

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

**James Clelland**, winner of the 2010 European Union Literary Award for his novel *Deeper than Colour* (Jacana Media), shares his thoughts on writing

**Describe yourself in a sentence.**

Full of passion, intensity, silliness and stubbornness. An intellectual, defined as someone who is curious about everything.

**Describe your ideal reader.**

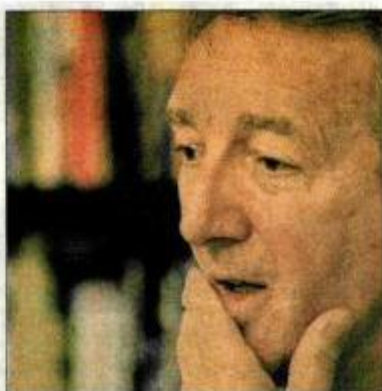
As most writers will write the type of books they would themselves read, let me describe my own reading needs. I seek a book that will teach me "stuff", defined as either information about things, emotions, feelings, situations or motivations. I like to read a book that I wish I had written.

**Describe the process of writing the work. How long did it take?**

Long and tortuous. The germ of an idea must be extended, treated like a garden, tended very carefully. It needs to be written out, left to mature, thinned out, fed with fresh ideas and watched with lots of love and patience in the hope it flourishes. I have no routine. I write at home when the "day job which pays the bills" allows, or in airports, coffee shops, Long Street, anywhere with a buzz, a background white noise, anywhere apart from being in the peaceful and quiet countryside. I am more creative when part of something, often with music without words playing, or operas in foreign languages, Italian, German, French, that I can't understand and don't focus on. *Deeper Than Colour* took two years to write and another year to edit.

**What was the originating idea for the book?**

It started with a germ of a notion to write an antidote to the reality rubbish we are surrounded by today — Warhol's 15 minutes of fame seems available to everyone, sadly. I read a review of a French movie in *TLS* [*Times Literary Supplement*] about a normal couple — a definition open to debate — whose marriage and life fell apart when they began to receive tapes/DVDs of themselves doing ordinary things, such as taking out the bins, driving to work, etcetera. They never found out who sent them these clips but the fact they were observed made them act differently and destroyed their marriage. The perfect life was severely challenged by being watched. I wondered what would happen if an abnormal person began to film him-



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self in every situation? Would he then stop reacting in "real time", waiting to review the clips to see how he should/could have reacted? I already had the main character of Angus in mind, a seriously troubled Border War vet with post traumatic stress disorder, someone whose ability to cope had been compromised by being taught to hate the very people who now ran his country post-apartheid. Also his wife had to be an equally strong and selfish character, to counterbalance Angus.

**Name some writers who have inspired you and tell us briefly why or how.**

Every book I've read has made its mark on me, for good or otherwise. Strangely, I found myself fascinated by "John" writers, namely John Braine, John Fowles and John Updike, among others. Dickens gave me an insight into the use of humour in dark stories, Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* trilogy showed that small, quirky character traits conveyed as much as paragraphs of description as in Walter Scott. Anthony Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time* was a series of novels I didn't want to finish. There are others such as Damon Galgut, JM Coetzee (another John, of course), Samuel Beckett, Michel Houellebecq, Amis (father and son) and Milan Kundera.

**Do you write by hand, or use a typewriter or computer?**

I use a very small and powerful laptop. I'm a gadget junkie, although learning how to use them intimidates me.

**What is the purpose of fiction?**

Every reader would define that differently. I once worked with a man who tore each page out of novels as he finished it. That way, he said, he would never lose his place. His purpose was never to get lost. I prefer to lose myself in fiction, to become part of a new world, one infinitely more interesting than the real one we have no choice but to inhabit. Fiction, to me, is for release, edification and stimulation, which each of us would — again — define differently.