

L.M. Merrington

Press Kit

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Biography

L.M. Merrington was born in Melbourne, Australia. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in media and communications and Chinese, and a PhD in international relations, and has worked as a freelance journalist, editor, strategic analyst and communications manager. She lives in Canberra with her husband Tristan. *Greythorne* is her first novel. Her website is www.lmmerrington.com.

About Greythorne

How did Lucy Greythorne die? From the moment she arrives at the isolated, windswept Greythorne Manor, Nell Featherstone finds herself haunted by the fate of the mistress of the house. Employed as a governess to eight-year-old Sophie, a fey, half-wild child, and entranced by the girl's father, the enigmatic Professor Nathaniel Greythorne, Nell is drawn deep into the house's mysteries. Why does Sophie go missing from her bed? What caused Lucy to run away the night she died? And why will no one in the nearby village speak of Greythorne Manor and its secrets?

When a violent storm reveals Lucy's body is not in her grave, Nell begins to develop suspicions about the Professor's research. What she discovers in his laboratory, however, will turn all her ideas about life and death, morality and creation on their head, leaving her to face an impossible choice.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What inspired you to write *Greythorne*?

I had never written a Gothic novel before – most of my previous fiction (unpublished) has been fantasy. The actual idea came quite suddenly; I was reading Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* and I started to doze off. When I woke up, I had a rough outline of *Greythorne* in my head, with characters and a loose plot structure. I initially intended it to be more of a ghost story, but as it developed it delved into the realm of pseudoscience and became more about the moral choices the characters have to make, as well as the mysteries surrounding Lucy Greythorne's death and the Professor's research. I wanted it to be a book that would appeal to older teenagers as well as adults, in the

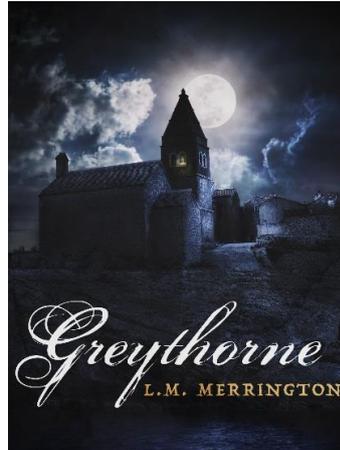


Photo credit: James Walsh

tradition of nineteenth century adventure stories by the likes of Charlotte Bronte, Robert Louis Stevenson and Jules Verne.

2. What do you like about this genre?

I've long been fascinated by the nineteenth century – it was a time of rapid technological and social change, especially for women. I'm passionate about exploring women's stories, because they are often left out of traditional histories. I enjoy the Gothic genre because it gives me an opportunity to bring together the best parts of the mystery, historical fiction and fantasy/sci-fi/adventure genres and at the same time to push my characters into situations where they're faced with some difficult choices and conflicts.

3. How long have you been writing for?

I've been writing fiction since I was around 10 years old, but this is my first published work of fiction. However, I've published extensively in journalism and academia (under my full name, Louise Merrington). My first article was published when I was 12 years old, as part of a program for school students run by the local paper. I've also been published in *The Age*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Canberra Times*, *The Bulletin*, *Inside Story* and *East Asia Forum*, among others, and have contributed chapters to *Engaging India* (ed. Ian Hall, Georgetown University Press 2014) and *Australia and India: Bridging Different Worlds* (ed. Brian Stoddart and Auriol Weigold, Readworthy Publications 2011).

4. Can you tell us a bit more about your background?

I was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1984. As an only child, I spent a lot of time reading and would often imagine myself into my favourite stories – for a while I was the unknown sixth member of the Famous Five. I knew from early on that I wanted to be a writer, but chose initially to pursue journalism instead as I felt it would provide more security. I completed a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Melbourne, majoring in media and communications and Mandarin Chinese, which included 6 months of language training in Beijing (I also spent 6 months in Yunnan, in southern China, teaching English when I was 18). While at university, I worked as a freelance journalist and also had a regular job with *The Age's* student newspaper, *SAGE*. I completed internships at the Walkley Foundation for Journalism and at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Asia-Pacific Focus* program in Sydney, as well as the ABC bureau in Beijing.

I wrote my honours thesis on media regulation in China, and during that year I decided that I would rather pursue research than journalism. I received a scholarship to the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra to do my PhD, where I focused on conflict and cooperation in the China-India political relationship and spent seven months in India and China conducting fieldwork. After graduating in 2012, I joined the Department of Defence as a strategic analyst, where I spent three and a half years, and also worked as an editor for Defence publications. Throughout 2014 I held a part-time visiting fellowship at ANU's Australian Centre on China in the World, where I worked on turning my thesis into a book, and in 2015 I returned permanently to ANU as the Deputy Communications Manager for the College of Asia and the Pacific. I'm thrilled that after 20 years of writing, I'm finally achieving my dream of getting a novel published. One of my biggest inspirations was my grandfather, Ken Sillcock, who was also a writer, and I know he'd be very proud too.

5. How long did it take you to write *Greythorne*?

I wrote the first draft of *Greythorne* as part of NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month), which is an international challenge where participants try to write 50,000 words during November. Although I didn't meet the 50,000 word goal, I had a first draft within three months. I then spent the next nine

months editing it. The novel went through four distinct drafts before it was accepted for publication, with around 20-30,000 words being rewritten between them.

6. How did you get it published?

In November 2014, I attended the Australian Society of Authors' 'Literary Speed Dating' event in Sydney, which brings together a collection of publishers and agents for aspiring authors to pitch to. I pitched *Greythorne* to an editor from Pan Macmillan Australia who asked to see the first three chapters, and then eventually the entire manuscript. She also acquired for Pan Macmillan's digital-first imprint, Momentum Books, and offered me a contract with them in April 2015. Momentum is a really good fit for *Greythorne*, because the novel is quite short (50,000 words) and would probably have had a hard time finding a home with a traditional publisher. Although its primary form is as an ebook, it is also available in print-on-demand paperback.

7. Are you working on another novel?

I'm about to start writing my second novel, tentatively title *The Dark Before The Dawn*, which will also be a Gothic novel but this time set in 1860s Australia. There is a long tradition of Australian Gothic literature and a rich seam of history and folklore that I'm looking forward to drawing on. Without giving too much away, there'll be bushrangers, a murder mystery and probably a ghost or two as well.

