

## In Praise of Disquiet Caitlin Shepherd

### Abstract

*In Praise of Disquiet* situates feminist-memoir writing as an embodied artistic process and argues that this form of writerly practice provides a method to work through affective individual and cultural experiences of ‘snapping’; of breaking out and down; of refusing to carry on. I reflect on my own writing practice as a method of writing myself back together again in the aftermath of a feminist snap moment. I argue that the literary form of feminist-memoir is an empowering and critical tool that can be used to challenge the pervasive myth of living and working to achieve the impossibility of the good life. Feminist-memoir writing as literary method can be used to empower the writing-speaking subject, and simultaneously critique and challenge the capitalist social codes, values, systems, and institutions that have commingled to create the compounded stresses that so often lead to a snap.

**Keywords:** Memoir; feminist killjoy; feminist snap; re-writing the good life.

I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do. Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement. (Cixous 1976: 875)

### Introduction

Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. (Cixous 1976: 880)

*In Praise of Disquiet* is a strange document. It's a reflection about how writing is an embodied process, how writing provides a method and tool to work through affective individual and cultural experiences of snapping; of breaking out and down; of refusing to carry on; of breaking bond; of leaving, no matter how painful the breakup and its aftermath. It's a piece of writing about writing; it's a reflection on how and why I write. Specifically, how I have used writing as method and process to re-assemble myself, after a difficult and disorientating experience of snapping, of breaking bond, of challenging dominant cultures, resulting in me leaving my home and significant, multiple relational attachments. I propose trans inclusive, intersectional feminist writing as an alchemic and transformative practice, making the case for writing about difficult and troubling experiences as a valuable and

empowering process; one that can give voice to stories of lived experience often muted, dismissed, glossed over. In this article, I make the case for the importance of feminist-memoir writing as a method to give voice to women's lived experience under the conditions of patriarchal capitalism.

This article fuses theoretical discussion and analysis with first person lived experience, narration, and reflection. At different pulse points throughout this article, I argue that the literary form of feminist-memoir is an empowering and critical tool that can be used to challenge the pervasive myth of living and working to achieve the good life (Berlant 2011: 2). Feminist-memoir writing as literary method can be used to empower the female writing-speaking subject, and simultaneously critique and challenge the capitalist social codes, values, systems, and institutions that have come together to create the compounded stresses that so often lead to a feminist snap moment (Ahmed 2017: 188-189). In wilfully writing about troubling and troubled first person lived experiences, I advocate for feminist killjoy writing as resistance, a form of writing that refuses to write in a 'well behaved' voice.

In the research, development and writing of *In Praise of Disquiet*, I draw on the intellectual labour of three writers: British-Australian writer and scholar Sara Ahmed; American scholar and cultural theorist Lauren Berlant and American writer and professor Melissa Febos. For this article, I reference *Living a Feminist Life* (Ahmed 2017), specifically *Chapter 3, Wilfulness and Feminist Subjectivity* and *Chapter 8, Feminist Snap*. I work with Ahmed because she stresses the importance of paying attention to people who snap, who break down, who refuse to carry on and take it. Ahmed makes the case to focus on the cause of the snap as a pose to the symptom of the snap. Ahmed reminds us, that social reactions to a snapping woman's behaviour, reveals how women are frequently blamed for their snapping, as opposed to focussing on the socio-economic and political conditions that led to her snapping. Further, Ahmed's writing on the feminist killjoy is valuable to my discussion of feminist-memoir writing as a difficult practice, because it validates snappy, unhappy, and killjoy women as important – because they demonstrate a refusal to carry on pursuing the impossibility of the good life.

In the writing of this work, I reference the ideas of Lauren Berlant, outlined, and discussed in the book *Cruel Optimism* (2011) specifically, ideas outlined in *Chapter 6, After the Good Life, an Impasse: Time Out, Human Resources and the Precarious Present*. Berlant argues

that there is an ambient state of increased precarity running through different classes and groups of people in the West (Berlant 2011: 192-194). This pervasive socio-economic atmosphere provides a detailed cultural context for individuals rendered exhausted and precarious when engaging in the impossibility of working to realize the good life. Berlant's definition and discussion of the good life is valuable, in that it details the impossibility of working hard to secure a safe, affordable home; reciprocal social bonds; and the option to have a job for life, if desired. As Berlant dismantles the good life as an impossible dream, replaced instead, with a wide distribution of precarious living and sensual fragilities (Berlant 2011: 195), she offers the idea of the impasse to describe the cul-de-sac of 'capitalist realism' (Fisher 2009). She details the impasse as stuck in the movement of ongoing paradox, taking place in the same space. The impasse is both 'a formal term for encountering the duration of the present, and a specific term for tracking the circulation of precariousness through diverse locales and bodies' (Berlant 2011: 199).

Finally, I draw on the work of Melissa Febos, specifically her book *Body Work* (2022). In this book, Febos advocates the power and significance of life-writing as a form of resistance to a culture intent on silencing and reducing trauma narratives that inevitably occur in a profoundly unequal and violent society. Febos argues that cultures that refuse to listen to first person accounts of trauma, difficulty and precarity, are cultures that refuse to acknowledge and challenge structural inequity (Febos 2022: 16). Febos states the value of feminist-memoir writing; written lived experiences of trauma, difficulty and struggle have the power to challenge cultural and political regimes that reproduce socio-economic and cultural structures of oppression and inequity (Febos 2022: 17).

## Context

I wanted to put my body into these words  
I wanted this to be a part of my body  
This part of my body.  
(Berry 2017: 15)

*In Praise of Disquiet* is not a standalone piece of writing. It is part of a much longer document that I'm currently in the process of editing, called *The Abyssal Snap*. I initially wrote *The Abyssal Snap* over the period of a 424-day long liquid trip. A journey into a

kaleidoscopic and contradictory range of my interior states. On this journey, I wilfully stepped into parts of me, that previously, I did not know existed. Unfortunately, I wasn't on a psychedelic spiritual retreat. Instead, these embodied and affective states were caused by compounded pressures rooted in socio-economic structural precarity (Berlant 2011: 196) playing out alongside simultaneous relationship breakdowns that directly impacted my housing security.

*The Abyssal Snap* as feminist-memoir, documents a sequence of embodied and affective states that I experienced over the period of fourteen months, that at times, felt too consuming to make any headway in. On many days, forward was no longer a viable prospect. Instead, I found myself halted, frozen in dissent, inside an invisible but potent material, not dissimilar to being fixed in the chemical strata of formaldehyde. As I receded from the world, I repeatedly stepped back into my interior. A porous container made of skin-texture folds, filled with bodies of water in motion, and the changing shape of the moon. I later came to realize, through engaging with the work of Berlant (2011) and Ahmed (2017), that the state I found myself in was not so strange, not so weird afterall. In reading the work of feminist cultural theorists and critics, I came to realize that I was having an immediate and oft times overwhelming embodied response to the socio-economic, relational, and domestic conditions of complex and endemic precarity. Berlant details:

Precarious bodies, in other words, are not merely demonstrating a shift in the social contract, but in ordinary affective states. The instability requires, if not psychoanalytic training in contingency management, embarking on an *intensified and stressed out learning curve* about how to maintain footing, bearings, a way of being, and new modes of composure amid unravelling institutions and social relations of reciprocity. (Berlant 2011: 197)

## Form and Genre

Originally, I had hoped to submit *The Abyssal Snap* to the *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, but I was way over the word limit for article submissions. It's important to contextualize *In Praise of Disquiet* and its genesis in *The Abyssal Snap*, because it is rooted and informed by a fourteen month near daily writing practice and method, that has guided and contained me during a very challenging and disorienting set of events and circumstances.

When I talk about writing about my writing, reflecting on, and naming my creative touchstones, approaches, and methods, I am talking about the specific ways of working I have developed, during the process of writing myself back together again, daily, over the period of fourteen months. The regularity of sitting, feeling into, reflecting on, and crafting my story, gave me temporal and psychological stability during a long and demanding process of change and upheaval.

In developing my writerly practice, I build on the literary form of feminist-memoir writing, drawing heavily on the principles of *écriture féminine* (Cixous 1976). Feminist-memoir fuses dialogue with self through the act of writing, remembering, reflecting, describing, and narrating first person lived experience. For many feminist-memoir writers, lived experience gets digested, consolidated, and made sense of through the act of scribing their experience to word, to sentence, to paragraph, to chapter, to book.

In its most basic terms, literary memoir is a written narrative of someone's experience of parts of their life. The term is taken from the French word *mémoire*, which means memory, or reminiscence. Add to this feminist, which privileges and spotlights female experience. As Melissa Febos proffers, writing is a transformative practice, allowing for digestion and integration of lived experience (Febos 2022: xvi. Words have effect, and they also last the test of time, becoming artifacts documenting the authors motive, thought and expression. In her call to write, Febos states:

Writing is a form of freedom more accessible than many and there are forces at work that would like to withhold it from those whose stories most threaten the regimes that govern this society. Fuck them. Write your life. (Febos 2022: xviii)

I use the term feminist-memoir to define my method and genre of writing, because through the process of writing *The Abyssal Snap*, I have had visceral and psychological experiences that my writing practice, and the thought it facilitated, was quite literally, enabling me to reassemble myself – to put myself back together again. As Sara Ahmed attests, words help us rewrite our life into something more empowered, more emboldened, less passive, less undermined, less shit:

When I read some of the books in my survival kit, I hear them as manifestos, as calls to action; as calls to arms. They are books that tremble with life because they show how a life can be rewritten; how we can rewrite a life, letter by letter. (Ahmed 2017: 256)

I write because I have to. It has always been so – a kind of sense-making, nuanced, eye to hand, hand to eye, slow-time literary impulse. Words are not abstract thoughts. Words take shape in the things that we do with our minds, tongues, bodies, days, homes, hands, relationships, and ways of being in the world. Words conjure new realities, new selves. Words shape bodies and bodies shape words. Words shape how bodies live, how they love, how they die, and in what circumstances. Words are embodied, visceral and come home to roost in the body-mind that precedes action in the world. The false dichotomy of writing as a disembodied process is challenged by many writers, including myself. Here, in the feminist-memoir tradition, the word and body are in real-time symbiosis; Cartesian dualism has slipped out of method and form, seeped out of both writerly pot and process.

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## Writing, Snapping

Naming violence carries its own particular history of overcoming invisibility.  
(Hancock 2016)

The place I have been writing from, is the complex, demanding, disorienting, and empowering aftermath of a feminist snap experience. I did not know about this term, until I read Sara Ahmed's book *Living a Feminist Life* (2017). It was a relief to discover Ahmed's writing. It helped me better detail and contextualize what was happening to me. There is a chapter in *Living a Feminist Life*, dedicated to defining, discussing, and stating the significance of feminist snaps, otherwise known as breaking points or 'the very points we might aim to reach' (Ahmed 2017: 187). In chapter 8, *Feminist Snap*, Ahmed encourages leaning into and listening to those who experience snapping. Ahmed values an attention given to those who are snapping, because it can reveal the pressurized conditions that have led to the sharpness of the snapped and snapping subject (Ahmed 2017: 189). The chapter considers how to think more affirmatively about breaking points, about breaking bonds, about the experience of snapping and its aftermath. Here Ahmed examines the role of snappy women

and positions the conscious and intentional act of breaking bond as a way of invoking personal and relational refusal and transformation.

To snap can mean to make a brisk, sharp, cracking sound; to break suddenly; to give way abruptly under pressure or tension; to suffer a physical or mental breakdown, especially while under stress; to bring the jaws briskly together, often with a clicking sound; to bite; to snatch or grasp suddenly and with eagerness; to speak abruptly or sharply; to move swiftly and smartly; to flash or appear to flash light; to sparkle; to open, close or fit together with a click. Snap is quite a sensation. To snap can be to mark a sharp sound. As a feminist killjoy, I have been giving my ear to those who sound sharp. I will come back to the sounds of this sharpness; it matters. The temporality of snapping is also crucial: a snap is a sudden quick movement. The speed of snapping might be how a snap comes to be apprehended as a movement at all (the slower you move, the less a move seems like a movement) (Ahmed, 2017: 188).

Compounded experiences of relational and structural inequality led to my snapping. To my giving way. My jaw clicking. My biting. My grinding. My sliding. My skinning. My cortisol shock shaking. My sinking. My rising. My insomnia. My unapologetic flashing of my teeth and gums. Cyclical and guttural refusals, to those I had previously bonded with. Refusals to offers, gestures and behaviours that I had previously accepted, gone along with, been complicit in. I broke the path. Snap. I stopped going the way I thought I was going. Snap. I stopped dead in my path. I did not follow along with the dominant narrative. I did not stay on side. Snap. I disrupted the dream, seemingly available only to the already privileged. Snap. Snap.

In my snapping, I essentially broke bond with a personal and cultural commitment to the ‘good life’ as a feasible individual and collective destination. Berlant details the notion of the good life in the introduction of *Cruel Optimism* (2011) and asks, what happens to us when the good life fantasy starts to unravel:

Why do people stay attached to conventional good-life fantasies – say, of enduring reciprocity in couples, families, political systems, institutions, markets, and at work – when the evidence of their instability, fragility, and dear cost abounds? Fantasy is the means by which people hoard idealizing theories and tableaux about how they and the world ‘add up to something’. What happens when those fantasies start to fray – depression, dissociation, pragmatism, cynicism, optimism, activism, or an incoherent mash? (Berlant 2011:2)

Later in the book, Berlant argues that the good life can be described as a destructive impasse, an ongoing state of precarity and cruel optimism that leads to a deterioration in physical and mental health for those invested in pursuing the good life. For many, as the notion of the good life becomes increasingly unobtainable, the realisation of the impossibility of upward mobility and economic security is experienced as the loss of an aspiration that people once thought reasonably possible to achieve. For some, this is experienced as grief. As individuals and cultures are faced with the impossibility of a promised destination, the good life becomes an impasse, marked by a constant state of intellectual and embodied restlessness, adaptation, and adjustment. Berlant details

[...] a thick moment of ongoingness, a situation that can absorb many genres without having one itself – is a middle without boundaries, edges, a shape. It is experienced in transitions and transactions. It is the name for the space where the urgencies of livelihood are worked out all over again, without assurances of futurity, but nevertheless proceeding via durable norms of adaptation. (Berlant 2011: 200)

This atmosphere of increasingly widespread affective anxiety, endless adaptation, hustling, grief and precarity, frequently leads to embodied stress fractures (Berlant 2011: 196). These stress fractures, along with the embodied and psychological states of the snapped and precarious are important to attune to. We need to write, read, and listen to these stories of snapping, because they signal the slow and fast violence of the many conditions of everyday life presented as inevitable, unavoidable. As Ahmed reminds us, the violence of the snap, does not originate in the snappy individual; it is valuable to emphasize to those snapping, that the snap does not start with her. There is always a complex set of contexts and circumstances that give rise to the snapping, snappy and snapped woman.

When you don't take it, when you can't take any more of it, what happens? The moment of not taking it is so often understood as losing it. When a snap is registered as the origin of violence, the one who snaps is deemed violent. She snaps. You can hear the snap in the sound of her voice. Sharp, brittle, loud; perhaps it is like the volume has suddenly been turned up, for no reason; the quietness that surrounds her ceases when she speaks, her voice cutting the atmosphere, registering as the loss of something; a nicer atmosphere, a gentler mood. And then: violence is assumed to originate with her. A feminist politics might insist on renaming actions as reactions; we need to show how her snap is not the starting point (Ahmed 2017: 189).

I throw my notes into the overflowing folder of memos of patriarchal entitlement, dismissal, shutdowns, and socio-economic inequity. While I scribe my experiences into textual form, I

read and listen to accounts of forced female resilience. Resilience born out of women being the subject of bodies and minds, under increased pressure, and at the same time, being celebrated for bearing this pressure, for being resilient. In other words, being celebrated for being able to take it (Ahmed 2017: 189). Resilience is an oppressive term. I refuse to identify myself with the idea of resilience. It's a word that rewards an ability to carry on, to bear it. To shut up and take it. Resilient women are lionized. Difficult, angry, sharp, hurting, breaking, broken and snappy women are told, implicitly and explicitly, that they ruin everyone else's fun.

If a woman refuses to have fun, refuses to maintain the moral imperative of happiness, and instead, tells her story, revealing the violent and inequitable socio-economic conditions that have made her so resilient, she is told to calm down. She is told to stop stressing. She is told to hold it together. She is told not to be so intense. These snappy and sharp-tongued women are my muses, my teachers, my nurses, my mothers, my friends, my support structure. In writing and archiving the contextual, complex, and deep root structures of inequity and violence that drive the force and urgency of feminist snappiness, while asking other women how, where, and why it hurts, the story cabinet of structural inequality slowly, slowly, becomes a resting place, a source of solace, a toolkit for queer, intersectional feminist healing, mutual-aid, resistance, and world building. In sharing our stories, writing, speaking and listening to and with each other, we co-create a deep, dark, watery place of mutual care, of sharing notes, of sharing pain, remedies and staying with each other, while we sink, swim, hurt, while we lick our wounds, while we light our fires, while we write, while we dance, while we sing, while we weep, while we remember, while we forget, while we start again, while we sleep, while we try to sleep, while we lose our shit, many, many times over.

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### **Difficult Women, Difficult Memoirs**

My body is a haunted house that I am lost in. There are no doors but there are knives and a hundred windows. (Germain 2016)

The contemporary and historical literary landscape is littered with difficult women, telling difficult stories, disrupting the status quo, wilfully refusing to toe the line, fit in, smile, carry

on. Stories of discomfort and disquiet need telling, and they need to be listened to. People in pain are not mad or bad. They are a reasonable product of a culture that has normalized many shades and systems of structural violence. People who tell difficult stories are people risking life and limb in their refusal to carry on being resilient; their refusal to smile and suck it up; their refusal to be nice, easy, fun.

Women who have lived through embodied experiences of structural violence, are often women who are already socially and economically precarious. To survive with day-to-day economic precarity is exhausting - people who are without significant social, cultural, and economic capital and backup, are problem-solving in a way that their wealthier counterparts are not and will unlikely ever have to. In pulling together a story that represents the lived experience of being harmed by structural violence, the speaking-writing subject risks denial, dismissal and re traumatisation. The speaking-writing subject who tells her difficult story on her terms, risks being told to stop being so dramatic, to stick to the facts, to toughen up, let it go, move on, to forgive the oppressor, to forget about it.

Dismissive and disciplinary social responses to the difficult woman and her difficult words, express a double layer of violence. The writing-speaking subject has experienced struggle, pain, pressure, precarity and then, in communicating her experience, she risks being told to calm down, told to stop making a scene. People taking time and effort to craft accounts of oppression and inequity are often blamed and shamed through instruction to tone it down, to stop complaining. As Melissa Febos cautions, we must resist policing our own stories with notions of heteropatriarchal capitalist acceptability:

The stigma of victimhood is a timeworn tool of oppressive powers to gaslight the people they subjugate into believing that by naming their disempowerment they are being dramatic, whining, attention-grabbing, or else beating a dead horse. By convincing us to police our own and one another's stories, they have enlisted us in the project of our own continued disempowerment. (Febos 2022: 20-21).

In short, writing about trauma, pain, oppression, resistance, and refusal is frequently minimized and dismissed as inappropriate and unacceptable in dominant social-emotional behavioural codes. The cultural resistance to feminist-memoir writing, is a conscious and unconscious response to undermine difficult women, and their difficult stories.

Difficult women are not born difficult. They encounter stacked and relentless socio-economic, racialized, gendered, ableist and structural barriers. Difficult women are made difficult by problematic and unequal social systems of reproduction and economic organisation. They struggle to re-imagine, dismantle, and rebuild alternatives to the dominant fantasy of the good life as an obtainable destination. We live in a society that wants to profit from the exploitation of poor, aging, queer, sick, disabled, black and brown, and female bodies, but refuses to listen when these bodies complain, snap, dissent, push back, tell painful and inconvenient accounts of the hours, days, weeks, months, and years lived as subjugated and violated bodies. As Febos observes, a society that silences trauma narratives, is a society that refuses to acknowledge structural violence, a society that refuses to work towards social justice: 'I'll say it again, because it bears repeating: the resistance to memoirs about trauma is always in part – and often nothing but – a resistance to movements for social justice' (Febos 2022: 18).

Why are difficult and painful stories so often ignored and silenced? Because any explicit challenge to the good life, raises difficult, painful, and unfamiliar emotional, social, psychological, and embodied sensations for people who have never, or infrequently, had to a) reflect on, name and account for their privilege; or b) been subject to experiences of day-to-day pain, exclusion, dismissal, poverty, hostility and aggression caused by structural oppression and domination. In doing the difficult and brave work of writing a difficult memoir, the speaking-writing subject refuses to uphold social norms and values that view peace, quiet, calm and comfort as a sign of the accomplished, good life. We do not live in a peaceful, quiet, or comfortable world. The good life is an aspiration that attempts to placate and distract the already precarious and exploited. The lived experiences of people being harmed by the normalisation of structural violence, are testament to the dishonesty of the idea of the good life as an obtainable destination. Enter and all hail the saliency and power of the feminist killjoy (Ahmed 2017).

The feminist killjoy is an uncomfortable figure. She kills joy. She ruins your day. She is willing to get into trouble. She is trouble. She is troubling. The feminist killjoy isn't often chosen by the women that become feminist killjoys. Rather, she appears. She is conjured in the face of struggle, of inequality, of pain, of distress (Ahmed 2017). The feminist killjoy disrupts other people's happiness. How dare she?! Her disruption of happiness is significant,

because the moral virtue of happiness, is often used as an argument to maintain an inequitable status quo. As Ahmed, observes ‘happiness is used to justify social norms as social goods’ (Ahmed 2017: 254). What the killjoy does through her very being, is challenge dominant patriarchal, capitalist philosophies and notions of happiness. Through and with her body. Through and with her voice. Through and with her words. Through and with her emotion. Through and with her mess. Through and with her writing. In doing so, she destabilizes and problematizes images and expectations of the capitalist good life, including the image of the well-behaved woman – aspirations and values that have been presented in many parts of the world, as normal, as desirable.

### **Writing with the Trouble**

In writing *The Abyssal Snap*, I made the decision to stay close to the trouble. To lean into and write with the trouble (Haraway 2016). My body-mind was troubled. I was troubled. Yet, this was not only *my* trouble; rather I came to contain, articulate, and reflect the troubles that had come to inhabit my body-mind, through the form of a dominant patriarchal capitalist social script; a script that is not my own. To sit with and near this trouble, to embody this trouble, is not a passive subscription to the tools and methods that maintains the master’s house (Lorde 2017). It is not a position of acceptance and integration of violent histories and violent contemporarities. Rather, it is the acknowledgement that resistance and change are rooted in taking note of, understanding, and attuning to individual and collective disquiet, discomfort, pain, and trauma. Through writing with my trouble, I regularly asked myself how, where, and why it hurts, I listened to the cause *and* presentation of my pain. In lending an intersectional feminist ear to the cause and the symptoms of soreness, distress, pain, and heartache, I am more able to articulate what I, what *we*, are up against. In naming and giving form to the problem, it sometimes becomes easier to choose how to respond to it. How to sidestep it. How to break bonds with it. How to see breaking bonds as a form of difficult healing, a form of clearing, a form of refusal.

To conclude, I praise expressions of disquiet in any creative form. Summoning, communicating, and sharing snappy and snapped affective sensations and states, can help to reveal the structures that give rise to such impasses, and cul-de-sacs. In staying with sick responses to a sick society, in writing out difficult stories, in welcoming the stories and

experiences of those who have snapped, in staying with and writing through the trouble, we have a chance of writing ourselves into new states, new modes of being, new worlds.

Throughout this article, I have argued that the literary form and practice of feminist-memoir writing is an empowering and critical tool that can be used to challenge the pervasive myth of living and working to achieve the broken fantasy of the good life (Berlant 2011:2). I have briefly described my own experience of writing my feminist-memoir *The Abyssal Snap*, and discussed some of the methods, processes and insights deployed and gathered on the long writing journey I have been on. This creative writing practice was a lifeline to me and offered a space for me to refuse, recover, recuperate, and voice my embodied and psychological experience of snapping – an event, caused by compounded stress, long term precarity and relational breakdowns. Through my memoir writing practice, I was able to document, attune to and interrogate my affective and psychological experience of snapping, and write myself through the painful, yet necessary process of breaking bond.

Feminist-memoir as literary method can be used to concurrently empower the writing-speaking subject, and to disrupt values, policies and codes that reproduce the violence of patriarchal capitalism. Feminist-memoir is a form that can be difficult, and doesn't seek to be good, nice or entertaining. Drawing on Ahmed's idea of the feminist killjoy, feminist-memoir as literary process offers those struggling with endemic and endless precarity to express their stress, pain, snap and to say 'no, I'm not doing this anymore'. In writing out these stories of inequity, precarity and marginalisation, a form of literary witnessing is realized. Women are read and seen, and they are seen for all the invisible, agonising, and complex demanding labour they have performed under the masquerade of being resilient in the face of sustained structural inequality and increased precarity. Feminist-memoir writing offers the possibility of self-assembly; a form of re-writing, re-speaking, re-imagining ourselves. Through the act of writing one's experience onto page, gathering thoughts and embodied experiences into word-images, some form of narrative structure and coherence, the writing subject has the chance, if she so desires, to slowly, tentatively, furiously, write herself back together.

When did you begin to put the pieces together? Perhaps when you put the pieces back together you are putting yourself back together. We assemble something. Feminism is DIY: a form of self-assembly. No wonder feminist work is often about timing: sometimes we are too fragile to do this work; we cannot risk being shattered because we are not ready to put ourselves back

together again. To get ready often means being prepared to be undone  
(Ahmed 2017: 27).

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