

Belinda Nicoll, a freelance writer, has been awarded a fellowship by the Jentel Artist Residency Program in Sheridan, Wyoming. During the four week retreat she'll work toward completing her memoir, "My Life As An Alien." The story bears witness to the life transitions of the author, post-apartheid South Africa, and expatriate life in post-9/11 America.



*My Life As An Alien is a memoir about change and irony. In 2001, the author—a newlywed woman in her early forties—relocates from South Africa to the United States with her second husband. The couple arrives at JFK airport on 11 September just minutes before the North Tower is hit. Through the spreading pall of smoke, she sees the second plane hit the South Tower and the image of the collapsing edifice emerges as a symbol of their uncertain future.*

*Missing a social support structure and pining for the two adult children she left behind, the author struggles with a rigid immigration system that denies her the rights she's always taken for granted. Along with loss of identity comes loss of confidence and self-esteem. The marriage buckles under the strain of cultural orientation and the growing disparity between her quality of life and her husband's. He fears that the unprecedented upswing in South Africa's cost of living, together with the falling dollar, will make it all but impossible to return home.*

*Resilience and a sense of adventure keep the couple on course. Their desire to correct the imbalances in their lives convinces them to relocate from the West Coast to upstate New York, and later to the South. However, crushed by a deepening sense of displacement, they toss guilt, resentment, and anxiety between them, the mid-life crisis of each further disturbing the dysfunctional atmosphere.*

*Ultimately, it is love and their sense of humor that spurs a kaleidoscope of perspectives on life, helping them to accept their circumstances and overcome their personal issues.*