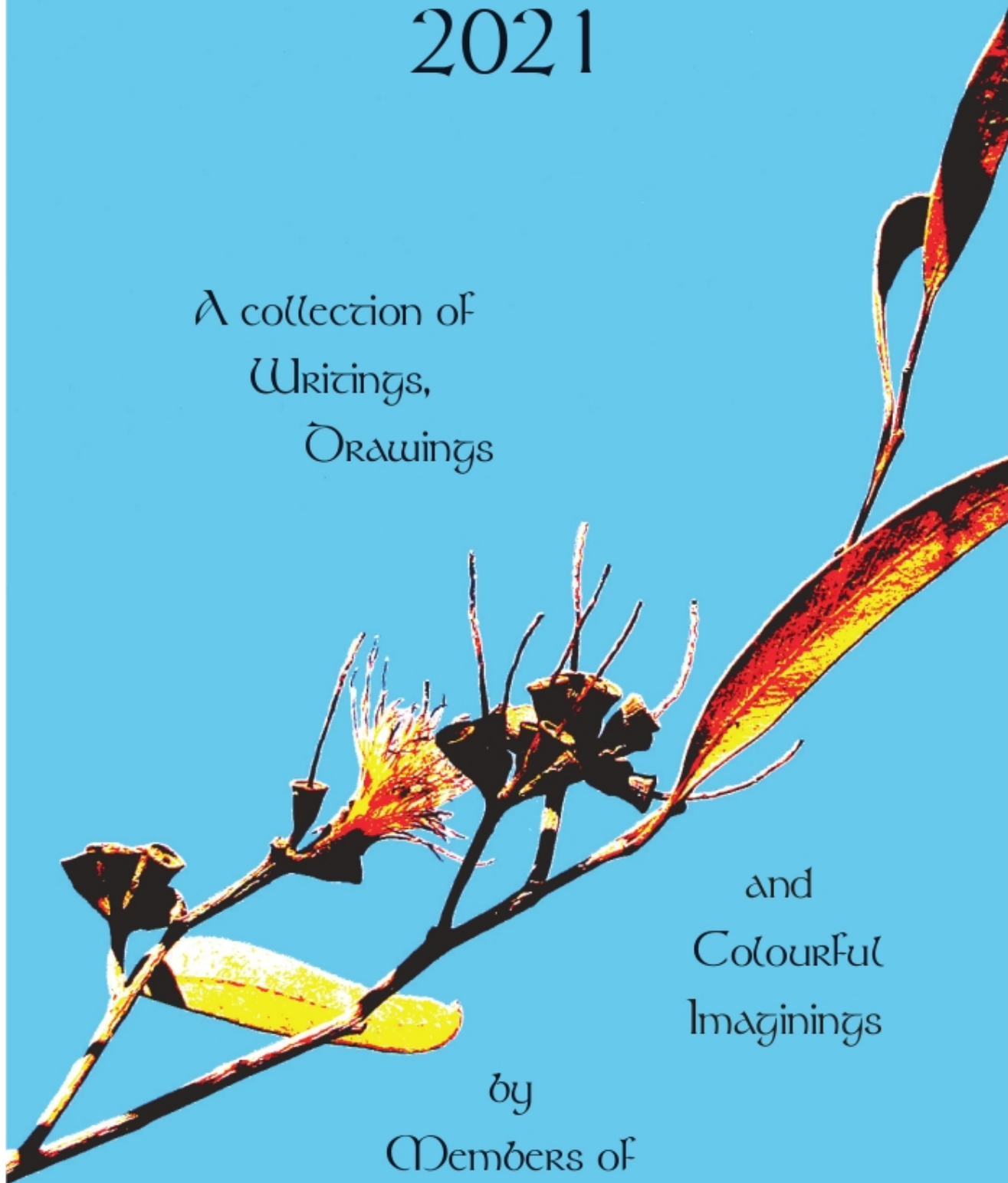


Autumn Leaves 2021

A collection of
Writings,
Drawings

and
Colourful
Imaginings

by
Members of
USA Yarra Ranges





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2021

Edited by Sue Goss



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Note from the Editor

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.' And that was not last year, it was the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five.

Charles Dickens, 'A Tale of Two Cities'

Dickens knew it all. The bold first paragraph of A Tale of Two Cities is perhaps one of the most familiar and oft-quoted of all literary texts – apart from 'to be or not to be' – which is also rather apt! When the whole world shut down on March 1, 2020, did we really believe that it would still be shut down on June 1 2021? In between there were wars and revolutions, protests and upheavals, elections and atrocities as always, but there was something else. We discovered each other.

Only a writer like Dickens can describe a little of what happened to us in the last two years, and even he would have been staggered by this peace-time disaster. There was a BC and there has to be an AD. For writers and artists, who have an obligation to set out and explain our world to following generations, this means, perhaps, Before Covid, and After the Dawning. Because writing, and life, will never be the same again.

And yet it will. After the worst bushfires comes the new growth. Within days there is rain. Within a year the little birds return, the ferns grow and we can look across the bay, marvelling at regeneration. Enough has been said about what shook us as we watched on helplessly while the world fell apart. Not enough has been said about the way we fell apart together.

We looked out for each other. We wrote letters and made sure people on the other side of the world were okay. We skyped and zoomed and stood at our gates to wave and sing. We counted the days and learnt to dance. We played tennis on rooftops, grew vegetables, wrote poetry and took photos of raindrops. And we emerged, once again, with this hope firm within us as we sat, basking in the winter sunshine in Lilydale and the summer sunshine in Leamington Spa or Amsterdam or wherever the people you care about happen to be today.

This plague has shocked our humanity. But much of our writing has its origins in fire, a fundamental element which still leaves us helpless, even more helpless than disease. There is anger, bewilderment, fear. But there is love. And also faith. Cling to those and we will come through.