

## “The big adventure is close-in”: An interview with Jan Truss

Marie C. Davis

**Résumé:** Dans cette entrevue, Jan Truss nous parle du paradoxe fondamental des livres étiquetés “pour enfants”: ils sont écrits par des adultes mais destinés exclusivement aux jeunes alors qu’ils sont achetés par les parents et les éducateurs et qu’ils offrent souvent une richesse culturelle que seuls ces derniers peuvent apprécier. Dans l’expression “littérature d’enfance et de jeunesse”, il faudrait peut-être mettre l’accent sur le premier terme, à l’inverse de ce que font certains spécialistes de la question.



In articulating a philosophy which emphasizes the differences between the artist and society, responsibility and ignorance, literature and mere books, Jan Truss insists “there must be kids who need the rich embroidery of things” rather than the easy emotions of “fast-food fiction.” In her own fiction she poses problems but does not provide facile answers. A teacher of children and young adults for 25 years, Truss’s respect for young people informs the work of the writer she has been now for 20 years. She has written plays, poetry, short stories, a libretto, essays, and several novels, mostly set in her own habitat, rural-to-wilderness western Canada. Her subjects range widely: in *A very small rebellion* (both a novel and a play) and *The judgment of Clifford Sifton*, she sounds the theme of social injustice, while *Oomeranghi Oh!*, a play for pre-schoolers, captures poetically a sense of magic. *Bird at the window* deals with teenage pregnancy, *Jasmin* with school and home pressures on a younger girl, *Summer goes riding* and *Red* (the first two books of a quartet), with the complications of pre-adolescence. Perhaps because Truss has written for so many different audiences, the significance of her contribution to Canadian children’s literature has yet to be fully recognized. In this interview, she discusses her work, her views on art and the need for “an outside vision that can save, that can direct a life” for a child on the brink of adulthood.

**DAVIS:** When did you start writing fiction?

**TRUSS:** When I was 45, in about 1970, I thought, "What do I do with my life now?" I had always thought I would be a teacher—forever. I had emigrated, been school principal and consultant, and I was teaching at university—teaching teachers to teach art which is what I had always wanted to do. And then my legs bent and I got tired. Like many women of my generation I was exhausted; I had had children and worked all my life. This is not a wail. It's simply saying this is the way life is if women are to fulfil themselves. I was tired and I thought I was boring, so I quit.

Whenever I had talked at education conferences, my speeches had got published. So I thought I might have a bit of talent. I taught myself typing in a desperate six weeks, but then I hadn't a clue what I wanted to write. I thought of poetry, which is, I think, the basis of all our language. But that wouldn't make a career. So I sat down to write short, short stories as a form of discipline.

**DAVIS:** How short?

**TRUSS:** About 1000 words. I sent three off to the CBC and they bought them. It was lovely to hear them read. One piece they returned I sent to *Chatelaine* and once I had enlarged it they bought it. And I thought, "This is easy!" Then there was the First Alberta Culture Search for a New Novelist Competition, which I was just in time to enter. I won it with *Bird at the window* [1974]. Meanwhile, I had written a play and sent it off to an Alberta competition: it won second prize. I thought success was easy. But that was beginner's luck. It was never easy again.

**DAVIS:** All this success came in the first year or two of your sitting down to write?

**TRUSS:** Yes. But success was very difficult. If you're a schoolteacher for a long time you are the butt of society's criticisms, no matter how good you are. To get a book published and suddenly receive praise was difficult to cope with emotionally. Then the academics found the prizewinners provincial and small in scope. But that's what we write about, isn't it?—our own little worlds. When I've gone back and read *Bird at the window* I have found it nothing to be ashamed of.

**DAVIS:** Did you learn technique from certain writers?

**TRUSS:** When I wrote my first novel, I got out various novels, the size I was going to write, and looked at the relationship of dialogue to description. Just to get a feeling for it. Because it's strange, really, when you write a first novel. But otherwise I tend to do it by osmosis. I read everything my many friends bring in. I read *The New Yorker* (which I don't like as well now because, with the new editor it has speeded up) and I like the slow, dreary pieces in *The Atlantic*. When I'm actually writing I can't read other people's fiction because I catch their voices and become influenced; so I usually read magazines when I'm really writing.

**DAVIS:** What have you been reading in the past year or so?

**TRUSS:** Alice Walker, Anita Brookner (I never tire of her), Timothy Findley,

Kathleen Govier, A.S. Byatt's *Possession*, and Neil Bissoondath's *A casual brutality*, which I found very fresh.

I am actually wading through a Stephen King novel so as not to be too bigoted! (I will never finish it; it's *so* tedious! But paragraph to paragraph it's good.) I'm reading it because I have a seventeen-year-old boy who needed a home living with me, and he is passionate about Stephen King. I have also read works like Peter Mayle's *Toujours Provence* (which is not as good as it is hyped up to be) and Goodman's *French dirt*. And I have re-read Stephen Spender's and G.M. Hopkins's poetry; Hopkins always surprises me. I have also re-read *Catcher in the rye* and *Lord of the flies* which are, to me, still delicious, still beautifully written.

I like *The woman above* by Mary Ridskin, one of our Alberta writers. And I was bowled away by Carol Shields's *The republic of love*. I think she is our leading Canadian woman writer right now. Her language is so jewelled.

**DAVIS:** What about Sinclair Ross?

**TRUSS:** Oh! *As for me and my house* was my first memorable Canadian novel. It was a miracle for me because it illuminated so perfectly the prairie world I was in and put me at peace with the people I was amongst. In my first year in Canada the people were mysteries to me, these people who spoke the same language as me, but with whom I had no contact. *As for me and my house* is a profound book, and I think because it is so simple, it is difficult.

**DAVIS:** Which of your own works are you happiest with?

**TRUSS:** My play, *Cornelius Dragon*. It's about an immigrant boy who is rebuffed by his new wild west, small-town society. The play is theatrical, touching, and strong. I wish someone would give it an imaginative, majestic performance. And then there's *Silver City*, my Rocky Mountain, ghost town opera libretto, written for composer Quentin Doolittle. Enormous pleasure hearing one's words sung first by students at the Banff School of Fine Arts, then at a workshop in Toronto's Comus Theatre by big professional Canadian opera voices. What joy!

I'm generally happy with most of my works, except for a book called *Peter's moccasins*, a textbook I was asked to do to give Indian kids in Grade 1 a vision of themselves. By the time I got through with all the bureaucrats and the committees and the school superintendent, who are not thinking in literary terms at all, my story got sidetracked, disjointed, and messed up. Educators don't know that you want a literary unity in any work you offer to young people. They take in quality by osmosis. I was not satisfied with *Peter's moccasins*. I left the editor's name on it with mine because she had made so many changes.

**DAVIS:** But *Cornelius Dragon* stands out as something you're very happy with?

**TRUSS:** Yes. I think of it as "going down"—it sloshes around in the subconscious. There's a scene that goes down into a strange subconscious realm. Those of us who create are always reaching down to that *surprising* place just out of

control, just out of clear knowledge.

**DAVIS:** Is that true of most of your stories; is that what makes them interesting for you?

**TRUSS:** Yes, they go down somewhere. Like the scene in *Red* where the boy rescues the doll. I do find those parts *scary*. When I'm doing them I usually get up and go away because it feels dangerous down there. But when I've written them I think they're good parts. I do so many things from some sloppy, subconscious place. I use the word "sloppy"—but I know from watching people paint that you learn control so you can let go. In every sport, in everything we do, we learn our control so that we can let go. So I think some things come when I've let go.

I remember once when Monica Hughes and I were doing a workshop together, I discovered that Monica plans everything. And so when she comes to write, it's like joining the dots of her plans together. It doesn't work that way with me. I can plan till the cows come home only to have my character nudge me and say, "Oh, no, I'm not going there." And so I go from scene to scene; I surprise myself all the time.

**DAVIS:** So the plot always evolves from character?

**TRUSS:** Yes, but if I were talking to young people about writing I would say that that's not necessarily the way to go; you have to find out what works for you.

**DAVIS:** What are your writing habits?

**TRUSS:** I did have a routine, carried over from when I was a school teacher; I worked from about 9 till 3. I used to be quite happy to get a couple of pages done a day. But when my husband fell ill and was very sick for a long time, I got confused. When he died, that really threw me. We had been at university together; he was my most intimate friend, intimate enemy, best companion.

I'm now trying to search out my habits again. I only have good thoughts in the morning; I don't do anything creative in the afternoon; I want time to walk in the woods and run across the fields and stretch out by the fire. I value leisure. In the evenings I light the fire and listen to the radio. I live in a forest; I live alone (usually), I catch the horses and collect the cows, I cope with bears and wild animals and fences, mend the brooms, and get in the firewood. I, who sometimes spend a week at the opera in England, come back to do these practical things.

**DAVIS:** In a way then you are like Jasmin. She goes out into the wilderness and has to fight for her survival.

**TRUSS:** Yes; I have become the woman in Keats's poem, Meg Merrilies, who "lived as she did please." My recent visit to England was a pilgrimage to get my life on track, to go back and lay all my ghosts. In England, I spent time with the woman I roomed with at university. Our husbands were friends and she was widowed 3 weeks before I was. We hauled out the old albums and confronted the silly girls we had been—the wonderful, silly girls. And I was so aware of the importance of coming out of one state free to explore the next one.

**DAVIS:** Memory is an important concern in your work. Charlotte, in *Summer goes riding*, claims that her grandfather “started her memories” when he put her on a chestnut horse at the age of two. That memory stayed with her, just as Red’s memory of his mother haunts him.

**TRUSS:** Yes, memory is a source of inspiration for me. My own childhood memories are a kaleidoscope, of city street and city lights and lying in a big bed with the lights of traffic darting across the ceiling and the sound of the newsboys calling. City parks, brass bands, swans on the lakes, and old men in gazebos, old people with big bottoms playing bowl, cobblestone streets, and horses among the buses, and store windows filmed up with mist on cold nights, meat markets, carnivals—the memories of a Midlands’ city girl.

**DAVIS:** It’s almost Dickensian.

**TRUSS:** Well, of course it is. I also remember my own little family with a sick father and I remember going on welfare—the rooms emptying, everything being sold. I remember the house where everyone talked about politics like mad because my father came from the left and my mother from the right. We read Dickens and Dumas, Brontë and all the English women novelists—not high-brow but nor were they low-brow. And I can remember the history of the world in newspaper headlines from when I was a little girl.

**DAVIS:** Did your parents read to you?

**TRUSS:** Yes, poetry around the fire. My mother used to know “How Horatius held the bridge”—all seventy verses! My mother was dramatic, a gambler who went to the races. I never write about any of these things; I might before I die. In my autobiographical pieces like “The party” I usually come out on the black side.

**DAVIS:** Why?

**TRUSS:** Oh, as writers, we’re *chewing* on ourselves. I was a child of poverty. I was also a teacher of underprivileged adolescents in the docks of Liverpool, and then I worked with young criminals in reform school. I suppose I had to investigate the efforts of deprivation on me, my mother, my father, on all of us.

**DAVIS:** It sounds as though your childhood was very rich with experience. Would you describe it as happy?

**TRUSS:** I came to the conclusion when I was a teacher that it’s a rare child who has a blissfully happy childhood. In retrospect, of course, it was a struggle. But I think I did a lot of flying. This desire, this strange desire to be, to fly—each one of us at some time in our lives wants to fly.

**DAVIS:** Many of your important characters are dreamers. Were you one?

**TRUSS:** I was a very practical dreamer. And by the time I was 10 I was off to the grammar school and that was a world of books. I still have my *Laurel and gold* poetry textbook which I used to read under the bedcovers to my brother and sister. We also had a wonderful book of prints of works of art. Turner’s *The fighting Temeraire* I remember with absolute delight.

**DAVIS:** What did you like about Turner?

**TRUSS:** The acceptance of mystery; the possibility of more, that infinite quality that is spirituality. I was just recently in London at the National Gallery where they had five of Turner's paintings displayed in daylight. How my spirits rose! It's like the reawakening of all desire to rediscover that initial exhilaration, to fly with Turner. El Greco's works brought that same soaring of the spirit.

**DAVIS:** One of the remarkable things about *Summer goes riding* is the supernatural quality, the mystery. Charlotte mounts a horse and she's lost, gone into another state.

**TRUSS:** She has her dream; she has her vision. She knows who she is, and her ancestors are in her. I had this sort of experience in my own life. My grandmother (who had been a designer for a pot factory) died the month before I was born. When I was about 10 years old, I went to visit the house that my grandmother had lived in. From the door of her house and all down the passageway there was a wonderful screen that she had embroidered in magnificent colours. I was suddenly transported by the sense that my grandmother was in me. I knew that my fingers would make things. It was very magical.

Now my daughter-in-law, who is the model for Charlotte, feels the power of her ancestors in her riding. And I've talked to other people who feel this power of the past.

**DAVIS:** That is, of course, what Jasmin feels too—the power of her grandmother in her fingers when she creates her clay figures.

**TRUSS:** I'd forgotten that. Yes, how wonderful! I never invent anything, you know.

**DAVIS:** Perhaps embellish?

**TRUSS:** No. I think the people who embellish are the ones who write fantasy and space stories. I just find reality very rich. *Summer goes riding* came from listening to my daughter-in-law talk about the summer in her childhood before she got a horse. And at that same time I had my nephew visit from England, this tall fellow with frizzy hair and chains round him. The village girls here used to come around and I used to get my nephew riding on a horse with them—riding double so that they could knock their boobs into his back. I used to watch all the little sexy things going on, and I listened to them. Then I put that together with my daughter-in-law's story. So, I'm listening and observing, not inventing. And then, of course, I can remember myself at all these ages. I remember what it's like when a boy sits on you and you feel the shape of his genitals on your belly. And I remember the friendship between girls, the intimacy and dissatisfaction.

**DAVIS:** But though in many ways your fiction is realistic there's also an element of unreality, a dream-like quality that gives a story drama.

**TRUSS:** All my life I've lived with people who are dramatic, and whose reality is heightened and theatrical. I string realities together, but there are also moments when something profound happens to the psyche—unreal moments of incandescence, transcendency. You could write books about what reality is, but to me those profound, strange, incandescent moments are very real to the mystery of

human development, to the mystery that we all are.

**DAVIS:** In *Jasmin* you offer an unsentimental portrait of Leroy, a mentally-challenged child, and in *Red* you offer Celeste, a slow learner. Characters like these aren't often seen in the pages of literature for children.

**TRUSS:** When Leroy came into my book, I couldn't think why he'd come. It puzzled me for a long time. But he comes in because I needed somebody *skinless*, like our consciences, to show an aspect of humanity. I found out a long time later where Leroy came from. When I went to visit my college university roommate, I spent time with her 43-year-old brother who has never walked and is in a wheelchair. My widowed friend still has as her anchor and her conscience that idiot brother. She spends her afternoons train-watching with him.

**DAVIS:** What about Celeste, in *Red*? She's initially irritating; you don't tell us she's a slow learner until quite close to the end of the novel. Is her Auntie justified in putting constraints on Celeste's life?

**TRUSS:** This comes up in the courts a lot these days. Do we protect our hurt and our slow human beings? Do we give them full rights? I think of the novel as a poser of problems. The novel is as confusing as our own life is.

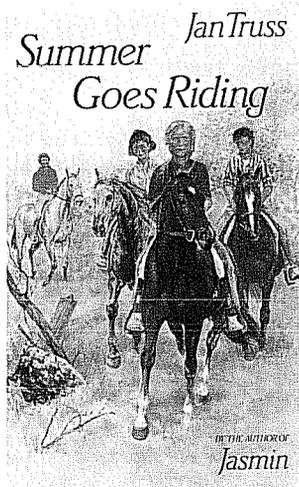
Celeste came from somewhere. She just seemed right, coming in like a wildflower, as girls come into boys' lives. She's a naughty tease: to Red she's delicious. I saw her walking down that street of yellow light and shadows; I had to learn who she was.

**DAVIS:** I'm interested in how you see *Red*. It's a very different novel from those you've written previously. The protagonist is, first of all, a boy. Second, there is very little adventure or outside excitement in this story. You explore excitements and dangers as they're felt, emotionally and psychologically. Was *Red* more difficult to write than those novels?

**TRUSS:** It was easier to write. I like writing close in. I can see that the drama of *Jasmin* is much easier and more accessible. *Jasmin* is younger and her problem is spelled out: her failure at school, her misplacement in the family and her need, her desire to know who she is, to realize herself. I wrote *Red* because in *Summer goes riding* the character Red tore at my heartstrings—so reliable, so confused, a practical kid who took such a beating. He's slightly older than the children in the other novels and he has embarked on the tide of life.

**DAVIS:** He has emerged into a world different from *Jasmin*'s, or Charlotte's.

**TRUSS:** *Jasmin* and Charlotte are very defined young people. It is only Red, like so many boys, who is not defined. The only thing he's defining himself by is his



necessity to be successful with girls. If I think about it, men are not my heroes, are they? I think that comes from growing up in the industrial Midlands where I always thought of women as big and powerful and of men as little shrimps who wore navy blue suits to go to the seaside, who rolled their pant legs up and showed their little thin white legs. In the Midlands women had always worked—women with big, strong arms always worked. Right from Victorian times, the women had worked in factories and the men were stunted—small, stunted creatures. To me, just as Carl Sandburg kept saying about the pioneers, “Strong women keep coming on.” I suppose in my childhood perception, the men were sick and small and the strong women kept coming on. Maybe this is coming out when I write about a boy. I find the drive and the power of the girl so much stronger, really, than it is of the boy.

**DAVIS:** Red’s father leaves the door unlocked every night, in case his wife comes back. Always waiting for the woman.

**TRUSS:** I didn’t even notice that. But isn’t this true? For all their bombast and their certainties and their big shoulders, modern men want to love a woman, whereas women want to love themselves.

Red has never known the love of a woman, and then suddenly here is Louise, this mother of his, doing dignified and gentle things.

**DAVIS:** Her coming reinforces the haphazard quality of Red’s life. The world depicted in that novel seems more chaotic than the world of *Jasmin* or *Summer goes riding*. Even though the tornado in *Summer goes riding* brings about very abrupt shifts in fortune, the sudden surprises throughout *Red* seem to suggest even more forcefully that anything could happen to him or to anyone at anytime.

**TRUSS:** He’s just flotsam, isn’t he? The world comes to him and confuses him, satisfies him, and teases him, helps him grow. People surprise us all the time, don’t they? And why would I write predictable things for young people—I, who was a teacher of young people for such a long time? To me, Louise is a wonderful, rich character, but I think, “Where did she come from?” She surprises me.

**DAVIS:** Many of the mother figures in your work have had some near-tragedy occur to them when they were young. Many of them “had” to get married or give up their children.

**TRUSS:** I do see the male as endangering the female. In writing *Red*, I didn’t set out with any idea to make a point; but I think it comes through subconsciously that the male is a threat to the female and that he better look to himself.

**DAVIS:** In what way is he a threat—a threat to her freedom?



**TRUSS:** Well, of course he is. All around Red he's getting the message: look what happened to my mother, to Auntie. And look at this beautiful girl, Celeste, who doesn't have much mind. She needs to be protected against herself, doesn't she? The girl or boy at the brink of adulthood has the power to imprison the other. This is the time to look at each other in the eyes and say, "What do I want to do with my life? What's threatening it? What are the dangers?"

Red doesn't have the comfort of a friend; he has Jake only for a moment. And boys tell girls things they hide from other boys. I hope that some men teachers would take up the business of Jake saying, "Don't talk to me unless you dare to be serious." Like Red, we need desperately, at times of great tribulation, the ruthlessness of honesty.

**DAVIS:** Outsiders like Jake figure prominently in much of your fiction.

**TRUSS:** The signposts. The wonderful signposts, the inspirations, to the roads that one could possibly take.

**DAVIS:** But in *Oomeranghi Oh!* the outsider is a sham.

**TRUSS:** It's only because *Oomeranghi Oh!* is a play presented from the viewpoint of the child left at home. If we follow the wide wild world through to its conclusion we destroy what we already have. In *Jasmin*, if the little girl pursues the wider world shown by the outsiders she will leave her first world of home. It seems to me that those outsiders are very important. The people we meet on the way are very significant in all our lives. A writer on the edge plays that function, the function of outsider or signpost.

**DAVIS:** Creativity is always on the "outside"? Would you characterize yourself as writing to rouse any sort of social attitudes or action?

**TRUSS:** Just a general and ongoing attitude of thinking about the human condition. I think you have to read my books very carefully. I'm not political and I'm not easy to classify. I am not a very gentle lady with good middle class values.

**DAVIS:** Do you think writing changes anything in the observable world out there?

**TRUSS:** It always has for me. It can lift the spirit, it can change your direction. It is not T.V. that makes the thinking of the thinkers. And, in spite of television's influence, I find young people quite wonderful now. When I came to be a teacher 33 years ago, there wasn't a wonderful world of thought and knowledge and vocabulary. I find the young people now, and their teachers, more erudite, more knowledgeable, more courteous, more outgoing. Of course there's a forthrightness among young people that can be interpreted as rudeness if you're ancient and unsympathetic. But what interesting and eloquent people I have met over the years in schools and libraries.

And yet at the same time society puts so much value on the dollar. I have no patience with parents and schoolboards who go on about the poor reading level of students and at the same time encourage students to work half the night, making money at McDonald's. If our students get time to read, yes, they are

affected.

My stories all contain social commentary—a professor who teaches some of my books from that point of view said *Bird at the window* staggered him because he grew up in a small town, so he teaches it as social commentary. But I think the social critic and the writer in me are integrated. To take the mildest example: isn't there criticism of Maggie's mum in *Summer goes riding*? But I never say it overtly. I wouldn't do otherwise. I can't bear to be told what to think when I read.

I felt in *Jasmin* that I was much more critical than in *Summer goes riding* of a whole social structure, of that sort of family, that sort of mother, that sort of overbreeding, that sort of total carelessness about life, that uncaringness of the school system, those attitudes towards people who are different. In *Summer goes riding* the criticism was much gentler.

**DAVIS:** You seem to be criticizing women's addiction to daytime T.V. and insipid romances through the figure of Olive Stalke in *Jasmin*.

**TRUSS:** The lady herself, my model for Olive, was quite delighted with that picture. People in the village know that some of my characters come locally. Olive is wonderfully lovable, but do you want her for a mother?—I'm not going to tell you the answer. Even when I was a student, when someone would try to tell me what to think, I'd think the opposite.

**DAVIS:** Your novels ask questions?

**TRUSS:** The good teacher asks questions, and the good lesson ends with questions. As you're reading you're putting two and two together and building a much bigger world than the mere world of the pages.

The business of youth is all about the wonderful world of choices. Children learn what the forces are in their own lives much better by looking at them in other people's, much better than by having guidance lessons.

**DAVIS:** Your characters themselves seem to cherish rather than announce their private feelings.

**TRUSS:** Their reserve, their privacy, has dignity. I liked *Degrassi Junior High*. Its great quality is that it never steps over into easy feeling. It keeps everybody's dignity. That such good stuff has become so popular is a credit to the viewers as well as the makers of the show. Humanity has to grow bigger than chocolate-box feeling or painting-on-velvet feeling. One of the differences between American and Canadian sensibilities is that Americans have been encouraged to expose their feelings all the time. To me, there's nobility, not coldness, in the Canadian sensibility.

**DAVIS:** What do you think of Canadian children's literature?

**TRUSS:** I think in our enthusiasm to establish a Canadian bookcase, we have become confused. We keep talking about Canadian children's *literature* when we mean *books* or *reading material* for Canadian children. I want literature to have a capacity for enduring on its own and not for political reasons. For me, good fiction is layered, demanding interpretations, taking the mind for a spin. It

must nourish sustainable emotions: delight, anguish, wonder, enchantment, anger, despair, laughter, envy. As a teacher, the books I take up would have to read aloud well. They'd have to have cadence, and they'd have to have characters one could discuss.

There must be kids who need the rich embroidery of things, rather than the McDonald's, the fast food of literature, to be consumed with all the grease. When I talk to young writers I say, "You write with all your senses, you know." When I write, I'm not watching, I'm there. For me, the big adventure is close in. I joy in the shine on a fingernail or the raindrop on the eyelashes. When I was a girl, sitting in class, I used to look outside the classroom window and try to find exactly the right words to describe what was going on. I would sit there caring enormously to get the right words for the sunlight on a passing shopping-lady's basket.

**DAVIS:** Your descriptions of the natural world have a painterly quality. Do you still paint?

**TRUSS:** No. I only have energy for one big art form. If I'm writing I hardly ever do anything else.

**DAVIS:** When you end a story, do you have a sense of resolution?

**TRUSS:** Yes. I say that with some confidence. I know the feel of the essay coming full circle, or the novel, the picture, the meal. With painting it's a very important thing that you learn to stop soon enough or you overdo it. It's like cooking greens. There's an art in knowing when.

**DAVIS:** Is there a sense of catharsis when you write something—a sentence, a story—"close-in"?

**TRUSS:** I get a sense of delight and I go and run and jump. I forget I'm 92 (!) and run with my fat dog.

**DAVIS:** Where do you go next?

**TRUSS:** I'm now doing the third book in the quartet—*To winter's end*. It's the realization of Charlotte's dream. And then in the last novel of the quartet I'm going to finish up where I started in *Bird at the window*. That was an un-love story and I want to set myself the task of writing a love story of when Charlotte is 17. I'm trying this week to get committed to my writing again. And I really liked what I wrote today.

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