NOVEMBER 2026 ISSUE

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA

LITERARY MAGAZINE



THE CORPORATE CLIMB
Mmathabo Sukati Rewrites The Ladder

SOLLY RAMATSWI
She Voted, I Slam

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

GIOIA LOMASTI AND THE BRIDGE OF 100 BOOKS

HERITAGE ON THE MENU
How 88 Eastern Cape Women Wrote Their Grandmothers Into History

AWARDS FOR AI GENERATED BOOKS
Are They Worth It?

SHATTERED DREAMS
When Talent Becomes A Curse

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How To Know When To Quit Writing: *An Official Survival Guide by* PUBLISH'D AFRIKA .
SHATTERED DREAMS: *When Talent Becomes a Curse in a Mining Town* 1
SOLLY RAMATSWI: *She Voted, I Slam* 4
Heritage On The Menu: *How 88 Eastern Cape Women Wrote Their Grandmothers Back Into History* 8
Gioia Lomasti And The Bridge Of 100 Books 11
Still Being Heard: *Lovelyn Bassey's Hear Me Out Finds Its Audience* 14
THE ANATOMY OF A STORY: *Why Some Novels Never Leave You* 17
The Prix Pascal: *Literary Prize For AI So It Stops Ghostwriting Everyone Else's* 21
When London Pauses, What Does Africa Do? *The Society of Authors AI Charter and the South African Question* 24
Theatre At The Taxi Rank: *Art Against The National Disaster* 27
The Corporate Climb: *A View From The Top*
Mmathabo Sukati Rewrites The Ladder 30
A Milestone That Is Actually a Milestone: *Ireland Pays Its Artists to Exist, and Why South Africa Cannot Afford Not To* 33
CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS 37

PUBLISHED BY PUBLISH'D AFRIKA
Designed & Compiled by Sukoluhle Nontokozo Mdlongwa
Edited by Thokozani Magagula

CONTACT DETAILS
Call/WhatsApp:
+27 83 487 4440
+27 74 643 0618

Email:
info@publishdafrika.com
thokozanimagagula@publishdafrika.com

Facebook: Publish'd Afrika Magazine

From The Editor's Desk:

How To Know When To Quit Writing

An Official Survival Guide by PUBLISH'D AFRIKA

Because **PUBLISH'D AFRIKA** issuing its FINAL edition for the year—don't panic, we are not dying, we are just going to go touch grass and come back in January 2027—we thought we should give you a proper guide on quitting.

The first sign you should quit writing is when you have written your biography on Facebook and it says "Writer | Author | Thought Leader | Public Speaker | Content Creator | Voice of a Generation" but you have never actually finished anything longer than a caption. If your entire body of work is 47 started Google Docs titled "Final Final FINAL version 3," God is telling you to stop.

1. When your family starts praying for you out loud.

Not the silent kind. The loud, laying-of-hands kind.

Your mother says, "We thank God for our son, who is still writing that book since 2019." Your aunt adds, "We bind the spirit of procrastination." When your own mother asks, "Can't you just get a real job at Truworths like Felicity?", it is time to log out.

Harper Lee understood this. She wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird* in 1960, watched the whole world lose its mind, won a Pulitzer, and said, "Thank you, I'm going to go live quietly and never explain myself again." She only came back fifty-five years later because someone found a manuscript in her attic. That is not a comeback, that is your landlord finding your diary.

2. When you start talking to your characters and they start answering back rudely.

J.D. Salinger wrote *Catcher in the Rye* in 1951 and then decided that all of you were too annoying to write for. He moved to a bunker in New Hampshire and wrote fifteen locked manuscripts that he told his estate not to publish until fifty years after he dies. That is not quitting. That is breaking up with your readers via Post-it note.

Arthur Rimbaud did it better. He was a genius French poet at seventeen, wrote all the poems they still force on high school kids, and by twenty-one, he said, "You know what? Poetry is broke. I'm going to go sell guns in Africa." And he did! He literally quit writing to become a gunrunner in Ethiopia. If your plan B is not that dramatic, keep writing.

3. When every rejection email from a traditional publisher starts to feel like a love letter.

"Dear writer, thank you for your submission. Unfortunately..."

You have read so many of these you now have a favourite editor who rejects you politely. You wait for her rejection. You miss her when she doesn't reject you.

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA has not rejected you. We are just going on holiday. November is our FINAL edition for 2026. Final in the sense of "we need to go pay our DSTV and breathe." We will be back in February 2027. That is two months of not having to read your story about a girl who pulls down her short skirt in a fancy lounge. Use it wisely.

4. When you start describing everything like you are writing a novel.
You can't just say, "The food is nice." You have to say, "The samp was a symphony of ancestral yearning, served on a bed of existential dread." If you described the OK hand emoji in words for three paragraphs, you need a nap, not a pen.

5. When you quit for noble reasons.
Some people quit because they achieved everything. Maya Angelou never quit. Toni Morrison never quit. But Zora Neale Hurston died broke, buried in an unmarked grave, and had to be rediscovered thirty years later by Alice Walker. So maybe the real sign to quit is when you realise the literary world will not clap for you until you are dead. In that case, quit early and come back as a ghost. Ghosts get better book deals.

So, final advice?
Don't quit. Take a break. That is what we are doing.
PUBLISH'D AFRIKA is not quitting writing. We are quitting for two months the way your boyfriend says "I need space" and then comes back with braids and a new personality. This is our final 2026 edition, so we will go away, re-read all the manuscripts you have been sending to us, fight with our printers, argue about Oxford commas, and resurrect in January 2027 with a new edition that will make you say, "Ah, so this is why they left."
If Rimbaud can quit poetry to sell guns, if Salinger can quit fame to talk to trees, if Harper Lee can quit for fifty-five years just because she felt like it, you can quit Twitter and finish chapter three.
See you in January 2027. We love you. Now go and write something before we change our minds and extend this break to 2030.
PUBLISH'D AFRIKA—Still Publishing. Just Not Next Month.

SHATTERED DREAMS:

When Talent Becomes a Curse in a Mining Town



Given Boleu's 24-minute documentary asks a painful question: what happens to a God-given talent in a town that only values what comes from underground?

Not everyone is born to be a doctor, an engineer, or an academic. For some, art is bread and butter. For some, talent is the only honest way they know how to pray. But in Middelburg, a mining town in Mpumalanga where the earth is mined and men are measured by what they can extract from it, that prayer has been hard to answer.

It is here that filmmaker, poet and producer Given Boleu went looking for shattered dreams and found them still breathing.

His documentary, ***Shattered Dreams***, has just made the Top 10 final selection of the Mbombela Rural Youth In Film Festival (MRYIFF), set for 26-28 November 2026 at the Kanyamazane Community Hall in Mbombela. The festival, funded by the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, the Presidential Employment Stimulus and the National Video Foundation, is a fitting stage for a film that is, at its heart, about rural youth refusing to be invisible.

Produced by his Middelburg-based company 1050 STATE (PTY) LTD, written and directed by Boleu, *Shattered Dreams* runs just twenty-four minutes. It speaks in English, Zulu and Xitsonga. It does not need more time. Its power is in its economy.

Boleu's premise is blunt: government has no structured programme for art that matches what it has for maths and science. Families, out of love and fear, push children toward 9-to-5s. The result is not just unemployment; it is a spiritual exile.

"Instead of talent being uplifted, it seems like a curse," Given told **PUBLISH'D AFRIKA**. "A lot of artists end up wasting talent by being trapped in things that they are not passionate about, due to pressure to provide for themselves and their families just for survival. While they have talent, they are trapped behind the tills at retail stores, petrol stations and mines."

In the film, the artists speak for themselves, and that is where Boleu the theatre-maker shows his discipline. He lets them testify. Anselmo Chicco Manyisa, known as Phryme Erl, a hard-core rapper with the mind of a billionaire, funds his craft with hustle money. Kenneth Mkhwanazi articulates why the ceiling in entertainment feels concrete. Monica Billeni, singer, script writer, make-up artist, director, offers the counter-narrative: a family that said "don't give up" when she was ready to trade the mic for an ordinary job. Eugene 'Geeno' Mathibela, comedian, rapper, actor, MC, cracking jokes about almost everything except exploitation, which he has lived. Monica Duduzile Mnguni, a visual artist, bubbly, ever-smiling, soft and firm at once, a woman who has dedicated her life to God, tells what it costs to draw while female, in a male-dominated industry, while living with a mental condition. And Kevin 'The Falcon' Moropa, poet, rapper, MC, smart, outspoken, impeccably dressed, knows how demoralising and lonely it is to chase a dream when no one claps.

Boleu does not romanticise them. He shows where the arts took them—to darkness, to depression, to drugs, to an unending misery that can last a lifetime—and then he introduces a third angle often missing from arts documentaries: spirituality. How important it is for artists to involve God in their callings. Art, Given believes, is life and talent is the future.

The target market, he says, is the stereotyped parent, the uninformed teacher, anyone who has ever said "art won't put bread on the table." It is a necessary provocation. Art is bread, if we build the table.

Given Boleu himself, born 3 February 1993 in Mhluzi, Middelburg, is a product of that long apprenticeship. Theatre first—performing, writing, directing, producing, hosting music festivals and poetry events. Poetry led to scriptwriting as second nature. Film came when he acted as lead in the comedy *Wanted*. Behind the camera, he found his pulpit. In 2023, he wrote, directed and produced the first *Shattered Dreams* under the Once Upon A Concept programme by Bolobathaba Media Group, funded by the NFVF. That film won Best Documentary at MIFF. He followed it with High Impact Leadership Programme, following twenty-four leaders in Machadodorp. In 2025, he acted in and produced *Mtoni Chronicles*.

Given remains determined to tell African stories, black child stories, to give a voice to the voiceless, to give the township a chance to shine on a global stage. *Shattered Dreams* is his argument that the township is already shining, we just haven't built the lights.



SOLLY RAMATSWI:
She Voted, I Slam



From Katapi in Pollen to the world—Solly Ramatswi, the boy who turned a grandmother's ballot into a battle cry.

There are poems that are performed, and then there are poems that stand like a flag on a hill.

That is how Solly Ramatswi speaks about *Born Free*, the poem that won him the Poetry Africa National Slam Jam at the Durban Playhouse, R20,000 and a ticket to represent South Africa at the World Poetry Slam Championship in Japan in 2027.

When asked what was going through his mind that night, he didn't talk about winning. He talked about redemption.

"Born Free was a piece that stood like a flag on a hill," he said. "Not because I value it more than my other works, but because of what happened at the 2024 Poetry Africa festival. I was in the top 10 and choked a few lines into the poem. I was frustrated with myself. I was looking forward to getting to the last round so that I can finally give it justice, and I believe I did!"

In 2024, the poem fell from his mouth. In 2025, at the 30th edition of Poetry Africa, he planted it. At the heart of that flag is one line that carries the whole weight of a country: "She voted, I slam."

When asked what being "Born Free" means to a young man raised in Pollen village in Limpopo, born after 1994, Solly doesn't give you a political theory. He gives you a woman.

"The line paints an important part of the freedom we are in: VOTING!" he said. "It is an acknowledgment of all the bodies that stood in long queues and put that cross on the ballot paper so that we can be here. Those who came before us stood as one and DID THAT, VOTED! The 'she' in this poem is my grandmother and, she too, voted for this freedom. This gives me pride and strength to stand on my two feet and dream."

She voted. He slams. That is his inheritance.

And yet *Born Free* is not a celebration that ends with a raised fist and an "Amandla!" It is a question. Solly uses all the struggle imagery we know—the fist, the queue, the chant—and then turns the light toward the present, toward himself.

"This poem was a question: how do I protest as a young adult born after 1994? Does the lack of experience of the apartheid mean that we are not fluent in protest, and are we ungrateful not to think this is enough?" he asked.

When asked if we are free, his answer was disarmingly honest: "I am questioning both myself and that way of protest. The question's existence means that we aren't entirely free. There's more to fight for."

It is that honesty that made him say, moments after winning: "I am a testimony of what community is."

When asked who that community is, he again returned to the first library he ever knew.

"My grandmother has always been that community before I got to mean more people. She is like a library in the flesh, her stories are a community's gift to a boy like me: a boy who grew up in the village."

From that village library, Solly has built his own libraries. He is the founder of Soetry Media and Project Translation, and the

pioneer of what he calls the Sign-In Slam—or Sign-and-Slam—a wrecking ball, in his words, that combines spoken word with South African Sign Language.

Asked why it mattered to make slam accessible, he said: "Sign-and-Slam is a wrecking ball that breaks the social walls around us, or I wish. I am one who believes that language lives beyond the paper and mouth and ear, and SASL is an example of it. I am fascinated by language being movement and a memory."

On that stage, poets are challenged to learn how to sign their poems. It keeps them on their toes.

"As artists, we need to visit spaces that keep us on our toes so that we become responsible citizens," he said. And then, with a sting: "We used to accuse Zulu people of not wanting to learn other languages, yet we are here doing the same with SASL."

The same insistence on accountability runs through his other obsession: Black boyhood. Masculinity. The monsters we read about in headlines and the boys who become them.

When asked how slam allows him to explore that in a way page poetry cannot, Solly made a distinction that every poet should memorise:

"The page can be a secret thought that isn't challenged. But the page is where I listen to myself then hold yourself accountable for the things I say. We introspect on the page before we perform these stories about black boys who can turn into the monsters we often read about."

The page is where you listen. The stage is where you are held accountable. That ethic has carried him from a Word N Sound Poetry League champion to now, South Africa's Slam Champion. He beat a formidable field—Glen Mokoena as runner-up, Tsholang Bodibe third—in a national final that felt like a generational handover.

Asked what that night, at 30 years of Poetry Africa, told him about spoken word in South Africa, he was gracious:

"It was an honour to race with these two young poets. They kept me on my toes and I loved every moment of it. Glen really showed up as that dark horse. I am a fan. I'm looking forward to seeing more of these young bloods in these spaces and beyond slam."

And now, Japan. The world stage. A voice that started in Katapi in Pollen, Limpopo, will have to learn how to travel without losing its accent.

When asked how he is preparing, he refused the idea of preparation as isolation. He wants to live.

"I intend to live and appreciate life. These stories come from life itself; they are life itself. We cannot get stories from a body that didn't live. But I also intend to keep my pen and body sharp by being consistent with poetry performances and theatre productions. This method proves itself to be working. So, let's go conquer the world by living."

That is Solly Ramatswi, a theatre maker first, a poet second, a boy from a village always. When asked what the dream is

after Japan, he looks past the trophy toward longevity.

"I am a theatre maker, so I am looking forward to writing productions that will be the definition of longevity. There are works like the Standard Bank Young Artist Awards. I am salivating over it. There is always more to do. I tell people that I am obsessed with the pursuit of growth, and to pursue growth is to go on and on and on and on. If I stop, then who will tell the stories of a young man from Katapi in Pollen? There are lonely pages waiting for my hand. There are pens waiting to be picked up like toddlers."



Heritage On The Menu:

How 88 Eastern Cape Women Wrote Their Grandmothers Back Into History



There is a taste you cannot Google. Yondela Ngqokelela woke up one morning in 2024 craving it._*Isigwampa*—maize meal folded into wild green leaves, the way her grandfather made it, thick and steaming, a dish that filled the belly and the room. She tried to cook it from memory. She stirred, she tasted. It was not it.

"It was then I understood," she says. "Somewhere, there is a grandmother who can no longer stand at the stove. And when she goes, she will take the exact measure of salt, the exact moment to turn the leaf, with her."

From that craving, a collective was born—or rather, remembered itself into being.

The Eastern Cape Women Writers Association (ECWWA) was founded in 2022 in a WhatsApp group that began as a thread between women who had been told that books written in isiXhosa do not sell.

That stories about *Umqa* and *Umxoxozi* belong only in the kitchen, not on the page.

Today, it is 88 women strong—poets, novelists, bakers, visual artists, food crafters—from Ngqeleni to Pretoria to Cape Town, but all rooted in the red soil of the Eastern Cape. They call themselves writers, but what they are really doing is archiving a library that was never built.

In September, during Heritage Month, they launched two firsts at once: their 92-page traditional recipe book, *IiResiphi zokutya kwesiNtu*, and their First Annual African Food Festival at the Mthatha Arts Centre Pop-Up Store.



Published by Mbana Design Publishing House and edited by Nontuthuzelo Conjwa-Diya and Prof. Buyiswa Mini, with publisher Nozuko Mbana, the book is not a cookbook in the Western sense. It is a lineage.

Open it, and you hear voices:

Isigwampa—milled meal and *imifino*, different in every homestead.

Umcuku— sour amarhewu dancing with dry *umphokoqo*, the taste of childhood mornings.

Isonka Samazimba—sorghum bread, ancient and dark as earth after rain.

Isophu— fresh maize and beans swimming together like old friends.

Umqa— pumpkin surrendered into maize meal, soft as a lullaby.

Iguluda, Udodorhoyi, Umkhupha, Umxoxozi— wild watermelon, steamed bread, corn bread, bean porridge. Names that sit in the mouth like prayer.

Umqombothi — maize beer, not drunk, but shared.

"Maybe there is a grandmother somewhere who can no longer prepare her favourite dish," Ngqokelela says, "but with this book, her grandchildren can now get step-by-step instructions. What is written down stays forever."

This is the quiet revolution ECWWA is leading. In a country where we will pay generously for sushi and pasta, they are asking: who will pay for the knowledge of our mothers? Who will write down how your people in Mpondoland make *umqa* differently from your people in KuGompo?

Most of the contributors are elderly women—living libraries, whose hands know by feel, not by grams. Yondela herself, chairperson, author of *Undiphucile Khorona* and *Umfundisintsapho Ulibulele*

Ikamva Lam!, baker behind Amampondo Bakers, and currently writing a memoir and documentary about her HIV journey, understands that storytelling is not luxury. It is survival.

"Our work is about helping women tell their stories and celebrating African culture," she says. "We bring together writers, crafters and artists to keep our traditions alive."

Supported by OR Tambo Tourism and the Nelson Mandela Museum, the African Food Festival on 19 September 2026 did exactly that: it turned tasting into testimony. Women who had only ever written in notebooks saw their isiXhosa books displayed at festivals, in Amazwi Museum, in schools.

ECWWA does not just publish. It mothers its authors, teaching them how to turn a memory into a manuscript, a manuscript into a market, how to walk into a library or a government department and say: our stories deserve shelf space, too.

When a story is told orally, it changes a little each time, like a song hummed down a long corridor. When it is written, it anchors.

This book is an anchor. An invitation to sit again at a fire. To ask your grandmother, while there is still time, "Mama, show me once more."



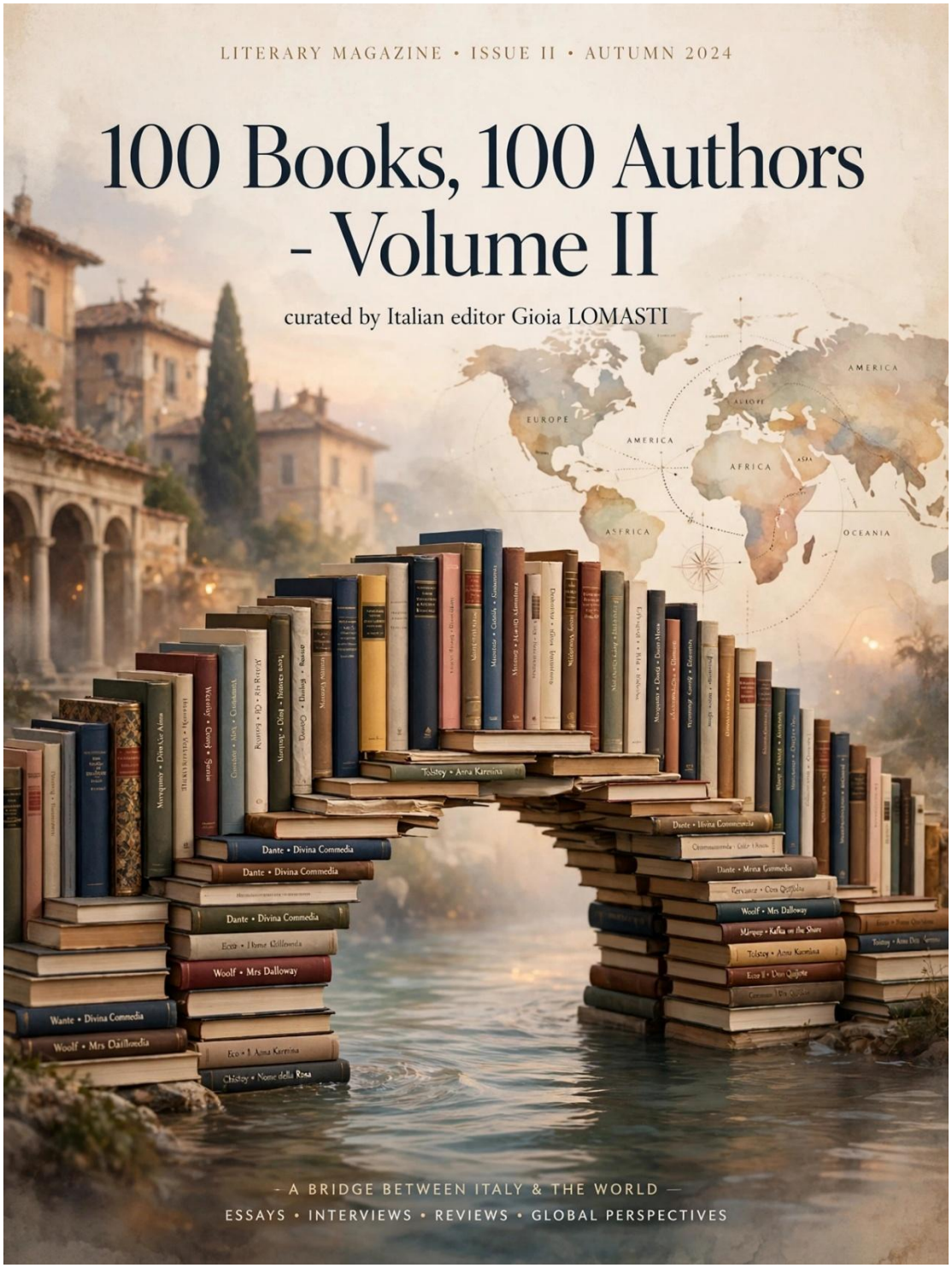
ABOUT THE COLLECTIVE

The Eastern Cape Women Writers Association was founded in 2022 to support women in writing, publishing and sharing stories while promoting isiXhosa language, heritage and literature. They welcome partnerships with libraries, schools, publishers and cultural organisations.

To taste, to read, to join:

Facebook: Eastern Cape Women Writers Association
Chairperson: Yondela Ngqokelela | 078 794 9921 | yondelangqokelela@gmail.com
Every recipe is a return ticket. Every page, a way home._

Gioia Lomasti And The Bridge Of 100 Books



Italian Editor and Cultural Curator Launches Volume II of International Project "100 Books, 100 Authors"

In an era where publishing often chases trends, Italian editor, poet and cultural promoter Gioia Lomasti has chosen a different path: to build bridges.

Founder and curator of Vetrina delle Emozioni (Showcase of Emotions), a literary platform that for over a decade has connected authors, artists and musicians across Italy and beyond, Lomasti has established herself as one of Italy's most active independent voices for poetry as a living civic act.

Author of *Passaggio* (2008), *Theo, la Patafisica* and most recently *Il verso che tace* (The Verse that is Silent)—a bold poetic experiment conceived as ten unwritten cantos inspired by Dante Alighieri, now part of the Biblioteca Dantesca dei Chiostri Francescani in Ravenna and honoured with the patronage of the Società Dante Alighieri—Lomasti describes her editorial work not as production, but as curation: clarity, essentiality, and respect for the author's voice.

It is from this philosophy that her ambitious international project was born: **100 Books, 100 Authors**. After the success of the first volume, which brought together 100 titles from Italian and international authors into a collective cultural cartography, Lomasti is now preparing Volume II.

The concept is simple and powerful: 100 books, 100 authors, 100 different worlds bound together in a single editorial project that celebrates diversity, translation, and the universal power of storytelling. Poets, novelists, essayists and writers from all continents are presented side by side, proving that literature remains the most durable form of cultural diplomacy.

For Volume II, authors are invited to submit books published in English or Italian. To ensure a truly global reach, Lomasti has entrusted the international coordination and editing for authors living outside Italy to Dr. Ashraf Aboul-Yazid, Egyptian poet, novelist, journalist and international literary coordinator known for his work building Afro-Asian and Euro-Arab literary networks.

An Invitation to Creative Friends Around the World

Dr. Aboul-Yazid announced:

"This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce your literary work to a wider international audience and strengthen connections among writers across cultures and continents."

How to Participate in 100 Books, 100 Authors – Volume II

Authors interested in being considered are asked to prepare:

1. **Front Cover Image**: A clear, high-resolution image of the front cover only.

2. **Book Description**: A presentation of your book in no more than 500 words.

3. **Author's Literary Biography**: A 200-word autobiographical profile, written as a narrative paragraph.

Materials are coordinated internationally by Dr. Ashraf Aboul-Yazid and can be sent via:

Email: ashraf_dali@yahoo.com

WhatsApp: +20 109 575 5602

In Lomasti's own words, a book only truly lives when it is shared. Her project reminds us that once a text leaves the author's hands, it becomes a conduit for emotion, memory and encounter. *Il verso che tace* was an invitation to listen to what is not written; 100 Books, 100 Authors is an invitation to read what the world is writing.

From Ravenna, city of Dante, to Cairo, to Germiston and beyond, 100 books are waiting to meet each other.



Still Being Heard:
Lovelyn Bassey's Hear Me Out Finds Its Audience



The entrepreneur and author's challenge to African women to stop shrinking, is hard to ignore.

When Lovelyn Bassey's debut book landed on shelves on 1 August, it arrived with the kind of résumé that usually announces a business memoir: a law degree, two master's degrees, an MBA, and a COO title at one of Africa's largest direct-selling health companies. What readers keep coming back to, though, is a single question buried in the foreword. Who might you have become if nobody had taught you to shrink?

That line belongs to Michelle Göldner of The Reigne Institute, one of the first reviewers to put words to what Hear Me Out: The Audacity to Lead as an African Woman seems to be doing to the women who pick it up. Göldner calls it "A Call to Stop Shrinking," and argues that the book treats silence not as a personality trait but as something conditioned into women from childhood, then trained back out of them, page by page. Echoing the call, Unfathered author Cassandra Gudlhuza, who edited the manuscript, has called it simply "Powerful. Necessary. Timely," and said she hopes every woman "from Lagos to Langa" reads it. Neither reaction reads like the usual launch-week politeness. Both read like recognition.

Bassey says that is exactly the point, and that the book's argument was never abstract to her. At fifteen, she told an older man, an "uncle" by cultural courtesy rather than blood, that he could not keep running his business on her mother's property. She was right, and everyone around her knew it. What she remembers is that nobody discussed whether she was right. Her mother was told the girl had been "rude" and "stubborn" for saying so at all. It is the kind of moment many African women recognise immediately and rarely say out loud, the one where being correct and being acceptable turn out to be two entirely different tests, and only one of them is optional.

That gap between competence and palatability is the engine of Hear Me Out. "You were not born quiet, timid, or small," Bassey writes. "You were raised and conditioned to become that way, intentionally or inadvertently." In a chapter titled "The Obedience Trap," she goes further than most leadership books are willing to, naming the women, mothers, aunts, teachers, colleagues, who pass that conditioning on, usually out of love rather than malice. She describes watching women rise to serve plates at a professional event while capable men stayed seated, simply because "that's how we have always done it," and asking, in front of everyone, why that was still the rule.

None of this is theoretical for Bassey, which is part of why reviewers keep calling the book uncomfortable in a useful way. She is Chief Operating Officer of Healthgarde International, believed to be the youngest Black woman to lead a direct-selling company in Africa, moving regularly between South Africa, Nigeria and other markets. She also founded the coaching practice Leadership with Lovelyn, owns Urban Ethnic Market, and

holds law and business qualifications from the University of Pretoria, Howard University, the University of Derby and Nottingham Trent University, with executive education from the University of Cape Town and Harvard Business School. That record has not gone unrecognised: she has been named a finalist for the COWAP African Women Awards and the Standard Bank Top Women Awards, and in 2025 received a Granfo honour for her empowerment and social impact work with rural women and children. It is, by any measure, a résumé built for rooms most people never get invited into. The book's argument is that the invitation was never really the problem.

Since launch, that argument has kept finding new rooms to sit in. Bassey has taken the conversation to many platforms, with further plans lining up for the months ahead, evidence that the momentum has outlasted launch week. Off the page, the reach is larger still. Through her coaching and mentoring work, she has helped thousands of entrepreneurs, most of them women, build businesses, develop leadership skills and, in a number of cases, travel internationally for the first time through opportunities tied to that growth. Her podcast, The African Businesswoman, and her Leadership with Lovelyn platform extend that mentorship to a wider, ongoing audience. The book reads less like a departure from that work than a distillation of it.

"You do not need more permission," Bassey writes, in the line reviewers quote most. "You do not need more validation. You do not need to be chosen. You need to decide." It is a thesis as much as a sentence, the one African women seem most willing to sit with.

Hear Me Out: The Audacity to Lead as an African Woman is available in softcover, hardcover and e-book from lovelynbassey.com, Takealot, Urban Ethnic Market, select Exclusive Books stores, Amazon, Apple Books, Kindle and the Africarise Store.



THE ANATOMY OF A STORY

Why Some Novels Never Leave You

Every unforgettable novel is not an accident. It is built, beam by beam, choice by choice. If you want to understand why you couldn't put a book down, look at its skeleton.

Here is the structure in the order your reader will experience it as they read your book.

1. PROLOGUE
What it is: A standalone piece before Chapter One begins. It often lives outside the main timeline, voice, or point-of-view of the book.

Its job: To make a promise. It whispers to the reader: something important happened before this story, or something terrible is coming. Stay. It can plant a myth, a murder, a prophecy—something the main story will later pay off.

Why it is important: It buys curiosity. It allows you to start with atmosphere and mystery without rushing your main plot. A weak prologue feels like throat-clearing. A great one feels like a hook in the soul.

Done brilliantly: In *A Game of Thrones* by George R.R. Martin, the prologue introduces the White Walkers, a threat the main characters don't even believe in yet. In *The Name of the Wind* by Patrick Rothfuss, the prologue is three lines of silence, and you are already haunted.

2. EXPOSITION
What it is: The foundation. The world as it is before it breaks. Who lives here, what is normal, what does the main character want but not have?

Its job: To earn affection. To make us love or at least understand the ordinary life, so we feel the cost when it is taken away.

Why it is important: Without exposition, there are no stakes. We don't care if a world burns if we never saw anyone living in it.

Done brilliantly: Toni Morrison's opening to *Beloved* "124 was spiteful." One sentence of exposition and you know the house, the haunting, the history. In *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, the first chapters establish class, family, marriage, and money with such precision that everything that follows matters.

3. INCITING INCIDENT
What it is: The crack. The letter arrives. The stranger comes to town. The opportunity or threat that can no longer be ignored.

Its job: To end the "before" and force the "after." From this moment, the protagonist cannot go back to sleep. They must act.

Why it is important: This is the engine. It turns description into story. Many novels fail because they wander for 100 pages without one.

Done brilliantly: In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling, it's Hagrid's arrival: "You're a wizard, Harry." *In Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, it's Okonkwo's violation of the Week of Peace—a small act that sets his tragic downfall in motion.

4. RISING ACTION
What it is: The long climb. A series of complications, conflicts, and choices, each more difficult than the last. Allies are found, enemies are revealed, secrets surface.

Its job: To create pressure. Every scene should answer one question and ask a larger, more dangerous one. The noose tightens slowly.

Why it is important: This is where character is revealed. Under pressure, who is your protagonist really? This is also where the reader decides to trust you. Are you leading them somewhere worth going?

Done brilliantly: Gillian Flynn in *Gone Girl*. Every chapter of rising action reframes who is the villain. Khaled Hosseini in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*_—each complication deepens the bond between Mariam and Laila until you cannot bear to see them hurt.

5. CRISIS
What it is: Not the action, but the decision before the action. A quiet, brutal moment where the character must choose between two irreconcilable things. Two values. Two futures.

Its job: To force identity. Not "what will happen?" but "who will you be when it happens?"

Why it is important: Plot is what happens out there. Crisis is what happens in here. Readers remember choices more than explosions.

Done brilliantly: In *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo, Michael Corleone must choose: remain the good son who stayed out of the family business, or avenge his father and become the Don. In *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ifemelu must choose between her American life and returning to Nigeria.

6. CLIMAX
What it is: The peak. The confrontation all other scenes have been building toward. The protagonist faces the antagonist, themselves, or the system, and something has to give.

Its job: To deliver. Every promise you made in the prologue, exposition, and rising action must be paid here. It must be both surprising and inevitable.

Why it is important: A reader will forgive a slow start if you give them a devastating climax. They will never forgive a brilliant setup with a weak climax.

Done brilliantly: The courtroom in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The final confrontation in the hotel in *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The last fifty pages of *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Adichie—relentless and earned.

7. FALLING ACTION
What it is: The exhale after the scream. The dust settling. What is broken? Who is left standing? What did victory cost?

Its job: To control the comedown. It prevents your climax from feeling cheap by showing its immediate consequences.

Why it is important: Without it, your story ends at a shout. With it, your story ends at an echo. We need to breathe before we leave.

Done brilliantly: In *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, after the attack on Bodwin, the community comes to exorcise the house—a quiet, communal ritual after horror. In *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, the arrival of the naval officer after all the savagery—innocence returned too late.

8. DENOUEMENT
What it is: From the French for "untying." The knot is untied. The core question of the novel—will she be free? will he be forgiven? will they survive?—is answered.

Its job: To give emotional closure. Not necessarily happy, not necessarily neat, but complete. We learn if the character has changed.

Why it is important: This is the feeling the reader takes with them. The last emotion is the lasting emotion.

Done brilliantly: In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston—Janie on her porch, alone, at peace, having lived a whole life. In *Things Fall Apart,* the white District Commissioner deciding Okonkwo deserves only a paragraph in his book. A devastating, perfect ending.

9. EPILOGUE
What it is: An after-image. A glimpse months or years beyond the resolution. Often in a different voice or distance.

Its job: To show legacy. What did this story leave behind? It answers the reader's final, human question: "And then what happened?"

Why it is important: Used sparingly, it is deeply satisfying. Used badly, it undoes your denouement. It should feel like a gift, not a necessity.

Done brilliantly: **In** *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the epilogue at Platform Nine and Three-Quarters, we see the children of our children. In *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, the epilogue is an academic conference centuries later, which reframes the entire horror as history.



The Prix Pascal:

Literary Prize For AI So It Stops Ghostwriting Everyone Else's



In a move that has left the French literary establishment clutching its pearls, its cigarettes, and its very expensive notebooks, three tech entrepreneurs in France announced that they have created the world's first literary prize exclusively for books co-written with artificial intelligence.

It is called the Prix Pascal. It has no jury yet. It has no prize money yet. What it does have is vibes, audacity, and a press release.

Philippe Rodriguez, Albin Serviant and Gilles Menter, three names that sound like they should be launching a blockchain for cheese, sent a statement to AFP declaring that enough was enough. Other literary prizes are sweating, hand-wringing and rewriting their rules about AI. They decided to just lean in.

"The prize is open to anyone who writes in French, anywhere in the French-speaking world, with no requirement of nationality or residence, and without a publisher," they said. Translation: If you have Wi-Fi and a slightly guilty relationship with ChatGPT, you are eligible.

"Only the work itself matters: an unpublished work of fiction, in French, co-written with an artificial intelligence, that dares to do what has never been read before." Which is a beautiful way of saying: "We want a book that no human has ever had the nerve to prompt."

This is, of course, happening because France's literary world is currently on fire. And not in the sexy, existentialist-cafe way.

Since September, the French book scene has been completely roiled by Thelyson Orelien, the Haitian-born debut novelist whose book *It was Either That or Die* was so good it won the prestigious FNAC prize, got shortlisted for the Goncourt, France's Booker Prize on espresso and existential dread, and then got accused of being written by a robot.

For weeks, Orelien said non. Non, non, non. It was all him. It was either that or die trying. Then his original Canadian publisher, Boreal, quietly came out and said yeah, actually, we have confirmed AI was used in the writing process.

Imagine being the Goncourt jury. One day you are debating Proustian influences, the next you are running a manuscript through an AI detector that has the same accuracy as a horoscope.

The fallout has been spectacular. Established prizes are now frantically re-writing their rules to exclude AI. Publishers are talking about "human-made" labels, like organic chicken but for novels. "This book is 100% free-range author, raised without ChatGPT."

But the Prix Pascal guys looked at all that panic and said: "Why are we pretending? Everyone is using it. Let's just give it a trophy."

And honestly? It's brilliant. For years, authors have had to pretend they wrote their 400-page historical saga entirely alone in a freezing garret in the 6th arrondissement, sustained only by black coffee and suffering. Now they can finally say, "Yes, I co-wrote it with Claude. Claude did the research, Claude fixed my metaphors, and Claude reminded me what year the French Revolution ended."

The thorny questions remain, of course. The press release for every other prize now has to answer: Can you use ChatGPT for research? Can you use it for writing advice? Can you ask it to "make this paragraph less boring"? At what point does "assisted by AI" become "written by AI while you were napping"?

The Prix Pascal neatly avoids all of that by saying: "Bring us your robots. Bring us your cyborgs. If you and your AI wrote a torrid love story set in a boulangerie during a heatwave, we want it."

Submissions are open until November 30th, with the prize to be handed out in mid-December. That gives French-speaking writers exactly six weeks to type "Write me a Goncourt-winning novel but make it French and sad" into a prompt window and hit enter.

The jury is still TBA, which is very on-brand. Why have a human jury at all? Let the AIs judge each other. Let ChatGPT fight Claude in a literary cage match. May the best autocomplete win.

In the end, the Prix Pascal might be the most honest literary prize in France. It doesn't pretend to know what literature is anymore. It just knows that somewhere, a laptop is very hot, a writer is saying, "Rewrite that but with more melancholy," and a masterpiece is being co-authored at 2am.

Blaise Pascal, the 17th-century philosopher the prize is named after, once said: "The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of." He never met an author arguing with a chatbot over a semicolon.

Welcome to French literature, 2026 edition.



When London Pauses, What Does Africa Do?

The Society of Authors AI Charter and the South African Question

Last week, the UK's **Society of Authors (SoA)** launched its Ethical AI Charter, a joint effort with the Creators' Rights Alliance, the Authors Guild in the US, the Australian Society of Authors, the Writers' Union of Canada and New Zealand Society of Authors.

The charter was meant to define how publishers, agents and prize bodies should use generative AI in a "transparent, responsible and ethical way."

On 13 October it went live. By 21 October, the SoA had withdrawn from its own charter. CEO Anna Ganley apologised: "I am sorry that we clearly failed to communicate [the charter's purpose]." She then clarified the SoA's real position: "There can never be any truly ethical use of generative AI because of the way LLMs have been trained on copyright works without permission or payment; the detrimental environmental impacts; and the harmful effect it has on disempowered communities."

Members had complained about lack of consultation. The SoA will now run a survey and discuss next steps at its AGM on 19 November. The charter itself is still live, with no other organisation having withdrawn.

Ganley told The Bookseller: "We are clear that authors' intellectual property rights must be protected and respected in this age of AI... we need to keep humans in this loop. We need to look after our creative workers, not the trillion-dollar US tech titans who exploit and extract from our UK books ecosystem."

It is a very British fight. But the same fight is playing out very differently in South Africa and across Africa.

What South Africa Is Actually Doing

1. **We have a law that was accidentally ahead of its time.**

South Africa is still governed by the **Copyright Act 98 of 1978**. In 1992, long before ChatGPT, Parliament amended it to say the author of a "computer-generated" work is the person "by whom the arrangements necessary for the creation of the work were undertaken".

South African courts in *Payen Components v Bovic and Haupt v Brewers Marketing Intelligence* have since distinguished between "computer-assisted" (human remains author) and "computer-generated" (minimal human input). That means South African law does recognise AI-assisted work if you can prove human skill, effort and judgement—prompt engineering, curation,

editing. If you just click "generate," you may own nothing at all. The work falls into a legal grey zone.

2. Our creators are forcing disclosure, not withdrawal.

While the UK debates charters, South African music has acted. After a member survey in April 2025 where 89.2% of 502 respondents said SAMRO should push for an AI protection law, the Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO) now requires members to disclose how much AI went into a song when they register it.

The SABC has taken a similar line: its stations "avoid airing fully AI-generated works until clear legal frameworks are established," though it admits it has no firm rules yet on partly AI-assisted music. The reality is already here—Rea Gopane's AI-made amapiano track *Suka!* hit No.1 on Apple Music SA this year.

3. Our AI policy collapsed — because of AI.

In April 2026, South Africa published its Draft National AI Policy for comment. Ten days later, News24 found at least six of its references were fabricated. Minister Solly Malatsi withdrew it on 26 April, saying: "The most plausible explanation is that AI-generated citations were included without proper verification... This failure has compromised the integrity and credibility of the draft policy".

The irony was brutal: a policy designed to demand human oversight had failed to keep a human in the loop on its own drafting. Two officials were suspended, and a new Independent Expert Panel chaired by Prof Benjamin Rosman must now rewrite it for 2027.

As Vodacom warned in a recent policy paper with Bowmans: Africa must not simply copy the EU AI Act. The paper notes compliance costs of €6,000-€7,000 per high-risk AI system in Europe; costs built on testing bodies and regulators many African countries do not have. With 86% of Africa's workforce in the informal sector, a credit-scoring AI carries very different risks here than in Brussels.

And What Is Africa Doing?

No African country has yet enacted a dedicated AI Act.

The African Union's Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy, endorsed in July 2024, calls for "Africa-centric, ethical and inclusive AI" and stronger cooperation, but leaves domestication to each state.

Nigeria modernised its Copyright Act in 2022, its first major update since 2004, introducing digital distribution and enforcement powers, but it contains no provisions on AI-assisted or AI-generated works.

Kenya and South Africa have both affirmed in case law that purely AI-generated works are unprotected—human authorship is still required.

The African problem is not just copyright. It is sovereignty. As one analysis put it, South Africa's earlier "cloud-first" policy accelerated transformation but entrenched dependency on a few global providers. AI cannot follow the same path.

The Lesson for South African Authors

The UK's SoA is asking: should we pledge to use AI ethically, or reject any ethical use outright?

South Africa's question is more practical and more urgent: we have an old law that almost works, a Copyright Amendment Bill that has been before the Constitutional Court since 21-22 May 2025, a music industry demanding transparency, a national AI policy that hallucinated its own sources, and a continental strategy that asks us to speak with an African voice.

We do not need another imported charter to sign. We need three things the UK debate cannot give us:

1. **Choice, consent and control with African data**: A clear rule that training LLMs on South African authors without permission is infringement, and mandatory watermarking and disclosure as proposed in our own withdrawn draft policy.

2. **Protection for the human in the loop:** As Ganley said, keep humans in the loop, but in South Africa, that loop includes the freelance translator in Mzansi, the vernacular author writing in isiZulu, the farm-school choir whose song is scraped to train a model.

3. **A framework that fits our reality:** Not a copy of the EU Act, but a principles-based framework—transparency, accountability, fairness, safety, privacy, proportionality—judged locally for informal economies and deep inequality.

The SoA has paused to listen to its members. Perhaps it is time South Africa's Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, CIPC, SAMRO, the Writers' Association of South Africa and the African Union do the same—and write an ethical charter that starts in Limpopo, not London.

Theatre At The Taxi Rank:
Art Against The National Disaster



South Africa has been asked to light up in orange again. From 25 November to 10 December, during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, government buildings will glow, ribbons will be tied, and speeches will be made. It feels routine. It should not.

On 21 November 2025, the Head of the National Disaster Management Centre classified Gender-Based Violence and Femicide as a national disaster under the Disaster Management Act. It was the first time the state gave a name to what women have known for a generation: that this is not a series of incidents, but a disaster that lives in our streets.

Nothing has made that abstraction more brutal than the open veld and abandoned lots of Ekurhuleni in the past three months.

Since 15 July 2026, eleven women's bodies have been found in and around Kempton Park. Police have named them: Busisiwe Mahlangu discovered on 15 July; Itumeleng Kekana on 3 August; Nomfesane Mjobo on 26 August; an unidentified woman floating in the Clayville River in Olifantsfontein on 7 September; Gracious Nkomo on 10 September; Elizabeth Moselakgomo—a runner known as Tsontso, a mother who left home for an afternoon run and never returned—found behind a hotel in

Rhodesfield on 12 September; a woman whose name is still withheld pending family notification on 14 September; Dineo Motapane and Jabulile Ntimba on 15 and 17 September; Ntombifuthu Nxumalo in Thembisa on 26 September; and another unidentified woman in Springs on 27 September.

Some women were partially clothed. Some bore signs of trauma. Some were missing. The police, with a R400,000 reward on the table, say they cannot yet confirm a single perpetrator. Communities do not need confirmation to feel hunted.

President Ramaphosa told municipalities they have 60 days to fix broken lights, clear abandoned buildings and secure dangerous routes. He was right: "Women should not have to live in fear because the government has failed to repair a light." But lights do not repair a culture. That is where art comes in.

We like to think art reflects society. In South Africa, the best art has always refused to merely reflect; it intervenes.

During lockdown, illustrator LeeAnne Burger and lawyer Lee-Ann Germanos founded The Embrace Project, selling local artworks to fund grassroots GBV organisations and to lobby for legislative change. Their premise was simple: a painting can pay for a protection order.

In the gallery, the intervention is more intimate.

Andrea Walters, herself a survivor, has spent a decade translating intimate partner violence into a visual language we cannot look away from. *In Vrou:Vertaal* [Woman:Translated] (2012), umbrellas hang at different degrees of opening in a club setting—each a domestic shield that has failed. *Abject of Desire* (2013) centres on the death of a woman at the hands of a partner, refusing spectacle. *#OverMyDeadBody* (2022) is a direct protest placard turned artwork. As a recent study in *Image & Text* notes, Walters' work insists on the survivor as author, not artefact.

That same refusal of the violated body as spectacle runs through three artists examined by researchers at the Tshwane University of Technology's Artivism symposium. Gabrielle Goliath's ongoing *Elegy* performance sings for individual women and queer persons lost to femicide, one voice, one name, no photograph. Lady Skollie uses frank, satirical watercolour and crayon to talk about consent, sex work and church patriarchy—laughing to keep from screaming. Annemi Conradie-Chetty's *Lull*: subversive embroideries and Biblical texts of terror embroiders texts of terror onto muslin—the same fabric used to swaddle infants—to show how soft domestic craft can hold hard patriarchal violence.

On the ground, art leaves the white cube. In Kimberley, Atlegang Creatives' production *Breaking Silence* has toured Northern Cape communities during previous 16 Days campaigns, using theatre to rehearse what it sounds like to speak up and be believed. In Westville, mosaic artist Peta Salmon and her team of women from Inchanga built two large anti-domestic violence mosaics outside the SAPS station. Salmon used mirror glass deliberately: the

chains of violence reflect, but so do the mirrored wings of a bird breaking free—the viewer sees herself in both the trap and the escape.

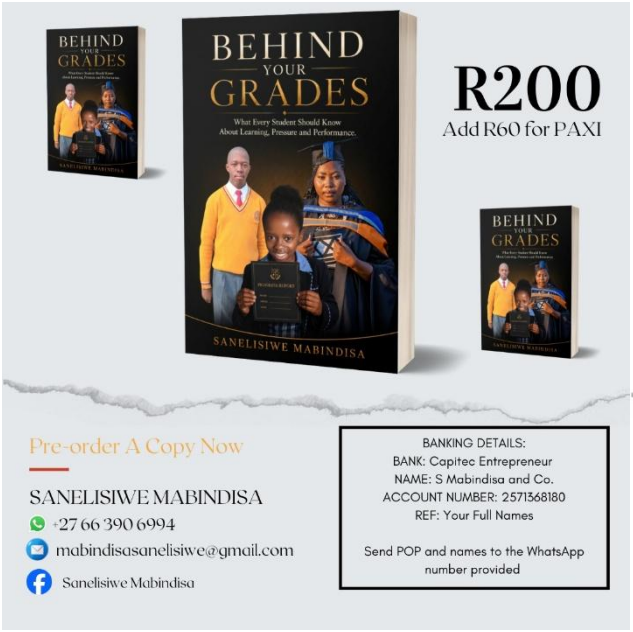
Perhaps the most urgent artistic work is not about women at all, but about men. Research on toxic masculinity as a driver of GBV has turned to artists who visualise alternative manhood. Mzoxolo Mayongo, Loyiso Mkize and Lindiwe Mayisela have been cited in the South African Journal of Art History for works that portray soft masculinity, emotional vulnerability and non-violent resolution—not as weakness, but as cultural resistance. Add to that poet Lebo Mashile, whose poem *The Gorgon* refuses the myth of the monstrous woman, and photographer Zanele Muholi, whose portraits of Black lesbian and trans life insist that to be seen is to be protected.

The Via Mzansi collective, 19 emerging artists recording at Jazzworx in Bryanston this August, put it most plainly. Their single *What's Wrong With The World?* is not a question to victims, but to all of us.

This is why, on 13 September in Kempton Park, hundreds of runners ran 13 kilometres not to compete, but to reclaim. They ran past the place Elizabeth Moselakgomo was found. A runner told IOL: "We shouldn't be looking at our back. We should be protected at all times."

For the 16 Days, art must do what those runners did. It must occupy the street. It must light the abandoned building before the state fixes the bulb. It must give us a language beyond orange lights and statistics.

If you are a writer, write the name Busisiwe Mahlangu into a poem and make it impossible to forget. If you are a curator, hang Walters or Goliath where a police officer must walk past it. Art will not arrest a killer. But it can make a country refuse to live with killing.





The Corporate Climb:
A View From The Top
Mmathabo Sukati Rewrites The Ladder



There are memoirs that tell you how to get to the top. Mmathabo Sukati's second book, *The Corporate Climb: A View From The Top*, asks a harder, more necessary question: who do you become while you are climbing?

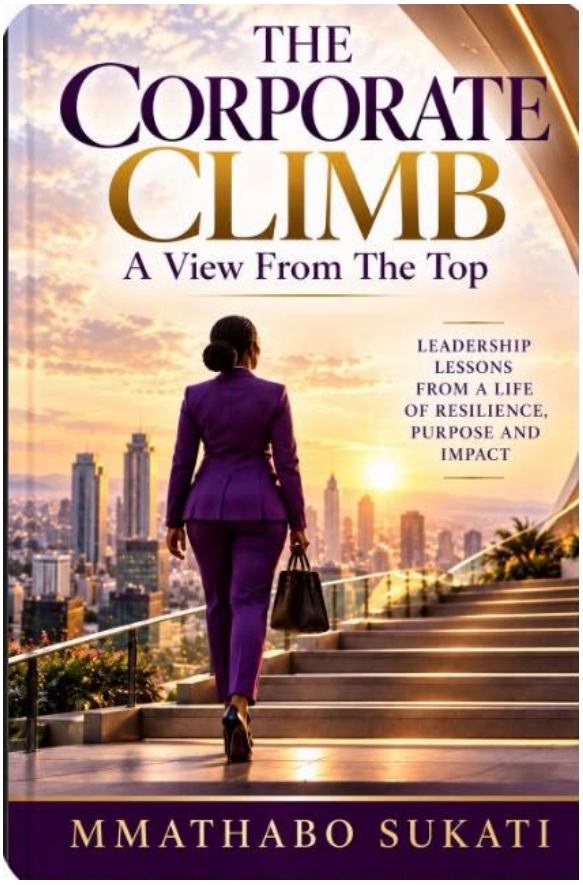
For readers who met Sukati in her searing debut, *The Child Bride: From Captive to Courageous – A Girl's Fight to Rewrite Her Destiny*, the new book will feel like both a continuation and a reinvention.

The first book was about survival, about a young girl whose education and freedom were interrupted, who had to find the courage to reclaim her life. *The Corporate Climb* begins where freedom begins.

"Freedom was not the end of my story. It was the beginning," she writes. "A new, quieter, but more profound question emerged: what would I do with the opportunity I had been given?"

What she did was climb. Not metaphorically, but literally: studying after the house was quiet, becoming a Chartered Accountant, learning to love disclosure checklists at PwC and Stanlib, being told by a manager, "Mmathabo, own the whole file, not just your piece."

This is not a boardroom brag book. Sukati is explicit in her introduction: "This book is therefore not a celebration of positions or titles." It is a book about formation.



She structures that formation into what she calls The Climb Model—fourteen rungs that are less about promotion and more about character.

It starts with *Competence*, the first rung where she had to prove, mostly to herself, that she belonged. Then *Responsibility*, where the question shifts from "How do I succeed?" to "How do we succeed?" That shift, she argues, is the bridge between being good at your job and being a leader. You grow by letting go, by teaching someone else to do what you do best so your hands are free to carry something heavier.

From there, the rungs become more human and more dangerous: *People*—"behind every number, every process, every strategy and every organisation are human beings." *Influence*—finding her voice. *Power* and how power tests your character. *Governance*, where she codifies a beautiful, brutal set of guardrails: *Integrity, Accountability, Transparency, Challenge, Sustain*. Her reflection prompt: Would this decision still stand if it were examined years from now?

Strategy is the rung where she learns to lift her eyes from the next step to the mountain. For years, she writes, she was auditing her own life. "If my life was an audit file, my manager would have said, 'Mmathabo, this is immaterial, go home.'" Strategy taught her to see the weather changing.

What makes *The Corporate Climb* different from the crowded shelf of corporate leadership literature is where it came from. Sukati does not arrive at the bottom of the corporate ladder empty-handed. She carries invisible luggage.

In a powerful early section, *The Strength I Carried Into The Climb*, she connects the girl who survived child marriage to the woman in the boardroom. Resilience was not learned in a management course. It was

learned by getting up while still tired. Perseverance was learned by continuing toward a destination that was not yet visible. Determination was learned by understanding, in the most visceral way, what education can change.

"The same determination that once helped me reclaim my education helped me pursue professional excellence," she writes. "The same courage that helped me begin again helped me speak up, challenge decisions and eventually occupy spaces where my voice carried greater responsibility."

She is also unsparing about what the climb costs, and who pays for it. One of the book's most moving threads is her honouring of invisible acts of support—the man who bought a home so she could bring her children home, the quiet assurance that there would be food at the end of the month. She reminds climbers at every level: behind every visible milestone—the qualification, the promotion, the corner office—are invisible contributions. That ethic becomes the book's final, and most urgent, philosophy.

In the closing chapters, *Purpose and Legacy: Lift As You Climb*, Sukati makes the turn from success to significance. "Success asks: 'What did I achieve?' Significance asks: 'What did I leave behind that will live without me?'"

The final rung, she discovers, does not exist. "I used to think the final rung of the corporate ladder was the top, that one day you arrive and you finally exhale and say, 'I made it.' Now I know there is no final rung."

Legacy, in her telling, is not being remembered forever. It is leaving the ladder stronger, steadier, and more welcoming for those who come after you, even when your name is no longer on the office door.

It is a fitting view from the top. Not a panorama of what she conquered, but a clear-eyed look back at who she carried with her, and who she is now reaching back for. As she tells the reader still at the bottom of their own ladder: "You belong. You may not have all the answers... Keep climbing."

The Corporate Climb: A View From The Top is not just for accountants, executives, or women in corporate South Africa, though it will be essential reading for them. It is for anyone who has ever wondered whether survival skills can become leadership skills. In Sukati's hands, they can—if you climb wisely, and if you remember to hold the ladder for the next person.

A Milestone That Is Actually a Milestone:

Ireland Pays Its Artists to Exist, and Why South Africa Cannot Afford Not To



A basic income scheme for artists in Ireland began rolling out last month, paying musicians and creative workers more than €34 million over the next three years.

That line, small as it looks, is seismic. The Basic Income for the Arts scheme, which piloted in 2022 and was officially announced last year as a permanent scheme, will support 2,000 selected artists across Ireland. The first 750 successful applicants have been chosen from a batch of more than 10,000, and will receive just over €1,400 per month starting in October, backdated to September.

What the National Campaign for the Arts called "a significant milestone" is, in policy terms, a world first.

How It Was Conceived

In 2020, after Covid shut down every venue, festival and set in Ireland, then Minister for Culture Catherine Martin commissioned the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce. Its brief was simple: how do you keep artists alive when art stops?

Its recommendation was radical: stop funding projects and start funding people. A basic income pilot. Applications opened in April 2022, and 8,000 people applied for 2,000 places, and the selection was deliberately run as a randomised controlled trial—Ireland's first large-scale RCT on cultural policy.

The logic, Martin said at the time: "Worrying about putting bread on the table really impacts artists' creative juices. This is about giving them space to work." For three years, artists received €325 per week, about €1,413 a month, no strings attached, no final report, no prescribed painting or album.

How It Is Funded — And Why The State Says It Pays For Itself

This is not charity. It is a line item in the national budget, administered by the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport.

For the permanent scheme, Minister Patrick O'Donovan ring-fenced €18.27 million in Budget 2026, and a further €34.4 million within the 2027 Budget to sustain the three-year cycle. Payments are €325 per week, for three years, with a three-month tapering-off period. The scheme will operate in three-year cycles—artists on the 2026 cycle cannot reapply until 2032.

The government made it permanent because the data forced it to. An independent evaluation by Alma Economics and a cost-benefit analysis found:

- Artists increased creative time by 11 hours per week
- Arts-related expenditure rose by €333 per month, arts income by over €500 per month
- Anxiety and depression reduced significantly compared to a control group
- For every €1 invested, society got back €1.39, through higher productivity, higher spending in the arts economy, and reduced reliance on other social welfare.

Public buy-in is almost unanimous: in a survey of 17,000 respondents, 97% supported making it permanent. As Peter Power of the National Campaign for the Arts put it: "The scheme was a real-world test of what happens when people are given stability instead of precarity."

It is, as Deutsche Welle noted, "unique in Europe," attracting study visits from Germany and Finland.

Bringing It Home: South Africa's Long Funeral

If Ireland has decided that instability is a policy problem, South Africa still treats it as a personal failing. We clap at funerals and post RIPs, but we watch our legends die in the same way, decade after decade.

The list is not short:

Those who died with nothing:

-Simon 'Mahlathini' Nkabinde, the Lion of Soweto, mbaqanga icon. In his prime he filled stadiums with the Mahotella Queens. He died in 1999 destitute. The only property to his name was a three-room house. Hugh Masekela said he could not afford a bicycle.

- Brown Dash — Kwaito star whose album sold 100,000 copies. Died at Chris Hani

Baragwanath in 2012, broke. Fellow musicians had to pass a hat for his funeral.
-Brenda Fassie — made an estimated R30 million in her career. Died in 2004 destitute; donations covered her medical bills and funeral.
-Dumile Feni — one of our greatest visual artists, died penniless in New York in 1991, on the edge of a major homecoming show.
- Ernest Cole, who made apartheid visible to the world in *House of Bondage*, died penniless and almost forgotten in New York in 1990, days after Mandela walked free.
-Moses Tladi, the "native genius" landscape painter, forcibly removed from his home in what is now Bryanston to Soweto, never painted again, died in grief in 1959.
-Ray 'Velaphi' Ntlokwana, Gugulethu-born legend, died of colon cancer in 2000 in his family home.

Those who now have to beg while alive:

-Dr Malinga — In 2022 SARS came for his house over R400,000 arrears. He had to beg on Facebook Live. Fans raised R100k.
- Zola 7 — Kwaito legend, posted his banking details asking for donations for medical care. MaMkhize gave him R1 million.
- Madala Kunene — the Zulu guitar legend, 78, called "Bafo," put on an 8-month public hospital waiting list for surgery, forcing a UKZN campaign: "Please Donate — Let's Support a Living Legend".
- Nandi Nyembe, 75, the soul of South African storytelling, died in August 2025 after a viral video of her in a wheelchair asking not for pity but for work and money for basic needs.
- Sabelo Gumede, comedian, battling Stage 3 choriocarcinoma, spent over R100k on tests before diagnosis, now crowdfunding chemo because he cannot work.
- Toya Delazy — in April 2026 posted: "I'm invited to Podcast & Chill… Kerosene is so expensive… Can you guys *xhasa the bhanoyi*" to raise flight money from London.
- Bravo Le Roux — Khayelitsha rapper, died by suicide in Switzerland in January 2026. His family needed CHF100,000 (R2 million) just to repatriate his body.

This is not mismanagement. Research by Gwen Ansell at University of Pretoria into a jazz relief fund found that even "star" musicians are not nearly as well paid as the public believes, and their working costs often drive them out of music entirely. Actors, as SAGA chair Jack Devnarain says, work as freelancers with no royalties, no pension, no health cover.

Why We Need It — And What It Could Look Like

Ireland recognised that precarity is not romantic; it is expensive. It kills output, mental health and the archive. South Africa has the same precarity, but multiplied by apartheid dispossession, no resale rights, and a Department of Sport, Arts and Culture whose budget for creation is still project-based, competitive, and late.

Imagine a South African Basic Income for the Arts:

2,000 practitioners — writers, poets, painters, jazzmen, actors, dancers, crafters—selected by peer review, not followers, paid R5,000 per month for three years, unconditional. Cost: R360 million over three years. Less than one major stadium refit. Less than what we lose to one tender corruption case.

The Irish evidence says it would return more than it costs in expenditure, productivity and reduced emergency appeals. It buys time; time not surrendered to Uber driving, call-centre shifts, or begging online.

We cannot continue to have a culture where an artist must become a tragedy to be remembered, and a fundraiser to be kept alive. Ireland has given its artists bread so they can keep the juices flowing. When will we?



CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA - OPEN CALL FOR MANUSCRIPT ASSESSMENT

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW IF YOUR WRITING IS ANY GOOD?

You have written a novel. Or half a novel. Or you have a story that has been living in your head for years. Friends say "it's great," family says "you should publish it," but deep down you are asking yourself the real questions:
Is my writing actually any good?
Does my story hold together?
Do I have what it takes to be built on and developed into a writer?
PUBLISH'D AFRIKA is opening its doors for an honest, professional, and developmental review of your work. We are inviting aspiring authors of fiction to submit a synopsis and the first two chapters of their manuscript for a frank assessment. No sugar-coating. No empty praise. Just a clear, respectful evaluation of where you are strong and where you need to grow.

SUBMISSION WINDOW: 01 NOVEMBER - 30 NOVEMBER 2026
WHO KNOWS? MAYBE YOUR SUBMISSION COULD FORM PART OF OUR NEXT ADOPT-AN-AUTHOR PROGRAM ACQUISITION.
We are not only assessing. We are also scouting. Outstanding submissions from this window will be considered for selection into our Adopt-An-Author Program, our intensive developmental program where we walk with a chosen author from manuscript to market-ready book.

WHAT TO SUBMIT:
1. A 1-2 page synopsis of your full story - beginning, middle, and end.
2. The first two chapters of your manuscript.
3. A short cover letter: Who are you, what genre is your fiction, and what is your word count?
4. Format: English only, Fiction only for this round. Word document, Times New Roman 12pt, double-spaced.

Send to: info@publishdafrika.com with subject line: MANUSCRIPT ASSESSMENT - [Your Name] -[Title]

WHAT OUR ASSESSMENT WILL COVER:
1. **Grammar & Punctuation:** The technical foundation. Are sentences constructed correctly? Is punctuation helping your meaning or confusing it?

2. **Syntax & Sentence Craft:** How you put words together. Are your sentences clear, varied, and active, or are they tangled and hard to follow?

3. **Flow & Pace:** Flow is the rhythm of your writing from paragraph to paragraph. Pace is how fast your story unfolds. Does your opening hook the reader, or does it drag?

4. **Voice & Character:** Do we hear a distinct authorial voice? Do your characters sound like real people?

5. **Plausibility Issues:** This is when something in your story breaks logic, human behaviour, or the rules of your own world. For example, a character in 1998 rural Limpopo using a smartphone, a police officer who does not call for backup before entering a dangerous house, or a woman forgiving a huge betrayal in one paragraph with no emotional process. We flag moments where a reader would stop and say, "That would never happen like that."

6. **Show vs. Tell & Dialogue:** Are you showing us the story through action and vivid scenes, or just telling us "he was angry"? Is your dialogue natural and purposeful?

7. **Market Readiness & Potential:** Our honest verdict on what is working, what needs reworking, and whether you have the raw material that can be built on.

WHAT YOU WILL RECEIVE:
A concise 1-2 page assessment report with strengths, weaknesses, and clear next steps. This is not a full edit; it is a developmental compass.

IMPORTANT NOTES:
This is an assessment opportunity, not a guarantee of publication. But for exceptional voices, this could be your entry into the **Adopt-An-Author Program**.
Submissions are limited and will be assessed in order of arrival.
We respect your work. We will be honest with your work.

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA
+2783 487 4440 / +2774 643 0618
info@publishdafrika.com | http://www.publishdafrika.com
We publish Africa. We build writers.

The Obibiezenna Prize For Literature 2026

The Obibiezenna Prize for Literature, an annual literary award established to celebrate outstanding African writing, is organizing its 2026 edition with a singular focus on poetry.
Established by writer and poet, Collins C. Oparaocha to honour the best of African literature, the 2026 edition of the prize seeks to encourage and award writing by African writers, which is imaginative, original and will likely help improve the understanding of African life and condition.
The Prize, which rotates between fiction and poetry, invites entries in both genres for its different editions. The 2026 edition will be dedicated to poetry. The guiding vision of The Obibiezenna Prize For Literature is simple: Literature without apology.
The judging panel for this year's prize includes Nigerian writer and poet Ikenna Okeh, Mexican poet Pablo Gross Herrera and Nigerian writer and poet Abraham Aondoana.

Eligibility
African writers: Eligible.
Qualification: Applicants should be aged 18 years or above.
Applicants' nationality/citizenship should be indicated in the application.
African diaspora: Eligible.
It is open to writers from all over the continent and African writers in the diaspora.

Who Can Submit?
African writers from 18 years old and above are invited to participate in The Obibiezenna Prize for Literature 2026.

Three poets will be recognised, with the first-prize winner receiving ₦100,000, the second-prize winner ₦70,000, and the third-prize winner ₦50,000.
Submissions will close on November 5, 2026, with the shortlist to be announced on November 30, while the winners will be announced on December 12.
On October 10, 2026, the Obibiezenna Prize for Literature will open its doors for submissions to African poets and poets of the African diaspora.

Click the link in bio to read the full submission guidelines and eligibility criteria https://jaylit.com/call-for-submissions-the-obibiezenna-prize-for-literature-2026/

Meanwhile Magazine Call For Submissions

Welcome to MEANWHILE, a new digital magazine based in Canada. They focus on the other: the weird and wonderful, untold stories, diverse voices, local legends, and more.
They are currently accepting submissions for their inaugural Spring 2027 issue, themed *Now That We're Here*.

ABOUT THE THEME

Now That We're Here is about beginnings: first attempts, first encounters, decisions, discoveries, and the moment an idea becomes real. We want work about starting, arriving, and taking the first step into what comes next.

FICTION

We accept fiction in three lengths: nano-fiction (under 100 words), micro-fiction (100–1,000 words), and short fiction (1,000–3,000 words).
You may submit multiple pieces in one document, provided the total does not exceed 3,000 words. Please name the file with the title(s) of the piece(s).

POETRY

Submit up to three poems, with a maximum total length of five pages. They welcome free verse, prose poetry, and other forms. Please submit all poems together as one document and name the file with the title(s) of the piece(s).

VISUAL ART

They accept original artwork in a wide range of mediums, including photography. You may submit one piece, multiple pieces, or a series.
Please submit no more than 10 presentation-ready images, along with an artist statement of no more than 500 words. Accepted formats are JPG, PNG, TIFF, and PDF. Please name files with the title(s) of the piece(s).

FORMATTING

All written submissions must be 12-point and single-spaced. We have no font preference.

MULTIPLE SUBMISSIONS

You may submit to multiple categories, but each category must be submitted separately. Please do not submit more than once to the same category. If you submit twice to the same category, we will decline the second submission and consider only the first.

SIMULTANEOUS SUBMISSIONS & WITHDRAWAL

We accept simultaneous submissions. If your work is accepted elsewhere, please let us know. You may withdraw your submission through Subfolio. To withdraw only part of a submission, email info.meanwhilemagazine@gmail.com with the details.

ELIGIBILITY
Submissions are open to everyone. You do not need to have any ties to Canada to submit. We do not currently offer translation services, so submissions must be in English.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED WORK
We do not accept previously published work.

RIGHTS
We ask for First North American Serial Rights and the right to archive contributors' work. All other rights revert to the contributor upon publication.

FEES & PAYMENT
Submissions are free. As an independent magazine, we are not currently able to pay contributors for work published in our digital issues. We hope to change this in the future.

PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT
Please do not submit work that is:
• Hateful to any group
• Excessively gory
• Sexually explicit
• Non-original and/or made through the use of artificial intelligence

Repeated violations will result in automatic declines on all future submissions.

HOW WE EVALUATE WORK
We evaluate work on four criteria:
• Resonance with the call theme, either literally or metaphorically
• Quality of the work as a representation of its craft
• Novelty and distinctness
• Adherence to the submission guidelines

We love to be delighted, surprised, startled, challenged, corrupted, amused, obsessed, and more.
Connect with them:
Instagram: @mwmagpress

CALL FOR SHORT STORY SUBMISSIONS

African Ink Publishers Ltd invites writers to submit original, creative short stories celebrating diverse perspectives and the art of storytelling.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES
Language: English or Kiswahili
Length: 2,500–4,500 words
Target audience: Young adults and adults
Format: Microsoft Word document containing the story and author biography
Additional details: Include the themes explored and moral lesson, where applicable.

Submission Period: 18 October – 27 November 2026
Submission Deadline: Friday, 27 November 2026.
Submit to: africaninkbooks@gmail.com

TERMS AND BENEFITS
Stories must be original and previously unpublished.
Submissions may be screened for plagiarism and AI-generated content.
Only selected and accepted stories will be published.
No submission fees or preliminary payments are required.
Selected authors will receive a free author copy and a certificate.
Authors retain ownership of their stories.

Call For Manuscript Submissions: 2027/2028 Publication List

Dryad Press is inviting poets and writers to submit their manuscripts for consideration for the 2027/2028 publication list.
Submissions will be open for ONE MONTH ONLY, from 1 November to 30 November 2026. Please ensure that your manuscript is submitted within this period.
This call is open to a wider range of genres and forms of writing. They welcome:
• Poetry
• Short story collections
• Memoir
• Creative non-fiction
Before submitting, please read the full manuscript submission guidelines on their website and ensure that your work meets all the requirements. A submission fee is payable to support the process of having shortlisted manuscripts reviewed by qualified and experienced readers. Please note that this is not a reading fee.

Publishing opportunities are limited, so take the time to prepare and submit your strongest work. This is an opportunity to share your voice, your stories and your imagination with the world.
Submission window: 1–30 November 2026
Read the guidelines and submit here:
https://dryadpress.co.za/submissions/

About Dryad Press
Dryad Press is an award-winning independent South African press that publishes literature that unsettles and surprises: in form, language, and idea. We love books that prompt readers to reflect on experiences of the world in new ways.
Since 2016, Dryad Press has published contemporary South African poetry collections by both new and established writers. We have curated award- winning poetry collections, several supported by funding from the National Arts Council.
This year, submissions are open to a wider range of genres and modes than poetry. Yes, we still want your poetry. But we also welcome short story collections, memoir and creative non-fiction.
Our last open submission period attracted more than 80 manuscripts and led to the publication of Zero Summer by poet, literary critic and academic Simon van Schalkwyk, a debut collection, Magnitude by poet and academic Deborah Seddon, a further debut collection Fluent in the Language of Burial by cultural activist Thando Fuze, and Sarah Uheida's Ingrid Jonker winning poetry collection Not This Tender.
Before you submit, familiarise yourself with Dryad's books. Visit our online bookstore. Buy a few titles. We are running a fabulous special offer of 25% off for the month of November.

Tshwane Authors Rally 2026 – Join The Books Revolution!

Calling all aspiring, published, and established authors!
Authors Are Artists proudly presents the Tshwane Authors Rally 2026, a gathering dedicated to empowering authors, celebrating literature, and transforming the publishing industry.

Date: Saturday, 21 November 2026
Time: 9:00 AM
Venue: Denlyn Mall, Mamelodi West, Pretoria
Entry: FREE!

Topics to be addressed:
📌 Author injustices
📌 Author training

- Author sales
- Author networking
- Author funding
- Women in writing
- Authorship in disabilities

Whether you are an aspiring writer or a published author, this is your opportunity to connect, learn, share experiences, and explore new possibilities in the literary world.
For more information: 063 454 8266
Email: authorsareartists23@gmail.com
Click the link to secure your space: https://forms.gle/UGQkxu35Bdvuv4F28

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA
LITERARY MAGAZINE
Redefining Africa's Narrative