



Writing and Technology

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I'M NOT A FAN of technology, I never have been. But, as the years pass, I like it less and less. This is partially attributable to the fact that, in the last two and a half decades of my writing life – during which time I've been the reluctant owner of one desktop computer and four laptops – two of those laptops have crashed so spectacularly that I lost two full novels, in addition to years' worth of works-in-progress, to say nothing of the rest of my life stored within its hardware.

These catastrophes occurred in spite of the fact that the contents of the first laptop was backed up on a separate hard drive – which *simultaneously* broke; who knew that was possible?! – and the second laptop was (supposedly) backed up on the so-called 'cloud', a notion I was immediately suspicious of, given its insubstantial-sounding nature — things which can be held in the hand are much more easily held to account. So I shouldn't have been surprised when I learnt, a little too late, that this back-up to the cloud doesn't happen automatically upon the purchase of a subscription, but one has to configure one's computer settings accordingly.

Of course, as you are by now aware, I am an absolute Luddite when it comes to anything technological and thus, even if I'd had had such awareness that such a thing needed setting up, I would've been at a loss when faced with how to do it.

My response, when informed that this cloud hadn't magically saved all my lost books, was to burst into tears and, when the online customer



support person told me – brightly – to ‘have a nice day’ it took all the willpower I possessed not to scream a series of expletives in response.

As is usually the case in life, it took me a long time to learn from my mistakes and find new and creative ways to back things up. However, I now have multiple methods — the trustiest one being to email a day’s work to myself when I’m finished. This method, I feel, is as close to failsafe as I’m going to get, excepting some apocalyptic scenario involving the destruction of the internet and the end of civilisation, in which case neither I nor anyone else will care a jot for the loss of my unfinished novels.

I suppose the answer to all this would be to write my novels by hand. This is something I try, from time to time, but usually abandon after three chapters as too impractical. Perhaps, if I lived the life of a nineteenth-century middle-class authoress, without a teaching job and several kids to look after, I might. But, given that impossibility, this Luddite must remain tied to the desk, reluctantly tapping out everything on untrustworthy computers, waiting for the next crash to come...