



...Not just a pen

COMEDY WOMEN IN PRINT PRIZE

2021



Welcome to the world of

COMEDY WOMEN IN PRINT

You may be in an uber, on the tube or having a quiet fag under a lamp post outside by now, but wherever you are, I hope you're not too disappointed there isn't a massive slab of chocolate in your goody bag. Instead, you've got this souvenir brochure - be happy.

We've laughed, we've cried, we've doubted, we've fallen out and fallen in (*pubs and eateries mostly*) throughout this diverting journey to get to tonight. And here we are – at the first post covid winners' event to celebrate diversity, breadth, and the inner droll of female witty writers.

As soon as I mentioned (OK, shouted) the idea of CWIP, I was met with nothing but enthusiasm, so I knew I was on to a winner. In fact, not one person said it might be a bad idea to become compulsive, obsessed, persistent, whiny, and annoying - so I just cracked on with it. And, who knew that I'd meet so many nice people along the way – even if it meant gate-crashing parties, drinking, and fishing business cards out of various body parts or being caught applying lip liner on a zoom call. *It was worth it.*

So, I hope you're ready to be delighted, relieved, and empowered - *Why?* Because it's about effing time - pardon - I meant that there's never been a better time to be witty and a woman – suddenly the world has fallen in love with witty women's narrative voices. Witty story telling is now 'in' apparently...

Not that I'm complaining, but when I began writing and performing comedy it was 1983 and unless you were a male performer - the audiences tended to glaze over or throw things. Oddly enough, I cracked on despite being asked to reveal a certain body part at the *Comedy Store* once – (*luckily, I hadn't brought it with me that night, so I was let off the hook*).

You may know me from *Ab Fab* or *Naked Video* or *Bottom* or perhaps from the odd weird and wonderful series on *BBC Radio 4* which slipped through the net to be commissioned in the 90's. So here I am, 30 years later asking somewhat rudely – how about having more than one witty female writer at a time to be heralded for both their success and their potential? We are not there yet....

Helen Lederer
Founder

the fresh flower company

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Proud to support the 'Comedy Women in Print Prize 2021'

"A myth abounds that women aren't funny. Naturally it wasn't women who came up with this nonsense: women know how hilarious other women are."

CWIP



Marian Keyes
CWIP Patron

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The University of Hertfordshire is proud to be a partner of the Comedy Women in Print (CWIP) prize, supporting alumna and Honorary Doctorate recipient Helen Lederer.



SO HOW DID THIS ALL COME ABOUT YOU MAY BE WONDERING?

Good question – a couple of years ago, out of 24 Amazon best seller humorous books - 20 were written by women! These funny female books occupy a stonking 83% of the market. Yet where was the funny female comedy literary prize?

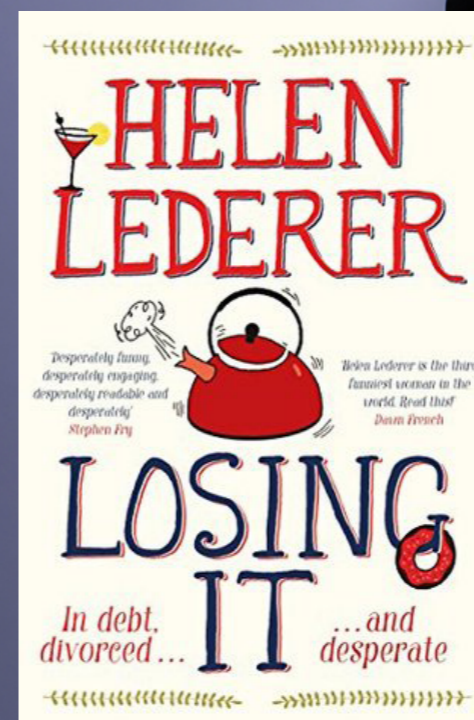
When I finished writing my comedy novel Losing It, I looked around rather hopefully for a female comedy literary prize to win and discovered there weren't any.

Which is why I set up #CWIP

PS In CWIP's first year – the wonderful Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize had, in its 18-year history, awarded a female winner two and a half times.

Two years later, four of the witty books on Bollinger's shortlist were by women. With a glorious win from Nina Stibbe in 2019.

Coincidence or CWIP's influence?
Just asking...



Meet the judges...



CWIP is indebted to the talent and generosity of the judges along with their valuable time, shared belief and friendship



Joanne Harris
Head Judge - Published

Joanne Harris is a renowned English-French writer, best known for her novels including *Chocolat*, *Blackberry Wine*, *The Lollipop Shoes* and most recently *The Strawberry Thief*.



Dame Maureen Lipman
Published Novel Judge

Maureen Lipman, or should we say Dame Maureen Lipman, is an actress across theatre, film, radio and television, as well as writer and comedian.



Steph McGovern
Published Novel Judge

Steph McGovern is a journalist, broadcaster and television presenter, best known for her eponymous, week-day TV show *Steph's Packed Lunch*.



Sarah Shaffi
Head Judge - Unpublished

Sarah Shaffi is a freelance writer and editor, known for her literary journalism featured on platforms including *Stylist* magazine and *Penguin.co.uk*.



Martha Ashby
Unpublished Novel Judge

Martha Ashby is Editorial Director at HarperFiction, HarperCollins' main fiction division. She has worked with authors including Cecelia Ahern, Mhairi McFarlane, and Lindsey Kelk.



Faye Brann
Unpublished Novel Judge

Faye Brann is the author of *Tinker, Tailor, Schoolmum, Spy*, also known as the winner of the CWIP unpublished novel prize in 2020.



Cathy Rentzenbrink
Published Novel Judge

Cathy Rentzenbrink is an acclaimed writer with four, soon to be five, published books which span memoir, fiction and non-fiction including *The Last Act of Love* and *Dear Reader*.



Nina Stibbe
Published Novel Judge

Nina Stibbe is an award-winning writer and member of CWIP royalty, having won our published novel prize in 2020 for *Reasons to Be Cheerful*.



Susan Wokoma
Published Novel Judge

Susan Wokoma is an actress and writer best known for her roles in *Crazyhead*, *Chewing Gum* and *Truth Seekers*. Her writing credits include a short film, *Love the Sinner*.



Gloria Hunniford
Unpublished Novel Judge

Gloria Hunniford is a revered television and radio presenter who has appeared in a range of programmes ranging from *Rip-Off Britain* to *Loose Women*.



Thanyia Moore
Unpublished Novel Judge

Thanyia Moore is a stand-up comedian and actress. In 2018 she won the *Funny Women* contest, which is dedicated to supporting female comedians.



Dr Jennifer Young
Unpublished Novel Judge

Dr Jennifer Young is the Head of Writing and Journalism at Falmouth University. Jennifer has been working with CWIP since its inception in 2019.

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SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT... OUR PARTNERS MAKE IT POSSIBLE

From the beginning, Harper Collins has awarded the winner of the unpublished manuscript a publishing deal, as well as an advance of £5000.

The University of Hertfordshire offers a place on their MA in Creative writing to the runner up.

In 2020 we included Funny Graphic novels as a category and learned a whole load of new stuff about wit on the page by partnering with the brilliant LDC comics. Falmouth Uni came on board to offer an Online MA in comedy writing to a second runner up.

These partnerships have impacted on the literary landscape of witty writers. Of the 24 writers longlisted for the unpublished prize in 2019 and 2020, over a quarter have now been published!

Here's some boasting because we do that now...

"My phone never stops ringing!! and believe me, this didn't happen with the Wodehouse prize!! I'm thrilled to have won a CWIP award but more than that, it's been a joy to be involved, right from the start."

Nina Stibbe, CWIP published novel winner 2020.

"I enjoyed every last second of being shortlisted in such amazing company. I will be forever grateful to you lot for giving me such joy personally, and for highlighting Big Girl, Small Town."

Michelle Gallen, shortlisted for CWIP published novel 2020.

"When the shortlist was released, I was approached out of the blue by an agency who requested the manuscript as a result of reading the synopsis on the CWIP website."

Abigail Mann, CWIP unpublished runner-up 2019. Author of 'The Lonely Fajita', 'Sister Surprise' and 'The Wedding Crasher' (One More Chapter HarperCollins).

"After winning the runner up prize last year, I achieved my MA in Creative Writing with distinction and loved it so much I'm now doing a PhD in creative writing also at Herts. I have written a new novel. I owe it all to CWIP."

Zahra Barri, CWIP unpublished novel runner-up 2020.

"My debut novel, The First Time We Met, is now published with Bookouture, and all the feedback you generously provided made a huge difference to me in getting to this point"

Jo Lovett-Turner, longlisted for CWIP unpublished novel 2019.

"You have done so much for comedy writers in terms of providing a platform to get us noticed. You have helped me get an agent and given me an unbelievably fantastic launch pad, beyond my wildest dreams"

Kirsty Ayre, CWIP unpublished winner 2019 'Cow Girl' (HarperCollins).

"Being longlisted made me feel stronger, freer, & braver. You have created something really special in CWIP. It engenders a sense of creative bravery, and community."

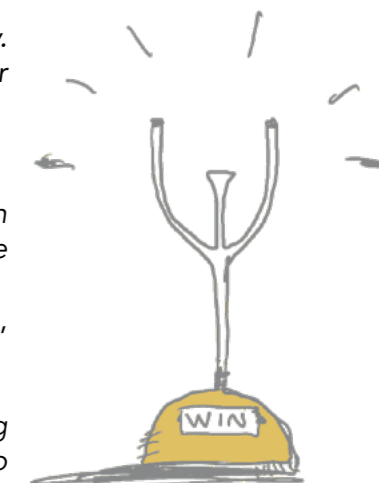
Vanessa Lawrence, longlisted for the published humorous graphic novel 2020.

"Ever since my name was announced, I'm taking more risks in my work, telling weirder jokes, pushing myself to find new voices and new perspectives to mine for comedy. To say CWIP changed my career is a massive understatement."

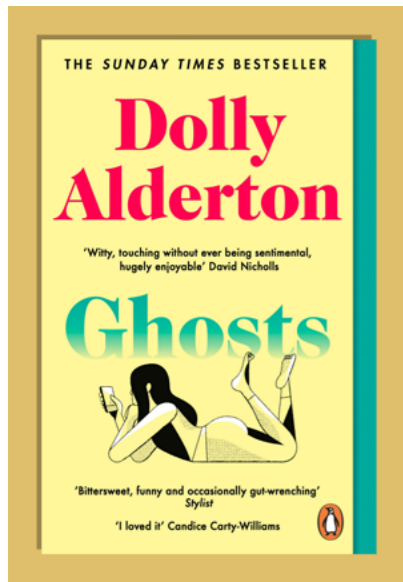
Laura Steven, winner of CWIP published novel 2019.

Alumni:

Kathleen Whyman, shortlisted unpublished novel 2020 'Wife Support System' (Hera Books);
Faye Brann, unpublished novel winner 2020 'Tinker, Tailor, Schoolmum, Spy' (HarperFiction);
Nancy Peach, longlisted unpublished novel 2020, 'Love Life' (One More Chapter);
Eva Verde, longlisted unpublished novel 2019 'Lives like Mine' (Simon and Schuster).



Published Shortlist

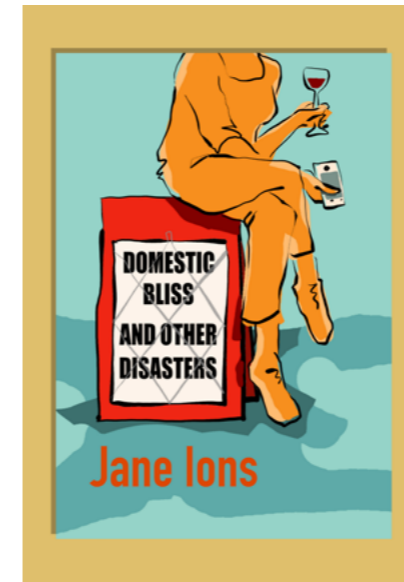


GHOSTS

Dolly Alderton

Fig Tree, Penguin

The judges felt that the power of this novel lies in its truth as Alderton taps into a universal condition around love. One judge said, *“One of the strengths of this book is that she dared to say, ‘we want people to love us, but not in a stupid way’. I laughed a lot and believed in this completely.”*

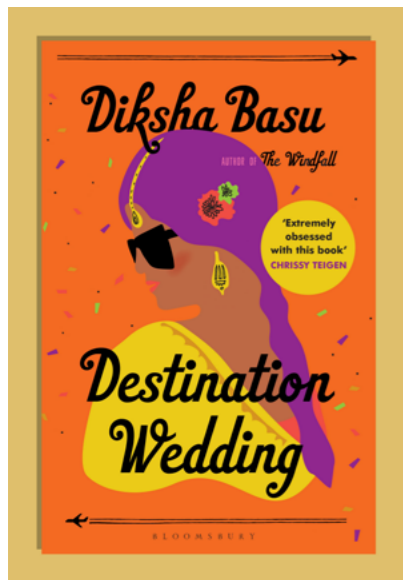


DOMESTIC BLISS AND OTHER DISASTERS

Jane Ions

Bluemoose Books

The judges found this to be very clever book that was well executed. They felt that the tales of woe of a tired teacher are marked by their hilarity, as one of the judges commented, *“She wrings everything funny out of it, and makes the most of it. I found myself laughing a lot”.*

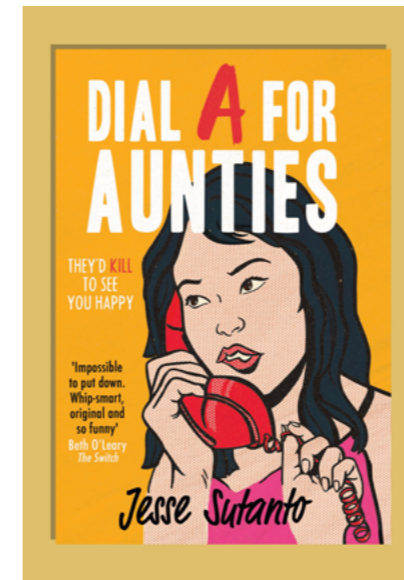


DESTINATION WEDDING

Diksha Basu

Bloomsbury

The judges found the relationships within this book to be particularly compelling, notably that between protagonist Tina and her father which added a really interesting texture. They thought it was very well written, particularly the blind dating scenarios, and one judge summarised it as *“funny, interesting and clever”*.

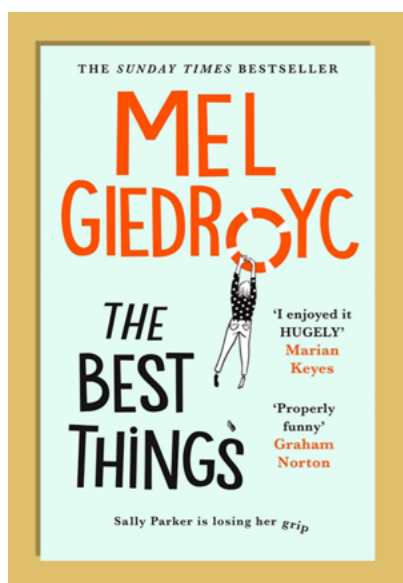


DIAL A FOR AUNTIES

Jesse Sutanto

HQ, HarperCollins

The judges found this book to be young and fresh and funny. They praised the vibrancy of the characterisation, particularly protagonist Meddy, and revelled in its ridiculousness and hilarity. One judge commented on the *“very good, audacious setup; one that made me laugh”*.



THE BEST THINGS

Mel Giedroyc

Headline

The judges found the characterisation to be a key strength of this book, along with the honesty of the prose. The plot rests upon a great setup, which was executed very well. One of the judges commented, *“I just loved everything about it - a very accomplished funny novel”*.

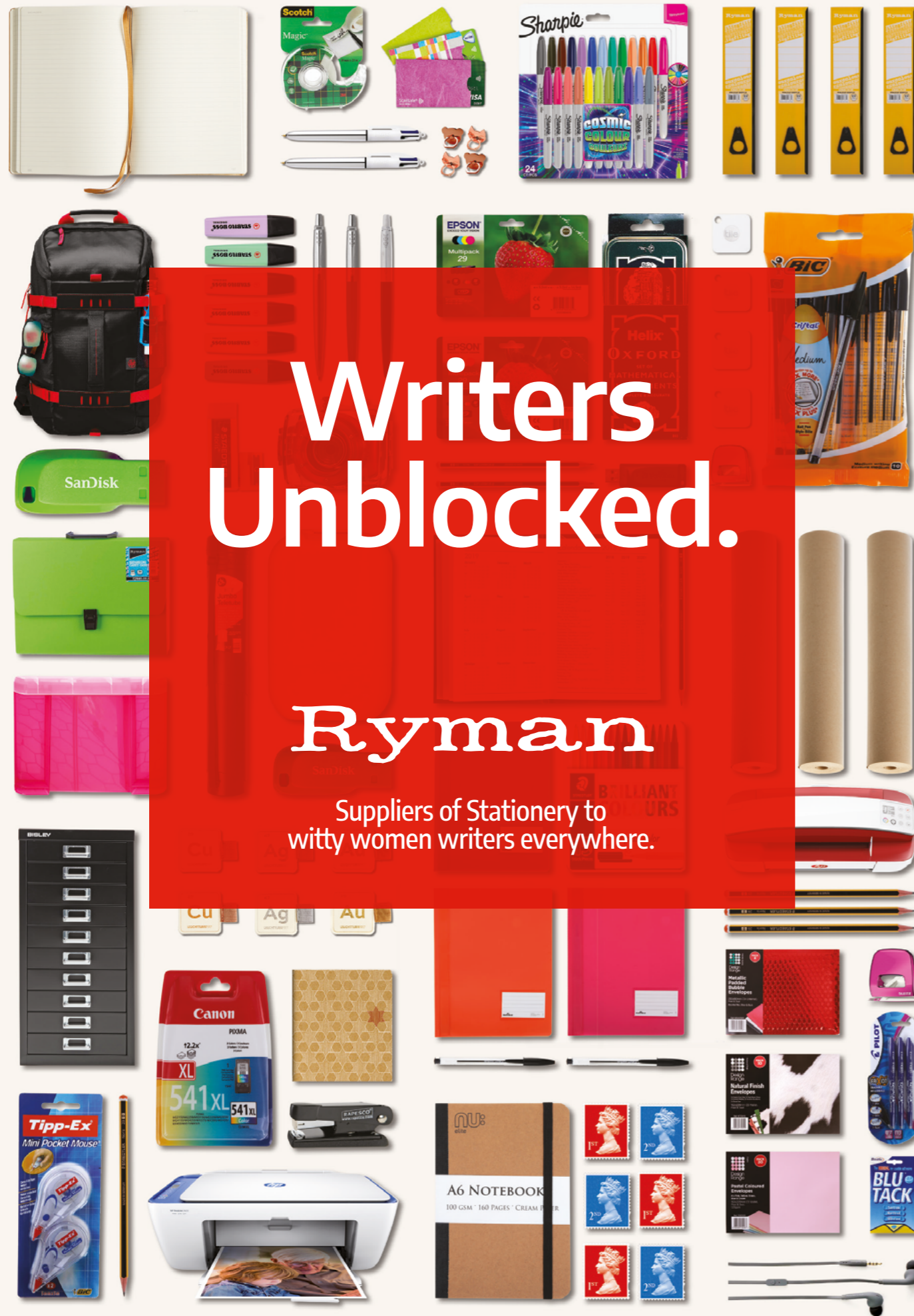


MURDER BY MILK BOTTLE

Lynne Truss

Bloomsbury

The judges found the farce-like feel to this very inviting, and loved the mischief entwined throughout. They also praised the setting and sense of place as being particularly strong. One judge commented on its fresh plot, noting *“I love that it wasn't about a woman trying to find a husband”*.



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BEFRIEND US

— WHAT? YES! —

It's all very well boasting, but here's my confession. I'm not actually trained in prize work....

With your friendship - we can do this. Why? Because you have seen the difference CWIP can make to the profile and respect of witty women's writing. Our brand has integrity and irreverence. Your involvement will genuinely close the gap in parity in the landscape of prizes and celebration.

We've only just begun. We need more categories, more administrators, more events etc - just like the big boys have.

By contributing - you are truly enabling us to definitely put witty female authors centre stage. We invite you to be part of our journey. Any and all support will make a huge difference.

comedywomeninprint.co.uk/support

COMEDY WOMEN IN PRINT PRIZE — FRIEND —



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*My future
is up there*

Our girls can explore possibilities that are simply out of this world, like studying GCSE Astronomy at the Royal Observatory.

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Unpublished Shortlist



The Lady Detective

Hannah Dolby

THE LADY DETECTIVE

Hannah Dolby

The Lady Detective follows Violet Hamilton, a Victorian spinster who asks a seedy seaside detective to investigate the disappearance of her mother ten years before. Dolby didn't originally intend to write a funny novel but found that her characters naturally had a strong sense of humour. Accordingly, one judge commented that it's "engaging, fun, original - It was so refreshing to read a Victorian historical novel that was so well written".

The NCT Murders

Kat Sumner-Ailes

THE NCT MURDERS

Kat Sumner-Ailes

Described by Kat as "pregnant women do *Midsomer Murders*" and inspired by the comedy diary she kept throughout lockdown, *The NCT Murders* focalises around a group of unlikely pals at an NCT class who, following an unexpected birthing and even more unexpected murder, join together to investigate and clear their names. One of the judges commented, "I laughed out loud! This is written very well, and with originality. There was also a good mystery element woven throughout".

Fools Rush In

Jo Lyons

FOOLS RUSH IN

Jo Lyons

When natural introvert Connie's father announces he's getting remarried, she is aghast to find herself in Benidorm trying to bond with a sassy Pussycat Doll of a stepsister-to-be. Lyons' first draft centred on the romance and sibling rivalry dynamic, but she reworked the manuscript to capture a sense of uplifting joy. As such, one of the judges praised, "I loved it, and everything about it. Delightful set up and good observation. I laughed out loud at this".

Labour Law

Clare Ward-Smith

LABOUR LAW

Clare Ward-Smith

Helen Bailey's ruthless law firm employers use her Maternity Leave to steal her clients and ruin her career, but Helen fights back – whipping out wet wipes and pulling on her power pants to litigate like her life depends upon it! Clare wanted to exploit the quiet power of using satirical wit to challenge this gritty subject, which was picked out by one of the judges - "This novel gave a strong sense of who the protagonist was, as well as her journey".

The Purgatory Poisoning

Rebecca Rogers

THE PURGATORY POISONING

Rebecca Rogers

Dave wakes in his own 1980s version of Purgatory and discovers he's been murdered by one of his so-called friends. He gets sent back to earth, aided by a rogue angel, to solve his own murder. Rogers wanted her Heaven to feel a bit like Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, and Hell a bit like the grimmest of British campsites - which was picked out by the judges, commenting, "This was very original, and the world building was done well. There was a lot of wry, dry humour".

The Death and Life of Agnes Grace

Emma Williams

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF AGNES GRACE

Emma Williams

The Death and Life of Agnes Grace captures a multi-generational relationship as Agnes and her grandson, Tom, are on a voyage of self-discovery to recapture her youth, and corrupt his, before time runs out for them both. Emma used the dark, self-deprecating element of her humour to elevate Agnes' forthrightness as a character. One of the judges commented on this dynamic: "There was a good amount of humour. It was nice to see an older voice and a younger voice. Well-rounded and well written."

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FLASH FICTION AND CWIP - WHEN LESS IS MORE



We were so inspired by the fun of CWIP's first flash fiction prize 'Comedy Women in Pants' (managed brilliantly by volunteers Alex Scott and Georgie Head and won by Lily London), that we had to do it again.

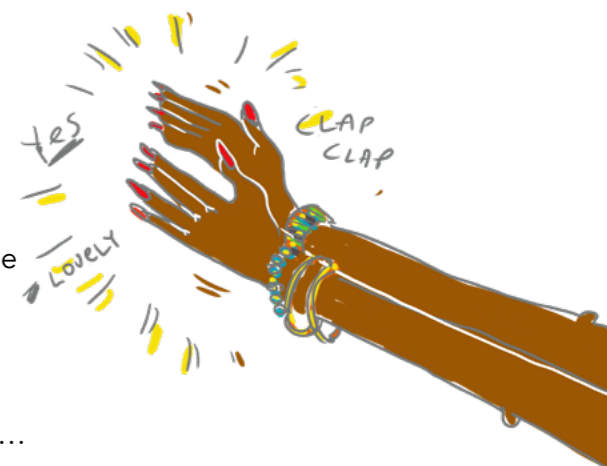
This time we partnered with two amazing organisations. The very brilliant Black Girl Writers and equally inspiring People in Harmony. Together they had the jolly task of shortlisting the most cringe worthy entries for the 'Comedy Cringe Flash Competition'.



We said we needed to hear EVERYTHING, and the entries did not disappoint. The Cringier and most embarrassing, the happier we all became.

BBC TV Ab Fab Star and wonderfully witty writer Llewella Gideon had the hard task of choosing the Flash Fiction Cringe champion. Everyone was blown away with the high standard of cringe story telling. The winner receives a CWIP cash prize tonight!

The discipline of condensing a witty narrative into a mini novella has been so uplifting - CWIP's Flash Fiction series may have to get smaller...



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(ALCS) is delighted to be sponsoring the
Comedy Women in Print Prize 2021

Find out more about the work we do to support writers at
alcs.co.uk



Essex girl, with a big voice, big hair and a cool little band, The Vintage Youth.

GEORGIA & THE VINTAGE YOUTH

Georgia Crandon is a perfect choice for CWIP. Her song, 'Told me to go home' is about the struggle for recognition – so we had to nab her and love her support. "When Helen asked me to support *Comedy Women in Print* I first thought great, a chance to wear my Leopard print knickers... if I can get them off my boyfriend. When I realised the objective wasn't clothing I thought F**k it I'll wear them anyway" - Georgia

Georgia's previous EP's, *The Girl - El Reco - Go FUNK Yourself* feature accomplished musicians like Neville Staple (The Specials), Dave Swift (Jools Holland R&B Orchestra and Mo'Nique's Earth Wind & Fire. She has been played on BBC Radio 2 and numerous other BBC local stations. Her latest EP *Overthinker* which dropped in 2020 also features on a compilation album released in Japan in September 2021.

Having completed 52 date UK theatre tour, concluding at The Royal Albert Hall in 2019, Georgia Crandon is now recording her debut UK album and set to tour Germany, Japan and the UK in 2022.



The CWIP Story Song

Lyrics - Helen Lederer - Georgia Crandon

*Ever since the eighties it's been quite tough
No one on the circuit seemed to like my stuff.
So, I wrote a book to get more visibility,
But funny female fiction had no parity.*

*It's time to change and get our voices heard,
In spite of accusations of us spreading the wrong word.
Though it's changing, it's hard to make our mark,
There's many of us out there, not just Muriel Spark.*

*CWIP is here to clear the air,
If you're funny and you're female there's a prize to share.
Women's witty fiction is still quite rare,
We're changing this and yes, we dare.*

*Take a ballsy lady with a funny mind,
I couldn't think of two things better off combined.
Still the biz' can be unfair
We're changing this and yes, we dare, 'oh yeah,'
We're changing this and yes, we dare.*

*All the prizes out there were won by men,
Let's fill the witty world with 'hims', 'hers' and 'thems,'
Setting up this prize appeared the thing to do,
Support is slow but steady, now it's down to you.*

INSTRUMENTAL BREAK

*All the prizes out there were won by men,
Let's fill the witty world with 'hims', 'hers' and 'thems,'
Setting up this prize appeared the thing to do,
Support is slow but steady, now it's down to you.*

*CWIP is here to make amends,
Even Miss Corona couldn't stop our pens.
Funny girls were overlooked, but oh contraire...
We're changing this and yes we dare.*

*And CWIP is far from passionless,
And CWIP is ABSOLUTELY fxxking FABULOUS,
Still the biz' can be unfair,
We're changing this and yes, we dare, oh yeah,
We're changing this and oh yeah, we dare.*





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The Prize would not exist without the fabulous support of visionary organisations and generous individuals. CWIP would like to thank the following partners, donors, individuals, and companies.

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