

The Short Story, Novel, and Poem

A Submission Guide

About Me

- I've always liked writing.
- Vancouver Film School Screenwriting Program in 2008
- Writer's Guild of Canada Diverse Screenwriters Program (West) 2012
- Second Rounder for Austin Film Festival Screenwriting Competition 2013
- Pivot to Literary in 2017 (Java Mausoleum in Ricepaper Magazine)
 - It's about the Short Story
- Seven Muses of Harry Salcedo 2018
- Elevator Lady and Diaspora Dialogues 2019
- The Future

Literary Submissions

-Most Common Formats for Submission Pieces:

- Short Story
- Poetry
- Creative Non-fiction
- Novel

The Short Story

“A story with a fully developed theme but significantly shorter and less elaborate than a novel.” (Oxford)

- Different genres

- Word count limits -- 1,500-5,000

- Recommended word count: 2,500-3,000

- Submissions and competitions usually have their word count guidelines around 2,500.

Personal Examples

-*Elevator Lady* - word count 2471

Long-listed for CBC Short Story Prize (2019)


-*Not All Bears Drink Mead* - word count 2217

Published in Immersion Anthology (Dark Helix Press, 2019)

-*Capsule* - word count 2130

Published in Seagery Zine 2019

First lines

Natsuki always had two dreams she would recall: One was to leave Japan and travel around the world. In her 32 years, she made it as far as Vancouver and then she came hurtling back after three years. The other was to be an elevator lady. She felt the  calling on a grocery trip as a child. Dressed in a fitted green uniform, the elegant attendant skillfully assisted traffic into four elevators. The attendant's professionalism, grace, and confidence inspired Natsuki to aim for the dream throughout childhood.

Around lunchtime, Natsuki received a phone call as she dressed Yui, her three-year-old daughter. It probably could be another insurance agent. To her surprise, it was Hiroki, a past she would like to forget.

"Hey Nat, been a while," Hiroki said in straight English.

Natsuki froze, she didn't know how to reply. She was a translator for a mobile phone game company for years. Though she dealt with the intricacy of translating the English language, when it came to personal matters, she almost always found herself tongue tied. Why would Hiro call me now?

Microfiction

Like a short story, but much, much shorter.

World count limits: 200-1,500

Recommended word count: 700-1,000

A common competition piece with multiple submissions all year.

Personal Examples

- *The Door* - word count 237
 - Published in Issue 4 of First Page Literature (2020)
- *The Tao of Moving On* - word count 1,138
 - Published in Ricepaper Magazine (2018)
- *Guide to Canadian Urban Wildlife* - word count 1,434
 - Published in Ricepaper Magazine (2017)
 - Reprinted in Philippine Canadian News.com (2018)

the door

Two months since I became admin, they built a door that separated the two departments in our office. While with everything in this nonprofit, it would balance out eventually, I had to put up with white girl problem by listening to how much the door triggered my co-workers. My eyes resisted the urge to roll and yet when I completed my day, they would side eye and roll however much I wanted. You told me that I couldn't hide my emotions and Romeo said the same thing. I should take it with a grain of salt.

I planned to take a class by next year the moment I saved enough money from my desk job. I was 35, going on 36, I didn't have much time left to break into an industry that paid well. I wanted to get into film as the city's industry was chock-full of productions. "Save BC Film" had long passed and even if they shoot most shit in Georgia now, most productions still visited Vancouver. Yes, gone were the X-Files days when PAs made oodles of cash staying up sixteen hours or more. I could take the grind, after all, I ran dope for Romeo for years.

Longer Short Stories

Novelette - Common example, too short for a novella and too long for a conventional short story.

Word counts of 10,000 or more.

Publications that accept longer word counts:

- Carte Blanche - 4,000 words

- Grain and American Short Fiction - 5,000 words

- Clarkesworld - 10,000-15,000 words max

Poetry

“Literary work in which special intensity is given to the expression of feelings and ideas by the use of distinctive style and rhythm.” (Oxford)

Freestyle - not bound by a specific form.

Generally shorter than short stories between 50-250 word counts.

“Postcard Stories” - Poetry suited for prose writers.

A story so short it can fit on a postcard. Postcard stories are often associated with an image. They provide a sort of snapshot of a moment in time.

-Geist has a yearly competition that involves postcard stories.

Personal Examples

-Ambivalence

Published in Vancouver Writer's Fest Books and Ideas Newsletter

-Frostbite and Contempt

Published in Voice and Verse Poetry Magazine Issue 56 "Home"

-Insomnia and Jogging

Published in Social Distanziner Issue 3

Insomnia

by Vincent Ternida

Vancouver, BC

As a child, I envied those who would stay up past midnight. They spoke of the TV shows that children would only dream of catching. They would talk of the empty streets, mysteries, and ghost stories. I was curious and would stay up late, trying to catch that envied moment. I never made it past ten thirty. I made friends with fellow vampires during my twenties. We would scour the streets of Quezon City, partaking in the scavenger hunt of open eateries, internet cafes, and other entertainment halls. We would play multiplayer games until three and eat rice porridge with pork offal and hard boiled eggs. We would start a band and take the later slots as we could rehearse our music. With call centers offering more graveyard shifts, the rush hour evened out in Metro Manila, the city never slept. Traffic jams would continue until four in the morning, giving no respite in the main artery that connected each business sector. I enjoyed my twenties to the point of excess, my days were twice as long, and I lived twice as hard. As I entered my thirties during my long sojourn in Vancouver, my attraction to nightfall faded terribly. My days became shorter and exhaustion set in. I would need three hours to wind down before succumbing to slumber. Such as my admission to the world of night, while my mortal body would exact a hefty toll for a lifetime of sleep debt.

--- I've always taken sleep for granted in my youth, as I enter middle age in this state of quarantine, I've realized how hard it is to get sleep these days.

Creative Non-Fiction

The Personal Narrative

- Essay format, memoir writing
- Usually a specific life event that plays with theme.
- Very close to a short story format.
- Blurring lines between fiction and non-fiction

Personal Examples

-*Java Mausoleum* - word count: 2490

Published in Ricepaper Magazine (2017)

Prologue in *The Seven Muses of Harry Salcedo* (2018)

-*Finding William Flores* - word count: 390

Featured post in Medium (2019)

-*Southeast by Southwest* - word count: 1,590

Forthcoming in Write to Move Anthology (2021)



Three weeks passed since the Keurig machine stopped talking.

“A Keurig? Thanks, I guess.”

“You’re so busy with your work I doubt you find time for decent coffee,” my mom said.

I happened to work next to a couple of artisan coffee shops, though I hated to admit it, I would usually settle for Starbucks. The Keurig box absorbed the awkward energy surrounding the dining table.

“Want to listen to my story? Maybe you can use it for that novel you’re trying to write.”

My dad feebly broke the silence. My dad retired early as a CFO of a multinational corporation in Jakarta. It was a nice way of saying “he got laid off.” After that, he never kept a job longer than two weeks. Indonesia seemed like a lifetime away.

The Novel

“A fictitious prose narrative of book length typically representing character and action with some degree of realism.” (Oxford)

Word count would depend on genre.

Nanowrimo - 50,000 words (180-200 pages double-spaced)

Recommended - 65,000 words (~300 pages)

Fantasy or Speculative Fiction - 100,000 words or more (~400 pages)

Novella

- A short novel or long short story
- Word Count - 20,000 to 40,000
- I don't recommend writing a novella if you're aiming to sell or publish the story.
- If your word count is 30,000-40,000, expand it to 50,000 to make it a short novel.
- If your word count is 20,000-30,000, cut it down to 12,000-15,000 as a novelette to be included in a short story collection OR if it's a fantasy, submit it to publications that take novelettes like Clarkesworld

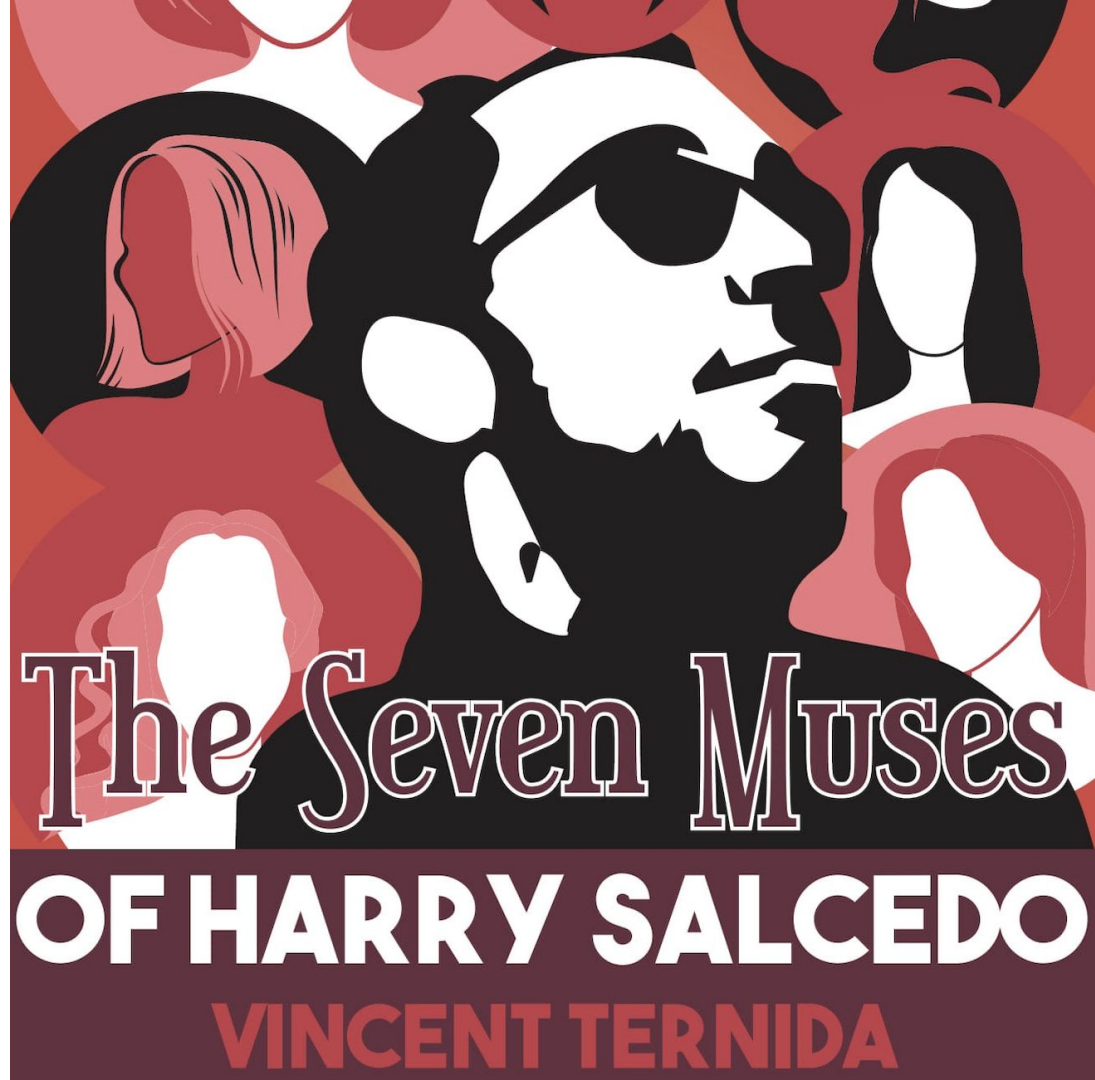
The Seven Muses of Harry Salcedo

Published by Dark Helix Press under ACWW Books Imprint

Final Word Count - 48,876

Classified as a short novel or novella length

Originally a short story collection, but ACWW encouraged me to rewrite as a novel.



The Seven Muses

OF HARRY SALCEDO

VINCENT TERNIDA

Short Story Collection

If you have a sizeable piece of work, like a novelette and a bunch of short stories, you can compile them into a collection.

Joined by a common theme.

Usually composed of 7 to 9 pieces.

Interconnected short stories where recurring characters and setting connect the individual short stories that make it read like a novel rather than disparate stories.

Terminal Cities

Contains *Elevator Lady*, *The Door*, *Capsule*

Submitted to Diaspora Dialogues (2019)

Current Word Count: 47,178

Has recurring anti-hero told through perspectives of different characters.

Currently looking for representation - three stories being shopped around.

Suggestions

- 1) Know why you're writing this piece.
 - a) Chasing Trends
- 2) Your first and foremost goal is to **serve your story**.
 - a) Forget word counts
- 3) Write and edit your story to the best version possible and **shelve it**.
 - a) Create a catalogue of written work.
 - b) This way when submissions come along, you have a body of work to choose from.
 - c) Allows you to avoid chasing trends.