



# AUTHOR & AGENT

BY MICHAEL REDHILL



WRITERS' HOW-TO  
THE WRITERS' UNION OF CANADA

This book is not a substitute for professional help or advice. It is not meant to replace a lawyer, an accountant, or other estate- and financial-planning experts — which is why, throughout, you'll see repeated exhortations to consult these professionals. The author and The Writers' Union of Canada are not providing legal, tax, or any other professional advice or services in this book. Neither the author nor The Writers' Union of Canada will be responsible for the result of any actions or decisions you may make based on errors, omissions, or information in this book. Neither the author nor The Writers' Union of Canada endorses or recommends any commercial products, processes, or services included in this booklet.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
ONE AUTHOR'S STORY	5
<b>THE AGENT'S BUSINESS</b>	<b>7</b>
What is an agent?	7
What are agents looking for?	7
How does my agent sell my book?	8
What are rights?	8
What <i>doesn't</i> an agent do?	9
The book marketplace	10
<b>HOW TO FIND AN AGENT</b>	<b>11</b>
The agent challenge	12
Things you <i>can</i> do to help your chances	12
Approaching an agent	13
Canadian agents versus U.S./U.K. agents	13
Agent as editor	14
Life without an agent	14
Genre specialists	15
Sub-agency	15
Your contract with the agent	16
Rights Represented	16
Commissions	17
Expenses	17
Payments	17
Communications	17
Termination	18
Fees and scams	18

<b>THE SELLING PROCESS AND ITS VARIOUS OUTCOMES</b>	<b>19</b>
The agent's obligations	19
The results are in	20
Fast sale, slow sale, no sale	20
Dealing with rejection	20
<b>CONGRATS! YOUR AGENT SOLD YOUR BOOK! WHAT NOW?</b>	<b>22</b>
What is an advance?	22
What are royalties?	23
Advance risks	23
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION</b>	<b>27</b>

# ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

**AUTHOR & AGENT** is part of the Writers' How-to Series, which offers professional guides on a variety of topics for writers. All guides in the Writers' How-to Series are available for purchase online at [writersunion.ca/writers-how-to-series](http://writersunion.ca/writers-how-to-series). Members of The Writers' Union of Canada can access the full series at no cost.

**MICHAEL REDHILL** is a novelist, poet, and playwright. He is also a professional editor who has worked with authors for more than thirty-five years. His most recent works include *Bellevue Square*, which won the 2017 Giller Prize, and the poetry collection *Twitch Force*. He lives in Toronto.

**THE WRITERS' UNION OF CANADA** is the national organization of professionally published writers. TWUC was founded in 1973 to work with governments, publishers, booksellers, and readers to improve the conditions of Canadian writers. Now over 3,000 members strong, TWUC advocates on behalf of writers' collective interests, and delivers value to members through advocacy, community, and information. TWUC believes in a thriving, diverse Canadian culture that values and supports writers. [writersunion.ca](http://writersunion.ca).



**The Writers' Union of Canada**  
600-460 Richmond Street West  
Toronto, Ontario M5V 1Y1  
416.703.8982  
writersunion.ca



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada



**ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL**  
**CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO**  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

**Ontario** 

We gratefully acknowledge funding support from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, and the Government of Ontario.

© The Writers' Union of Canada and Michael Redhill, 2026. All rights reserved.