



ALANA VALENTINE is a Sydney-based playwright. In 2013 *Tinderbox* was produced by Tredwood Productions at Darlinghurst Theatre 19, and *Comin' Home Soon* at the Leider Theatre, Goulburn. In 2012 *Tarantula* was produced at the King Street Theatre and *Grounded* was presented by Tantrum/**atyp** at the Civic in Newcastle and at the Wharf in Sydney. In October 2012 Alana was presented with the prestigious 5th STAGE International Playwrighting Award for *Ear to the Edge of Time*. She was also nominated for a fifth time for the 2012 Griffin Award for *Lavender Bay*. *Cyberbible*, commissioned by PLC Sydney, was first presented December 2011. Two of her community-sourced plays are on the NSW Higher School Certificate Drama syllabus (*Run Rabbit Run* and *Parramatta Girls*). Her Queensland Premier's Literary Award nominated play *Head Full of Love* opened in 2012 at the QTC after a premiere season in Darwin, Alice Springs and Cairns and also aired on ABC Radio National. Alana's documentary-style project-making has seen her involved with multi-disciplinary works which involve visual art, creating an installation for the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery of a joint work by Goulburn Correctional Centre inmates and children of inmates which companioned the aforementioned stage play. Alana also conceived an origami ribbon fish sculpture and storytelling event called *Swimming Upstream* for ASCA's (Adults Surviving Child Abuse) Blue Ribbon Day associated events. In August 2013 her play *Dead Man Brake* will be presented at Merrigong Theatre in Wollongong.

CYBERBILE & GROUNDED

ALANA VALENTINE



CURRENCY PRESS
SYDNEY

CURRENCY PLAYS

First published in 2013
by Currency Press Pty Ltd,
PO Box 2287, Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012, Australia
enquiries@currency.com.au
www.currency.com.au

Copyright: *Cyberbile* Foreword © Greg Friend, 2013; *Cyberbile* © Alana Valentine, 2011, 2013;
Grounded Introduction © Fraser Corfield, 2013; *Grounded* © Alana Valentine, 2012, 2013.

COPYING FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

The Australian *Copyright Act 1968* (Act) allows a maximum of one chapter or 10% of this book, whichever is the greater, to be copied by any educational institution for its educational purposes provided that that educational institution (or the body that administers it) has given a remuneration notice to Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) under the Act.

For details of the CAL licence for educational institutions contact CAL, Level 15, 233 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000. Tel: within Australia 1800 066 844 toll free; outside Australia +61 2 9394 7600; Fax: +61 2 9394 7601; Email: info@copyright.com.au

COPYING FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Except as permitted under the Act, for example a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All enquiries should be made to the publisher at the address above.

Any performance or public reading of *Cyberbile* or *Grounded* is forbidden unless a licence has been received from the author or the author's agent. The purchase of this book in no way gives the purchaser the right to perform the plays in public, whether by means of a staged production or a reading. All applications for public performance should be addressed to RGM Artist Group, PO Box 128, Surry Hills NSW 2010. Tel: +61 2 9281 3911; Fax: +61 2 9281 4705; Email: info@rgm.com.au

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA CIP DATA

Author:	Valentine, Alana, 1961– author.
Title:	<i>Cyberbile</i> & <i>Grounded</i> / Alana Valentine.
ISBN:	9780868199849 (paperback)
Target Audience:	For secondary school age.
Subject:	Australian drama—21st century.
Dewey Number:	A822.3

Typeset by Dean Nottle for Currency Press.

Printed by Openbook Howden, St Marys, SA.

Front cover design by Heath Killen.

Cover design by Katy Wall for Currency Press.

Front cover shows Jemima Webber as Farrah in *Grounded* (photo Justine Potter). Back cover shows Sasha Ognjanova as Community Figure in the 2011 PLC Sydney production of *Cyberbile* at Audrey Keown Theatre, Sydney (photo Leonard Elliot).



Cyberbile & *Grounded* was created with assistance from the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

Contents

CYBERBILE	1
<i>Foreword</i>	
<i>Greg Friend</i>	3
GROUNDING	49
<i>Introduction</i>	
<i>Fraser Corfield</i>	51

CYBERBILE

FOREWORD

Drama is a powerful tool to educate and inform its audience. It can open deep wounds, awaken suppressed emotions and explore ways of healing or changing lives.

In 2011, one of the Drama staff at Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney, Joanna Golotta, wanted her senior Drama club to create their own piece of theatre.

The senior students had been studying verbatim theatre as part of their final HSC course and had embraced the concept of real testimony driving a theatrical performance, and this was the form they wanted to write in. Initial discussions were based around topic areas—what could a group of 15- to 17-year-olds explore with a certain level of knowledge and understanding? The answer was found in our first meeting.

Cyber-bullying. It's everywhere. It creeps into our kids' bedrooms late at night and infests social media outlets for all the world to see. Everyone can be reached and no-one with a mobile or an email address, a tumblr account or Facebook is immune to this dreadful plague.

Our school had recently conducted a survey into this epidemic and whilst our results returned a really positive analysis there was still evidence that some among our school community were engaging in this terrible form of bullying. Further research by our group uncovered the fact that it's a massive issue in schools right across Australia. One school had attributed three suicides in 18 months to online bullying. The statistics were horrifying.

And so we created an anonymous survey and handed it to every girl in Years 7–12. Over 700 surveys came back. Most of them were what we as a school would want to read. Students had not experienced online bullying, or they knew of someone who had but hadn't been part of it themselves. However, a small proportion uncovered a terrible world out there where some hid behind anonymity and made other students' lives a living hell. I should point out that some of the stories were from students' pasts in other schools which is why they made the change to PLC. In saying that, there was enough evidence that cyber-bullying was also prevalent amongst our students.

The survey also allowed students the option of revealing their identity so that they could be interviewed further. Thirty-four girls came forward wanting to tell their story. Over the course of three weeks we interviewed all 34 students. Some of the stories were very hard to sit through and we were so appreciative of the girls having the courage to come forward and share their experiences.

After typing out the transcripts of the interviews and sifting through the 700 surveys, we sat down and started to collate the material into a theatrical piece. Verbatim theatre is not only about the words on the page, it is about the dramatic structure and the ‘reveals’ to the audience. It didn’t take us long before we realised that we needed help. Professional help.

Joanna had been to one of Alana Valentine’s workshops earlier in the year and Alana’s beautifully written *Parramatta Girls* was one of the texts we studied in Year 12. I wrote to Alana on a whim asking if she would be interested in being involved in our project. To my utter surprise and relief she agreed to meet with us and consider our proposal. The rest is history, contained in the pages of the script you now have.

Alana took our material away and came back three weeks later with a structure that allowed the content to come to life on stage. In the style of ‘massaged verbatim’ Alana took the story of one of our students and created the character of Oriana. The play follows her journey as a victim of cyber-bullying and her determination to stand up to this vile form of intimidation.

The process to get to a final script was a long one and such an incredible experience for our students. Alana was so generous with her time, often coming in to workshop the scenes and shuffle the monologues to ensure maximum impact. Our students were living any actor’s ideal dream—to be able to work alongside one of Australia’s great playwrights and to see firsthand how a script is developed from concept to reality.

The production was co-directed by Joanna Golotta and myself in December 2011. The audience response was tremendous and it started a dialogue around the school that we believe has made a positive impact on our students.

Joanna’s vision and determination, coupled with Alana’s skill and creativity is a wonderful example of the strength of Drama as a subject in schools. It exemplifies how professionals and students can collaborate

in the creative process and PLC Sydney is eternally grateful to Alana for her vision and courage. Currency Press also deserves kudos for agreeing to publish this important piece of Australian theatre.

Cyber-bullying will be hard to fully eradicate in society. However, through plays such as *Cyberbile*, the hope is that this cowardly form of bullying will be greatly diminished and its victims will find the courage to stand up for themselves, and those who know bullies in their social groups will expose them for what they are.

Greg Friend

Greg Friend is Head of Drama at PLC Sydney.

Cyberbille was first produced by Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney, at the Audrey Keown Theatre, Croydon, on 1 December 2011, with the following cast:

ORIANA	Sophia Mobbs
CELINE	Kassandra Kashian
TERRI	Ruby Kerr
FIGURES	Charlotte Rowse, Georgina Chard, Helen Mchugh, Natalie Cox, Elloisa Candi, Simone Ireland, Alya Higgins, Annie Watson, Rosie Bailey, Rachel Simpson, Katrina Sioufi, Sasha Ognjanova, Anastasia Balis, Lily Murphy, Elise Harrison, Georgia Dodd, Jessica Blake, Natassia Chrysanthos

Directors, Greg Friend, Joanna Golotta
Lighting Designer, Alex Grierson
Sound Technician, Jared Lattouf

CHARACTERS

FIGURES 1–12 These include cyberbullies, cybervictims, parents and teachers. When the figures reappear in the script they are never the same character they were previously so, in truth, the figures could be played by many more than 12 performers, at the director's discretion, or the 12 specified. Similarly the figures are often non-gender specific and may be changed by small alteration of pronouns, though with some of the figures this may not be appropriate.

CELINE, 16

ORIANA, 16

TERRI, 16, may be played by a female or male performer

SET

The work should be played on a set which allows the individual worlds of the students, teachers and parents to be realised, as well as the 'office' where Celine, Oriana and Terri are conducting their research. The theatricalised 'dream' sequences with matadors and bulls should be as colourful and dynamic as the director cares to make them.

NOTE

The author would like to thank Miss Joanna Golotta and Mr Gregory Friend from PLC Sydney for commissioning this work and also for providing such rich verbatim source material for me to draw and build upon from interviews with their students, teachers and parents. Although this material is substantially drawn from transcripts, it has been 'massaged' and dramatised by me in significant ways so that it does not accord precisely with any single source and should be regarded as documentary-inspired fiction.

AV

SCENE ONE

FIGURE 1: I was... I guess I was sitting at my computer and I was replying to an email and I just typed one word that was stronger than I usually use and the word was 'slut' and I just typed it and it felt good to use a stronger word and I sent it off and nothing happened and it sort of just went from there. I would describe it that... as I started using stronger and more forceful words on the screen... like I found this total word for it which is vitriol and that's what it's like... like by shooting this vit into the email then the less there was in me. Like it was as if the second I saw this nasty shit appear on the screen then I had ejected something out of my own body and I have to tell you that felt good. And so I found myself actually looking for situations where I could like overreact and just really spill that bile out of me. Mostly anonymously. I guess it's not so different to wanting to march in the streets or dye your hair green, it's just about being really verbally rebellious yeah? Like everyone knows you're not supposed to but it honestly feels really good. Just to shoot off stuff like that. Like it's venom. And it's just in you and then it's just... out of you.

FIGURE 2: Yeah, I've really liked it when Formspring has got particular to certain schools and to people you know because I like to watch the reaction. Like even if people are really upset it's not like I'm heartless, it's just that I'm more kind of absorbed by watching their reaction than caring about what they're going through. Which sounds harsh but I don't mean it like that. I mean it like... it's like being in a story or a show or something and you're the one pulling the strings. Like you can't pretend that that sort of power is not cool. It's way cool. You write something and then in the real world, in people you see, it's affected them. Really big-time. And you're probably thinking that I'm some sort of psycho but I'm not. I just did it once... like unintentionally did it once, wrote something that really upset someone and I felt bad about that but then, I dunno, I just stopped feeling bad and just started being fascinated by what a big reaction it was and so I wanted to do it again. It gave me something to look forward to, which I know is pretty lame. But it did. I bet I'm gonna get in trouble for admitting all of this.

FIGURE 3: This whole thing about cyberbullying... I am just so over it because... because I like to use the internet to say what I think and if that's gonna be labelled bullying then I'm up for that. I mean you hear girls say that someone online told them that they were fat or ugly and they're really devastated by that and I mean honestly I just have no tolerance for that kind of indulged, overprotected princess behaviour. If it takes little old me to give them a reality check then so be it. Some of these girls are such wimps, it's like they sue the school for breaking a fingernail you know. 'Oooh, someone said I looked bad in that dress last night. I'm being cyberbullied.' Get over yourselves. I have written that to girls online. I tell them how lame they are. Because they need to get real about how privileged they are and how trivial their concerns are. I bully girls online because they need to stop being such a pack of wimps. And if they don't want to know the truth then they shouldn't go online and look into their profile. You know?

SCENE TWO

ORIANA: Hello and welcome to the world of social networking and online bullying. My name is Oriana Matthews and I am a student at Silver Wattle High. Earlier this year we conducted a survey about students experiences of cyber friendships and these are the results.

CELINE: No, don't say 'these are the results'.

ORIANA: But they are the results.

CELINE: Yeah, but you sound like you're announcing the Eurovision Song Contest voting scores. [*In an accent*] 'I am Inge from Sveden and here are the results of the Svedish jury.'

ORIANA: That's racist.

CELINE: Everyone makes fun of Eurovision.

ORIANA: Well, I don't think it's funny.

CELINE: Fine.

ORIANA: Should I explain about how we conducted one-on-one interviews with students from Year 7 through to Year 12?

CELINE: You mean girl-on-girl interviews.

ORIANA: What's wrong with you today?

CELINE: Nothing. I'm always like this.

ORIANA: So just quit it.

CELINE: Who's a cranky pants, Spongebob Squarepants today?

ORIANA: I'm not.

CELINE: Is this stuff getting to you?

ORIANA: What?

CELINE: 'The results from the Svedish jury'?

ORIANA: No. I think that stuff that came in from the bullies is kind of gold.

CELINE: It is, isn't it?

ORIANA: No-one was owning up to it in the surveys.

CELINE: 'Maybe I might have bullied once but I didn't realise I was doing it.' Yeah sure, and I didn't realise my pants were on fire.

ORIANA: You've got a fixation on the word pants today.

CELINE: Have not.

ORIANA: Have so.

CELINE: Speaking of bullies.

ORIANA: Yeah well, setting up the site where they could send stuff anonymously has really worked.

CELINE: So has anything else come in?

ORIANA: Sort of.

CELINE: How can something sort of come in?

ORIANA *hands her a piece of paper.*

ORIANA: But it's nothing.

CELINE: [*reading*] 'Oriana Matthews you dumb slut, stop working on this cyber shit project or we will stop you because you are sick trash. You're nothing but a fake whore who thinks that you are better than other people.'

ORIANA: So they're testing me.

CELINE: Sounds like they're threatening you.

ORIANA: It's nothing.

CELINE: Don't you think we should tell Miss Pardelote?

ORIANA: No way.

CELINE: Why not?

ORIANA: Because... I don't want them to close down the project.

CELINE: They won't. They'll just trace them.

ORIANA: And then that becomes the story of this project. That I ran to the teachers as soon as it started getting interesting.

CELINE: You don't have to say that.

ORIANA: It's verbatim. It has to be authentic.

CELINE: Not totally.

ORIANA: Yes, totally.

CELINE: Fine.

ORIANA: If they do it again we'll talk about what to do.

CELINE: Meanwhile the researcher becomes the research?

ORIANA: Well, sometimes the journalist becomes the story.

SCENE THREE

FIGURE 4: I think you can hear why I get bullied. It's pretty different. I guess it's just that to me it's really normal because I've always had it. So I'm used to it. I even got offered a voice-over job on a film once when I was thirteen. I didn't get it but they did a test and everything and the director said he really loved it, you know, my voice. Some people think it makes me sound masculine I suppose. But it's not masculine it's just deep. Plenty of women have deep voices and husky voices. Heaps. I even read how actresses sometimes do stuff to make their voices deep and husky, like smoke, I guess. I was a premmie baby, premature, and that's how it happened because there were all these tubes down my throat in those early weeks. I don't call it damaged because I don't think of it as a negative. Anyway there was this one girl, she was sort of a friend of mine for a while and then she just turned really nasty, started to ignore me and stuff. Like I'd say hello and she'd just ignore me and so I knew something was wrong and then I started getting these really heavy emails, saying I was basically a man and I was probably deformed and saying how she couldn't stand to be around the sound of my voice because it was like a sleazy old man in a pub and all this stuff. And I didn't tell anyone about it for a long while, even though I knew you're supposed to. I guess because I was deep down really ashamed of myself so it's not like it felt justified... more just that I didn't know if people would think it was fair enough because my voice is so deep. I'm not explaining it properly but since I've got older I know that people can hurt you most with the things that you dislike about yourself the most. When we did *Othello* for drama I realised that. Which is damned sophisticated don't you think? Even

if I do say so myself. Anyway... the thing you doubt about yourself is the place where they can really get in. Big-time.

FIGURE 5: We have these school trips where you go overnight on excursions and that's where this particular bullying started. You have to share and I was sharing with this girl who was in a form lower than me and anyway she saw that I was reading a Mills & Boon. At first she was just razzing me as if it was a joke you know swooning about and making up really cheesy lines as if she was the handsome heroine. And then at night she would wake me up and start reading out bits of the book to me. Like in the middle of the night and I was in a deep sleep. It was really weird and then when we got back from the trip I kept getting these emails with quotes from various Mills & Boon in them and no name signed but of course I knew it was her. And the trouble with it is that she could have just said that the whole thing was a joke between friends and that's what she told me she would say. Even when I told her that I didn't like it... because then she started posting stuff about how I had never had a boyfriend and I never would because I was really frigid and because I have never had a boyfriend everyone believed her and there was nothing I could do. And I was in real trouble there for a while. Sorry. It obviously still gets to me even though in my head I'm totally over it. Sorry. A couple of nights I spent the whole night crying so I'd get to school with really red eyes. And I got really paranoid imagining that people thought I was crying because I couldn't get a boyfriend but it was really because of this girl who just wouldn't leave it alone. She was a real bitch. We never resolved it really she just stopped which was good. I still don't have a boyfriend but that's okay.

FIGURE 6: Last year I was away for the whole term in Germany, going to school there and when I was over there I was checking my Formspring and there were lots of comments saying, 'don't come back, you don't belong at Silver Wattle High', and stuff like that, but luckily I am a strong person and I really didn't care. I find it kind of amusing how people were bothered enough to do that and yeah, these people tended to write as if they were the whole perspective of the year while I knew I had friends here. Some of the messages would say, like, 'no-one at Silver Wattle High likes you', 'don't

come home', and it was stupid because I obviously know I have friends because I was in contact with people and they couldn't wait until I got back. So it was yeah, kind of stupid. And the other main thing has been with me and my boyfriend 'cause he's a bit older and people he is friends with have come on to my Formspring and said, 'what are you gonna do with him?' and things like that and then go onto his and say that 'going out with a 14-year-old I've lost a lot of respect for you', and things like that. He's 18 and he is still in school and he's been my best friend for ages. We're actually family friends so we go to family dinners and things, it's not a big deal. We're not planning to do anything big of course. But you still get comments like, 'oh, if age is just a number then jail is just a room', and it's like well that's just stupid, he's not going to jail. It's not like he's a big predator or anything like that—it's really stupid but, um, we both find it really amusing actually.

SCENE FOUR

ORIANA *enters with two figures either side of her. Both are wearing horned 'bull' heads which might be masks or papier-maché prosthetics. They complete the actions as described in the poem—winding a sheet around her and spinning her in it, dragging her to and fro like a cocooned silkworm, then pasting words and letters onto her, not necessarily coherent but perhaps with asterisks and stars. There also might be an 'el bulli' chorus of smaller bull figures who dance or otherwise move during these dream sequences.*

ORIANA: I had a dream that was not all a dream
 and in it I was stalked by horned creatures
 'el bulli'
 and my sheets were wound around me
 tight as the night
 wrapped like a cocoon
 like a worm
 and their weapons
 were not knives
 were not swords
 but felt the same