

# managing vicarious effects & writing poetry

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# poetry?

- arts-based research
- meaning-making and sense-making
- strategy for data **immersion** and **translation**
- data communication
- tool for reflection

sins of omission

Daniel Valerio's case  
the media a large  
part in policy

'legislation  
by tabloid'

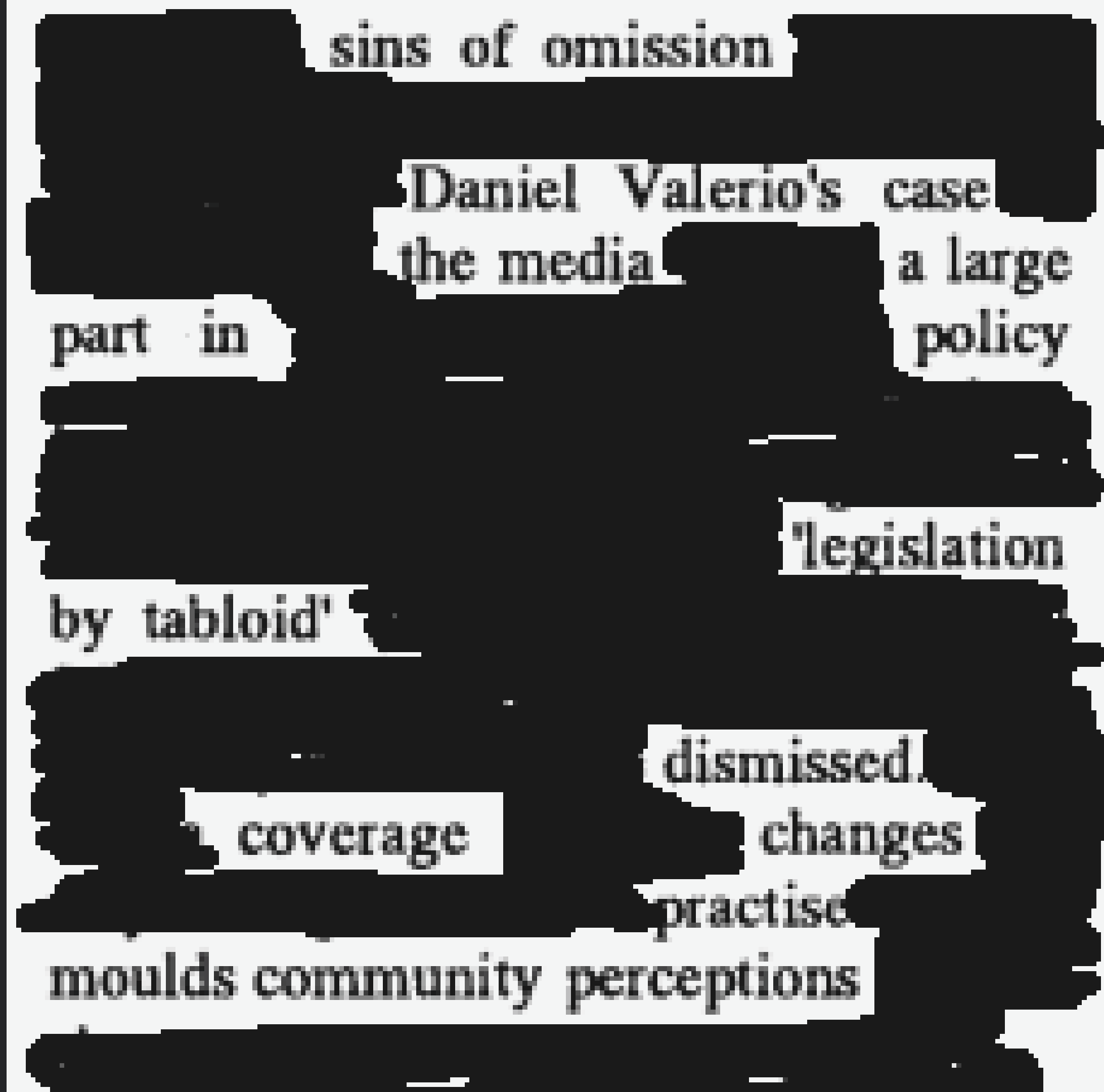
dismissed.  
coverage changes  
practise  
moulds community perceptions

Poetic inquiry unsettles dominant forms of knowledge production and creates space for decolonising, feminist, and critical approaches.

It is often *openly subjective*.

Poetry invites a wider audience to engage with research emotionally and intellectually, blurring the boundary between art and science.

See: Butler-Kisber, 2020; Chamberlain et al., 2018; Gannon, 2002; Leavy, 2015



# vicarious effects & (not just) distressing topics

- working with trauma stories
- personal histories
- new traumatic events
- i.e., COVID lockdowns and mandates, fires and floods

5

otherwise unexpected stories, as they were  
set against the futility of what we could possibly achieve<sup>29</sup>  
conflated

misremembered

negative sequelae<sup>30</sup>

(in this case, encephalitis)<sup>31</sup>

(in this case, a dead brother)<sup>32</sup>

(in this case, a lot of alcohol abuse and physical abuse, too)<sup>33</sup>

(in this case, it's the whole heroin addict, paranoid schizophrenic thing)<sup>34</sup>

(in this case, a child's cancer, a murder, child abuse, or chronic health problems)<sup>35</sup>

it's about interrupting them<sup>36</sup>

*yuck*

(in this case, disgust)<sup>37</sup>

**Somehow in qualitative research, the ways in which we have done it - the meek little summaries that describes a person's situation or story - *keeps us safe*. It keeps us behind the words ... never ever engaged, shifted, or moved by these circumstances in which we work.**

**Poetry forces us to come outside from behind the blocks of text and begin to see ... these real lives that are all around us.**

Prof. Heidi van Rooyen, 2021  
International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry

# prendergast's poetic 'voices'

## **Vox theoria**

Literature-voiced poems  
that respond directly to  
literature texts.

## **Vox autoethnographica**

Poems that stem from our  
own analytic memos,  
journals, or field notes.

## **Vox participaire**

Participant-voiced poems  
generated from transcripts  
or co-created.

# **vox theoria** **blackout poems**

## **Vox theoria**

Means respond directly to literature texts.  
Also called erasure poems, and are a version of 'found' poems.

## **Think about..**

summarising the main ideas or 'seeing through'. Cut out redundant words, build new sentences, etc.

## **Source texts**

Journal articles, books, newspapers.



# Gannon's reflection on Getting unmarried: Week one

This story is the raw words of the woman experiencing the event. It is “constructed” of course by the poet, but it is fragmented and contradictory, like the woman who lived it. She intellectualizes everything, spinning words around herself. She lists the reasons he gave for leaving her, documents his words, names her own emotions in abstract language—“cheated / jealous / angry / guilty / very frightened / exhausted / frozen”—but lives them in her sleep. It is in her dreams that her experiences of rejection and anger are violently embodied—“If he had a knife he would have sliced off one of my breasts / as a mark of courtesy / . . . I’d slit his throat / . . . he’d arranged / for someone else to fuck me.” Yet she also represents herself as positively embodied, as healing, as agentic in regaining autonomy with “I went out dancing.”

A story about fertility, which is a story about the body, emerges. But it is a story of competition between two women for a man in which fertility is the strategic weapon.

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of rejection

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fuck me

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is the

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Heaven's download.

I was scrolling through photos the other day the picture just jumped out at me, almost yelling 'pick me, pick me'. But then my logical brain wanted to find a connection with the theme of reinvention or reinvigoration.

I was emailing Carmel Bell at the time and I asked her what she thought of it. This is an intriguing picture. Strong primary colours, water based, cleansing and renewing. I love the hair floating which equals strength and courage. I love the colours and it certainly speaks to me about learning to see self clearly, which is necessary for reinvigoration. The image we hold of ourselves is often counterproductive to how others see us. So distorted. I

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We have

the Daniel Valerio  
case

human

examples are needed

The

unanticipated

consequences

various vested interests

Appendix B

Zhetnikov

When you have a

pe-

cial insight,

process,

of experience

develop a deep

understanding.

compose, compare

to deepen

clarity.

work at a core idea until it's perfectly clear

and has become your own.

unfolding of new realizations.

ultimate spiritual realities

can be considered

essential. I have found

of the inner and

of the outer and

to trust that

is real.



# writing poetry

1

## **Prompt**

Instructions and examples  
of poetry forms

2

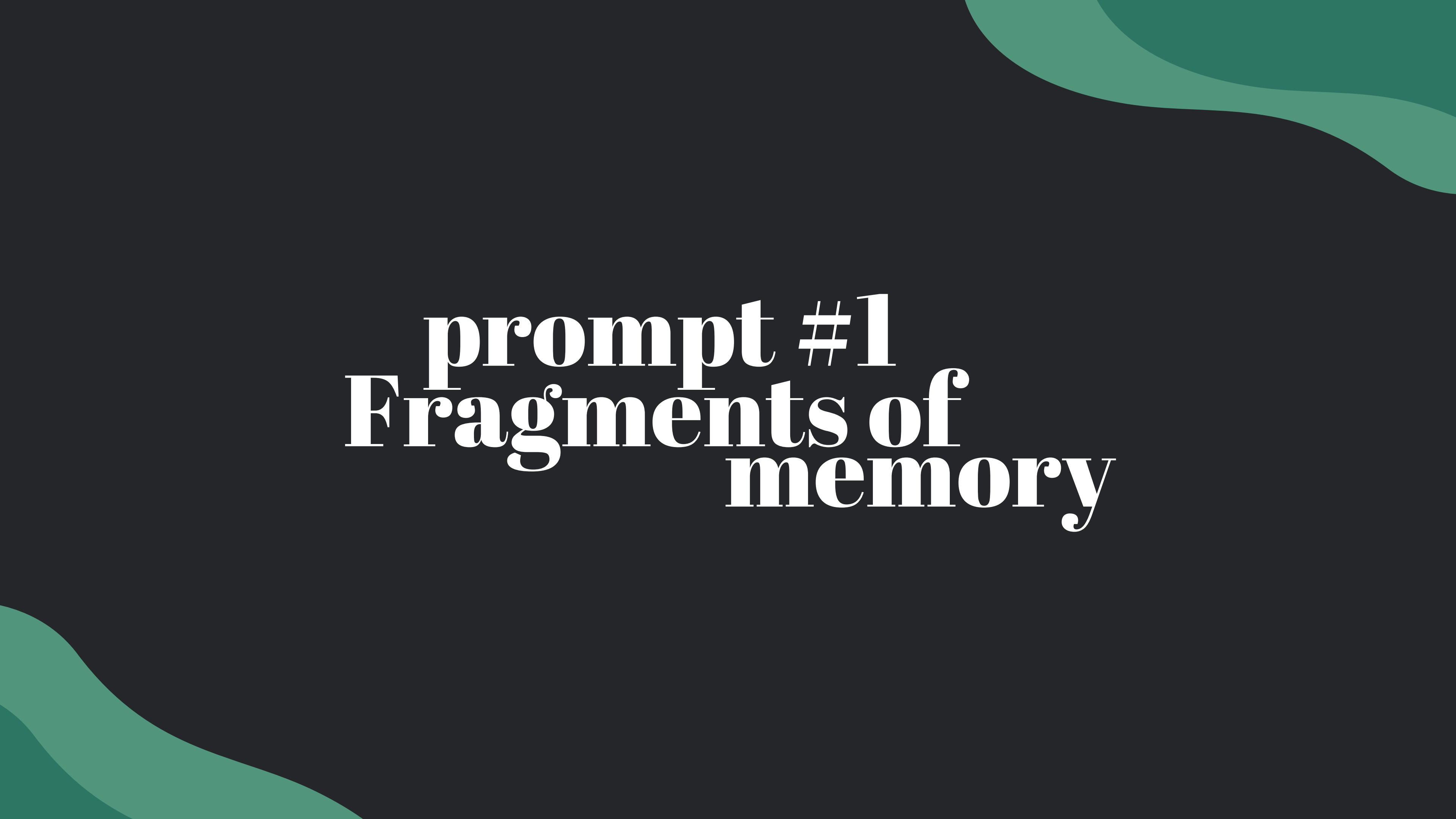
## **Writing time**

10 minutes to write in  
response to prompt

3

## **Reflect & share**

5 minutes reflective writing,  
sharing poems and/or insights



# prompt #1

# Fragments of memory

# **vox autoethnographica** **fragments of** **memory**

## **Vox autoethnographica**

Means writing from our own  
voice and own experience

## **Think about..**

months in a challenging  
year, days of a tough week,  
before-during-after a  
meeting or interview

## **Source texts**

Reflections, analytical  
memos, emails or texts,  
field notes, memories.

# process

1

## **Think**

Bring a client, participant or specific time to mind - a 'critical' event ethically or emotionally.

2

## **Write**

Choose 3 defining moments and describe them (i.e., who/what/when/where/how)

3

## **Edit**

You can number the events (Day/Step 1, 2, 3...), begin with a date (It's 1998, In 2005...), or leave it ambiguous. Events don't need to be in order.



4

things that have annoyed me  
his dependency  
his insecurity  
his inability to communicate  
his sulking  
his complaining  
his childishness  
his self-delusion  
but weaknesses become lovable and tie you down

6

Friday  
he phoned  
we talked  
he says when he talks to me  
he feels he's made the wrong choice  
I went out dancing

# Getting unmarried: Week one by Sue Gannon

# ‘children’s feet’ – by Kelsey Rude

## **Before:**

Still groggy  
from a night sleeping on a pillow full of foam blocks.  
I splash water on my face from the green bucket in my room.  
You were my first interview of the day.  
We sat in plastic chairs in the shade.  
    Were they orange? Maybe blue?  
We passed white papers back and forth.  
Exchanging information.  
    Confirming your consent. Confirming that I can use my recording device. Confirming  
    your genuine willingness to participate. Confirming that you understand. --- but do  
    either of us *really* understand?  
It all feels...  
    Impersonable...bureaucratic...  
    ...and ----- disconnected  
from the very personal, intimate, embodied experiences we are about to discuss.  
You told me you wanted to start by sharing your story.

## **During:**

Alone. Loneliness. Loss.  
Your uncle. Your sister. Your auntie.  
Dig a hole. Put her inside.  
Children’s feet. Crushed.  
A pregnant woman – ‘I smell you’  
    Is it a boy? Is it a girl?  
    A boy.  
    They just had to find out...somehow.  
A man. His small child.  
    Hands tied. Feet tied.  
    A river.  
Hunger. Living on sugar cane.  
Survivor. Survived. Surviving...

## **After:**

Nightmares.  
Where am I?  
Why does this keep happening?  
Time to go home. I’m ready.  
    but wait...  
Where is the car?  
    It’s   b r o k e n  
I just want to leave this place.  
I want my pad thai and my bed.  
How can I make this about myself? After all you have been through? After all you have told  
me?  
    NO  
    I WILL NOT  
    THIS IS NOT ABOUT ME  
    GET IT TOGETHER  
Solutions? – there’s a mechanic  
Why are they refusing to help me? What have I done? Have I offended them? How? Why?  
Frustration.  
    ...why am I crying?  
    GET IT TOGETHER  
I just want to go home.  
One more night.  
They say I can stay.  
A shower full of spiders – I think I’d prefer my bucket.  
A kitchen full of noodles. But I’m not hungry.  
Another strange bed.  
Another strange room...and strange noises. Who is there?  
Morning.  
The car is still broken.  
Hours of waiting...hours of thinking...thinking about you...thinking about what you told me.  
Chats in the dark.  
Friendship. Ideas. Partnership.  
I leave.  
I am home.  
I eat my pad thai.

# prompt #1

## fragments of memory

**Think > Write > Edit**

i.e., months in a challenging  
year, days of a tough week,  
before-during-after a  
meeting or interview



# prompt #1

## reflections

### Suggested questions

- What event(s) is the poem about?
- What is 'the poet' doing?
- What did I learn?





# prompt #2

## Moods & ‘i’

# **vox participaire** **moods & 'i'**

## **Vox participaire**

Means writing from the perspective (and voice) of our participants or clients.

## **Source texts**

Build these poems from interview transcripts, narratives or co-create them with participants.



# process

1

## **Search**

Refer to an interview transcript or client narrative. Scan or search (CTRL+F) for statements beginning with “I am/have/was....” and “I’m not/don’t/wasn’t...”

2

## **Arrange**

Arrange the statements in repetitive sets to tell a story about who they are.

3

## **Remember**

Aim for the poem to be mostly (if not entirely) participant voiced (their own words). Add a word or two to help with flow.

I'm elated.

Not helium inflated ecstasy-high elated

Not elated like the lotto winner who's just won the  
humungous jackpot and-is-about-to blow-it-all-on-  
techno-toys elated.

Just lung bursting, overly joyous can't really express  
why, everything just feels-in-its-right-place elated.

Joy has a thousand names and one of them is elation.

# Elated

by Nita  
Ketnikoff

# sloan

I am goal-oriented, very reserved, quiet

to him,

I am “chooku” and I hated that

these names **stuck**

I am *stuck* at school and ‘disengaged’

I was happy

until she turned the whole school against me

happy

until I turned to drugs and the drinking

happy

until the point where suicide felt like my best bet

*I didn't want to die*

*I just didn't want to be there*

I am lucky and

I am learning

to love myself for who I am

# prompt #2

**Keep working on  
fragments**



**Write an 'I' or mood  
poem**

# prompt #2

## reflections

### Suggested questions

- Who is the poem about?
- What is 'the poet' doing?
- What did I learn?



# summary

- Poetic inquiry includes found poetry, autoethnographic poems, and participant-voiced verse, among others (Prendergast, 2006; Zhang, 2021).
- There is no single correct form — rather, form should be chosen against purpose and ethics. Practitioners must take seriously their commitments to relational ethics — honouring participants' words, ensuring consent, and avoiding harm (Butler-Kisber, 2020; Galvin & Prendergast, 2016).
- We can experience vicarious trauma and secondary stress, particularly in emotionally demanding contexts (Fiolet, 2025; Lerias & Byrne, 2003; Fenge et al., 2019). Prepare ethically, emotionally, and practically.
- Poetic practices can serve as ethical reflexivity and debriefing practices to incorporate into your workflow.

Start small, write often, honour the mess.





thank you

happy writing!

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