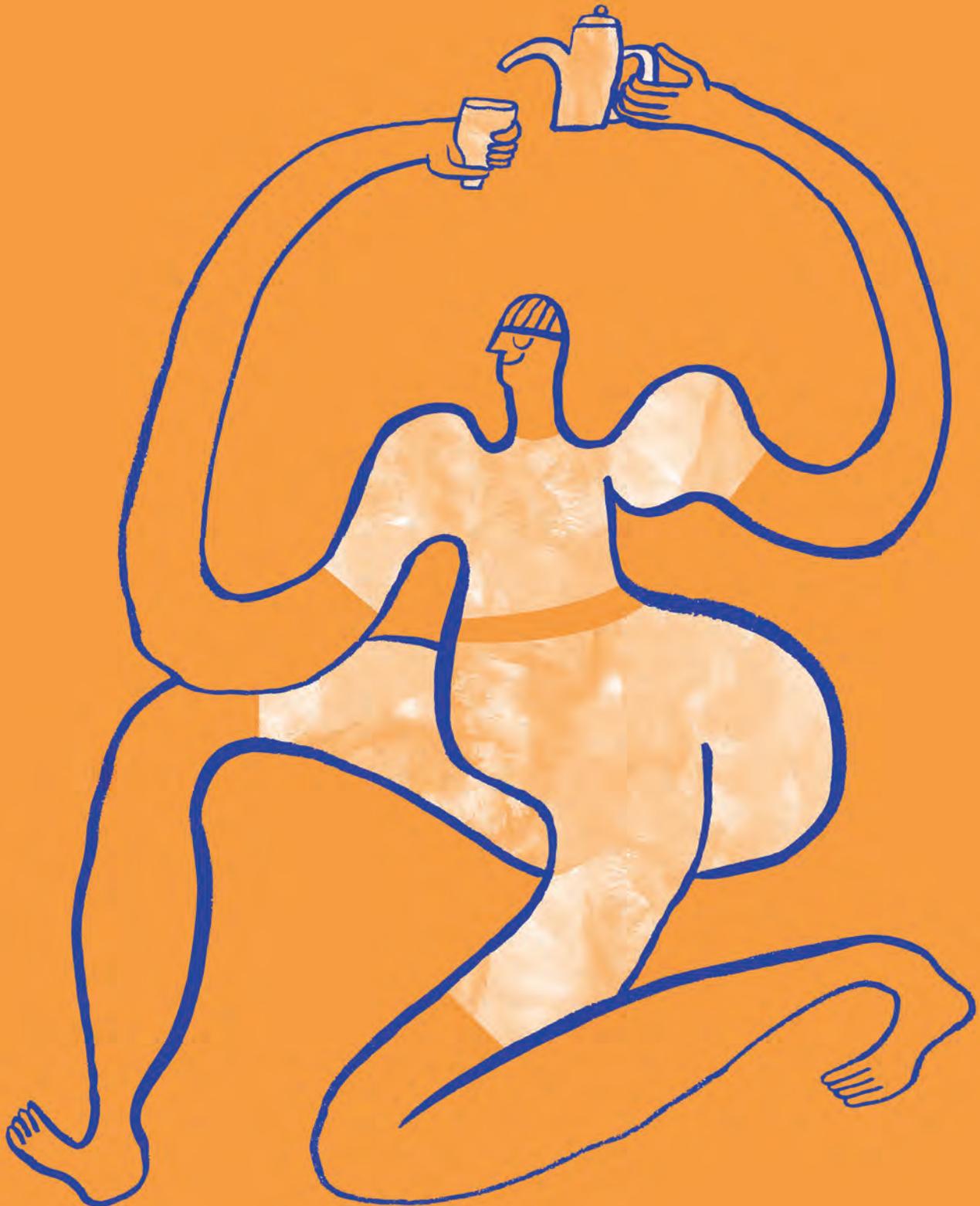
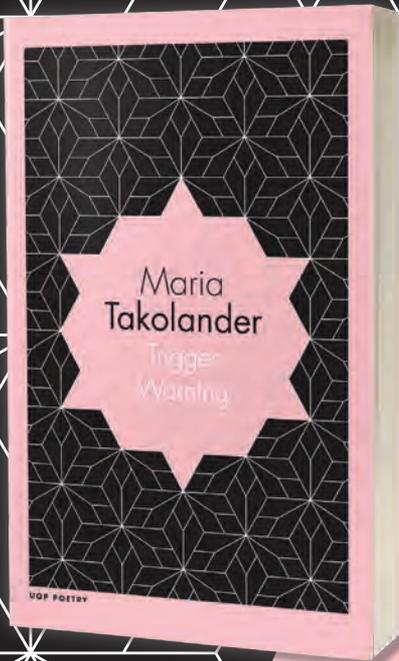


# The Victorian Writer

UNBECOMING | SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2021





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# Editorial – Lucy Hamilton

---

I'm a big, big fan of Survivor. I've been an avid watcher of the American series for a long time, and this year, for the first time, I started watching the Australian version. It's a show that encourages competitors to 'Outwit, Outplay, Outlast' – to be strong, smart and resilient.

On Instagram, I saw a post where Survivor contestant, Rachel Downie, has shared examples of the online abuse she received. The fatphobic, homophobic, vile abuse was in response to a photo Rachel shared of herself on the show in swimwear – as most contestants are for much of the show. Rachel Downie is a strong, smart, resilient woman, criticised for daring to simply exist while inhabiting a body that these abusers deem 'unbecoming'.

Simone Biles pulled out of team gymnastics competition at the Olympics. Certain commentators jumped over themselves to show their disrespect for this elite athlete, claiming that the fact she puts her mental health first is evidence of weakness, instead of the resilient, strong, and smart act it truly is.

It's not new that women, and in particular, in the case of Biles, women of colour, are harangued for not conforming to expectations. As a student of medieval literature, I've read enough tales of supposedly unbecoming women to last a lifetime. In selecting the theme 'Unbecoming' for this edition, we wanted to encourage a bold interpretation of that word, an exploration evoked in the tension of that term. Donna Ward has brought together writing that evokes well the complexity of this theme.

I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight some recent staff changes at Writers Victoria. We recently farewelled Frances Terrett, our Memberships Officer, after three years of hard



work, and welcomed Lou Garcia-Dolnik into the role. Program Admin Officers, Latifa Elmrini and Diem Nguyen are also both leaving for big new adventures, and we welcome Caitlin McGregor into the role of Program Admin: Competitions, and Danny Silva Soberano into the role of Program Admin: Community. We wish everyone leaving all the best, and welcome those joining the team.

I want to thank Kirsten Krauth for all her work as Managing Editor of the magazine over the last couple of years. Her stewardship has seen some wonderful innovations to the format, and we'll miss her very much. I cannot thank Donna Ward enough for stepping in so quickly as Guest Editor for this issue; it's been a true pleasure working with Donna and seeing her ability to take Kirsten's initial vision and create something that, I hope you will agree, is a great collection of works.

Lucy  
CEO, Writers Victoria

Cover image: Elin Matilda Andersson is a Swedish-Australian illustrator, designer and artist based in Dharawal Country on the NSW South Coast. She creates colourful hand-drawn illustrations by mixing ink brush drawings, paper cut-outs and digital processes. Elin likes to work with people who do good things, and is represented commercially by The Jacky Winter Group.

Acknowledgement: The Writers Victoria office is situated on the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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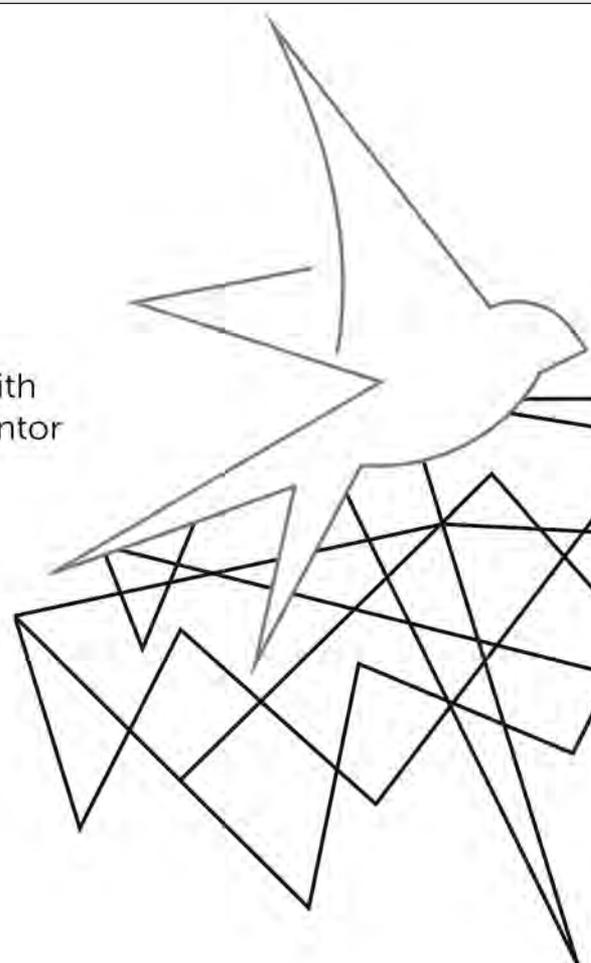
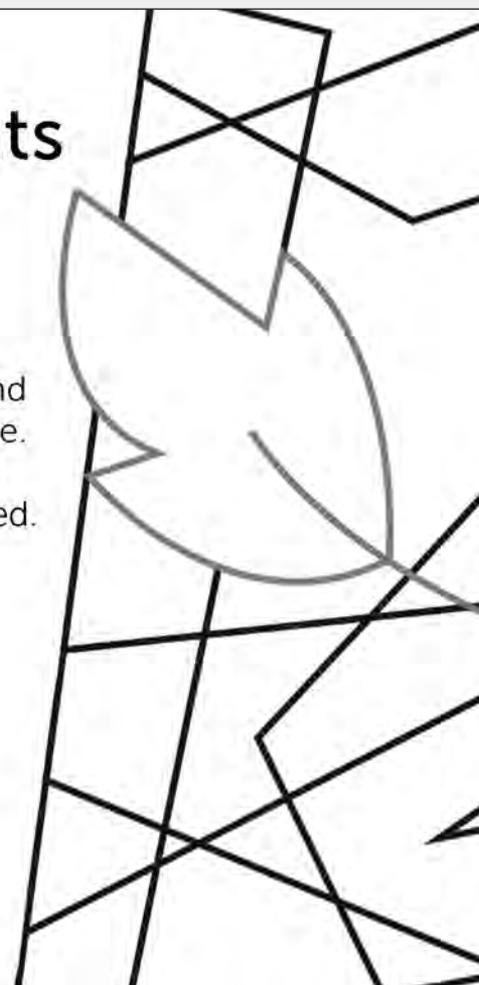
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Up-to-date information about special events and writing groups can now be found online. [writersvictoria.org.au/calendars](http://writersvictoria.org.au/calendars)  
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# Guest Editorial

Donna Ward

---

It doesn't happen often. Serendipity. An unplanned and fortunate discovery. Horace Walpole discovered this word for us on 28 January 1754, when he encountered Bianca Cappello for the first time. Well, a portrait of her, allegedly by Giorgio Vasari. It might have been by Agnolo di Cosimo, more commonly known as Bronzino, the portrait's artist remains obscure. Another serendipity for another time.

Walpole immediately adored Cappello. He hung her image in his bedchamber and wrote to Horace Mann of his epiphany. And when he did he coined the word, serendipity, from a Persian fairytale, *The Three Princes of Serendip*, because, he wrote, the heroes 'were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of'.

Serendip is the name Arab traders gave the island of Sri Lanka. It comes from the Arabic, *Sarandib*, which is, in turn, from the Sanskrit, *Siṃhaladvīpaḥ* — Dwelling Place of Lions Island. An awkward name, indeed. A better way of putting it might be: Lion Island.

So there I was, in bed, in the middle of winter, toward the end of Melbourne's fourth lockdown, when serendipity found me. I was in bed because my bedroom has the best winter sun in the house — I promise you. I was on my iPhone, doomscrolling, as one does. I was, you might say, on an island. You might say, Lion Island, since the news bellowed around me like the troops at Armageddon.

And there it was. Serendipity, in the palm of my hand. It came in the form of a message from Kirsten Krauth, discussing a piece I might write for this volume. In our e-conversation Kirsten mentioned she must move on from being the managing editor. Her life was rapidly flowing in a different direction. She had received a Donald Horne Creative and Cultural Fellowship from the

University of Canberra to research and write her podcast, *Almost a Mirror*. She must begin immediately.

I said, Would you like me to step into the breach?

I had forgotten the wonder of curating a volume of work. I had forgotten that to be a curator is to be a fisherman. Or should I say fisherwoman, or fisherperson? The use of fisherwoman does distract with a thesis on gender, and, fisherperson, entirely robs the image of its magic. Words are so potent, evocative, manipulative. They include and exclude, steal enchantment, render the imaginative quite unbecoming.

Whatever the word, I wish to invoke an indigo clad person, with broad pants, a loose shirt, and a pointed hat of woven cane, standing in a boat filled with delicate nets and perhaps a cormorant at the helm.

Let me begin again.

I had forgotten that to be a curator is to float in the night sky and cast a net into the stars. Captured, the stars jostle and shine. Some brighter than others. All so unique I can't imagine how each rare brightness will enhance those around it.

Star shuffling begins. Repeats. The lights blind me and slip into my dreams, until I wake into a startling collection I never thought was there but, of course, was always there. After all, in the beginning and in the end, we are the stuff of stars. Unsurprising, then, our words and stories, our imaginings and ideas quite naturally combine into a galaxy.

The net Kirsten cast, was cast in a certain direction. She asked for pieces on the theme of unbecoming and left a note:

**Unbecoming:** not becoming; inappropriate; unsuited, improper; unseemly. Of clothing, etc., unattractively inappropriate. The act of undoing or unmaking, turning away from, or 'unbecoming' something someone once was or presented as being.

To be honest I expected a haul of writing about being improper, feisty stories of unflattering behaviour, a furious wave – unbecoming of a woman.

But no. Every time I step into the curator's boat I forget the mysterious truth of this kind of fishing. We cast our net in the direction of supernova and catch nebulae instead. It always happens. I always forget. Always, it feels serendipitous.

We have in this collection the most intricate set of variations on unmaking, undoing, and becoming something utterly unexpected. Interlaced in this are flashes of the improper, the unseemly, the wholly inappropriate.

Jess Zanoni's gentle interview with Sinéad Stubbins reveals a woman in search of her most authentic and, if you will, unbecoming self. Stubbins is a woman who finds humour in spelling mistakes, saying the wrong thing, awkwardness. She creates beauty from that which is unbecoming in herself, and in her world.

Kent MacCarter's *Fat Chance*, a series of what he calls, 'journalism poems', are as unbecoming as it gets. Brutal, unflinching reportage of humanity's destructive nature. When I read them, I could not move. They are stunning, and will stun you.

These two pieces shine like quartz in this glittering collection on the reality of life – that we become, unbecome, and become again. That life is destructive, and destruction brings life. Sarah Halfpenny quietly, powerfully, explores life's undoing against the backdrop of this pandemic. Sally Fitts, in her first ever published essay, tenderly reveals how friendship re-weaves a person crumbled into grief. Peter Ivan's wit shimmers through his folly to unbecome a writer, and Monica Dux entertains with her staggered disengagement from Catholicism.

And these poems do what poems always do. They face what collapses us most – the questions of meaning and transcendence. We begin with a grand metaphysical thought in Londeka Mdluli's unassuming poem, *Pigeon Houses*. We move into the tender disintegration of love from David Francis, on to Bronwyn Lovell's portrayal of the crushing transfiguration those brave women of the nineteen-sixties took to become astronauts, then further out into an android future in which Helena Pantsis effortlessly depicts the laws of thermodynamics. After confronting ourselves with the brutal truth in Kent MacCarter's poems, we return to the big questions again in Ellina Zipman's rhythmic poem about quotidian life in a brick home, and to finish, Kevin Brophy's whimsical reflection on ants.

It has been a delight to have stepped into the breach, cast Kirsten's net and gathered these galactic thoughts. Each contributor has enchanted me with their art and their excitement as, together, we polished their star. Elin Matilda Andersson's voluptuous artwork thrills me as much as Cappello thrilled Walpole. I am so very glad to have her on the cover.

Working with the team at Writers Victoria, Lucy Hamilton, Sarah Hollingsworth, Jennifer Turner, has been as smooth and wonderful as watching spun silk dry in the sun.

And after all this, here I am, again, in my bed, in the middle of winter. We were released from Melbourne's sixth lockdown yesterday. The celebrations softened by news of a mystery case of COVID-19. Our city holds its breath to avoid whispers of another lockdown. We all hope not. But if this collection tells us anything, it is that as impossible as it might seem in all this stillness, there is always serendipity.

---

Donna Ward established the micro-press *Inkerman & Blunt*, and '*Indigo Journal of Western Australian Writing*'. Her prose has appeared nationally and internationally, her memoir is, '*She I Dare Not Name: A Spinster's Meditations on Life*', (Allen & Unwin 2020). For more visit [donna-ward.com.au](http://donna-ward.com.au)

# Feather Basket

Sally Fitts

---

I am only doing this for her.

The last thing I need is another creative outlet. I make practical necessities all the time – garments, blankets, baskets, preserves, meals, potions, and pots.

She grieves her husband's death and, casting about for distraction, She finds a Zoom course on weaving. The teacher is an Indigenous woman with a generous, patient nature.

With every raffia twist She accepts, a little, that her husband won't be coming back. Today her fledgling basket won't behave, her frustration turns to hopelessness, then tears.

But this is the way of grief, isn't it? One lonely step at a time.

She and I go way back. She lived next door when I came home from the hospital. We are Yin and Yang, Pisces and Taurus, water and earth. She is large-bodied, large-spirited, kind and generous. Her highs and lows are in vivid Technicolour. I am quiet, studious, earnest, sometimes stubborn, a shy and steadfast friend.

I envy, always have, her openness, the way She cuts through the crap to the feeling. I don't envy her constant companion—the dark cloud that dogs her. She thinks herself clumsy and not smart. 'You're the smart one', She says. And it's true, I negotiate some parts of the world for her. She makes sure I don't get too pompous.

There have been rifts and difficulties, times when we drifted. But I am tenacious. I don't let her get away for long. I claimed her, all those years ago, and She claimed me.

Our friendship is our unbreakable thread. Sharing the creative life enriches it. She began in Art school at 16 with no doubts about who

She was. It took me 41 years to get started. At least my IT life got us up and running in Zoom.

She says we are 'makers'. I love this description. We believe in starting where you are, use what you have, do what you can. It fits us. With him gone, this is what She needs.

These days there is no pretence, no condescension. Only kindness.

I can feel her chagrin. The ease with which my basket progresses is a pain in the arse for her. I know why She struggles. She will make a beautiful basket, but the pull to return to the bedcovers turns her fingers into sausages, and her brain to mush.

We use garishly coloured raffia from China, not local reeds and grasses, but the weaving and talking and weaving and talking, somehow, renders it beautiful.

\*\*\*

She calls me late in the afternoon. No words just choking sadness.

'Will I come over? I'm coming over.'

It is not far from my bush block to her house. A blessing, after decades in different states.

I make crumpets with vegemite. We drink tea in bed. I lie on his side. The electric blanket is set permanently low – as if it could be a replacement.

She talks between silences. Of when they were young and beautiful, when all was wonderful until it wasn't. Of the last days, when bullying pain ran the show.

I listen. Add my recollections. She remembers things differently. Doesn't matter, the point is the talk.

The sodden sadness moves. She gets up. Gets out of that room for a while.

\*\*\*

They say grieving moves through defined stages, but really it is messier and more random. Days or weeks of despair and devastation, interspersed with days of feeling ok, even good. Not tidy and linear. More like the Buddhist idea of 'no time'. Past, present, and future all in this moment. I watch for the black dog's vicious return.

\*\*\*

The weaving goes better in the second session. More yarning. A woman tells the story of weaving in the desert with a mob of aunties. She shows us fabulous pieces collected from Indigenous artisans around the world. We hold up our work in front of the camera and marvel at the differences – since we all began with the same materials, followed the same instructions.

We discuss different materials we can use; the grasses, vines, wools, fabrics, twine, ropes, hairs; the feathers, beads, stones, shells which can embellish them, and we look at stunning examples. She becomes her old 'over-the-top' self, amassing a 'bits-and-pieces' collection for her basket, undoing mistakes with equanimity.

\*\*\*

I arrive home to find her in the spare room, in her pyjamas, bra-less. Wailing, utterly bereft.

'Where IS he?' 'I don't know where he is'. I watch with trepidation. I am useless before her intense anguish. And slightly repelled, though I wish I could voice my own grief that way. I make tea, and rub her back.

She regains some balance. We smile, we giggle. We laugh hysterically at her state of undress. What if She had an accident on the way home? Every mother's worst nightmare! In the midst of this loud, messy situation, She says, 'It feels like something has shifted'.

Then a knock at the door. Unexpected. Two old friends arrive a week early for dinner. She creeps out to her car and drives off.

The next day, She clears away the sympathy cards, the dried flowers, the favourite photos, She keeps enough for solace.

\*\*\*

We wander through the trees at my place. She stands with her face lifted, and a single feather floats down. 'It's him', She says. A prolific vinous weed grows here. It spreads like wildfire. Wraps itself around everything. Impossible to eradicate. She and I call it Covid.

We have decided to weave with it. It's bloody awful. It snaps easily, and smells. She turns up every so often, drives into the bush, and backs out with a huge swirling unruly bunch of the stuff. I expect her to get bogged or run into a tree, but She doesn't.

She loves the bush. She was once my intrepid leader, tramping for miles, sharing her knowledge of plants and a thermos of tea. I hope She will reconnect now, let the power of it seep back into her.

We sit and strip leaves, cut Covid into manageable pieces before wrangling it into some useful woven thing. It occupies time.

I will weave the feather into this, She says.

They say time heals grief, but time simply fuzzes things over. Together, we will weave her into a new life.

---

Sally Fitts is interested in creative non-fiction and poetry. Her creative life so far has been as a visual artist, and you can see some of her work at [sallyfitts.com](http://sallyfitts.com). This is Sally's first published work.

# Kintsugi

Sarah Halfpenny

Late March 2020

Silence, thick as a woollen blanket, has descended on Melbourne. The city is unbecoming — losing its people, softening at the edges. Amid this eerie stillness, my life unravels.

Quiet permeates the car as I drive Beatrice to Monash Children's Hospital. It's a cloak I can't shrug off, one that becomes a little heavier each day.

The four-lane highway is deserted. The suburbs are foreign without people. Unnerving. I'm on constant alert for something invisible. COVID-19. It makes us fear things that might not be there, panic at the loss of things we never imagined could be taken from us.

Beside me, Beatrice shrinks in the grip of anorexia. She's only 16. Fifty kilometres away, in a nursing home, Mum slips into dementia. She's 82. Their suffering began as incremental, innocuous, then became life shattering.

Alzheimer's sunk its claws into Mum after Dad passed in 2015. She left peas burning on the stove. Repeated questions every few minutes. Lost her joie de vivre. Lost who she was. Beatrice's decline began with a debilitating neurological condition a year or so ago. Medication stole her appetite. Weight loss brought ill-fated praise from well-meaning people. The spectre of anorexia drifted in.

Now I stand in a too-bright hospital room clutching the plastic bag of clothes they stripped from Beatrice's fragile body. She lies on the bed, unrecognisable. I exhaust myself with mind games. How did we end up here? How did she disappear in plain sight?

I try to concentrate on the young doctor's words. He tells me Beatrice's heart has

almost failed. Terror snakes an icy path through my veins.

For weeks I make the 80 km round trip. Covid is everywhere. On the elevator buttons. Floating in the air. Invisible. Enduring. A hospital feels like the worst place to be. I worry Beatrice will catch it, will have no strength to fight it. I slather my hands in sanitiser until they're dry and red. I order handmade cotton face masks like it's a hobby. The days are unspeakably strange. I lose my grip on what life used to be.

Beatrice fights her demons, one mouthful at a time. I try to reignite her spark, engage with my once vivacious girl. She can't even fake a smile. My heart breaks anew each day.

Fat tears slide noiselessly down her face. The silence is here, too. Pushes its way into everything. Beatrice says she feels like a phosphate tablet in water — slowly breaking down, folding and flipping until she is no more. I save my tears for the drive home.

The wretched hush has fallen over Mum's world, too. The television is the only sound in her small neat room. She hasn't spoken in two years. A heartbreaking contrast to the woman known by every retail assistant at The Glen Shopping Centre for her kind words and funny stories. Her muteness distresses me. Her vacant cornflower eyes pierce mine.

In this silent contagious world, I nurse an anorexic back to health, and let go of the mother I adore.

At home, awaiting my affection and attention is Darren, our four other children, and home schooling. Trying to be across curriculums from Grade 5 to Year 12 is paralysing. Impossible. Anxiety drums a hollow in my chest. I am consumed by whirring thoughts.

My once simple life unspools, like thread running across a table. Slow, then fast, until I can't keep up with the changes, the real and perceived failures, the desolation. I am heading over the edge with nothing to stop me.

The weeks roll on. Darren and I unlearn our parenting style. We let the kids FaceTime their friends for school work. Take time limits off their devices. Shoo them outside once a day. Have family movie nights. We go with our gut, but guilt lodges in my stomach.

No longer able to visit Mum in person, we hover outside her window. She stares at the TV. Time is the commodity I wish I could exchange. Refund. Hack. Steal. Anything to turn back the calendar. Remorse seeps in. It's insidious and debilitating.

At home, Darren and I take neighbourhood walks. Just the two of us. We stumble upon glorious nature reserves. He photographs quirky house numbers, like an enormous handmade eight carved in wood, and the curling black metal number that announces apartment 2/222. Darren keeps me laughing with accidental spoonerisms. I write a list: a tiece of poast, where did I phut my pone? sparking pots, a grit of boin strain, gackpaking bear.

Darren is my safety net. He stops my freerfall into regret. He brings joy even to the smallest moment.

It is late May, 2021. Autumn. Rain comes and the grass turns green, again. I am at time's mercy. Beatrice re-emerges from her lonely hell. She smiles. Hope shapes our future. Mum closes her cornflower eyes for the last time, only a few hours after I kissed her soft hair, held her smooth hand, and whispered, 'Thank you for everything. I love you.'

A cruel trade.

There is a Japanese artform that Darren taught me about called Kintsugi – broken pottery repaired with lacquer and gold. Shattered pieces are cherished. Cracks are illuminated with veins of gold.



Photo: Riho Kitagawa

I think of our life during these past few years like a Kintsugi creation. As the fragments fell, Darren and I gathered them, joined the fault lines, made something strong and beautiful.

We live a life remade with gold, and love so fierce it hurts.

---

Sarah Halfpenny is a freelance writer whose clients include the City of Melbourne, Child Magazines, RSPCA, Sydney Water, Sydney Trains, aMBUSH Gallery, Kidspot, and Nickelodeon. In 2018 she co-founded the annual Stellar Short Film Festival to support Australian filmmakers.

# Unbecoming a Writer

Peter Ivan

---

I fear, in the words of 1990s prophets Boyz II Men, 'we've come to the end of the road.'

The modest hill up which I pushed, pulled, and oft-times carried my billycart of creativity most of my life is now at my back, and I find myself hurtling down the other side, steering rope unravelling in my grip, toward some dark, incomprehensible fate.

Which is a rather overwrought way of conceding that maybe my best writing days are behind me and I've no idea what happens next.

Permit me to shift the cart into reverse momentarily. To my salad days. Fruit salad mostly, and a scoop of Neapolitan, when I was even more naïve than I am now, and the world was a new experience every day. I loved to write during my primary years, as I loved drawing, or going to the movies. By 10, my larval brain had deified the romantic notion that I could do something related to these for the rest of my life, and be happy. One fateful day, I wrote a story based on a favourite TV show of mine, and my teacher, Miss Eris, in oblivious innocence, penned the comment 'Possible future scriptwriter!' upon the page.

And that was it. I was going to become a writer.

If you're reading this (you, not Miss Eris), you've probably experienced a similar moment. A crisis of sorts, danger and opportunity conspiring to deflect you down a writerly path that would define a significant portion of your life. I'll warrant all the literary titans were afflicted thus — Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Austen, Hecht, Highsmith, Nabokov, Mamet, King (don't judge me). But perhaps if talent and luck played their respective roles I, too, could

be, if not a titan, at least a Times New Roman 12-point demigod.

My billycart undertook its ascent, and I'm happy to report that I've managed to subsist for several decades on being a writer, despite detours such as home buying, child rearing, and comic book collecting — a desperate attempt to recapture vanished days of innocence and sunshine. My unpredictable choice of profession afforded me all the predictable requisites of modern living, though I drew the line at outdoor kitchens.

I've written small articles, big ad campaigns, flash-in-the-pan TV, popular movies, and countless unfinished part-projects. I'm grateful, and I'll die knowing that, somewhere in the world, future generations might uncover a DVD of my work on the back shelves of an op shop as one might, today, dig out and puzzle over a George Formby 78.

Life has been... okay.

But what eats at me is this: I'm deep in the throes of middle age. The most scandalous thing in my browser history is my obsessive research into the Seniors Card program. And the demigod I believed to be my destiny instead became a bit player in the shadows, while the lights shone on those in super-charged billycarts ascending veritable mountains towering above my modest undulation of mud and gravel.

I wanted to become a writer. I became a writer. And now it seems the time is here to unbecome a writer. This, despite the fact I've never, ever, heard anybody describe themselves as an ex-writer. Or a retired writer. Or even a dead one.

What do they say? A writer doesn't write because they want to, but because they have to. But do we really have to? We're all grownups. Can't we just decide we've had enough of the accursed blank page, the pain of creation, the little to no reward? Isn't the yardstick of insanity to repeat something ad nauseam expecting a different result? Wouldn't a serving of obsolescence be less bitter without a starter of fly-speck success?

Very well. Suppose for a moment that we do have to write. That we can't help it. If so, then what is 'a writer' anyway? Somebody with several slim volumes of published poetry? A YouTube video essayist who uploads content every other month? Is it Aaron Sorkin? Or Zadie Smith? Is it the woman in the downstairs flat who has written a paragraph in her journal every day for the past 67 years?

The answer is, you may have guessed, yes to all. Some might not consider themselves 'a writer.' Sorry. You don't get off that easy! As testing as it often is to be a writer, becoming one is deceptively easy – you just have to write. The unvarnished act of regular word-scribbling is sufficient to join the club, and share in its attendant pains.

Payment? Audience? You're still a writer without these, like it or not. So be careful. When, at the foot of your hill, you relent to the muse, choose wisely as to the type of writer you want to become. Stay true. And don't dismiss entirely the prospect of a paying audience, especially if you have a comic collection to nurture. Or children.

As for me, so what if things didn't turn out as the 10-year-old imagined? I don't think I want to be a writer anymore. And I don't think I need to either.

So here I sit, hurtling downhill in my billycart, unbecoming a writer. Pretending Miss Eris never wrote those words. Resting on my meagre laurels. Scoffing at the fact that were I to look up 'demigod' in the dictionary there would be no picture of me contentedly smirking back.

Peace beckons. I need only veer gently from this preordained path of the writer's rocky anguish into rolling valleys of forever wildflowers.

But...

Through my emerging tears, I spy the merest glimmer... There, in the heart of the abyss, before I know it, that familiar flutter, that inevitable rush. Another story idea. Oh, how it calls. I fear I am lost to it. To its Siren song in haunting four-part harmony; 'It's So Hard To Say Goodbye To Yesterday.'

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Peter Ivan is an award-winning copywriter and screenwriter. His work has been produced for television and film, including the hit family movie, 'Oddball'. He is working on a teenage novel and a short story anthology, and published a tongue-in-cheek self-help book, 'Kids Clutter Chaos', on Amazon, just because.

# Lapsed: Losing your Religion is Harder Than it Looks

Monica Dux

Edited extract from her book of the same title, published by HarperCollins ABC books, 2021.

When the last threads of my connection to Jesus frayed and broke, and I finally dumped him, it was a bit of an anticlimax. Our final breakup occurred when I was sixteen, one Sunday at Mass, during the usual monotonous sermon from good old Father McGlone. As he droned on, I thought about what he was saying, and I realised I didn't believe one word of it. The last remnants of belief had evaporated from the soul I no longer believed I had.

All those years of trying and failing to love Christ now made sense. I hadn't been able to love him because he was, as Mary Magdalene observes in the musical, 'Jesus Christ Superstar', just a man.

But there are two hurdles you need to clear when you give up your childhood religion, and the second is often the most treacherous. After you stop believing in whatever deity you were taught to venerate, you also have to get rid of the baggage that came with him: the rules and values that your particular supernatural friend insisted on. And this second stage of unbelief is usually harder to get through.

We tend to imagine religious conversion as a dramatic revelation: a flash of light, a brain explosion, a moment of supernatural clarity. Saint Paul was famously knocked off his horse by a vision on the road to Damascus, while the Emperor Constantine reportedly had a divinely inspired dream that instructed him to place the mark of Christ on his soldiers' shields. Whatever the details might be, moments of religious inspiration are usually described as sudden and absolute.

By contrast, a loss of faith is almost always a process of gradual erosion. Maybe that's why there aren't any reverse-road-to-Damascus style atheism stories, where a previously devout tax consultant falls out of his Audi after hearing Richard Dawkins interviewed on the radio. Yet something has to prompt you to start questioning your faith. For me, the trigger that brought all my simmering doubts into focus was sex.

Like most cradle Catholics, I was brought up to believe that having sinful sex, immoral sex, is one of the worst ways to sin. Throughout my teens, I was schooled in the many forms this immorality might take. Sex outside marriage was immoral. Masturbation was immoral. Being intimate with someone from the same sex was immoral. Even tampons had a whiff of immorality, what with the fingers-up-your-vagina thing. Back then I associated the word 'immorality' entirely with sex acts. Even today when I hear the word spoken — in reference to our nation's treatment of refugees, or multinational companies not paying their fair share of tax — I flush with confusion. What has tax avoidance got to do with fucking?

So it's not surprising that in the year after I'd given up on Jesus, I was still determined to remain a virgin until I got married. Some of my peers had started having sex, and the rest were talking about it. But I smugly told myself there was no way I would stain my private parts like them — I was better than that.

At this stage, virginity was at the centre of my moral framework. Yet up until the age of eleven, I hadn't even been sure what the word meant.

Mum had told me it meant 'pure', so I figured 'virgin' was just one of Mary's many aliases, along with Perpetual Succour or Star of the Sea.

Part of my problem was that to understand virginity, you first have to know that sex is a thing. Which put me at a significant disadvantage, because for most of primary school I'd been taught it was God who put babies into mothers' tummies, rendering sex biologically superfluous. To me, even Our Lady's supposedly miraculous pregnancy was rather mundane. It was the same as what happens to all expecting mothers, except that most had to go to the doctor to confirm that God had done His thing, while Mary got to have a special angel deliver the news.

All of this raised some tricky questions about my relationship to Dad. Was he my father only because he happened to be married to Mum? But then why did so many children resemble their dads? Perhaps we somehow absorbed their likenesses due to sheer proximity. But then why didn't kids look like the family dog, for example?

So many questions.

Then my brother Matt started bringing home disturbing reports from his schoolmates about daddies lying on top of mummies. Naturally, I didn't believe any of it, particularly the ridiculous idea that penises would go into vaginas — that had to be made up. Still, I sensed I was missing something, which prompted me to corner Mum in the kitchen and insist she give me all the gruesome details. And this time, I finally got a straight answer. Imagine my surprise.

The decision to dump not only Jesus, but also my commitment to virginity, came later. It was sparked by my history teacher, Mrs Barrett, who was known to volunteer the occasional risqué opinion. Not so long before, she'd helpfully advised me that, contrary to popular assumptions, tampon use would not deflower me. I now came at her with a virginity-related follow-up question, just as we were sitting down to discuss the Russian Revolution. Did she think I should wait until marriage for sex? 'Well,' Mrs Barrett deadpanned, 'why would you buy

one book when you can visit a library?' As an avid reader, I got the point.

Shortly after the end of high school, I finally put Mrs Barrett's advice into action. I was working my part-time job as a checkout chick, and I'd started dating my supervisor. He was a much older man — nineteen years old, in fact, and a music student at university. Which I found incredibly exciting.

I approached my de-virgining like a biology exam in which I intended to get top marks. I read books on the mechanics of sex. I researched the best position to minimise any first-root discomfort, and I readied myself to wee before and after sex, having read that this might stop me getting cystitis. I even broadened my research base to include pop-cultural influences, particularly a fascinating sealed section in 'Cleo' magazine. But perhaps the most important detail of all was the condom, which I practiced putting on his penis so many times that it risked derailing the whole project due to chafing.

Because my boyfriend was studying music, we were able to use one of the practice rooms at the University of Sydney. You could book them for an hour, which seemed like more than enough time, and they locked from the inside. This was a far classier arrangement than option two: behind a bush at the local park.

At last the big day arrived, and the deed was done. That night I wrote in my diary that 'something momentous' had happened. It had been a 'bit of a thrill', and I 'just wanted to keep doing it'. Yes, I was staying cryptic in case Mum read it, but not because I felt Catholic guilt. I simply wanted to avoid the drama my diary could create, should it fall into the wrong hands. As far as I was concerned, my de-conversion was as good as complete — and once again, it had been entirely painless.

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Monica Dux is a writer, and a columnist for 'The Age'. She is the author of, 'Lapsed', 'Things I Didn't Expect (when I was expecting)' (MUP, 2013), co-author of, 'The Great Feminist Denial' (MUP, 2008), and editor of the anthology, 'Mothermorphosis' (MUP, 2015).

# Glitch in the Matirx

Jess Zanoni interviews Sinéad Stubbins

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I, like many, consumed Sinéad's debut book, 'In My Defence, I Have No Defence', in lockdown – in bed, on the couch, hunched over the kitchen counter, or sitting and reading in my parked car – so I could experience Sinéad's stories at least partially in the outside world.

Sinéad Stubbins isn't totally dismayed about releasing a book in the midst of a lockdown. 'I'm starting to think it came out at the exact right time,' Sinéad admits over our Google Meet call on a Wednesday evening – the sixth night of Melbourne's fifth lockdown. Not that I am counting.

At Sinéad's live-stream book launch the previous month, she observed how 6 pm in the middle of winter in Melbourne looks like midnight. And, indeed, while talking to Sinéad in my bedroom tonight, I see only the glowing reflections of my lamps on the frosted window pane. Amidst the darkness, I'm grateful for Sinéad's humour and warmth, so palpable, and shining through my laptop screen.

'I really wanted it to be the kind of book that you would pick up when you were having a really bad day, or a fight with someone. You know those texts that you send, the ones you immediately regret? I wanted the book to help stop you sending that text.'

'In My Defence, I Have No Defence', is a poignantly relatable, charming, and down to earth collection of personal essays about our lifelong endeavour to feel at ease with who we are. There is sweet comfort and lightness in reading Sinéad's book when trapped in rumination and deprived of life's many textures that break up this inward focus. It's a relief to be drawn into a realm that acts as a generous mirror reflecting our human idiosyncrasies with humour and understanding.

'I come from a family of people who tell tragic stories, but make them really funny. It's like I'm part of a mini tradition of making the deplorable, the humiliating, and the stickier areas of life into a joke. I feel like my natural writing voice is one that is conversational, trying to bring people in through a funny story.'

Sinéad wrote her book every Saturday for a year. She never thought she was penning a 'comedy' book per se, or even telling jokes. In fact, Sinéad's conversational tone sustains a natural, leisurely pace throughout the book. 'I was writing in the way that you would be talking to a friend. Conversations that you have with your friends are almost always funny. It's banter, there's like a pitter-patter to it, like a tap dance.'

Sinéad speaks about her time on the writing team for Charlie Pickering's show, 'The Weekly', which she describes as a totally different experience compared to writing her book. 'It sounds really simple, but something that's funny on the page, isn't necessarily funny when you read it out. The timing is different, the way you say something, and also the density of jokes is so different. Writing a script for TV has to be "bam, bam, bam, bam" density of jokes; for good reason. But if you're writing that on the page, it's almost like it's too much for the brain to process.'

Perfectionism and self-criticism are major pillars of Sinéad's book, and these crippling habits were around as she wrote. Throughout her essays, Sinéad allows readers into the relentless niggling doubts and anxieties that arise when producing creative work, and in other vulnerable walks of life.

'I was so scared of being irritating. I said to a friend, when I was writing, "I can't understand why my writing is so irritating, but when I read a different book by another person who

is self-deprecating, like Samantha Irby or Dolly Alderton or Jessi Klein, why is it that I don't find them irritating?" and she was like "because you have more compassion for other people than for yourself."

For a long time, Sinéad mistook this obsessive self-scrutiny for a strong critical eye, but eventually she identified it as an unsustainable, exhausting pattern that reaps no rewards. 'I had to have real conversations with myself in my notebook, like, okay, so it's actually offensive to the people you're working with to think that this book is rubbish. It's actually not your place to tell people what they can and cannot enjoy about your work.'

'In My Defence, I Have No Defence', makes writing about one's own experiences, memories and obsessions look effortless and compelling, but writing about oneself is in fact a nebulous, delicate task. It's often hard to pinpoint what it is, exactly, that makes a reader interested enough to stay with an author who writes about their own psyche.

'You have to be able to tap into something that is bigger than you, and for it to be bigger than the thing that you're writing about. My stories kept coming back to the notion of shame, and shame is something that we all experience, to different degrees.'

This is the first time Sinéad has ever written for herself in an unrestrained way. So far, her writing has been her livelihood — writing for various publications and journals.

She began writing her book by writing down memory after memory. 'After a while, it became clear that all the stories I was writing involved some sort of performance of self, or being found out to be a fraud, or other people turning out to be a fraud. It was all tied up in the need to be loved and liked, and wanting validation that I couldn't find in myself.'

Sinéad realises, these themes, have to be the beating heart of the book, and it means she cut stories that didn't tie back to this motif. 'I wanted you to be able to walk away from a story and, even if you haven't had the direct



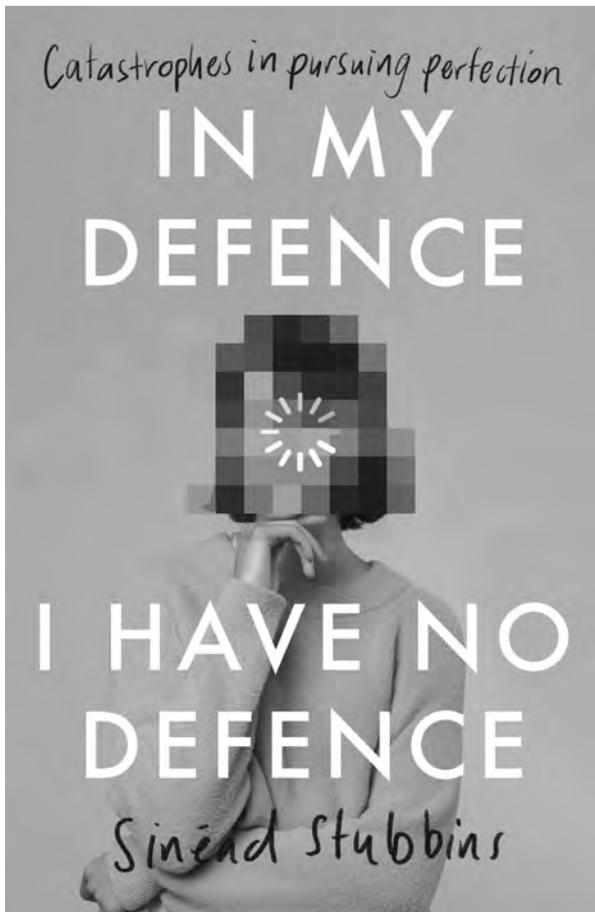
Sinéad Stubbins

experience that I've had, you can relate to the feeling.'

Many stories in the book are only a few pages long. When I ask why the brevity, Sinéad speaks of being authentic and true to her own interests as a writer. She doesn't wish to conform to the pressure of writing a 'literary' book in order to be worthy as a writer.

'I've never wanted to spend a really long time on one idea. So I stopped putting the pressure on myself to write essays of a certain length, I just wrote them for as long as I thought they were relevant. I also wanted it to be something that felt quite snackable, that you could put down, and it could be anywhere in the book, and it's not like you're going to lose the plot point.'

Near the end of 'In My Defence, I Have No Defence' is an essay about confronting the murky, confusing emotions surrounding Sinéad's best friend getting married. The essay honestly captures the way we confront insecurities around the symbols of success that we are taught to covet when growing up, symbols toward which, in adulthood, we might feel ambivalent or detached. These



complicated feelings become particularly pronounced when our closest friends couple and have children.

Sinéad received an influx of resonance from readers about her experience and this prompted her desire to explore the topic in the future.

'I've gotten so many messages about that essay. I was really surprised, but also, I was like, "Oh, this is a thing." That was actually the piece that I felt most nervous about writing, because I had increasingly, for years, felt so defective, that I wasn't up to the correct life-stage. Not that I just wasn't up to it, but that I didn't want it. I feel like, even now, it can be a really unfashionable thing, for women to say "No, I don't think about marriage that much. And, No, I actively, at this point in my life, don't want kids." I still don't think that people feel comfortable saying that.'

In the end, Sinéad wants to write stories that balance suffering and joy, and demonstrate how important it is not to exploit herself or the challenging experiences in her own life, just for shock value.

'As writers, we often feel like we can't take up space unless it's saying something serious. And I just don't believe that. Our brains can only take so much misery without some joy. There can be as much depth in joy, as there is in trauma.'

The writing Sinéad loves the most, throughout time, is writing that makes the mundane poignant, hilarious, heartfelt, and tragic. 'I think you can tell a writer who has lived a life and taken notes, because they're the ones that can observe a truth in a moment that otherwise would pass you by. And that's something that I really admire and aspire to.'

Sinéad's sense of humour is attuned to the awkward, the endearing and the tender. In closing I ask if she can put language around what it is that makes her laugh. She pauses thoughtfully, then says, 'I think it's whenever it feels like there's a glitch in the matrix, where things are not working out the way they're meant to work out. It's just so funny to me. Like, spelling mistakes are funny to me. Saying the wrong thing is funny to me. It's whenever the performance of ourselves as cool, sophisticated, educated humans falters a little bit – I find that deeply funny. I'm a person who is very vulnerable, and proudly vulnerable. And I think when we laugh at each other, and with each other, and laugh at ourselves, it kind of opens up this gateway to each other.'

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Jess Zanoni is a writer, musician and editor. Find her music in alt-rock band, Arbes, and her solo project, Za Noon. Her writing can be found in, 'Cordite', 'Voiceworks', and elsewhere.

# Pigeon Houses

Londeka Mdluli

When you return home,  
find me a cilantro pigeon.  
Bring back the cottonmouth hair  
watch me hang the moon with your plots.  
Ask me why butterflies, with their wings  
are just caterpillars aspiring  
to be the birds that eat them.

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Londeka Mdluli is a South African born writer who is of dual nationality. Although she was born in South Africa she does not shy away from her Zimbabwean heritage.

# How to Be a 'Lady' Astronaut\*

Bronwyn Lovell

Fight tears. Kick emotions. Quit pink.  
Get hair cut — seriously, at a barber.

Push body harder: blister, chafe,  
bruise. Run till your boobs sweat

away entirely and that bloody  
period stops. Grow balls and bite

tongue. Being a killjoy won't  
get you to space. Lodging a formal

complaint won't. Calling out  
inferior superiors definitely won't.

To make it past the gatekeepers:  
eyes on the stars, mouth wide shut.

\*In the early 1960s, at the Lovelace Clinic in Albuquerque, thirteen female pilots, who called themselves the First Lady Astronaut Trainees, passed the same tests as the seven male pilots selected for NASA's Project Mercury. These women, proved fully fit for and capable of spaceflight, were denied the opportunity because of their gender.

# The Lovelace Ladies

Bronwyn Lovell  
for Jerrie Cobb

It's hard to imagine the gruelling things  
those wishful women were willing  
to do: swallow a rubber tube right down  
to their stomachs;  
have their reflexes shocked;  
have ice water shot  
into their ears to induce vertigo;  
ride weighted bikes  
to the point of exhaustion; be sunk  
in a soundproof tank for sensory deprivation  
to see if it triggered hallucinations;  
escape from a submerged cockpit;  
be spun and battered  
with g-forces; be probed ceaselessly  
both physically and psychologically;  
outperform the men  
in almost all testing phases  
then heft open their legs  
for a gynaecological inspection  
while the patriarchs of NASA  
couldn't be arsed to open their steely hearts.

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Dr Bronwyn Lovell teaches creative writing at the University of South Australia, and holds a certificate in space studies from the International Space University. Read, 'Sex and the Stars: The Enduring Structure of Gender Discrimination in the Space Industry' online in the Journal of Feminist Scholarship. Bronwyn is a past member, and worked as part of the Writers Victoria team.

# Thermodynamics

Helena Pantsis

In the shape of an exponential function,  
 she will stroke the lustrous iron of her body,  
 will feel the space between her legs  
 and touch the welded bump where  
 cavities, or protrusions, or softness should be.  
 Bionic limbs slow and grazing hardware, warmed  
 by the endless ticking of her robot brain –  
 the conservation of kinetic energy.

What gratifies the technophile  
 leaves the tech unsatisfied.

The cyborg digs into her tin can flesh  
 hoping to find weaker things,  
 software made wet and meaty  
 the way women's bodies are.

She bends over to unscrew the  
 panelling that keeps her innards in.

She is intellectually unattainable,  
 emotionally stunted, aware  
 she is taking herself apart but,  
 it is in her programming to continue.

She consults her decision tree, the statistical mechanics  
 of reason, and finds it in her nature  
 to learn. She will disassemble the body  
 until the ticking halts, and the malfunctioning  
 fossilises. Her anatomy is an equation of  
 heat, of work, of temperature, of entropy.

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Helena Pantsis (she/they) is a poet and writer from Naarm, Australia. She/they is a full-time student psychology and creative writing student with a fondness for the gritty, the dark, and the experimental. She has been published in Voiceworks, Farrago, and Meanjin. Find more of her work at [hlnpnts.com](http://hlnpnts.com).

# Fractal

David Francis

A man leaves his wife who has cancer.  
Before he goes he paints their house,  
makes over the garden, empties the shed,  
clears the yard. He cleans his car inside and out,  
gives it polish, then leaves it to her.

The man goes to his lover and lives with her.  
She too has cancer.

Love is a realm of solstitial opposites –  
it knows the affirmation of ceaseless sunlight  
and the benign indifference of polar nights.  
The geometry of love is exquisite –  
a snow flake lodged on an eyelash.

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David Francis' poetry has appeared in many journals and anthologies, including 'Prayers of a Secular World'. His first poetry collection, 'Promises Made at Night', was published by Melbourne Poets Union in 2013. In a parallel life, he is a transplant surgeon in Melbourne and Kathmandu.

# Fat Chance

Kent MacCarter

## Fat Chance #1

12 May 2010

Afriqiyah Airways Airbus A330-202 passenger jet crashed on approach to Tripoli International Airport, Libya. 'Under the circumstances, Ruben is doing well. He sleeps a lot. Now and then he is awake and is alert,' relatives read in a statement about their nephew, Ruben van Assouw. 'We told him that his parents and brother are dead,' they continued. The flight consisted primarily of Dutch tourists departing from Johannesburg.

At 6 am, the plane, Flight 771, met the Tarmac without any reported problems. For reasons that remain unknown, the fuselage shattered from nose to tail resulting in a complete loss of the hull. This is rare for a one-year-old aircraft. There was no conflagration, only disintegration.

Books, cushions, and South African souvenirs comprised the largest intact pieces of evidence for Libyan emergency crews to recover. Metal shards that were once the aircraft were notably smaller, with human remains smaller still.

The afternoon before the crash, Ruben blogged about the camping trip that took him, his brother Enzo, and their parents through some of the world's most rugged wildernesses; South Africa's Mac Mac Falls, Kruger National Park, into Swaziland, and on into Lesotho. Twenty forensic experts were flown in from the Netherlands and had marginal success in identifying 104 humans' body parts. Dutch officials repatriated what remained of individuals as soon as each was identified, a process that required a month to complete.

Although the 105th, final and only complete individual from the flight suffered multiple leg fractures and significant loss of blood from the nose, the nine-year-old boy was found alive, alert and entangled in his crushed seat with his own blood dripping into his mouth. The seat was discovered 500 metres from the nearest debris and jabbed into a sand dune as a beach umbrella might be. 'He's okay. He's not getting any worse,' said an orthopaedic specialist to media later that evening.

This landing saved the seat and the boy from tumbling over a deep ravine fewer than five metres away.

15 January 2007

Jennifer Strange was among the eighteen people who entered the competition, 'Hold Your Wee for a Nintendo Wii', held by KDND, an FM radio station in Sacramento, California.

In a bid to win the video game console, the contestants were asked to drink as much water as they could without urinating.

Jennifer drank eleven litres of water in three hours. As the contest progressed, a disc jockey at KDND asked a co-host, 'Can you get water poisoning?' 'Not with water,' the co-host replied. 'Your body is 98% water. Why can't you take in as much water as you want?' 'Maybe we should have researched this before,' the disc jockey said.

Jennifer Strange's daughter was eleven months old when her mother doubled over and collapsed after coming in a close second place – having poisoned herself with water intoxication, which was later corroborated by the county coroner in the process.

Her husband, Billy, said of his daughter to investigators, 'In the brief amount of time she spent with Jen, she really picked up on a lot of her qualities.'

At 107.9 on the dial, the station was named, The End, acknowledging the last band in the FM broadcasting range. Its format was contemporary pop and soul. Jennifer Stranger won two movie tickets for her second-place effort, which her daughter and husband redeemed the following week.

# Fat Chance #2

16 August 1987

A Northwest Airlines DC-9-82 passenger jet crashed on take-off from Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport, Michigan. Cecelia Cichan's flight lifted off the runway at 170 knots and began rolling from side to side at just under 15 metres above the ground.

Both of the jet's engines then stalled, causing the aircraft to spiral 40 degrees to the port side, and bisected a flood light pole near the end of the runway. This removed six metres of the port wing and ignited an internal jet fuel tank. The aircraft then counterrotated 90 degrees with its starboard wing penetrating the roof of an Avis car-hire building and a display of Ford Bronco II SUVs.

This action severed an equal length of outer starboard wing, igniting it by the same means. With that counterforce, the aircraft inverted a full 180 degrees and flew two kilometres upside down above Middlebelt Road's evening traffic.

Fire billowed from both ends of the severed wings. The aircraft cambered downward onto the road, striking two vehicles, decapitating both drivers, yet not arresting the inertia the aircraft achieved during full rotation.

The aircraft then rammed the support abutments of a railroad bridge spanning Middlebelt Road. This impact quartered the fuselage – further retarding its pace – and caused the quadrants to roll down the commuter beltway until they ricocheted off an Interstate 94 overpass concurrently. The remaining structural integrity collapsed into unrecognisable char.

Cecelia was recovered in her assigned seat. It was intact, unburnt and upright in the middle of Interstate 94. She was alert, conscious, still buckled, and clutching World Traveller, Northwest Airlines in-flight magazine, in her hands. She was four years old.

Of the 154 other passengers and crew, the largest piece of human remains was half of a woman's palm with three fingers still attached. Dental records were ineffective in the casualty identification process.

15 July 1964

Methuselah is a Great Basin bristlecone pine tree. Prometheus was one. Methuselah is currently 4,852 years old, the oldest single living tree – or organism of any kind – on Earth. It grows at an undisclosed location within Inyo County, California. Prometheus would have been 4,872 this year – twenty years Methuselah's senior – were it not for Donald R Currey of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, a graduate student and US Forest Service cadet.

Donald was gripped by the dendrochronology craze sweeping across the botanical sciences in the '60s. His life's mission was to study climate dynamics of the Little Ice Age; an era that came and went in the lifetimes of both trees.

There was much excitement when Prometheus was discovered and named in 1963. Non-invasive core samples were ordered by the Forest Service, that Currey volunteered eagerly to extract. Currey was still learning the nuances of his trade and was a novice at using the increment borer. He jammed and broke the instrument soon into his penetration of Prometheus. Alibis diverge here.

Onlookers claim Currey immediately became enraged by his failed attempt to obtain a sample. Others claim he browbeat a fellow researcher out of his issued increment borer and proceeded to break that tool as quickly as he had done his own. Regardless, in fitful haste, Currey exploded into a set of hatchet vees, and shouted curses as he felled Prometheus within 30 minutes. As the professional woodsman on the scene, no onlooker interfered with Currey's actions. There was no collective cry, Timber!

Prometheus – after more than 4,800 years of life – listed until its trunk's xylem and phloem completely separated, dying instantly.

Sections of Prometheus were divvied up between various research institutes. One section resides in a convention centre in Ely, Nevada, under a Plexiglas casing. Its dried mass is permanently on display next to slot machines tuned to pay out jackpots at a rate between 3–5% greater than the Nevada Gaming Control Board requires for Las Vegas. Ely is the county seat of White Pine County, and its only incorporated city. Per capita, it has the highest recorded rate of on-site casino gaming aggression.

Soon after, Currey was reminded that he forgot the Little Ice Age was only 600 years ago and hundreds of other, far younger trees would have provided identical data to support his dendrochronological zeal.

# Fat Chance #3

6 March 2003

Flight 6289 is a frequently scheduled, short hop between Aguenar and Algiers. The Air Algérie Boeing 737-200 passenger jet with 103 people on its manifest crashed on take-off from Hadj Bey Akhamok Airport. Before the aircraft became airborne, its starboard engine exploded during maximum thrust rotation. This instigated a frantic discussion between the pilot, male, and the copilot, female, about what emergency steps to execute next.

The copilot ordered landing gear up. The pilot did not respond. Again, she ordered the same command that was also met with silence. The remaining good engine could not overcompensate for the drag that occurs at take-off and stalled.

With the landing gear still down, Youcef Djillali's flight nose-dived into a rocky outcrop near the runway's end, obliterating the aircraft on impact. The elapsed flight time was less than two minutes and achieved 180 metres at its apogee.

Youcef, an experienced soldier at age twenty-eight — having been involved in numerous regional conflicts in Algeria — was discovered pinned beneath four of the 102 bodies recovered from the wreckage. He suffered more damage from his collapsed rib cage and swollen brain, due to the weight of the cadavers atop him, than he did from the crash and the fire.

The 1980s

*Thermosphaeroma thermophilum*, commonly known as the Socorro Isopod, is the scarcest of the 500 known species of freshwater isopod. Their marine cousins are found in habitats worldwide. Isopods are miniature crustaceans with seven pairs of legs and range in size from 300 micrometres to 50 centimetres. By the late '70s – millennia into its unique speciation – the Socorro Isopod's natural habitat became extinct before it did.

The species' survival was confined to a population just large enough to maintain natural selection among the specimens that colonised two concrete water storage tanks. The tanks were fed by the mineral-heavy, freshwater trickle of Sedillo Springs in New Mexico, and circulated by a network of sluices and overflows running between them.

The Socorro Isopods' universe had been reduced to 50 square metres. It was listed as an endangered species in 1978.

The tanks supplied water to hoses belonging to the City of Socorro's municipal golf course, primarily used in the upkeep of putting greens. The green on the twelfth hole, a par five, is closest to the tanks. Golfers occasionally birdied the hole, but no eagles, or double eagles are known to have been recorded.

The species evolved into one that exhibits extremely rapid growth rates in the young. To augment the population's natural diet of microbes provided by the spring, the mature isopods subsisted from cannibalistic feeding frenzies on their young. This occurred whenever the species teetered too close to unsustainability and subsequent extinction. This growth and feeding cycle has been repeating for 300,000 to 400,000 years, first in the spring water, then only in the tanks.

By 1999, due to denuded native vegetation and nearby soil erosion, weeds invaded the springs, formed a mass underground root system and choked off the species' water and food supply.

That same year, vandals also dumped a stolen and stripped motor vehicle into one of the two tanks. Steel rust quickly contaminated the delicate pH balance of the stored water beyond equation. The recovered vehicle was registered with Arizona vanity plates that numbered SHED3VL.

Two captive populations of Socorro isopods currently exist at the Albuquerque Biological Park. There, it has been recorded that, since captivity, the female body size in both controlled groups has rapidly evolved to much larger dimensions than any in the known fossil record.

*Thermosphaeroma thermophilum*, commonly known as the Socorro Isopod, is also known as the sowbug.

# Fat Chance #4

30 June 2009

Yemenia Airways Flight 626 from Paris, an Airbus A310-324, dove into the Indian Ocean off the coast of the Comoros archipelago after an aborted approach to Prince Said Ibrahim International Airport. It missed the runway, as well as landfall, by one kilometre.

The moon phase at the time of the crash was a waxing half-moon that set at 9.23 pm. There was no solar or lunar illumination, so a backup runway was attempted due to 65 kph winds occurring at the time of approach. Later, no record could be found of any aircraft ever attempting to land on the designated runway.

Bahia Bakar, age 13, did not know how to swim. It was 1:32 am at the time of impact. She clutched floating debris for 15 hours – kicking, paddling, and eventually waving to a distant fishing boat, gaining the crew's attention at 4 pm that afternoon.

Her face displayed multiple bruises and her collarbone was free-floating within her body. Of the 153 bodies recovered – only Bahia was found alive.

Grande Comore Island, where the capital, Moroni, is located, is a mountainous island with volcanic peaks that reach a maximum of 2,361 metres, including the Karthala volcano. It was unusually active the day before the crash, creating a mesoscale open cell convection. As a result, the volcano likely disrupted the lower tropospheric wind flow with a strong and unpredictable shear.

In a city emergency ward, Bahia's Uncle Joseph told her that her mother was in the next room, and that she could see her soon, because – as later recounted – he was unsure of what to say to the child.

The mother's corpse was located a few days later, drifting back toward Paris via Madagascar.

9 December 2005

Robert James Mauleverer Garnett, age 35, had recently separated from his wife. Together, they have a four-year-old daughter. Robert was a manager at a McDonald's outlet in Lambeth, South London.

Big Macs differ in size, protein and fat quotients in each country in which they are served. In the UK, a Big Mac offers 2,340 kilojoules of energy. They are pre-made and housed in airtight steam trays, awaiting sale, assembly, and consumption.

PC Lee Clement, the first officer on the scene, said the police received a call from Robert's sister, Fiona, on Sunday 11 December. She was concerned her brother had not been seen since the previous Friday. He was due at an extended family gathering on the night of his death.

Robert's internal body temperature peaked at 45 degrees Celsius, exacerbated by a 90% diminished capacity to sweat out toxins and release body heat.

After he broke into Robert's flat, Detective Clement said, 'I could see the bedroom ahead of me with the door open. The scene appeared untidy. There was a double bed ahead of me and the room was in darkness.' A large consuming body was lying on its back on the bed. Its knees were raised with both feet planted on the bed. Three Ziplock bags with powdery residue lay on the floor beside the body. Cocaine and ketamine were found in Roberts's blood, and traces of morphine in his urine. Detective Sergeant Paul Byrne later told the inquest, 'There was no suggestion of third-party or criminal involvement.'

Robert had poached himself by zipping up in a rubber suit after ingesting an enormous amount of cocaine and other narcotics. His body temperature increased with alacrity, causing his brain to swell. His intention in donning a gimp suit was to increase the intensity of his high. The result was death by hyperthermia and the concurrent process of cerebral oedema – excessive fluids on the brain which cause its structural implosion.

Coroner John Sampson recorded a verdict of accidental death.

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Kent MacCarter is publisher of Cordite Books, and managing editor of 'Cordite Poetry Review'. He is the author of three poetry collections: 'In the Hungry Middle of Here', 'Sputnik's Cousin', and 'California Sweet', and edited, 'Joyful Strains: Making Australia Home'.

# An Old Brick Home on Huntley Street

Ellina Zipman

The house is being pulled down  
It is of yellow brick  
An old lady used to live here  
For fifty years  
The excavator is digging  
Its tongue deep  
Into the memories

The house is being pulled down  
It is of yellow bricks  
An old lady lived here  
For fifty years  
The walls keep memory  
The excavator digs its tongue  
Into recesses of her life  
The house is no more  
The space is clean

An old house is being pulled down  
Machines puff and creak  
The bricks hold her life  
Only dirt left  
Fifty years of laughter  
The girl in the wedding dress  
Now it is dust

The house is being pulled down  
It is of yellow brick  
It is old  
A lady lived here  
All her life

The house is being pulled down  
It was of yellow brick  
Now the lot is empty  
Only dirt remains  
Evened

The house is being pulled down  
It is of yellow brick  
Dirty-yellow brick  
Not the bright sunny colour  
Her laughter bounces off the broken walls  
The hammock  
The tennis balls  
The kids' screams  
All pulled with the bricks  
To earth

The house is being pulled down  
It is of yellow bricks  
The excavator is digging  
Its tongue  
A snake  
Swallowing memories  
Of her life

The house is being pulled down  
It is of yellow brick  
It was built in the fifties  
When all the houses on the street  
Were yellow brick  
The same shape

The old lady who lived here  
Is in a nursing home  
A young couple bought it  
They don't want a post WWII legacy  
They want their own  
From scratch  
On the remnants of old  
The old bricks turned to dust  
The old lady moved on

The yellow brick house stood here once  
It had a room for children  
And a veranda  
And a big fruit garden  
And begonias in the back and at the front

The house is being pulled down  
An old lady lived here  
An excavator is spreading  
Her memories around the earth

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Ellina Zipman is a Melbourne writer, poet, teacher and academic. Her work appears in anthologies, newspapers, magazines and online. She is pursuing a PhD on positive ageing at Monash University and her first poetry collection, 'Through My Jewish Eyes' will be released by Poetica Publishing 2021.

## Nitpicker

Your regular editing lesson, brought to you by Penny Johnson, Program Manager of Professional Writing and Editing at RMIT.

Apply Australian style and formal grammar.

1. I would like to (brooch/ broach) the topic of personal transformation.
2. Lately Laurie, Soraya and (myself/I) have been obsessed with self-help books and podcasts.
3. Like others, we covet a shinier, savvier and stronger self, (which/that) these authors and podcasters promise is within our reach.
4. We are improving our financial literacy, decluttering our wardrobes, managing our anxiety, becoming more courageous (and/, and) getting fit.
5. Neither total converts (nor/ or) total cynics, we operate like bowerbirds, picking and choosing what suits.

Answers on page 41



# Moral Philosophy

Kevin Brophy

Ants are trailing up the outside wall.  
 Leaves are yellowing the yard.  
 I read a lengthy essay  
 on morals and philosophy  
 and ask you what is better,  
 the dignity of being free  
 or the diminishment of me  
 for the greater good of us.

You say the greater good's being lost  
 in all the reasons rich dudes (that's us)  
 find to keep multitudes outside  
 the greater good's benign expanse.

I have seen the ants trailing up the wall,  
 leaves clip each other in their fall  
 fill the yard with crinkled yellow cards.  
 The world is changing, always changing,  
 the essay notes at its ending.  
 My coffee's cold, and the ants are saying  
 something about themselves I cannot hear.

My silver ladder and its world-above, take me  
 to the cracks they're squeezing through  
 into the haven of our inner walls  
 safe from winter's back yard pall.

I'll seal the cracks and slip away.  
 The ants will find another way; though  
 I'll never know what it was they  
 said among themselves, what convinced them  
 all to trail up on that wall above  
 whatever's in the yard they're coming from.

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Kevin Brophy's latest book is 'In This part of the World', (MPU Inc). Emeritus Professor at the University of Melbourne, he was poet in residence at the Australia Council Keesing Studio in Paris, 2019-20. In 2022, Finlay Lloyd Press will publish his second collection of short fiction.

# Transforming a Manuscript to a Book

Paul Morgan on editing, compromise, and censorship

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Oh what a feeling! You've finished your story... but this is not the end; it's only a beginning. A neat pile of A4 sheets has a very long way to go before becoming a book.

We are generally too close to – and too much in love with – our own writing to see what needs fixing up to turn it into something that works at its best, keeping a reader turning those pages. To maximise the chances that your work is published and read, it deserves a professional edit. Is the basic concept likely to be picked up by a publisher? Are there plot twists or characters, which were fun to write but don't add to the story? Does the middle section 'sag'? Only after these and many other questions are answered, can you even think of submitting to an agent or publisher, let alone think about a copy edit or proofreading.

As part of this process, it's not uncommon for an editor to suggest you change or remove a passage to make the work a more attractive prospect for a publisher. The choice is yours, and you may not always agree, but it's usually wise to accept the suggestion. In authoritarian countries (which now outnumber democracies in the world), such suggestions from publishers and authorities have dark consequences if not followed. At best you may be censored or 'cancelled'. At worst, you may be tortured and imprisoned for years, as happens in Turkey, China, and so many other countries. The PEN International Case List gives chilling details on the scores of writers and journalists persecuted around the world.

It is not only political pressure which causes writing to be 'edited' in this way. It may be religious extremism, or a culture which fears sexual freedom. It may be conformity to orthodoxies (right or wrong, right or left), which are intolerant of discourse with other views.

It is not only in fundamentalist societies where such restrictions are imposed. For example, Philip Pullman's best-selling, 'His Dark Materials', trilogy was heavily criticised by Christian churches in the US for being 'anti-religious', so his North American publisher insisted on editing out a passage which described the heroine, Lyra's, sexual awakening.

Navigating our own choices when reviewing a manuscript is never an easy task. However, it's a deeply rewarding process that brings your words closer to becoming a publishable work. These are easy choices though, compared to the challenges faced by writers in countries where a wrong word can mean the author ends up in a dank prison cell for years. There is no greater demonstration that words matter, and have a power which dictators fear.

Discover the work of PEN International's Melbourne Centre and follow activities on our website and social media.

[www.penmelbourne.org](http://www.penmelbourne.org)  
Twitter: @PenMelbourne  
Instagram: penmelbourne  
Facebook: @penmelbourne

# Workshops and Courses

See more courses and book online at [writersvictoria.org.au](http://writersvictoria.org.au), phone (03) 9094 7855 or email [program@writersvictoria.org.au](mailto:program@writersvictoria.org.au).

Please note: this information is correct at the time of printing. If anything changes, the website will be updated as soon as possible, and the latest correct information can be found there.

## **MWF x WV Workshop** **Program: Writing Successful Narrative Non-Fiction**

with Maria Tumarkin

Award-winning cultural historian and author Maria Tumarkin leads a workshop on successfully navigating the challenges of non-fiction writing. Drawing from her creative process writing the critically acclaimed 'Axiomatic'—a boundary-shifting fusion of thought, storytelling and reportage — she walks you through truthfully addressing ethical dilemmas, developing and staying true to your voice, integrating research without clunky insertions of background info, and problem-solving around the trickiest hurdles of your project.

When: Saturday 4 September 2021, 10:00am – 12:30pm

Bookings via the Melbourne Writers Festival website

## **MWF x WV Workshop** **Program: How to Write Speculative Fiction**

with Claire G. Coleman

In increasingly unreal times, readers are turning to the imagined worlds of speculative fiction to make sense of the past, present and how our story might end. Join prize-winning Noongar author Claire G Coleman ('Lies, Damned Lies') on the ins and outs of the genre,

sharing insight into her own creative process crafting the celebrated speculative novels 'Terra Nullius' and 'The Old Lie'. Find out why the genre is such a powerful political force, its capacity to explore colonialism and its undoing, and how to build realistically unreal words in your own writing.

When: Saturday 4 September 2021, 2:30-5:00pm

Bookings via the Melbourne Writers Festival website

## **MWF x WV Workshop** **Program: How to Fictionalise Your Life**

with Kavita Bedford

How can your writing convincingly push beyond memoir to make compelling fiction inspired by real-life events and relationships? Join Kavita Bedford, the author of the critically acclaimed novel 'Friends & Dark Shapes', for a workshop on how to fictionalise your life. She looks at literary devices, breaking down form and creating voice; how wrestling back a narrative can serve as a political act; and examples of modern writers who draw from stylised personal perspectives.

When: Sunday 5 September 2021, 2:30-5:00pm

Bookings via the Melbourne Writers Festival website

## **MWF x WV Workshop** **Program: Creating YA Characters**

with Alice Pung

Much-beloved bestselling author Alice Pung conducts a workshop

on how to write compelling character-based YA stories. She shares insight and tips from her own writing, including her novel 'Laurinda', which won the Young People's Literature prize at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Learn more about developing three-dimensional human beings, crafting dialogue and inner monologue, creating a character arc, and if and how to write characters of different backgrounds.

When: Saturday 11 September 2021, 10:00am-12:30pm

Bookings via the Melbourne Writers Festival website

## **MWF x WV Workshop** **Program: How to Embrace Vulnerability in Your Writing**

with Rick Morton

Vulnerability beats at the heart of Rick Morton's work. His bestselling memoir 'One Hundred Years of Dirt' laid bare the legacy of family trauma, and its follow-up, 'My Year of Living Vulnerably', charts his healing from complex PTSD. In this special workshop, Morton demonstrates how writers of all genres and themes can embrace vulnerability in their work, sharing insight into how to capture it on page, how to extend empathy to the people you write about, and how to dance the line between light and shade to make your storytelling sing.

When: Saturday 11 September 2021, 2:30-5:00pm

Bookings via the Melbourne Writers Festival website

**MWF x WV Workshop  
Program: How to Get  
Your Book Published**

with Bridie Jabour

After penning most of her novel, Bridie Jabour gathered her courage and began cold-calling agents. Since then, she has published the newly minted non-fiction book 'Trivial Grievances', learning of the many pathways to publication along the way. Jabour will lead writing exercises and offer advice on sharpening a first draft, while providing practical tips on pitching your manuscript, liaising with agents, and finding a publisher.

When: Sunday 12 September 2021, 10:00am – 12:30pm

Bookings via the Melbourne Writers Festival website

**MWF x WV Workshop  
Program: Writing from  
a Child's Perspective**

with Sofie Laguna

From 'To Kill a Mockingbird' to 'Room', stories with young narrators at their centre can help us see the world in new and unexpected ways. Miles Franklin-winner Sofie Laguna will guide you through the process of writing from a child's perspective. She will show how to access an authentic point of view, how to solve challenges of plot, structure and pace with a strong central voice, and how to ensure your work is original and energised.

When: Sunday 12 September 2021, 2:30-5:00pm

Bookings via the Melbourne Writers Festival website

**ONLINE WORKSHOP:  
Established Author Forum:  
Michelle de Kretser on Writing  
Through Fear (plus bonus Q&A)**

with Michelle de Kretser

As part of our new Established Author Forum, Michelle will speak about writing through fear, and host an 'Ask Me Anything' session to share wisdom and wit about her career. This session will take place online, so you can stream from your own home or come and join a watch party at The Wheeler Centre.

When: Thursday 16 September, 2021, 6:30-8:30pm

Member Price: \$45/\$60

Non-Member Price: \$100

Level: Established Only

**The Beginning, Middle, and  
End: Crafting Short Stories**

with Tony Birch

This course will engage participants with the practice and craft of the short story. We will discuss what it is that constitutes the short form and participants will be introduced to published stories that provide excellent examples of style, form, structure, character and plot. We will also work with 'sketching', observational work and consider what may be regarded as the 'germ' of a story and the challenge of shifting ideas to the page to produce a completed draft.

When: Saturday 2 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**ONLINE WORKSHOP:  
Writing Biography: Structures,  
Focus, and Stories**

with Michelle Scott Tucker

Whether you're writing biography, interested in ghost writing, drawing together your family or local history, or even thinking about feature interviews—if you want to tell someone else's story then you

need to learn how to illuminate your subject with writing that is engaging, ethical and insightful. This lively and practical workshop will use real-life examples to examine what works—and what doesn't—when writing other people's lives.

When: Saturday 9 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**Delving into Historical  
Fiction: Inspiration, Research  
and Finding the Balance**

with Sulari Gentill

Writing fiction often begins with a single shining idea. Writing historical fiction is about setting that idea in a time and place that has existed and been recorded. The historical novelist's art is that of weaving a new story into the old. Explore the techniques, tricks, ideas and pitfalls of bringing history into a narrative in a way that enhances rather than swamps.

When: Saturday 9 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**ONLINE WORKSHOP:  
Writing True Crime**

with Leigh Straw

Whether it's the joy of transgression or a delight in being deviant, true crime fascinates because the stories are real and multi-dimensional. A crime or a criminal will draw attention but it's the wider story that extends the fascination. True crime books offer 'armchair detectives' the opportunity to participate and get involved in either solving the crime or understanding

a true crime case or story in relation to history and society.

When: Sunday 10 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**Inspiration for a Writing Life: How do you find discipline and respond to self-doubt when the going gets tough?**

with Ingrid Laguna

How do you find the discipline to keep writing when the going gets tough? How do you keep believing in yourself when there are so many books coming out every day, and so many wonderful authors? How do you trust the process and keep playing with words? Explore strategies for responding to self-doubt and plan for a writing life that is inspired, supported and purposeful.

When: Sunday 10 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**Rhythm and Rhyme: Writing Picture Books in Verse**

with Nicki Greenberg

A great bit of rhyme is a magical thing. But a clumsy one sets readers' – and publishers' – teeth on edge. Learn about crafting quality stories in verse, with a special focus on writing picture books. We'll explore useful techniques, tips and tricks, as well as the pitfalls to avoid when working in this ever-popular narrative form.

When: Sunday 10 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**Writing Yourself as a Character**

with Mandy Ord

Mandy shares her passion and fascination for the genre of autobiographical comics and life writing, as well as her practical and creative approach to writing engaging personal stories. Representing the self as character is at the core of exploring the powerful combination of words and pictures that is central to the literary language of comics. Focusing on writing and visual grammar, students will discover how to create their own unique autobiographical stories and/or comics.

When: Saturday 16 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**Unreliable Narrators and Other Innovative Points-of-View**

with Robert Gott

If the voice in your writing is wrong, everything is wrong, and this applies whether your narrator is reliable or deliberately unreliable. Whatever your ambition, you need the voice to carry it. We will explore and play with point of view, tone and character. It's not just about finding your voice; it's also about finding the voices of your characters.

When: Saturday 16 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**Idea to Action: Getting Your Picture Book on the Page**

with Maxine Beneba Clarke

Arrive with a picture book idea; leave with a finished first draft of the text, and a fully

visualised illustration concept.

When: Sunday 17 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**Workshopping to Improve Your Writing**

with Emily Brewin

Writing doesn't have to be a solitary pursuit – workshopping is a great way to meet other writers and to develop your writing. Discover the ins and outs of giving, receiving and applying constructive feedback, and learn how to create a safe, creative workshopping space. Participants are encouraged to bring 800-1200 of their own words to share.

When: Sunday 17 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**How to Emotionally Engage Your Reader**

with Emma Viskic

Great prose, action and ideas can all be for nothing if readers don't care enough to keep turning the pages. Award-winning author Emma Viskic will expand your knowledge of one of the most important elements of writing: creating an emotional connection with your readers. You'll leave this workshop with the tools to create stories your reader will remember for a long time to come. For fiction and non-fiction, beginners to advanced.

When: Saturday 23 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

### **Using Science as Your Muse**

with Leah Kaminsky

Did you know grasshoppers have ears on their belly, or that scallops have 200 eyes? The world of science is filled with so many weird and wonderful discoveries. We will explore how you can use science as a wellspring for your creativity and generate original, unique ideas to strengthen your own writing. No prior science experience necessary!

When: Sunday 24 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

### **ONLINE WORKSHOP: The Publishing Landscape: An Overview**

with Hella Ibrahim

The publishing process is a mystery from the outside, but writers are expected to navigate it with professionalism and ease. Hella will demystify the industry and provide you with the information to make the right choices for your work and your career. Topics covered include types of publishers, how to get your book in the door, the editing process, fees and royalties, and distribution channels, marketing and publicity.

When: Saturday 30 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

### **ONLINE WORKSHOP: Shaping an Essay Collection**

with Ellena Savage

Essayists are notorious magpies. We collect facts, anecdotes, theories, speculations, fantasies, and desires, finding materials

everywhere from textbooks to train rides. Given the vast and diverse terrain essayists move through, often within a single short piece of writing, how can we shape the ‘messy everything’ into a collection that in some way coheres?

When: Sunday 31 October, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

### **Plotting and Structure for Beginners**

with Anna George

In this jam-packed workshop, discover what makes a story compulsive reading, and why carefully crafting your novel’s mid-section is key – both to staying the course as you write and to keeping your readers reading. Whether you’re starting out or have a manuscript underway, acclaimed author Anna George will teach you how to turn your story idea into a structured narrative.

When: Sunday 7 November, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

### **ONLINE SEMINAR: Ask... About Poetry Publishing**

with Jacinta Le Plastrier, Jeanine Leane, and Terri-ann White

Join us for an evening dedicated to poetry publishing. Poetry is often overlooked in industry discussions, but poets and their publishers have clear and distinct needs, challenges, and opportunities. Take this opportunity to ask questions of our three panellists about all aspects of poetry publishing, from pitching, distribution, marketing, tips, and trends. This

evening will be run as a Q&A session and participants will be invited to submit their questions before and during the seminar.

When: Tuesday 9 November, 2021, 6:00-7:30pm

Member Price: \$18/\$25

Non-Member Price: \$40

Level: All

### **Avoiding Conflict Avoidance: Jump-Starting Stalled Stories**

with Cate Kennedy

Do you find yourself avoiding conflicted characters and potentially ‘incendiary’ scenarios in your fiction because it feels too risky? Does the dynamic energy of your story suffer as a result? Creating characters with dilemmas fuels great plots, but first authors need to tackle their own internal conflicts about exploring such material. Participants who find themselves with flat, uninspiring protagonists in stories that run out of steam will have the opportunity to take a fresh look at the work they’re stuck on, and hopefully start to ‘unlock the block’.

When: Saturday 13 November, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

### **ONLINE WORKSHOP: Personal Narrative in Creative Non-Fiction**

with Rafeif Ismail

This course will focus on the creation, development and editing of short personal narratives. You will learn about personal narrative structures, the ethics in writing creative non-fiction, and techniques to manage vulnerability and burnout. Come with an idea and leave with a polished first draft.

When: Saturday 13 November, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**ONLINE WORKSHOP:  
Story Time: Navigating  
Narrative Time, Dual  
Timelines, and Time Jumps**

with Victoria Purman

It can be creative and fun to play around with timelines in a novel. But what are the challenges of playing with time or using more than one timeline in a novel? How does a writer keep track of when events happen in a novel? Victoria Purman has written both dual time-line and historical fiction and will guide you through the process of keeping track of time and how to jump back and forth in it.

When: Sunday 14 November, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**ONLINE WORKSHOP:  
Writing Animals**

with Laura Jean McKay

People have been depicting nonhuman animals for millennia, but how can we create meaningful nonhuman animal characters in 2021? We will look at ourselves as writing animals and how we can write other animals in a meaningful way, drawing from examples of animal fiction as well as the climate changed environment. Through reading, workshopping and exercises we explore the nonhuman in fiction that roars.

When: Saturday 20 November, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**Established Author Forum:  
End of Year Event**

As the Established Author Forum finishes for the year, come along for a social evening to celebrate the year that was and toast the year to come. An open mic will invite reading from your works-in-progress and hear what your friends and colleagues have been working on.

When: Thursday 18 November, 2021, 6:30-8:30pm

Member Price: \$45/\$60

Non-Member Price: \$100

Level: Established Only

**ONLINE WORKSHOP:  
Escaping the Monster: How  
to Use the Tropes of Horror to  
Write Stories that Resonate**

with Kaaron Warren

Why should you borrow from your colleagues in horror fiction? Because a horror overlay allows you to explore the worst and best of humanity and, if you're honest, yourself. Learn some of the tricks of the trade with one of Australia's most awarded horror writers, Kaaron Warren, and how you can incorporate horror tropes into your writing to add thrills, chills, and real fear to your writing.

When: Sunday 21 November, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**How to Write Coming  
of Age (At Any Age)**

with Kate Mildenhall

Coming of Age novels come in all shapes and sizes and are often the books we adored as younger readers. So, what are the elements of these novels and how can we best learn from, write and market them? Participants will read samples, discuss, plan and do

writing exercises to support them to craft their own coming of age novel, be it already in progress, or still just a dream.

When: Sunday 21 November, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**ONLINE WORKSHOP:  
Navigating the Emotional  
Journey of Memoir**

with Yuot Alaak

Memoir writing can be emotionally draining but can also be cathartic. It is important that memoirists strike the right balance between emotion and reason. Writing a memoir is about deep personal reflections and it is important writers do not rely on shallow emotions at the expense of reason as readers will see through this. Learn to navigate this emotional journey with confidence.

When: Saturday 27 November, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

**Show, Don't Tell**

with Eliza Henry-Jones

Everyone knows the golden writing rule "show don't tell" but what does it actually mean? And how can we achieve it? Being aware of showing the reader rather than telling can help make your writing more nuanced and impactful. Through a series of dynamic exercises, discussion and content, delve into what showing in writing actually means and the best way to go about achieving it.

When: Sunday 28 November, 2021, 10:00am – 4:00pm

Member Price: \$135/\$155

Non-Member Price: \$215

Level: All

# Milestones

Over the past three months, our members have had an extensive range of writing successes, and we'd like to congratulate them all on their achievements. Read below to catch up on what Writers Victoria members have been publishing and gaining recognition for recently.

## Book Publishing

**E. J. Beaton:** 'The Councillor' published by Penguin.

**Gabriella Kelly-Davies:** 'Breaking Through the Pain Barrier: The extraordinary life of Dr Michael J. Cousins' published and launched by Painaustralia for the beginning of National Pain Week.

**Harry Blutstein:** 'Games of Discontent' published by McGill-Queen's University Press.

**Jacque Byron:** 'Happy Hour' published by Allen & Unwin.

**Jan Dale:** 'Chasing Music: My Crazy Campervan Adventures in America' published by Busybird.

**John A. Martino & Michael P. O'Kane:** 'Olympia: The Birth of the Games' published by Histria Books.

**Karen Martin:** 'Dancing the Labyrinth' published in both English and Greek, in Melbourne and Athens respectively.

**Kate Ryan:** 'The Golden Book' published by Scribe.

**Michelle Tom:** 'Ten Thousand Aftershocks' published by HarperCollins.

**Narrelle M Harris:** commissioning editor of 'The Only One in the World: A Sherlock Holmes Anthology' published by Clan Destine Press.

**Ray Liversidge:** manuscript of short poems and flash fiction (working title 'Flash Points') accepted by Ginninderra Press, due to be published mid-2022.

**Robert Hadler:** 'Mutineers: A True Story of Heroes and Villains' published by Wilkinson Publishing.

**Roz Bellamy:** 'Mood' acquired by Wakefield Press.

**Sandra Carmel:** 'Last Hope' published by Evernight Publishing.

**Sharon Postlewhite:** 'The Dumnonian Compass' published by Shawline Publishing Group.

**Sue Parritt:** '28 Days' published by Next Chapter.

## Published Writing

**Alida Galati:** short story 'Speck' shortlisted in the 2021 Furphy Literary Awards; to be published in the upcoming 2021 anthology.

**Gayelene Carbis:** poems recently published in 'Live Encounters – Special Edition', 'Australian and New Zealand Poets'; 'Eureka Street'; and 'Not Very Quiet'.

**John Bartlett:** poems published in 'The Crow', 'The Lake' (UK), and 'Meniscus Literary Review'.

**Sean O'Leary:** short story 'Parkville' published in online magazine 'PunkNoir'.

## Awards

**Gayelene Carbis:** two stories shortlisted for the MicroFlix Festival and Awards, and Highly Commended in the Yeats Poetry Prize for Australia 2020.

**Greg Hansen:** novel 'Pelsaert's Nightmare' won Gold in the 25th annual Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPYs), for the category Australia/New Zealand/Pacific Rim – Best Regional Fiction.

**Kaye Baillie:** two picture books shortlisted in the 3 to 5 age category of the 2021 Speech Pathology Australia Book Awards: 'Boo Loves Books' illustrated by Tracie Grimwood, published by New Frontier Publishing, and 'When the Waterhole Dries Up' illustrated by Max Hamilton, published by Windy Hollow Books.

## NITPICKER ANSWERS (from page 33)

1. Broach.
2. I.
3. Which.
4. And [, and] is an example of the serial comma or Oxford comma, which isn't preferenced in Australian style guides for a straightforward list like this].
5. Nor.

# Membership Form

Name

Organisation or writers group

Postal address

Email

Please tick if you do not wish to receive our enews\*

\*We will not supply or sell your information to a third party.

Suburb

Phone

Postcode      State

Gender  Female  Male  Other

Date of birth (optional)   /   /

At what stage of writing are you?

Early (just begun)  Emerging (some publication)  Established (published a full-length work)

What do you write, or what would you like to write?

- |   |  |   |  |                                      |
|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic           | <input type="checkbox"/> Crime           | <input type="checkbox"/> Literary fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio               | <input type="checkbox"/> Web content |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biography/Memoir   | <input type="checkbox"/> Essays/Reviews  | <input type="checkbox"/> Lyrics           | <input type="checkbox"/> Romance             | <input type="checkbox"/> Young adult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blog               | <input type="checkbox"/> Family history  | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-fiction      | <input type="checkbox"/> Screenwriting       | <input type="text"/>                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business/Technical | <input type="checkbox"/> Feature writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Playwriting      | <input type="checkbox"/> Short stories       |                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childrens          | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic novels  | <input type="checkbox"/> Poetry           | <input type="checkbox"/> Speculative fiction |                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copywriting        | <input type="checkbox"/> Journalism      | <input type="checkbox"/> Popular fiction  | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel              |                                      |

Do you identify as:

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse  Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander  Person with Disability

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 Regional \$50

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# Writers Victoria's Spotlight Services

Spotlight is a suite of affordable options that links you with experienced writers, editors and industry experts for personalised feedback on your work. Writers Victoria works with a team of authors, editors and writing tutors to make sure your work is read by someone with expertise in your area.

## Spotlight on your...

*Voice in memoir*

*First page*

*Character*

*First chapter*

*Poetry*

*Pitch*

*Synopsis*

*Social media*

Visit Writers Victoria's website for more information and bookings

<https://writersvictoria.org.au/support/spotlight-services>



## 2021 WRITEABILITY FELLOWSHIPS

Writers Victoria's Writeability Fellowships support emerging writers with disability with tailored professional development.

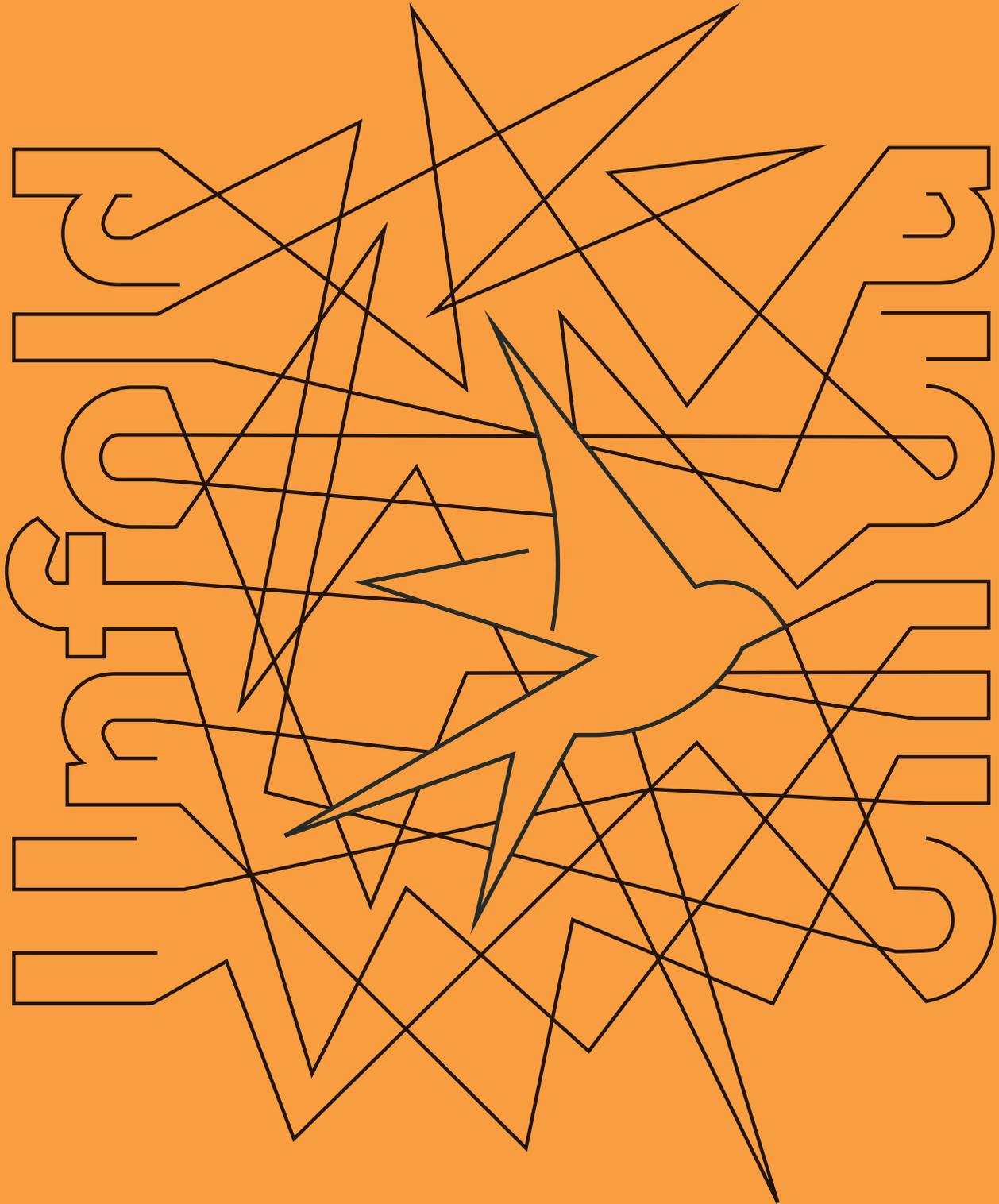
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More information online

[bit.ly/2021WBF](https://bit.ly/2021WBF)

2021 Season 2 Program

Program online at [writersvictoria.org.au](http://writersvictoria.org.au)



**WRITERS**  
VICTORIA

All about writers