

**WRITE**

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ISSUE /**

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# From the Chair

## As Old Supports Fall, New Growth May Flourish

By Rhea Tregobov



*The neighbourhood in Vancouver where I live is bucolic: lots of treed areas where people push their kids' strollers and walk themselves and their dogs. Over the last couple of months, these local walks have taken on a different aspect.*

Despite their magnificent size, tree after tree has come down, vulnerable in a way that once seemed unimaginable. These losses are likely due to the drought and heat we had last summer, followed by the record rainfall that came with fall and winter. It's a painful sight — these giants that were such a part of the landscape felled, their shallow roots displayed.

Those of us who've been part of the publishing world for a while have had ample reason to fear that the familiar landscape we relied on and benefited from to sustain our careers had been or would soon be irrevocably altered. The loss of independent bookstores, of review space in daily newspapers, and of public funding for the arts has been hard to witness. The most recent blow came in the summer of 2021: a deeply flawed Supreme Court decision that failed to remedy the deeply flawed *Copyright Act*. Since 2012, the Act has deprived Canadian authors of significant income. And this seemingly endless pandemic has only added to the challenges: some of the pillars of our publishing ecosystem seem ready to topple.

It's not an overstatement to say that we are living in a time characterized by grievance and division. So it was both heartening and inspiring to learn of a U.K. project that has taken off, one that was motivated by a sense of fairness, justice, and generosity. AuthorSHARE is an initiative designed to pay authors a royalty on sales of used books, and it's the first of its kind in the world. AuthorSHARE is a partnership with author organizations the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) and the Society of Authors, and two large-scale used-book retailers, World of Books and Bookbarn International.

The fund at present sits at £200,000 (CAN \$345,000) for the first year. The maximum annual payment to any one author is capped at £1,000 (CAN \$1,700). AuthorSHARE is encouraging

other used-book retailers to enrol; if the program expands, so will payments to authors. And because sales of used books are growing at a much higher rate than new — a 12 percent annual increase for used, versus 1 percent for new books — this income represents a significant step towards greater fairness for authors.

In early February our Executive Director, John Degen, moderated a webinar on AuthorSHARE. William Pryor, chairman of Bookbarn International, was one of the panellists. As he spoke of his lifelong engagement with books, reading, and authors, it was easy to believe that a character informed by the love of literature would engender this inspiring impulse towards generosity. If I get to meet William Pryor in person, I plan on buying him dinner.

One of the elements of the Canadian publishing ecosystem that looks like it is getting some fortification from our current federal government is the Public Lending Right (PLR), which pays authors for library holdings of their books. Our Union is currently lobbying for an increased budget for this program, and we are optimistic. In a recent Union budget brief to the feds, we quote Roy MacSkimming, who noted that PLR “embodies a bargain struck in good faith between Canadian authors and the Canadian public” and is a form of “natural justice.” If AuthorSHARE does catch on here, Canadian authors can hope for greater natural justice on this front as well.

It is hard to see supports fall. But it is important to remember that, in the openings created, new growth may flourish. It is particularly encouraging to see how nimble some segments of our community have been in adapting to change. We can be proud of the Union's response. We have embraced virtual meetings, webinars, and social events, reaching far more members than our in-person programming did. As the pandemic situation improves, we look forward to more hybrid programming. Where we can have in-person events for those who are able to attend, they will be live-streamed for those who wish to have a virtual presence. They will also be recorded for asynchronous participation. This approach will lower barriers while allowing for the (much-longed-for) informal and direct contact that in-person programming offers. And let's hope these sustained and enlarged conversations help us continue to adapt and thrive.

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# Writing Rights

## Words at War

By John Degen



*I am hoping this column will be irrelevant by the time it's actually published and that we are celebrating a peaceful spring.*

I'm a child of the Cold War. I grew up in a small town with an active incoming ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) siren that would, we were told, give us a whole 8 minutes to get to some sort of shelter before nuclear annihilation rained down upon us. Where the shelters were was anybody's guess. Weirdly enough, the siren was stationed right outside my town's public library. Being a book nerd from an early age, I saw that siren a lot, and I thought about it a lot. Ironically, had I ever heard it go off and found myself far from my own home, I probably would have run *toward* the piercing sound, trying to get to the damn library. I mean, why not spend your last moments surrounded by books?

I have the full package of Cold War memories, and maybe just a few more than most Canadian kids. Like so many living in Canada at the time, I watched the Paul Henderson goal in the 1972 Canada-USSR hockey series in my public school gymnasium. I remember pointless duck-and-cover drills beneath rickety elementary school desks. In what I can only assume was a fruitless gesture at teaching about disarmament, my high school traumatized a generation by showing us all the Oscar-winning NFB doc *If You Love this Planet*, directed by Terre Nash. It was a call for immediate pullback from nukes, featuring images from the bombing of Hiroshima. Kids were literally weeping for lost futures at their lockers that day.

But I also travelled with my father to the East German border in 1976 because somewhere over there we still had distant relatives. I remember an American soldier prompting me to wave across the *Schutzstreifen* (protective strip) at the tower guards on the other side. When I did so, he laughed and said, "Now you know what it's like to have a rifle aimed right at your head." East German border guards, it seems, used their rifle scopes in place of binoculars.

In the mid-80s, as an undergraduate in Ottawa, friends and I would go for late-night walks and smoke our, um, "jazz cigarettes" on the Rideau riverbank beneath the imposing Soviet embassy building, certain we were pissing off the enemy with the skunky smell of freedom. When the Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko died in March 1985, embassy staff dropped leaflets on campus inviting students to visit and sign a book of condolence for his widow. And we did so, in the name of peace and curiosity. It was a terrifying thrill to walk through those heavy doors and be greeted by what we imagined were KGB agents.

In 1987, during my backpacking year, a buddy and I were removed from a train by armed Yugoslavian border guards.

Marched along the tracks in the dark, we were taken to a small border station where we had our "expired" travel visas renewed, for a price. I will never forget the icy sweat down my back, nor the faces of those guards, our own age and younger, staring at us with blank expressions, Zastava M70 machine guns slung from their shoulders.

Seven years later I was back in Eastern Europe, examining bullet holes in the buildings of the University of Bucharest, buying books from all the new Romanian publishers who'd sprung into business post-1989, and filling notebooks with observations that would populate three of my own books. The Cold War was over, or so we were told.

My reading has always been heavily influenced by this life experience. Perhaps my favourite book of all time is *Letters to Olga* by Vaclav Havel, the imprisoned Czechoslovakian dissident who became President of the Czech Republic. I read all of Josef Škvorecký while he and I were both at the University of Toronto. I remain grimly fascinated by Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, and will forever revisit Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

So in late February, when I woke to the news that Vladimir Putin had ordered Russian troops to invade Ukraine, I reached for words. I'm rereading the poetry of Taras Shevchenko and Anna Akhmatova.

From "Will and Testament," by Taras Shevchenko, written in Pereyaslav, Ukraine (translated from the Ukrainian by Daniel Moysaenko):

*When I die bury me  
in the middle of the steppe  
of my Ukraine. So I can seize  
broad the broadback field and  
Dnipro, twisting, so  
I can see and hear it roar,  
roaring, carrying*

*thieves' blood  
to the ocean.*

From "Poem without a Hero," by Anna Akhmatova, written mostly in St. Petersburg, Russia (translated from the Russian by Stanley Kunitz and Max Hayward):

*As the future ripens in the past,  
so the past rots in the future —  
a terrible festival of dead leaves.*

Peace.

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# Editor's Note

## An Unintentionally Timely Focus

By Philip Moscovitch



*As with most magazines, each issue of Write is planned many months before the issue lands in your mailbox or inbox. The magazine's editorial board holds four planning meetings a year, and roughs out what themes to cover in upcoming issues. Last fall, when the board decided journalism would be the theme for spring 2022, we had no way of knowing how timely the issue would be.*

The work of journalists has been critical in understanding the many challenging, even disastrous, events facing us. And at the same time, journalists have been dismissed, threatened, and worse — just for doing their jobs.

In this issue, we have several stories looking at different aspects of journalism. Douglas Diaczuk, who covers daily news in Thunder Bay, shares his own experiences with being called a “liar” and “communist” after identifying himself as a journalist. Diaczuk also talks to other journalists who share stories about the hostility they have faced in doing their jobs, and how they face that challenge. Is social media to blame? Well, somewhat, but the issue goes much deeper than that.

Elsewhere, Matthew Byard looks at the Local Journalism Initiative — a program funded by the federal government to encourage reporting in underserved communities, such as Black Nova Scotians, Byard's own beat. And Ethan Lycan-Lang discusses the question of whether journalism school is worth it.

As with every themed issue of *Write*, we also have stories

on other subjects for you. Anna Porter looks at writers under attack by authoritarian regimes for telling the truth, and Donna Besel shares her deep insights into how we can protect ourselves while writing about personally traumatic events. And agent Carly Watters makes the case for taking Instagram and TikTok seriously as marketing tools and demystifies the process of using them to your advantage. (You may be surprised to learn how much TikTok drives book sales.)

I am particularly pleased that many of the contributors to this issue of *Write* are new to the magazine. I hope we will see them back in our pages again soon.

As always, we also remember Writers' Union members who have passed away. I recently attended a Zoom reading by poet bill bissett, in which he referred to Union member Ellen Jaffe and others as having recently “gone to spirit,” which I thought was a lovely turn of phrase. We remember Ellen as well as Laird Stevens and Erna Paris in this issue. In addition to being a great writer, Erna was, of course, a great supporter of the Union and served this organization in several capacities including a term as chair. She is remembered by two other former chairs, Doris Heffron and Myrna Kostash.

Finally, some personal news, as they say. This marks my first full issue as the editor of *Write*, and I look forward to continuing to serve you as editor of your magazine. Send letters to the editor, pitches, or ideas for what you'd like to see in the magazine to [write@writersunion.ca](mailto:write@writersunion.ca).

I would also like to thank outgoing editor Rhonda Kronyk for her contributions to *Write*. I had the pleasure of working with Rhonda as a freelance contributor to the magazine and as an editorial board member. I appreciated her perspectives and her commitment to the magazine, and I wish her well with her future endeavours.

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# Writer's Blot

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MARKETING /

## The Rise of Social Media as a Way to Sell Books in 2022: Using Instagram and TikTok for Author Promotion

BY CARLY WATTERS



*Gone are the days of lengthy newspaper features. Instead, here come the pithy 30-second Instagram Reels that quickly showcase the hook of a book, an emotional thread, or snappy review. So, what's an author to do? Grab your phone and join the party!*

As a literary agent, my job includes coaching clients and future authors on using social media to promote their work. Twitter was once the place to be, since it is a natural extension of the writing process (with a maximum of 240 characters). But the experience of social media has expanded, and now you can add video, memes, graphics, links to articles and so much more. Today, I teach clients how to lean into all the free tools at their fingertips to reach millions of eyeballs.

There are a number of reasons that Book TikTok (aka BookTok) is helping to sell books. Number one, TikTok's audience skews younger than Instagram and Twitter, and if there is one thing that Gen Z knows, it's when they're being marketed at – and they have a real hesitancy to trust that. So when word-of-mouth book reviews are shared on BookTok, they're taken very seriously. There have been several articles in *Publishers Weekly* and the *New York Times* about the power of emotionality in these videos, and when someone is so moved (sometimes to tears) in a video people take notice. Wouldn't you?

Number two, the way the TikTok algorithm works is that things that are trending tend to trend longer than, say, on Twitter. So, some of the books we're seeing on the bestseller lists are staying there for weeks, or even over a year, because the word-of-mouth is continuing. The grassroots nature of this marketing is very real. Books coming into popularity on BookTok are often three-to-seven years old. Publishers put so much energy into initial launches, and seeing these books thrive years later is fascinating. (*The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid has been at the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list for over a year since TikTok discovered it.)

What you put into an app is what you're going to get out of it. If you spend time on Instagram interacting with all its functions, you will be rewarded with views. If you spend zero time and wonder why no one engages with your content, this should be an "a-ha" moment. These apps owe you nothing.

There are several media-worthy stories about viral TikTok's changing writers' lives, and while it won't happen for everyone it could happen to you. There is a randomness to social media, and going viral is rare—yet stories and trends emerge that support the fact that people are reading books, the book business is doing really well, and social media continues to be a driving force in author discoverability. This means writers must acknowledge it and build a strategy around interacting with it.

Book sales are up. According to a July 2021 BookNet piece, Canadian "print sales for the first 6 months of 2021 versus the first

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6 months of 2020 show[ed] a significant increase of approximately 1.5 million units and \$47 million year-over-year.” In the U.S., data firm NPD BooksScan said print book sales rose 9 percent in 2021 over the previous year. The company’s executive director, Kristin McLean, said TikTok was “definitely” a factor.

That shouldn’t be surprising. We’re spending more time at home, and on our computers and phones, than ever. We’ve seen little of our friends and family in person these past 2 years and spent even less going into stores. Discoverability is happening online.

As an agent conscious of the importance of author brands, I have personally made it my mission to develop my own platform, to show authors how to do it. I have over 9,000 followers on Instagram and over 39,000 on Twitter. I know the work it takes but also the immense value that comes from it. People buy books based on my recommendations because they can trust me. Clients sign with me because they know I understand social media marketing.

If you’re feeling overwhelmed, remember this: it’s all storytelling. That’s why they’re called Instagram Stories. What narrative are you communicating, albeit visually, to your followers? If you can write a book, you can entertain on TikTok. Create a story and a tone for your followers to be immersed in. Your voice, much like your writing, is what people come back to. Be yourself, be honest, be memorable.

Remember: no one wants to see a video of you asking people to buy your book! They want to see authentic, relatable, and entertaining content, and they want to trust you. This is not publicity that anyone can buy; it comes from spending hours cultivating a community online.

Here are five tips to get you more comfortable with social media in 2022:

1. Your author brand is qualitative (i.e. your voice, style, and identity online, including your unique way of approaching content and opinions).
2. Your author platform is quantifiable (i.e., How many followers do you have?).
3. The keys to growing your platform are consistency, authenticity, continuity, community-oriented content, repetition, and aesthetic awareness.
4. Make your followers feel appreciated by answering every comment and DM (this is how you build an engaged community).
5. Choose one block of time every two weeks to create content, and use all the tools available to you (like Canva, Instagram Reels, and TikTok) and play off existing memes and audio content so you don’t have to reinvent the wheel.

There is no escaping the fact that you must be digitally literate to market yourself successfully online. I always believe that great books sell, but in order for people to know about them we have to encourage people to share them — and the number one way people share these days is social media.

*Carly Watters is the Senior VP and Senior Literary Agent at P.S. Literary and the sitting VP of PACLA, the Professional Association of Canadian Literary Agents. Carly has an M.A. in Publishing Studies from City University London. She is the co-host of the popular writing podcast The Shit No One Tells You About Writing. Her clients’ books have been translated into forty languages, optioned for TV and film, adapted into podcasts, and have been on every bestseller list from coast to coast. She lives in Ottawa.*

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COMIC BY SCOT RITCHIE

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WRITER'S PROMPT /

# Writing Alone... Together

BY PHILIP MOSCOVITCH



from the U.S., where he did a Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing at USC. He said he figured he would “come back home, spend time with my family, and see what the writing life is like in Saskatchewan.”

For Aitken, the group represented an opportunity to meet a personal need and be of service to others. “In Canada, we are often extremely scattered across the country. And for me, living in Regina, the odds of me finding a community of other BIPOC writers living locally who want to meet and talk about the professional side of writing — I didn’t think that was going to be easy to discover.”

Aitken’s sessions drew a core of four or five participants, and sometimes got as high as nine. Sessions began with a check-in, maybe discussion of a particular issue someone was facing, and about 40 minutes of independent writing, as well as some social time. The group ran until the summer, when, Aitken, said, it seemed to naturally wind down.

In addition to being a writer and translator, Aitken is also a writing coach. He said one of the valuable aspects of the group was the opportunity for BIPOC writers to speak in confidence. “If something goes awry in the publishing process, or you feel like you’re being misread or misinterpreted by an editor, or by a publisher, or an agent, sometimes you don’t feel like you have a safe place to talk about that. And having sort of a private space to do that with other people who have likely encountered something very similar is liberating.”

Bustin said when she started the group she kept a spreadsheet. “I had everybody’s names, and I was checking people off when they showed up. I don’t that anymore because we are who we are, right?”

*Philip Moscovitch is the editor of Write, the author of Adventures in Bubbles and Brine, and co-host of the books podcast Dog-eared and Cracked.*

## WRITING GROUP DOS AND DON'TS

Licia Canton is a veteran writing group host and participant and has led sessions for several organizations including TWUC. Here are her tips for hosting online writing groups:

- Set times and stick to them. She recalls a session in which some participants wanted to keep talking. She recalls saying, “I will mute you all, and we’re going back to writing. We can continue this discussion at the end.”
- Be responsive to circumstance. If someone is sharing something emotional between writing sessions, that’s not a time to bring down the hammer. “There is a human aspect,” she says.
- Cap the group size to something manageable.
- Be skilful in ensuring everyone has an opportunity to be heard. “It becomes like a family... We all have that person that does all the talking and that person who doesn’t get enough space. So there’s some juggling going on.”
- Her most important tip? “It should be fun. If it’s not fun, stop doing it because you don’t want to be having bad dreams about your Zoom participants.”

*Monday afternoon, 1:05 p.m. I click the Zoom link in my calendar, just as I’ve done almost every Monday for the last 14 months. A half-dozen familiar faces in little boxes fill up my screen.*

In early 2021, The Writers’ Union of Canada launched a series of virtual writing groups across the country, called “Write Now.” TWUC set very few rules for the sessions: they had to include a land acknowledgement and at least one silent writing period of 35 minutes or so as well as a social component. The rest was up to the individual hosts.

Some offered open-ended groups, while others were more specific. Georgia Webber, for instance, offered hour-long sessions “for those curious about the comics medium.” Neil Aitken hosted “a virtual writing space and social gathering intended for BIPOC writers.”

I had an idea for a novel, and joining one of these groups seemed like a good way to see if it might go anywhere. I joined Pam Bustin’s group simply because she was offering the most sessions.

Bustin, who is based in Chapleau, Ontario, has experience hosting online sessions through a website called the Oasis. She figured she could easily host one of the TWUC groups too. But she had no idea how it was going to go.

“I didn’t know if anyone would be interested, especially when I saw what the other groups were offering,” Bustin said in an interview. Each session starts with 10 minutes of guided meditation, as a way for participants to feel grounded. (Bustin always tells people if meditation is not their thing to feel free to just dive into the writing.)

Over time, the sessions have developed their own rhythm: group members check in with each other and talk about what they plan to work on in the session, Bustin leads a meditation and reads a poem, and then there are two 30-minute writing periods separated by a 5-minute break.

The sessions were supposed to end May 31, but Bustin said she was happy to keep showing up every Monday if others wanted to continue. “Everybody was into it, and that made me so happy because it’s like, now we’re really a group that’s all in it together, you know?” she said.

Neil Aitken decided to host a Write Now group because he “knew the value of being able to meet together with other writers, especially other BIPOC writers,” he said. In 2019, Aitken returned to Canada



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# Speaking Out

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BY DOUG DIACZUK

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## Convoy protests shine national spotlight on journalist harassment

**W**hen the “United We Roll” trucker protest in support of pipelines and the oil and gas industry rolled across Canada in 2019, I was assigned to cover its stop in Thunder Bay for a local news website.

Dozens of people were standing in a hotel parking lot near vehicles and semi-trucks wearing the yellow vests and jackets that had become associated with the movement. I identified myself as a local reporter and asked if anyone was willing to speak. I was called a “liar” and a “communist” — simply because I was a journalist.

I was used to online harassment, particularly from a local Facebook page that unrelentingly accused the local media of being dumb, lazy, liars — and several other defamatory remarks — in an effort to discredit, harass, and sow distrust of local journalists.

I’ve been told to just not look at the page, to ignore it. But that’s not a solution, because what is happening to journalists in Canada today is becoming impossible to ignore.

In February, during the height of the convoy protests that occupied downtown Ottawa and shut down land border crossings with the United States, veteran *Vancouver Sun* reporter Kim Bolan spoke out on Twitter. Disturbed by the anger and harassment

directed at journalists, she wrote: “People obviously don’t have to agree with all news stories/journalists, but singling people out, stirring the pot, encouraging hostility towards us, and in some cases preventing those in the field from working is NOT acceptable.”

“Then I signed off, thinking, ‘OK, I tried, I haven’t been very successful,’ she said in an interview. “I went out for a walk and came home and had this horrific message waiting for me saying I was going to be hung and someone was coming to slit my throat.”

After tweeting the contents of the message, she wrote, “The climate of hate is unlike anything I’ve seen in my 37-year-long career.”

Bolan, a long-time crime reporter, has been experiencing threats and harassment for more than 25 years. Her home was shot at while she was covering the Air India bombing. She used to see such incidents as rare and unique, but that’s all changed.

“What we are seeing now on social media is really a whole different thing,” she said. “And when you are out and about and covering demonstrations or protests, and you are shoved, or spit on, or insulted, or blocked, or harassed just because you are a journalist — that is a scary new development for journalists in Canada.”

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## “Even after you try to do a human thing, you are still seen as an enemy.”

More and more Canadian journalists say they have experienced harassment in the course of doing their jobs. An Ipsos survey of 1,093 journalists across Canada released in November 2021 found that 73 percent reported an increase in online harassment in the last two years; 42 percent reported an increase in in-person harassment; and 25 percent said physical attacks are on the rise.

Women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ2+ journalists reported even higher increases in the amount of harassment as well as its severity. Enduring prolonged and consistent harassment takes a significant toll on journalists' mental health, resulting in some people seeking counselling or leaving the profession altogether.

The majority of respondents detailed experiencing online harassment. But during the convoy protests across the nation, the mistreatment of reporters became part of the story, as audiences witnessed brazen acts of intimidation and provocation by protesters against reporters — particularly TV crews, who are hard to miss in large crowds — live on air.

It is easier for those working in print or radio to blend in, but Jorge Barrera, a reporter with CBC's Indigenous unit in Ottawa, took a different approach. While covering the occupation, he wore his press badge openly and engaged with protesters individually.

“When I would introduce myself, or I was in a group with people who I would have direct interactions [with], they would tell me that they don't trust the mainstream media or don't trust CBC,” Barrera said. “I would engage with them and say: ‘Why do you think that?’ I always try to be as transparent as I can in my work.”

Barrera said he wanted the protesters to understand that reporters are human, not hostile elements, and are just trying to share an understanding of events in the public interest.

“In my own way, I was trying to rebuild some of that trust that has eroded, not only in media institutions but institutions in general,” he said.

Part of that distrust stems from what Barrera called a flattening out or horizontal distribution of information with traditional institutions such as the media, government, and academia having lost the trust of a segment of the public.

This became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic with the media becoming falsely implicated in conspiracy theories surrounding the severity of the virus and the benefit of vaccines.

More extreme groups, often on the far right, seize upon these feelings of mistrust and fear and use it as a rallying call to gain more support and target anyone speaking out against it on social media.

The distrust of media institutions has become so deep-seated that Barrera is not sure if it can ever be rebuilt, particularly for the individuals who were willing to confront journalists so openly, calling them liars or propagandists.

He recalled an incident when he offered one of the protesters a ride home. It was a small gesture, and he recalled the conversation as civil, but Barrera later learned the individual said he was not a good person and the CBC was not to be trusted.

“Even after you try to do a human thing, you are still seen as an enemy,” Barrera said.

The dehumanizing actions displayed during the convoy protests shone a massive nationwide spotlight on the harassment journalists experience on the job, but this is an issue that has been increasing in intensity for years. And while journalists tend to prefer staying on their side of the microphone, more are starting to speak out.

On March 8, Carleton University hosted “Journalism Under Siege,” a panel discussion with reporters, including Barrera, sharing their experiences covering the convoy protest in Ottawa and what it means for the industry going forward.

Prior to the protests, in October 2021, the Canadian Association of Journalists in partnership with Carleton University, released a report called “Poisoned Well,” detailing the results of a roundtable discussion with women and BIPOC journalists on their experiences with online hate.

Kim Trynacity, president of the CBC/Radio Canada branch of the Canadian Media Guild, was a member of the Carleton panel. She said cyber-harassment of journalists is deeply damaging to individuals and the work they do, and newsrooms need to do more in the way of support.

“No reporter wants to go to their manager and say: I don't

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## “We need more quality journalism, more quality reporting, not less.”

want to cover this because people are attacking me online. There’s a bit of a stigma attached to it,” she said in an interview. “I think some managers are still dealing with how to deal with it in a meaningful way.”

Martin O’Hanlon, president of CWA Canada, a 6,000-member media union, said the union hadn’t received any complaints from members about their companies not supporting workers when it comes to harassment in the wake of the convoy protests. But, he noted, it is the responsibility of employers to protect employees.

“I think most employers understand the responsibility,” he said in an interview. “It’s just a matter of making sure they are doing enough.”

There are fears that the toxicity directed at the industry could dissuade aspiring journalists from entering the profession, which is why O’Hanlon believes young reporters need to be reminded of the pivotal role they play in society — reporting the facts.

“If the good people give up, we will have a generation of bad journalists, and we don’t want that,” he said. “That would be the worst thing.”

Bolan, who also teaches journalism at Langara College in Vancouver, said harassment, both online and in person, is something that needs to be addressed in terms of what is being taught in journalism schools and how reporters can better protect themselves.

“What’s happening is it is so widespread, and it is so difficult to really understand when you might be at risk,” she said.

Social media is certainly fuelling that spread, but it is born out of the vacuum left by shrinking newsrooms and a lack of community journalism across the country.

O’Hanlon said it is up to journalists working today, in the face of harassment, to ensure they continue to practise the fundamentals of good, fact-based, unbiased journalism.

“That’s all you can do,” he added. “If people don’t appreciate or respect that, then we are in a post-truth society, and I don’t know what the hell you do about it. You educate people as best you can, and that’s it.”

Journalism as a profession is very different from what it was

10 or 20 years ago, but the fundamentals remain the same and one of the strengths is a diverse set of voices and perspectives.

But some of those voices are being lost, with more women and BIPOC journalists leaving the profession due to ongoing and unrelenting harassment.

Women and people of colour in high-profile positions have always faced hurdles, Trynacity said, with online harassment being one of the latest challenges. She believes making sure quality news is available as broadly as possible is more important now than ever.

“We need more quality journalism, more quality reporting, not less,” she said. “And diversity of opinion and diversity of legitimate sources from where your news comes.”

Fuelled by anger and distrust, the types of incidents seen during the convoy protests will likely continue. Barrera surmises that what happened during the convoy occupation in Ottawa was not a “flash in the pan.”

“This grew into something,” he said. “I don’t think that sort of energy just dissipates into nothing.”

And so journalists will do what they do best: inform the public even if that means stepping out from behind a camera or microphone, standing in the spotlight, and telling their story.

“The more we talk about it, the more people know, and the more the public realize this is an issue,” Trynacity said.

“Things have to change,” Bolan said. “I don’t want anyone to get seriously hurt or worse because they are doing a job that is vital to our democracy, which is being a journalist.”

*Doug Diaczuk is an author, journalist, and photographer living in Thunder Bay, Ontario, where he contributes to TBnewswatch.com. He has a master’s degree in English literature from Lakehead University. His work has been published in Geist, Quill and Quire, and SubTerrain. In 2015, Doug won the 38th annual 3-Day Novel Contest for his novel Chalk, which was published in 2016 by Anvil Press. Chalk went on to win the 2016 Northern Lit Award. In 2019, Doug won the 3-Day Novel Contest for the second time, with his novel, Just Like a Real Person, published by Anvil Press in 2021. Doug’s short story “Frogs Don’t Swim” was included in the Northwestern Ontario Writers Workshop short story collection Twenty Years on Snowshoes.*



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# Writers in Peril

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BY ANNA PORTER

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## Saying their names

“**T**yrannical governments always try to silence writers: writers represent the uniqueness of the individual human voice, and that is what dictators of all kinds wish to erase. They are Job’s messengers, escaping from catastrophes to tell us what has happened. They are Dantes, bringing news of the *Inferno*. Now, more than ever — in an age of burgeoning autocracies, when democratic norms are under attack — these endangered human voices need our help.”

— Margaret Atwood, March 2022

I was born in Hungary, at a time when writers were imprisoned or killed for writing stories that the governing regime thought were not sufficiently submissive or failed to support the approved narrative. My grandfather, a publisher who had already lost his publishing company, was jailed for speaking his mind in old-world coffee houses and being overheard. The charges (yes, there was a trial) were something else, but everyone knew why this charming, somewhat anachronistic older man — Olympics contender, football player, dueller, magician — had been sentenced to 18 months at hard labour.

Obviously, he was not the only one. Renowned poet George Faludy was in the same labour camp. As was George Gabori, whose book *When Evils Were Most Free* recounts his time, first, in

the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau, and later at the Recsk labour camp in Hungary. He joked that he viewed himself as an “equal opportunities internee.” Novelist Sandor Marai was forced into exile. He wouldn’t allow his books to be published in Hungary under the Soviet dictatorship. He mourned the loss of his homeland but continued to write in poverty. When the German (2001) and English (2002) language editions of his brilliant novel, *Embers*, became international bestsellers, he was no longer here to enjoy the success. He had killed himself in California, mere months before the Berlin Wall was dismantled in 1989. (*Embers* was translated from the German edition, *Die Glut*, by Carol Brown Janeway, and published by Vintage in 2002.)

Marai considered that being deprived of hearing his own language in his own country was more painful than death. No wonder that driving writers into exile is favored by dictators. Exiled Chilean novelist Isabel Allende wrote in *Island Beneath the Sea*, “We all have an unsuspected reserve of strength inside that emerges when life puts us to the test,” as she had been put to the test. Poet and Nobel Prize laureate Pablo Neruda returned to Chile in 1973 and died there a few days later under circumstances that are still debated today. His funeral was attended by thousands who risked imprisonment for disobeying curfew.

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## “Being in exile is harder than being a prisoner.”

Elsi Erdogan and Ahmet Altan are just two of the hundreds of Turkish writers jailed after the 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Elsi Erdogan, one of the best-known Turkish writers, disappeared without charges into Bakirkoy Closed Prison in 2016. After her release, pending trial, she went into exile. Altan's books have sold more than seven million copies worldwide, and he won literary prizes in France and Germany while he was behind bars. Released after 5 years, at the age of 71, he chose to stay in Istanbul. He said he would rather spend the rest of his life in a Turkish prison, where he can speak his own language, than in exile. “Being in exile is something I believe is harder than being a prisoner,” he said.

I write this as Russian forces have invaded Ukraine. I read messages from Ukrainian writers caught in the maelstrom of bombardments against civilians. Stanislav Aseyev, who had been tortured by the occupying Russian forces in his native Donetsk, published his book, *The Torture Camp on Paradise Street*, even as Russian forces gathered at the border. Poet and novelist Serhiy Zhadan, whose devastating novel, *The Orphanage*, was recommended by the *New York Times* as one of six books to read for context on Ukraine, was coordinating relief efforts in Kharkiv; Andrey Kurkov, author of *Death of the Penguin* and eighteen other novels, was sending messages to the *Today* program from Kyiv; novelist and filmmaker Oleg Stentsov, joined the territorial Defense Forces.

When I was researching material for my book, *The Ghosts of Europe: Journeys Through Central Europe's Troubled Past and Uncertain Future*, I discovered that 80 percent of Ukraine's published writers had disappeared during the first 10 years of the Soviet Union's existence. The post-war regime continued to wage war against writers — some were beaten to death, many were jailed, more were forced into psychiatric hospitals. Their books were banned, as were books by Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, and Polish writers. I remember visiting the Library of Prohibited Books in Prague. Those cramped dark rooms hold 27,000 different books and 2,200 periodicals, of which 14,000 are *samizdat* publications — unpublished, copies made and circulated illegally by writers and sympathizers. They are novels,

essays, short stories, poetry, philosophy, translations, mysteries, even humour, and they have nothing in common except that they were all banned during Soviet times. There is Solzhenitzin's *Gulag Archipelago*, Bohumil Hrabal's *Closely Watched Trains*, Vaclav Havel's *The Beggars' Opera*, and books by Czeslaw Milosz and Josef Skvorecky, whom I had the privilege of publishing in Canada. After 1968, his name could not be mentioned in public. The librarian, Jiri Gruentorad, had spent eight years in a forced labour camp.

Is it any wonder that Ukrainians, as fellow Eastern Europeans, tend to disagree with Russian president Vladimir Putin's assertion that the loss of the Soviet Union was “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century”? During the Stalin era, neither fame nor international awards could save you from persecution if the dictatorship didn't approve of your work. The state took over control of literature through the Union of Soviet Writers. Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* spent 12 years in hiding, and was published only in a heavily redacted version in 1967.

Anna Akhmatova, the 20th century's most significant Russian poet, continued to write even as her work was banned in Stalin's Russia; her husband and many of her friends were executed, and her son was imprisoned. Her fellow poet, Osip Mandelstam, was sentenced to a labour camp for the sin of criticizing Stalin in his poem “The Stalin Epigram.” He died in transit.

Sadly, Russia under Putin's autocracy has returned to the repressions of the Soviet era. Since 1990, the number of murdered Russian writers has grown alarmingly, but not surprisingly. A regime that does not allow free speech, or a free press, will silence independent voices. Perhaps the most famous case is that of Anna Polykovskaya, known for her writing about corruption and human rights abuses in Chechnya. She was assassinated in the elevator of her apartment building. The person who ordered her killing has not yet been charged.

Russian-American writer Masha Gessen has written extensively about the harassment and beating of journalists and the persecution of LGBTQ+ Russians. Gessen, who is trans and non-binary, now lives in the United States. After their interview

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# Since 1990, the number of murdered Russian writers has grown alarmingly, but not surprisingly.

with fiction writer Lyudmila Ulitskaya was published in the *New Yorker*, they were branded a traitor for speaking out about brutality of the police and for their opposition to the war on Ukraine.

Dictators, my grandfather used to say, imprison or kill the writers first, because words can be more effective than weapons. Writing in the *New Yorker* in 2014, Gessen said, “A book can be an inspiration or a murder weapon.” It depends on whose hands it falls into.

How many works of literature will never appear because their authors were jailed?

PEN Canada campaigns on behalf of persecuted, imprisoned, and exiled writers throughout the world. At home, its Writers in Exile program helps writers who are forced from their own countries. In the face of tyranny, it has had some successes.

Ethiopian writer Martha Kumsa was tortured and imprisoned for 9 years without the formalities of even a sham trial. In prison, she taught geography and mathematics. She was released in part because of pressure from the international PEN community and now teaches in Canada. “Ethiopia is in freefall into carnage once again,” she wrote in PEN’s 2021 annual report. “Hope raised is miserably dashed. Hundreds of thousands are suffering in its dark dungeons...”

PEN had something to celebrate on March 11, 2022, when Saudi Arabian writer and blogger Raif Badawi was released from jail. PEN had been agitating for his release since he was sentenced to a decade behind bars and 1,000 lashes, fifty of which were delivered in a public square in Jeddah. Ensaf Badawi, his wife, now lives in Montreal.

On arriving at Los Angeles Airport, where he was greeted by a crowd of supporters, Vietnamese writer and blogger Nguyễn Văn Hải, known as Dieu Cay, said that the best message to all political prisoners is: “Have faith, you are not alone.” He had been jailed in April 2008. International human rights organizations, including PEN Canada, had worked for his release.

Poet Hernando Gonzales was released from prison in Cuba in 2010. He had served 7 years, much of it in solitary confinement.

“I have been beaten, caned, and starved.” But he was one of the lucky ones. The youngest of the seventy-five writers and human rights workers who had been rounded up in March 2003, known as “Black Spring,” he survived his incarceration.

Rashad Ramazanov, an Azerbaijani writer and blogger, was arrested in May 2013 and served 6 years of his 9-year sentence before being pardoned with 400 other prisoners in 2019. He had been beaten and tortured. He suffers from tuberculosis contracted while in jail. The author of 7 books and numerous articles, he has remained an outspoken political commentator after his release. He is an honorary member of PEN Canada.

Maung Thar Cho, who uses the pseudonym Zargana, a writer, poet, editor, and member of PEN Myanmar, author of over seventy literary works crossing multiple literary genres including poetry, essays, and short stories, was jailed several times. A professor of Myanmar literature at the Yangon Training College, Maung Thar Cho gained a reputation for his use of satire to address contentious political and social issues. After his release, he was banned from performing in public. He was rearrested in 2021 together with many other writers and journalists.

Military dictatorships are notoriously lacking in a sense of humour.

Executed Nigerian environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa spoke about a writer’s duty not only to “x-ray society’s weaknesses, its ills, its perils,” but also to be “involved in shaping its present and its future.”

Arundhati Roy, speaking of the suppression of voices critical of the government of India, said, “Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness — and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we’re being brainwashed to believe...”

*Anna Porter is the author of ten books, some of which have won prizes. She was a book publisher for 30 years.*



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# Local Journalism Initiative

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BY MATTHEW BYARD

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## Telling stories in underserved communities

Last November, I watched as the clock ran out in the Nova Scotia provincial Division A high-school football final, and the Auburn Eagles celebrated their first championship. But this was more than a football game. It marked a historic moment in high school sports for Black Nova Scotians.

Auburn Drive High School has one of the highest concentrations of Black high-school students in Atlantic Canada. With their victory, head coach Dion Thomas-Hodges became the first Black head coach in the province's history to win a Division A high-school football championship. And it was also the first time three Black referees, including head ref Vince Williams, officiated at Division A football championship.

My beat is covering issues related to Black Nova Scotians for the online news website the *Halifax Examiner*, so I was at the game, on the sideline, following the action up and down the field from the scrimmage line, taking notes and photos. Knowing that I cover the local Black community, Williams had tipped me off to the significance of the game.

As part of its 2018 budget, the Government of Canada announced it would spend \$50 million over 5 years to help support civic journalism in diverse and underserved communities. The Local Journalism Initiative program (LJI) launched in 2021. The program funds my position at the *Examiner*.

Underserved communities may be in “news deserts” — places with little to no access to community newspapers, TV, or radio. Or they may be areas of “news poverty” — communities or groups whose issues and institutions “demonstrate significant gaps” when it comes to receiving adequate and accurate local news coverage.

All content produced through the Initiative is under a Creative

Commons (CC) licence, which makes it available free of charge to other media organizations who may want to republish the stories.

While some Local Journalism Reporters cover stories in a particular geographic area, my mandate is different. I cover stories that affect and/or are of interest to the Black community in Halifax and, more broadly, in Nova Scotia and the Maritimes.

Black people first settled in the rural community of Shelburne, Nova Scotia in the late 1700s following the American War of Independence. It was home to the largest free African population outside Africa. And while they may live in close physical proximity to each other, at times the Black and white communities of Nova Scotia can seem worlds apart. This affects the way Black people are perceived by the overall population, which in turn can affect the way Black people and Black communities are covered by the province's predominantly white news media organizations.

The consequences are far-reaching. They include what stories get told and how they're told, how in-depth they go, whose opinions and interviews are sought, and whose opinions are downplayed, not considered, or outright ignored.

There is also the issue of what angles are overlooked, and which issues and stories affecting Black people do not even make it onto the radar of the local mainstream media in the first place.

Soon after I was hired by the *Examiner*, a provincial election was called. I was proud to be the first to file a story noting that the riding of Preston was being contested by all Black candidates — a first in the Maritimes.

When Tim Houston's Progressive Conservatives defeated the Liberals and were elected to a majority government, I was first to ask who would be the next Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs, given that the newly elected PC caucus was all white. The

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new Government named a white man, Pat Dunn, to the job, and fired the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs' Black female deputy minister — replacing her with a white man. The actions and advocacy of various Black community organizers I spoke to eventually led to a face-to-face with Houston and Dunn, and Houston's subsequent appointment of a Black associate deputy minister.

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On Vancouver Island, *Ha-Shilth-Sa* is Canada's oldest First Nations newspaper. Founded in early 1974, the name means “interesting news” in the language of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth people, who originate from the west side of Vancouver Island.

*Ha-Shilth-Sa* Managing Editor Eric Plummer also serves as a reporter for the paper, which covers issues that directly relate to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth. He says, “That could be Supreme Court rulings, there could be legislation coming from Ottawa, residential school discoveries — because a lot of our readers went to residential school and there were residential schools in Nuu-Chah-Nulth territory on the west part of Vancouver Island.”

Having worked for four different news organizations over the past decade, Plummer, who is not Indigenous, says that reporting for organizations like *Ha-Shilth-Sa* has “inherent differences” from working on other community papers.

“Part of that is that things just take more time. Sometimes there's long periods of travel. Sometimes there are conversations that you have with people that cannot be rushed into a four-minute exchange that you might otherwise have with a local politician,” he said.

“You know, if you're talking to someone, especially an Elder, you need to listen and allow them to talk. And when they're done talking, usually they'll let you talk. But what I learned early on is that you cannot rush them through. It's just not culturally appropriate. People are not accustomed to being pushed that way, especially when they're speaking about things that are usually quite important. So there is a change in pace that needs to be respected and understood.”

Plummer says through the LJI, he was able add photographer Melissa Renwick as an additional full-time reporter and photojournalist. (Renwick is not Indigenous either.)

Renwick works out of Tofino, about two hours away from the organization's main office. Where Nuu-Chah-Nulth people are spread throughout several communities, Plummer says having Renwick with the paper has been “a huge benefit.”

“Having someone in Tofino has been really useful in that we've been able to be more adaptable, being able to respond to things as they happen,” he said.

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Since being hired by the *Examiner* I've written exclusive stories about Black mothers being dissatisfied by police and school officials' response to incidents involving their children; Black citizens' interactions and allegations of racial profiling towards the police; stories about issues of both disagreement and conflict within the Black community; as well as many pieces profiling various Black entrepreneurs, organizers, educators, athletes, entertainers, and others.

Through the Creative Commons licence, many of my stories have been republished in the *Toronto Star* and other papers.

While I've seen the Creative Commons licence as helpful in getting my stories broader exposure, Matteo Cimellaro is more ambivalent.

Cimellaro is a Cree/First Nations reporter for the online news publication *Canada's National Observer*, out of Toronto. He was hired through the LJI and covers youth and youth issues along with arts, policing, environmentalism, and Indigenous issues in the Toronto area.

“My first piece was with an Indigenous land defender. I really wanted to hear them talk about what it's like to be an activist when there is so much kind of surveillance on Indigenous land defenders,” he said.

“On the one hand, I think it's super important to have these grants because, let's be honest, I wouldn't be having these assignments if it wasn't for the grant money. So I can't complain about that on that end,” Cimellaro says.

Though he admits he has no strong feelings one way or the other about the Creative Commons licence aspect of his work, and he calls the Local Journalism Initiative “a blessing” — both in terms of his own career and the stories he can cover — Cimellaro says some money for republishing stories would be helpful.

“It'd be great, you know, if there was a slight republishing fee because, even fifty bucks is a week of groceries for me,” he said. “Some weeks can get dicey so, you know, it counts.”

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This past summer marked the first federally recognized Emancipation Day, which commemorates the abolishment of slavery in the British colonies on August 1, 1834.

After attending a large event in Parade Square outside of Halifax City Hall, I contacted Rosemary Sadlier, who was responsible for much of the hard work that went into bringing about the formal recognition of Emancipation Day.

I was able to help educate readers about some of the little-known history and context surrounding Emancipation Day, including the role that slave revolts — particularly the Haitian Revolution — played in bringing about emancipation in the first place, and how the Emancipation Act sparked a very lucrative practice of bounty hunting and kidnapping Blacks in Canada in order to sell them into slavery south of the border. I also delved into the history of large Emancipation Day celebrations that took place in Windsor, Ontario, up until the 1960s, when police and government shut them down fearing they would cause the civil rights movement in the U.S. to work its way north of the border. These are stories that may not have otherwise been covered.

There may be some major downsides to the Local Journalism Initiative, but as a reporter with the program, they don't stand out to me. The opportunity to earn a living wage by keeping my community and others informed on issues and under-reported or unreported incidents that affect Black people in my region has been one of the great blessings of my life.

*Matthew Byard is a reporter for the Halifax Examiner, hired under the Local Journalism Initiative to write about stories in the Black community. He grew up in Halifax, Dartmouth, and Truro, Nova Scotia with family roots in the Black communities of Truro and Gibson Woods, near Kentville. He is a graduate of the Radio Television Journalism program at Nova Scotia Community College and the Transition Year Program at Dalhousie University, where he also studied philosophy and political science.*



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# Embracing the Pain

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BY DONNA BESEL

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## Writing about trauma

**“W**hen I am writing, I am trying to find out who I am, who we are, what we’re capable of, how we feel, how we lose and stand up, and go on from darkness into darkness.” – Maya Angelou

In my creative writing workshops, the essential point hinges on one simple statement: “You have something to say, and you have the right to say it.” For some, this statement may seem obvious, but for me, it was a revelation.

In November 2021, University of Regina Press published my memoir, *The Unravelling: Incest and the Destruction of a Family*. This title tends to unsettle people and they often tell me that I’m brave for writing it, but for me, telling the story was necessary.

The narrative covers disclosures in my family, and the 3-a-half-year slog after RCMP charged our father for sexual assaults of me and three of my five sisters. At the time, I had ten siblings, and we were all adults. The prosecution divided my family and the small community where we grew up.

The first printing ran out 2 weeks after publication. Although I’d sent the manuscript out regularly over at least 20 years, now the book was being called groundbreaking.

*The Unravelling* is a memoir that uses literary devices such as dialogue, flashbacks, and metaphors. It doesn’t pretend to be entirely objective or depict black and white conclusions, and it doesn’t pretend to speak for anyone other than myself.

Writing about the sexual assaults was gut-wrenching, and I still get choked up when I reread certain sections. Although the title includes the word “incest,” the memoir depicts only a few physical details. Instead, it is about family relationships, community reactions, and legal process. Although numerous books have been written on sexual abuse, I couldn’t find any that described prosecution for this specific crime. But, as Toni Morrison said, “If there’s a book you want to read, but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it.”

But writing about traumatic events — particularly traumatic events in one’s own family — is challenging. And as writers, we need to find ways to protect ourselves.

I began working on the book in 1998. The first version was almost 200,000 words. Trusted friends and mentors read it and made suggestions. Their responses encouraged me, so I sent the manuscript to numerous Canadian publishers, naively believing that the content was important and urgent. I received dozens of polite rejections.

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## Writing about the sexual assaults was gut-wrenching, and I still get choked up when I reread certain sections.

In 2002, my story about a day of teaching on a Hutterite colony won second place in *Prairie Fire's* creative nonfiction contest. Other pieces were longlisted in competitions, appeared in various publications, and won awards. In 2015, my collection of short stories, *Lessons from a Nude Man*, was nominated for several awards.

In 2016, one of the chapters of *The Unravelling* was longlisted for the CBC Literary Awards Creative Nonfiction Prize, and the Canada Council for the Arts awarded me a grant to do revisions. By the time U of R accepted it, I had cut the manuscript to around 90,000 words.

I began to suspect it wasn't the writing that prevented my "incest manuscript" from getting published.

The material was difficult, and I couldn't divorce myself from it as a writer.

Over the years, I worked with numerous counsellors and attended support groups, workshops, and conferences for survivors. To cope, I used massage, physiotherapy, yoga, and self-hypnosis. I visited and spoke on the phone with friends and family. Outdoor activities alleviated my anxiety: tramping around in the bush, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, riding my horse, walking the dog, swimming, canoeing. I played ringette and hockey.

Music also helped. I took voice lessons, played my guitar at all hours, and wrote dozens of songs fuelled by sadness and anger. I read books about sexual assaults and healing. I cried a lot and wrote daily in a journal. (Later, I used the journal entries, subpoenas, and legal documents to write the memoir).

In 2015, I presented at the Creative Nonfiction Collective's Victoria conference with Vancouver author Heather Conn, another incest survivor. Our session was called "Writing Past Fear: Trauma, Taboos, and Finding a True Voice." We shared personal stories, told how writing about trauma affects the writer, and gave tips for navigating difficult stories. At the beginning of our session, the sight of volunteers hauling stacks of extra chairs into an already crowded room had reassured me that our topic really mattered. Afterwards, one of the conference organizers confirmed it; he told me about the dozens of positive evaluations and rave reviews.

In 2023, Guernica Editions of Toronto, Ontario, will publish

Heather's memoir, *No Letter in Your Pocket: How a daughter chose love and forgiveness to heal from incest*. Here's a short description of her book: "In 1990-91, incest denial and sexual assaults disrupt a woman's spiritual quest and romantic adventures in India. Two decades later, after profound healing, she's become more resilient. Finding the love and intimacy she craves, she can, at last, forgive her dying father — and her mom, for her decades of silence."

Heather said, "It surprised me how my body responded at times when writing my memoir. I thought that after therapy and so much healing, I would feel strong and safe. But fear, sadness, fatigue still cropped up sometimes. I honoured that, rested, and sought support in nature, movement, and meditation."

Although Heather's choices led her on a different path from mine, she used similar coping strategies: yoga, massage, hikes. She read about sexual abuse, took breaks from the writing, allowed herself to cry, wrote in her journal, and sought out supportive others.

Unlike me, she only briefly attended a support group for incest survivors. Instead, she immersed herself totally in research, created nurturing rituals, and became a therapeutic Jungian facilitator. Also, she received tremendous support from her late husband, Frank McElroy.

Not surprisingly, my husband shared a similar history of childhood dysfunction. While my sisters and I struggled through the never-ending upheavals of my father's prosecution, my husband did his best to stand with us in our long battle. Three years later, without warning, he filed for divorce and disappeared for 3 weeks with our 8-year-old son. After 10 months of erratic behaviour and pleas to return to the marriage, he died by suicide.

For me, the trauma falls into several categories — the actual childhood abuse, the court process, the repercussions of the prosecution, writing about it, and facing what happens after publication. As I write this, negative reactions to *The Unravelling* have been minimal. I have received thousands of emails, texts, letters, phone calls, and Facebook posts since I announced its publication. At first, I felt overwhelmed by the tsunami of people revealing childhood sexual abuse. Many admitted they had never told anyone.

Fortunately, I had a first-person forewarning to expect this

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# “Forgive and forget” is probably the most toxic, the most common, and the most useless advice.

wave of survivor disclosures. Inspired by feedback to our “Writing Past Fear” presentation the previous year, CNFC organizers invited Elly Danica to speak at their 2016 Banff conference. Elly was the author of the groundbreaking 1988 memoir *Don't: A Woman's Word*. Hal Wake hosted the event. He was the books producer for CBC Radio's *Morningside* when host Peter Gzowski interviewed Elly in 1989. I knew I had to attend.

Elly told about her father's crimes, the physical and mental impacts of getting the book published, and the effects of hearing hundreds of abuse stories from vulnerable survivors. She admitted she felt compelled to move away from Moose Jaw, her home community. (In 1998, she moved to the South Shore of Nova Scotia.) To process the after-effects of the abuse and reactions to her book's publication, she used weaving, photography, and painting. Despite the stress, she became an outspoken activist and sought-after speaker.

Her blunt words shook me to the core. I had never felt such electrifying energy at a public presentation. In the engrossed silence, surrounded by dozens of women listening to her presentation, I fought to suppress my weeping. Afterward, a surge of emotion disconnected me from my brain and my body. I went for a long walk and bawled. I missed the next session, but the mountains and the river and the soaring forests soothed me.

I was saddened to hear Elly died last year, on October 7, 2021.

This is what I learned from writing about trauma. It is not therapy, but make sure you get lots of therapy before you tackle the project. Find a counsellor who understands anger and grief and adverse childhood experiences. Find people who will listen and support. Ignore people who spout any of these platitudes: everything happens for a reason, it made you stronger, you need to move on, we all go through stuff, and no one has the perfect life. “Forgive and forget” is probably the most toxic, the most common, and the most useless advice – forgiving and forgetting allow bad behaviour to continue. Forgiveness requires truth, remorse, changed behaviour, apologies, reconciliation, and amends.

Make sure you have enough distance from the buried event. Take breaks as you need them. Set limits if you're feeling overwhelmed. Try to remember that writing can make meaning out of suffering. Positive changes can come from facing adversity.

Bearing witness may inspire others to speak out.

Embrace the pain; it fuels the impact. As Natalie Goldberg said, “Write what disturbs you, what you fear, what you have not been willing to speak about. Be willing to be split open.”

And here's a tip from Ernest Hemingway: “Write clear and hard about what hurts.”

*Donna Besel's work has gained recognition from CBC Literary Awards, won national contests, and earned nominations for awards. Her books include a collection of short stories, Lessons from a Nude Man, and a memoir, The Unravelling: Incest and the Destruction of a Family. The forests of Eastern Manitoba, where she has always lived, provide endless ideas and settings for her boreal stories.*

## TRAUMA-RELATED MEMOIRS

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou

*Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt

*The Glass Castle* by Jeanette Walls

*The Concubine's Children: Portrait of a Family Divided* by Denise Chong

## BOOKS ON WRITING ABOUT TRAUMA

*Writing History, Writing Trauma* by Dominick LaCapra

*Writing as a Way of Healing* by Louise DeSalvo

## INCEST MEMOIRS

*Don't: A Woman's Word* by Elly Danica

*My Father's House: A Memoir of Incest and Healing* by Sylvia Fraser

*The Kiss* by Kathryn Harrison

*All That is Bitter and Sweet* by Ashley Judd

## WRITING ABOUT INCEST/SEXUAL ABUSE

*I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*, edited by Ellen Bass with Louise Thornton

# Dispatches

NOTES ON THE WRITING LIFE

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT /

## Is J-school Worth It?

BY ETHAN LYCAN LANG



*A few years ago, at a party in St. John's, my girlfriend, Leslie Amminson, was talking with a couple of veteran CBC journalists.*

She was just out of her undergrad, and they asked what she planned to do next. She was moving to Halifax, she told them, for journalism school. The response was not enthusiastic: J-school was a waste of time and money, they said.

Despite the discouragement, she was in class the next week, determined to prove them wrong. Or, at the very least, hoping to God they weren't right.

That's where we met. Where she told me that story.

It's now 2 years since we graduated, and we're both working journalists.

More than thirty Canadian universities have journalism programs. There are bachelor's degrees, master's, Ph.D.s, expedited programs. (We were in a one-year bachelor's program at the University of King's College.) I would argue the program is worth it if it's hands-on and forces students to study journalism mostly by practising it. It should provide dedicated instructors excited to share their hard-earned wisdom, who can be patient without coddling, who will take panicked phone calls well outside school hours, and who teach students not only how news is delivered and consumed today, but how it might be tomorrow.

Plenty of journalists have had success without J-school. Ernest Hemingway, Peter Mansbridge, and Carl Bernstein never got a degree of any kind, and they did okay.

But it's tougher now. Newsrooms don't have the staffing they once had. They can't afford to hire unproven reporters and give them time to cut their teeth and shadow more experienced staffers. News outlets are looking for journalists who've already proven they can report quickly, accurately, and on all media. And you need to be in J-school, or recently graduated, to apply for most internships, which also makes it harder for aspiring reporters without a J-school degree to find work and contributes to a lack of diversity in newsrooms.

Conor McCann is a Canadian freelance journalist based in Melbourne, Australia, who got into journalism after majoring in English and history at Memorial University of Newfoundland. After a couple of years at a St. John's radio station, he started freelancing.

"I feel like I didn't take an easy path," McCann said. Now 27, he told me J-school could have helped him learn how to pitch stories and hone skills that took a lot more trial and error to acquire outside the classroom.

"But at the same time, I've got friends who are my age or a little older, and they did their Master's in journalism. And they're only now getting settled into what they want to do."

I've said J-school's not a waste of time. Money is where it gets a bit trickier.

At King's, the master's program runs just shy of \$15,000. A four-year Bachelor's of Journalism degree at Ryerson University costs about \$30,000 in tuition. Meanwhile, the average annual income for "writing professionals," the Statistics Canada category under which journalists fall, is just over \$40,000.

And what about jobs? Ryerson takes 150 new journalism students every year. That's only one school. There aren't 150 journalism jobs up for grabs each spring.

But journalism school teaches critical thinking, communications, and problem-solving — all skills useful in other jobs.

John MacLean is a J-school grad, former journalist, and government lawyer in Nunavut. In oral arguments at court, he references a page of notes at the lectern: main points written big at the top, and key facts bulleted below.

"That's exactly the same as what you'd do if you're going to do a live hit on television. It's exactly the same technique. I remember learning that in television class."

He's since used that J-school tip, and others, in front of the Supreme Court. His journalism degree sharpened skills essential to his present work. The government, MacLean says, needs people who can draft policy, analyze data, and communicate complex information plainly and succinctly.

Of my graduating class of twenty-four, only seven have full-time journalism gigs, four are freelancing while doing further studies, five are in communications, and the rest have switched gears.

I'm one of the freelancers. I'm able to support myself on my writing alone, working regularly for an online publication and a TV station, both in Halifax. Leslie is in the last year of her master's after a summer on contract for CBC's Labrador Morning. She's a recipient of the Joan Donaldson CBC News Scholarship, and heads to Toronto at the end of the semester. J-school connections gave us these opportunities.

The money can make you pause, I admit. And I think students should take cost heavily into account when deciding on J-school. You can become a good journalist without the formal education, but you might need to be more disciplined, dogged, and independent to do so.

Of course, these are also the qualities of a good journalist.

*Ethan Lycan-Lang is a freelance writer from Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley. He regularly writes for the Halifax Examiner and sometimes helps research shows for Global Halifax. Ethan went to journalism school at the University of King's College in 2019 and graduated at the beginning of a pandemic.*



REMEMBRANCE /

## Erna Paris: A Remembrance

BY MYRNA KOSTASH



*We were young, gifted Canadian writers, Erna Paris and I, in the golden age of Canadian magazine journalism.*

I speak from a perspective of more than half a century: you had to have been there.

“There” was Toronto in the mid-1970s and into the 1980s, and in the editorial offices of *Chatelaine* and *Saturday Night and Maclean’s* magazines, where Doris Anderson, Robert Fulford, and Peter Newman, respectively, held court. It was in a meeting with Fulford that I learned what a freelancer is (writers published in SN didn’t have “jobs”), and I was launched.

I don’t remember the occasion when I met Erna — probably at one of the parties that magazines occasionally hosted, serving *free* wine and cheese — but in March 1973, Erna and I, together with Heather Robertson (1942-2014), Melinda McCracken (1940-2002), and Valerie Miner, passed around a bottle of a cheap Hungarian red, Szekszardi, and decided to write a book. Together. Collectively. Cooperatively. We had all come through the upheaval of the women’s movement and in various ways and places with the student and international New Left movements. So *our* book would be produced in a non-hierarchical process and would have no male authority to intervene until it came time to find a publisher — Macmillan Co. of Canada, as it would turn out, after a few rejections elsewhere. (Toronto’s Women’s Press, founded in 1972, seems not to have been considered, although it may have been one of the publishing companies who turned us down.)

I recently reread the short “Introduction” (collectively penned) to *Her Own Woman*, to remind myself what it was that Erna and I and the others had set out to do.

As writers ourselves on feminist issues (rape, divorce, motherhood, income inequality) we wrote that we had grown “bored” with the representation of woman as “victim” and decided we would now write profiles: two each, so, ten portraits, of “energetic, expressive” women, stories of “courage and imagination.” Moreover, we would write in the style of “highly personal, involved, and opinionated [new] journalism.” As for who these portraits of “her own woman” should be, “we talked and argued, but in the end we felt that our subjects should represent a mix of famous and anonymous women, because the ability to take charge of one’s own life is clearly not

limited to the celebrated. Nor is it limited to one age group, or to the middle class.”

And which women did Erna portray? I think about her choices now as having telegraphed to us the people and events she would go on to write about in a sequence of books, from *Jews: An Account of Their Experience in Canada* (1980), to *The Sun Climbs Slow: The International Criminal Court and the Struggle for Justice* (2009), and the republished with a new author’s introduction, *From Tolerance to Tyranny: A Cautionary Tale from Fifteenth Century Spain* (2015). Not to mention her decades of op-ed mini-essays — pungent, succinct, bristling with moral and intellectual authority.

In “The Education of Madeleine Parent,” Erna profiled a force in Canadian labour union history. Focussing on organizing unskilled workers, Parent had lived through it all by the time Erna, a fluent French-speaker, interviewed her: the Duplessis era of attacks on unions; her numerous arrests, trial and conviction for seditious conspiracy; and the victories too, as when striking textiles workers in 1946 stared down the Quebec provincial police. You feel the attraction. Erna wrote: “...Madeleine has fought dragons everywhere, and I’d say she has loved every minute of it. The passion is just behind her eyes... It is in her fists that clench, unconsciously, on the neat, pink skirt as she talks of ‘war’...”

In the sixth sentence of “Portrait of Barbara,” her portrait of filmmaker Barbara Greene (1923-2016) — before the story of a creative woman “stripped down to her naked life force,” her misery “as monumental as her laughter,” — Erna tells us, “Barbara Greene is my friend.” As with all of Erna’s writing, and unlike a lot of “new journalism” in its heyday, this encounter is not about the writer as protagonist, but it is very much about the writer as palpably present, as witness to another’s existential autonomy.

We wrote by way of introduction that *Her Own Woman* was experimental: “We sat in each other’s living rooms and discussed, edited, applauded, criticized, and generally pulled apart each other’s work. Given the egos involved when writers expose their wares, it was a perilous experiment — and, on the whole, it worked splendidly.”

As a group, we never tried it again and went our separate ways (literally in my case when I moved back to Alberta in 1975). But Erna and I remained the best of friends.

In a 1995 review of her *The End of Days and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, I concluded: “If we do not see society as greater than the sum of our distinct parts, then we may fall apart in strife and violence. That questions of this magnitude for the 1990s arise from a retelling of events of 15th-century Spain is a testimony of the powerful and fluent sweep of *The End of Days*.”

I write this in a time of war in Europe, of a terrible falling apart into strife and violence on the scorched earth of Ukraine. Erna has fallen silent. I am bereft.

*Myrna Kostash’s most recent books are Prodigal Daughter: A Journey to Byzantium and The Seven Oaks Reader. Her essays and creative nonfiction have been widely anthologized. Ghosts in a Photograph: A Chronicle appears October 2022. She lives in Edmonton, Alberta.*

# News

THE LATEST ON WRITING AND PUBLISHING  
IN CANADA AND BEYOND

## PUBLISHING AND BOOKSELLING

### YA on the Rise

BookNet reports that share for young adult novels in the English Canadian market rose from 3.5 percent in 2020 to 4.8 percent in 2021. About 40 percent of all books sold in the country fall into the young adult and juvenile categories. While YA books increased market share, juvenile titles dropped slightly. BookNet also says psychology, graphic novels, and memoirs saw big jumps in 2021. Interestingly, given the pandemic, sales in crafts & hobbies dropped.

### TikTok Brings Back 22-Year-Old Book

In *Quill & Quire*, Rita Simonetta writes about the resurrection of Russell

Thornton's 2000 poetry collection, *The Fifth Window*. TikToker Ohmarni (real name is Marni Webb) smelled a conspiracy when she couldn't find a copy of the book anywhere.

"There was no conspiracy," Thornton tells Simonetta. "If it was hard to get a hold of, the reason was that it was published over two decades ago in a limited run by a small independent Canadian literary press." He sent Webb a copy, she made a TikTok about it, publisher Thistledown Press was inundated with requests — and bingo, the book went back into print.

From Simonetta's story: "[The orders] have come from Norway, Germany, Australia and Bulgaria," says managing editor Caroline Walker. "In terms of the U.S., it's just about every state. We've also received orders from retailers and individuals across Canada."

## SALES

### Bestsellers from Canadian-Owned Publishers

Wolsak & Wynn publisher Noelle Allen called last year for a list of bestsellers by Canadian-owned publishers — and then set about compiling one herself. The list samples books published by independent Canadian presses and sold through indie bookstores.

For February 2022, Catherine Hernandez's *Scarborough* (Arsenal Pulp Press) was the runaway fiction leader, while Charlie Angus's *Cobalt: Cradle of Demons, Birth of a Mining Super Power* (House of Anansi) led in non-fiction. For Kids, the top title was *Treaty Words: For as Long as the River Flows* by Aimée Craft and illustrated by Luke Swinson (Annick Press).

## The Malahat Review

ESSENTIAL POETRY • FICTION • CREATIVE NONFICTION

### Commit these deadlines to memory

**November 1, 2022**

Open Season

Awards | \$6000

Three writers split the winnings

**February 1, 2023**

Long Poem Prize | \$2500

Two winners split the prize

**May 1, 2023**

Far Horizons Award

for Short Fiction | \$1000

One winner gets the prize

**Inquiries:** malahat@uvic.ca



University  
of Victoria

## Constance Rooke Creative Nonfiction Prize

WIN  
\$1250



Tune in

ENTER FOR \$35 BY AUGUST 1, 2022

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# Member News & Awards

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## Announcements

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**Lorne Shirinian's** new novella, *Simantov*, has just been published by Blue Heron Press and is available on Amazon.ca.

PEI fiction writer, poet, and playwright **J. J. Steinfeld's** latest book, *Acting on the Island and Other Prince Edward Island Stories: New & Selected*, has been published by Pottersfield Press. It gathers 21 of the nearly 500 stories set on the Island that Steinfeld has written over the last 40 years. It is a thought-provoking collection of Island stories embracing and exploring the themes and psychological terrain that have pervaded all his writing: from the absurd to the existential, the surreal to the spiritual, the realistic to the fantastical. This is Steinfeld's 23rd book, and his 14th short story collection.

**Natalie MacLean** has just signed with Dundurn Press for her third book, a memoir. *Wine Witch on Fire: Rising from the Ashes of Divorce, Depression, and Drunk All Over* is the inspiring story of one woman's quest to rebuild her life that's been shattered with the sudden crumbling of her 20-year marriage and a vicious professional attack. She's forced to choose between despair and overdrinking or digging deeper to find the magic inside herself to reclaim her son, sanity, reputation, new love, and ultimately, her self-worth. Natalie is the bestselling author of *Red, White, and Drunk All Over* and host of the *New York Times*-recommended podcast, *Unreserved Wine Talk*. If you'd like to be a beta reader and get a sneak peak at the manuscript, please email her at [natalie@nataliemaclean.com](mailto:natalie@nataliemaclean.com). You can also visit her website [www.nataliemaclean.com](http://www.nataliemaclean.com).

**Stephen Aitken** has published *Listen Up! Exploring the World of Natural Sound*. Print copies will be available in September 2022, but digital editions are accessible from the Orca website. In *Listen Up*, young readers are introduced to all the sounds of the natural world, from the first Big Bang to the complex soundscapes of the rainforests. Readers will also discover how the invasion of human sounds, from airplanes, traffic, and machines, is threatening the survival of species that have adapted to their habitats over thousands of years. Conserving the sounds of nature is an important part of addressing the biggest challenges facing humanity today — protecting the planet's biodiversity and the future of our natural world. Stephen is super excited to finally see this pandemic writing project go to market. Thanks go to his agent Stacey Kondla at the Rights Factory, all the editors at Orca, and the wonderful nature photographers who helped turn this book into a work of art.

**Rick Revelle's** fifth novel will be published by Crossfield Publishing in September. The book is called *The Elk Whistle Warrior Society*. Revengeful, thorough, and without remorse towards the abusers of their people, The Elk Whistle Warrior Society sets out to do what

the police and government cannot and will not do: hunt down people who prey on them and their families. If you like reading about tough, smart, and goal-oriented Native women characters who can be looked up to by their readers because they are educated, strong, and passionate about their people, then this is the book for you. Just look for the blue tattoos, and stay out of their way if they are after you. The last people who you want knocking on your door are The Elk Whistle Warrior Society women. They aren't here to sell you Girl Guide cookies.

Ottawa crime-fiction writer **Brenda Chapman's** latest book, *Blind Date, A Hunter and Tate Mystery*, was released March 1, 2022, from Ivy Bay Press. This is the first in a new series featuring true-crime podcaster Ella Tate.

**Fiona Tinwei Lam** has started her new role as Vancouver's sixth Poet Laureate with the initiation of a poetry contest in 2022 for youth, emerging poets and established poets to generate poems about historical, cultural and ecological sites within the place now known as Vancouver. The second stage of the contest in 2023 will involve a poetry video contest for student filmmakers based on the award-winning poems. Learn more at [www.vpl.ca/poetlaureate](http://www.vpl.ca/poetlaureate).

"Carver's Mistake," a crime story by **Philip Moscovitch**, appears in the forthcoming anthology *Jacked* from New Jersey-based Run Amok Press. The anthology is edited by Canadian crime novelist Vern Smith.

In April, ECW released **Michael Barclay's** *Hearts on Fire: Six Years That Changed Canadian Music 2000-05*. Barclay is the author of the 2018 bestseller *The Never-Ending Present: The Story of Gord Downie*. *Hearts on Fire* is a sequel of sorts to the 2001 book *Have Not Been the Same: The CanRock Renaissance 1985-95*, co-authored with Jason Schneider and Ian A.D. Jack.

Ottawa author **Rick Prashaw** has published a second memoir, *Father Rick Roamin' Catholic*. The faith memoir captures his 70-year, "crooked, straight" journey to heaven's doors, mixing mischief, irreverence, and humour next to sobering commentary on a church's troubles, including abuse, residential schools, and judgement of LGBTQ+ people.

**Marvyne Jenoff** is pleased to announce her fifth book, the poetry collection *Climbing the Rain*, has been published in print and e-book by Silver Bow Publishing, New Westminster, BC. Spanning her 60-year career, the poems are divided into sections including "Sky Blue Umbrellas," "Embracing Union Station," "It's a Fish! It's a Plane!," and "The Octave Difference in Our Voices." Launched via Zoom on April 2, *Climbing the Rain* is now available to be ordered through [www.marvynejenoff.org](http://www.marvynejenoff.org) (preferred), [www.silverbowpublishing.com](http://www.silverbowpublishing.com), bookstores, or on Amazon.

## Awards

*Brighten the Corner Where You Are* by **Carol Bruneau**, *Barry Squires*, *Full Tilt* by **Heather Smith**, and *Lay Figures* by **Mark Blagrove** are on the longlist for the 2022 DUBLIN Literary Award.

The 2022 Evergreen Award Nominees include *Shadow Life* by **Hiroimi Goto**, illustrated by Ann Xu, and *Speak, Silence* by **Kim Echlin**.

The long list for the 2021 BMO Winterset Award includes **Olivia Robinson** for *The Blue Moth Motel*.

**Robyn Braun's** essay "The Stutter of Emmett's Stutter" won *subTerrain's* Lush Triumphant Prize for creative non fiction.

**Kate Braid's** essay "The Hasty Heart" was short listed for *Event* magazine's 2021 non fiction prize.

In celebration of World Poetry Day, the League of Canadian Poets shared the winners of the 2022 Very Small Verse Contest and Broadsheet Contest. **Jaelyn Piudik** won the 2022 Very Small Verse Contest for "Clepsydra," and **Anna Yin** won the 2022 Broadsheet Contest for "The Hollow Tree."

**Nancy Chislett** was awarded a grant for \$22,000 from the Canada Council for the Arts Explore and Create program.

*Solitary*, the latest book from **Zev Bagel**, has won the 2021 David Adams Richards Award from the Writers' Federation of New Brunswick.

Dundurn Press and **C.S. O'Kinneide** are proud to announce the nomination of *Starr Sign* for the Mystery Writers of America's coveted Edgar Award for Best Paperback Original. O'Kinneide is the only Canadian to be nominated in the adult fiction category.

The Association of Italian-Canadian Writers (AICW) has announced the short lists for the 2022 Edition of the AICW Bressani Literary Prize, established to promote and celebrate works by Canadian authors of Italian background. In the Fiction category is *The Afrikaner* by **Arianna Dagnino** and *The Family Way* by **Christopher DiRaddo**. In the First Book category is *The Transaction* by **Guglielmo D'Izzia** and *Cracker Jacks for Misfits* by **Christine Ottoni**. In the Poetry category is *Plastic's Republic* by **Giovanna Riccio**.

### MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members may submit announcements (100 words maximum) to be included in an upcoming issue by emailing it to [write@writersunion.ca](mailto:write@writersunion.ca). Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

## New Members List is current as of March 14, 2022.

**Silmy Abdullah**, *Home of the Floating Lily*, Dundurn, 2021.

**Kelsey Andrews**, *Big Sky Falling*, Ronsdale Press, 2021.

**Louise Arbour**, *Des poules dans ma cour*, Ecosociété, 2020.

**Nafiza Azad**, *The Candle and the Flame*, Scholastic, 2019.

**Helen Bajorek-MacDonald**, "A Canadian Passport," *Pens of Many Colours*, 3rd ed., Nelson Thomson Canada, 2002.

**Tom Ball**, *Tom Ball's Book of Original Quotations and Prognostications*, Left Fork Books, 2021.

**Shari Becker**, *The Stellow Project*, Skyscape, 2015.

**Luke Beirne**, *Foxhunt*, Baraka Books, 2022.

**Renée Belliveau**, *The Sound of Fire*, Nimbus Publishing, 2021.

**Tamara Bernstein**, "'Isn't that life, in a way: trying to accommodate dissonance?'" *Reflections on Lesbianism and the Life and Music of Ann Southam*," *Circuit* 31:1, 2021.

**Barbara Black**, *Music from a Strange Planet*, Caitlin Press, 2021.

**Gloria Blizzard**, "Black Cake Buddhism," *Humber Literary Review*, Summer 2021.

**Andrew Calderone**, *Borders in the Sand*, AOS Publishing, 2022 (forthcoming).

**Helen Chau Bradley**, *Personal Attention Roleplay*, Metonymy Press, 2021.

**Timothy Christian**, *Hemingway's Widow: the Life and Legacy of Mary Welsh Hemingway*, Dundurn, 2022.

**Judith Clark**, *Under the Radar*, DCB, 2020.

**Simon Constam**, *Brought Down*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2022.

**Jeff Cottrill**, *Hate Story*, Dragonfly Publishing, 2022.



**Suzanne Craig-Whytock**, *The Dome*, Bookland Press, 2019.

**Angela Crocker**, *Work from Home Zone*, Self-Counsel Press, 2021.

**Corey Croft**, *Becoming Buddha*, Fly Pelican Press, 2020.

**Giulia De Gasperi**, "From tomatoes to potatoes: La Bella Marca on Cape Breton Island," *Italian Canadians at Table: A Narrative Feast in Five Courses*, Guernica Editions, 2013.

**Jaswant Deed**, *Dharti Hor Pre*, Chetna Parkashan Ludhiana Panjab, 2008.

**M. M. DeLuca**, *The Savage Instinct*, Inkshares, 2021.

**Victoria Denault**, *Score*, Hachette Book Group, 2017.

**Victoria Dickenson**, *Berries*, Reaktion Books, 2020.

**J.J. Dupuis**, *Lake Crescent*, Dundurn, 2021.

**Eli Tareq El Bechelany-Lynch**, *The Good Arabs*, Metonymy Press, 2021.

**Maureen Evans**, *Eat Tweet: 1,020 Recipe Gems from the Twitter Community's @cookbook*, Artisan Books, 2010.

**Melanie Flores**, "The She," *The Prairie Journal: Issue 69*, 2018.

**Pamela Goldstein**, "A Cave with a View," *Chicken Soup for the Soul: O Canada*, Simon and Schuster, 2011.

**Ariel Gordon**, *Treed: Walking in Canada's Urban Forest*, Wolsak & Wynn, 2019.

**Laurie Ness Gordon**, *The Medal*, Borealis Press, 2014.

**Murray Greig**, *Goin' the Distance: Canada's Boxing Heritage*, MacMillan Canada, 1996.

**Jessie Hannah**, *Small Structures of Nova Scotia*, Nimbus, 2021.

**Teresa Healy**, *Gendered Struggles Against Globalisation in Mexico*, Ashgate/Routledge, 2008.

**Alison Hughes**, *FLY*, Kids Can Press, 2022.



**Andrew Hunter**, *It Was Dark There All The Time: Sophia Burthen and the Legacy of Slavery in Canada*, Goose Lane Editions, 2022.

**Mikhail Iossel**, *Love Like Water, Love Like Fire*, Bellevue Literary Press, 2021.

**R.H. Irving**, *Don't leave IT to the Geeks*, Pheasant Ridge Creations, 2001.

**Kim Letson**, *In the Footsteps of a Roman Legion - Walking the Via Egnatia*, West Moon Publishing/Island Blue, 2021.

**Barry D. Lewis**, *Wireless Networks for Dummies*, For Dummies, 2004.

**Jim Lowrey**, *Taming Untameable Beings*, KDP Amazon, 2015.

**Andrew David MacDonald**, *When We Were Vikings*, Simon & Schuster, 2020.

**AnnMarie MacKinnon**, "Chicken at Large," *Geist*, Winter 2018.

**Wendy Jean MacLean**, *Rough Angel*, Borealis Press, 2006.

**A-M Mawhiney**, *Spindrifts*, Friesen Press, 2021.

**Donald Neil McIlhone**, *The Calyx*, Trafford Publishing, 2004.

**Melanie Mitzner**, *Slow Reveal*, Inanna Publications, 2022 (forthcoming).

**Tara Moss**, *The War Widow*, HarperCollins, 2020.

**Ezat Mossallanejad**, *Torture in the Age of Fear*, Seraphim Editions, 2005.

**Sheila Murray**, *Finding Edward*, Cormorant Books, 2022.

**Barbara Nickel**, *Dear Peter, Dear Ulla*, Thistledown Press, 2021.

**Ronald Niezen**, *Truth and Indignation: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools*, University of Toronto Press, 2017.

**Nicholas Galliot O'Keefe**, *Inner Compass*, DRC Publishing, 2021.

**John Passfield**, *Terry Fox: Somewhere the Hurting Must Stop*, Rock Mills Press, 2019.

**Emily Pelley**, *Finding Safe Harbour: Supporting the Integration of Refugee Youth*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022.

**Cristina Pepe**, "Toys of War/Giocattoli di Guerra," *Italian Canadiana-New Perspectives in Italian Canadian Writing Vol 34: Dynamics of Cultural Inheritance*, Legas Publishing, 2020.

**Rick Prashaw**, *Father Rick, Roamin' Catholic*, Friesen Press, 2022.

**Aviva Rubin**, *Lost and Found in Lymphomaland*, Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, 2015.

**Harpreet Sekha**, *Prism*, Ekstasis Editions, 2021.

**Ed Shiller**, *Managing the Media*, Bedford House Publishing, 1989.

**Bruce Simpson**, *Paislee and the Talking Tree*, BRS Press, 2020.

**Kevin Spenst**, *Hearts Amok*, Anvil Press, 2020.

**Ingrid Stefanovic**, *Safeguarding Our Common Future*, State University of New York Press, 2000.

**Sneha Subramanian Kanta**, "Where we will never return," *Muzzle Magazine*, 2020.

**Lucien Telford**, *The Sequence*, Friesen Press, 2021.

**Elizabeth van der Geld**, "All Those Infinite Variations," *Minola Review Issue 30*, 2021.

**Michele Moore Veldhoen**, *The View From Right Field*, MMV Publishing, 2018.

**Sheryda Warrenner**, *Floating Is Everything*, Nightwood Editions, 2015.

**Wanda Waterman**, *Dervish at the Crossroads: A Soundquest Through the First Two Decades of the New Millennium*, Guernica Editions, 2020.

**Michelle Winters**, *I Am a Truck*, Invisible Publishing, 2016.

**Tim Yearington**, *Quest for the Thunderbird Nest - Returning to Algonquin Spirituality*, Borealis Press, 2019.

**Astrid Young**, *Being Young*, Insomniac Press, 2007.

*It was printed in the last issue that Michael DeVillaeer's manuscript, Buzz Kill: The Corporatization of Cannabis, was to be published by Douglas & McIntyre. This is no longer the case and the manuscript is still available for an interested publisher.*



# TWUC WEBINARS

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# In Memoriam

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## Erna Paris

BY DORIS HEFFRON

1938–2022

Erna Paris was a writer of profound books, seeking to make progress on peaceful coexistence and justice, both nationally and internationally. She was a similarly profound journalist, writing many articles on national and international affairs, and she brought her large focus to radio programs.

All TWUC members will have received Executive Director John Degen's full write-up on Erna's achievements as a writer and as Chair of TWUC in 2009/10. Many of you will also have seen the full-page obituary in the *Globe and Mail* and tributes in other places. I want to expand on Erna's character as a dedicated TWUC member, friend, and colleague. There were many of us in her life. Another former Chair, Myrna Kostash, has written elsewhere in this issue (see p. 21) about the group of non-fiction writers, including Heather Robertson, who worked with Erna back in the early 1970s, eking out a living through magazine and newspaper work.

I came to know Erna in 1983 when she was outgoing Ontario rep, and I was the incoming. She invited me to lunch and brought along a formidable pile of files to "brief" me on the previous year's work. This was typical of her seriousness of purpose and collegial approach to other writers. She was warm-hearted, enthusiastic, and both inquiring and informative. We clicked, and laughed over the discovery that we both had studied literature and philosophy and had been cheerleaders. The only other writer I know who had that unusual combination is Sylvia Fraser, a founding member of TWUC who also became a journalist and novelist.

My conjecture is that cheerleaders of that ilk and time maintained a strength and enthusiasm that got channelled into their seriousness of purpose in life. Erna's team became the human race, justice, and rights for all. Her early focus was on what was done to her Jewish ancestors. Her book *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History* (2000), gave her the big prizes. But she told me what gave her the deepest satisfaction in her career was having that book cited by a resolution in the United States that eventually resulted in a monument to American slaves. *Long Shadows* was also cited in 2007 by the Government of Canada when voting to formally apologize to Indigenous people for atrocities and cultural decimation caused by the residential school system. Erna's heart swelled at these effects of her work.

I became a fan of her writing after reading her early book *Step-families: Making Them Work* (1984), having become a step-parent myself in 1980. The role could be nearly traumatizing at times. Erna was not a step-parent, but she observed, researched, and wrote a most helpful book.

Erna's second, 40-year marriage, to Tom Robinson, a professor specializing in Greek philosophers at the University of Toronto, was beautiful to observe. It was an ideal marriage of equal partnership, shared interests, and emotional support.

Erna was a sensitive, steadfast friend and colleague. When I was becoming Chair of TWUC 4 years after her, I consulted her for advice. My first week into the job, I was informed I had colon cancer and would be fast-tracked for surgery. Erna had gone to France for some months. She sent me a symbolic rose. I became one of the lucky ones whose cancer was removed by surgery alone. Towards the end of my year as Chair, we needed a task force to look into why the nominating committee had resigned in the previous year and how things could be resolved. I asked Erna if she would lead this complex task. Did she ever! She helped resolve the issues with an enduring restructuring of the committee.

My personal favourite of Erna's books is *The Sun Climbs Slow*, about the formation of the International Criminal Court. It is actually a riveting read. Erna made her way into the offices of world leaders to do interviews and research for that book. The conversations she recorded reveal how good she was at drawing politically guarded characters out, including very experienced leaders such as former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. She herself could be stunningly knowledgeable and sharp in conversation. When a VIP mused, "Who was it who wrote that the strong do what they will, and the weak seek justice?" Erna shot back "Thucydides."

"Well that's the way of the world," he continued, probably gobsmacked at this sharp, petite Canadian.

I hated that one of the final things Erna and I shared was the struggle with cancer. She and Tom stayed in our home in Beaver Valley, north of Toronto, two Christmases ago when she was completing her chemotherapy. Afterwards, she tested clear... for a few months. Then she phoned to tell me the cancer had returned. She knew this would be curtains. Her plan was to finish her book of memoirs, take a week in France, and then have a final dose of chemo, which might give her more time. She wanted to gather her two grown kids and three grandkids for a Christmas holiday in Beaver Valley.

She finished her memoir book. Her agent was pleased with it. Erna didn't get to France. But we were able to give her our house for the holidays. They were cut a bit short by Erna having to go back to Toronto for pain treatment, then palliative care. In spite of that, Erna Paris, being the great person she was to family, as well as to friends and to the world, gave her family that cherished last holiday memory.

Erna's final and very telling gesture was her request that in lieu of flowers a donation be made to The Writers' Union of Canada or to Human Rights Watch Canada.



## Ellen Jaffe

BY JOE BITZ

1945–2022

Ellen Jaffe died on March 16, 2022, a day after her 77th birthday, in Toronto, Ontario. Ellen’s passion was writing and she found immense joy in working with others to explore creativity. Three days before her death, a Zoom reading of Ellen’s poetry was held in her honour, which she received as a gift exemplifying her life’s work. (You can find it on YouTube by searching for “Ellen S. Jaffe poetry reading.”)

A sampling of Ellen’s published works included *Writing Your Way*; *Feast of Lights*; *Skinny-Dipping With the Muse*; *Water Children*; *Crossing Lines* (to which she was a contributor); *The Day I Saw Willie Mays*; and *From Sinai to the Shtetl and Beyond* and *Letters & Pictures From the Old Suitcase* (both edited with Lil Blume).

Ellen was diagnosed with cancer in 2019 and was fierce in making the most of every day she had. Her family is forever appreciative of Dr. Chen and the team at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, whose treatment gave Ellen three years of happiness, as well as the palliative team at Bridgepoint Hospital, who provided her with dignity, comfort, and safety during her final days.

Ellen is survived by her loving partner, Roger Gilbert, who

was by her side every day she took on her cancer. Ellen loved and will be missed by Roger’s children, Terri, Vance, and Simon, and grandchildren Alexis, Sydney, and Cameron. Ellen was admired and will be remembered by her beloved, her son, Joe Bitz, whose life is a reflection on the outstanding traits Ellen provided as a parent. Ellen had never-ending love for Joe’s partner Christina and boys Emilio and Elijah.

I would like to offer a special acknowledgment to all of Ellen’s friends — too numerous to name — who meant the world to her and helped her shape the artistic world around her.

Ellen’s legacy will be commemorated by the Ontario Poetry Society with the Ellen S. Jaffe Humanist Award for Poetry, an honour she was fortunate enough to be advised of before her death.

Ellen’s charities of choice were Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International, the Canadian Cancer Society, TVOntario, Tarragon Theatre, Daily Bread Food Bank, the David Suzuki Foundation, and the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

She lived a life worth living and even at the end was filled with love. Her family and friends are grateful for having had her to travel the road.

Condolences may be left at [www.aftercare.org](http://www.aftercare.org).

From Ellen:

*When you lose someone you love,  
They return gradually, shyly, to your heart,  
Growing roots, then flowers,  
Cherished, delicate, visible  
Only to you.*

Shalom.



## Laird Stevens

BY DR. KRISTINA KANDYBA

1953–2021

B.A.s (Music) and (English Literature)

M.A. (Philosophy)

Ph.D. (Philosophy)

Laird Stevens was a consummate man of letters whose vast intellectual interests were reflected in his teaching appointments in college and university departments of Philosophy, English, and Liberal Arts. Over 25 years, he taught logic, the philosophy of love, English grammar and literature, essay writing, and children’s literature. Students in his classes knew they would benefit from comprehensive and thoughtful feedback on their work.

Laird was not only creative in transmitting others’ ideas in his teaching but also in expressing his own creativity, be it in musical

composition, accomplished piano playing, and of course, as an author. His literary accomplishments spanned books for children, philosophical novels, and psychological thrillers based on Jungian psychology.

In addition to teaching, writing, and his intellectual pursuits, Laird also adored Paris. He had lived there for a year at the age of 12 and returned several times as an adult, spending several months there in total. Many segments of his books were written in Paris or included scenes set in the city.

Laird was a father of two sons, Gethin and Dashiell. His parenting was characterized by an intense devotion to the artistic, especially musical appreciation and practice. He was a deeply knowledgeable man who had a great sense of humour and enjoyed good conversation.

A partial list of his work appears below:

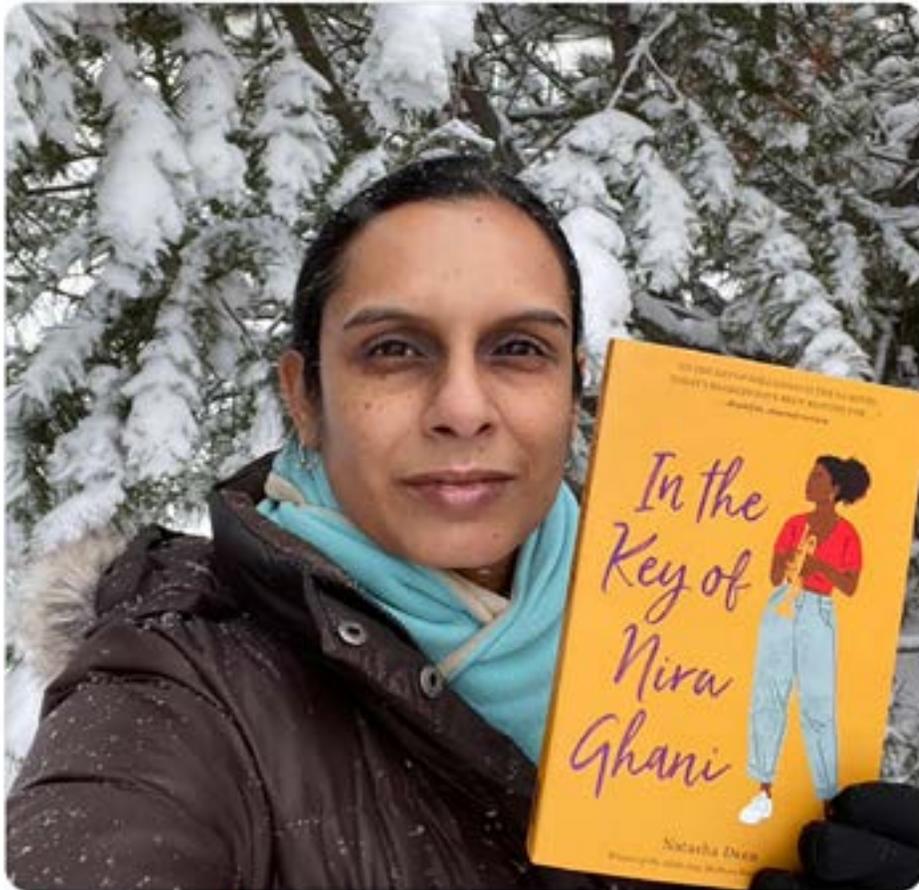
- Adult novels: *Paradise Lost*; *The Death Fairy*
- Children’s books: *Millie the Mouth* (under the pseudonym Freddi French, and co-written and illustrated by Kristina Kandyba); *The New Blue Fairy Book*; *Harry Goes to Paris*
- Academic books: *The Fairy Tale Grammar Book*; *How To Write A Story... Or An Essay*
- Puzzle books: *Plus or Minus*

**Ten years is an impossibly long time to wait to be paid. Add your voice to the chorus of Canadian creators urging the federal government to fulfil its promise to take action.**



**Natasha Deen**  
@natasha\_deen

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