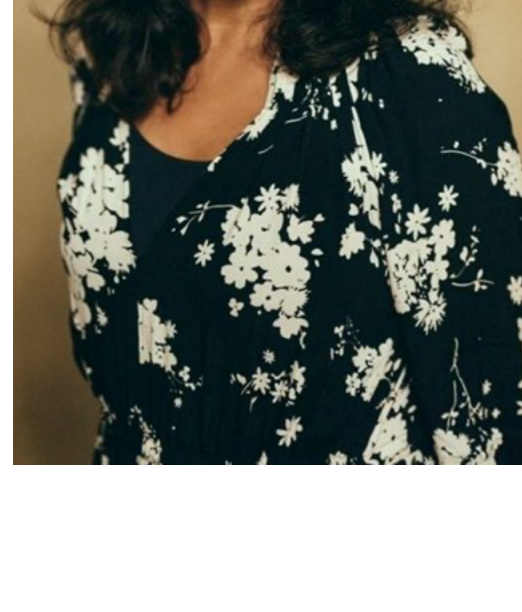


# Write On! Interviews: Author Gita Ralleigh

05 NOVEMBER 2023 / NEWS, WRITEON INTERVIEWS

Write On! interviews author Gita Ralleigh



Gita is a poet, writer and doctor born to Indian immigrant parents in London. She teaches creative writing to science undergraduates at Imperial College and has an MA in Creative Writing and an MSc in Medical Humanities. Her poetry books are *A Terrible Thing* (Bad Betty Press, 2020) and *Siren* (Broken Sleep Books, 2022). Her debut children's novel *The Destiny Of Minou Moonshine* is out now from Zephyr/Head of Zeus.

**WO: How would you describe your writing to someone new to it?**

*GR: I find it difficult to describe my own writing! I'm a poet as well as a fiction writer, so I do strive for (to quote Samuel Taylor Coleridge) 'the best words in the best order.' People often think writing for young readers is simple but I think it's actually more difficult than writing for adults, particularly with fantasy, where the writer must build an entire world, while keeping the language clear and concise.*

**WO: Can you tell us a bit about your latest book *The Destiny Of Minou Moonshine*?**

*GR: The Destiny Of Minou Moonshine follows fierce orphan girl Minou as she sets off with a secret, a map and a mechanical elephant, through the lush landscape of Indica in search of her destiny. Aimed at ages 9-12, the book is a fantasy adventure set in an alternate version of colonial India, perfect for readers of authors such as Sophie Anderson and Jasbinder Bilan.*

**WO: What inspired you to write in the first place, and what inspires you now?**

*GR: I was born in London to Indian parents. As a child, I enjoyed reading fantasy, but there were no children of a South Asian background in those stories. India, where my grandparents lived, felt like a magical place as a child. There were elephants, monkeys and peacocks; we would picnic in the grounds of palaces, and goddesses and temples were part of everyday life.*

*When I began writing, I decided to set my own fantasy adventure in an alternative version of India: Indica. I chose a queendom, with a dynasty of queens and a goddess who protected the city because feminism and female empowerment are abiding concerns. And, although the book is fantasy, many elements are based on historical facts, which I loved researching.*

**WO: The current issue of Write On! explores the theme of 'Literary Passions And Guilty Pleasures'. With that in mind, what would you say fuels your literary passion in terms of both reading and creating? Do you have a bookish guilty pleasure you're happy to share?**

*GR: As a child, I read every single book in our local library. I had to move on to the adult section by the time I was 11, because I'd run out of books to read – so I'm basically omnivorous! A literary passion I have now is to read poets of my own heritage, who've been denied a voice for so long. I've recently loved poetry by Anita Pati (shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize) and Sarala Estruch, plus a fantastic anthology of poetry called Out Of Sri Lanka. I read fiction quite quickly but poetry forces me to slow down and consider every word. I suppose my guilty pleasure is reading children's books as an adult! I love Sita Brahmachari's work and really enjoyed Nazneen Ahmed Pathak's recent debut, City Of Stolen Magic.*

**WO: What one piece of advice would you give an aspiring writer?**

*GR: Try to read as a writer would: slow down, take notes, examine language and plot construction and pay attention to voice. Join a writing class and listen to feedback. Every writer needs readers and editors. But, most of all, keep going and believe your story matters!*

**WO: Question from Twitter user: @juneachowdhury If you were to write a memoir, what would you call it?**

*GR: I think it might make for a very boring memoir, as it would have to reflect how, although I have a busy routine as a doctor and mother, books are a world I escape into from real life! Booktopia perhaps?*

**WO: Can you tell us anything about future projects?**

*GR: I'm working on another fantasy adventure for children, this time set on an island off the coast of Indica. The book has a different young hero, whose world overlaps with that of The Destiny Of Minou Moonshine.*

**WO: Lastly, if you could choose one fictional animal/creature to be a pet or companion, who would it be and why?**

*GR: I think I would choose the talking horse from The Horse And His Boy by C.S. Lewis, part of The Chronicles Of Narnia fantasy series. The book has a female heroine, Aravis, coded as Middle Eastern/Asian. And, although her representation is stereotypical and orientalist, she was the first non-white heroine I'd ever seen in a children's book. Also, Bree, the talking horse, teaches his rider how to ride, which would be handy as I've never learned!*

You can find out more about Gita Ralleigh here [gitaralleighauthor.wordpress.com](https://gitaralleighauthor.wordpress.com) and connect with her on X (formerly Twitter): @storyvilled and on Instagram: @gita\_ralleigh

*The Destiny Of Minou Moonshine* is available to buy from [Amazon](#), [Waterstones](#) or to order from your local independent bookstore.


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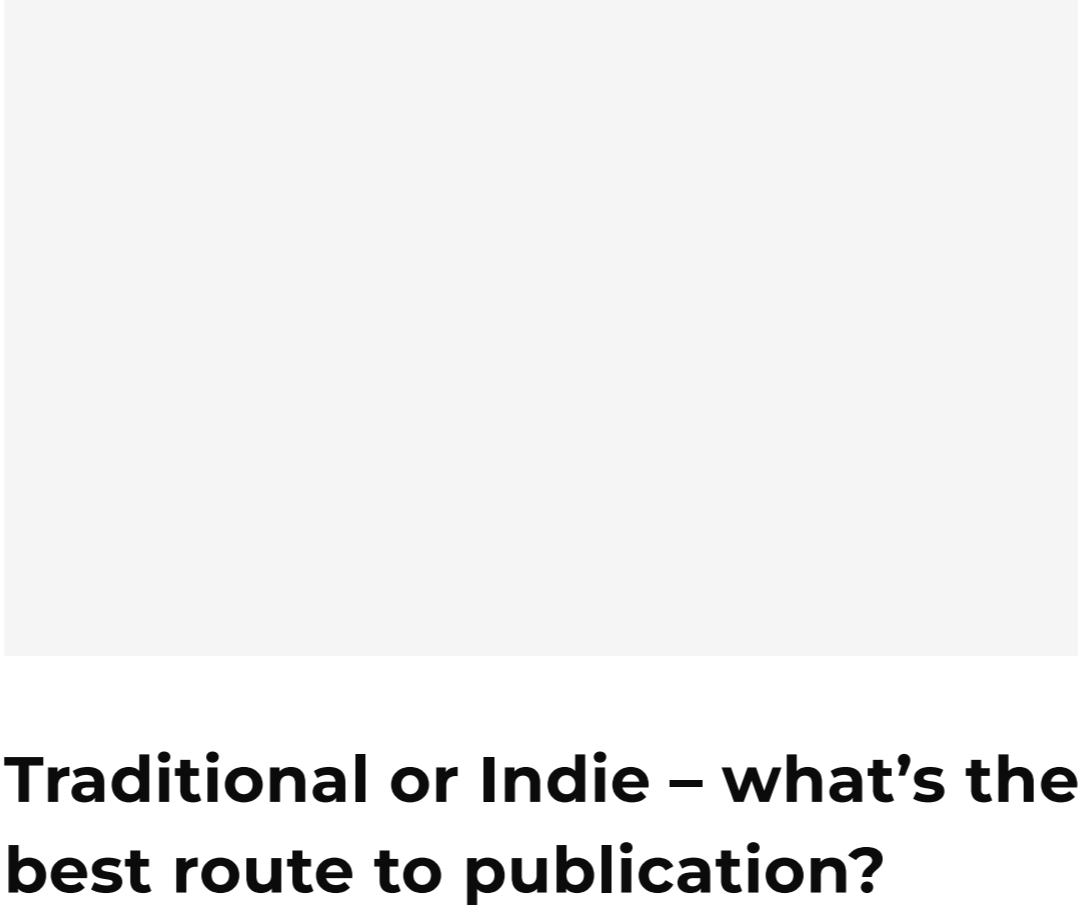
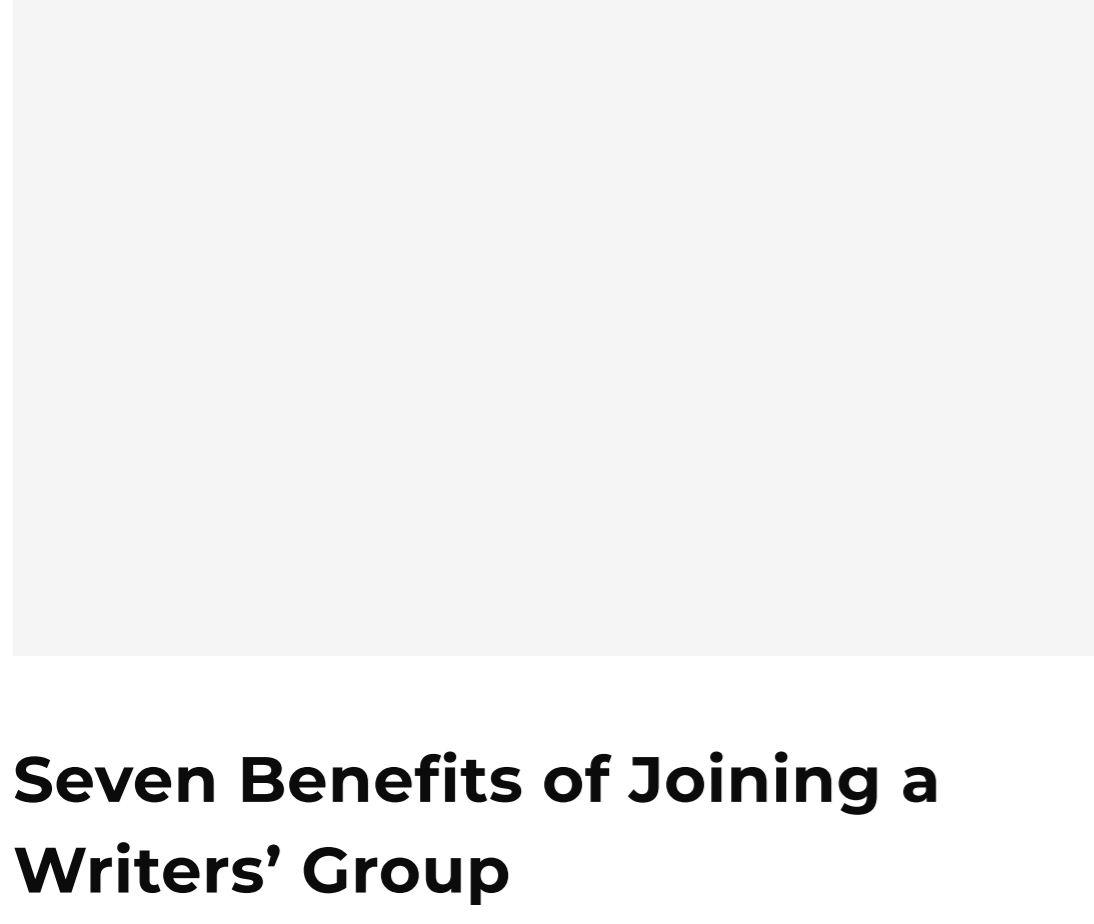
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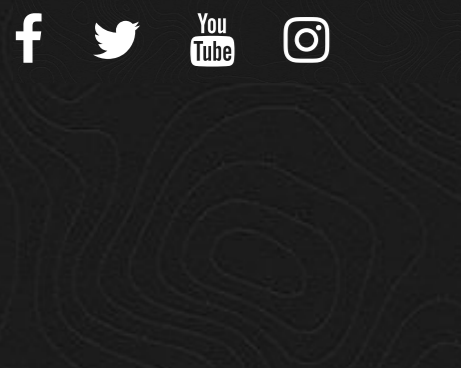
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