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## Bildungsroman (Jen Webb)

### A history of speech

I like a door that sounds decisive when you close it a child who knows precisely when to hang up the phone the historian who discourses on the use of 'hang up' for the phones we now use my rusting memories of lying on the floor of my parents' bedroom spiral-wired phone against my head listening to you breathe while you listened to me breathe as though we were rehearsing for a future we would not live to see.

Leaving love behind, you place the phone back in its cradle. Leaving love behind, you close the door. So gently it might have been a breath.

## After watching Q&A once too often

Remembering the things we have forgotten: those leaves blown across the roof by the recent storm; those monstrosities propped against doors.

We love our monstrosities when they wear velvet collars, when they carry sheaves of wheat or prizewinning cakes.

You made love to me for hours and hours, like it was the World Cup. You made love to me like a story you would tell the grandkids. Leaving me ashy and scattered. Leaving.

Every morning I fill the French press and drink cup after cup of coffee. Wakeful from the beginning. Wakeful to the end. Surprised by the way every door will open, and close, all by itself.

## Bildungsroman

We were fourteen and fifteen and spent afternoons stretched out kissing on your bed while your mum tapped on your door saying *Orange juice, dears? Scones?* and then I'd pedal away on my no-gears bike from your Fourth Street apartment to my Seventh Street home with its mullioned windows and parquet floors, fourteen blocks away, lips swollen, and *I loved you* I said, *loved you*, then left not just you but everything.

The film is breaking down. Its emulsion shatters like glass and each image is eaten by the decay, unstable as memory, as the history we failed to share. The weather has changed, and still I commit to nothing. I have no library card; pay only casual rates at the gym. I am no longer a little girl.

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**Jen Webb** is Distinguished Professor of Creative Practice, and Dean of Graduate Research, at the University of Canberra. Author/editor of thirty scholarly volumes, she has also published eighteen poetry collections and artist books, and is co-editor of the bilingual (Mandarin/English) anthology



Open Windows: Contemporary Australian Poetry. Her most recent poetry collections are Moving Targets

(<https://recentworkpress.com/books/product/moving-targets/>), and Flight Mode (<https://recentworkpress.com/books/product/flight-mode/>). (Recent Work Press).

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## Payment

Verity La INC is an artist-run, not-for-profit organisation. However, as a result of financial support from our **fabulous readers** (<https://australianculturalfund.org.au/projects/verity-la-supporters-drive-2/>) and Create NSW, we are able to pay our writers in 2020 – woohoo! Each piece – or suite of shorter pieces – published (excluding

previously published book extracts) will receive the grand (in literary circles) sum of \$AU100. Read our full [submissions guidelines](https://verityla.com/submission-guidelines/) (<https://verityla.com/submission-guidelines/>) for more details.

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## Official Info

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A small selection of work is also archived at [Deakin Research Online](https://www.deakin.edu.au/dro) (<https://www.deakin.edu.au/dro>), Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

The journal is comprehensively listed on the [AustLit](https://www.austlit.edu.au/) (<https://www.austlit.edu.au/>) database.

*Verity La* gratefully acknowledges the assistance of [Australian Council for the Arts](https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/) (<https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/>) for supporting the journal throughout 2018 and '19, and to [Create NSW](https://www.create.nsw.gov.au/) (<https://www.create.nsw.gov.au/>) for its support in 2020.

The opinions expressed in the works published on *Verity La* do not necessarily reflect those of its Editorial Team or Board, nor are they necessarily endorsed through the act of publishing. We welcome respectful and informed discussion and urge you to get in touch via [editor@verityla.com](mailto:editor@verityla.com) (<mailto:editor@verityla.com>) to raise any questions or concerns. Our ears are always open.

## Why *Verity La*?



HOPE VERITY FITZHARDINGE, 1972;  
PHOTO SUPPLIED BY GEOFF  
FITZHARDINGE, COURTESY OF THE  
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It's an abbreviation of 'Verity Lane', a very dodgy back-alley in Canberra, Australia's national capital, where the journal was born. (These days we operate from a network of laptops all over the country – don't tell ASIO.) More importantly, however, the name now given to the lane also commemorates the birth there, in 1938, of Verity Hewitt's, Canberra's first serious bookshop. In that pre-electronic age, this bookshop and its owner encouraged the distribution and intelligent discussion of literature in the

otherwise bleak cultural environment of 1930s Canberra, perhaps comparable in some ways to the use today of online journals. From a wider perspective, Verity was a remarkable example of a mid-twentieth-century woman, independent, brave, and with a deep and creative interest in

literature and people. In fact, she was such a special lady, a book (<http://scholarly.info/book/verity-a-remarkable-womans-journey/>) has been written about Verity and some of her letters (<http://scholarly.info/books/a-nice-quiet-tourist-letters-from-a-journey-to-afghanistan/>) have also been published! Verity's family has informed us that she would have been sympathetic with our aims and pleased with our work. Hope Verity Fitzhardinge (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fitzhardinge-hope-verity-12499>) (1908-1986): we honour you; you are our patron saint.

# What They're Sayin'

'Increasingly influential'

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'Verity La puts the umlaut in über-cool ... Verily.'

– *PS Cottier* (<https://pscottier.com/>).

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– *Daniel Davis Wood, University of Melbourne*  
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'Verity La is the future of Australian online publishing.'

– *Paul Hetherington, Professor of Writing, University of Canberra*  
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## Other Stuff

Verity La is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW

[.https://i2.wp.com/verityla.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/critics-circle.jpg?ssl=1](https://i2.wp.com/verityla.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/critics-circle.jpg?ssl=1)) Verity La received a Canberra Critics Circle Award. Tops!

\*

**Verity La acknowledges the Aboriginal people as the Traditional owners and Custodians of the lands on which we now work and live. We pay our respects to the Ancestors and Elders who were, and continue to be, the storytellers helping us to know our Country and her people of the past and present more clearly. We are reminded of the journey that began with the Aboriginal people in this land, but that now incorporates the larger family of Torres Strait Islanders and Australian people.**

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