

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

This is Write Your Novel and I'm Yvonne Battle-Felton. I'm a novelist and lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University. And in this podcast, I'll be in conversation with other leading novelists as we explore the writing process. This series delves into the decisions that writers might face and looks at how to make the most of the writer's toolbox. In each episode, you'll hear one writer talking about one book to shed light on one narrative device. So there may be the odd spoiler as we go under the skin of their writing and their process. And at the end of each conversation is a writing exercise to help you try out their technique in your own writing. Funded by Arts Council England, supported by New Writing North, this series is very much for you, the writer. Let's get started.

In this episode I'm in conversation with Carmen Marcus. The writer and performance poet released her debut novel *How Saints Die* in 2017. And that's the book we're focusing on today. Winning the New Writing North Northern Promise Award as a work in progress in 2017, the book explores the question of ten-year-old protagonist, Ellie Fleck – where have they taken her mother? Irrepressibly curious, Ellie lives with her fisherman father, Peter, on the wild North Yorkshire coast.

It's the 1980s and her mother's breakdown is discussed only in whispers with the promise, better by Christmas, and no further explanation. Steering by the light of her dad's sea-myths, her mother's memories of home across the water and a fierce spirit all her own, Ellie begins to learn in these sudden strange circumstances who she is and what she can become. By the time the first snow drops show, her innocence has been shed, but at great cost. With Carmen's specialism in performance poetry, it's only fitting that the mechanism to focus on is rhythm and language. As devices, rhythm and language can develop pace, intention, character, setting, narrative voice and more. First, I asked Carmen to read a passage of the book.

Carmen Marcus:

This bit that I'm going to read now I wrote really early on and it was one of my favourite bits to write. And it's just, it's occurring at the point where Ellie doesn't really know what's happened to her mum and we're approaching Christmas. And her dad took her to visit her mum in a mental institution, but Ellie had no idea what that place was or what was really going on. And her dad has promised her that her mum would be better by Christmas and Christmas is fast approaching. And this is a moment between Ellie and her dad that I just love. "They set off through the back streets huddling close to the old red brick walls. Plumes of woodsmoke lifting from freshly lit fires and tempting them with someone else's warmth. Down, down through the cobbled back alleyways, stacked with lobster pots, salt and weed tang even in this cold.

These alleyways have their own rules, not street and road and lights and look what's coming, but hush and hide. The bike bounces on steadily and Ellie keeps their pace quick. She breathes out and in through her red scarf that smells of home. More flakes are landing and bursting on her eyelids. Her dad turns around, his face alive, a child's. The tree, the snow, her father, the shadow of his cap over his face and his face shining, the gift of it all. The snow lands on his dark blue coat making another sky with other stars, like the star clock. He kneels down to Ellie, taking her pale hands into his own. His gloves, wet and shining with tiny crystals. He left her hands to his mouth and blows a fire full of breath into the cup of her palms. From his pocket he takes out her soft yellow mittens. She wants to put this night

away for safekeeping to keep her father safe. She can see the lines framing his mouth, the tiny red cracks in the snow of his eyes.

'Hey, settle down Ellie. Should I tell you your story? I pulled up the nets and there you were all blue and cold, like a porpoise. Yeah, like a porpoise, like a pup and I cut you free.' 'And you took me home from the sea for luck.' 'All right now, come on then, quick march, left, left. I had a good job and I left.' Ellie falls in step with her father's giant strides and whispers out into the snow hush, left, left. The bike ticking and the snow softly fssing to the ground."

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

Thank you so much for agreeing to do this, it means so much.

Carmen Marcus:

Oh, thank you for asking me to do it. I think it's such a scary thing facing that first draft.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

So I have here, and I cried so often while I was reading this book. And part of it was Ellie's story and it was definitely the way that she was telling it, the way the narrator, it was that tenderness for me, it's the details that are crisp and descriptive. And that conciseness, there's a precision to your prose that really just guides us through the narrative. And I wanted to talk a bit about that evocative use of sound. So for me, and I have some of my favourite lines, so one of them is, 'she retreats to her special stool, yellow paint crackling.' And then even more throughout, there's the shush, shush, the thud tick tick tick, the scrit, scatter, scatter, the pad pad pad. All of the characters, the sound is so vibrant and so alive through the narration of them. Can you talk to us a bit about how you use sound in your writing and I guess how you capture that? What is that process like for you?

Carmen Marcus:

Oh, it's incredible to hear someone who's really felt the book. And so thank you for, thank you for articulating that. Sound, why is it so important and how do I get there? I think growing up the way that I did where I did, so I grew up by the sea. That sound is a world in and of itself and a dimension in and of itself. And it's something that I've always been so attuned to. And when I talked about that journey going back to being a child, I think as a child I was an observer and a listener more than a sort of present, running about shouting kind of child. And that was how I learned to interact with the world. But I think it comes from the experiences that I had as a kid where my dad would take us to the beach and the sound of the waves, the wind, the birds, are the sea, are the beach to me.

And they're so present. And my mum, who is Irish Catholic and I'm lapsed Catholic. When you're brought up within this strange religion, Irish Catholicism is very, very strange. So language is actually sound sense. The way that she speaks, the rhythms that she uses to speak. And my mum would often never finish her sentences. She didn't need to because she got there with just the expression, the physical, sound expression of what she wanted to convey. So the lyrical way that my mum would speak, the way she'd structure a sentence together, the way she'd use her whole body presence to articulate something was— she used sound more than she used language and I really, really picked up on that. All of the half said things. And then also being brought up within a religion.

So we were brought to church from a really young age. When you hear the mass as a child you don't hear the words because they're complicated. And if you start to take them in when you're really small, you'll just start to feel terrified. So as you get older, the terror starts going up and up and up as you realise exactly what God is asking of you. But as a child, what you hear are these, the rhythms, but more importantly the call and response. So I feel like for me, sound is about my relationship with nature. It's about how I express the conversation too and listen in return to nature. And I think that's what I really wanted to capture with the story, with those sounds, was to bring that undercurrent of language of the natural world around me and also the undercurrent of what isn't said, because children pick up on what isn't said, to bring all of the unheard stuff to life too.

And I couldn't do that with words as they were in their current form. So I had to muck about with the structure of sentences, use the power of sound. And I love Dylan Thomas. And I had a teacher called Mr. Webster, he was amazing. And he would read Under Milk Wood with his eyes half closed like he was incanting a prayer, and he was. And listening to Under Milk Wood gave me the permission to do that in my own writing. And it not just gave me the permission to do that in my own writing, it legitimised the relationship with language that I'd experienced in a household that didn't read.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

There's so much there. And it was really interesting what you were talking about with your mother's use of expressions and pauses and how that said so much. And I noticed in the book, you create these visual pauses and silences. For me, one place I noticed it was when the children, and the narrator refers to them as little Rumpelstiltskins which I absolutely loved. But while they're questioning or teasing her, the pauses between their questions and the laughter, it's formatted, not narrated, as in told. The narrator doesn't say, and they this and they that, it was shown, it was quite visual in a way that it was directed by the narrator or both. Can you walk us through that decision there? It was really lovely to see visually. But I guess I'm curious how you got there as the writer.

Carmen Marcus:

When I was writing How Saints Die, I think I'm poet first and foremost. So when you let a dodgy poet loose on a keyboard with a large piece of work, they can't forget how to use the page to say what they really want to say and how to create those pauses and those silences. So it was really, really intuitive. My first draft was really messy. It was really all over the place because I was still thinking in the zone of poetry. So a lot of the big chapters actually were much smaller fragmented chapters and they got kind of edited together so that we could take the reader on mini journeys. But I wrote in a really fragmentary way. So chapters often went longer than sort of two, maybe three pages at the most. And working in that way gave me the freedom to use the space on the page. And what I wanted to do, I was writing as a poet.

And I wanted, especially with those conversations that were happening. Or conversation isn't the right word for what happens between bullying, but I wanted the emotion to land in the same way. And I'm a performance poet as well so I don't... So with the way that I write, it's more composing than it is for the page. And I also speak out loud, especially when I'm doing dialogue which really, really helps you get over the fear of dialogue when you're writing. And so what I wanted was when those hurtful things were said, I wanted it to land

and I wanted the reader to go inside Ellie to feel the impact of that. And there was no other way to do it unless I was actually there reading it than to go right, take a pause, take a breath, feel that physical punch.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

I think you did that beautifully throughout the book. Speaking about, and I guess this is still the writing that, it is the writing and in a way it's the formatting part of it. So I noticed you don't use dialogue tags or speech marks and quotation marks, except in remembered speech. You use dashes for dialogue and the context to tell who's speaking. What does this allow the reader to do in terms of engaging with the text? And what does it allow you to explore as a writer?

Carmen Marcus:

Intimacy. I find punctuation so irritating. And the way that I knew story, the way that I encountered story was spoken. And there is that my mum was a great storyteller, my dad was a great storyteller and they would shift from idea to idea. Every time they told a story, it changed. And there was this aliveness to the spoken word that punctuation contains. It tries to contain and suppress and hold inside it. And I just wanted the flow. And again, it's because I was, well, I still am a poet, poetry gives you the permission to do it. So I just thought, well, I'm not going to change that. Roddy Doyle uses dashes and it's like, well if Roddy Doyle can do it, I want to.

And lots of other writers do, but also doing that allows me this intimacy with the reader that invites them into that space as though, can you hear this? I want you sat at the bottom of the stairs with me listening to what's going on between the parents. I want you sat at the bottom of the stairs with Ellie. I want you sat on the beach with Ellie. I want you to feel the sound in your ears. And there's something about language as I said before, where it needs to be felt. Punctuation interrupts all of that and it just frustrates me so I have done with it.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

I love that giving yourself permission to just be intimate in that way with the words in the story and the reader. And where I thought it would distract me, it actually just— you know how they talk about each book teaching you how to read it. And I felt like it was just, okay, this is what I am and how I am. And it was like, okay. And we knew who was speaking by what they were saying or where they were positioned. And it just, it works quite well.

Carmen Marcus:

And just to pick up on that, it's an editing point as well. When you dump punctuation, you have to work harder at character and voice or it doesn't work. So it really makes you get into the head of your character and how they speak and generate all of that stuff that will never go in the book, but you really need to know it about your characters. And yeah, that was really important. And whenever I'd get stuck in the book, I'd always go back to character. And that rescued me. So when we think about things like writer's block and what stops us, often it's because we've reached a point where we don't know our characters well enough or we haven't made a decision about them from their own position. We're trying to force them into a situation that they're resisting. So get to know your characters and then you can

go back in. And because it's not the 200, 500 words a day that you're doing it doesn't feel like the work, but it is the work, character is the work.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

I think that leads right into something else that I wanted to ask you about. And it's around that word choice and characterisation. So for me the language throughout the book, it develops the characters in the narrative just like you were saying. While they are buying the tree, so Ellie and her father, she, and this is in quotes, "Bites down on her embarrassment with two S's and two R's." So we see her becoming a stronger, more confident speller. And this is actually in spite of woodsy. And also we see her comprehending the world around her and her father through the world's eyes. Can you talk a bit about Ellie's perspective and the world through her eyes at that point, when they're buying the Christmas tree?

Carmen Marcus:

It's one of my favourite bits to write, that bit. Ellie's world is getting bigger and her father's world is getting smaller. And at this point she knows it, at this point she feels it. And their relationship shifts. So her dad, it's not that he's consciously withdrawing. There's a world unfolding that he doesn't understand and Ellie's getting older and she's reaching out, curious and grasping at that world. She wants to get the words that he doesn't. The whole new language, and a little bit before then she's just been at French club. So there's a whole new world that's opening up to her. And suddenly she sees the distance between her and her dad. And she's got this unspoken conversation of body, feeling, earth, nature with her dad. And she's moving into this other world. And what she's feeling is pain.

She's feeling pain at that pull away from him because she's resisting it. But she also knows that she needs to go there too because the option if she doesn't is stasis and an ending. And it's all of that going around in her head and she's only 10. But we've all been 10 and we know the complicated spin of those first cracks between our relationship with our parents, of understanding their limitations. And there's a beautiful book called *Motherless Daughters* that I was reading at the time, it's nonfiction. And she says that our first, if we don't experience a significant loss before the age of about sort of 10 or 11, then our first experience of death is the death of the child within. And so in losing her connection to her dad, Ellie's losing her childhood because it is part of growing up.

And I think that's it. I think I've just worked out what it is. This is another thing writers need to know is sometimes you think you know your book and you don't, and you need someone else to reflect it back to you for you to really understand what you were doing. And that's cool because that's what makes a book a living thing. If there's something about your own book that you love, but you don't entirely get, I'd say that's probably a good thing.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

I think you're right because in that moment, there were a couple of things I liked about that because Ellie understands what the shop signals, Yvonne's, and I love that name for the shop and for the shop owner. And when I read it, it made me laugh and it was just like, oh, that's my name. But it was just, so that for me was quite lovely. But there's also something in the shop owner knowing that the father can't afford the full price and Ellie knowing it as well. And she was embarrassed but she didn't set out to embarrass her father, she didn't draw attention to it. So there was still something quite lovely and vulnerable and honest

there. When Ellie's trying to talk to her father and he's trying to teach her through gutting the fish, it feels like in that moment they're both trying to communicate through gestures and space and through this action but they're unable to or they're saying different things. So she asks, will ECT bring her back, talking about her mother. And we're told he fans out the dorsal and pectoral fins which means he doesn't know. And later at bedtime, when she says dad and he says, what? And she says, what time is it? Which means, where did they take mum? And the reply is bedtime. And I'm curious about how much of those are, I guess true interpretations and translations and how much are those miscommunications? And I guess one, how you did it because it was beautifully vivid, the way that it's kind of hopeful and yet somewhat dangerous because of these, about the possibilities of miscommunications. So I guess what was the writing like for you and what were you hoping that would have us feel as a reader?

Carmen Marcus:

I thought it was really important to show the closeness between Ellie and her dad but also to show that he wasn't as comfortable with language as his own daughter was. So there are instances where Ellie has to write the notes for school because he doesn't exist in words, he can't articulate himself in words. He uses his hands, he uses gesture, he uses sound. Sometimes he even uses the sea to speak for him and to connect to Ellie through. And that was a really important thing partially because that was, I drew that from observations with my dad and I didn't understand my dad until I lost him when I was 19.

And it wasn't until I reflected back a lot through this novel that I understood he was speaking to me the whole time, but I couldn't read the language of his hands. And I wanted to demonstrate to people and to readers, I wanted them to feel the struggle of this really strong but deeply, deeply sensitive man to create a shape of comfort and safety for his child without using something as useless and deceptive as words because that's not where his power was. But in trying to create a safety with her through routine, through repetition, through teaching, through articulating the only things that he did know, which were fishing, the birds, the land, the sea and get that to speak for him, and Ellie gets that later.

I won't say the line in case it spoils it for anyone, but I think that's what I was going for. And I kind of really wanted to challenge this, this myth of the brutish Northern male because I've never met one, I spent my whole life in the north. And for my dad, he was six foot four. He had the broad shoulders. He could gut a fish, he could make anything, but he was the most sensitive and gentle person that I'd ever encountered and couldn't bear anything to suffer. But his whole soul was in his hands. And because that's the language that Ellie has to learn to read, to understand who he is. Does that answer the question?

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

Of course. How many drafts did you go through and I guess first, on your own editing, and then were there other elements? Did you share it with other readers or with agents and how many drafts did it take even after that, before publication?

Carmen Marcus:

I kept it really quiet during the first draft because I hadn't written anything before. I didn't want to make a promise to anyone that I would, let alone myself, that I would finish it. So I kept it really private. And I think that's a really, really important thing, although it is great to

talk to through ideas. So I had a mentor called Laura Degnan, who's brilliant. And I'd say, I think I'm going to do this, I think I'm going to do that. And once I'd had enough structural chats with her, I literally just hid myself away and wrote like a demon. And I think with the first draft, get it out as quickly as you can and don't think too much about editing your line spacing, about where things look on the page. Because as you said there Yvonne, you picked up on the poetic spacing, the creation of the pauses, that was all really instinctive and that remained in the final drafts.

So there's so much about the instinctive process of that first draft which you need to retain, you need to defend and hold onto as the core energy of the story even though a lot will change. So I got my 50,000 words out and I was like, yeah. And then I won the Northern Promise Award with that draft, which is a work in progress. I got an agent and my agent was saying to me, can you get it publication ready? And I was too ashamed to say, I don't know what you mean because I was totally [inaudible 00:26:08] And we ended up parting ways. So I was rewriting and rewriting in a futile way because I didn't know where I wanted to take the story. And I generated about a hundred thousand words. And I kind of needed to expand to contract. So that was over about three or four different drafts I expanded.

And that enabled me to think about, what's really the core of the story? And in that expansion, I really put pressure and pain on all of my different characters but I hadn't got to the core of my story in the sense that Scarlett Thomas' book, *Monkeys with Typewriters* is superb. She puts you on the spot as a writer and she goes, what's your seed word, if you had to reduce your entire story to one word, what would it be? Which makes most writers go, ahhhh! And run, run far, far away. But it's such a brilliant exercise to do. So I kept iterating what was my seed word, loads of spider diagrams. So in order to get my story into an actual workable draft, I had to come away from the page and do loads of things that weren't writing. I had to research about electric shock therapy.

I did loads of research on fishing because my dad wasn't there to ask. And also because there are details, there are beautiful metaphors that you can use about shipbuilding and boat building that I wanted to get in there. So I did all the writing that isn't writing. The research, the reading, reading tons of books by children to get into a child's mindset and then went back to the page. So I kind of, that seed word was damage, and the opposite word was fixing. And what I really understood was what I was getting at with the story was to actually understand that damage is a beginning not an ending. That it's not about victimhood, it's about endurance. And once I had that shift in my mind because it's very much about social realism, you've got bullying, you've got social workers involved, you've got teachers, you've got failures within the system and a ten-year-old girl slipping through all of that and becoming very vulnerable.

And so there was a lot of that hard stuff. And then I realised that I was making a victim and she wasn't, nor was her mum and nor was her dad. So how do I pull out of that? And then when you focus on that one word damage, you've got to look at all of the other possibilities associated with that, that become the word survivor. So I think when you've got to like a sea of a hundred thousand words, pull back and do the writing that isn't the writing, or you will go, ahhh!

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

Oh, that's such a wonderful generous answer. That's such a beautiful way to talk about the getting there and the journey of the writing and the drafting and the ideas. So there were

elements you say, from your childhood that were in the story. And I'm always curious about that, how writers take from life and what does that make possible in the writing? And I guess those rules, and so what has to stay true to the life experience and what can you explore and redefine?

Carmen Marcus:

I think as a writer, we always need to use the truth of our own experience as a starting point. But we also have to let ourselves off the hook and give ourselves permission to let that go and use it and to use it as a launch pad. Now I write magical realism, but I write a lot from the real. What happened with *How Saints Die* is it came in these fragmentary bursts, partly due to the nature of how I was writing it. At the time I was working a really intensive job that was anything between 40 and 70 hours a week. But with a gift of lots of traveling on trains and you know what writers like about writing on trains, they're just like, okay, total uninterrupted writing time. You're stuck in a seat for anything up to three hours and there's nothing else that you can do except pour your soul out on a page.

And so these fragments came out and the subject of the book *How Saints Die*, it's about Ellie who's a 10 year old girl, as I used to be. She has a fisherman father as I had. Her mum has a mental breakdown and my mum did. And I was able to write these intensive, truthful bursts of experience as a starting point. But to get them into fiction, the first step was to write as a child. So there's a huge amount of reading books written for children that I needed to do to step back into the mindset of a child. I also was visiting my mum a lot and talking to her about her experiences. And there was something incredible about when I got off the train to my mum's house, I would walk back the same route that I would walk home from school because my old primary school was right next to the train station.

So walking and treading those places of childhood really brought me back. And it allowed me to walk that line between the real and imagined because I was remembering being a child and that encodes the memory differently. But what I realised that when you're writing the real is that when you get really close to the truth of the experience, it's too intense. It's too blurry. It becomes like this nebulous shot of reality that's too hard to hold. And so what you have to aim for is what Mark Doty described in his beautiful, beautiful poem, *Migratory*, the space between the spirit and the skin. So you're going for the spirit of the moment but you're carving a new reality for that moment. And in that point, you have to let go of your own experience. You have to let go of yourself, give it to the characters that you've made.

And that simultaneously is a massively healing process because you have to let go. And let go not just of the tough experiences but of the beautiful experiences as well. And then your characters will take that experience that you offer to them and go, right, I'm going to do this with it. And you go, oh, you can't and they go, I'm going to. And off it goes into fiction, into that other realm. So I think, and one of the things I keep above my writing space is always that quote, between the spirit and the skin, that's where you're aiming for.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

That's absolutely lovely. And if I could ask just one more question, you've been so generous with your answers and with your advice and about your process and the writing. And if there was one piece of advice that you would give readers about that attention to language. And so they've just read your book and they're going, my goodness, I want to do something

like this. I want my book to sound this way. I want my readers to feel this way. What advice might you offer?

Carmen Marcus:

Try poetry. Take a break from the long form because I did lots of other projects around *How Saints Die* and it swam into my vision and it sort of, and it had to filter back down. I was doing poetry performance projects and working with children. I did a tabletop performance with children which was a retelling of Shakespeare's *Tempest* which was so much fun. So the one thing I would say is be open and allow other forms to inform your work and play with poetry. Because what poetry does is it allows you permission to not just play with language but open into a different kind of intimacy with your truth and have a different form. And when I say play with poetry, read, read poetry, listen to poetry, try to write it. And there are some amazing, amazing poets out there at the moment who are doing extraordinary things.

And you only have to sort of hit YouTube to find it. And something about poetry and what I was aiming for when I was doing the early writing, what I was aiming for, this point where the language hums and you just go and you get this tingle. And poetry does that really, really, really quickly. And lots of, lots of novel writers do it too. But you're aiming for that. As I said, that place between spirit and skin. You want to feel that vibration and then you know it's there. And that's the bit when you're editing that you'll never edit out because that's the bit that sings and it holds the core. And when you read poetry and you write poetry, you learn that there's another undercurrent to language which is about vision and sound as well. And so that's, yeah. Yeah, if you want to write, really, if you want to write sort of try something that isn't novel writing, is the weirdest advice ever, but it really adds a lovely dimension to your work.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

Oh, I'm sure. When you think about it though, after you said it, it's like yeah, it makes sense because it does in a way force you to be a bit more concise and to use imagery in potentially different ways and also to consider the audience and how you're doing that translation. So it's absolutely brilliant advice.

Carmen Marcus:

It's just poetry brings you closer to your reader because when you're writing a poem, you're always asking the reader or the listener to play a role for you. And so it's a conversation. And as I said in that last sort of bit when I flipped and asked the reader to play the person who was going to put a stop to the bad thing, you can do that, you learn to shift. So that thing, have you found your writer's voice, which makes all writers go... Poetry really helps you to find the distance between you and the reader and how to negotiate that distance between you and the reader.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

Carmen, thank you so much for your generosity, for your answers, for your time, for the book and just for flipping through the pages with us and really breaking down how you did it. So thank you ever so much.

Carmen Marcus:

Well, thank you for asking me to do this. And thank you for being such a gloriously sensitive reader. It's so lovely when you lay this little trail in your book of things that you hope people will pick up. It's like scattering things on a beach and you go, oh, I hope somebody is going to notice this. And you did, you've picked up on all of those little shiny sparkly things that I put in. And it's just it's the best thing about writing, after you've gone through all of the urgh, is having somebody read it and pick up on those little moments that you've inlaid into it.

Yvonne Battle-Felton:

Oh, thank you so much for that. That's so lovely to say, thank you.

Inspired by Carmen Marcus and a discussion of language and word choice in *How Saints Die*, in this exercise, we're focusing on word choice, sounds and silences. You'll need 15 minutes for this. First, listen to and/or read three poems. Read the poems out loud, listen for the pauses, breaths and rhythms. For this exercise, try to use at least one poem that's new to you. Now, thinking of a place you know well, this could be a real or imagined location, list all of the sounds that might make up the place. Write the words, describe the sound and the feelings you associate with the sounds where relevant. Use words that sound like the sounds you are describing. Where necessary, make words up, spell the sounds the way you hear them, play with the rhythms of the words. Now that you've described all the sounds, describe the silence, be creative. What does silence sound like here?

What does it feel like? Then using your list write a 26 word poem inspired by the sounds and silences of the space. Use each letter of the alphabet only once to begin each word. Your poem can be in any order you'd like. It can rhyme or not and take any form that's useful to you. The only limit is the word count, 26 words. Now, read or perform the poem out loud. When you're finished, you may have a new way of hearing the setting of your story.

As our episode on rhythm and language comes to an end, thanks again to my guest, Carmen Marcus. Her book, *How Saints Die* is available at libraries and bookstores on and offline. *Write Your Novel* was presented by me, Yvonne Battle-Felton and it was produced by Candace Wilson. The music was by Joe Gardner. It was a Sonderbug Production funded by Arts Council England and supported by New Writing North. Next time it's Paul Mendez and conversation to talk about point of view. And if you want to know more, you can follow me on Twitter @YBattleFelton. And don't forget, you can continue the conversation via the Write Your Novel server on Discord. For more details, head over to the New Writing North website. See you there.