

What is the working title of your current/next book?

Victorian Blockbuster: Fergus Hume and **The Mystery of a Hansom Cab**

Where did the idea come from?

This story---of a self-published book that goes on to become the biggest-selling detective novel of the 1800s, defines the publishing genre of detective fiction, and paves the way for Sherlock Holmes--has never been told before.

What genre does your book fall under?

It's not a weighty cradle-to-grave biography, more the biography of a book, its influence, permutations and curious afterlife. It includes anything from madhouse history to male attire to film history and copycat true crime. Fergus himself left no diaries, and there are few letters. So it can't be a conventional literary biography. But given so little is known, that is actually a blessing—the book is all new material to the general reader.

What actors would you choose to play the part of your characters in a movie rendition?

Fergus—one of the hobbit actors, and not because he came from New Zealand. He was short and stocky. I need an actor specialising in charming villains for his publisher.

What is the one-sentence synopsis of your book?

How to write a bestseller and not actually make any money.

Will your book be self-published or represented by an agency?

I went and flirted with Text publishing (there is no other real way to describe it) and they liked the idea. So I wrote the proposal. They liked that too. I had professional help to negotiate the contract. My deadline is July, 60,000 words.

How long did it take you to write the first draft?

Ha! I'm working on two chapters simultaneously, revising as I go. Two other chapters are sort of completed, and most of the rest are chunks in progress. When I get stuck or bored with one I move to another...and so on.

What other books would you compare this story to within your genre?

Can't think of anything offhand. Text reckon Longitude should be my model.

Who or what inspired you to write this book?

Not inspiration, more that I realised I had enough matter for it.

What else about the book might pique the reader's interest?

It's a crime fiction history, but that also deals with publishing, marketing, the nature of literary reputation, the colonial cringe, and New Zealand.