

The Victorian Writer

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Editorial – Lucy Hamilton

Transformation – where shall we take this theme in this moment? Spring? Lockdown six ending? Marvel phase four?

I've always loved change. If something's not working, I want it fixed. If something's been one way for a long time, I want to just try and see what will happen if we do it a little bit differently. I have certainly had to pull from that attitude over the last two years. I've also been forced to lower my expectations on what change can look like at times (e.g. swapping ends of the dining table with my partner so we work from a different angle every couple of months).

I'll leave further musings on the theme to the writers in this issue, who can better express the complexities and inequities highlighted over the last little while, as well as muse on other meanings of the theme. In this issue you will find nonfiction from Sian Prior about writing a second memoir, Laura Fulton on the deeper meaning of changing clothes, Tina Cartwright on the transformative power of workshops, Adolfo Aranjuez on the intersections between mental health and lockdown, and Ella Baxter on changing attitudes and pregnancy. You'll also find an interview by Jess Zanoni with Yves Rees about their new memoir. There's poetry from Sarah Fraser, Gayelene Carbis and Indrani Perera.

This issue houses the Woman of Colour Commission, something we offer thanks to an anonymous donor. This year it was won by Gurmeet Kaur with their poem 'Notes on Provisional Status'. Judge and Writers Victoria Chair Noë Harsel said of the work that it is "a poem that displays strong imagery of pain and of interrogating narratives of migration and history. As a reader, I was moved by so many emotions, feeling keenly a loss from



a relationship to heritage and the journey toward understanding through the calling of ancestors".

On to transformations at the Writers Victoria remote office. Since the last edition, we have welcomed Danny Silva Soberano into the team as Program Officer – Community. Danny works Monday – Wednesday and those of you excited about the reopening of the studios will have received emails from Danny. They also run our projects in the City of Casey and work with Caitlin McGregor on our manuscript assessment and mentorship service. Welcome to the team, Danny!

I will end on one final transformation. With this issue, we welcome Elizabeth Flux as new Editor for the 'The Victorian Writer'. I'm so delighted that Liz agreed to come on board. With her vast editorial experience, I'm excited to see Liz's vision unfold over this next chapter of this wonderful magazine.

Lucy
CEO, Writers Victoria

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Up-to-date information about special events and writing groups can now be found online. writersvictoria.org.au/calendars
writersvictoria.org.au/resources/writing-groups

Cover image: **Hop Dac** is an artist and writer who lives in Geelong. He has had work published in 'Overland', 'Kill Your Darlings', 'Peril' and various anthologies including 'Growing Up Asian in Australia', although these days he's spending most of his free time painting and running (not at the same time).

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

Another round, anyone?

On writing a second memoir

Sian Prior

There must be a good metaphor. A fresh one. No food comparisons (soufflés never rising twice, cakes you can't have and eat, multiple bites of the cherry). I hate cooking. Grooming, perhaps. I think of a comb running through hair, each stroke gathering up a different combination of strands, tackling a different series of tangles. This metaphor has its limits too. Still the same head.

Mirrors are an obvious choice of metaphor. My first memoir was full of them. Is it a different mirror I'm looking into? No, it doesn't quite work. Mirrors can't encompass the temporal. They only capture you now. And now. And now. Not then. And after then. And before then.

I've written a second memoir, everyone. Another sad one. "Happy stories are boring." This is what I tell my writing students. "Find the thing that troubles you the most. The knot you can't untie. Write about that."

But – again?

Writing multiple memoirs is not new. Think of Karl Ove Knausgård pumping out millions of words about himself. Think of Deborah Levy, Vivian Gornick, Joan Didion, all producing multiple slim volumes examining their large lives. Think of Michel de Montaigne and his personal essays, scratched and re-scratched in ink, a man examining and re-examining every fleeting thought he has over a lifetime.

I am no Knausgård. My first book, 'Shy: a memoir' (Text Publishing, 2014), took five

years to write. It felt longer. For a while now I have been convinced that I only have two true stories to tell in memoir form, and then it will be done. But why retrace the same steps, the same years, with variations on the same themes? Why tell this story? And how to justify – to potential readers and to myself – what could look like an act of monumental egocentricity?

When I was researching for my creative writing doctorate, I came across an Australian psychologist Peter Raggatt who had revisited the theory of "the dialogical self" and had written specifically about dialogical selves in storytelling. Raggatt asks: "Can one's life be captured in a single, grand, synthesizing story? Consider your own response to a request to 'tell your life story'. Taken seriously, the question might prove impossible to answer satisfactorily."

Part of the problem, he says, "is in the singularity and finality of the phrase 'your life story' – as if there could be a definitive account. The phrase 'your life story' presupposes a ... linear, integrated, and coherent (tale), with all the facts about your life neatly tied together with a golden thread, a single narrative voice."

But as Raggatt reminds us, "the story you tell will probably be but one story from a number of possibilities, and therefore the life story could never be encompassed by a monologue." The life story, he says, "is really more like a conversation of narrators, or perhaps a war of historians in your head."

In my first memoir I took this idea of the dialogical self and named several of these “selves” or “personas” inhabiting my head. Most of the time they were called either Shy Sian or Professional Sian, and they had a long conversation in the final pages of my memoir. They were two possible versions of me as I saw myself eight years ago, and they were mostly interested in debating the topic of my shyness.

But because identity is mutable and ever-emergent, and because hindsight is a process rather than a momentary epiphany, and because understanding shyness was never going to provide me with a complete picture of myself, I’ve been at it again, asking *who am I, and why?* This time, shyness will barely rate a mention.

The second memoir is about my long, complex and ultimately unsuccessful quest to have a child. These events were evolving during the same years I wrote about in the first book, but it was never mentioned. As American writer Vivian Gornick explains, every work of literature has both a “situation” and a “story”. How I came to be childless wasn’t the story I wanted to tell in ‘Shy’.

In writing a new memoir there have been new problems to solve. Given I have published a memoir already, how much do I need to tell again? What can I assume the reader knows, doesn’t know, needs to know, or doesn’t need to know about my life? If I revisit some of the same territory, will it be annoying for those readers who’ve read the first memoir? If I don’t, will it be baffling for those who haven’t?

Other challenges are already familiar. For example, who did I need to consult before I felt ethically comfortable writing about them in my book? What would I have done if they were not happy – take them out, disguise their identities even further, or learn to live with their discomfort?

To tell this story I have had to write – again – about an earlier relationship with a high-profile

person. When the book is published the same questions will be asked about why I’ve chosen not to reveal the identity of that person in the book, when a simple Google search will reveal their name. My answer will be the same. If everyone else has a made-up name to protect their privacy, using that person’s real name would be weirdly inconsistent.

I’ve made some new discoveries. In the first draft of the new memoir I had to revert to using real names, because when I changed them, there was a strange temptation to change other small details. Distorting the truth for ethical reasons felt like a gateway drug to unethical distortions. When the book is ready to be printed (Text Publishing, 2022) I will swap those real names for fake ones, secure in the knowledge that everything else I’ve written is true to my memories.

I’ve also discovered that, although the subject matter is completely different in the second memoir, the emotional territory is essentially the same. Fear, loneliness, grief, and unfulfilled desires are all back in the frame.

What both memoirs have had in common is their transformative effects. Researching and writing the first book enabled me to recast my shyness as an inherited temperament trait rather than a character flaw. I am still shy, but I am no longer ashamed of my shyness.

And writing the second memoir has enabled me to transmute deeply buried grief into self-compassion. My infertility led to three miscarriages, contributed to two relationship failures and produced a motherlode of sadness. Somehow, when that sadness is transferred to the page, it has less weight. Absence mutates into presence. I haven’t made a baby, but I *have* made something that will go out into the world and take on a life of its own.

Dr Sian Prior is a Melbourne author and writing teacher. She runs online courses in creative non-fiction. Her second memoir will be published in 2022. sianprior.com

Alone on the Borderline

Adolfo Aranjuez

It often starts with a pang of dread, then a frantic scan of the calendar, chat window, inbox. When was the last time you and a loved one spoke? You count the number of days since the last communiqué and check who initiated: an uncomfortable five, and you. You coax memories of your most recent time together, the chats so natural it seemed like lockdown never fractured interactions, and the food they'd sent you away with (which you quickly squirreled away as reminders to eat well and that you're cared for). Then you survey the exchanges before that – the length of them, the tone, the frequency, who spoke more, less, who ended it, how. Soon, you detect the sensation that typically displaces the dread: bittersweetness.

In that time, you could have dialled a number – one saved conveniently in your phone's 'Favourites' list, arranged hierarchally from most to least loved (or who most to least loves you; they're proportionate) – and been done with it. Except, for you, making something happen nullifies its positive impact, because affection should be expressed without prompting. Plus, you like it like this: being alone. A government-sanctioned lockdown is gold because it means you get the stability and bending-the-world-to-your-will that you've always craved. Sure, you have the occasional night of vice or those infrequent, therapist-decreed spontaneous activities, but your ideal baseline is *same*. Regularity means you can

temper the way that everything – the rest of the world, your relationships, your sense of self and self-worth – is always scarily in flux. Being alone means you don't have to answer to anyone, and that you don't have to expect an answer; each reach-out is an opening for vulnerability.

Then again, it's one thing to be *generally alone* and another entirely to be *specifically alone*. *Generally alone* encompasses survival mechanisms that compensate for isolation, and the swathes of solo apartment dwellers who derive pleasure from relative solitude. (Another thing altogether is the loneliness epidemic that's now a public health issue, but your concern is the *state* of alone, not the *condition* of loneliness). *Specifically alone* reminds you of your choices: that maybe you've pushed people away, if not explicitly, then by being overly fastidious about the 'right' way care should be shown. This has made it nigh-impossible for anyone to just 'be', or else taught them to stay at arm's length – which is, defensively, where you want them. Or maybe it's circumstantial, in the sense that the circumstances you do exert control over can no longer line up with the circumstances in others' lives. Or maybe it's just, as you've told yourself before, the way you're programmed – and, if people truly love you, they'll understand and act accordingly, right?

One other thing you can't pin down: time. It's always been vague and volatile, but,

Thermomixed into the 2020s cocktail alongside confinement, infection fear, overzealous libertarianism and long-drawn-out routine, it's gotten that much more elusive. You take to perusing Facebook's Memories pics to get a glimpse of where your loves had sprung from, and Instagram posts to see where those loves have led. You're dizzied by the realisation that so much has changed – hairstyles, humour, how often you hang out, your haunts – and that, despite the component parts no longer being the same material they were when the bonds first manifested, the bonds themselves are still there. You remember how social media was your playground, a place where you'd flaunted your enviable connections. It was a golden time: you were haloed with the warmth of your inner circle everywhere you went because you were together, and after that, the halo would stay because you'd have mementoes and messages with which to relive it. You were in-the-moment in a moment that would never really end.

But now? You'd egressed from online for your brain's sake, a neuronic short circuit causing you to fixate on likes and comments to the point of paralysis for hours. It was a healthy trade-off, you'd told yourself; saved from the allure of web-dispensed dopamine, you could focus instead on life outside the screen. The main perk of being alone is that socialising becomes an opt-in proposition – but in lockdown, with folks having substituted IRL with URL, you're marooned. You ponder the merits of making a glorious return, then find yourself dissuaded by the eons of internet history you'd have missed. Time, according to psychologist Ruth Ogden, distends and condenses to suit its container – a comfy apartment, a crowded street corner, an uncertain country, an unending app feed. And if your time away has taught you anything, it's that you don't really like it on there, anyway. The internet is a realm of pure thought, externalised as approximates of interaction. No-one really lols when they type 'lol' and you find this disingenuous.

Something you do like is being able to name things, and your therapist has gifted you that: *teleological mode of mentalisation* – the belief that observable action is necessary for validating the reality of psychosocial phenomena such as love. And another: object constancy – the aptitude for understanding that people and phenomena, once perceived, continue to exist even when absent from the purview of consciousness. Part of your problem has always been that you need assurances that someone in your life is actually *in* your life, so you hunt around for displays of affection. When most people aren't calling or making plans with one another, they're likely just tired or grumbling at bills or wishing the dishes washed themselves, trusting that relationships are as watertight as they were five days before. But you're not most people. You believe your ability to discern time gaps and tally interactions lets you Cassandra your way out of sinking ships before threats appear. The real danger, though, the teleological one, is to assume that everyone's feelings and actions are driven by consistent motives – which you somehow have preternatural access to. Worse is the assumption that, in prickly situations, people can only be one of two things: unaware of how their actions could hurt you (thus throwing into question how much they really know or care for you) or wilfully choosing to hurt you.

Humans are messy and changeable, including you, and this kills you, so you hold onto soothing but fallacious thinking. Interiority is your blessing and bane; instead of venturing out (to the real world or the simulated online one) to confront the unpredictable, you retreat into a carapace of self-devised interpersonal thought experiments. You rationalise this is okay because you're – as sociologist Corey Keyes has conveniently identified – *languishing* during this period of global uncertainty; not quite psychologically unwell, but not super great, either. Yes, despite the myriad metaphors to the contrary, love isn't a flame that can be

extinguished so readily. Yes, your fear of abandonment, which causes you to seek evidence of love and pre-emptively sideline or sever 'risky' relationships, needs to be kept in check. But there's a crisis out there and there's a crisis in here; with a personality disorder, you can at least say the problem is rooted in your cerebral apparatus. It's like living and watching at the same time, someone or something else dictating how each scene progresses to the next.

And so you resign yourself to suspension. You scroll through a few more windows, line up hippocampus pictures with social media pictures, and will time to get a damn move on. Everything is probably fine, even if you can't confirm it, and since you can't make it so, you'll just have to tell yourself it is.

Adolfo Aranjuez is an editor, writer, speaker and dancer. He is currently the Melbourne International Film Festival's publications and content manager and Liminal's publication editor; previously, he edited the magazines 'Metro' and 'Archer'. His essays, criticism and poetry have been published widely, including in 'Meanjin', 'Right Now', 'Screen Education', 'The Manila Review' and 'Cordite'.
adolfoaranjuez.com

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. My neighbour Henry is a writer (and an/and) editor.
2. Henry is the one (that/ who) recommended I do the life writing course.
3. He's lived all over the world: Hanoi, Vietnam; Rabat, Morocco (,/;) and Buenos Aires, Argentina.
4. His literary soirees are exquisite monthly affairs, for which he always (borrows/ lends) my chaise lounge.
5. In return I may mingle with his guests, (whoever/whomever) they may be that night.

Answers on page 21



Sprig: At the 'Poetry as Presence' workshop

Gayelene Carbis

for Claire Gaskin

The writer brought us gifts
in brown paper bags.
We were not
allowed to exchange
them amongst each other.
We had to sit with
what we were given.
We opened the bags –
a rush of paper
around the room –
the surprise of it.
And so I
reached inside
and felt
feathery fronds,
a soft tickling on my fingers,
the freshness like the grass
under my feet this morning
as I walked barefoot
towards the pool
for my morning laps at six
in that liminal time
between darkness
and light –
and the lightness
of this gift from the
brown paper bag
reached out its fingers
in a bergamot fragrance

(but that doesn't come close,
if I knew what it was,
I could better describe
its smell, but surely
this is all part of its purpose) –
I had to hold it close,
I had to
breathe it in to feel that
deliciousness –
it reminded me of something ...
but I wasn't sure what –
the mind of course wants to
work it out,
keeps saying – what is it?
what is it?
but the scent, so strong,
doesn't speak and
tells the mind to simply
shut up –
what it is doesn't matter –
the only meaning is
what you hold in your hand
this piece of the forest –
these leaves in their
meaningful patterns
either side of the sprig –
what shall we call the gift
when we don't know
its name?*

*Rosemary. It was rosemary! Of course it was.
The writer next to me told me as soon as she
smelt it. It occurred to me afterwards: if I
cooked, I'd know so many names of things.
And if I had a garden, I might know even more.
But the scent of rosemary – surely everyone
knows that. But apparently not.

Poetry As Presence: with Claire Gaskin
(Poetry Masterclass with Australian Poetry)
– January 2019

Gayelene Carbis is an Australian-Chinese-Cornish-Irish writer of poetry, prose and plays. Her first book of poetry, 'Anecdotal Evidence' (Five Islands Press) was awarded Finalist - International Book Awards, 2019. Gayelene is currently shortlisted for the Newcastle Poetry Prize and Finalist in the Microflix Writing Awards. Recent awards/shortlistings include: Ada Cambridge; Yeats; Woorilla; and Bruce Dawe Poetry Prizes (2021/2020). She won the My Brother Jack Poetry Award in 2020.

Inside

Ella Baxter

I am at a party where a friend is wearing \$900 pants. I am turning thirty-five and \$900 is what I earn in a good fortnight. The pants are beautiful and black, and they reach up towards her tailbone in the middle of her bottom. I track her in the pants through the party. I am there as she bends down – watching as the pants accommodate such extreme calisthenics. I'm there, wincing for the pants as she does a high kick on the dance floor. They are mesmeric. They are art. You could start a war and win it wearing pants like that.

At the party I drink one glass of wine, shove in two sticks of cheese, and follow up with some grainy crackers. I pop a handful of grapes in my jacket pocket for later and then make an effort to speak to people who have jobs, and who buy things without looking at the tags, and who don't gobble down free crackers. I don't tell them that you can work hard and still have no money. You can work hard and not be tired enough to sleep. You can be exhausted and still not sleep.

*

I am an artist and a writer who is trying to finish a sculpture exhibition while writing my second novel. Each evening I drink black coffee, beer, and boba tea to fuel my work. But lately my memory has been turning to glue, and my period is eleven days late. Three pregnancy tests all bunched together in my fist tell me I am pregnant.

I have lots of friends. That's a lie, I have very few friends, and when they found out, they were apprehensive. They reminded me both together and then separately, that I will need to change. I cling to memories of using my credit card to fly to Vietnam by myself and

then dancing in rubber thongs at a tiny club sandwiched between a wall of backpackers and a blocked fire exit. I reminisce about buying an old cat from a shelter who was slowly dying of cancer, and how I nursed him, feeding him sashimi grade salmon until he died in an old towel. For many years, terrible choices have been the best part of my life.

*

You are my baby and you are a drop of chaos the size of a tooth. I am unbelievably sick. It is a fetid sickness, that zooms me up through the atmosphere and then drops me plummeting to earth. I inhale peppermint oil, but it only seems to enhance the smell of the grout and the spray concrete ceiling in this flat. I sit in my studio amongst all my unfinished work and cry so loudly that I vomit, and then vomit again at the smell of my own insides. At the door my husband hovers, and I try to explain what it feels like, but the only thing I can come up with is, "terror mounting". *Terror mounting*, he repeats, and I nod. *Okay*, he says. He brings me a glass of water and a cold face cloth. I fall asleep and dream of laying a nest of eggs exactly like a turtle would. While I am burying my eggs in sand, I keep accidentally stepping on them. Up and down, I stomp, trying to move away from the precious eggs, but I panic, and move too quickly, smashing more.

I imagine you, my baby, cramped into my body, curled up like a spanakopita. You are on a long-haul flight for nine months and the thought of you unable to disembark disturbs me. At a dinner party, a psychic witch puts both her hands on my belly and tells me that you are a boy and that babies pick their parents. We live in a home surrounded by furniture we found by the side of the

road. Hard rubbish. Nothing matches and everything is broken. I touch my death shrouds, the homoerotic prints of Hockney, the kookaburra feather stuck into an incense holder, and wonder what conclusions you have drawn from us. I hope that you are content with me as your mother. At the very least I'll try my hardest to make you think of me fondly.

I am an artist. I am an artist. I am an artist! And here I am not actually making anything. The all-consuming nature of it has gone, and I am left performing the actions but thinking of you. You are in everything I do and touch, thoughts of you, fantasies of you, images of me holding you and stroking your head. I begin to look at ingredients of the paints I use, I store my needles differently, I reorganise the cupboards and move unsafe things to safer locations. Today I ate a big breakfast. Egg with tomato and cheese on bread, not toast, because the toaster kept blowing the fuse. I had one large Arabian date with tahini and two small cups of coffee. Four passion fruits. My stomach rolls and my uterus stretches, and I have never felt more like a conduit. Never more like a five-foot eight 3D printer. I want you to be happy and fed. I think I love you; I love you; I love you.

Another life. Another life! I am going to show you where the good bush walks are. How to make muffins, and you will teach me a lot more. I've heard it is a shared thing. This world is wild and it will hurt you and could even potentially kill you, and so I need to tell you that there are massive, deep, and wide things that you can be crushed or drowned by, and so you will absolutely need to be careful. There is also a sun and a moon and forests and cake. There is glomesh, quolls, and a million shades of green in one landscape alone, and there are beautiful, sticky things like honey and spit. There is a lot you will like. There is a lot.

Someone once told me that god is in everything you touch, but I've often thought of god as something that rests inside. God

is about as long as your spinal cord and is always talking, so you can choose to listen at any time. Marcus Aurelius explains it better than I do. You may not agree with some of the things the inside god says, I definitely don't, but I hope that when you are born, I can hear the god inside you. I want to hold you in two hands, and put my ear to your belly like a conch shell, and will listen to where you might have come from. It is an honour to carry you. It is an absolute dream.

Ella Baxter is a writer and artist. Her debut novel, 'New Animal' was released in March 2021. Ella is currently writing her second novel, 'Woo Woo', while working towards a new collection of death shrouds to exhibit.

Chrysalist

Sarah Fraser

On Day One I made a list. You know the kind.

Things to do

- (sun salutes)

Things to learn

- (Spanish)

Things to master

- (sourdough,
myself)

A list for the times

Exploiting time

When in crisis, build a chrysalis –

Don't let the demons in

Or the virus.

I lost the list around Week Nine.

Down the back of the couch somewhere
with my senses of time and purpose.

For a time, listless, (ha ha)

listing

I accepted stasis.

Walk, work, eat, sleep, awake

Routine needs no list.

Month Four I made another.

A 'post-' list to right myself:

remembered joys

promised changes

A lining of hope ready to split open.

I expected wings
on my back
when I emerged:
Spanish-speaking, hot-bread-scented, core-strengthened wings to propel me forward
Onwards
Upwards
Post-

This gooey mush of broken-down ambition,
slurried hopes and plans
– this wounded caterpillar –
Was not on the list.

Sarah Fraser is a medical writer, author and publisher. She has written three books for younger readers, and is co-editor of the non-fiction anthology 'On the Street'. Find more at quietcorner.com.au

Permission to write? GRANTED

Tina Cartwright

Many years ago, after a poetry reading, a well-known writer introduced me to his colleague saying,

“Tina’s a writer too.”

My mouth fell open. I was mortified.

“Not really,” I mumbled and ran out of there.

These days I will talk about writing to anyone who will listen, and many who won’t. I’d love nothing more than to have to my novel published. Not so much for achievement’s sake, or so that someone might read it, but more for the opportunity to work with an editor to refine and improve my work.

A series of fundamental turning points have occurred between that conversation and today – most of which, can be credited to writing classes. For aspiring writers, being ready to sign up to a class is a turning point in itself. It takes a special kind of courage to enter a classroom and not only confess to having a long-held dream but to ask for guidance in working toward achieving it. In Melbourne we are fortunate to have a wealth of accomplished, brilliant writers teaching writing. These tutors are acutely aware of the vulnerability it takes. They too, have been there.

Workshops and classes offered through writers’ festivals or writers’ centres can be a wonderful opportunity to work out which classes will work for you. There’s almost any kind of writing class imaginable, across all genres, from business writing to writing the

psychology of your characters. There are courses designed to get you started, to build writing discipline and hold you accountable, right through to those structured with the aim of students leaving with a complete, publishable manuscript. Between enrolling for a short course at your local community centre, to undertaking a full-time degree in creative writing, there’s a course to suit everyone’s lifestyle and budget.

It’s hard to encapsulate how much writing classes have meant to me over the years. Merely being around other writers was transformative. Award-winning authors shared their secrets. One said that whenever possible she travelled to where her story was set and walked her character’s route, checking the timeline and adding authenticity. Another told us that 90 per cent of the story should be happening now. An exercise highlighting what was scene and what was summary in a well-known writer’s work helped me make better decisions about which scenes were essential in my own writing. I started out shy and sceptical and finished up transformed.

For me the first turning point could be credited to gaining a greater understanding of the amount of work involved. If I hadn’t taken a writing class, I wouldn’t have met published authors. I might not have known about line-by-line or structural edits. I wouldn’t have known about agents or publishing meetings.



Photo: Nicholas Thomas via Unsplash

A few years ago, I took a class in short fiction at RMIT. The tutor was a generous, incredibly insightful author. Here was someone who'd already done all the thinking and distillation of thought that we were only beginning. Not only was she willing to share with us her journey to publication and her very precise feedback, she was honest in regard to the persistent, ongoing, selective and strategic work we would need to do if we wanted to progress with our writing. I understood that being able to write would not be nearly enough.

The second turning point was a shift in confidence. Before undertaking the short course at RMIT I had had a few things published, but that class was the first time I began to believe I could write. Firstly, because someone I respected told me I could. Then secondly, because finally I understood what the work involved. With a focus on the process my writing transformed. If my writing wasn't good enough, it didn't mean I could never, ever write, it meant there was more work to be done. There's no ego in clarity. This shift allowed me to be honest

about the weaker aspects of my writing and set about improving it.

The focus on the work allowed me to feel confident talking about it. It meant a greater understanding of what I wanted the parts to do, and why they were or weren't achieving that. During that class, I was incredibly fortunate to be among students with a wide variety of expertise. Through discussions with them I built a picture of where we overlapped, where we differed, and which aspects of my writing would need to be broader. For example, I had a tendency for close introspection that sometimes got bogged down in detail, at the expense of developing a stronger narrative. Through witnessing my classmates' progression as writers, I gained insights about my own. The insights gained by sharing and workshopping – although not for everyone – can clarify for you what kind of writer you will be and where you might find an audience. All things you will need to know, if or when, you do decide to approach a publisher.

In 2020 I took a Novel Writing Class through Faber Writing Academy. Besides being one of the things that kept me going during 2020, it was another turning point. The tutors, both incredible writers, were willing to share with us years of resources, planning, and strategic development designed to improve our writing. They were both working writers whose careers spanned decades. Through demonstrating, week after week, what a writer was, they made being a “real” writer accessible. They showed how it was possible. Again, they clarified what the work involved.

British writer, Hanif Kureishi, caused a stir when he expressed doubt over whether writing was a transferable, teachable craft, stating that “writing a story is a difficult thing to do and it’s a great skill to have. Can you teach that? I don’t think you can”.

But even great writers start somewhere. You can trace the burgeoning strength and the distillation of what’s unique in your favourite writer’s works. Read closely, their early novels or early short stories can still show some technical aspects, like clunky transitions, that latter work executes flawlessly.

Without a doubt every writing course I have taken has improved my writing. There is no magic point of perfection. The impossible challenge of perfection might be one of the reasons that writers write. Our focus shouldn’t be on whether writing can be taught. But rather, are writing courses beneficial? Undoubtedly, they are.

By exemplifying what a “real” writer is, they make it possible to become one. Other possibilities follow. Like the possibility of tackling those ideas that previously you felt beyond your ability. The “I’m not sure I can”, becomes “but what would I do if I could?”. You allow your ideas freedom.

The writing class shows students what kind of writer they can be. Step by step, it breaks down the work involved. It’s not luck or talent. The writing class provides students with access to the experts but the true permission to transition from believing one can be a “real” writer to becoming one, comes from within.

I no longer care when people ask, “Oh, are you still writing?”. Now, I answer enthusiastically. I might even tell them about Elena Ferrante and how she wrote in ‘The New Yorker’ that the only person who can give you permission to write is yourself.

Tina Cartwright lives on unceded Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung lands. She studied Linguistics and Literature in New Zealand and Mexico and has worked as a Secondary teacher in New Zealand and Spain. Her writing has been published in both New Zealand and Australia.

Double helix

Gurmeet Kaur

After Tarfia Faizullah, Pratyusha and Alycia Pirmohamed

१

I do laps around my body, listen to circadian rhythm,
place my fingers where diasporic movements begin.

२

There's an anxious hurry in archiving things.
Bills, letters, visas, interview transcripts,
equally weighted, *just in case*.

Your face is a map of
where we arrived.
Consider how we
leave footprints.

My skin is breaking, an angry spot on cheek
suppurating. I am self-conscious, clamouring,
then remember I am a grown woman.

३

My grandmother asks why I am obsessing
questions *what do you want from them?*
only one suitcase of belongings.

over the ancestors, she
My grandmother suggests I keep
We are always on the move, she explains.

४

Velvet night oiled hair a thousand wild bears circling forests duffel bags
awake late stiff being carried on the backs of men cream dress tired parents
hide behind a motorway pull out wings of a fly from eyes the night's stitched shroud
barbed wires walking a full balloon held tight deflating we are *shifting*.

4

Weighted, long pauses between

medical tests grate me.

I try to get the paperwork done.

My grandmother's words

leave in a hurry.

Examine how we
glow under gaps of
doors fluorescent
blue.

ξ

An archaeological school of thought believes the ancestors were ripped from their descendants during periods of mass migration. The modern migrant has no way of retracing their steps to the past. Continents have moved on, people walk on obsidian, not knowing. It is like a medical procedure so anatomically significant that ancestral bodies and their inheritors split apart, mutated, changed, surgically removed from the roots. There is no traceable scar to return to.

∅

The air stinks—it's the autumn leaves
decomposing in months of rain.

Starlings plummet to earth,
drift collapse move away.

I go outside, put out the laundry
during a lunar eclipse. A ghost glows

On occasion, we comprise of
headless horses: running,
leaving things, nomadic,
homeless.

in the background, blue, printed
in this poem I leave a gap

so they can visit.

t

In this way I feel the ancestors twice.

I read them poems like prayers
as they dissolve in my mouth,

let me record their illegal status,
or dislocation for years later.

Now read this again and
replace ancestors with grief.

Gurmeet Kaur is a writer and poet from London, living in Wurundjeri country. She has been the recipient of residencies and fellowships at Varuna, Incendium Library, and City of Maribyrnong. She is also a winner of the 2021 Ultimo Prize. Her work appears in 'Aniko Press', 'DYNAMIS Journal', and elsewhere.

NITPICKER ANSWERS

(from page 8)

1. and an
2. who
3. ; [semicolon]
4. borrows
5. whomever

Flannel

Laura Fulton

(written from inside the ring of steel, metropolitan Melbourne, September/October 2021)

I changed my clothes today.

Which should be a small thing. It should be nothing at all.

But here we are, inside again, lockdown number six, like we've been for well over 200 days. And the case numbers won't go the right way, and the vaccination rates are moving so slowly, and it seems like that light at the end of the tunnel never gets any closer, no matter how tightly we restrict ourselves, no matter how still we sit, so it doesn't matter what I put on in the morning or if I shave my legs or whether or not I wash my hair. We have reached the peak, the summit, the top of the scale – the most we can do. How long can we hold this high note?

Don't get me wrong. I'm not opposed to these restrictions. I am ON BOARD, part of the team, here to help. I understand that easing restrictions, even after 18 months (give or take) of dealing with this thing (off and on), will mean losing people, mothers and grandparents and children and best friends who would otherwise have lived. I can't yet accept the preventable loss of human life as inevitable collateral damage, a devil's bargain for a robust economy, however realistic that plan might sound.

Still. I don't remember the last time I wore eyeliner.

I can't explain the comfort I find in putting on the same unwashed clothes every day. Maybe, instead of comfort, I have found a reluctant acceptance, a means to grieve the way things used to be, the way things may never really be again. I think some part of me gives up every

time I put on the same grubby canvas cargo pants, the same sweat-stained t-shirt, the same blue flannel button-down I borrowed from my teenaged son months ago and never gave back. Maybe wearing the same clothes every day is just me saying "fuck it". Fuck. It. What, considering everything, does it matter?

Except.

My desk (now set up in the lounge, where I can't walk through the room without seeing it) calls to me. And the ideas have risen to the surface, and they beg me to write them, the characters I have imagined for years, the stories I have been scribbling madly for months in the cracks of time – at a noisy gym while my children train, at a borrowed desk in a borrowed high school between classes on the days I get called, in the car between errands on the days that I don't, on the kitchen bench in the midst of cooking and laundry and life – moments of time I have (until now) only been able to smuggle from my day.

But now the calendar is empty, the phone silent, the door unknocked, so I run to my desk, and I snatch my ideas off the back burner, where they have been left for so long to simmer, and I catch them before they boil over. Ideas turn to paragraphs which turn to stories and whole documents. And I breathe and I breathe, and I notice my t-shirt is kind of disgusting.

I am not the first to cling to my stories, to find that rope in the darkness and follow it through to the light. Lee Smith ('Fair and Tender Ladies', 1988) found her salvation through writing during the last days of her

mother's life. She said it "sort of saved my life" to be able to immerse herself in a world of her own creation, even as she watched her son's slow decline into mental illness and eventual death. Dorothy Allison ('Bastard Out of Carolina', 1992) and Kaye Gibbons ('Ellen Foster', 1987) both found a way to write through the pain, guilt, shame and trauma of difficult childhoods, giving the truth of their own experiences to fictional characters.

Even now, while darkness spreads to every corner of the world, when the callous indifference of mankind seems somehow worse than the mindless indifference of disease, writers call on their craft to sustain them. R.O. Kwon ('The Incendiaries', 2018) calls writing her "lifeline" while Hank Phillippi Ryan ('The Murder List', 2019) notes that "it's always safe inside a story". Beverly Jenkins ('On the Corner of Hope and Main', 2020) calls the writing process her refuge: "I may not be able to affect what's going on outside, but I control the world my words build."

I understand that the worlds we create aren't always enough to rescue us from the horrors of reality, the anxiety of uncertainty, the tedium of isolation. Some suggest that we may as well write because what else is there to do? So much, in fact. There is so much else to do. There is raging addiction, alcoholism, social media obsession, unhealthy habits to cultivate in the face of this existential dread. There is weight to gain through emotional binging, and relationships to destroy through argument and boredom. The anguish of the storyteller, in fact, is a well-known phenomenon. Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, Hunter S Thompson, Ernest Hemingway, Anne Sexton, Jack London, Cesare Pavese – all suicided. For many talented writers, the craft is just not enough.

Except.

Sometimes our stories come to us in our dreams, in the shower, on a walk, on the train, nuggets of ideas we see in some small sliver of life, moments that might pass by

another person but that a writer can spin into an entire narrative, robust with conflict and character and theme, just itching to get out of our heads. And I realise, as I look through my closet, that if I don't write them down, my stories will die with me, trapped inside my head, and I find a different flannel, a pink one with a hood.

Rebecca Solnit ('Recollections of My Nonexistence', 2020, 'Men Explain Things to Me', 2014) argues that writing is "the best thing to do in the worst of times, as well as in the best ... Writing a sentence is drawing a line and some of those lines are roads out of hell". Jennifer Finney Boylan ('Good Boy', 2020, 'She's Not There', 2003) also notes that "telling stories is one way of making sense of a world that so often just feels like chaos. Seeing your life as a narrative, as a thing with a thread that connects who you have been to who you become ... [is] a process that has pulled me out of despair many times, and more than once come pretty close to actually saving my life". A story is not always enough, then, but sometimes it can be, if we let it.

And so, I stand at my desk and decide that, of all the places I could go inside this darkness, the world I have created is the safest. And I change my clothes – trading my son's blue flannel and limp, filthy grey t-shirt for a fresh, clean grey t-shirt and my pink hooded flannel – and the light at the end of the tunnel, that seems so far away, gets a little bit closer.

Laura Fulton is a writer, educator and researcher born in Arkansas and based in Melbourne. The former columnist, ghost writer, and project writer has published commercial books and articles in the US, the UAE, and Australia. Her work has appeared in 'Swamp Writing', 'TEXT', 'Qualitative Inquiry', 'Pendulum Papers', 'Antithesis', 'The Watershed Review' and 'The Incompleteness Book'.

going viral

Indrani Perera

i. incubation

the infection first appears when I am flicking through
the stack of poetry books sitting next to my laptop
the onset is heralded by a subtle increase in vocabulary
and a heightened appreciation of beauty
followed by a mild tendency to speak in rhyme
then a rash of metaphor appears under my arm pits
and angry spots of alliteration swell on my tongue
I suffer from occasional bursts of haiku
followed by intense periods of sestina
symptoms range from mild verbiage to acute hyperbole

ii. onset

frantic, frenzied, scratching and scribbling on scraps of paper
ink sliding thoughts through the roar of paper tigers
growling and stalking, pouncing and rending in tangled metaphors
their nibs score the peaks and troughs of poetic highways
words run slick in rivers rushing to the sea then pooling at my feet
a cartographer's chart of destiny, a poet's dictionary of madness
bending and folding myself into signatures
collating phrases and binding ideas

iii. decline

once the fever of words has subsided
a publisher sees two of my poems in a journal
and asks me to submit a collection for publication
seeking inspiration I pick up a collection of poetry
from the pile next to my computer
and nothing happens
I leave flowers on Algernon's grave
hold a seance to summon Neruda's shade
nothing

iv. convalescence

you will find me flipping through poetry books
in libraries and bookshops around the world
or listening to poets at literary festivals and open mics
desperately seeking to catch a new strain of *poeticus articulatum*

Indrani Perera lives on Wurrundjeri Country. She is the creator of the Poets' Express e-mail newsletter, founder of 'The Pocketry Almanack' print journal and host of the Pocketry Presents podcast. She is the author of 'Promote Your Poetry' and the poetry collections 'Defenestration' and 'Pas De Deux'. Find her at indraniperera.com

A knowing deep in the guts

Jess Zanoni interviews Yves Rees

It can be hard to summarise the way each of us have grown over the last 18 months – how do we speak of the parts of ourselves that have quietly morphed, deepened, waned?

Time is traditionally the marker in which we measure change. In lockdown, time travels at the same speed it always has, but if you've lived in Naarm over the last year and a half, you know that the experience of it is has felt warped and murky. This is bodily knowledge; sensing that time encompasses nothing as well as everything. We don't need to explain these types of knowing, they need no reference point.

Yves Rees, a historian, academic and writer, is committed to this phenomenon in their own life and work – things that are deeply felt, deeply known, need no template or justification for their validity.

'All About Yves', their new memoir, tells the story so far of Yves living openly as transgender. The memoir is a collection of essays that take the reader through significant moments in Yves' transition. Until the age of 30, Yves had lived unhappily as a woman. They were in a constant state of unease in their body, an unease which they would eventually learn had a name – gender dysphoria. Yves believes that dismantling the gender binary benefits everyone, and that allowing people to do gender in more complex, dynamic ways, accurately reflects the true nature of human beings.

"Because we all only exist inside our own minds, it's easy to think that whatever experience we have of our body or identity

in the world is normal," Yves tells me over video chat from their leafy study one Friday morning in October. "I'd been stuck in this awful prison my whole life, and just thought that that was the world. And then I suddenly discovered that this prison had a door that had been there the whole time. I just hadn't seen it. And with that came this euphoria in realising I could walk out that door."

A key thread through 'All About Yves' is the way in which being transgender is not predicated on the binary of "man" and "woman." Yves is not a woman, nor are they a man. They are transgender, a gender unto itself; its own destination. Tied to this, is how gender presentation and gender identity are not synonymous, and don't always overlap. Yves is transmasculine, meaning their gender presentation includes more "masculine" clothing, short hair, a flat chest. This physical presentation doesn't mean that Yves is, nor wants to be, a man.

"Gender is much bigger than gender expression. Gender expression kind of feels like this crude articulation of what it is. And gender identity is one of those things that we all have that we just kind of know in our guts about ourselves and find really hard to explain to anyone else," Yves deliberates. "I think when I first realised I wasn't a woman, I felt this sense of 'Oh well that means my gender expression has to be super blokey, and that I have to reject everything feminine' – and now I know that that's absurd."

There is a pressure many minorities feel, to share their most personal or traumatic stories in order to be seen. In striving towards a

future where our society embraces varied experiences of gender without question, we must also reconcile this with the desire to connect and understand each other more fully through storytelling and art. The nuance to this tension, is in disclosure and storytelling for its own sake. There should be an inherent awareness of the humanity that exists behind, and within every work of art. One shouldn't need to be convinced of that humanity.

"That was something I really grappled with in writing the book," Yves admits. "We're expected to parade our trauma as a kind of entertainment, and as an exchange for some kind of empathy or tolerance. I didn't want to re-enforce that trope, and I know a lot of trans people are turning away from memoir for that reason."

More and more TV shows, films, and books are including gender diverse characters, but few include these characters without some kind of backstory. In de-stigmatising trans characters in popular media, Yves propounds that it's essential to create three-dimensional trans characters whose role and identity aren't entirely built around their gender. This raises questions about how cis-people can sensitively incorporate trans characters into their stories.

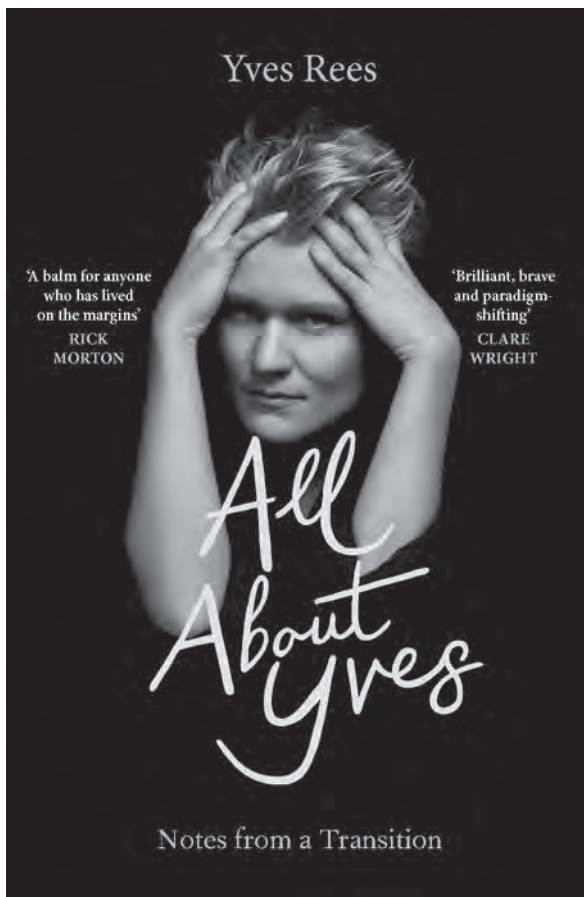
Yves believes there's an important distinction to make between a writer including a character that is different to them in a story, as opposed to making them the protagonist and inhabiting their mind. Yves says that it is often unfavorable to do the latter, because it can simplify the complexity of that identity.

"It's so hard to live in the body of someone with a really different identity to you, because there are so many subtle things about how one exists in the world that you are blind to. No matter how much you read or observe, you'll just never really quite know. I'd rather read from the perspective of trans characters written by trans people because there's that level of expertise, just as I would prefer to read female characters written by women."



When white, cis or able-bodied writers create stories that exclusively comprise of characters similar to them, damaging power structures are upheld that don't convey truthful or interesting representations of the world. This line of thought echoes writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who in her 2009 TEDtalk divulges the danger of a single story throughout literature. The idea here, is that if there is an overwhelming homogeneity to the stories that we are exposed to across our lives, then we begin to think that any experiences, identities, and voices that don't fit into these narratives do not belong in literature: are not worthy of being told. If trans characters aren't included in the novels, films, and TV that we watch, then trans people can't see reflections of themselves in the world—this doesn't just refute one's existence, but erases it.

"It was through reading other trans stories that I first found the language and concepts to identify my transness and my gender. I felt like I was constantly on the verge of becoming invisible, or of fading away. Writing this book has felt like a really powerful way of speaking



back and asserting trans validity, and our reality.”

Receiving heartfelt emails from parents of trans children has meant a great deal to Yves when reflecting on the reception of their book so far. The parents who have been in touch tell of feeling much more enlightened and equipped in supporting their child after reading Yves’ book, and have confessed they didn’t really understand what their child was going through prior to reading.

I ask Yves what they make of the paradox in our culture, of not believing or affirming young people who come out as trans, in fear that their gender divergence will turn out to be a phase. This cultural anxiety co-exists with the argument that if trans people who come out in adulthood were “truly” trans, it would have been apparent in childhood.

“There’s this expectation that for an adult to earn the right to transition, there needs to be a story of childhood suffering, which is really perverse,” Yves says. “It’s a reflection of how transphobic our society is — that coming out as trans at any age is such a big deal. No one does it lightly. If a kid is telling you out loud that they’re trans, they’ve probably been thinking about it for a really long time, it’s not just a passing thought.”

There is so much to be gained from Yves’ memoir, no matter who you are; an enriched understanding of gender is one, but a feeling of connection to Yves, through their generosity and openness is what is most treasured. It’s also as pertinent as ever for trans teenagers and young people to read stories like Yves’ — to feel less alone, to know that they have a community, and that they deserve to have their journey of self-discovery respected and celebrated. Intimacy hasn’t felt available or accessible for many in lockdown, but Yves feels that connecting to others through their book has been the most rewarding part of publishing their memoir, on top of feeling a new, profound sense of confidence and comfort in their own body.

“That intimacy you feel as a reader with the author of a book actually goes two-ways. When we’re connecting with other people in everyday life, we’re often showing our masks, or our most confident selves, but in reading and writing, we’re more honest and more vulnerable,” Yves shares. “This experience has led me to doing more creative and risk-taking things. It’s just incredibly joyful and good.”

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.

The empty chair

Paul Morgan on editing, compromise, and censorship

PEN Melbourne is having a meeting soon. It's a chance to come together at last after the lockdowns (how many did we endure?) and have a real-life, face to face catch-up. It's a chance to meet up with old friends and make new ones. We've one new member who'd love to be there too – Nedim – but he can't make it unfortunately. He's unavoidably detained . . . in Van Prison in Turkey. In fact, he's been there for the last 2000 days, much of it in solitary confinement. His crime was a pretty serious matter, of course, to lead to such a savage sentence. He told the truth, and it doesn't get much more serious than that to an authoritarian leader like Turkey's Erdogan.

Nedim Türfent is an Honorary Member of PEN International's Melbourne Centre. We're in contact with him and his family, campaign for his release, and recently published a broadsheet to publicise his case. A young Kurdish journalist, he simply reported on a case of police brutality in 2016. The Turkish government's response was not to suspend and investigate the police officers, but to threaten Nedim and prosecute him on trumped-up charges. Despite witnesses at his trial confessing they were tortured to give false testimony, he was sentenced to eight years and nine months in prison for supposedly "spreading terrorist propaganda". As part of the sentence, he has spent almost two years in solitary confinement in harrowing conditions.

We won't be seeing Nedim at our meeting in Melbourne, then. But we don't forget him, and do our best to ensure others don't forget about him either, along with all the hundreds of other writers and journalists persecuted around the world for telling the truth. In PEN tradition, an empty chair on the stage will make Nedim's presence felt. We'll write letters and cards to him, and continue to call for the quashing of his conviction and release from prison.

PEN International's Melbourne Centre is based at the Wheeler Centre, and welcomes new members and volunteers to help with our work campaigning for people like Nedim. Sad to say, PEN has never been busier, with an increase in authoritarian governments around the world.

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

www.penmelbourne.org.

Twitter: @PenMelbourne

Instagram: penmelbourne

Facebook: @ penmelbourne

Workshops and Courses

See more courses and book online at writersvictoria.org.au,
phone (03) 9094 7855 or email program@writersvictoria.org.au.

Please note: from Friday 22 October 2021, all patrons over the age of 16 must show proof of their COVID-19 vaccination status as a condition of entry. Before you arrive for an in-person course, please make sure you have added your COVID-19 digital certificate to the Service Victoria app or bring printed proof of your vaccination with you. You can find more details about how to add your certificate by visiting coronavirus.vic.gov.au. We also offer an extensive online program.

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.

ONLINE SEMINAR: Lunchtime Bite: Finding Your Inner Poet

with Lou Garcia-Dolnik

This Lunchtime Bite is dedicated to all things poems, poetry, and verse. Whether you're terrified of line breaks and experimentation or looking for ways to reinvigorate your practice, we'll be thinking through poetry as a space of experimentation, constraint, and possibility, where "failure" can be the starting point for something new. The session will cap off with a 15-20 minute Q&A where all questions, anxieties, and curiosities are most welcome!

When: Thursday 27
January, 12–1pm
Member Price: Free
Non-Member Price: \$25

ONLINE SEMINAR: Evening Appetiser: Effective Research for Fiction

with Alex Hammond

Alex has published three research-heavy books: two legal thrillers that incorporate existing law, precedents, and legal practice and a historical thriller set in German-occupied Paris. This session looks at how to strategically target your research and tie it to your novel's structure. It provides practical, usable tips so that you're using your time well and not falling down the rabbit hole of in-depth research or struck with "accuracy paralysis".

When: Thursday 27
January, 6–7pm
Member Price: Free
Non-Member Price: \$25

ONLINE SEMINAR: Lunchtime Bite: Grant Seeking and Writing for Beginners

with Lucy Hamilton

Do you have a project that needs funding support? Are you at a loss as to how to approach a grant application or find out what options are out there? In this session, Writers Victoria CEO Lucy Hamilton

will give an overview of the options out there. You will learn how to approach a grant from demystifying guidelines, approaching application questions, and gathering support materials, as well as who to go to for extra help.

When: Friday 28
January, 12–1pm
Member Price: Free
Non-Member Price: \$25

Online Poetry Clinic

with Andy Jackson

Poetry can seem mysterious and difficult. But you can write it – and this online course aims to expand your skills and confidence. Each month, participants receive a brief prompt to help them start a new poem, which they will then show to the rest of the group. Andy will provide precise, constructive suggestions for improvement, along with some ideas to expand your reading and writing practice. All participants are also encouraged to give feedback.

This online course actively encourages sharing of your work with your cohort as well as with the tutor.

Pieces of up to 80 lines due
11:55pm Mondays
31 January, 28 February,
28 March, 25 April, 30 May.
Member Price: \$240/\$250
Non-Member Price: \$310

Online Graphic Narratives Clinic

with Eloise Grills

In this course, students will develop a portfolio of short comics or graphic narrative works under the mentorship of comics artist, visual essayist and educator Eloise Grills. Grills will provide carefully crafted workshopping notes and feedback, assisting students to identify strengths and weaknesses in their illustrated narratives. Grills will recommend texts from leading comics practitioners to inspire and educate students on the form. She will also set optional comics exercises for students to engage with independently.

This online course actively encourages sharing of your work with your cohort as well as with the tutor.

Pieces of up to 1500 words in comics script/written draft form, or 6 to 8 pages of drafted comics pages due 11:55pm Mondays 31 January, 28 February, 28 March, 25 April, 30 May.

Member Price: \$240/\$250
Non-Member Price: \$310

Online Screenwriting Clinic

with Chelsea Cassio

Chelsea will look at all aspects of your script, including Character, Dialogue, Structure, Plot, Story, and Theme. A story starts with character, and that's where she will begin assessing your script. Well-formed characters require a satisfying arc along with their own personal transformation, and the story itself should

aim to be a comment on the human condition.

Chelsea can guide you towards a solid structure and a clear narrative with your script. As much as there is a "template" to screenplays, it is also important that your own brand of storytelling shines through. We come to rely on well-known script structures, but a unique voice is also key. This online course actively encourages sharing of your work with your cohort as well as with the tutor.

Pieces of up to up to 1500 words for an outline or treatment or 10 script pages due 11:55pm Mondays 31 January, 28 February, 28 March, 25 April, 30 May.

Member Price: \$240/\$250
Non-Member Price: \$310

Online Advanced Short Story Clinic

with Rashida Murphy

A short story ought to sustain both attention and imagination – a great short story leads the reader into a world where attention to detail is sustained by economy, complexity, and depth. Rashida will guide writers to combine elements of the personal and social imaginary to create layered, nuanced stories. Some visual and word prompts may be provided to explore the links between language and form. There will be targeted feedback for improving your writing.

This online course actively encourages sharing of your work with your cohort as well as with the tutor.

Pieces of up to 1500 words due 11:55pm Thursdays 3 February, 3 March, 7 April, 5 May, 2 June.

Member Price: \$240/\$250
Non-Member Price: \$310

Online Emerging Short Story Clinic

with Julie Koh

In this online clinic, participants will submit short fiction of up to 1,000 words each month for five months. You will receive individual feedback from your tutor, focusing on elements including plot, character, and voice. Participants will have the opportunity to comment on each other's work. This clinic is ideal for beginner and emerging writers.

This online course actively encourages sharing of your work with your cohort as well as with the tutor.

Pieces of up to 1000 words due 11:55pm Thursdays 3 February, 3 March, 7 April, 5 May, 2 June.

Member Price: \$240/\$250
Non-Member Price: \$310

Online Speculative Fiction Clinic

with Eugen Bacon

Speculative fiction helps you understand other perspectives and encourages a response in fiction to sometimes realistic themes such as climate change, the role of technology, societal dysfunction, and the crucial what if? In this online feedback clinic that runs over five months, author Eugen Bacon will provide feedback on your short

story or excerpt of a longer work of fiction, enabling you to hone your work with believable worlds and characters in convincing speculative fiction.

This online course actively encourages sharing of your work with your cohort as well as with the tutor.

Pieces of up to 1500 words due 11:55pm Thursdays
3 February, 3 March,
7 April, 5 May, 2 June.

Member Price: \$240/\$250
Non-Member Price: \$310

ONLINE LONG COURSE: The Next Draft

with Laurel Cohn

The key to getting the most out of your next draft is understanding the role structural editing plays in manuscript development, how to go about it, and how to survive it. Laurel guides you through her five-step approach, providing strategies and tools, and explores the challenging inner terrain that underlies critical engagement with your own work. Time between sessions allows you to put into practice the concepts covered. Each participant will have a one-on-one session with Laurel through the course.

When: Saturdays
29 January, 28 February,
26 March, 10am–4pm
Member Price: \$390/\$450
Non-Member Price: \$645
Level: All (with a completed first draft)

ONLINE COURSE: Basics for Beginning Writers

with Kate Mildenhall

It's a new year and you've finally created some space for your writing. CONGRATULATIONS! You've already made the biggest step. Join Kate Mildenhall to take you through the basics of setting up your creative practice, exercises for tapping into creativity, goal setting and creating writing habits, and pushing through the Big Blockers. Whether you are writing memoir, poetry, fiction, or YA this is a course to kickstart your creative practice for 2022.

When: Saturday 29
January, 10am–4pm
Member Price: \$135/\$155
Non-Member Price: \$215
Level: Early, Emerging

ONLINE COURSE: Making Truth from Story and Story from Truth

with Kathryn Heyman

Humans are hardwired to value storytelling. In this one-off course, award-winning novelist and memoirist Kathryn Heyman ('Fury') shows you how an author might take a kernel of truth and turn it into a work of art: a novel, memoir, or captivating work of narrative non-fiction. The day will be structured with a morning course and an afternoon in your own space to work on the techniques Kathryn will present. Using exercises developed over almost two decades of coaching writers, Kathryn Heyman will show you how to discover the truth of in any story.

When: Sunday 30
January, 10am–4pm
Member Price: \$135/\$155
Non-Member Price: \$215
Level: All

ONLINE AND IN-PERSON LONG COURSE: Crime Novel Intensive

with Anna Snoekstra

Three full-day courses:
Whodunnit – Characters in Crime; Wheredunnit – Setting in Crime; Howdunnit – Plotting and Structure in Crime.

Two online seminars: Red Herrings, Plot Twists, and How to Keep Your Reader Guessing; Fridging, Sexy Lamps, and Other Crime Cliches to Avoid

When: Saturdays 5 February,
2 April, 4 June, 10am–4pm,
Thursdays 17 March,
19 May, 6:30–8pm

Where: Courses, The
Wheeler Centre, 176 Little
Lonsdale, Seminars, Online
Member Price: \$480/\$570
Non-Member Price: \$795
Level: All

IN-PERSON COURSE: Writing with Art – Ekphrasis, Versions, and Riffs

with Bonny Cassidy

How does our brain translate images into words? What can visual and plastic artwork tell us about poetry and vice versa? This course approaches the poetic genre of ekphrasis from a broad perspective, with discussion and exercises in ways of seeing. Suited to early or emerging writers looking for a new way to generate poetry, or

for visual types seeking to put their optical life into language.

When: Sunday 6 February 2022, 10am–4pm
Member Price: \$135/\$155
Non-Member Price: \$215
Level: All

**ONLINE SEMINAR:
Ask...About Publishing
Your First Book**

with Ella Baxter, Jazz Money,
Sneha Lees writing as Ruhi Lee

When seeking to be published, it might take one, two, or nineteen books, but what happens then? What is expected of a debut author, and what should your expectations be? And just how does it feel to hold your book in your hands? Join our three debut writers to talk about their lead-up to publication, the realities of working with publishers, and what happens next.

When: Tuesday 8 February, 6–7:30pm
Member Price: \$18/\$25
Non-Member Price: \$40
Level: Early, Emerging

**ONLINE COURSE: How
to Structure an Essay**

with Timmah Ball

Learn how to develop an essay and other forms of non-fiction writing from initial ideas to re-drafting and research. The course will cover basic structure, different styles of essay, and non-fiction writing, editing your own work as well as research techniques. Topics covered will include different styles

within essay and non-fiction writing as well as hybrid and experimental forms.

When: Saturday 12 February 2022, 10am–4pm
Member Price: \$135/\$155
Non-Member Price: \$215
Level: All

**IN-PERSON COURSE:
Compelling Characters
in Short Fiction**

with Shokoofeh Azar

Failures, sorrows, regrets, stupidities, wasted dreams, personality weaknesses, and the dark sides of our being, which we always hide under beautiful and acceptable masks, are the raw materials of our fictional characters. In this short course, I will show you how to pull your fictional characters out of the dark half of your being and let them breathe.

When: Saturday 19 February 2022, 10am–4pm
Member Price: \$135/\$155
Non-Member Price: \$215
Level: All

**IN-PERSON COURSE:
First Things First: Fine-Tuning
the Opening of Your Novel**

with Jennifer Down

It might sound like a cliché, but first impressions are vital – from the prospective publisher who picks up your manuscript on submission to the book-buyer browsing the shelves at their favourite store. Learn how to fine-tune the opening sentences, paragraphs, and pages of your manuscript

to ensure your reader is hooked right from the jump.

When: Sunday 20 February 2022, 10am–4pm
Member Price: \$135/\$155
Non-Member Price: \$215
Level: All

**IN-PERSON COURSE:
Writing Exquisite Sentences**

with Emily Bitto

Regardless of genre, style or level of experience, all writers work with words and sentences as the basic units of prose. This course will re-focus your writing on the level of the sentence, providing practical ways to improve your prose in both drafting and editing stages. You will learn, among other things, to strengthen your verbs, avoid cliché, and master imagery and metaphor. Through tuition, examples, writing exercises and workshoping, you'll be empowered to elevate your sentences from ordinary to sublime.

When: Sunday 27 February 2022, 10am–4pm
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

Dennis Altman's non-fiction book 'God Save the Queen: the strange persistence of monarchies', has been published by Scribe.

Eugen Bacon's story collection 'Danged Black Thing' has been published by Transit Lounge; and she has signed a two-book deal with Raw Dog Screaming Press imprint Anti-Oedipus Press for her black speculative fiction 'Chasing Whispers', and a collection of essays on Afrofuturism and black writing titled 'An Earnest Blackness'.

Louise Baxter has published her book of poetry and prose, 'Grief Has Teeth'.

Jemimah Brewster has published 'Oscar & Alice: A suburban Gothic novella'.

Thea Calzoni's memoir 'Dancing with the Maternal Bond: Life with an unusual child' will be published via Bad Apple Press in February 2022.

Jennifer Code's novel 'The Mad Angel' has been published and is now available via BookPOD.

Phil Copsey's 'The Calibre of Justice' (the second book in the

Tony Signorotto crime series) published by ICOE Press.

Robyn Flemming's memoir 'Skinful' will be published in January by Brio Books.

Naomi Fryers' non-fiction narrative 'A Very Long Way' has been published by KMD Books.

Stef Gemmill's children's book 'Toy Mountain' (illustrated by Katharine Hall) has been published by EK Books.

Linda King's fourth book in her series of travel guides, 'The Smart Travelista's Guide: How to protect your travel health & safety' is now available online.

Olympia Koziaris's 'Yiasou Yarraville From Heartache to Heroes' has been published via a City of Maribyrnong grant to document the memoirs of the aging Greek community in Yarraville.

Fiona Lowe has signed her third 2-book contract with Harper Collins' HQ imprint, for novels to be released in 2023 and 2024.

Michael Metzger's biography 'Under a Different Star' has been published by Streamline Publishing.

Ruth Morgan's collection of crime fiction stories 'The Whitworth Mysteries' has been published by Clarendon House.

Bala Mudaly's biography 'Colour-Coated Identity: A Memoir' has been published by Tale Publishing.

Julie Murphy's picture book

'Tiny Possum and the Migrating Moths' (illustrated by Ben Clifford) has been published by CSIRO Publishing.

Sean O'Leary's crime fiction 'Going All the Way' has been published via Next Chapter Publishing.

Michelle Tom's memoir 'Ten Thousand Aftershocks' has been published by HarperCollins.

Filip Vukašin's debut fiction 'Modern Marriage' has been published by Affirm Press.

Published Writing

Bette Martin's short story has been published in the 'Grieve Anthology Volume 9', which has been published by the Hunter Writers Centre.

Eugen Bacon has had short stories included in the anthologies 'The Devil Don't Come with Horns', 'Other Terrors', 'A Taste of Unguja' and 'Professor Charlatan Bardot's Travel Anthology to the Most (Fictional) Haunted Buildings in the Weird, Wild World'.

John Bartlett has had poems published in 'fourW Anthology', Verandah Journal, Brushstrokes II, the Ros Spencer Poetry Contest Anthology 2020-21, Impossible Archetype, The Lake and Unusual Works.

Nadia Suhan (Nadia Konik's) story 'Grace' will be published in the 2021 Stories of Life anthology 'The Labyrinth & other stories of life'.

Milestones

Awards

Carolyn Masel has won second prize in the 2021 ACU Prize for Poetry for her poem 'Etymological Wisdom'.

Fiona Lowe's 'Just an Ordinary Family' has been shortlisted for the Romance Writers of Australia's Ruby Award, in the romantic elements section.

Jock Serong has won the 2021 ARA Historical Novel Prize in the Adult Category for his novel 'The Burning Island'.

Kaye Baillie's children's book 'The Friendly Games' has been shortlisted in the 2021 Children's Peace Literature Award by the Psychologists for Peace Interest Group (SA).

Margaret Jacobs has won the inaugural Aireys Inlet Poetry competition for her poem 'Classroom, 1963'.

Wendy J. Dunn's historical fiction 'Falling Pomegranate Seeds: All Manner of Things' has been longlisted in the 2021 Chaucer Book Award, and has won the Reader's Favourite Silver Medal in the Fiction – Historical – Personage category.

Zachary Pryor has won the Sydney Hammond Memorial Short Story Competition for his story 'Gold Rush'. It will be published in the prize anthology 'Courage'.

Breda Hertaeg's story 'Ailish and the Phoneline' has been longlisted for the Sydney

Hammond Memorial prize, and will be published in the anthology 'Courage'.

Lyn Yeowart has been longlisted for the 2021 ARA Historical Novel Prize – Adult Category for her novel 'The Silent Listener'.

Rebecca Fraser's short story 'Yelah' has won first place in the adult fiction category of Farrells Bookstore 2021 Writing Competition; and her short story 'Due South' has won first place in the adult fiction category of the Mornington Peninsula Shire Mayor's Writing Awards.

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="checkbox"/> Other <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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Find out more about what it means to be part of an association on our website at bit.ly/1MQAcQt

Who hasn't sometimes wanted to change their life and start over?

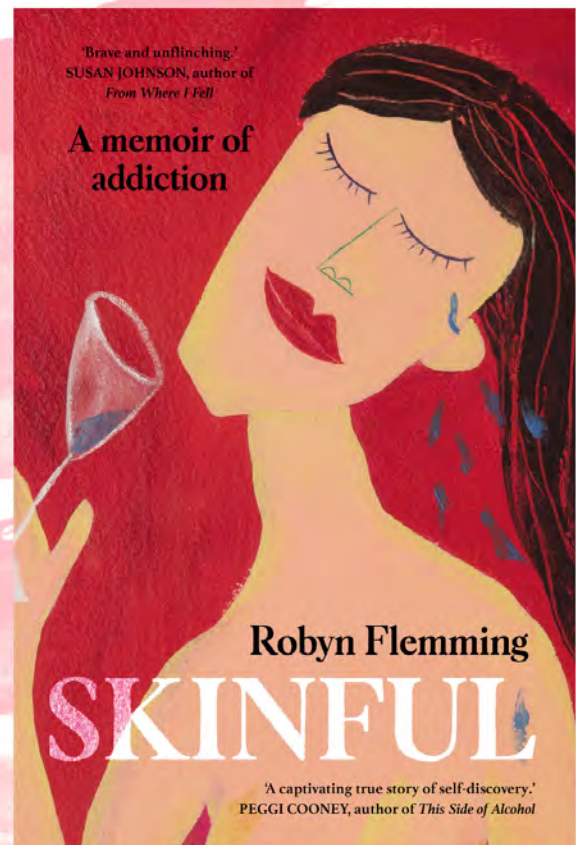
When Robyn Flemming left Australia to wander the world as a nomadic freelance editor, it wasn't the first time she had shed an old skin for a new one in the hope of changing who she was on the inside. Was her decision to risk everything yet again an act of faith or of folly?

Skinful is about the questions we ask at life's turning points: Who am I? What life do I want to live?

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"Shawline Publishing has been a great support...Bradley Shaw has the right sensitivity to work with and to nurture new authors... and I was so excited about the amazing cover design..." Karen, Shawline Publishing Author

"Proactive, full of energy; This is an agency an author can really grow with..." Alistair, Playtime Books Author

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2022 Season 1 Program

Editing & Manuscript Assessments

Writers of all genres and styles can receive a detailed manuscript assessment from one of our industry experts to help develop their work or prepare to submit it to a publisher. Mentorships offer writers the opportunity to work with an experienced author or industry professional on a one-to-one basis. Our mentors can help you with all aspects of the craft and business of writing.

Services start from \$310. For more information to book a manuscript assessment or mentorship, visit our website.

Writing Studios

Writers Victoria manages writing studios in two historic National Trust properties: Glenferrie in East St Kilda and Cells for Writers at the Old Melbourne Gaol.

Studios are available for rent from \$170 per month. For more information visit our website.

Fellowships

Writers Victoria works in collaboration with partners and funders like the Grace Marion Wilson Trust and the Hazel Rowley Literary Fund to provide fellowships for emerging and established writers, including residencies and mentorships and funding to develop their work.

Keep an eye on the Writers Victoria website or newsletter for more information about our fellowships and deadlines.

Access

Please notify us of all access requirements when booking online. If you require further assistance, contact our membership line on 03 9094 7855 or program@writersvictoria.org.au. For information on The Wheeler Centre, please go here: www.wheelercentre.com/about-us/accessibility.

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