imprint

Northern Territory Writers' Centre Journal | December 2017

Imprint

NORTHERN TERRITORY WRITERS' CENTRE JOURNAL

ABOUT
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ABOUT NT WRITERS' CENTRE
The NT Writers' Centre encourages vibrant literary activity in the Northern Territory, developing and supporting writers in all genres at all stages of their careers. We value quality NT writing as a unique component of Australia's literary wealth and recognise Indigenous writers and storytellers as a core component of this.

As well as our ongoing member services, we offer a program of workshops, opportunities and showcase events across the NT including the annual NT Writers' Festival.

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Guest Cover Artist
Dion Beasley lives in Tennant Creek and is well known across the Territory as the artist behind the T-shirt brand Cheeky Dogs, and the picture books Go Home Cheeky Dogs, and Too Many Cheeky Animals.

Northern Territory Writers' Centre

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EDITORIAL FIONA DORRELL

On Sunday morning of the NT Writers' Festival that took place in Alice Springs this year, people gathered as Walpiri women from Yuendumu sat on the ground and oiled and painted one another up in preparation for the launch of their new songbook, *Yurntumu-wardingki juju-ngaliya-kurlangu yawulyu* (Batchelor Institute Press). There was a livestream beginning soon in the Gallery Room connecting the launch to other audiences around the Territory. From the sidelines, someone tentatively reminded the group of time constraints; Valerie Napaljarri Martin, in her navy beanie with the blue and red pompom, took charge. 'You can't rush these things,' she explained to the audience, 'they have to take their own time.' 'These' she later added 'are the cultural procedures of our lives.' The livestream was delayed. No one fussed.

In *The Opposite of Glamour* (Sydney Review of Books 2017), Delia Falconer observes 'I've started to notice, over the last few years, an evangelical tone creeping into writers' festivals, in which writers proselytize the power of literature to 'represent complexity' or make us better people. As writers are encouraged to promote ourselves as brands, it's too easy to pat ourselves on the back for simply writing, rather than worrying about the specific work our books can do in the world.'

As a writer tracking the environmental crises of our times Falconer's scrutiny of the business of Australian literary culture is earnest. Between festival circuits, social media, grant applications, residential retreats, marketing strategies, and increasing requirements on writers to 'promote ourselves as brands', Falconer asks when 'glamour' became a measure of important writing. 'Those who have glamour,' she writes, 'are 'winners' — above the ruck, in their gilded sphere — while those who don't are 'losers''.

The Walpiri Women's songbook compiles and documents ancestral knowledge and to those involved in the production of the book, its value is absolutely clear—as Barbara Napanangka Martin told the audience 'Old people are passing away... We don't want to lose their deep knowledge of country and jukurrpa songs and stories.' In the face of some of the challenges of our times, parallel concerns are shared by many of us; I'm reminded that our books have important work to do.

The Walpiri women's appearance in the Festival, further recounted in this issue in a transcription by Georgia Curran, alongside alongside other strong Indigenous programming was easily a highlight for 2017. Mention should also be made of the sand story told in Ngaanyatjarra by Lizzie Marrkilyi Ellis who sat regal on the red ground beneath a desert sky and captivated her listeners. Special thanks to my colleagues Dani Powell and Shrike O'Malley for their intelligence and passion in putting together this Festival.

In looking back over 2017, many other books and projects deserve a mention.

In this issue, Beth Sometimes reflects on the little yellow shed, *Apmere Angkentye-kenhe*, which opened midyear in the centre of Alice Springs as an interactive place for Arrernte language, involving talks, exchanges, and learning activities and resources. The project was produced by *Watch This Space* in collaboration with Arrernte language experts.

Karen Manton reports on further publications by Batchelor Institute Press. Their books and projects push new ground in the publishing industry for multimedia, multilingual books that might better cater to a place where many of our languages being spoken only have a short history of being written down and where oral storytelling, song and dance have traditionally been vessels for culture.

Kieran Finnane reviews Kim Mahood's *Position Doubtful*, a book that speaks so perceptively to the complexities of our region.

Perhaps together these works offer more of a pompom-beanie take on the 'glamour'. Happy reading. I look forward to what 2018 might hold.

Fiona Dorrell
Alice Springs Program Manager
NT Writers' Centre

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: PROFESSOR MARTIN JARVIS OAM

Professor Martin Jarvis at the 2017 NT Writers' Festival in Alice Springs.

2017 has been a very exciting year for the NT Writers' Centre, following on from the great successes of last year. Of particular significance was the NT Writers' Festival held this year in Alice Springs, directed by Dani Powell and themed Crossings | Iwerre-atherre. Under Dani's direction, the Festival team did a terrific job! It was wonderful to see strong turn-out for all events, including the opening ceremony held at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden.

This year there was an additional opportunity to expand our reach with a pilot livestream program. Festival sessions were broadcast right around the Northern Territory. The experiment with the use of live streaming technology at the Festival's so called Satellite Sessions, meant we were able to partner with other regional centres, and we were delighted to be able to work with libraries and various arts centres across the Territory and beyond, all the way to Port Augusta! Our thanks must go to all the organisations that helped make this feature of the Festival a success.

Beyond the Festival there was also a program of many workshops and events held right across the Territory, and the Board of the NT Writers' Centre would like to take the opportunity to thank and congratulate Sally Bothroyd, and her team, for their great work during 2017 in ensuring a Territory-wide program. There is no doubt that the NT Writers' Centre has firmly established itself as supporting the whole of the Northern Territory.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE: SALLY BOTHROYD

Welcome to the second edition of *Imprint* – the annual journal of the NT Writers' Centre.

2017 has gone by fast, and it's been a busy year for myself and Alice Springs Program Manager Fiona Dorrell.

The NT Writers' Festival in Alice Springs in May was an unprecedented success. Huge thanks must go to Festival director Dani Powell. It was Dani's second time at the festival's helm, after delivering a great festival in 2015. Fiona Dorrell also put a huge amount of effort into the Festival and along with co-ordination by Shrike O'Malley, and production by Robbie Hoad and Kristy Schubert, it was a winning combination!

For Darwin members, there was the Community Writing and Publishing Forum – assisted largely by a community grant from Darwin City Council. A number of members took the opportunity for a one-on-one meeting with literary agent Tara Wynne, or children's publisher Clair Hume from Affirm Press in Melbourne. The workshops on marketing, publishing and romance writing, along with the free information sessions, were also a big success.

The NT Writers' Centre has continued to offer support via our year-round program, and to other literary events, including the NT Literary Awards, run by the Northern Territory Library, and the Young Author Awards, run by Darwin City Council. We also helped two Territory poetry slammers, Victoria Alondra and Daniel Townsend, get to Sydney for the National Poetry Slam Championships.

Thanks again to members of our board for their ongoing work behind the scenes.

The NT Writers' Centre would not be able to operate without the funding support of Arts NT, the Australia Council, the Alice Springs Town Council, the Darwin City Council, and the Community Benefit Fund.

Sally Bothroyd
Executive Director
NT Writers' Centre

Vale Alice Eather, poet

MY STORY IS YOUR STORY

Djiya wiba yinyirra
Ngana Maningrida yo
Djiya wiba yinyirra

People ask me for my story
But my story is your story
My feet are in the dirt and the dirt it speaks in dust
and the trees they speak in leaves like the people speak in trust
and the water speaks in waves and the dust is in the wind
so the Country covers my skin and my skin covers this body
And this body has a vessel in this chest that carries messages from my ancestors on what to do against a threat
And these messages come to me in dreams and I've collected so many now
they're asking me to speak

People ask me for my story
But I thought my story was your story
When I see a map of Country, I see land, sea and family
When they see a map of Country they see mining fantasies
When I see the sea-bed, I see sacred sites
When they see the sea-bed they see dollar signs
When I see a map of exploration permit 266
I see them trying to reduce my country into three digits

When I see Yirridja and Dhuwa Country, I see everything that is our Moiety
When they see Yirridja and Dhuwa Country, they see the future in the oil and gas industry
When I see the tides rise and fall
Kabalala karapa kakaja
I can read the storms
When they see the tides rise and fall
They just want to find out what's under it all
It's funny how they want to dig deep, but act so shallow
So I say: Koma! Ngika! No!
Saltwater people say: Koma! Ngika! No!
Wùnal Clan say: Koma! Ngika! No!

People ask me for my story
But my story is your story
When you cry, don't you cry the ocean?
When you sweat, don't you sweat the ocean?
When you drink, don't you drink the rivers and the rain?
And when you wash don't you wash into that ocean so that cycle can start again?

When we cry, we cry the ocean
When we sweat, we sweat the ocean
When we drink, we drink the rivers and the rain
and we wash into that ocean where the cycle starts again.

Thank you to the Eather family for this photo of Alice, taken in 2015 on Kabalko Island (her mother's country off Maningrida).
Thanks also to the family for allowing us to print Alice's poem.

Ali Cobby Eckermann: Inspiring Outsiders

CANDY ROYALLE

SEEDS

there are always seeds that thread us
and carried on the wind set us apart

does the wind come from the origins
of the mother or the father

will my origins be blown away
or remain in distance if I leave

will the wind stand breathless
shall I remain to die broken from home

This is the poetry of Ali Cobby Eckermann, a Yankunytjatjara / Kokatha woman who was born then tricked away from her family on Kaurna land.

All my life I have felt like an outsider with regards to language – a land for the elite, the educated middle-to-upper white classes. Academic writing, a lot of non-fiction, even some investigative journalism can feel impenetrable. Like a language for only a few - a kind of pervasive elitism that persists, articulated in convoluted in-knowledge that outsiders like me - born of immigrants and without higher education - cannot access.

This holds true, often, for poetry too. There have been many tomes dedicated to dead white men making millions as skeletons whilst living women of colour toil over groundbreaking, heart-shattering work that moves in ways so visceral it is hard to remember to breathe whilst reading.

And yet in this country, poetry that is so enamoured by its own cleverness and poets dazzled by their own adroitness still get lauded by the establishment.

Although I was tempted to talk about the essays of Arundhati Roy who taught me that I could speak out with truth as my firearm, though I was tempted to talk of the ongoing impact on me of Silvia Federici and her book *Caliban and the Witch* which made the whole history of the subjugation and oppression of women so easy to understand – so easy, so enraging and heartbreaking, I decided instead to speak about one of my favourite and one of Australia's greatest living poets Ali Cobby Eckermann.

Nonfiction is a huge pool and as far as I'm concerned poetry is part of its waters. Poetry is a liquid truth – certainly to the author, and too for the reader who swims in it, often upstream. It is nonfiction in so much as it is autobiographical - a snippet or moment in time of the writer. A glimpse into their consciousness, access for a fleeting second into their mind. It is documentation of the personal, the political – inseparable as they are. Poetry has the potential to pierce through the intellectual and head straight for the heart. It can move people in ways other crafts can't. So it is with Ali Cobby Eckermann's work.

DIP

My mother is playing hide and seek
between my memory and my dreams

she hides amongst the Language
Speakers
I catch glimpses of her laughing

no longer foetal I must arise
no longer prone she has arisen

I see a foot dip daintily
In a rivulet of fresh rain

Is it hers or is it mine?

Ali Cobby Eckermann is a survivor of the Stolen Generation as her mother was before her. Both stolen women, their stories and histories are mirrors of the worst kind. Yet Ali talks about her two mothers being equal, both being integral to her. In an interview with the ABC she said:

"[My birth mother] was the first person I saw who mirrored my face...because that's what family is – we were a reflection of each other...

...my adopted mum...who I have all the memories with...is integral in my life...my two mothers can only be equal."

Though Ali searched for her birth mum

from the time she was eighteen, it wasn't until her thirty-third year she was able to find her – and discovered Audrey Cobby, more widely known as Audrey Kinnear, was a fierce and respected activist who still carried inconceivable guilt. In Ali's words "her generation were really shamed, more than my generation, to give their children up...the guilt that these women had to endure was really deep inside them..."

THE LETTER

Dear Mother
The mission is good.
The food is good.
I am good.

rips the page from the typewriter
scrunches the page till it bleeds
kicks it under the wardrobe

inserts a fresh page
tentatively with finger
poised and types

Mummy
Where are you?

Ali grew up with her Lutheran adoptive parents but at seventeen ran away and unwittingly headed to the birthplace of her mother, at Ooldea on the Nullabor Plains, living there for two years without any idea that that was where her kin were from. I love this part of her story – that she is poetry herself writing with her body what she eventually put to page.

NGINGALI

my mother is a granite boulder
I can no longer climb nor walk
around

her weight is a constant reminder
of myself
I sit in her shadow

gulls nestle in her eyes
their shadows her epitaph
I carry

a pebble of her in my pocket

It is Ali's continuing and consistent language of forgiveness and compassion in the face of such unimaginable trauma that truly inspires me; how she can remain fierce and grounded in all her truths and still speak and write with great humanity.

When she signed my copy of her book, *Inside my Mother*, where all these poems are from, she wrote "To Candy Royalle, the language of loss is the victory". Even though we have spent a little bit of time together, I've never had the courage to ask her exactly what she meant by that.

I took it to mean that we who know suffering, we who have witnessed the oppression of our people and fought for some form of acknowledgement or justice; we who have found the words to use, who continue to rally and push and create and demand and share and speak unapologetically about all the injustices; we who share stories in the hopes of rehumanising the dehumanised – we are truly the victors. This is the point of poetry for me. Poetry not in love with itself; instead, poetry in love with the telling of true history.

I do not for a second presume to understand the suffering of the Stolen Generation. I can never. Though we know how it sounds; though we can read about it, talk about it; though we have witnessed a Prime Minister apologise for it; we can only gather information. We can only know about the damage, the very wrongness of such a program of enforced assimilation based on good intentions, which is part of the greatest crime this nation has ever committed, on an intellectual level. We can only intellectualise the damage of white-washing, the decimation of culture, of language and oral storytelling, the flagrancy of a history written by white oppressors. But we who are not Aboriginal can never, ever truly understand what that trauma feels like. We can empathise and act as allies but we cannot ever fathom the sense of absolute devastation and loss.

Poetry can however bring us closer than any article, any report, any list of dehumanising statistics where the continued reduction of humans to numbers is a massive injustice. It can bring us closer to a visceral and emotional understanding of that suffering. Maybe, through the poetry of Ali Cobby Eckermann our empathy and compassion can be turned into action. Currently, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families is happening at a rate greater than the first Stolen Generation. Right now, history is repeating itself and that "Sorry" on our behalf, echos hollow.

Reading Ali's poetry hands us our humanity so that we understand intrinsically and viscerally that the removal of children from their people should not be happening, that it is a crisis of massive proportions. Once our hearts have been cracked wide open, once we've bypassed the intellectual which can be influenced by excuses and false justifications, misinformation and prejudice, once that poetry takes a hold of every cell and particle and atom that makes us up, perhaps we will be propelled to engage and ask the first people of this nation – how can we help stop this? Tell us what to do.

Poetry can induce full body chills, involuntary tears, awe. There is a real intimacy, a connection between writer and reader which culminates in an experience unlike any other literary or even creative medium available to us and so for me is the greatest form of nonfiction imaginable. Maybe I'm biased, but I'll leave you with the words of Ali Cobby Eckermann and you can make up your own mind.

KULILA

sit down sorry camp
might be one week might
be long long time

tell every little story
when the people was alive
tell every little story more

don't forget 'em story
night time tell 'em to the kids
keep every story live

don't change 'em story
tell 'em straight out story
only one way story

all around 'em story
every place we been
every place killing place

sit down here real quiet way
you can hear 'em crying
all them massacre mobs

sit down here real quiet
you can feel 'em dying
all them massacre mobs

hearts can't make it up
when you feel the story
you know it's true

tell every little story
when the people was alive
tell every little story more

might be one week now
might be long long time
sit down sorry camp

In 2017 Stolen Generations survivor, ***Ali Cobby Eckermann****, won the Windham-Campbell award for poetry. Valued at $215,000, Eckermann said 'an award of this magnitude will continue healing many of us' and will 'change my life completely'. The award website states, Eckermann 'has produced a substantial and formally innovative body of work' which 'gives language to unspoken lineages of trauma and loss."*

Photos included are of Ali's participation in NT Writers' Festivals across the years.

This article is an edited version of a speech given by ***Candy Royalle*** *at the Stella prize longlist announcement in Sydney on 7 February. It was published in The Guardian in March this year.*

Ali Cobby Eckermann's most recent poetry collection, Inside My Mother, *is published by Giramondo.*

Book in a Day

KATHERINE REGION OF WRITERS

Katherine Region of Writers (KROW) is now in its 26th year. That's quite a feat for a writing group in a small rural town, south of The Berrimah Line. In August several committed KROW enthusiasts decided to take on a writing task to mark the occasion – Write a Book in a Day.

Book in a Day is an Australia-wide competition that gives groups of up to 10 authors, in various age and word limit categories, the chance to write a book aimed at ten to sixteen year olds in twelve hours – 8am to 8pm. This can be done on any chosen day from May to August. Book in a Day is linked to the Kids Cancer Project and all books are sent to cancer wards around Australia for young patients to read. So, the more creative and wild the better. This year Book in a Day has managed to raise almost $200,000.

To inspire these wily words teams are given parameters of two human and one non-human character, a setting and an issue. Each team's line-up is unique, but there are five random words that every team across the country must use, just to keep it interesting.

KROW member, Lyndal Carbery, has been running Book in a Day through the ether at Katherine School of the Air for four years now. Students from Thailand, Kalkaringi and the Barkly Tablelands have, in real time, joined together to create linguistic masterpieces. Last year Katherine School of the Air won the NT/QLD division for best primary book. *Chelsea's Delicious yet Dangerous Challenge* is a four thousand word novel of epic proportions. Chelsea, an endangered species expert, has lost her wallet while canoeing along the Ord River. After two weeks looking for endangered species in the local cave she is ravenous and so happy to come across a remote bush restaurant. Francois is renowned for creating dishes using Australian delicacies. Starving Chelsea asks Francois for something to eat…for free. Chelsea's daring question gives her far more than she bargains for.

This year's participants, Lyndal, and fellow KROW members, Philippa Jones, Royelene Hill, Toni Tapp Coutts and Lorraine Harris, as well as local artist Mandy Edge Tootell, had their work cut out for them when they saw their parameters. A geologist and a jockey, in a haunted house where gravity goes wrong and where they interact with the Easter Bunny. The day was spent with much butcher's paper, markers, mind maps and USB sticks as chapters were planned and written then passed around for editing.

"12pm came. Then 4pm, and soon after 6pm and suddenly there were only two hours left."

12pm came.

Then 4pm, and soon after 6pm and suddenly there were only two hours left.

A mad dash of group editing around a very large TV screen, thanks to Katherine School of the Air lending their premises for the day, meant that at 7:52pm the writers leaned eagerly forward, watching the screen, shouting, 'Send! Send!'

At 7:53pm they flopped back into their chairs exhausted, but with wide grins plastered across their faces.

'Same time next year?' asked Lyndal, eagerly.

'You bet.' They replied.

Copies of KROW's book: *Outback Wonderland: a journey down under… literally* will soon be available. Funds raised through sale of the book will go towards next year's Book in a Day competition.

If you are interested in being involved or having your own group participate go to writeabookinaday.com or email **krowmembers@gmail.com** for support and inspiration.

Those Fifty Words Might Live in Sentences

BETH SOMETIMES

I'm looking for clues to give this weight, I look for weight in the light of others, I'm reading geography looking for language, "the land gave us words."

I'm riding my bike through Yeperenye shops carpark, cruising not pedalling, up off my seat noticing things. The 'p' of apmere written in LED rope lights hangs within reach on the side of the yellow shed but still no one has pulled it – it has not yet become a handle and it may not.

Apmere Angkentye-kenhe – a place for language, also referred to as 'that yellow shed', arrived upon the scenes in Mparntwe Alice Springs 2017. Public activity is temporarily dormant again now after its first burst of life over three weeks in June & July - that apmere untarne, yellow place, behind the Uniting Church. It was an art project, a collaboration between Watch This Space Artist Run Initiative and a team of local Arrernte language custodians which grew over the time. The shed premised Arrernte language knowledge as the key axis of the exchange to take place there through a series of events and open hours. The interior housed archival Arrernte language resources including audio and video content, plus specially created elements including a large topographic map of Mparntwe with audible site names, a language learning audio tour available for collection, a 'no-shame pronunciation booth', a range of physical learning resources and a mini library. I thought, maybe it would be a place for exchanges of multiple languages but Arrernte people said no, this is Arrernte country and it will be for Arrernte language.

A drop in the ocean of a long legacy of language work; people's memories are short. My respect and acknowledgement now to all the Arrernte people and others who have worked with this language in many ways over many years.

Apmere experimented with the potential for creative and political alliances between artists and people who work in multiple ways with Central/Eastern Arrernte, looking at what such a place could mean to different people and how various political claims around Indigenous languages could be enacted. The project positioned Arrernte language learning and the necessary associated listening as a potential site for certain claims to be both articulated and heard, inviting reflection on the ways settler and Arrernte cultures encounter one another. It was surprising. Lots of people showed up; sometimes in surprising ways.

One idea in the making of *Apmere* grew in to a campaign to promote 'Fifty Words Everyone Living in Mparntwe Should Know' which was inspired directly from similar ideas in Aotearoa, where a basic vocabulary of Te Reo Māori has been insisted in at least elements of a mainstream lexicon and flourished. A political claim. For me perhaps, a slightly uncomfortable step into the didactic, but one that MK and Lowlee and others got excited about; their enthusiasm gave me the impetus to run with the suggestion.

People who have learned other languages or progressed further than just a beginning, know that when a language gets into your system it starts reproducing itself, echoing around, rolling through your perception of the world – a little viral almost. So, words are like seeds if they are tended.

When we recorded an audio track of Lowlee and Ali and Pwerte (project team members Lorrayne Gorey, Alison Ferber & Michael Gorey) voicing those fifty words and me asking silly questions about the meanings, we didn't know each other very well yet. I was still very shy around them and around Arrernte as a language because I didn't (and still don't) know it very well. We were out the back of the old Watch This Space in the sun brainstorming which words were the fifty... Lowlee had written a big expansive list another day and this day we started chipping away at it, every word that didn't get to stay we said "akunye!" that poor word had to fall off the list. And then they kept thinking of new ones they'd forgotten which were in fact more important. The really important words were left off the list, though. Some words are deemed too special or sacred or potentially dangerous for casual inclusion.

"I consider everything I say to be a spell and that is why I'm very careful about what I say." – Charlie Sofo

One claim or assertion made by the *Apmere* group is the need to get the language of whom you are speaking with correct; you might do this "by simply asking someone where they are from!" In clunky attempts to relate, (and "the point is to relate!"), new - and even at times more established - settlers use the languages of other peoples to greet or name; a violent blanketing, a convenient othering. I think here of Derrida and his consideration of animals and the word 'animal'. "For Derrida, the fact that we refer to all living creatures that are not human as "animals" is absurdly reductive. He makes a good point. Lumping together the cricket and the whale, the mountain lion and the parakeet, the giraffe and the marmot, seems lazy and dismissive" Likewise an atnyeme and an arlketyerre and an arripe bloom with their own specificity in form and in function, telling us more about the world we live in than the generic 'wattle'.

I am interested in a settler's relationship to the Indigenous languages here as an element of how we might decolonise our being and our thinking and our doing. I'm interested in how people born into the Aussie linguistic mainframe can decode its rigorous English-centrism so that the intricate and intimate alterity of the original languages in which this continent was conceived, can flourish to tell its stories and shape its future. In the words of Maori/Samoan/German Aotearoa-born rapper Jessica Hansell: "the more people who are allowed to tell stories on their own terms, means that there is more meaning and dexterity to understand and experience the planet accurately." I think of my gnawing distaste for the word 'diversity', particularly in the context of the arts, and just now for the first time I think perhaps 'dexterity' is a word that seems primed to jump in that ring. A dexterous cast of storytellers. Dexterous representation. Encouraging dexterity. I'm down for that.

"On their own terms"... I'm thinking about the poster 'Fifty Words Everyone Living in Mparntwe Should Know', the Arrernte words in the middle there as subject, framed by English - that capture a microcosm of the dominant language frame through which our public sphere is largely conducted. The 'other' language can be included or not included – in this frame it is held still within the institution of English, an exhibit designed for non-Arrernte people. And that is its purpose. But seeing a frame like this, created by my hands, opens up the possibility of imagining what it looks like unframed, or what

"When a language gets into your system it starts reproducing itself, echoing around, rolling through your perception of the world"

stories told 'on their own terms' really are, and then you realise, it's there, they are already there - but it takes a frame for us to see it.

There's this rhetoric flying around at the moment about dual naming in Alice Springs and the NT, and an ensuing online outcry that they might possibly consider changing the name of this town to Mparntwe (which in fact no one in a position of power actually said they would). Chief Minister for the Northern Territory Michael Gunner said: "It's very clear to me that we don't have a proper inclusion of the first people in our very basic culture." I'm excited in one sense that this matter is being talked about at a government level but this sentence – as a spell – says that first people should be included in our basic culture. A spell that is cast over and over in the rhetoric of power in the governance of this place, reinforcing the frame that original names could be included within. I hope for meaningful collaboration for site names be heard on their own terms, hidden or made known where appropriate.

Sometimes art highlights a lack of something that people haven't anticipated they needed yet, maybe in an abstract sense (like maybe that strange arrangement of wire and paper you saw in a gallery that pushed out a new little corner in your mind) and sometimes more concretely. It was hard to explain to people what we were making in the lead up to *Apmere* but then once it declared itself people said things like "why wasn't this here twenty years ago?" I think people get excited and say things like that when in fact things like that probably were happening twenty years ago but then ballooned

into something now unrecognizable or were intimate and have faded out of memory.

What was apparent along the way was the enthusiasm of the community that grew around the project and the willingness of a group of settlers to volunteer their time to something. Exciting things happen when people are able to make things happen not for economic imperatives but out of social necessity. There is a precariousness to this kind of activism and to maintaining an art practice and there are so many ways in which a life can be precarious. I speculate here about Mparntwe Alice Springs people's own senses of precarity; as colonized peoples, as settlers grappling with an uneasy belonging to country, as complex gendered beings in a heteropatriarchy, as fragile minds in a world that stigmatizes mental illness, as artists tasked with generating meaning from a contradictory collage of potential. Judith Butler discusses precarity as a potentially connecting principle between groups who have been made precarious for different reasons. The different ways to be precarious are not all evenly weighted of course, and usually are operating intersectionally, but the point is they generate insight for each other, or they can.

When MK asserted at the NAIDOC forum that "those [fifty words] words might live in sentences!" I think yes - words can be symbolic individual items – but together their capacity for meaning is exponential. Like us. Brian Eno said, "sometimes the strongest single importance of a work of art is the celebration of some kind of temporary community." I'm thinking about that in relation to this project, I'm thinking of Amelia Turner, who ran the majority of the fifty-word challenge sessions, saying to me how she now sees people who did the challenge down the street, says hello and tries out Arrernte language with them, her network thus extended. The community around this project augments other existing alliances but invites new people into these affiliations, well that's a business term, when Arrernte people are involved, it's more likely to be framed as artweye mape; as family.

We had a debrief meeting after it was all over and I fumbled around trying to explain outside of art-language how I conceived of what we did as art, Lowlee said "It's art, I see art everywhere, it's the lights, it's that TV thing there, it's got language in there, it's a piece of art, it's got language in there," gesturing at different things in the room, "it's got language in there. Art everywhere." And then MK said: "Art is just when the movement's here too you know?" When we get a group of people coming in here, that's like, art too..." And I think of what was declared to me as a point of utmost sensitivity—that "English is an Aboriginal language too" and the fresh meanings that can be made when language is remixed through other ontologies—art is just when the movement's here too.

Beth Sometimes *is a Pakeha New Zealander based in Arrernte country. An artist and language worker, Beth is currently completing an MFA through the Centre for Cultural partnerships at Victorian College of the Arts.*

Photographs courtesy of the author.

FOOTNOTES

Sofo, "'I Consider Everything I Say to Be a Spell and That Is Why I'm Very Careful about What I Say.'"

Neale, "Angkentye Anwerne-kenhe Impene Anthurre | Our Language Is Essential - NAIDOC Public Forum."

Verwoert, Rehberg, and Slater, Cookie!

Derrida, The Animal That Therefore I Am.

Higgs, "Notes on Derrida's The Animal That Therefore I Am."

Hansell, "What Would a Feminist Methodology Sound Like?"

Butler, Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly.

Turner, "Angkentye Anwerne-Kenhe Impene Anthurre | Our Language Is Essential - NAIDOC Public Forum."

Eno, "'Sometimes the Strongest Single Importance of a Work of Art Is the Celebration of Some Kind of Temporary Community.' - Brian Eno."

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Sharing Warlpiri Women's *Yawulyu* Songs

Written by Georgia Curran on behalf of the Warlpiri women from Yuendumu who attended the 2017 NT Writers' Festival

Some people ask us 'What are *yawulyu*, what do these songs mean?'. For us *yawulyu* are an important part of who we are – they contain all the knowledge we have of our country, of our *jukurrpa*, and of our ancestors.

For us, *yawulyu* are part of our identity as women from Warlpiri country. Lots of our younger girls have missed out on learning about this part of themselves but it is always there – it is always part of who they are because they can trace their family links back to the country and *jukurrpa*. We want to teach them all this knowledge while there are still juju-ngaliya 'senior business women' around to tell the stories and sing the songs.

Nowadays it is a big effort to hold *yawulyu*. In the past, we used to hold them all the time. The old people used to sing *yawulyu* at business time and for fun because it made them feel happy. Over the last year we have been putting together a book – a collection of *yawulyu* songs with their words, rhythms, stories, photos and links to sound recordings of the songs. This book is called *Yurntumu-wardingki juju-ngaliya-kurlangu yawulyu: Warlpiri women's songs from Yuendumu* (Batchelor Institute Press 2017). You can listen to the songs by scanning the QR codes with your phone or from the CD that comes in an accompanying boxed set. We also made a DVD which comes in the back of the book – you can see us dancing *yawulyu* out at Mission Creek, just out from Yuendumu, last year.

When we were invited to come to Alice Springs to present our book at the NT Writers' Festival it made us feel valued for this part of our culture. We want to share these songs with people outside of Warlpiri country – to show other people who we are as proud Warlpiri women. A big group of us came from Yuendumu for the festival and met up with other Warlpiri women who live in town. It was really important to have so many *juju-ngaliya* come together. Nowadays this can be really hard because everyone lives in different places.

On the Friday night we all camped out at Honeymoon gap. The Music NT mob had organised for us to stay there. Some ladies from Borroloola also came and sung some of their songs from over in the gulf country. We also shared some of our *yawulyu*. It was

"This is how we stay strong into the future. We have been doing this for a long time"

really special for us to share our songs like this with other ladies from different country. It was bitterly cold but we didn't notice as we sat around a huge fire singing and dancing into the night.

The next day we went back to Alice to get ready for the Writers' Festival. Saturday brought back the reality of town life. Family demands, sick relatives, where to sleep, what to eat.... Sunday morning was hectic but we got everyone there to the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens....cups of tea, sweet cake, empty pannikans, red ochre, white ochre, phone calls.... We sat outside in the morning sun whilst we painted up. A big group of people gathered around to watch us and learn about our songs. We sang the Minamina 'travellling women' and Ngapa 'Rain' *yawulyu*, which we have written about in our book. Then we all moved in to the theatre and some ladies danced in. We told everyone about our *jukurrpa* - our songs and our country. We also showed them the films of us dancing in the bush just near Yuendumu.

The festival theme was *lwerre-atherre* – an Arrernte word which means 'two paths coming together' and travelling together. For us, it is also important to come together with different people to share who we are. This is how we stay strong into the future. We have been doing this for a long time. Our *jukurrpa* stories tell of different groups of people coming together. At the festival, we told the story of the *Yalpurru-rlangu* 'two age brothers'. The two age-brothers meet each other. One is from Minamina and one is from Mt Theo – both special places on Warlpiri country. These two are from different places but they came together to go through business, to become men. In our story they come and meet up with each other again, they always hold this special connection of going through business together. When Warlpiri ladies dance, they become these two age-brothers and they talk to each other using finger-talk (Warlpiri sign language). "What have you come here for?" they say. "I've come to see you my brother". They will have a close connection forever, those two brothers from different places because they went through business together.

We went back to Yuendumu that afternoon, having shared a part of ourselves with all the people who came to see us at the festival. It is an honour to travel to share our *yawulyu* with others. We thank the Warlpiri *juju-ngaliya* from the past, present and future for always keeping these yawulyu strong and for continuing to share them. And also we thank the Arrernte owners of Alice Springs for having us on their country to sing, dance and share our songs.

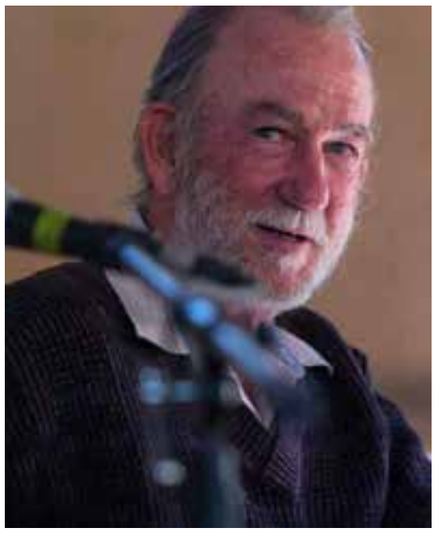
Thanks to the Warlpiri women from Yuendumu who attended the Festival to launch their songbook Yurntumu-wardingki juju-ngaliya-kurlangu yawulyu

Barbara Napanangka Martin
Nellie Nangala Wayne
Enid Nangala Gallagher
Ormay Nangala Gallagher
Ida Nangala Sampson
Audrey Napanangka Williams
Elsie Napanangka Granites
Alice Napanangka Granites
Lynette Nampijinpa Granties
Lorraine Nungarrayi Granites
Violet Nampijinpa Marshall
Biddy Napaljarri White
Maisy Napurrurla Wayne
Marlette Napurrurla Ross
Peggy Nampijinpa Brown
Valerie Napaljarri Martin
Dora Napaljarri Kitson
Ruth Napaljarri Oldfield
Nancy Napurrurla Oldfield
Wendy Nungarrayi Brown
Angeline Nampijinpa Tasman

Georgia Curran *is an anthropologist who has for the last twelve years worked with a core group of senior women from Yuendumu recording and documenting Warlpiri songs to assist in their inter-generational transmission.*

2017 NT Writers' Festival

THIS YEAR, ON THE CUSP OF THE DESERT WINTER, DIRECTED BY DANI POWELL, THE NT WRITERS' FESTIVAL RETURNED TO ALICE SPRINGS. STORYTELLERS, SONGWOMEN AND WRITERS CAME TOGETHER UNDER THE THEME ***CROSSINGS | IWERRE-ATHERRE***.



Photography by Oliver Eclipse and Peter Raftos

(left to right) Eunice Andrada; Arrernte songwomen led by Agnes Abbott at the Festival opening; Abe Nouk; Crosslines Poetic Picnic; Lizzie Marrkilyi Ellis tells a sandstory in Ngaanyatjarra; Tim Lowe & Dave Richards; Renee McBryde, Alex Barwick & Lizzie Marrkilyi Ellis; Jodie Clarkson & Therese Ryder; Bruce Pascoe; Presentation of the Gulf Country Songbook: Yanyuwa, Marra, Garrwa and Gudanji Songs; MK Turner & Veronica Turner; Barbara Martin, Georgia Curran, Terri-ann White, Karin Riederer, Julia Burke; festival director Dani Powell.

Delhi Walla bound for Darwin

MAYANK AUSTEN SOOFI

He's the Delhi blogger whose photographic work is on the cover of Arundhati Roy's long-awaited second novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and has more than 18,000 followers on Instagram.

Since 2007, Mayank Austen Soofi has been collecting hundreds of stories taking place in Delhi, through writing and photography, for his acclaimed website *The Delhi Walla*.

But Mayank Austen Soofi is also the author of non-fiction book about the sex workers of Delhi *Nobody Can Love You More*, and his enthusiasm for literature encompasses James Baldwin, Marcel Proust and Jane Austen. In fact, he loves the latter so much, he adopted her surname.

As part of the NT Writers' Centre South-East Asian Festival exchange, funded by the Federal Government, Mayank Austen Soofi is set to come to Darwin next year for the Wordstorm Festival in May.

Wordstorm director Sally Bothroyd interiewed him ahead of his visit.

You work in various creative areas: photography, writing, journalism, blogging ... how do you describe yourself?
I see myself as a person whose life is evolving through reading. I'm trying to understand myself and my world by reading books, mostly novels and poems. Everything else — being a writer or a photographer or a blogger or a journalist — comes later. They are just a progression of my reading life. If I don't have writers and poets in my life, then I'm nothing.

How did you get started in blogging?
I came to Delhi a decade ago as a waiter in the Radisson Hotel. It was near the airport. I had no academic accomplishment. (I'm not even a graduate). I lived in a slum behind the hotel. I was very unhappy in my job. My only consolation was reading novels. And because I would be reading a lot, and there was no one in the hotel who cared for Toni Morrison and James Baldwin (my then loves) I just one day decided to start a blog (called *Ruined by Reading*)... and started to share with some Unknown Unseen reader my most private feelings about the books I loved. Later, I started my Delhi blog too.

What led you to write a non-fiction book about the sex workers in Delhi?
There have been hundreds of books on Delhi's present and past. But there was not even a single book on GB Road, the red light. And it's there right in the heart of the city! And by the time I became an intimate of the women there, I was already into my obsession about documenting the changing life of a great city. So I decided to write that book. And I'm glad I wrote because GB Road is dying (thanks to factors such as real estate) and soon it will cease to exist.

What's the local reaction been to your book "*Nobody Could Love You More*?"
I keep getting very sentimental messages from readers about that book. They appreciate that instead of focusing on the sensational aspects of a sex worker's life, I gave a sense of her more private life, which, as it turns out, resembles my life, my readers' lives and probably your life too. You see the usual loves, jealousies, heartbreaks, disappointments, insecurities, hopes, and delights that shape all of us. The book was widely reviewed and all the newspapers and magazines seemed to like it except for one reviewer who was very upset that I too had inserted myself in the book.

You became almost like family to some of the workers. Do you still visit them?
Yes, they are my friends and I am theirs. Each time I want to relax, I just go to their establishment, lounge in

their rooms, watch Hindi film songs on TV, read my book-of-the-day, or simply take a nap... and have many cups of tea, of course. I'm very grateful that my relationship with the people depicted in the book did not end with the book. Maybe one day we may cease to be friends but that is true of any friendship.

You are prolific on social media. How do you find the time?
I love being on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. And when you love something, you don't need to find the time. And being on social media has expanded me as an artist, especially in experimenting with photography and adding layers to my pictures with words. Last year I had an exhibition of my Facebook posts in Venice. They were printed on hand-woven fabric.

Do you think you'll ever get tired of photographing daily life in Delhi?
It's not really about Delhi. To me photography and writing is a way of understanding the world I live in. To get close to myself. So I will never be tired. And I know that even if I'm obliged to live just in a narrow street in Darwin, I would never be tired of documenting it. The world is like a kaleidoscope. I keep seeing new things daily in the same old place.

You took the photograph for the cover of Arundhati Roy's long-awaited second novel. How did that come about?
"I think she is aware of my blog, *The Delhi Walla*, my photos and I was always present at her public functions ... and once she contacted me to do the cover of her novel, I could not believe myself."

I am a great fan of *God of Small Things* but apart from the novel, I am a fan of the cover because it is a beautiful artwork. Even if you keep looking at it for hours, you never get tired of it.

You're also a big fan of Jane Austen and Marcel Proust? Do you have an absolute favourite writer?
My heart is too big to have place for just one writer. I love many. Proust, Jane, Emily Dickinson, Arundhati Roy, and Shakespeare are some of them.

Have you been to Australia before?
Never. I'm so excited!

Have you read anything by an Australian author?
I fear not many, though I did love Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's List*. Ah, I know, he is Australian but not the novel.

Are you working on a new book?
I see my blog, **thedelhiwalla.com**, as a book... as a city epic in which I keep making additions day after day. So my answer will be... yes!

The theme of the next Wordstorm festival is "The view of the outsider". "Outsiders" are a big theme in Australian stories. Do you think this is true across all literature?
To me, "Outsiders" are an important element in the way of seeing and in the way of writing. I try to look at the place I live in as if I'm an outsider, but when I'm in a place that I'm only visiting, then I try to experience it like an insider.

For further announcements from Wordstorm 2018, keep an eye on our website **ntwriters.com.au**

Writing Memoir

PATTI MILLER

Sally Bothroyd spoke to Patti Miller, author of *Writing True Stories* (Allen & Unwin, 2017), on aspects of writing memoir.

How is memoir different from other nonfiction?
Memoir is an aspect of a life that might limited by a particular time whereas a biography or autobiography is a story of a whole life. In a way autobiography is more aligned with history, memoir is more aligned with fiction in that it has a specific structure and purpose.

How did you get involved in memoir?
It came from when I was teaching creative writing at university many years ago, and I noticed there were always a number of people want to write from their own lives. So I designed a course and offered it at Varuna National Writers' House, and it filled up instantly. There were so many people interested in it for reasons of exploring their own identity or for healing, or for preserving social history.

Katherine writer Toni Tapp Coutts' *A Sunburnt Childhood* is very much a social history, but she was also motivated by the desire to explore the enigma of her step-father. So there are complex reasons for people to write memoir.

What difficulties do you see people facing when writing memoir? What are the traps to beware of?
One of the main things is fear. People are afraid to get started because it's such a huge territory and it's very overwhelming to know where to start, but there's also anxiety about hurting other people … and people worry about being seen to be in a self-indulgent activity.

What tips would you give people embarking on the journey?
My approach is very much for jumping in, so start without worrying about how to structure it. I advocate for most people what I call the "patchwork quilting method". You start making small pieces, 500 words. After a while you might have 15 or 20 pieces, and you might see some colours emerging, some threads connecting, and then you can start putting it together.

How difficult is it to sell a memoir to publishers?
It is difficult. There's no sugar coating that, because many people are writing memoirs. There needs to be for most publishers something outstanding about it, in that it's maybe a unique experience, or a common experience with a new and original insight into it, or it's a topic that people are fascinated by at the moment. If your book isn't published, that doesn't mean it's not good. It really is based on how many copies they think they can sell. There's very few publishers who will publish something just because they think it is beautiful.

Tell me a little bit more about your recent book, *Writing True Stories*?
It's arranged by topics and covers issues like getting started, or writing scenes, or trying to find your voice. Then there's lots of writing exercises so you can pick the book up anywhere, and try the exercises, and it's graded from beginning writers to highly experienced writers.

*Patti Miller has been teaching people how to write memoir and nonfiction for twenty-five years, and so far forty-four people who've taken one of her workshops have had a book published commercially, including Katherine writer Toni Tapp Coutts (*A Sunburnt Childhood *and* My Outback Life*). Patti's latest book is* Writing True Stories: The complete guide to writing autobiography, memoir, personal essay, biography, travel and creative non-fiction*, published by Allen & Unwin.*

INDUSTRY

Taking a Look at Batchelor Institute Press

KAREN MANTON FOR BATCHELOR INSTITUTE PRESS

With seventeen years working on language resources, Batchelor Institute Press has a growing list of publications. Recent titles are a book and poster on birds, by and in the languages of the Ngarinyin, Worrorra, and Wunambal Gaambera People; and a new book on Marri Amu and Marri Tjevin plants and animals, by Custodians of culture and language from the Moyle River region.

Most titles are inspired and funded by Endangered Languages Projects or specific programs, e.g. a ranger program, and are requested by and created in collaboration with communities, including Elders, Custodians of language, story and Country, language workers and relevant advisors or participants.

'Communities, Clans or family groups decide what they want and need,' says Maree Klesch, publisher and founder of the Press. 'It's community driven for the initiative of the project, the content, the way it's produced and the protocols surrounding it.'

From education, literacy and numeracy titles, to resources for language maintenance and revival, the Press publishes across a range of formats, including print, audio, audio-visual, talking book, poster and e-book formats.

'Visual, aural and oral literacies are as important as written texts,' says Klesch, 'You can't just have a written work or story, there are other visual and oral versions that have to be there.'

Examples are the Marri Ngarr, Marri Amu and Marri Tjevin publications produced over a number of years. Elders wanted to record language and cultural knowledge through Traditional Knowledge stories for their children and grand-children. They also wanted to share culture and language with others around Australia and the world, to raise awareness and educate people beyond the community.

An oral, 'open' version of the story was recorded, together with related songs, and artists produced traditional artwork that also related the story. All of these ways were needed to convey various aspects, levels and content, as well as information about Country and language.

An extensive period of consultation followed as the books and audio were produced, designed, illustrated and edited, and taken back and forth from the people, Country and community that owned the story, to ensure that the finished materials fulfilled the vision of the Elders, storytellers, artists, singers, cultural performers and language workers.

For these and many other publications, Custodians of the story, artworks, songs and Country steer the project and the interests of the Clan are paramount. 'People don't want individual authors elevated above the Clan's communal rights,' explains Maree. 'Often the Clan name and knowledge is on the front cover, not the names of individual storytellers or artists.'

This means Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) interests in the work take precedence and sit side-by-side with copyright and IP. Batchelor Institute Press delved into ways of meeting both ICIP and copyright during workshops with lawyer Terri Janke to develop a set of protocols for the Press, and incorporate practices such as including an ICIP notice regarding customary law and clan ownership of the material, in addition to the usual copyright notices that appear on a work. The protocols align with Janke's True Tracks principles around benefit, community and Elder direction, producing materials in collaboration, and ways to increase digital access.

Most of the publications are now produced with both physical and digital versions, to enable access for the people who created and most use the works. Over the life of the press, a range of new digital formats have evolved. 'People want digital records of these materials,' says Maree, 'which is why we produce current titles and some from the past in digital formats, and now create e-books.'

Some digital versions are available on the new website for Batchelor Institute's CALL* Collection (**callcollection.batchelor.edu.au**), an archive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island language materials gathered over the past 40 years.

The full catalogue list and online purchasing options are available on the Batchelor Institute Press website at **batchelorpress.com.au.**

*CALL — Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education; CALL includes Batchelor Institute Press and a range of language programs. The CALL Collection is part of the Institute's Library.

***Karen Manton** has worked for Batchelor Institute Press as an editor and publications worker.*

Other recent titles by Batchelor Institute Press include:

Children's Authors Conference: Networking, Knowledge and Inspiration

MICHELLE COLEMAN

If you write for children and feel as if you're working in a silo, I recommend adding the Children's and Young Adult Writers and Illustrators Conference (CYA Conference) to your calendar, at least once.

After writing children's picture book manuscripts for two years, I had a collection of stories that my daughter and her friends had enjoyed, and most importantly that I was proud of. Yet I had no contracts and no feedback as to why they hadn't made the cut with the very few Australian publishers accepting unsolicited manuscripts in this genre. So when I came across the CYA Conference in Brisbane, I jumped at the chance to learn more and meet other aspiring picture book writers. Thanks to an Arts NT grant, half of my costs were covered which made the decision easier, and I knew I couldn't find anything similar locally at the time.

Held at Brisbane's Southbank TAFE, the Conference kicked off with feedback sessions from publishers and agents ($110 per session). It was daunting yet exciting to present two of my stories to the big guns of the children's literary industry, but as soon as I sat down with them I realised they were there to help and soaked up their wisdom. Penguin's Katrina Leham, Affirm's Clair Hume and Lisa Berryman from Harper Collins provided constructive feedback that I was able to pick up and apply easily to the two stories I submitted. Common threads began to appear in their assessment of my work, revealing what was working (in my case, descriptive imagery and original ideas were praised) and what wasn't (anthropomorphism, that is, animals talking to humans and unrealistic elements to storylines). I took the good and the bad on the chin—after all, I was there to figure out what could make my stories sing.

While Penguin, Affirm and Harper Collins representatives were thoroughly supportive, professional and helpful, there was one small independent publisher who had forgotten to print out my manuscripts, yawned throughout the session while reminding me that I was unlikely to succeed due to the competitive nature of the children's picture book industry (not entirely helpful for someone looking to improve their work but perhaps evidence of the competitive nature of the industry).

Tadaa Booksmiths offered free information sessions for authors interested in self-publishing, providing examples of book sizes, illustration styles, timeframes and pricing. Tadaa is certainly one to watch if you decide to go down this path.

The conference continued with some inspiring presentations, including the story of Ben Long who was told by publishers ten years ago that his rhyming stories would never be published. Yet, quirky rhymes came naturally to Ben and he successfully self-published two picture books that did so well, he landed a contract with Ford Street Publishing for his third picture book – Ready, Steady, Hatch! released in 2017. I walked away with the inspiration to keep going doing what I love and the understanding that rejections are just par for the course.

One of the most memorable parts of the conference was a master class by best-selling, award winning children's author Jacqueline Harvey, best known for the popular Alice-Miranda and Clementine Rose series. She took delegates through her own journey from teacher and Deputy Principal to one of Australia's most successful authors, before presenting her take on what makes a winning children's story. While her genre is primary and middle grade fiction, the principles remain the same. "When you brainstorm, one or two ideas will stand out," said Ms Harvey. "It's the idea that scratches away and just won't be left alone that's the one to pursue."

The conference concluded with a publishing panel, with a range of publishers and agents taking questions from the floor. Their main message was to do your background research before sending to a publisher or agent and tailor the pitch. They want your cover letter to be simple and reflect who you are. Unfortunately, the panel session confirmed that there are many more opportunities in primary, middle grade and young adult fiction than children's picture books. This is great news if these are your genres. But for those of us persisting with picture book manuscripts, we can take inspiration from Ben Long's story, who got there in the end with his persistence, talent and love for his writing. I for one was heartened to continue this writing journey that still calls me.

Michelle Coleman *is a Darwin PR consultant who specialises in media advice and quality writing and research. She has been a board member of the NT Writers' Centre since 2015.*

How to: Submissions

JACINTA DI MASE

Do you have a manuscript in your bottom drawer? One that you promised yourself that you would finish, polish, and get out to agents and/or publishers this year?

Now the year is almost over and you're keen to make good on that New Year's resolution and get it onto someone's desk before midnight this New Year's Eve.

STOP!

Could there be a better time to make your submission?

Timing

When you're ready to send your new manuscript or proposal out to agents or publishers, think about what might already be on their desk, what's going on in the industry at the time, and whether December is really the best time to get a good response to your work. In Australia, Christmas and the long summer break combine to create the perfect desk-and-in-tray-clearing storm. I rarely make submissions to publishers at this time of year because I assume that everyone is as busy as I am. It's hard to carve out any decent reading time, much less make considered judgements about manuscripts at this time of year. I prefer to receive submissions from February through to October.

Research

How do you find the right agent or publisher for your work?

Go to as many writers' festivals and industry events as you can. Attend sessions where publishers and agents are presenting and take note of what they are publishing and which authors they represent. Read industry newsletters and magazines: take out a short subscription to Books & Publishing magazine or newsletter (or share a subscription with your writing group). **booksellerandpublisher.com.au**

Read widely in your genre and always read the acknowledgments taking note of the industry professionals mentioned by authors.

Visit publisher and agency websites and read some of the titles on their lists.

Follow industry professionals on twitter and find out what they're buzzing about.

Become a regular at an independent bookstore and ask questions about books in the same style/genre as your work. Who are the best publishers in that category and why? Booksellers can offer a wealth of industry knowledge.

Agent or Publisher?

Until recently it was hard to get your manuscript to a publisher without an agent. These days most publishers have a regular pitch day so that unsolicited material can be submitted.

However, decide whether you want to submit to agents or direct to publishers from the outset. Agents prefer that you don't submit your work to agents and publishers at the same time. Most agents don't have a problem with multiple agent submissions (as long as you disclose the fact that you have sent your work to other agents). But, it's harder to represent a work that has already been presented and rejected by publishers.

Keep in mind that agents work with writers to prepare publishing proposals and polish manuscripts so that they have the best possible chance of being accepted for publication. Agents offer both editorial and commercially valuable advice and industry expertise. Agents target submissions so that your work lands on the desk of a publisher most likely to respond to your work.

Guidelines

Follow Them.

Every publisher and agent has specific submission guidelines listed on their website. Visit The Australian Literary Agents' Association (ALAA) for agency listings and links to ALAA member websites: **austlitagentsassoc.com**

How long is a piece of string...

Writers want to know long will it take to read and respond to their submission:

In a successful and busy agency, the priority is always the work for writers already on the agent's list and that can be frustrating for those waiting in the wings.

Writers need to consider other busy times in the industry that might effect response times: The Adelaide Festival in March, the Bologna Children's Book Fair and London Book Fair in early April, Sydney Writers Festival in May, Melbourne Writers' Festival in August, and the Frankfurt Bookfair in October.

I usually tell writers they will have to wait between eight to ten weeks, but if I'm honest, it's often much longer than that. But, it can be worth the wait because once you have an agent championing your work we rarely give up on trying to find a publishing home – even if it takes several years as it did for two picture books on my list: CBCA Honour Award winning titles *With Nan*, by Tania Cox and Karen Blair and Tea and *Sugar Christmas* by Jane Jolly and Robert Ingpen.

The Manuscript

You already know this right? Make it the best it can be.

Jacinta di Mase *is the president of the Australian Literary Agents' Association and a committee member on the Australia Council for the Arts Visiting International Publishers Program.*

Makassar International Writers Festival

DEREK PUGH

As the drums started the dancers began to move. The five girls were dressed in traditional checked Makassan cloth with elaborate head-dresses over a black *jilbub*. Large flat golden necklaces hung from their necks like armour and golden bands decorated their wrists. Their movements were carefully choreographed and they danced as one. I saw each curl their fingers back and forth in tiny, identical, intricate motions and was in awe to think that such small, delicate, almost unnoticeable actions, were integral to their performance.

The girls were there to welcome us to their university. My fellow Australian, Mark Heyward, an accomplished writer based in Jakarta, and I were to run a workshop on travel writing as part of the Makassan International Writers Festival in Sulawesi. They ushered us inside, throwing rice on the ground before us, then led us into the lecture hall.

The Festival had brought writers from across the world. Among numerous Indonesian writers there were other Australians, French, a Brazilian, Germans, Malaysians, a Moldovian and a number of others who would deliver workshops in a range of topics, following the festival theme of *Diversity.* The Australian Consul-General, Richard and his assistant Violet were active and a representative of the National Library, from Canberra, was promoting her work as well.

Mark and I discovered we had similar workshop plans so we merged. The lecture hall was large enough to accommodate the hundred or so eager, bright, young university students who had turned up to listen, and we delivered the program in a mix of English and Bahasa Indonesia. Many of the participants could speak English well, and when we got to the part when they were expected to write, several of them chose to write in English.

Amongst them were some very talented writers. Indonesia has thousands of islands waiting for travellers, and travel-writing written for Indonesians and by Indonesians, is a new, but growing industry. As we posed for dozens of photographs with groups of the students after the workshop, we hoped we had given some of them inspiration to join the push.

The festival was centred in Fort Rotterdam, a seventeenth century Dutch military fort which used to be the centre of Dutch rule in Sulawesi. It has been renovated into what must be one of the most picturesque venues for a writers' festival anywhere. Mark and I were part of a panel in one of the fort's ancient halls and we were also asked to perform that night at a concert – and Mark, a folkie from way back, with original songs – put in a splendid effort. I tagged along and accompanied him on a harmonica, and seemed to get away with it.

Walking around the fort during the festival was an interesting experience. There were workshops in several different languages, poets practising for their performances, musicians, photographers, songwriters, puppet shows, book stalls, the aromas of different foods and spices, and hundreds of young excited participants from across the archipelago.

The Makassans are aware of their long association with the north coast of the Territory – their ancestors visited for hundreds of years in search of trepang. There is growing interest in rekindling the friendship between Makassar and the Territory, and this is one of the reasons Australia now has a consulate there. We may soon see greater exchange of ideas and culture – this year for example, Makassan potters are visiting Yirrkala artists, and collaborating with them. The Makassar International Writers Festival has been an annual event for the past seven years, and my attendance was part of this growing alliance.

My presence there was thanks to sponsorship by the NT Writers' Centre (via a Catalyst Fund grant) and the Australian consul in Makassar.

Derek Pugh *is the author of several travelogues, science, and history books. His book,* Tambora: Travels to Sumbawa and the Mountain that Changed the World*, won the Territory Read Best Non-Fiction 2016 More online at* **derekpugh.com.au**

Agustinus Wibowo: Impressions of Alice

DINA INDRASAFITRI

Indonesian writer and photographer Agustinus Wibowo was initially scheduled to stay in Alice Springs during this year's NT Writers' Festival for a shorter while before jetting out again to Darwin.

That plan changed almost instantly when he landed in the red centre.

"The weather was nice," he said, "and, wow, so many artworks depicting the lives of Aboriginal people at the airport."

A few adjustments were made and Agustinus was able to stay longer in Alice Springs.

He was the main speaker at *Crossings and Borders* a Festival event held at the town's library. Paired with local journalist Glenn Morrison, he spoke of the journeys he had made through mainland Eurasia, captured in three books since: *Selimut Debu (A Blanket of Dust), Garis Batas (Borderlines) and Titik Nol: Makna Sebuah Perjalanan (Ground Zero: When Journey Takes You Home).*

His journey is indeed worth telling. Beginning in Beijing, where Agustinus studied Computer Technology, he initially had his sights set on South Africa as his final destination.

However, Agustinus did not make it that far and ended up staying for much longer than intended in Afghanistan, where his experiences included working as a journalist, nearly being robbed and kidnapped by a taxi driver, and being assaulted by policemen when he failed to present any identity documents on one very unfortunate day.

The audience at the library was visibly in awe of Agustinus' stories. Numerous people asked him questions about his adventures, his take on the current political situations in Indonesia and his feelings about his identity as a Chinese Indonesian - one that caused conflicting emotions within himself for many years because of the cultural discrimination faced by Chinese Indonesians in the Republic of Indonesia, particularly during the New Order era, from 1966 to 1998.

When he was young, for instance, his father made him take Chinese language lessons. He had to attend them in secret, because Chinese Indonesians were not supposed to openly express their cultural heritage.

"The conflict within me was enormous back then," he said, "I have to adopt one identity that opposes the other – These two identities were constantly at war with each other within me."

Thus, this year's Writers' Festival theme: "Crossings" or "Iwerre-atherre" resonated with his own journey to reconcile the two identities within him.

"It is interesting to see two nations in Alice Springs: Indigenous and the settlers, who are now the dominant ones, because it is a reflection of myself. Even within the limited amount of time I have here, at least I would like to see the crossings here, to represent my own questions about identities crossing each other."

Within a short amount of time, he tried his best to understand the culture and strife of Central Australia's Indigenous population. The effort involved some confusion and some memorable encounters.

At first, for instance, the word "dreaming" got lost in translation.

"I think Australians take for granted that people know what 'dreaming' means," Agustinus said, "At first I did not understand what it meant, I thought it was just a dream, but here I discovered that dreaming has a meaning that is even deeper than an origin story."

"I think Australians take for granted that people know what 'dreaming' means"

He was determined to make the most of his time. As it goes in Alice Springs, one encounter led to another, and he managed to squeeze in a visit to the Akeyulerre Healing Centre, where he joined the healers' gathering of herbs.

He also participated in a smoking ceremony and visited Emily Gap accompanied by traditional owners.

Agustinus is currently working on a project focusing on Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. From time to time, he goes on short travels to revisit the regions that had been featured in his books. Along with other commitments in Indonesia, where he is based now, he is leading a busy life.

But Alice Springs left such a strong impression on him that he said he would definitely visit the red centre again—preferably for a longer stay.

"I have never experienced any other festivals in Australia with so much involvement from Aboriginal people, or any other festivals with a deeper Indigenous perspective."

In 2017, Indonesian travel writer, ***Agustinus Wibowo*** *was an international guest of the NT Writers' Festival in Alice Springs.* ***Dina Indrasafitri*** *has worked for a number of media outlets including the Guardian, Radio Australia and the Jakarta Post. She is an experienced English-Bahasa Indonesia translator.*

Image: Agustinus Wibowo at the 2017 NT Writers' Festival. Photography by Oliver Eclipse.

Refining Grief into Meaning: Kim Mahood's *Position Doubtful*

KIERAN FINNANE

The remote pocket of country centred on Kim Mahood's childhood home in the Tanami holds her in trust while she's away, as she writes. The relationship with Alice Springs, where she also spent some childhood years, may not be as compelling but that 'in trust' idea seems to fit. There's a constancy to Mahood's place here: she steps in and puts in and although she steps out, when we next see her ... well, there she is, as we expected.

A place doesn't love you, Mahood writes, it can only reflect back what you put into it. Again, she is thinking of that tract of desert way out west, beloved to her. But thinking about Mahood and Alice Springs, I certainly see a reflection back, a very appreciative reflection for what she has put in – writing, teaching, exhibiting, returning.

I can remember the excitement in town back in 2000 around the publication of her first book, *Craft for a Dry Lake*. This was not only about its scope and poignancy, its multi-faceted story-telling and the quality of the writing. These were obviously appreciated elsewhere, as shown in the major awards it won. But there was a sense here of it being written for us, in that a place needs to be "made after a story" and her story had arrived in a cultural landscape that was sparse from a non-Aboriginal point of view.

As much as the cultural and political landscape was rapidly changing for Aboriginal people, so it was for non-Aboriginal people. The restoration of Aboriginal land under Land Rights along with growing Aboriginal political voice and strength forced the old romance of 'The Outback' to recede. Non-Aboriginal people were (and are) struggling with the meaning of living here, with the weight of this history and politics and all that is playing out from it. And there was *Craft for a Dry Lake*, a deeply personal story written right into that experience, embedded in it more profoundly than most through her family's background in the pastoral industry, on country that has been restored to its traditional owners. This context actually makes her book a key stepping stone between an earlier generation of Outback literature, to which Mahood's own mother, Marie Mahood, contributed, and the writing of a new generation of which Kim Mahood was at the vanguard.

At the end of *Craft for a Dry Lake* she writes, "My own journey affects nothing but my own life." But by giving it form in the way she did, it affected the lives of many of us. It was helping make our place, putting flesh onto our cultural bones, even if that flesh is pocked by ever more questions, ever more doubt. Which brings us to her much awaited second book, *Position Doubtful*.

When I go through my notes on the book I am almost daunted by the sheer number of its forays. For many readers what will stand out will be the accounts from the little-known world of the Walmajarri in Mulan, a tiny community in WA, not far, in desert terms, from where Mahood grew up.

Since 2004 she has been working there for half of each year, among her many tasks coordinating the making of large-scale maps as tools for inter-cultural understanding, layering in the overlapping knowledge systems of the Aboriginal locals and the many visitors to their land – archeologists, anthropologists, linguists, scientists, land managers, artists. (We saw some of this work in the exhibition *Desert Lake*, staged at Araluen in 2013.)

Maps are a key motif in the book, prompting Mahood's forays into the past via the maps inherited from her father, products of the exploration and colonisation that is her family heritage. It was from these maps that she took the '*Position Doubtful*' of her title. This was the honest enough marker of ignorance in earlier expeditions into the desert. For Mahood it has lost none of its metaphoric potency. She uses satellite technology for her mapping work in Mulan, but still for kartiya (whitefellers), she writes, "our position in relation to the remote parts of the country is more doubtful than it has ever been" and she's not referring to getting from A to B.

Her multi-veined exploration of yapa and kartiya relationships, especially through their understandings of country, overlaying and jostling against one another, is the great achievement of her book. Behind the making of each map she delivers a rich mix of writing: there's first person recounting – anecdote that is warm, honest, often funny, and description that is finely balanced between intent observation and poetic evocation; there's reflection and investigation – historical, scientific, philosophical, artistic. There's oral history, including an account of a little-known massacre by the son of a survivor.

The son is the artist Boxer Milner; his brother was a witness to the massacre; their father, a survivor. The detail is scarifying – recalling methods of the holocaust, yapa were forced to dig their own graves before they were shot and their bodies burned. Such are the historical memories people carry with them, whether or not they can be corroborated by other records. Mahood offers some reprieve in telling us of a moving contemporary ceremony of apology.

Woven through these explorations are her reflections on her own life and creative process. Between *Craft for Dry Lake* and *Position Doubtful*, there have been her essays, most particularly the lauded and widely read *Kartiya are like Toyotas*, in which so many who have lived and worked in remote communities have seen their experience mirrored, often hilariously in a rueful kind of way. But Mahood has also returned to us in Alice Springs formally in a number of exhibitions, all of which have taken us right into *Position Doubtful* territory.

I have already mentioned *Desert Lake*, which is centred on Mulan and Paruku (Lake Gregory). But for many of us, because Mahood's physical person featured in it so prominently, the exhibition *Obscured by Light* stands out. Until I read *Position Doubtful* I too readily and neatly described this as a collaborative work by Mahood and the late, deeply missed Pamela Lofts. It is one of the many rich offerings of the book, the account of their friendship and the journeys and creative endeavours they undertook together, and finally, of Lofts' death.

The photographs that made up *Obscured by Light* showed the antics of Violet Sunset, the character performed by Mahood under Lofts' direction, as well as the mime figure, again played by Mahood, dragging a boat across a dry lake. What I took as playful, humorous, parodic is revealed in the book to be more complicated in the making, and coming at some personal cost to Mahood.

The work with the mime figure, she writes, "lifted something from me, and laid in a piece of grit around which much of our subsequent friendship was formed".

And of Violet Sunset: "Apart from the feminised and theorised aspects of the person, I feel subtly coerced to discover something through the medium of Violet that I prefer not to know."

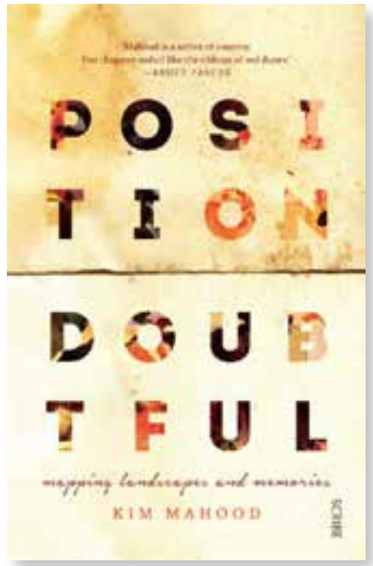
But if this sounds like it might be heading towards fuller disclosure, that is not what Mahood does. She is not a confessional writer. Rather she offers the reader the opportunity to join her, as we might in the passenger seat of the Hilux, dog in the back, making camp along the way, in deep conversation but not inside her head or heart in spelled out revelations. She goes so far, then opens up the rest as she might in a visual work: meaning fills out in the space between us.

To do this you have to write with poetic power and Mahood does, particularly in the company of her beloved, Lake Ruth / Mangkurrupa:

"I've seen it bone dry, crisp and brittle with a crust of silver weed ... Once it was a still blue dish on which a dozen swans arched their question-mark necks ... When I was young I saw it newly filled, the colour of milky tea."

This is where she returns, year after year, it feels safe and nurturing. It is where she goes in grief at the end of the book.

Grief impelled this book, just as it did *Craft for a Dry Lake*. Then it was the death of her father, now it is the death of Lofts and of other women, from Mulan, whom we've come to know in *Position Doubtful*'s pages – Margaret Yinjura Napurrula Bumblebee, Dora Mungkina Napaltjarri, Patricia Napangarti Lee and Anna Nakamarra Johns. Mahood dedicates the book to all five. Her loss engenders the responsibility to remember. And in remembering, she "refines grief into meaning".



Her grief somehow allows her to draw together all the book's disparate threads and to reconcile herself to her complex history and unusual, often solitary life course. There are a number of moments of epiphany towards the end of the book, all of them experienced alone in the desert.

"What is she searching for out there among all the salt and the sand?" she asks herself in the third person. And then she answers:

"She's not looking for new lands to inhabit, but for somewhere she knows already, some place she's been in her dreams."

The dreams aren't those of longing or memory, they scare her into knowledge of "a future that isn't yours, or anybody's, if things keep going the way they are."

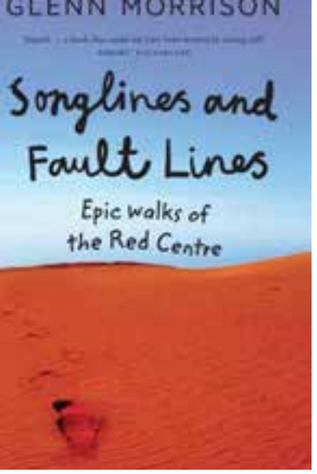
This summons our collective 'position doubtful' but Mahood doesn't stay there. She finds what she is looking for, or has, and imparts a sense of it – "stretching to the horizon, silent and new.

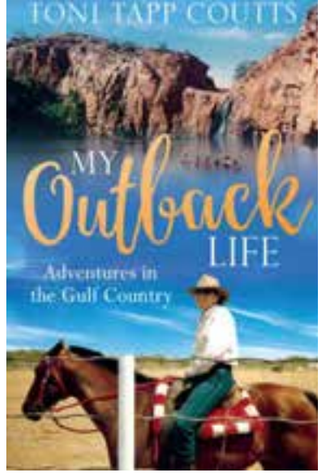
"Not even the birds had found it, blue as an eye, curling round the rim of the world."

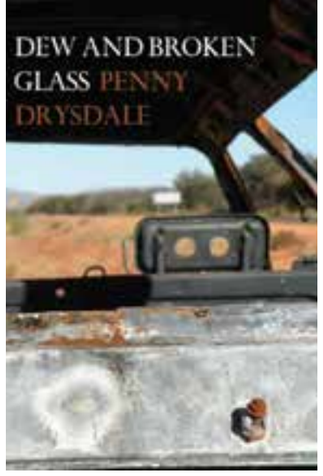
Such a beautiful opening to what lies ahead – for Mahood and for all of us, to make meaning of.

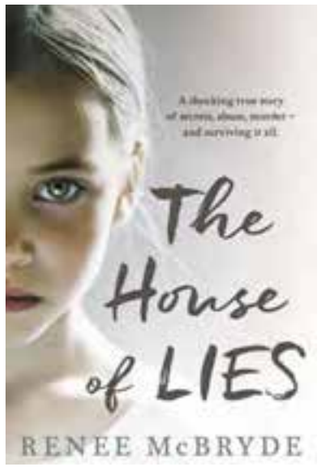
*This is a slightly edited version of **Kieran Finnane**'s speech at the Alice Springs launch of Position Doubtful, held in the Red Kangaroo bookshop, 3 July, 2017.*

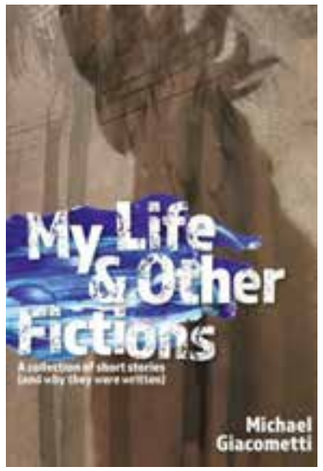
Short Reviews

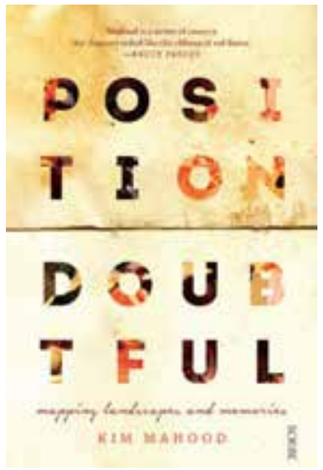


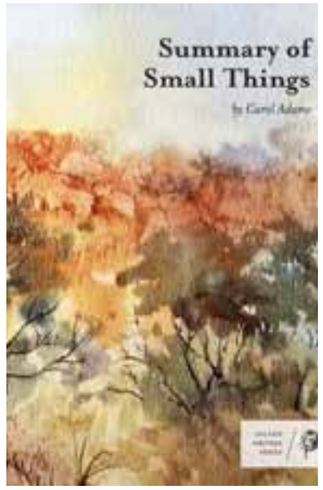


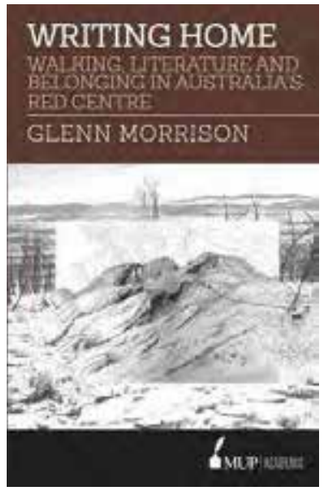


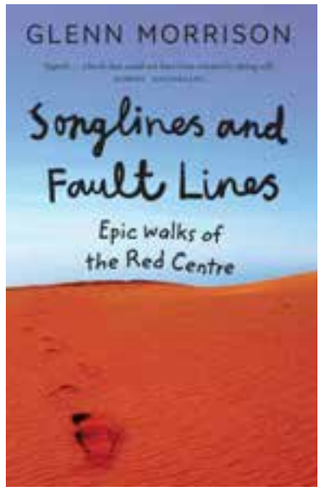


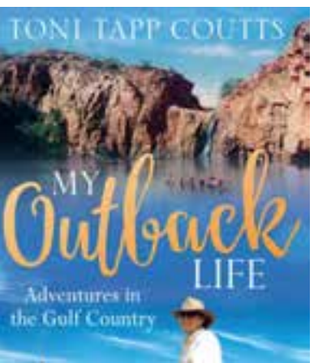


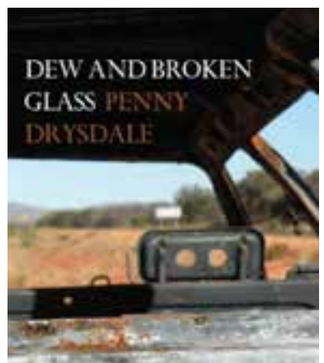


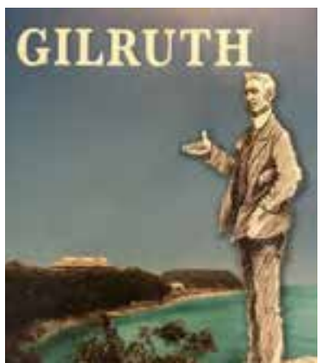












WRITING HOME: WALKING LITERATURE AND BELONGING IN AUSTRALIA'S RED CENTRE
SONGLINES AND FAULT LINES: EPIC WALKS OF THE RED CENTRE
Glenn Morrison
Melbourne University Press, 2017

Review by Megg Kelham

I first met Glen Morrison, author of two recently published accounts of the way walking literature has shaped our understandings of Central Australian society, on a one-day off-track walk which followed, almost literally, in the footsteps of the first European to walk on Centralian soil. Morrison was in the early stages of exploring why so many newcomers, including ourselves, feel so at home in Australia's desert heart. The answer to his question, re-framed as an exposition on what prevents belonging, is the subject of his recent publications. His thesis is relatively simple. In his own words: "persistently representing Central Australia as a frontier prevents Australians from reimagining it as home".

In both *Writing Home: Walking Literature and Belonging in Australia's Red Centre* and its less academic cousin, *Songlines and Fault Lines: Epic Walks of the Red Centre*, (Melbourne University Press 2017) Morrison explicates his idea using the tools of literary criticism. Focussing his gaze on six emblematic Centralian walks – covering the breadth of the region's long history – Morrison simultaneously demonstrates both the ubiquity of the frontier metaphor and its many inadequacies. No matter their cultural background, Centralians have as many commonalities to share as differences to argue about. Not the least of these commonalities is the shared practice of walking.

Without denying the sins of the colonial past, Morrison illuminates some of the contradictions embedded in the writings of influential Europeans who have used the concept of frontier to explicate intercultural difference. His critique of Arthur Groom's overly romanticised post-WWII depiction of Central Australia as wilderness is particularly insightful.

Importantly, Morrison does not restrict his analysis to European storytellers. In what he claims is a literary first, he also casts his critical gaze on a local ancestral tale which, somewhat intriguingly, he compares to a European pilgrimage. As all good books do, Morrison's account challenged some of my own pre-conceived ideas. I no longer, for example, view tribal boundaries as the rigid delineators of geographical space I had long presumed they were.

Glenn's books' provide an importantly critical counterpoint to those many Australians whose sense of belonging is troubled by the taint of invasion. To these people I highly recommend Glenn's work.

Glenn Morrison *is an Alice-based writer and journalist.* ***Megg Kelham*** *is a local historian currently undertaking doctoral studies at the University of Western Sydney. Her topic is a history of punishment in Central Australia.*

MY OUTBACK LIFE
Toni Tapp Coutts
Hachette Australia, 2017

Review by Sally Bothroyd

Hot on the heels of Toni Tapp Coutts best-selling memoir *A Sunburnt Childhood* comes a second memoir by the Katherine author.

My Outback Life begins about the time of Toni's marriage to Shaun Coutts, and chronicles the couple's life together, managing a huge cattle station in the Gulf country.

The book records the gradual shift in the cattle industry, as modern "conveniences" like air-conditioning and heli-mustering are introduced, so Toni's life as a young mother is not quite as rugged as that of her mother June. (After all, as we learned in *A Sunburnt Childhood*, there wasn't even a house when June went to live with Bill Tapp on Killarney Station.)

But life is still pretty tough, and there are sad – and frightening – times, but also funny moments, like when Toni's young daughter is forced to drive the car home from a campdrafting event because Toni's foot is so swollen from a centipede bite.

The books ends when Shaun and Toni decide to retire from the cattle industry, and they return to Katherine just in time for the 1998 floods which devastated the town.

My Outback Life captures the pioneering spirit of the Northern Territory's "outback" dwellers, and her memoirs have won Toni Tapp Coutts many fans around Australia.

As well as continuing her writing work, ***Toni Tapp Coutts*** *is on the Katherine Town Council. She's also on the NT Writers' Centre board.* ***Sally Bothroyd*** *is the Executive Director of the NT Writers' Centre.*

CROCS IN THE CABINET
Ben Smee and Christopher A Walsh
Hachette Australia, 2016

Review by Linda Wells

The most recent reign of the NT cowboy in government, the Mills /Giles attempt of 2012 – 2016 deserved to be documented clearly and concisely. Ben Smee and Christopher A Walsh, political journalists from the NT News, have done this in their terrific little guide to what went on and what went wrong: *Crocs in the Cabinet*.

Living in Alice Springs throughout the

time in question, I knew things were awry. I guess I didn't pay full attention to the extent of the corruption or conflicts of interest, the misspending of public money, the scandals and dirty dealings that were paraded for governance at the time and constantly threatened to tear the government apart.

There was Tollner and his acts of physical and emotional brutality; the dirty leadership coups; the Tokyo Cabaret Club Incident featuring the 'Minister for Foul Language' Matt Conlan; the scandalous high profile affairs; the defection of the bush bloc to Clive Palmer's aptly abbreviated PUP party; the wild overseas jaunts that Ministers were treated to from the public purse; the curious incident of the Palmerston Hospital Hole Cover-Up; and of course the selling of TIO which Smee and Walsh identify as the point at which Territorians finally turned their backs on the Giles Government. There was much, much more which is all laid out, along with relevant newspaper articles that were printed at the time and some of the more memorable NT News headlines.

'The paper isn't just crocodiles and quirky front pages' Smee and Walsh tell us towards the end of the book, having amply demonstrated this throughout the earlier pages.

'A script of high farce, a fall-of-Rome epic of backstabbing and buffoonery.' It's an excellent rollicking tale, entirely readable and gobsmacking. It would be sort of funny if it was fiction.

Ben Smee *won a Walkley Award in 2014 for his coverage of NT politics during his time with the NT News. In 2015 he was the NT Journalist of Year.* ***Christopher A Walsh*** *was also a political reporter with the NT News.* ***Linda Wells*** *is the author of Kultitja: Memoir of an Outback Schoolteacher (Ginninderra Press 2016).*

DEW AND BROKEN GLASS

Penny Drysdale
Recent Work Press 2017

Review by Julie U'Ren

Alice Springs is the setting of Penny Drysdale's debut poetry collection, *Dew and Broken Glass*. A book exploring what it is to be touched and changed by the people with whom she lives and works in the place she now calls home. Her poems capture vividly the responses of someone open to examining the complexities of living in Central Australia. Here's a poet also unafraid to laugh at herself. 'running as if my life depends on it…I have to get to the bookshop before five'

The sense of place grounds this collection firmly in country: a 'piece of bark splits from a blistered trunk,' 'spinach cooks still rooted in the earth,' and 'an old car decaying in clay.'

The detail with which she captures the beauty of a claypan, whistling fireworks on Territory night, playfulness of children at an outdoor film, a tragic death, a funeral, and the weight of forgiveness has immediacy.

Throughout the collection Drysdale returns to the violence that separates lives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the town. 'a police van purrs up the mall' She also celebrates her friendships with local Arrernte women, who's presence is felt from afar in a return visit she makes to the city. 'I see the old ladies have come with me'

As a debut collection, this is a stunning work with a bold and powerful voice.

Penny Drysdale *is a poet who has worked on social justice and cultural projects throughout her varied career.* ***Julie U'Ren*** *is a writer of flash fiction and short stories based in Darwin.*

GILRUTH: A COMPLEX MAN

Ted Egan
Ted Egan Enterprises 2017

Review by Craig Bellamy

This biography examines the life and times of Dr John Anderson Gilruth who was the Northern Territory's first commonwealth government appointed administrator.

As author Ted Egan states, Gilruth's term as administrator "was controversial, tempestuous, fraught with disputes and vitriol, even violence." While Gilruth was probably the most disliked administrator the Northern Territory has ever had, Egan points out this was largely a product of the turbulent times in which he 'ruled' the Territory. This was a period when many of Australia's young men were fighting and dying overseas in the 'Great War', a time when Darwin was experiencing an increasingly strong union movement and when the White Australia Policy ruled.

The book understandably concentrates on Gilruth's time in the Territory as this is the period for which he is best known and the period that Egan sought to better explain to readers. However, it is somewhat disappointing that little is written regarding Gilruth's time spent working as a veterinarian in New Zealand or his post-Territory life working with the fledgling Australian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) which was established in 1927 (the CSIR was the precursor to the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) of today).

Other features include a detailed index; a useful bibliography; a time chart of significant dates and events during Gilruth's time in office and up to the period when he appeared before the Royal Commission; and an impressive list of 'primary sources' of 'old Territorians' whom Egan interviewed. These three-and-a-half pages, while not alphabetical, read like a who's-who of significant Territorians.

Of interest is a twenty-six-page literature review where Egan evaluates the previous efforts of other authors writing about Gilruth. These include Douglas Lockwood, Ernestine Hill, Professor Alan Powell amongst a host of other authors.

In this book, Egan has attempted to give a balanced account of a man who has been harshly treated by history. Yet Egan was determined "not to be an apologist for him." Egan, who freely admits to being a "social commentator" rather than an "historian", has succeeded in this objective. While the book certainly portrays some of Gilruth's faults, including his tendency to be strong willed, overall the book achieves a balanced account of this man and the challenging times he lived in.

Ted Egan AO *is a folk musician, author, and was Administrator of the Northern Territory from 2003 to 2007.* ***Craig Bellamy*** *is a modern history PhD candidate at Charles Darwin University. He is also an avid reader of Northern Territory history.*

THE HOUSE OF LIES

Renee McBryde
Hachette Australia, 2017

Review by Alex Barwick

Renee McBryde wears an open, welcoming smile on first meeting and it's one that doesn't fade over time.

Having interviewed first-time author McBryde on several occasions there's an inner strength and hard-wired positivity that belies her complex, unstable and violent past.

But, as she says in her memoir *The House of Lies*, it's the only life she knew growing up so 'when it's your life you really just don't notice'.

The House of Lies sees McBryde lay bare the heavy weight of carrying family secrets, murder, sexual assault and domestic violence. As she untangles the web of lies and half-truths from family members around her she simultaneously shares a coming-of-age story as she tries to work out who she is in it all.

McBryde acknowledges she has a cracking memory. Her recall of early events and secret conversations is detailed and compelling, yet she kept no diary.

As a young adult she takes you inside the bloodied hotel room in Thailand where she lies smashed apart by her violent partner Ben. It's a raw and very real account of an abusive relationship that is sadly too familiar and echoes Rosie Batty's comments that 'domestic and family violence does not discriminate'.

Her collective experience to this point leaves the reader wondering how McBryde has had the strength to get through but characters like her 'lioness' Nan paint a picture of vigor across the generations, a kind of deep-rooted optimism despite the chaos.

The House of Lies is an honest, raw first novel from McBryde as she makes herself vulnerable in the pursuit of helping others learn from her experience. One hopes it has been a cathartic journey for her too.

Renee McBryde *is a community services worker in Alice Springs. House of Lies is her first book.* ***Alex Barwick*** *is a radio broadcaster and freelance writer living in Alice Springs.*

MY LIFE & OTHER FICTIONS

Michael Giacometti
Spineless Wonders, 2017

Review by Adelle Sefton-Rowston

Michael Giacometti is this year's winner of the NT Literary Awards Poetry prize. On the evening of the award, Giacometti admitted his winning poem, *In the soft light of dawn* was a piece carefully created over four years. I'm hesitant to ask how long it has taken him to craft his equally poetic collection of short stories: *My Life & Other Fictions*. Although a poet, Giacometti has successfully grasped character, plot and theme by generating rhythmic flowing prose. My favourite line for example speaks to what Giacometti's writing achieves: "Dark ink snakes across the page, leaving a river turned to salt by my spittle and tears, and a large blot, shaped like a question or a decision. Already dry." He writes honestly and fervently of the landscape, revealing new meaning of old clichés and allowing a contemporary reader not only to encounter place, but to question its harshness as something potentially more beautiful.

The stories in this collection are generally well placed – not in that predictable way that covers up the not-so-good stories, but in a way that heightens the theme of the story from the one before: symbolic architecture builds from one story to the next throughout the whole work. For example, hands on a ball in one story become hands on a bell in the next. An early explorer chronicles letters to his daughter, while the story before writes of the premature death of a six-year-old Indigenous girl.

That said, Giacometti delves into dangerous territory regarding who can and cannot represent Indigenous characters in writing. *My abbr.d life* portrays a fictitious Indigenous community and is of course not representative of all Indigenous people. If readers take into consideration his subsequent stories of 'explorers', we understand perhaps the more complex conditions of our social landscape: that there is more than one story. This story does not start on the first page of *My Life & Other Fictions*, but through the real life accounts from Indigenous people, missing in this country's abbr.d history.

Michael Giacometti*'s stories and poems have been published in Meanjin, Island, Wild and several anthologies. He has twice one the NT Literary Awards Poetry Prize.* ***Adelle Sefton-Rowston*** *has a PhD in literature and lectures at Charles Darwin University.*

ALICE SPRINGS: FROM SINGING WIRE TO ICONIC OUTBACK TOWN

Stuart Traynor
Wakefield Press, 2016

Review by Craig Bellamy

This book goes well beyond the last 'Alice story' given in Doris Blackwell and Douglas Lockwood's *Alice on the line* which was first published in 1965.

The European history of the township of Alice Springs goes back to 1870 and the early establishment of Alice as a communications link along the Overland Telegraph Line – hence the 'singing wire' reference in the title. However, the area has been inhabited by the Arrernte people for thousands of years. Stuart Traynor writes of the town and its surroundings and its peoples both black and white.

Lesser known histories are recorded in the book, including chapters on 'The Bungalow' and the effects of the Second World War on the town. The text is well written and is supported by several maps and thirty-eight photographs. The chapters often have tantalising titles such as 'A positive and popular man' (referring to Charles Todd).

Traynor describes the harsh living conditions and hardships of living in Central Australia, including the lives of the Overland Telegraph Line staff and Christian missionaries and many other characters. He also looks at another aspect of white settlement of Australia's vast interior – the role of women. An array of female characters are included here, including Atalanta Allchurch, wife of the Telegraph Station manager Tom Bradshaw, and the legendary and intriguing Olive Pink (whose name lives on in the Olive Pink Botanical Garden in Alice).

This softcover book has many other fine aspects including a detailed index, an extensive bibliography, informative chapter notes and even a time line of significant events for the town of Alice Springs from 1860 to 1960

The book won the 2017 Chief Minister's Northern Territory History Book Award.

An enjoyable and educational read.

Stuart Traynor *lived and worked in the NT for several decades, and after retiring, spent eight years writing this book.* ***Craig Bellamy*** *is a modern history PhD candidate at Charles Darwin University. He is also an avid reader of Territory history.*

SUMMARY OF SMALL THINGS
Carol Adams
Ptilotus Press, 2017

Review by Alice Woods

I started reading Carol Adams' *Summary of Small Things*, published locally by Ptilotus Press as a part of their new Inland Writers Series, just before taking a week off work. I took her message as a challenge; enjoy the small things.

I am a great fan of local literature and other forms of creativity and am constantly overwhelmed by the seemingly disproportionate number of skilled people in Alice Springs. For this reason I was already so keen to be charmed by Adams' book. I was far from disappointed. I loved Adams' writing style and her simple descriptions of daily life and her inner thoughts, which are at once so universal while also being so uniquely 'Alice'. Adams talks about her work in the garden and on her roof, her job, her creative process, as well as important things about love, laughter, grief, aging and so much more. She does so in an unselfconscious way that makes readers feel like they already know her; already like her.

Adams' sweeps her reader up with vivid descriptions and her clear joy in the small things; finding beauty in the mundane or in things just beneath the surface. Amongst other things that the book teaches its readers is a new word which I definitely feel applies to this work, *ebullient*, which means happy, joyful, energetic and enthusiastic.

Often during the period I was reading this book I consciously remembered Adams' words and used them as an encouragement to be more mindful and take more time to enjoy the world and my place in it. I even bought a notebook (which I drafted this review in).

I will always thank her for a moment, sitting in my garden trying to dig out buffel, the wind blowing, getting covered in blossoms and simply thinking 'this is beautiful'. I suspect that many others who have read this book have been similarly inspired and urge all who haven't already read it to do so.

The Alice Springs version of hygge.

Carol Adams *is a music teacher, painter and writer originally from South Australia.* ***Alice Woods*** *is the Special Collections Librarian at the Alice Springs Public Library and is passionate about Alice Springs and the wealth of local literature and other creative outlets.*

Congratulations to Darwin writer Johanna Bell and Tennant Creek illustrator Dion Beasley.

Their book *Go Home Cheeky Animals* was named the 2017 Book of the Year in the Early Childhood section by the Children's Book Council of Australia.

Children as Authors

SALLY BOTHROYD

Going into publishing is not for the faint-hearted, but one Darwin educator has launched a whole series of picture books ... with results surpassing his highest expectations.

David Cannon is the principal of The Essington School Darwin.

With a depth of knowledge about literacy and learning, he was inspired to fill what he saw as two holes in the market when it came to picture books.

"There aren't a lot of books featuring Australian animals – particularly animals from Northern Australia," he said. "And there aren't a lot of published books written by children."

He was also inspired by academic research on how writing can help children reach a higher standard of literacy than reading alone.

He decided to trial a program for upper primary age children, to allow them to work with a mentor, author Joanne van Os, to write a picture book featuring a particular animal.

David Cannon knew Joanne van Os as a parent, but also through the school's holiday writing program, and he knew she'd have the patience and knowledge to work with the young authors.

But David Cannon said he was totally blown away by the results. He thought maybe one book would be of high enough standard to be published, but in the end they decided to publish all ten as a series.

Illustrator Joan Andropov was another "find" from the Essington school family. David Cannon had noticed some paintings of native animals done by the retired nurse, and asked if she'd help out with the book project.

"She was very timid about her abilities," David said, "but the results have been outstanding." Joan did the illustrations for all ten of the initial series – showing a fine eye for bringing out the "character" in the animals.

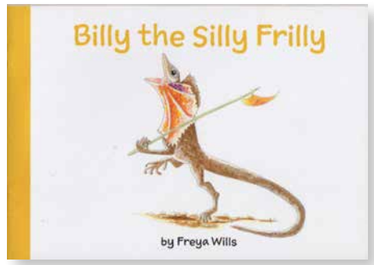
David Cannon did quite a large print run of the first ten books – aiming to sell them over a five-year period – but says he's now worried about running out. The books are for sale online at the Museum and Darwin Bookshop in the mall. They've also been picked up by an outlet in South Australia, and a school buyer in Queensland.

The second series of ten books is set to be launched in December 2017, and the next project is to translate five of the books into Indonesian, Japanese and Chinese.

David says his "mass market" approach may not be for everyone, but these days, there's no reason any school can't make an in-house book and print off at least a few copies.

"The exciting thing for me is that all of these kids have a book published," said David. "And I firmly believe that at some stage in their lives, they'll publish other things."

"He was also inspired by academic research on how writing can help children reach a higher standard of literacy than reading alone."



FICTION

Can you hear the beating of the drums?

SYLVIA PURRURLE NEALE

Australia 1956. A nine-year-old Arrernte girl is living in Giles Street. Eastside, Alice Springs. The time of the big drought. A small two-bedroom asbestos home, shuttered windows which were always open to allow the occasional breeze or dust to squeeze itself through; dirt floor, always sprayed with the hose to keep the dust down.

A very small wood stove, one large wooden table, one kitchen chair and bench – one end rested on top of an empty kerosene tin. The young girl knows how to approach the stool, unlike the Catholic priest who lands on the dirt floor, newly dampened especially for his visit; his nice white shirt and smart black trousers ruined. Her and her sisters had burst out laughing, much to the priest's disgust; still they noticed dad holding his breath, trying not to laugh.

Evening, the sweet smell of burning wood floated throughout the house and already she can taste the kangaroo stew, potatoes, carrots and onions and on top, fat soft dumplings; mum and big sister always found a way to make even the most meagre of meals taste heavenly.

The girl is about to go through a catastrophic upheaval – an event which will haunt her for the next 50 years: the death of her mother.

She has always been a very shy girl. She doesn't know how to connect to people. She feels separate from them, invisible. It seems there is always a space between herself and the world around her.

Her mother is her protection. Her stability, her safety. Her mother can see her. Her mother encourages and supports her in her never-ending search for the knowledge that will open windows into worlds outside her own.

The girl buries herself in books. She listens to the serials on the radio. She knows storytelling. It is part of her culture, her way of learning. Listening to stories, telling stories.

On that old brown radio that looks like a box with buttons – that needs to be hit every now and then to get it going. In the kitchen with the fire burning on the old wood stove. The tea boiling. The smell of curried sausages. Her old older sister cooking. Served with perfect rice. She always cooked perfect rice.

She sits on the bench and listens. The timber bench with one end propped up by a kerosene tin. She is always late for school and sneaks out early so she can catch the next episode.

The week after the funeral she goes back to school. The nun is out the front. She is questioning the children about their permission forms and money for a school excursion. 'Where's your form and money?' The class is still and silent. Everybody else knows. The nun asks again. She points her finger at the girl. 'Where's yours?'

The girl is unable to speak, unable to move, the teacher waiting; silence, icy silence. Then another student speaks, a friend. She tells the teacher what's happened. The teacher softens. She bends to touch the girl. *Don't touch me*. She flinches. She pulls back. *Never let people see you cry. Never!* She holds back the tears and runs. She stumbles. She runs home. She doesn't go back.

After her mother dies she withdraws further and she runs. She keeps on running.

It is during this time of grieving that she first hears a story on the radio, on the ABC – a story that resonates in her. She can't understand why at the time. But she can't let it go.

Another world, another time, another place. People screaming for justice, freedom. The right to live.

Still she can't let go.

***

I was in my forties. In Perth, Western Australia; in a theatre. Watching a live performance, a musical. I felt I knew these characters. I knew them well. All through the performance I kept thinking *Why do I know all these people?* Why do I know all of their names? I took a deep breath. I was overwhelmed with emotion; it was that story that had entered into my consciousness all those years ago, on that old radio in my kitchen in that house in Giles St, in Alice Springs.

Same story but with music this time. Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*.

In a song, I heard the line: 'There's a grief that can't be spoken'. And it took me back – back to that terrible day in 1956. When I was nine years old.

Victor Hugo wrote his story during a time of great upheaval and political unrest. Faraway France. First published in 1862.

1950s Australia and we, the Indigenous peoples of this place, were living under the control of the Aboriginal Act. We were seen as part of the Flora and Fauna – not as human. The irony is that they were right – we do belong to the earth, the country, all; animals, trees, rocks everything, we are one with our world. But that was not how they saw us.

There was no freedom; no freedom to live our lives, to marry whom you wanted, to care for your children in a way that was your way. To live and practice the ways of our ancestors. Restrictions ruled our lives.

If you found a way out that met their approval you were given a card to say you could work and live your life in the wider community. You could even go to the pub. You could be seen as a human being albeit an honorary one.

I have kept my mother's exemption card. Still it reads, 'This certificate may be revoked at any time by the Director of Native Affairs'.

155 years on, 17,000 kilometres away, Victor Hugo's extraordinary story found me and has followed me for 50 long years on my journey through life – but especially in the heart of this place, this sacred place.

Here I am, still yearning for peace, struggling for justice.

'Can you hear the beating of the drums?'

Sylvia Purrurle Neale *is an Eastern Arrernte woman born in Alice Springs. Her writing is published in* Voice from the Heart *(1995) and* This Country Anywhere Anytime *(2010). Sylvia read a version of this piece at the NT Writers' Festival, Alice Springs, 2017.*

Photos: (opposite page) From Flickr, Vintage Table Radio by Joe Haupt. https://www.flickr.com/photos/51764518@N02/34864423846/
(this page) Sylvia at the NT Writers' Festival, Alice Springs, 2017. Photography by Oliver Eclipse.

OPPORTUNITIES

Competitions are also listed on our website ntwriters.com.au

DECEMBER 2017

Nakata Brophy Short Fiction and Poetry Prize
Opens: 1 December 2017

The Nakata Brophy prize recognises the talent of young (under 30 years) Indigenous writers across Australia. The prize is $5000, publication in *Overland*'s print magazine, and a three-month writer's residency.

The Griffin Award
The prestigious Griffin Award recognises an outstanding play or performance text that displays an authentic, inventive and contemporary Australian voice, with the winner receiving a $10,000 prize.

JANUARY 2018

The Maurice Saxby Creative Development Program
Closing date: 31 January 2018

This program offers emerging children's writers and/or illustrators a two-week mentorship in Melbourne from 17th Aug – 2nd Sept in 2018.

FEBRUARY 2018

The Text Prize for Young Adult and Children's Writing
Closing date: 2 February 2018

The $10,000 Text Prize aims to discover incredible new books for young adults and children by Australian and New Zealand writers. The prize is open to published and unpublished writers of all ages.

MARCH 2018

The Chief Minister's Northern Territory History Book Award
Closing date: March 2018

This annual award is for the most significant historical book about the Northern Territory published in the last 12 months (January to December).

MAY 2018

The NT Literary Awards
Closing date: May 2018

The annual Northern Territory Literary Awards celebrate the achievements of emerging writers and are run by the Northern Territory Library.

The Australian/Vogel Literary Award
Closing: May 2018

The Australian/Vogel Literary Award is an Australian literary award for unpublished manuscripts by writers under the age of 35.

AUGUST 2018

The Scarlet Stiletto Awards
Closing date: August 2018

A national award for short stories, written by Australian women and featuring a strong female protagonist. Several categories, and prize money on offer.

OCTOBER 2018

ASA Emerging Writers' and Illustrators' Mentorships
Closing date: October 2018

Each year the ASA runs a selective mentorship program for unpublished writers and picture book illustrators.

Scribe Nonfiction Prize
Closing date: October 2018

The Scribe Nonfiction Prize is a developmental award for writers aged 30 and under working on long-form pieces or their first nonfiction book.

Finch Memoir Prize
Closing date: October 2018

The Finch Memoir Prize is an annual publication prize for an unpublished memoir of between 40,000 and 80,000 words.

Open Submissions

THE BIG ISSUE
The Big Issue is an independent magazine that publishes informative and entertaining articles on a huge variety of subjects including arts and entertainment, street culture, lifestyle and personal profiles.

VOICEWORKS
Australia's newest literary talents are filling the pages of *Voiceworks* right now. Submissions open quarterly for young Australian writers.

ALLEN & UNWIN
The Friday Pitch
Allenandunwin.com

BLOOMSBURY SPARK
Bloomsbury YA digital imprint
General email submissions
Bloomsbury.com/au/bloomsbury-spark/submissions

HACHETTE AUSTRALIA
General email submissions
Hachette.com.au/information

HARLEQUIN BOOKS AUSTRALIA
General email submissions
Harlequinbooks.com.au/submissions

MILLS & BOON
Accept general postal submissions
Millsandboon.com.au/submissions

HARPER COLLINS
Wednesday post
Wednesdaypost.com.au

PAN MACMILLAN
Submit manuscripts on Mondays
Panmacmillan.com.au

PENGUIN
Monthly Catch (first week of each month)
Penguin.com.au/getting-published

RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA
Hard Copy general submission only that are separate from Penguin.
Randomhouse.com.au/about/manuscripts.aspx

LACUNA PRESS
Hard copy submissions only
Lacunapublishing.com

XOUM
Online submission form
Xoum.com.au/submissions

WOMBAT BOOKS
Unsolicited picture books only through online submission form
wombatbookscom.au

AFFIRM PRESS
General email submissions
Affirmpress.com.au/submissions

PANTERA PRESS
General email submissions
Panterapresscom.au/fiction-and-non-fiction-how-to-submit

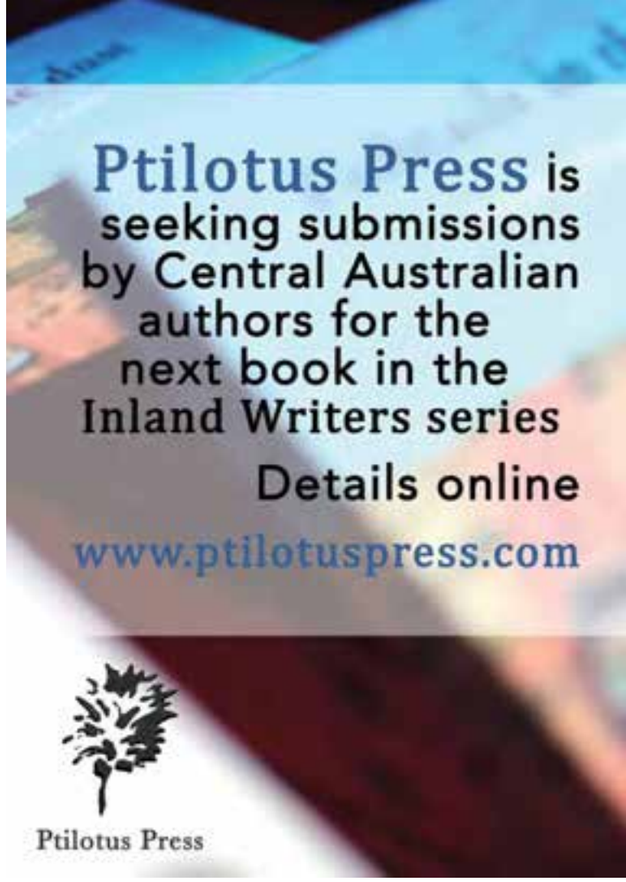
TEXT PUBLISHING
Hard copy submissions only.
Textpublishing.comau/manuscript-submissions

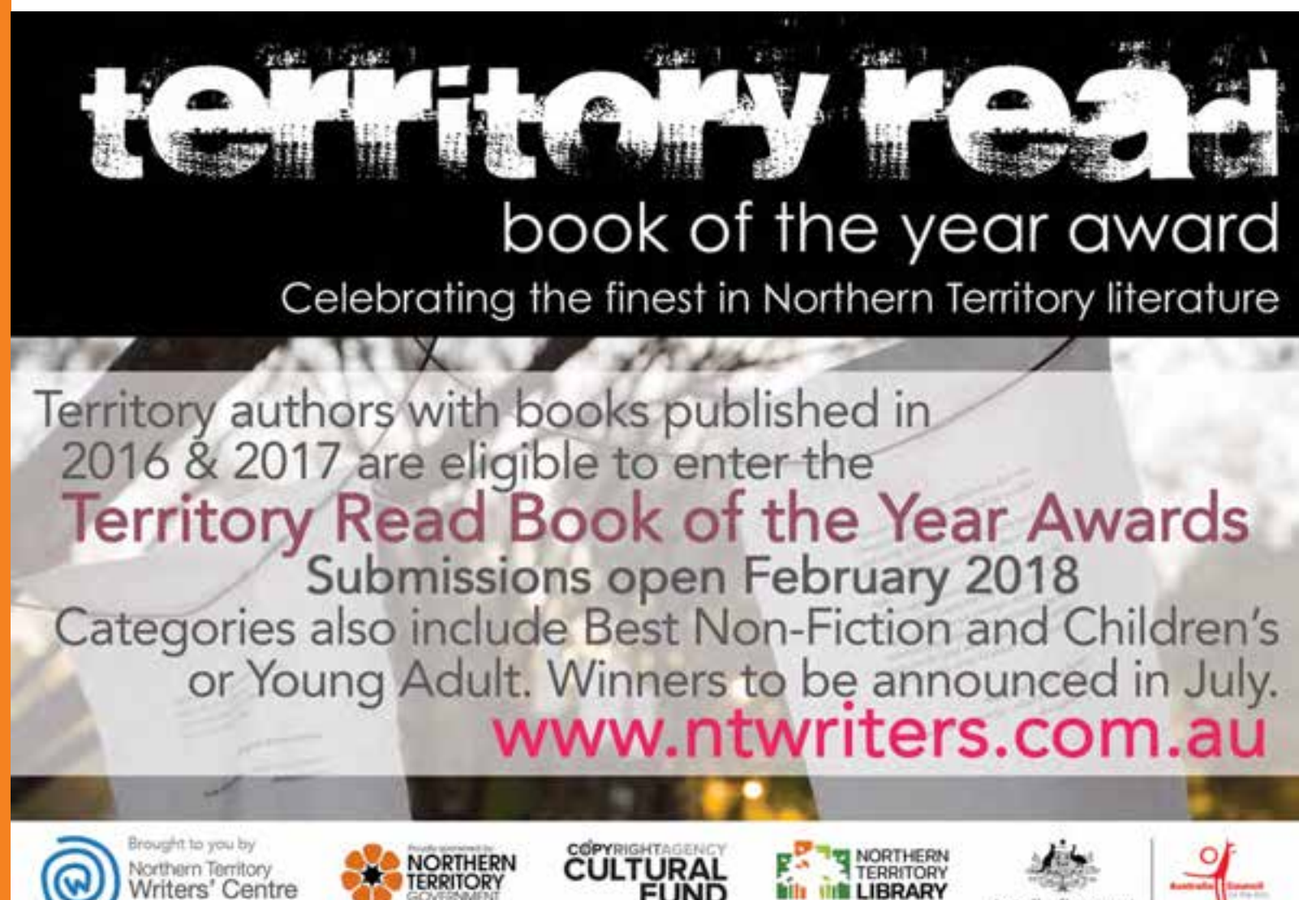
BLACK INC
General email submissions, not accepting unsolicited poetry or children's books.
Blackincbooks.com/submissions

TICONDEROGA PUBLICATIONS
General email submissions
Ticonderogapublications.com/web/index.php/about-us/submission/novels

GIRAMONDO PUBLISHING
Online submission form
Gironomdopublishing.com/contribute

FINCH PUBLISHING SYDNEY
Finch Publishing accepts manuscript proposals on Thursdays on the following subjects: parenting, social issues, child health, memoir, family relationships and mental health. They will also consider biographies.
finch.com.au





WORD STORM

NT WRITERS' FESTIVAL DARWIN

MAY 24-27 2018

Artwork by Pennyrose Wiggins: Kingswood Country, 2017 acrylic and oil on found car boot.

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INPEX

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