

openbook

Maxine Beneba Clarke
story

Toby Fitch
poem

Kerryn Goldsworthy
essay

Tim Soutphommasane
reflection

AUTUMN 2022



School children take part in a mass tennis practice session at White City Stadium in Rushcutters Bay for the opening of Tennis Week in 1957. Photo by Ronald Stewart. Taken from *Sydney Lives*, edited by Sydney Morning Herald photo editor Mags King, a book that captures our extraordinary city.





Openbook is designed and printed on the traditional and ancestral lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. The State Library of NSW offers our respect to Aboriginal Elders past, present and future, and extends that respect to other First Nations people. We celebrate the strength and diversity of NSW Aboriginal cultures, languages and stories.



Donald Fish was a leading mid-century graphic designer, page 18

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Self-portrait by Dr John Vallance

**... books are only
the beginning
of what we keep
in our stacks.**

When we gave this magazine its name, we hoped it would encourage open and confident connections with the State Library of NSW. Open books and open access, that's the idea.

In practice, it's not easy and there are quite a few reasons why. Hardest of all is choice — what gets included, what gets left out. Pip McGuinness, the editor, has spent months making contacts, commissioning articles and wrestling with the unenviable task of selection. I think you'll agree that again she's done a great job with this issue.

Then there's the nature of the institution itself. At its heart, ours is a research library — one of the most important in the world. It's here to serve scholars, writers, artists, scientists and thinkers. We are also here to open our doors and our books to people who would never normally come to a place like this, perhaps because they don't think it's for them. One of the most important and growing areas of our work centres on supporting First Nations scholars and communities as they work to reclaim their history on their terms. Many of them rarely, if ever, visit Macquarie Street, and when they do, may find our grand institutional buildings intimidating and unwelcoming. The same may be true for members of communities whose first language is not English.

Against this, there's nothing like grand and well-loved, accessible public architecture, to give people — regardless of background — a sense that they matter and are part of something bigger than they are. Simply sitting in the Mitchell Reading Room can be a source of pride and confidence.

Imagine the whole Library as an open book. Access must be the priority. Access without brutalising cultural sensitivities, or denying the mistakes of the past, but at the same time honouring the extraordinary things that have been achieved.

If you do imagine our Library as a book, I must admit that it's not always one that's easy to read. The collections are so vast and varied that, in the past, you've needed to know what you want before you visit. Browsing books in a state or national library is never straightforward, wherever you are in the world. And books are only the beginning of what we keep in our stacks.

This is why we've spent the past four years turning the place inside out. We've begun to select some of our most precious treasures and put them on semi-permanent public display in dedicated galleries. Think of these galleries more as walk-through catalogues than as traditional exhibitions. The displays have been assembled with minimal accompanying text, in the hope that visitors will feel able to make their own

sense of what they see. Every generation finds fault with the ways its predecessors did things. Libraries with collections like ours exist to make criticism, comprehension and renewal possible.

The 'Inside Out' program began in 2018 with the Picture Galleries in the Mitchell building and will be complete by the end of this year. The Collectors' Gallery on the ground floor of the Mitchell — currently being refurbished — presents selections of physical objects rarely released from the stacks. The Dixon Gallery, also in the Mitchell building, is now home to exhibitions assembled by First Nations curators. Last year we opened dedicated Map Rooms, and at the end of May, with the support of our Foundation, we will unveil a Drawings, Watercolours and Prints Gallery. Its inaugural show is 'Grand Vistas', which my colleague Richard Neville writes about in this issue. November will see the opening of a major photography gallery — perhaps the largest of its type in the country — which will show gems from our vast image collections, which extend from the present back to the beginnings of photography in the nineteenth century. Finally, the 'Amaze' Gallery will be home to displays of new acquisitions, along with important rare books and manuscripts which, for many of our readers, lie at the Library's heart.

Visitors will see that there is a lot of building work going on. By the time you read this, the restoration of the Mitchell Library Reading Room will be complete. The hole in the reading room floor, which was created in the 1980s, has been filled in, making more room for readers. The room itself has been recarpeted and repainted. From the end of this year, the Mitchell and Macquarie Street buildings will be connected by a new route through the new Photography Gallery. A special meeting place for Indigenous visitors, named in honour of Ruby Langford Ginibi and located immediately east of the Mitchell Library building foyer, is almost complete. Work to improve access to both Library buildings is well underway. Our rooftop bar was opened by the Premier in December and is already bringing us new friends. You can see a few snapshots of the Library Bar in this issue.

The point of all this activity is much the same as the point of *Openbook* itself. To encourage open and confident connections with this great institution and the cultures whose memory it protects and preserves. As Omicron recedes into our history (and into our stacks), we hope we can welcome you back very soon to see what all this theory looks like in practice. In the meantime, get reading ...

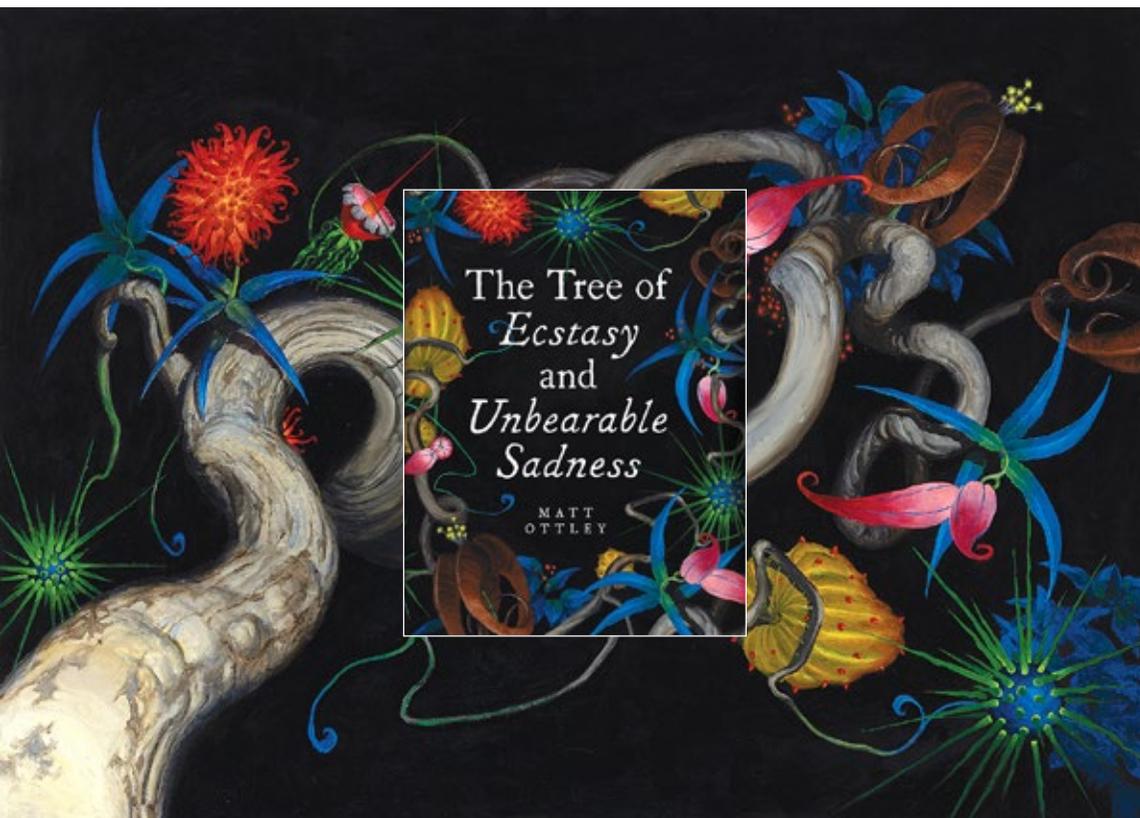
**Dr John Vallance FAHA
State Librarian**

openbook *obsessions*

All is forgiven

4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art reopens the doors of its heritage-listed, newly restored Chinatown galleries in March. Requiring no remediation, however, is 4A's reputation as a visionary creative organisation, committed to elevating Asian voices and building artistic dialogue between Australia and Asia.

Australian-Filipina artist Marikit Santiago's exhibition *For Us Sinners* will relaunch the Haymarket space from 26 March. The artist says this emotionally charged, vivid series 'questions utopian and dystopian themes, control and transgression, sex and sexual difference, paradise and exile'. The doctrine of original sin has made rich subject matter for art for centuries but seldom with a lushness as vibrant as Santiago's paintings. The diptych shown here is *The Shepherd* (2021), photo by Garry Trinh.



Flower of ecstasy, fruit of sadness

Matt Ottley is an acclaimed writer and illustrator, but his fans may not know that he is a composer as well. His new book, published by Dirt Lane Press, comes with a CD of a symphony, written by Ottley and performed by the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra. These form part of a multi-modal project — there's a film too.

The Tree of Ecstasy and Unbearable Sadness is groundbreaking in terms of its subject as well as its forms; Ottley writes about his own journey in and out of mental illness, the tree a metaphor not only for pain and illness, but for resilience and creativity. With branches of art, music and literature, he has allowed an especially poignant kind of tree to grow.



Photo by Joy Lai

Andrew Pippos

My father enjoyed telling people he'd never read a book in his life, as if

this were a detail you might remember about him, as if it were some great stroke of luck, like never being issued with a speeding ticket. I don't know what other people made of this fact but from my perspective, when I was a teenager, his status as a non-reader was a trait of grave consequence and a disappointment bordering on insult, because I wanted to be a novelist and supposed the task of writing and publishing a book was near-impossible without a pedigree or guide or miraculous help. For some reason I believed I might stand a better chance if my father read novels and could talk to me about Beckett or Tsiolkas.

He flicked through newspapers; he closely read the racing guide. Instead of books he preferred the medium of narrative speech, of stories told and refined at the table: tales about old cafes and gambling dens and superstitions and reversals of fortune and acts of generosity and sacrifice.

When I was 17, my father surprised me one day when he agreed to my suggestion that we read something together, something short — a play. Certainly he'd noticed my feelings of resentment, my childish impression that he could do nothing more to help me. For our one and only book club, I chose *Oedipus Rex*. I'm sorry to say at the time I thought the gesture was all subtle condemnation; I thought it might be clever to select a play in which a young man kills his father.

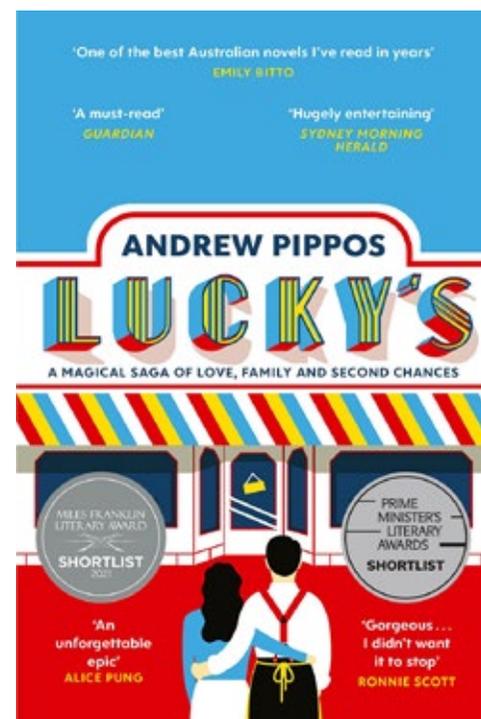
My father went to his grave without reading another book. This I know because I asked him during the final week of his life. The question came as a diversion from the other subjects we discussed at his death bed, and my curiosity was not whole: by that time it no longer mattered to me whether the people I loved were readers.

It's likely he knew the outline of the Oedipus myth: a man kills a stranger in a fight — in what we'd call road rage — on his way to the city of Thebes. When he arrives at the city, he finds the population at the mercy of the Sphinx, a monster who challenges Oedipus to solve a riddle. The riddle is answered and the monster flees. Oedipus becomes the king of Thebes and rules for many years until the day he discovers that the man he killed on the road was his birth father, and the woman he married is his mother.

For our one and only book club, I chose *Oedipus Rex*.

Within the space of an afternoon, my father read Oedipus and came to my room, book in hand, where he leaned on the door and we discussed the play. When he referred to certain passages he held the book up to his open face, his mouth compressed, the story digested entirely. About Oedipus, my father described him as admirable, intelligent, innocent in some ways. Was he a hero? Oh, for sure. When things fell to bits, he was prepared to bear responsibility, to suffer and change his life.

My father asked: what happened to the Sphinx? According to the myth I knew, the defeated monster, her riddle



solved, left the city and threw herself from a cliff. Yes but, said my father, the Sphinx possessed the wings of a bird, and who's to say she, before crashing to the ground, didn't save herself and fly off to some other place? Hidden in Sophocles's tragedy — the ur-tragedy — he identified an escape, a second chance. There could be another way; there was something I hadn't seen.

Later I came to understand the stories he told as constituting my inheritance. And his optimism helped him persevere through the six years he suffered with stage-four pancreatic cancer, when every scan and pathology report felt like either an escape from fast-approaching death, or a final notice of the end.

Today I see the disgraced Oedipus, driven into exile, accompanied by his two daughters, as he walks the road to Athens, followed by a speck in the sky: the magnificent Sphinx.

Andrew Pippos's debut novel *Lucky's*, was published in 2020. Shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award and the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Fiction, it was winner of the Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction 2021.



Sought-after audiobook narrator Rupert Degas.
Photo by Julian Wolkenstein

The sound of words

Audiobooks are more popular than ever. What's the process for turning words on a page into words in your ear?

'Anybody who says they don't read their Audible reviews is lying,' says Rupert Degas. The British-born actor turned Sydneysider is one of Australia's most in-demand audiobook narrators. He's performed, as he likes to put it, more than 300 books since recording his first one in London. Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* required someone who could bust out Irish, Scottish and English accents. The publisher helpfully added punctuation to Carey's stream-of-consciousness text so Degas 'knew where to breathe'.

Despite that novel's challenges, Degas (pronounced day-gas) was hooked. 'I thought, "Oh, I can play all the parts, I can do all the accents, I don't have to put on a costume, I don't have to learn any lines, I don't have to get up at five in the morning and get into make-up — I quite like this!"' he recalls.

Next thing he knew, he was voicing a daemon called Pantalaimon as part of the cast narrating Philip Pullman's fantasy novel *His Dark Materials: The Golden Compass*. The result won an Audie — the Oscars of the global audiobook industry — beating actor Jim Dale's rendition of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

Today, Degas's audiobook portfolio includes Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Kafka's *The Trial* and Australian author Chris Flynn's *Mammoth*, a comic novel narrated by a prehistoric mammoth. 'It was like a play within a play — I did the mammoth as Orson Welles,' Degas says. The captivating result was a finalist for the 2021 ABIA (Australian Book Industry Awards) Audio Book of the Year.

Degas is from a showbiz family. His screenwriter father, Brian Degas, famously convinced Hollywood legend Gloria Swanson to pen her autobiography after he'd already inked the publishing deal and his mother, Maggie Clews, presented on British radio and TV. Degas could probably write his own book — except he's too busy narrating them.

He records a dozen or more each year from his favourite studio — his home set-up in Sydney's eastern suburbs. 'It takes me four weeks to do a book,' he says. 'I do a chapter here, a chapter there — I dip in and out of it. I don't get to that point where I'm flagging because I'm just in the story.' He's also his own audio engineer. 'I've got one hand on the mouse controlling [audio recording software] Pro Tools and another hand on my laptop controlling the script,' he says. 'I'm finding words and stopping recording to go to pronunciation websites to find out how to pronounce them properly. So there's a lot going on and that means your brain is just working extra-hard.'

Thanks to technology — and boosted by the pandemic

— audiobooks are booming. The US audiobook market alone was estimated to be worth US\$1.1 billion in 2021. Book publishers are so attuned to audiobooks' possibilities they now release new titles in print and audio formats simultaneously.

So how are Australian publishers keeping up with demand? Veronica Eze,

audio producer for Penguin Random House (PRH) Australia, says many titles are recorded at an in-house studio in Sydney. The publisher also uses a network of external studios around Australia, such as Sound Kitchen in Sydney's Crows Nest.

On the summer day that *Openbook* visits, Sound Kitchen's two studios are — coincidentally — recording PRH titles. In the foyer I meet actor James Sweeney who has appeared on our small screens in *Neighbours*, *Total Control* and *Home and Away*.

Today, Sweeney's good looks don't matter. This job is all about his voice. He's here to narrate *Endurance: The Toby Price Story*, a biography of the Australian two-time Dakar Rally champion

Thanks to technology
— and boosted by the
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Ben Crabbe, Karly Joyce and Bill Dowling in the Sound Kitchen foyer. Photo by Joy Lai

and seven-time Finke Desert Race winner who's so famous for his mullet that fans buy mullet-themed merchandise.

Sound Kitchen instructs narrators to sit (in a non-squeaky, non-swivelling chair) and face a grey-walled corner so they're not distracted by their audio engineer's movements. I pop in behind engineer Ben Crabbe to see Sweeny at work. Crabbe has slipped off his shoes and is following along with the text on an iPad, picking up missed or messed-up words and asking for a redo, marking spots where edits are later required.

The process between voice talent and engineer is highly interactive. Both men stop to ponder the pronunciation of Arequipa — a city in Peru. I make myself useful, saying it for them. When it comes to Australian place pronunciations, Crabbe says if in doubt, he'll call a police station or school near the place to ask how it's said.

In the other studio Anna Clark, granddaughter of esteemed historian Manning Clark, is recording her first audiobook — her hefty tome *Making Australian History* (both were released simultaneously in February by Penguin Random House, like Price's book and audiobook). Unlike Sweeny, who simply backs up and starts again when he makes a mistake, Clark reflexively says 'Sorry' each time she fumbles a word.

'When I was invited to read it,' Clark says, 'I thought, "Yeah, that sounds great — I know my work, what a fun thing to do!" I've just finished day two [of six scheduled days] and it's actually really tiring. I thought it would be easier.' Even though she knows her text inside out, 'reading it out loud is like reading it anew — it feels like a new iteration'. Pronouncing some of the alliteration, she's discovered, is problematic. 'I was so proud of putting it in there for emphasis and, now that I'm reading it, they're total tongue-tiers,' she says. 'No more alliteration!'



Anna Clark looks up from narrating her book in the Sound Kitchen studio. Photo by Joy Lai

Recording and directing Clark from behind a glass window is Bill Dowling, Sound Kitchen’s director/audio engineer. Sound Kitchen recorded more than 80 audiobooks last year. Dowling says smartphones have played a pivotal role in audiobooks’ popularity. ‘The way you can listen to audiobooks is so much easier now ... and the fact publishers are now seeing the value in it is even better,’ he says.

Publishers might have preferences about voice talent for an audiobook — or they might ask Sound Kitchen to help cast a voice. Karly Joyce, Sound Kitchen’s studio manager/audio producer, says, ‘There are about six agencies we go to that represent Sydney talent — there are three main voice-over agencies and then there are also acting agencies. We tend to find that actors are really good for fiction because they become the characters in the story. They feel it a bit more.’

Sound Kitchen also directs plenty of first-time narrators. Dowling says, ‘If they can read without sounding like they’re reading, we can do anything with them. If they’re nervous and sound like they’re reading, we’ve had to recast a couple of times.’ Once the initial recording and edits are done, files are sent to audio proofers for a quality check against the text and to pick up unintentional noises. The talent returns to the studio to record pick-ups. Once those are added, the audiobook is ready to be mastered. ‘I’d estimate that every finished hour of a book would be about five hours’ worth of work,’ says Dowling. Audiobooks usually take about six weeks to travel through the studio’s production cycle.

The sensitive studio microphones pick up the tiniest of noises. ‘Tummy rumbles are our biggest hazard,’ says Joyce. ‘Bill tells everyone to eat bananas.’ The list also includes wrist clicks, finger taps, throat gurgles, fabric rustles and jangly earrings. For the talent, drinking milk is a no-no but apples can, apparently, reduce mouth noises. Voice actors are also told to

‘I’d estimate that every finished hour of a book would be about five hours’ worth of work’

stay hydrated and to take a walk outside to refresh their energy levels. ‘It’s a matter of keeping them vibed so you don’t hear that lag in their voice,’ says Dowling. ‘As soon as I pick that up, I say, “Stand up and have a stretch.”’

Celebrities such as Delta Goodrem have recorded audiobooks in Sound Kitchen’s studios while others, such as Indigenous singer-songwriter Archie Roach, have done so remotely. Dan Ruffino is the managing director of Simon & Schuster Australia, which published Roach’s memoir, *Tell Me Why*. Roach’s recording took out the 2021 ABIA Award for Audio Book of the Year.

‘For Archie to agree to record that on Country made it a very special project and it’s close to our hearts,’ says Ruffino.

‘We normally like to have a simultaneous audio production available when we release the print book but we were happy to wait until Archie had the time to record it. He’s a little frail so it was going to take a bit longer but now his voice and his stories are recorded for prosperity — it’s an amazing gift.’

When Roach’s audiobook followed the hardcover four months later, it gave the title ‘a second life’, Ruffino says. ‘A lot of people who bought the print book were happy to own an audio edition as well,’ he says. ‘It’s also one of the very few examples of when we produced a physical audiobook — everyone’s just doing digital now — but we produced a handsome CD version as well. We did that for Dave Grohl and Bruce Springsteen too. You’ve got to be of that calibre.’

Fiction fans might be dedicated to their favourite narrators but Ruffino acknowledges there’s ‘massive demand’ for celebrity-narrated audio. Downloads in Australia for Grohl’s biography, *The Storyteller*, were ‘a real eye-opener about the potential in this space’, he says. Audiobooks from comedians Judith Lucy and Kate Langbroek also performed well, Ruffino



Ben Crabbe, sitting at the controls, produces James Sweeny reading in the sound booth. Photo by Joy Lai

says, along with titles from Dr Michael Mosley. ‘People are happy to listen to health books in that format, which has been interesting for us,’ he says. The company’s website promotes ‘notable narrators’ such as Lucy and actors Claudia Karvan, Zoe Carides and Catherine McClements. ‘We’d also seek permission from them to use their narration in a radio ad or a YouTube video to promote the book,’ says Ruffino. ‘So the voice is used as part of the advertising campaign.’

Ruffino says all narrative fiction and non-fiction on his Australian list, along with some children’s books, become audiobooks. In 2021, Simon & Schuster produced 23 original audiobooks for Australia and New Zealand, and bought rights to another 23. ‘We sold off our rights to audio on some of the titles a few years ago but we won’t do that now,’ he says. ‘Publishers were reluctant to spend all that money [on audiobook production] at the time with the market

being so immature but that’s rapidly changed in the last two years.’ The company distributes titles on every available channel, from Audible through to library platforms.

PRH’s Eze says non-fiction genres such as personal development, business, true crime and memoirs do well as audiobooks, along with crime fiction. ‘We don’t tend to produce audiobooks for titles that are quite visual, such as ones that showcase art or cookbooks, though we did just publish our first one, the hilarious *Death to Jar Sauce* by Nat’s What I Reckon,’ she says.

Australia’s audiobook market isn’t currently measured but in 2020 Nielsen Book, which crunches book sales data, released what it said was the first study of Australian audiobook consumer behaviour. It found that 40 per cent of respondents were influenced to try audiobooks by a YouTube review. It also found the biggest barrier for Australians to increase

their audiobook consumption was price. A 2019 UK study found that not liking a narrator's voice was the biggest impediment.

Dowling understands that. 'Voices are like music — you might like a song I hate and vice-versa — and narrators are the same,' he says. 'If there's something you hear in the voice that you love, you'll search their name out and download whatever audiobooks they've done.'

For Ruffino, audiobooks are a no-brainer. 'People might have less time to sit with a book but this is a way of getting back some reading minutes that we've lost,' he says. 'With the explosion of home speaker systems, in-ear technology and iPhones, it just makes the medium a lot easier to access. My house is full of Sonos speakers so I can be cooking, cleaning or whatever, and still have a book following me around.'

Katrina Lobley is a Sydney-based freelance writer.

The art of voice-casting

Casting is Penguin Random House Australia audio producer Veronica Eze's favourite part of the job. 'I always read the manuscript first and consider how we can best tell this story,' she says. 'Do we need one narrator or multiple? What am I looking for with each actor? For our fiction titles, will there be a lot of different characters? Is there any accent-work required? Once I've decided how we'll be approaching narration, I get in touch with actors' agents and ask for auditions.'

'Listening to auditions is a lot of fun. We give little context when we're casting, just to see how actors interpret the story and the characters. The creative choices they make when they're recording their auditions are really interesting to hear.'

'Whether it's the first or seventh audition you've heard for that book, you can always hear when the actor just gets it — the story, the characters, their personalities and motivations. They really engage with the story they're telling.'

Keeping it real

With the growth of audiobooks and publishers' perennial eye on costs, it was only a matter of time before synthetic narration arrived on the scene. American-based company Speechki uses artificial voices — in 76 languages and even stretching to an Australian accent — to generate an audiobook. It costs between US\$500–\$1000, much cheaper than the production costs for most audiobooks.

In December 2021, Speechki said it had produced almost 1500 audiobooks and was contracted to produce another 7000. Sound Kitchen's Bill Dowling isn't impressed by the innovation. 'AI can read it to you but there's no inflection or colour, there's no emotion,' he says. 'It's like having a robot on stage acting.'

Take **5** TREES



WORDS Margot Riley

Mythical

Before bird migration was understood, scholars struggled to explain why some species disappeared as the seasons changed. One bizarre animal fable that persisted for centuries was that of the barnacle goose (*Branta leucopsis*). The fact that the goose was never seen to breed gave rise to the myth that it spontaneously generated from goose neck barnacles (*Lepas anatifera*), a type of crustacean. This biological misunderstanding led naturalists such as John Gerarde, in 1597, to publish misleading observations that the goose formed inside the barnacle shell and came out, legs first, until it hung by its bill, growing feathers once it had fallen into the sea. This legend was finally laid to rest when Dutch sailors saw the birds pairing, nesting and laying eggs.

The Herball, or Generall Histories of Plantes, gathered by John Gerarde, Imprinted at London by John Norton, 1597

Cultural

Taphoglyphs, Aboriginal carved trees, can be found dotted throughout Australia but particularly in New South Wales. Specifically the work of Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri artists, Aboriginal people have ceremoniously carved trees as a form of artistic and cultural expression for thousands of years. The Kamilaroi people in the central north-west designed their tree carvings around powerful symbols used for initiation ceremonies, while the Wiradjuri people of central NSW carved trees to mark burial sites of important male Elders. Each tree is unique; the majority are geometric in shape and feature chevrons, curvilinear lines, scrolls and concentric circles. Traditionally carved using stone tools, they display strength, skill and artistry.

A Wiradjuri taphoglyph from near Dubbo, 1910s, Henry King Photo, Sydney



Whimsical

‘Mr McGee lived under a tree’ ... so starts the enduringly popular tale by award-winning children’s book author and illustrator Pamela Allen. Designed to be read aloud, with short and simple rhyming text, the book is based on the notion that everyone wonders what it might be like to float about in the sky. This intricate watercolour is the second-last drawing in the story. Set on a clean white page, it shows an inflated Mr McGee just after he has popped and his tumbling descent has landed him safely back in the branches of the tree where he lives. Mr McGee went on to feature in seven more of Allen’s books which have delighted children for more than 40 years. The Library acquired Pamela Allen’s archive in 2020.

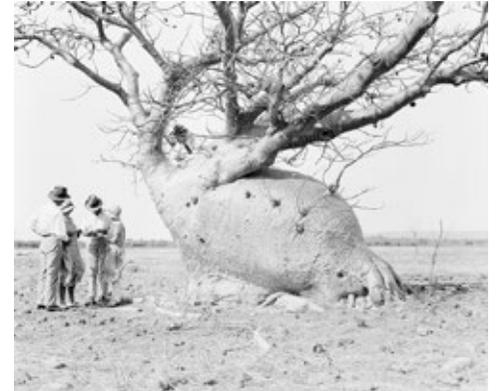
Watercolour for the children’s book *Mr McGee*, c 1987, by Pamela Allen



Seasonal

NSW Government Printer William Applegate Gullick was a highly skilled amateur photographer and early promoter of colour photography using autochrome plates. Invented by French brothers, Auguste and Louis Lumière, and released in 1907, the autochrome was the first commercially successful colour photography process. Hailed as revolutionary and described as perhaps the most beautiful of all photographic processes, autochromes produced positive colour images on glass plates coated with millions of red, green and blue dyed potato-starch granules. Popular for portraits and botanical studies, Gullick used the autochrome process to photograph his Killara garden to capture the changing colours of autumn leaves.

Autumn leaves: Maple Tree in Gullick family garden, c 1918, autochrome plate photographed by William Applegate Gullick



Botanical

Easily recognised for the large swollen base of its trunk, which gives the tree its bottle-like appearance, the origin of the Australian boab (*Adansonia gregorii*) is one of modern botany’s great conundrums. Found in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley region of Western Australia, it lives for hundreds of years and is one of only eight boab species in the world, yet its nearest relatives lie 10,000 kilometres away on the other side of the Indian Ocean. The fruit and flowers of the boab were a traditional food source for local Aboriginal people, while the shell of the boab nut was used for creative expression through carving and storytelling.

Boab tree, group of men and women, North Western Australia, c 1930, glass plate negative, Australian National Travel Association

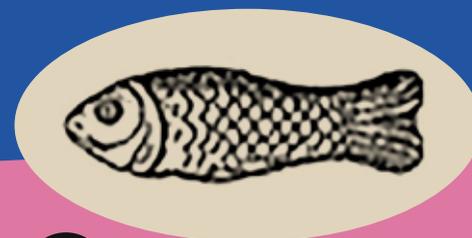


Peek Frean's

BISCUITS

SO FRESH - SO GOOD

WORDS Andrea Black



THE GRAPHIC DESIGN **OF**
Donald Fish

Boxes filled with artwork, illustrations, posters, photographs and advertisements mark an acclaimed designer's life.

They called her Myrtle. The little girl stands before a hot pink backdrop, hair askew, a hand in a Peek Frean's biscuit tin. Plucky yet furtive, she's looking to the side, one beady eye alert to the chance she might be caught with her hand in the cookie jar. Underneath this drawing of a mischievous theft are the words 'Peek Frean's Biscuits So Fresh — So Good'. The British biscuit company's ad, cheeky and bright, won the Outdoor Advertising Association of Australia's Poster of the Year award in 1956.

This poster is just one example of the mid-century, sometimes child-like, always optimistic humour to be found in the extensive Donald Fish archive held by the State Library. Fish, a graphic designer whose career spanned 60 years, often added a human or anthropomorphised animal element to his designs, stylised as bold cartoon characters, in advertisements that ranged from baby powder to beer. Vibrant colours and playful styles were, in fact, the antithesis of Australian ads of the era, which typically featured white backgrounds crammed with words, or photo-realist portrayals of suburban life.

The work of this polymath, graphic designer, illustrator, writer and cartoonist who died, aged 92, in 2021, deserves to stand alongside that of the world's best graphic designers — Saul Bass, Paul Rand, Milton Glaser — as well as the man who most influenced Fish's work, Raymond Savignac. This celebrated French



The original artwork for a 1955 advertisement for Tooth's KB beer. Both driver and locomotive are smiling — they know the end of the line is nigh

'The creation of a fleeting image which people will not forget'

poster artist used bright colours and characters to not only pique interest, but to instil a feeling of happiness in his target audience. He defined poster art as 'the creation of a fleeting image which people will not forget'.

A young Donald Fish travelled to Europe in the 1950s to learn to draw in the style of this poster artist and indeed met Savignac in Paris. Within the archives is a photo of a smiling, besuited Fish standing in front of the Eiffel Tower, balloons in the background. The caption on the back reads, 'while visiting Paris 1953 studying poster design'.

Born in 1929, Donald Fish grew up in the Sydney suburb of Vaucluse and, by his own admission, had an idyllic and creative childhood. 'I was intrigued by design for as long as I can remember,' he said in a 2009 interview. 'My peers used to surround me at school while I drew humorous little sketches and giant mandalas.'

Fish began his career as a message boy at Lintas advertising agency and,

by age 20, was promoted to the creative department. He soon moved to London to work at the London Press Exchange. According to the biography written for the Powerhouse Design Hub and now on the Australian graphic design website Re:collection, it was here that Fish created posters for clients such as Cadbury's and National Benzole. He also worked on many record covers, now held in the Library's collection, which also holds copies of magazine interviews and press clippings, chocolate tins, matchboxes and original artwork.

He returned to Australia in 1954, a time of optimism and creativity both for Fish and like-minded colleagues. He began working with clients such as P&O, Qantas, Reschs, and Schweppes. His work appeared in prestigious international design publications such as *Graphis* and *Modern Publicity*. He recalled later, 'In the fifties, writers and artists would meet at various places like my [Phillip Street] studio, and other haunts such as Lorenzini's Coffee Lounge, Vadim's

and The Lincoln. People working in the arts would meet, talk, argue and carouse until the early hours of the morning.'

Donald Fish's work in the 1950s reflects the aesthetic we know as mid-century modern. Among the ephemera in the archive are confectionary labels for Coconut Rough and Rumba from 1955. Their colours are bold and timeless: palm tree patterns in green and blue, a Cuban musician playing a conga in bright pink, green and yellow. There are also chocolate and biscuit tins and boxes: on the Nestlé's Variety chocolate box, each letter of 'Variety' is different – upper case, lower case, variations in colour and font – illustrating that inside lies a tantalising array.

Within the collection is a typed essay, 'The Poster: Advertising's Poor Cousin', where Fish questions why the poster had remained an anachronism given the sophisticated thinking devoted to other media. He argued that the poster has a lifestyle all its own, and a unique function. He reflected on his own craft: 'Conceiving a poster is exciting because it's one hell of a challenge. To penetrate, a poster must pack an emotional and visual wallop. It can shock, it can be hilarious. A poster must shatter the norm to gain attention.' He encouraged boldness, saying, 'the cardinal sin is modesty'.

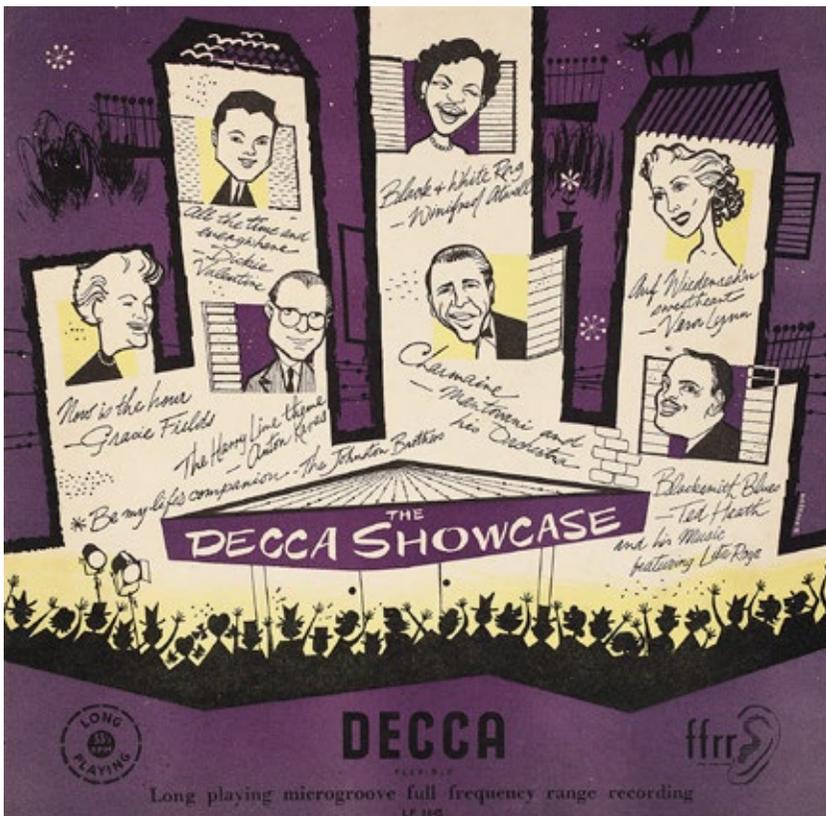
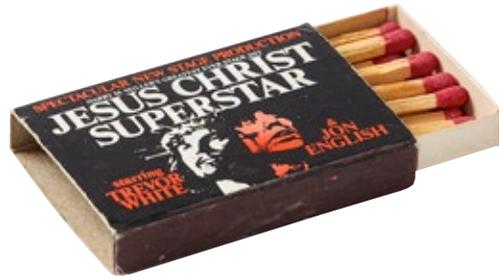
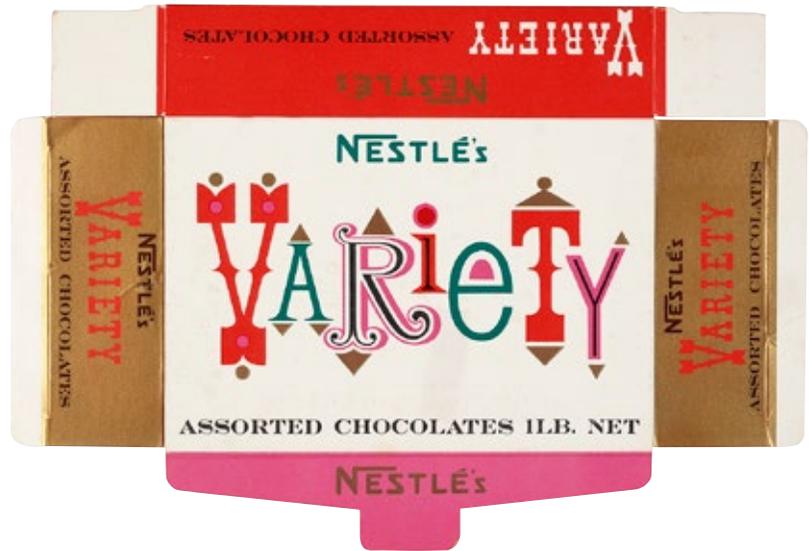
His essay, a highly edited version of which was published in *B&T Weekly*, offers insights into the thinking behind advertising, where art and commerce meet. He writes that it all begins with an idea: '[Posters] are there to communicate, and if they're well-conceived and exciting they can stimulate us, brighten our days and shift merchandise ... The poster is to advertising what the string quartet is to music.'

These days, commercial posters are revered as art objects and can command thousands at auction. Mid-century



Top: The record cover of the duet from the *Ford 50th Anniversary Television Show*

Bottom: The cover of Saint-Saëns's *Le Carnaval des Animaux*, Telefunken record label. In keeping with the whimsical theme, the designer signed his name 'D. Poisson'

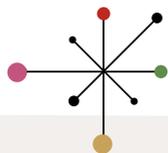


graphic design holds an exalted position; the poster has been taken off the street and displayed on gallery walls. Vintage posters are both art and commerce, used to sell a product or service. They hold nostalgic value too, part of collective memory and shared visual lexicon.

In Donald Fish's hands, even the driest subject could be imbued with excitement. The collection includes immaculate copies of the Commonwealth Bank annual report from 1957. The cover features an illustrated hand holding a fountain pen in cufflinked shirt and jacket sleeve, surrounded by numbers in purples, greens, black and red. A clipping from the *Sydney Morning Herald* reads: 'Once again the Commonwealth Trading Bank has produced one of the gayest and most colourful annual reports in the country. Queer to think of a bank report as being gay but it is, thanks to the clever, original designs by Mr Donald Fish.' His design won a medal from the Australian Commercial & Industrial Artists Association.

Clockwise from top left:
Nestlé Rumba chocolate wrapper
Nestlé Variety chocolate box
Matchbox advertising *Jesus Christ Superstar*,
for the 1975 Sydney production

The Decca Showcase album cover shows laughing caricatures of Gracie Fields, Winifred Atwell, Vera Lynn and more against a purple night sky, looking out from their apartment windows, a cheering crowd below



Fish and his art director wife, Victoria, met in 1961 and travelled the world together, including a second stint in London. Returning to Sydney in the mid-1960s, the couple and their friend Grant Roberts started a new side venture. Inspired by vintage shops in Chelsea and Knightsbridge, the trio opened a shop called Kaleidoscope on the corner of John and Moncur Streets, Woollahra. Full of antique oddities, it had a giant K out the front, a remnant from the 1883 Marcus Clark Furniture and Drapery store. A note in the archive in Donald Fish's hand writes that the shop was 'very famous for selling outlandish wares'.

Kaleidoscope hosted an 'opening' once a month, similar to a gallery event, with bonhomie and drinks. At the first one, according to *The Australian* columnist Daphne Guinness, actress Bunney Brooke bought a pile of beaded clothes and a 'man's black velvet waistcoat last seen in a flea market in Paris'. Guinness wrote that Don and Vicky Fish, with Roberts, were 'trying to inject into Australian antique shopping some of the fun they found in London markets'.

A black and white photograph from 1967 shows Liza Minnelli peering into the window. So taken with Kaleidoscope was the entertainer that she filmed part of a TV special there. Alongside footage of her singing siren songs at Chequers nightclub, and a love song in front of images of herself with Peter Allen — who she wed that year — there's a scene where the singer belts out 'Along the Road to Gundagai' while browsing the store.

In one of the archive boxes is a sticker, and a hot pink handbill shaped like a long bookmark, declaring that the store stocked 'a dazzling array of goodies ... including a wooden butter churn, a diplomatic frock coat, a pair of bellows and a black Ginger Rogers dance dress with gold lamé stripes by Selma Keane of New York, one of those rather awful Victorian



Liza Minnelli looks in the window of Kaleidoscope, a shop she was much taken with while visiting Sydney in 1967. Photographer unknown

frilly glass lamps, a feather boa, a stuffed pheasant and a painting of a spectacularly ugly lady standing among leaves'.

In the late 1960s, Donald Fish became the creative director of an American ad agency, working on award-winning campaigns with the likes of British Airways. He then started his own agency, Fountain Huie Fish, working with clients including Qantas, Club Med and Lufthansa. Numerous flyers, brochures and posters reflect what seems now to be a golden age of air travel.

In 1975, promoter Harry M Miller called Donald Fish asking him to work on a campaign to promote the stage musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Fish recalled that



TIME REVEALS.

Time has more bureaus and more correspondents in more places where news has its origins. That's why Time offers the reader such a depth of background, analysis and perspective.

It's Time's revealing coverage that makes it the biggest circulating news magazine in Australia. *Time 100,000 vs. Bulletin 90,300 vs. Newsweek 48,029.

Week after week Time's colourful coverage sets the right environment for readers whose need to know makes them particularly receptive to information about your product or service.

*ABC April to September 1980

FHF 1608

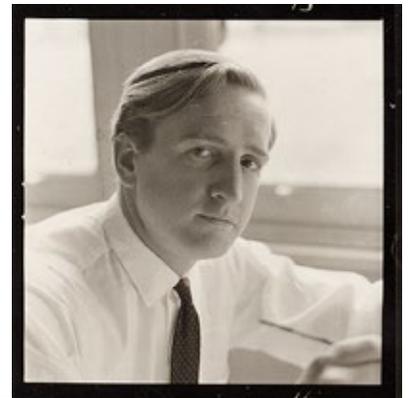
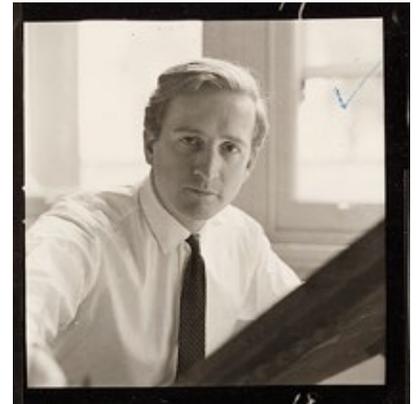
he had little to draw on for the poster design, other than photographs of the cast taken during rehearsals. His solution? He would blow up two small portraits to create a dramatic effect of good versus evil with Jon English, who played Judas, in red, and Trevor White, who played Jesus, in white. The image was even reproduced on matchboxes.

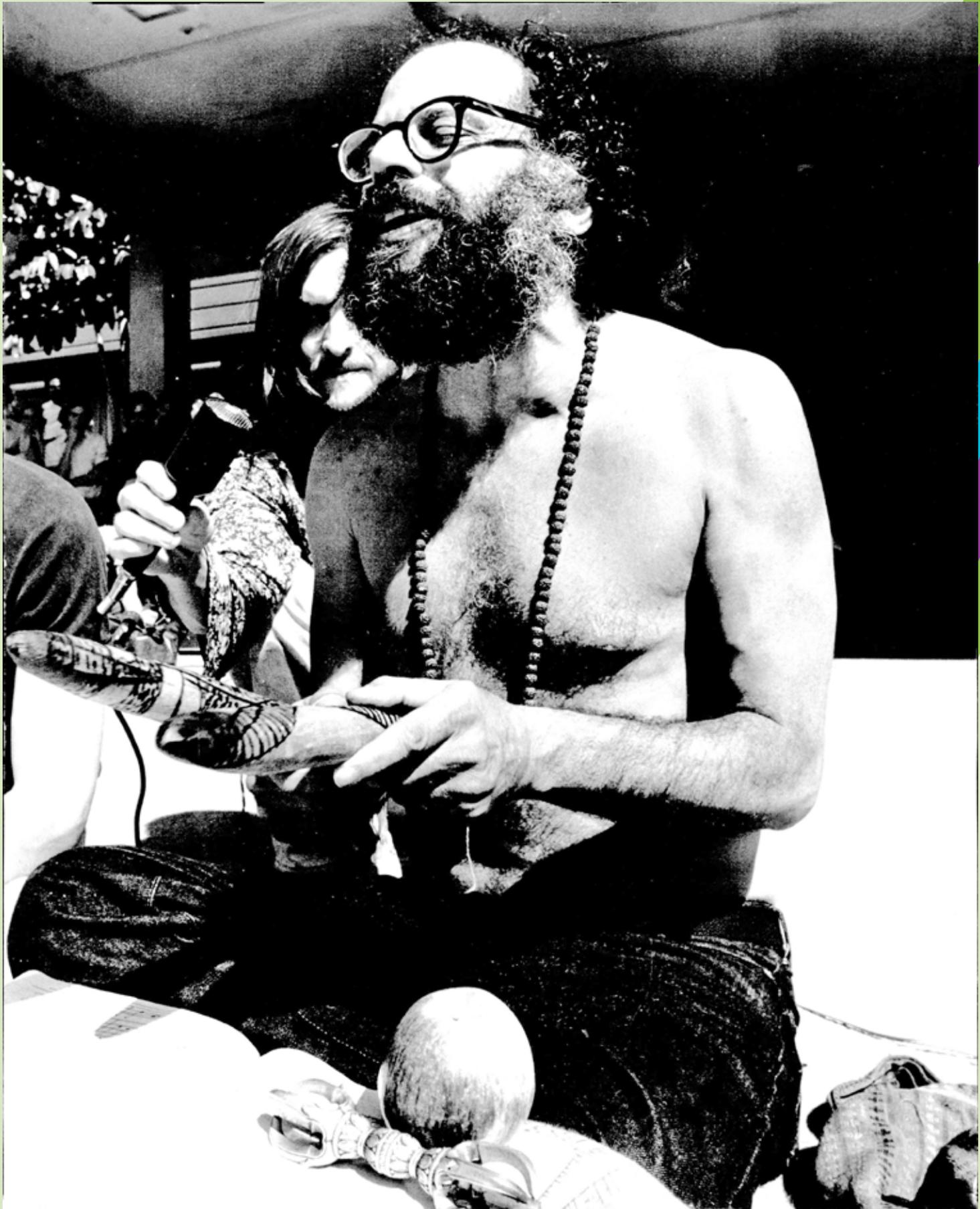
Three typed pages list the many awards Donald Fish received over his career, perhaps the most prestigious being the 1981 Clio Award for the *Time* magazine international campaign he designed and directed. Across the campaign is a blue and red magazine cover; one poster reads 'Time Reveals', and the cover is depicted as a can of sardines unfurling. For 'Time Elevates', a man is standing in an ascending lift, the doors, made from a *Time* magazine cover, opening. For 'Time Flies', there's a magazine cover on the tail of a plane.

No doubt his 2011 induction into the Design Institute of Australia Hall of Fame was another career highlight.

Fish's range and output were huge. Sifting through the collection I found company Christmas cards he crafted, perfectly preserved giant billboard posters, a watch for *Time* magazine, even a gold coin design for Gorbachev to celebrate perestroika and glasnost. It's a life's work, but there's also a black and white proof sheet from the 1950s that portrays the man. With a look of calm confidence, wearing a crisp white shirt, tie and cufflinks, he sits at his drafting board. In some frames Donald Fish looks to the camera, in others he's at work on a design, cigarette in one hand, one of the tools of his trade in the other. A stellar career ahead of him.

Andrea Black is a Sydney-based freelance writer.





Poet Allen Ginsberg sings for University of NSW students on the Library Lawn. Photo by Anton Cermak/*Sydney Morning Herald*

WORDS Barnaby Smith

ALLEN GINSBERG in Australia

Fifty years ago, the Beat poet and living symbol of the counterculture toured Australia, during a time of personal, spiritual and political awakening.

Anyone who climbed Uluru on the morning of 24 March 1972 – long before the ethical issues around doing so entered mainstream national conversation – might have stumbled across a curious sight: a middle-aged man, balding and bushy-bearded, sitting cross-legged with his eyes closed, meditating and perhaps chanting odd incantations. And under the influence of Queensland-grown psilocybin mushrooms.

This man was Allen Ginsberg. In this altered state atop a sacred place, his mind turned to his family. ‘Thought of you so sending love right here from the top,’ he wrote to his father from Uluru, ‘my face covered with little flies buzzing.’

The poet was midway through a reading tour of Australia – his one and only visit to the country – along with fellow Beat icon Lawrence Ferlinghetti and the Russian poet Andrei Voznesensky. Ginsberg had come to Uluru between readings in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, as part of a month-long stay that sent ripples through the Australian literary and arts community. The visit would have

a transformative impact on Ginsberg’s own poetics, politics and understanding of the world.

‘Great empty blue sky, ozone transparency laid over brush on red desert land – rare rain here a month ago – so lots of desert greens dotted below – Jack [Kerouac] was right about empty ness,’ he wrote to friend and Beat Generation alumnus Lucien Carr later in March.

Ginsberg was 45 years old when he arrived in Australia that autumn, 16 years after the publication of ‘Howl’ (with its infamous trial), and 11 years since the other long poem that brought him cultural fame, ‘Kaddish’. The previous year, 1971, had been a pivotal one even for him, a man whose life sprawled and embraced so many causes and aesthetics across all corners of the globe.

In the second half of that year, he travelled to Calcutta, India, and spent time in camps for refugees escaping genocide in Bangladesh. That trip, funded by Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones, had a profound effect upon him and yielded one of his most famous poems, ‘September on Jessore Road’. Later that year he stayed with John Lennon and Yoko Ono at a residence in New York state. As 1971 turned to 1972, he was working on an album with Bob Dylan that was pitched to be released on the famous Apple label, set up by The Beatles (it didn’t happen).

So, it’s fair to say that this trip to Australia early in 1972 occurred at a point not only when Ginsberg’s prominence and associations with the great and the good in pop culture were at their zenith, but also as a spiritual adjustment was taking place



Contact sheet photos of the poet in Central Australia. Courtesy of the Estate of Allen Ginsberg

within him. He would take the Refuge and Bodhisattva Vows later in 1972. Ginsberg's tour of Australia came amid an eventful period of personal development and political awakening.

'Ginsberg had wanted to visit Australia for at least ten years prior to his actual visit,' says David Wills, Beat Generation scholar and author of the book *World Citizen: Allen Ginsberg as Traveller*. 'Whilst on his famous round-the-world trip that included his long stay in India [in 1962], he wrote about wanting to continue on to Southeast Asia and down to Australia, but for various reasons he could not. In 1968 he also spoke about wanting to get back on the road and head to Australia, but again this fell through.'

The tour was not without incident. Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti and Ferlinghetti's nine-year-old son Lorenzo left San Francisco on 27 February 1972, stopping over in Hawaii and Fiji before reaching Adelaide, where they were joined by Voznesensky. The three poets were on the bill at Adelaide Writers' Week, part of the Adelaide Festival. Ginsberg's main reading took place at Adelaide Town Hall, but he held other more informal events across the city, including at Port Adelaide Town Hall, outdoors at Flinders University, and even in his own hotel room, entertaining followers until the small hours.

The reading at Adelaide Town Hall was, by all accounts, remarkable. Having encountered them in the days leading up to the event, Ginsberg invited Indigenous songmen from the Indulkana community in APY Lands to share the stage with him.

They took turns performing poems and songs, with Ginsberg reading his own work or that of William Blake,

and the songmen telling stories. This went on for hours and included improvised poems, using songsticks to keep time.

The poet and artist Richard Tipping, who was also on the bill at Writers' Week, remembers this event as 'completely extraordinary, a first time, nothing translated — an urgent didgeridoo, clap sticks, half a dozen dancers holding gum leaves.'

Writer and critic Murray Bramwell was also in attendance. 'Ginsberg celebrated the Aboriginal performers, giving them centre-stage and joining them with awkward, disinhibited Brooklyn Jewish dance moves of his own,' he says. 'The audience was thrilled by the spontaneity and the cultural and emotional unity of the event. This was classic Ginsberg — using his celebrity to bring together people and cultures in spite of the systemic racism in Australia at the time — and still now.'

Ginsberg's ability to bring people together was mentioned in reviews, with one write-up noting that it was 'a sad reflection that it took an American poet to bring Australia's major arts festival face to face with its responsibility to promote and present what is our only authentic national art form'. Ginsberg himself wrote in a letter that the Indigenous community had 'been shut out of the festival ... so I gave them an hour of my reading.'

After Adelaide, major readings took place in the eastern cities. There was moderate drama at a sold-out performance at Melbourne Town Hall when a 'huge parade of protesters came in and marched down all the aisles with big placards', according to Ferlinghetti in a 2010 interview. Responding to Voznesensky's presence, the group were

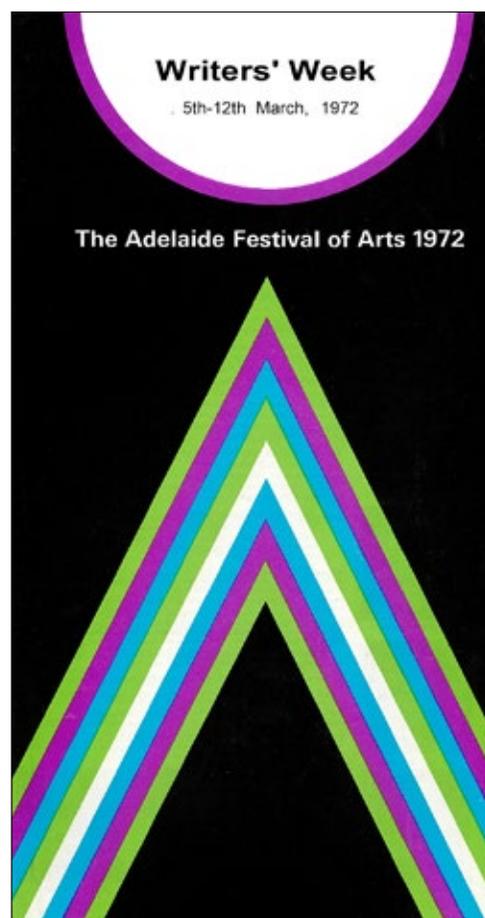
THE TOUR WAS NOT WITHOUT INCIDENT



protesting against the Soviet Union. They settled down, without police intervention, after 15 minutes.

There was also excitement at the Sydney reading, which took place at the Conservatorium of Music – an incident involving the enfant terrible artist Brett Whiteley that has passed into the city’s folklore. According to Whiteley biographer Ashleigh Wilson’s account, a shirtless Whiteley, drunk on whisky, started making a commotion during Ferlinghetti’s reading, which he thought was ‘boring’. Whiteley, who attended with his wife, Wendy, and friends, started shouting, waving his arms and ‘raving on incoherently’ until he was removed, and then, following a further scuffle in the foyer, arrested. The poet Pam Brown was in attendance that night and remembers that the ‘mad painter’ even bit a policeman’s ear. Ginsberg, meanwhile, was fairly placid about the incident, and ended up having dinner with Whiteley prior to leaving Sydney for Arnhem Land.

The Brisbane reading occurred in the final days of Ginsberg’s time in Australia (exact dates have been difficult to pin down). Held at the Student Union at the University of Queensland, it is perhaps the most interesting large, ticketed reading he gave, with, arguably, the most ‘underground’ or bohemian feel. Ginsberg and Voznesensky made a spontaneous decision to stop off in Brisbane, having been invited by the counterculture magazine *HARPO*. Perhaps because this performance was less formal than the others, there was, it seems, no controversy or confrontation. One attendee, Peter Marquis-Kyle, recalls that ‘lighted joints were handed out freely to the audience at the door’. The Aboriginal pastor and activist Don Brady was at this



Cover of 1972 Adelaide Writers' Week program

GINSBERG'S LETTERS HOME FROM AUSTRALIA SUGGEST HE EVEN CONSIDERED MOVING HERE TO LIVE

reading and performed on didgeridoo, with dancers who gave an 'exhibition of Corroboree', according to a *HARPO* report of the event. Ginsberg donated \$100 from door takings to Brady.

That same *HARPO* review also gives an insight into how Ginsberg was treated by the Australian mainstream media. The review mocks the inane questions of a TV reporter at a press event — 'How many poems have you written, Mr Ginsberg?' — and describes how a newspaper photographer asked the poet to wear a white feather in his hair because 'he didn't suit their conception of what a "beat" poet looks like'. The resulting interview in the *Courier Mail*, the *HARPO* author writes, 'seems as if it was done for five minutes over the phone by a child of ten with limited vocabulary'.

Ginsberg had a loose 'set list' that remained fairly consistent during his Australian tour. He read several poems written while he was here, including some composed on the day of performance, as at the Sydney reading. Aboriginal elements — clap sticks, didgeridoos — were also incorporated on numerous occasions. Ginsberg accompanied himself on harmonium at times for what he defined as 'blues ragas' that also featured sitar, guitar and dobro. He sang William Blake's 'Nurse's Song' from *Songs of Innocence* to his own melody, as well as other Blake works, in most, perhaps all, readings. Ginsberg tried and failed to give up smoking while travelling in Australia and regularly performed a song or mantra titled 'Put Down Your Cigarette Rag'. Many recollections of Ginsberg's Australian readings highlight this particular piece, which lambasted the tobacco industry and warned of smoking's health perils.

Relatively recent works such as 'September at Jessore Road' and 'Wales Visitation' certainly made appearances. When it came to his most famous poem, 'Howl', however, Ginsberg was reluctant. Tipping remembers Ginsberg announcing at Adelaide Town Hall, 'I wrote "Howl" a long time ago, and don't read it anymore, but I've been asked to read it tonight.' Ginsberg could also be riled by certain requests, with one attendee at the Melbourne reading stating that Ginsberg was 'visibly irritated and refused' when asked to repeat a performance of the Blake poem. Another element of Ginsberg's participation in these readings was as occasional translator for Voznesensky's Russian poems.

Beyond these high-profile performances, Ginsberg made excursions into the country's more remote areas, often to visit Indigenous communities. As well as the visit to Uluru, 'a holy rock mountain with ancient petroglyphs', as he wrote in another letter, he also visited Arnhem Land, where he spent time with Wandjuk Marika, the Indigenous leader, artist and musician. At Yirrkala, Ginsberg observed a traditional funeral with burial rites that lasted days and exchanged songs with Marika (even singing in Pitjantjatjara). Experiences like this were important to Ginsberg and his writing; two lectures he gave in 1976, titled 'Spontaneous Poetics', drew on what he learned on this trip among Indigenous Australians, with poetic breath, rhythm and communal participation being central themes.

Ginsberg also travelled in Far North Queensland just before the Brisbane reading, although it is one section of his Australian trip about which little seems to be known. It is certain, however, that he visited the alternative living community of Kuranda, near Cairns, and 'spoke with the people who have bought small farms in the area, and a small delegation from the hippy commune' according to a tiny article in the *Cairns Post*. He declined requests to read from his works at Kuranda; instead 'he sang many verses ad lib and was accompanied by those present'.

Some of the most interesting anecdotes from people who remember the Ginsberg tour of Australia are of personal interactions. For example, Murray Bramwell, a young PhD student at the time, rang Ginsberg's Adelaide hotel in the hope of meeting or interviewing him. The hotel took a message, and Bramwell resigned himself to nothing coming of it.

'A day or so later, one of the people in the group house where we were living called out to me and said there was someone called Allen Ginsberg on the phone, he wants to speak to you,' Bramwell recalls. 'I was amazed, and impressed by his gracious matter-of-factness. We talked for about ten minutes, mostly about his enthusiasm for these blues ragas and his plans for recording with Dylan.'

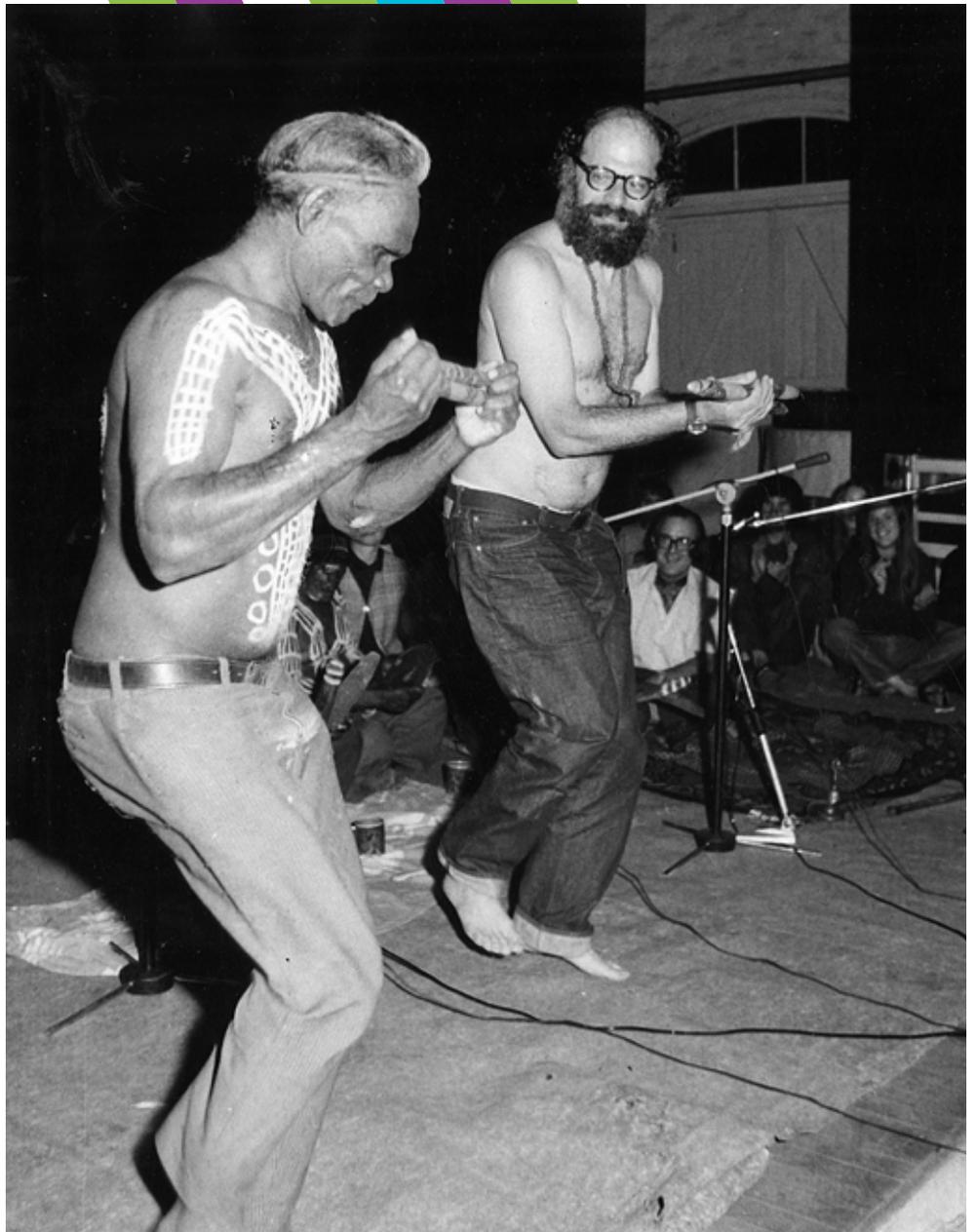
Tipping, 22 at the time, was tasked with driving Ginsberg from his hotel to the reading at Flinders University, and remembers discussing the poet's concept of 'Moloch' from 'Howl' in relation to the Adelaide cityscape. In the same city, the poet Robert Adamson was among those whom Ginsberg

entertained in his hotel room until late; he was advised by Ginsberg to contact the American poet Robert Duncan, sparking a trans-Pacific friendship between Adamson and Duncan that lasted decades. Pam Brown's boyfriend sat next to Ginsberg on a flight from Sydney to Darwin, and the poet signed a copy of *Hamlet* for him. It was perhaps because of this geniality and accessibility among Australians that another Beat poet, Gary Snyder, was moved to tell Ginsberg after his own visit here in 1981, that he 'heard many recollections of you in Australia'.

Intriguingly, Ginsberg's letters home from Australia suggest he even considered moving here to live, though it's hard to believe he entertained this idea too seriously. He was put off by the country's racism, which he certainly came across in Adelaide, and most likely elsewhere. In a letter to Snyder, he noted the relatively cheap price of land, but wrote, 'If there weren't such tough white karma I'd sell m'lot and emigrate and rusticate by the southern oceanside.' Ginsberg planned to return for the 1998 Adelaide Festival, but died in April 1997.

Another unknown is the identity of a young musician with whom Ginsberg had a brief fling in Adelaide. 'Beautiful 20-year-old dobro player who stayed over and slept with me and gave me a yoga book,' he wrote to fellow poet Gregory Corso. Who this musician was, and what happened to him, is a mystery. But he would have a story to tell.

Barnaby Smith is an arts writer, poet and musician who lives in the Blue Mountains.



Allen Ginsberg dancing onstage with an Indigenous performer in Adelaide, 16 March 1972. Photo by News Ltd

PHOTO ESSAY

A dramatic perspective of Mona Vale ocean pool before dawn in winter. Situated on a rock shelf, the 30 metre pool and its smaller counterpart were carved out in the 1930s by relief workers during the Depression, becoming a popular swimming spot for generations of Northern Beaches locals. Photo by Nick Moir





Immersion

Whether it be into the deep waters of the sea or those of a flood plain, into the thick of unbridled teenage joy, or into a gravity-defying performance, these images from *Sydney Morning Herald* photographers plunge us into a singular glorious moment.



Koranis (Micky) Weerachaiyong has designed his own amazing outfit for Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. He says of his outfit: 'this year, I have created huge wings of fabric and colour feathers, decorated with glittering sequins and different colour beads spread over the front and back. In addition, there will be heart shapes, circles and free forms all surrounded by little flowers.' 6 March 2021. Photo by Steven Siewert



A swimmer cools off by leaping into the water from Flat Rock at Bondi Beach to escape Sydney's soaring summer temperatures.
Photo by Jessica Hromas



School leavers celebrate the end of a year of lockdowns and remote learning at Schoolies Week in Byron Bay, a popular alternative to the Gold Coast for NSW students after the closure of the Queensland border in 2021 due to COVID restrictions. Photo by Natalie Grono



Then Deputy Premier John Barilaro, standing alongside Irish dancers, and then Treasurer Dominic Perrottet, both wearing green ties, toast the relaxing of COVID restrictions for indoor venues with a Guinness at the Mercantile Hotel in The Rocks during St Patrick's Day celebrations. Photo by Rhett Wyman



In late 2021, water flows into sections of Gayini that have been largely dry since 2016. Gayini is a 87,816 hectare property owned and managed by its Traditional Custodians, the Nari Nari Tribal Council, in the Lower Murrumbidgee Valley. Photo by Brook Mitchell



Dancer and choreographer Lucky Lartey dances on a cricket pitch at Beaman Park in Earlwood during a COVID-19 lockdown in Sydney in September 2021. Photo by Dominic Lorrimer





Jason and Sarah Cielo with their children Stella, Rome and Rocco had been living in their bus at Moree showground for three months. The family, who missed crossing the Queensland border by two hours before it closed, were unable to travel to a new home and jobs in Cairns. Photo by Louise Kennerley

The New Lollipop Lady



Summer in the Mallee.

is rust coloured soil
singing and shifting

with all the stories
that came before.

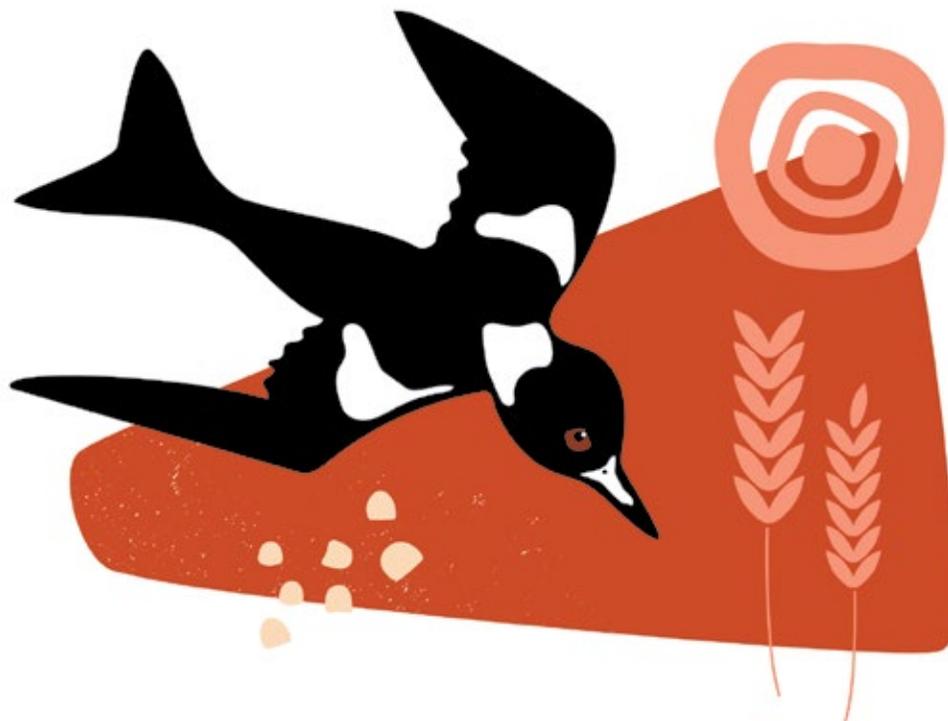
It's magpies,
swooping low-fierce,
to protect their young.
Letting me know:
they belong to this place.
It's their home.

In the sweltering evenings,
the high school kids,
thirsty from
harvest-handling
come down off the farms
to beg for cold tinnies
outside the *Old Colonial*.

*If yer big enough an ugly enough
to harvest the wheat, then yer
flippin big an ugly enough
to drink the nectar of the wheat,*

the barman
always shushes them
round the back.

My Dad says
proper beer is made
from barley though.



Summer in the Mallee

is the sure burn
of my fair skin,
even under layers
of SPF 50.
It's my hair,
bleached to the edge
of strawberry blonde
by the unforgiving sun,
hanging slick-wet
down the back of my neck

as I walk home, alone,
on Sunday mornings,
from the swimming pool.

Summer is Dad, looking up
from the paper,
*saying Buddy, this can't go on.
Y've lived here
since you were a dot,
ya need to start
bloody makin friends.*

Summer is Dad,
making me fill the radiators:
the scalding burn
of hot metal on skin,
as I crawl over hot car bonnets
to wash the windscreens.

It's the slow drip
drop drip
of the outside tap
down the garage
where Dad fixes
heavy vehicles:

the car yard filled with
farm utes, tractors,
and out-of-town trucks
that broke down
halfway to bloody nowhere,
and had to be towed in.

It's missing Mum's lemonade,
missing Mum's tomato salad,
missing the way she'd
quietly sneak in
and hang a wet tea towel
over the whirring Kmart fan
in the corner of my bedroom

to cool me while I slept.

This summer, in the Mallee,
is missing my Mum,
and missing my Mum,
and missing my Mum.



First Day Back

First day back
after summer holidays,
there's always something new.

This time,
there's a new crossing guard,
holding the crossing sign
outside our school.

Hey, she says,
as Dad and I cross the road.
My name's Rebel.

She smiles
the widest, whitest smile
I've ever seen.
Rebel has black curly hair,
with a dyed-red fringe,
and skin the colour
of a Werther's toffee-caramel.

Rebel has silver hoop earrings
all up the outside
of one of her ears,

and another ring
in the middle of her nose,
kind of underneath,
like you'd see
on a bull.

On Rebel, the ring doesn't look bullish, though
On Rebel, it looks beautiful.

*That's probably not her real name,
the new lollipop girl,* says Dad,
rolling his eyes, and shaking his head,
like he does some days
at my messy room.

Don't be rude! I whisper.

Besides, something about her face
tells me it is.
Rebel just fits her.
It fits her real good.

Rebel looks familiar somehow,
but I don't know from where.

Dad glances back at Rebel
over his shoulder,
like he thinks so as well.

Don't get any ideas Jed, he says,
looking at me
so closely
it feels like his eyes
are boring into my skin.

Ideas about what?
I peer across the road
at her purple armband tattoo,
ripped blue jeans,
and black lace-up boots.

At home, after wash up;
after sausages, mashed potato,
and peas that Dad made way too mushy –
I close the door of my bedroom
and get out my jar of paper clips.

I cut,
and bend,
and squeeze,

and cut,
and bend,
and squeeze,
until tiny silver earrings are moulded
all down the edge
of one of my ears.

After a while,
Dad yells from the living room:
*Oi! I hope you're not
getting into mischief up there, son!*
I'm not! I yell back,
quickly sliding the fake earrings
off my ear, and into
my top desk drawer.

But I know, somehow,
that because of Rebel,
the new school crossing guard,
who arrived after summer break,

our lives
will never
be the same.

I just feel it.

I feel it, deep down
in my bones.



Cuppa

Every morning,
at 7.35 am,
Dad still pours
two cups of tea.

As if it's
a muscle-memory
he can't yet control.

As if my Mum's
going to walk through the door
at any moment:

wilting-tired from night shift
down the hospital.

Full of stories
about new lives delivered,
or little babes lost.

They'll share
12 precious minutes,
maybe even 15,

before Dad has to leave
for work.

Mum complained,
sometimes,
that they'd become
*like ships, passing
in the night.*

But the morning cuppa
is how I knew

there was still
so much love.

The khaki green mug
with the painted orange rim,
that's Dad.

Mum's is delicate white porcelain,
flowering with banksias.

She loved that cup.
Got it three years ago,
during a trip to Melbourne
to see the Margaret Preston
exhibition.

This morning,
there is no milk
for the morning cuppas.

Dad is standing
with the fridge door open.

He stares,
and stares
at the shelves,

as if a carton
will suddenly appear.

Their two cups are already
on the table,

an earl grey teabag
waiting in each.

*I'll go to the corner store, I say.
Thanks, buddy, Dad replies.*

The air outside
is a chilly 10 celsius,
even though it's forecast
to get to 38 by noon.

That's January in the Mallee:
as Dad would say, *fucken brutal.*

Outside the corner store,
a red car is parked.

I know all the vehicles
in this town.

This one's new.

I peek in the window
as I pass by.
Rebel, the new crossing guard,
is curled up in the back seat,
a blanket pulled over her.

Her face
is all smushed up
against the upholstery.
I feel embarrassed, somehow,
at having seen her;

at her, asleep,
not knowing.

I think this car
is where
the new crossing guard
lives.

I hurry home, trying
not to think about it.

When I hand Dad
the litre of fresh milk,
he sighs with relief.





Reception

Sitting in the busy reception area
of the school,

in the comfy red chair
just across
from where the front office staff
shuffle-shuffle their papers
and
kerchuk-badom, kerchuk-badom,
staple our school reports,

you hear
all kinds of things.

Things a grade six kid like me
probably shouldn't hear –
even an *extremely precocious one*,
which is what Mum used to say,

when I got to eavesdropping.

Eavesdropping means
listening in, *on purpose*,
when nobody knows you are.

I know, because it was on
the *advanced spelling list*
last term,
and I'm the best *Under 12's* speller
this side of Bendigo.

I know most of the secrets
of Windsor Lake Primary,

from sitting very quietly
in this red reception chair,
every Tuesday morning,

with my head
in my poetry notebook,
swinging my feet
like my mind is elsewhere.

This morning,
Mr Patterson, the president
of the *Parents & Citizens Committee*
is leaning over the front desk,
tapping his fingers impatiently.

Lizzie and Petra,
who run the front office,
are pretending he's not there.

I can tell by the way
they're deliberately
not looking up:

Lizzie at the photocopier,
patting her new silver-rinse down,
as she loads the paper tray
to run off the newsletter,
and Petra at her desk,
cutting *late slips*
out of light green
A4 paper.

Mum called Mr Patterson
President of the P's & Q's,
because he loves making rules,
and always has his nose
in everyone's business.

Ahhhhem, ahem,
Mr Patterson clears his throat.

Lizzie's neck tenses, and
Petra scrunches her eyes smaller,
but neither of them look up.

Hello? Elizabeth?
P's & Q's says,
in an annoyed voice.

Lizzie, she corrects him,
yet again.

Rightio. Lizzie.
I was wondering...
Mr Patterson pauses, and
raps his knuckles
on the front desk counter,
as if there's something delicate
he wants to discuss.
I was wondering...where's...
is Brian coming back?

Lizzie and Petra
exchange glances,
like they knew
this conversation
was coming.

Brian is the old crossing guard,
who used to work
outside our school.

Brian knew all our names,
and walked slower than I've ever
seen anyone walk.

Martin in my class
said Brian was
a war veteran.
Martin's Mum told him so.

He looks harmless, whispered Martin,
but I bet he killed, like,
a heap of people.
Ages ago.
Anyway, they were probably just Japs.

Miss Colliard, our grade five teacher
last year,
she sent Martin out of class,
for *racially insensitive language*.

When I told my Dad about that, he said,
Well, I mean, this town's pretty white,
mate.
Poor kid probably doesn't know
any better. I hear this teacher of yours
has some very progressive ideas.

But he does know better.
When Martin MacDonald said *Japs*,
I saw the glee in his eyes.

I saw his bottom lip curl up.

Brian won't be coming back, says Lizzie
matter-of-factly to Mr Patterson.
He had a minor stroke over summer.
His daughter notified us during the break.

I see. I see.
Goodness.
That's a shame.

Petra looks up, from her late-slip-cutting
and over at Lizzie and *P's & Q's*.

Her eyes meet mine, and for a moment,
we can see each other's thinking.

And was there...
Mr Patterson follows Petra's eyes,
turns his head and looks at me.

I quickly stare back down
at my poetry notebook.
Was there a recruitment process,
to replace him?

Tuesdays

*It was the last week of the holidays,
Petra pipes up.
We needed someone right away.*

*This is a small community,
grumbles P's & Q's,
I'd have thought the P&C would have
a say.*

*Is the...person...the young uhh...
the young lady... is she, uhhhh, local?*

*She is now, says Lizzie.
She's signed a contract, says Petra.
We interviewed her last week.
We did all the relevant checks,
Ian approved her.*

*P's & Q's looks surprised.
Well then, he says, I guess,
if the principal approved her,
it's a done deal.
She just seems a bit...
inexperienced.*

*P's & Q's drums his fingers
on the counter again,*

*stands there for a moment, as if
he has other things to say.*

*Me and Dad,
we live next door
to Mr Sinclair,
the principal.*

*He went to the city last Monday,
to see his sister and nieces,
for the final week
of summer break.*



*Dad made me water his plants
every day.*

So I know

*that Mr Sinclair
was out of town
for Rebel's interview,*

*that Lizzie and Petra
must have chose her
themselves.*

*I wonder what he thought,
Mr Sinclair
when he pulled up and saw her,
the new lollipop girl,*

*all punked up like that
in front of the school.*

*She's half Jamaican.
In case you were wondering,
says Petra, informatively.*

*Add a bit of flavour
to the town, probably.
Oh, I didn't...
stammers P's & Q's Patterson
I wasn't saying...
that really doesn't matter to me,
at all.*

*Excellent, replies Petra.
We didn't think it would.*

*Lizzie smirks,
and winks over at me,*

*as Mr Patterson
strides away down the hall.*

*On Tuesdays,
I see the counsellor
at school.*

*I hate talking with her;
hate missing class,
hate all the other kids
knowing where I've gone.*

*When the counsellor
sticks her head
into the reception area,
her reading glasses poised
on the tip of her nose,*

and calls for me,

*I get a sick feeling,
in my stomach.*

*Mum used to call it
my anxiety.*

*Back then, Dad called it
mollycoddling,*

*but now,
he makes me come here himself.*

*Things are so different,
now she's gone.*

*You might be a bit isolated, buddy.
That's what yer teacher says.*

*And well, you know how I am,
I'm no good at this stuff.
I don't know
what to bloody do
with you.*

*When Dad talks like this,
his eyes won't meet mine,
and he doesn't know
where to put his hands,
and his shoulders droop.*

*The truth is,
this counsellor,
she doesn't know either.*

*what to bloody do
with me.*



Home Time

At home time,
the boys from the Catholic school
down the street
are always there.

They trail me home:

jeering,
and laughing,
and throwing bits of
bark and little sticks
they pick up along the way.

Saying *fucken fairy*,
look at the way he walks:
all up on the
tips of his toes.

At the start of last year,
they stopped for a little bit.

After they heard
about Mum.

But now they're back.

Every day.
Waiting around the corner
from my school gate.

They sniff the air,
the pack of them,

like hounds.

I don't run.
I just write new poems
quietly, inside my head,

as they follow me

all
the
way
home.

Hitch

Today, a dusty red mazda
pulls up beside me.

I don't look over,
just keep walking.

Sergeant MacDonald, Martin's Dad,
who comes every year
to talk to us kids
about *stranger danger*,
says that's what we're supposed to do.

But really,
Windsor Lakes
is a tiny place.

I know for sure
there is only

one stranger
in town.

Need a lift, mate?
Rebel says, leaning friendly
out the window
*Looks like you could lose
some of this dead weight.*

She rolls her eyes,
and flicks her thumb
at the bully-boys behind us,
who've stopped
taunting me.
to hover
on the sidewalk,
and watch.

There's a faded rainbow sticker
half-peeling off her driver-side door.

And another one
that reads: *Pay the rent.*
You are on Aboriginal land.

Before I can think,
my mouth smiles back at Rebel,
and my body propels me round
to the passenger side door.

I don't know why,
but I don't expect Rebel's car
to be so clean.

The seats look like they've
just been vacuumed
and even the windows
have been *Spray and Wiped*.

There's no dust on the dash.

Two suitcases are packed
neatly in the back.

I'm Rebel, she says,
like everyone in this town
doesn't already know.
And you are?

Jed.

No one's asked my name
in such a long time.

Okay Jed, mate,
tell me where to go.
Let's get you home to Mum.

I live at 17 Oleander Drive.
Right at the traffic lights, then left, then
left again about four streets down, I say.

And then, for some reason, I add
But my Mum's not at home.
She's dead.
Anyway,
thanks for the lift.

I want to grab the words,
and force them back down my throat.

Oh Jed, babe, says Rebel,
taking her eyes off the road
for a moment.
The sing-song way she says it;
the way her eyes cloud over,
make it seem like
she cares.

Dad won't be home for
another couple hours.

Could we...
we could go for a drive.

This is not
what Martin's Dad, the sergeant,
would recommend.

I expect he'd say I'm being
plain stupid.

Going against
all the safety rules.

Rebel slows the car down for a moment,
like she's thinking.

Then she smiles at me,
and sighs, as if to say
why not?

She puts her foot on the accelerator,
and the boys
from the Catholic school
down the road,

fade to tiny specks
in the rear view.



We speed past the post office;
past the Old Colonial;
past the swimming pool
and the old Mitre 10 hardware store.

We careen past
the yellow flecked canola fields

that are the gateway
to the edge of town.

On the road like this,
with the cloudless
purple-blue sky

stretching wide and low
in front of us

like the promise of forever,

and the paddocks
burnt mid-summer beige,
like rustling ghost-fields -

out here,
with Rebel at the wheel,
The Mallee doesn't seem
like such a bad place.

Not a bad place, at all.

We drive for a full half hour,
windows down,
the hot air whooshing past us,
like dragon's breath,

and Rebel's black curls
dancing this way, and that.

The silence between us
is like a gift.

My mind empties,
and suddenly, I feel
like everything
will come alright.

You'll be okay, kid, says Rebel,
as we turn around,
and drive back in to town.
Thanks, I reply.
Even though I don't yet understand
exactly for what.

Fear

I see the flashing blue lights
of Sergeant MacDonald's patrol car
the moment we round the corner

to Oleander Drive

Fucken holy Jesus, says Rebel,
her hands tightening
around the steering wheel.

Of course.
The bully-boys.
They must have told.
Let's just turn around, I say,
and get out of here.

Cute idea, kid, Rebel says,
under her breath,
but for sure, that cop
is just itching
to shoot me dead.

The police car is driving towards us now,
lights and siren still on,
as if we weren't approaching
home anyway.

Half the street
is coming out of their houses
to sticky-beak.
Sergeant MacDonald
is a fool, I say,
viciously.

But Rebel says, *Nah kid,*
probably just worried
about you.
I'm new in town,
I guess.

Shouldn't've taken you for a drive,
but you seemed
like you needed it.

Suddenly, I feel very small,



I don't even know Rebel,
and now, because of me,
she's knee deep in shit.

Rebel pulls the car over
in front of Principal Sinclair's house.

It's then that I notice: Dad is home,
standing on our front lawn.
He looks a mess,
like he did
the morning Mum died,

when he sat at the kitchen table
for almost two hours,
late for work,
in front of two cold cups of tea,

until the coppers knocked on the door.

Martin's Dad is at the driver side
window now,
pointing his gun at Rebel.

I've never seen that gun
out of its holster before.

I don't think anyone has.

Mum used to joke
that there was
no weapon in there,
only chewing gum wrappers
and cigarettes.

But now, the gun
is pointed at Rebel,
and he's yelling

*You alright, son?
Get out of the car!
Get out of the car!*

Principal Sinclair
and his wife Judy
are on their front lawn now.

I open the door
and climb out of the car.

Dad stumbles forward;
wraps his arms around me,
like he hasn't done
since I was a really little kid.

Hands on the wheel!
Sergeant MacDonald is screaming
at Rebel,
Keep your hands on the wheel!

Rebel's whole body
is shaking, but she
keeps her head down,
and her hands on the wheel,
like I silently will her to.

She didn't do anything wrong,
I look up at Dad.
I asked her to take me for a drive.
That's all.

She should know better, says Dad.
What did she think she was doing,
driving away with someone's kid?
You let Matthew handle this.

Rebel is out of the car now,
with her hands on the bonnet.

Sergeant Matthew MacDonald
is taking a dark brown wallet
from the pocket of her jeans.
He flicks through
her medicare card,
a drivers licence,
some credit cards,
with one hand.

The barrel of his gun
is still trained on Rebel
with the other.

Rebel looks younger now
than she seemed.
The fear in her eyes
reduces her
to about nineteen.

Something flutters from the wallet:
floats to the ground.

Sergeant Mac picks it up.
Unfolds it.
Squints closely at it.
Lowers the gun.

He looks over at Dad.
You know this young lady Mick?
Do you?

Of course not, Dad sounds
angry, and confused.

Wait there! The Sergeant barks at Rebel.
And don't move, if you know
what's good for you.

He walks over.
Hands the dog-eared photograph
to Dad.

Dad looks down at it.

And the blood slowly drains
from his face,

like he's seen a ghost.

Rebel's eyes meet mine,
her hands still on the bonnet
of her dusty beat up
red hatchback.

Sorry, she mouths.
But I have no idea what for.
I peer over Dad's shoulder.
The photograph is faded;
creased into quarters,
as if it's been carried round
for years.

In it is a woman with a wide smile
and a short curly afro:

Rebel's Mum,
you can just tell.

Her skin
is the cedar-brown
of farming soil,
after the winter rain.

She's standing with a young man
who I realise
could only be my Dad —
My Dad, younger.
My Dad, back when.

The beautiful Black woman
has her hand on her belly.

Underneath her hand
is a swelling bump.
And somehow, I know
that Rebel is under there.

Dad is smiling down,
a goofy-happy grin on his face.

Dad looks at the photograph,
then back at Rebel,
then down at the picture again.

It's then that I realise
why Rebel seems familiar:

the way she moves,
her lopsided smile,
that easy way about her.
They're just like Dad's.

Dad's mouth opens,
and closes.
Then opens again.

He slowly crumples to the ground,
till he's sitting down
on the grassy sidewalk
outside our home.

Rebel. Dad finally says,
stunned.

That's what she called you.
He kind of...chuckles to himself,
though his hands
are wringing each other,
like they do when he's
really nervous.

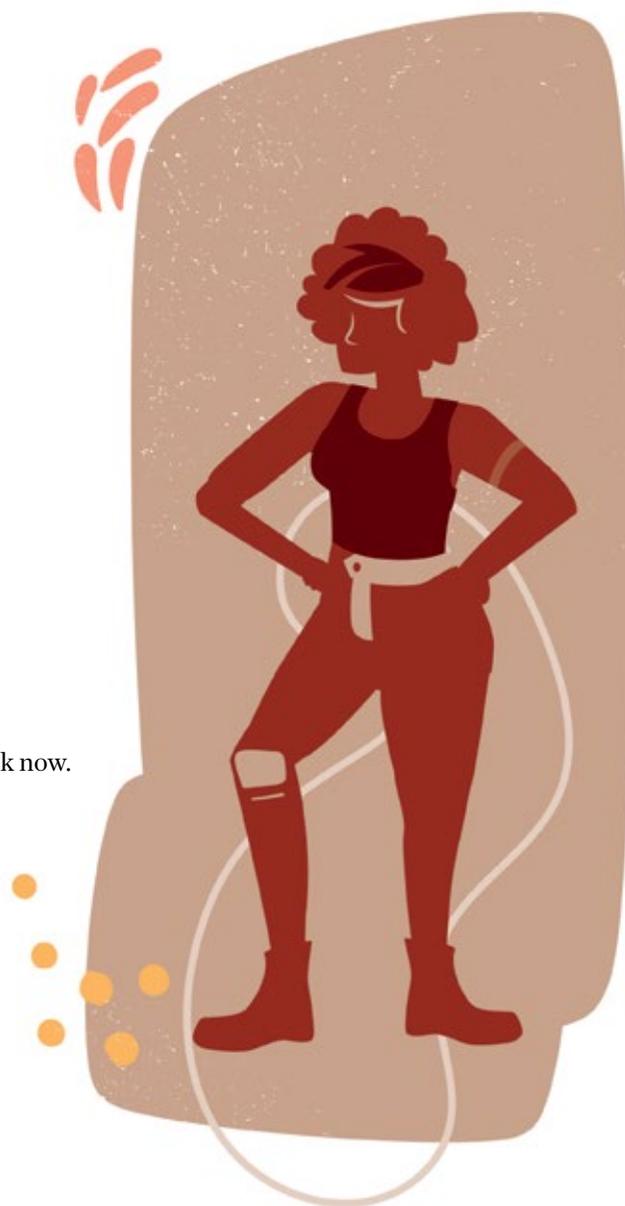
Dad's not a big one for words,
even at the best of times.

I'm sorry, says Rebel,
her hands still flat
on the bonnet of the car,
like she's about to be shot,

even though Sergeant Mac
has put his gun away,
and is standing right back now.

*I'm sorry to just
turn up like this.*

*And I know...
I know it's a lot.*



Maxine Beneba Clarke is a writer of short fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Her most recent poetry collection is *How Decent Folk Behave* (Hachette).

WORDS Elizabeth Humphrys



The Long March from Wollongong

Protesters, listening to singer Jeannie Lewis, once they reach Parliament House in Macquarie Street. From *Tribune* negatives.

A historian finds rich industrial history, and photography, in the archives.

In October 1982 in Wollongong there was a mass meeting of 20,000 workers. Angry about government inaction over rising unemployment and mass retrenchments, they voted to organise a protest march to Sydney, 90 kilometres away.



Wollongong, known as Steel City, had three things at the centre of town life: coal mining, the steelworks and ‘the Big Australian’, BHP. It was also home to organised and powerful unions, and for decades that combination had delivered jobs and decent living standards. By the 1980s, however, things had significantly transformed. Those at the mass meeting were living through a severe economic crisis that was already five recessions deep and a decade long.

The Port Kembla Steelworks and BHP were restructuring, and for many that meant getting the sack. Jobs were few and far between, yet politicians often told the unemployed they themselves were to blame if they did not find work.

A few weeks after the mass meeting, 40 mainly unemployed young people set off for Sydney on what they called the ‘Right to Work March’. They were demanding the right to a job. Nick Southall, then a 20-year-old unemployed activist who

took part, remembers leaving the Trade Union Centre at Lowden Square, seen off by locals including the Secretary of the Labour Council, retired miners, and the union’s Women’s Auxiliary.

Over the next four days and nights they trekked up the coast, greeted and cheered along the route by passing cars and trucks, as well as residents who called out support from their homes and front yards. Marchers passed through Thirroul and Coledale



Poster advertising the march in Wollongong. Redback Graphix, silkscreen print by Gregor Cullen

on the Illawarra escarpment, then on to Sutherland, Gymea and Sans Souci in the southern suburbs of Sydney, spending the last night in Mascot.

Their ranks grew to 150 on the final day of the march as more Illawarra residents joined them. Southall, who later became a leading scholar of economic struggles in Wollongong

during this period, recalls that when they arrived at Belmore Park, opposite Central Station, they were greeted by thousands: 'Construction sites had walked off the job to join the march, others left metal and engineering shops, and mail workers stopped work.'

Southall describes how the rally departed the park and headed up

George Street, turned past the corporate headquarters of BHP on Hunter Street, and then went on to Parliament House. At its peak, the crowd swelled to 20,000, bringing Sydney to a standstill during peak hour. A group of singers performed a ballad the marchers had written en route, to the tune of *Click Goes the Shears*:

Down in the Gong we're all on the dole,
Looking for a job's like climbing a greasy pole,
The bosses in Mercedes they tell us times
are slack,
But they keep making profits and we just
get the sack!

The marchers' feet had been left bleeding and bandaged by the long journey, but their efforts pushed their concerns on to the front pages of major newspapers.

Among the demonstrators that day were workers from the Garden Island dockyards, another worksite with a rich history of struggling for workers' rights. Their contingent included seasoned unionist Bert Heinemann, a highly skilled metal worker and avid photographer. Heinemann had the proficiency to build his own camera equipment, and for years he'd documented workers' struggles for the Communist Party of Australia's newspaper *Tribune*. His photos of the demonstration, held in the State Library of New South Wales collection, include one of his fellow Garden Island workers holding a banner in 'Support and Welcome' of the 'Wollongong Right to Work Marchers'.

Southall saw the Garden Island contingent at the demonstration, but he does not remember meeting Heinemann. Yet, they came together in a different way in my research as two activists, a generation apart, who participated in working-class struggle and documented it. I saw the threads of their lives laced together in the Library's collections. One of the joys of archival research is seeing how collective political efforts and moments of personal

endeavour are connected – on this occasion, at the same demonstration.

Bert Heinemann began his working life as a teenager, an apprentice fitter and turner in Zetland, in the wake of the Great Depression and on the eve of World War II. In this job he encountered older workers who had lived through the first large-scale industrial struggles in Australia in the late 1800s, known as the Great Strikes. Encountering these men, and his own early experiences on the job, shaped the direction of his life. Heinemann had only three years of high school but said that understanding politics, and the world, was essential: ‘For young people entering work, the job of understanding the total workings of our society is of utmost importance.’

Heinemann would become an active communist, a shop steward at Garden Island, and the Secretary of his local branch of the Australian Metal Workers’ Union in Granville. His extensive collection of photographs and slides record his personal and political life and provide insight into the things he valued. In one image, Heinemann’s workmates pose for the camera, proudly dressed in Sunday best. In another there is a spread of food on a picnic blanket, about to be shared and delicately displayed for the camera. Another captures the energy of a single moment, as workers in Sydney rush through the city towards the Stock Exchange to protest the sacking of the Whitlam government in 1975. The long boom was over and unemployment was on the rise.

We are living through a new period of economic upheaval. In 2020, COVID-19 delivered Australia its first official recession in 30 years, and unemployment returned to the centre of our national experience. In Wollongong, the unemployment rate is much higher than the national average, especially among young people.

Forty years after the Right to Work March to Sydney, a new generation have



Marchers at Central Station, from *Tribune* negatives of the job march from Wollongong to Sydney, December 1982

been organising. Early in the pandemic I stumbled into a Zoom meeting to find a group of young unemployed people discussing Southall’s research and scholarly writings. They were drawing from experiences four decades earlier, when Southall and others took part in the Right to Work March and ran the Wollongong Out of Workers’ Union.

One of these young organisers, Dean Fletcher, says that for him the most inspiring aspect of the work of Southall and others was ‘their mutual aid programs, the kitchens they had set up, and the rooms they had for people to sleep in’. That ‘model of providing free help for anyone who needs it’ is at the centre of the work he and others do in Wollongong today, including weekly advocacy and assistance stalls for any unemployed people who need help.

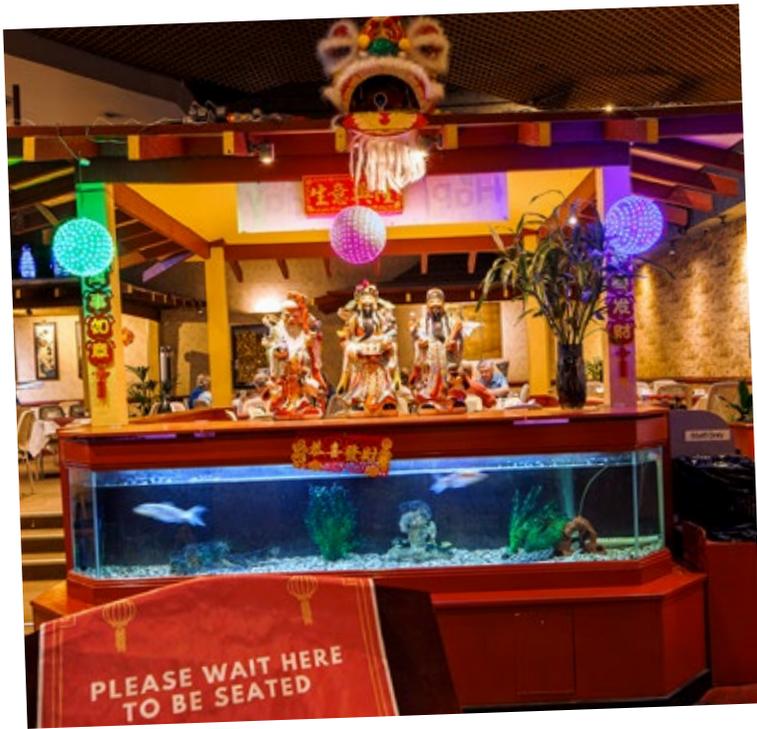
The Right to Work marchers and the unions could not stem the tide of job losses in the Illawarra in the 1980s. High unemployment levels extended across the 1980s and beyond. Today, ongoing economic stagnation and

intergenerational unemployment remain a problem. BHP departed Wollongong in 2015, which would have been unimaginable for those marchers.

The forces that prompted the economic crisis in Wollongong in the 1980s could not be held back by a band of marchers. Nevertheless, Nick Southall says that being part of the movement changed his and others’ lives for the better. In 2010, the Right to Work marchers were presented with community awards by the South Coast Labour Council as thanks for their contribution to the struggles of working people. Many continue to be politically active in the community to this day.

With sincere thanks to Nick Southall for his assistance and writings on this topic.

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SWEET + SOUR

Steamed, stir-fried or roasted, Chinese food in Australia has a long and evolving history.

WORDS Annie Tong

The Marigold, an iconic yum cha institution in Sydney's Chinatown, opened its doors for the last time in December 2021. Huge queues of people lined up to get a final taste of their favourites: fluffy steamed pork buns, slippery rice noodles doused in sweet soy sauce, prawn dumplings and mango pancakes. For almost 40 years, this historic restaurant served up some of the city's most-loved yum cha dishes.

Connie Chung, Marigold group manager, announced the restaurant's shock closure on Monday 1 November, exactly 39 years after her parents opened the original Marigold on Chinatown's Sussex Street. Ms Chung was quoted saying, 'A few workers have been here for between 20 to 39 years ... I've grown up with them, and they've watched me grow up as well.' The 'New Marigold', which opened on levels four and five of the CityMark building in 1991, later came to be known simply as 'Marigold'.

The earliest memory I have of the Marigold was when I was a young girl, no older than six. My mother and I had spent the morning exploring the hundreds of stalls at nearby Paddy's Markets. To my delight, Mum had just bought me something I'd been dying to get my hands on — a small toy dog that would yap excitedly,

shuffle forward a few steps and do backflips. Exhausted from shopping, and by my incessant begging, we decided to try out the Marigold for lunch.

With its regal red and gold carpet, crystal chandeliers and seemingly endless sea of tables, the restaurant exuded elegance. Even as an adult, the excitement of finally being seated was a feeling that never faded. The Marigold may have been your first taste of yum cha, a regular Sunday brunch spot, or the go-to place for family birthdays.

It wasn't the only Chinatown icon to close in 2020, however. With heavy hearts, we said goodbye to BBQ King, famous for its crispy skinned duck. Devastated foodies were quick to pay their respects online, sharing fond memories of their favourite meals or the deals they did while eating them. Meanwhile, the future of another long-running restaurant in the area, Golden Century, remains up in the air. With so many bittersweet goodbyes, it's easy to see why people are worried about the future of the city's Chinese dining scene.

But if there is one thing as certain as finding sweet and sour pork on the menu, it is that Chinese restaurants are resilient. In Australia, Chinese restaurants have survived two world wars, faced discriminatory policies and



overcome immigration hurdles. Today, Chinese food, with its many regional variations, is one of the most enduring and popular cuisines in the country. It doesn't matter where you travel throughout Australia, in towns big and small it's likely you'll find one common sight — the local Chinese restaurant.

Jan O'Connell, author of *A Timeline of Australian Food*, explains that commercial Chinese food in Australia can be traced back to the 1850s and the first big wave of Chinese migration during the gold rush. Soon enough, cookhouses started to open on the goldfields, serving up comfort food for homesick Chinese miners. Occasionally these small eateries would also attract Aussie diggers who were curious for a taste of something new.

When the gold rush ended, and with the arrival of the White Australia policy in 1901, Chinese migrants who had contributed so much were faced with hostility and racism. Many were reduced to menial jobs. Yet the total exclusion of Chinese

Top right: Dumplings. Photo by Charles Deluvio, Unsplash.com
Opposite: Peking Garden Chinese Restaurant, Gosford. Photo by Joy Lai



Food can help people feel at home, it can prompt them to miss home and it can be a bridge to a new home.

people was never going to be a reality. Some Chinese cooks who needed staff who were not available locally were allowed to bring in workers, as long as their business wasn't considered to be in competition with similar European enterprises. While most migrants were not permitted to bring relatives in, Chinese business owners used this loophole to bring across family members, often changing their names to hide familial connections.

Meanwhile, Chinese restaurants were busy remixing recipes to suit Western tastes. As fourth-generation Chinese-Australian author Annette Shun-Wah writes in her book *Banquet: Ten Courses to Harmony*, 'Mutations of traditional dishes are a sign of that great Chinese ability to adapt.' The infamous chop suey, for example, a simple dish of meat and vegetables coated in starch-thickened sauce, was oddly similar to the savoury stews that sustained the Australian colonies. While the roots of chop suey are still debated, it was most likely first cooked in Guangdong, China. Written as *tsa sui* in Mandarin or *tsap seui* in Cantonese, its name can be roughly translated as 'odds and ends'.

A great example of how Chinese-Australian food came to proliferate can be found in Roy Geechoun's book *Cooking the Chinese Way*. Published in 1948, it was Australia's first Chinese cookery book. The thin volume features 30 popular recipes with common ingredients such as ham, green beans, cabbage, beef, pineapple, almonds and peas. Faced with a shortage of traditional ingredients, early Chinese cooks sought local substitutes to make food that would closely resemble dishes from their homeland.

By the late 1950s, Chinese restaurants had started spreading across the country. For many ordinary Australian families, ordering Chinese take-away was as close as they came to eating out. It was during this time that menu items like lemon chicken, beef and black bean, and chow mein become standard favourites.

I know these dishes well. For several years as a teenager, I worked with my mother in the 'Asian section' of an RSL club restaurant on the Central Coast. Sequestered in a small corner, away from the 'Western section', the two of us served up hundreds of dishes during peak service time. As the orders came in, my job was to assemble all the fresh ingredients and



Above, from left:

The author and designer eat at the Peking Garden restaurant, located inside the Central Coast Leagues Club, Gosford. Photo by Joy Lai
 Restaurant owner Anthony Van Chi Truong. The Peking Garden will celebrate 40 years in November 2022. Photo by Joy Lai
 Advertisement for the Bamboo Chinese Restaurant in Pitt Street, Sydney, included in *Yep Yung Hee's Chinese Recipes for Home Cooking*, published by Horwitz in 1965

slide them over to my mum. Armed with a huge metal wok over a roaring gas burner, she would plate up something delicious in a matter of minutes. King prawns, fried to golden perfection and coated in honey, or a soothing bowl of egg noodles with pork and prawn wontons. One of our regulars, an older gentleman, would stop by almost every day to say hello and order his chicken omelette (extra vegetables, sauce on the side). I wondered how he never seemed to get tired of eating the same thing.

At the end of a long and sweaty shift, Mum would always prepare a meal for us to take home. It was never a secret 'off the menu' option, or anything glamorous. My favourite was the sweet chilli chicken: delicious deep-fried nuggets of chicken, covered in a tangy red sauce and tossed with onion and capsicum. While it was very different to the Chinese food we typically ate at home, it was still delicious and comforting in its own way.

At home, behind closed doors, my mum prepared the most incredible Northern Chinese food. On her days off she would spend hours hunched over in the kitchen making dumplings filled with chives, egg and pork. Learning how to cook traditional Chinese food has been a huge part of my life as an adult, but there are still days where I crave those dishes we served at the club. It's not just the cuisine itself that I miss, but also the memories of being with Mum in the kitchen — the heavy hum of the exhaust fans or the scrape of a spatula on a wok.

Food can help people feel at home, it can prompt them to miss home and it can be a bridge to a new home. We all have those special meals that instantly transport us back to a time and place. It could be the soup your mum made when you were feeling under the weather, or the questionable meat pie from your school canteen. Even the simplest of recipes is loaded with history, memory and identity.

Everyday Chinese restaurants are rarely celebrated in the same way as places like the Marigold or Golden Century.

Their offerings don't usually catch the attention of inner-city foodies looking for 'authentic' Chinese food. Consider the New Bo Wa restaurant in Moree, which has been nourishing the community since the 1970s, or the Peking Garden Chinese Restaurant in Gosford — not the restaurant where I worked — a local institution for over 30 years. For many of us, their classic dishes can be a trip down memory lane, one that leads to a birthday party, a first date or a wedding.

It goes without saying that our knowledge and appreciation of Chinese food is far richer and more complex than it was 50 years ago. We are now familiar with previously foreign flavour profiles like the tongue-numbing spice distinctive of Sichuan and Hunan. Immigrants from northern China have brought with them recipes that champion wheat, such as bouncy hand-pulled noodles and fluffy steamed buns. In Sydney, within walking distance of each other, you can find Hong Kong-style cafes, Taiwanese fried-chicken stalls and Michelin-starred soup dumpling restaurants.

While we mourn the closure of long-established venues in Sydney, I hope we can also pay our respects to the remote Chinese kitchens that still exist today — in pubs and clubs, motels and malls. They may not attract hundreds of reviews, but their classic recipes offer a priceless — and delicious — taste of nostalgia. Let's remember everyday Australians whose first experience of Chinese food came from plastic take-away containers, and those children of immigrants who spent their teenage years behind the counter of their parents' restaurants. These everyday restaurants are a testament to the resilience and creativity of Chinese immigrants and their contribution to Australia's modern food culture.

See Dominic Hon's dim sims, made from Roy Geechoun's recipe on page 90



Photo by Joy Lai

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Embracing the uncertainty

Science writer Jackson Ryan travels to Antarctica, via Mars, distant asteroids and tardigrades.

There's a Post-it note stuck in front of Jackson Ryan's desk that reads, simply, 'Uncertainty'. It's a reminder that even when things feel certain, they never really are. The line between 'maybe' and 'yes, 'could be' or 'will be', is blurry and ever-changing.

Ryan is chafing in that zone of uncertainty as I speak to him. He is caged up in a tiny hotel room in Hobart in what will be, he hopes, the last 24 hours of two weeks of compulsory quarantine before he boards Australia's newest icebreaker, the RSV (research and supply vessel) *Nuyina*, on its five-week maiden voyage to Antarctica.

He's been awarded a coveted berth as a journalist, travelling with the ship to the Australian Antarctic Division's Casey Station and Davis Station, observing and reporting on the voyage, on the science being undertaken, and on the experience of being in and around the frozen continent, the last great wilderness.

COVID has thrown a spanner in the works of this voyage, necessitating isolation, quarantine and multiple rounds of PCR tests to ensure he is not harbouring a SARS-CoV-2 infection that could be disastrous. Even now, with departure tantalisingly close, technical issues with the ship delay it by a day. Uncertainty indeed.

But that Post-it note was in place long before Ryan thought about applying for this voyage.

It's integral to Ryan's work as a science journalist; a reminder that nothing in science is ever truly settled. 'It's core to what science is about,' he says. For science journalists, one constant challenge is to convey that uncertainty.

Ryan is science editor for US-based technology news outlet CNET. He's also a multi-award-winning writer, a scientist, a games reviewer, a Disney show presenter, and the proud owner of an eye-wateringly colourful collection of Christmas sweaters.

At CNET, his day-to-day work involves writing news and features that cover the length and breadth of science. Tomorrow, and for the next five weeks at least, he'll be writing about icebreakers and Antarctica. Today, he has been writing about quantum entanglement and tardigrades (somewhat furiously, as he's trying to correct some misleading headlines and reporting on the subject). Yesterday, it was millipedes. A month ago, it was the COP26 climate change conference. Six months ago, it was the Japanese Space Agency's thrillingly uncertain mission to land a spacecraft on an asteroid 2.82 billion kilometres away, collect samples, and return in a literal blaze of glory to land in the dusty South Australian outback.

It's a whistle-stop tour of science every day of the week, and that's just how this former medical scientist likes it. The signs of an unfettered curiosity were there from an early age. Ryan remembers sitting in after-school care and devouring the non-fiction books, soaking up their information. A high school biology teacher also lit a spark: 'In Year 10, I realised that understanding the world and other systems, and animals, was kind of a cool thing.'

Then the TV show *House* also captured his imagination. He wanted to be one of the medical

Before the pandemic, science journalism was perhaps one of the lesser-known mainstream journalism beats in Australia

students working with Dr Gregory House (played by Hugh Laurie). ‘You get the white board out and hear “this is the problem with immunotherapy” and kick around ideas with your fellow doctors,’ he says. He launched into an undergraduate degree, and then honours in laboratory medicine, at the University of South Australia from 2007, but it didn’t feel right, a situation not helped by his deep loathing of chemistry. He bounced around from virology to haematology to immunology to molecular biology to endocrinology, finally completing a PhD in pharmaceutical and medical science, which focused on the role of vitamin D in skeletal health.

But it wasn’t enough.

‘In those academic research positions, your view of the world is so narrow,’ he says. ‘I was enjoying aspects, but I wanted to enjoy everything all the time.’ One aspect of academia that did appeal to him was the communication of science. Ryan loved travelling to conferences around the world, talking about his research and conversing with other scientists. He also loved writing and kept up his regular blog about video games.

With his PhD drawing to a close, Ryan was at a loose end. But a random sequence of events started with him coming runner-up in a competition to report on a huge video game convention in San Francisco and ended with him being asked to apply for a job hosting a Disney video game show, *GamesFest*, on Foxtel. Getting this job brought him into contact with the man who is now his boss.

In 2018, Ryan landed a job at CNET, his brief, simply, to write about science. And he has done that with gusto, his work already attracting acclaim from fellow writers in the scientific community. In the three years since he started, Ryan has been a finalist for not one but two Eureka Prizes for Science Journalism, been a runner-up twice for the Bragg UNSW Press Prize for Science Writing and won Young Writer of the Year at the Mumbrella Publish Awards.

Ryan approaches storytelling like he’s designing a rollercoaster, ‘starting low, slowly ticking up, peaking and rapidly coming down for the closer.’ This might be thanks to another of the Post-its that decorate his desk (there are five in total): ‘For Pete’s sake, make it interesting.’

The piece that was shortlisted for two of these awards, ‘To the Dragon Palace and Back’, exemplifies his narrative style. It takes readers on a slow-build, an exhilarating but nail-biting ride alongside the Hayabusa2 spacecraft, sent by the Japanese Space Agency (JAXA) to rendezvous with asteroid 1999 JU3 drifting in space between Earth and Mars in 2018. Hayabusa2’s mission was to observe, to deploy two tiny hopping rovers onto Mars’s surface, to land and collect surface samples and, then, to blast a small crater in the asteroid before landing once again to collect sub-surface material.

Like any space mission, the entire process allows for zero uncertainty in planning and execution and yet, is simultaneously wreathed in uncertainty. The first Hayabusa mission, launched in 2003, suffered even more setbacks than the doomed Apollo 13 journey to the Moon, so there was a lot riding on this one.

Aspects of the Hayabusa2 mission had been reported on extensively around the world, but Ryan wanted to get under the skin of the story, get to know the characters, and write about that wild journey from the moment of launch until the moment the asteroid samples landed.

So, this wasn’t going to be ‘just the facts, ma’am’. The story was steeped in more colour than Jackson’s Christmas sweater collection; from its main character Masaki Fujimoto, Deputy Director of JAXA’s Institute for Space and Astronautical Sciences — and his deep love of the band Queen (‘Don’t Stop Me Now’) — to the chilly 4 am vigil in the red dust of Woomera, waiting for the tell-tale streak of light that marks a capsule’s re-entry into the Earth’s atmosphere.



In every rollercoaster ride, there's that brief spell where the car has been ratcheted up high above the ground and is slowly circling before the inevitable plunge. The adrenaline is coursing, but there is a chance to look around and see the world from a different angle, before you are flung into the apparent abyss.

Ryan builds these contemplative lulls into many of his stories. 'That's something that I think about when I'm writing: how can I stop the action and write a thing that is flowery and delicious to read,' he says. In the asteroid story, this takes the form of a vignette that tells the bittersweet ancient Japanese folktale of family and lost love, one that gave the asteroid its final name, Ryugu: the Dragon Palace. But these digressions might equally be, 'Ok, it's now time to stop where we are, turn and be like, "so, have you heard of ion thrusters? Let's talk about ion thrusters".'

This explanatory component is one feature that can distinguish science reporting from other journalism specialities.

Before the pandemic, science journalism was perhaps one of the lesser-known mainstream journalism beats in Australia, except when some moment, like the first recording of gravitational waves, or that frequent mirage — 'Scientists Discover Cure For Cancer' — propelled it to the front page.

Then SARS-CoV-2 happened. Cometh the pandemic, cometh the science journalist. Science journalists have suddenly found their work is consistently scoring more clicks than anything else, as newspaper and magazine readers desperately seek information about how this century-defining event will affect them.

But again, it comes back to the responsibility of conveying the uncertainty that is inherent in science. Rarely has that been so laid bare as in this pandemic, when science has moved at break-neck speed, but taking two steps forward and, often, one step back as new studies build on, or sometimes contradict, a previous one.

'There is a responsibility for science journalists to be able to sift through that information that comes to them in a scientific way,' Ryan says. This doesn't require a science degree — although it certainly helps — but, rather, an awareness of the constantly evolving nature of scientific evidence. Hence the 'Uncertainty' Post-it. 'It reminds me to say, hey, this might be true right now, but if we get more data, maybe it won't be.'

Ryan sees science journalists as having a responsibility to tackle

misinformation, or at least provide more level-headed context for the sensationalist 'breakthrough' headlines that cause scientists to grit their teeth. 'We're always going to have to contend with the mainstream media jumping on a very interesting story for clicks,' Ryan says. Science journalists will be the ones who read the study, interrogate the science and the scientists, and get to the real story about, say, why tardigrades aren't actually achieving quantum entanglement with qubits. Also explaining what the heck tardigrades, qubits and quantum entanglement are. And why they matter.

That need to convey uncertainty and context has never been greater than during the pandemic. As Ryan waits in his hotel room, the Omicron variant is running rampant around the world, and he's frustrated by the lack of uncertainty in the reporting about it.

'Even if a scientist says to you, based on its spike protein our vaccines look like they should work [against Omicron], there's still a level of uncertainty there, and you have to tell the reader that,' he says. 'Downplaying it risks giving a false sense of security, which could have potentially deadly consequences.'

As we speak, Ryan gets a text confirming that the RSV *Nuyina* will depart tomorrow. It's good news, but having been reading non-fiction books about various Antarctic voyages — including the disastrous 1897 journey of the Belgian ship the *RV Belgica*, during which everything that could go wrong did — he's finely attuned to any bad omens.

That said, if things do go wrong, it will make a great story. That's not why he's on board, but there aren't any express rules forbidding the embedded journalists from reporting on the journey, warts and all. 'If there was a fire on the ship, I'm sorry but I can't *not* write that story.'

Whatever happens, this is the opportunity of a lifetime. 'I'm as excited as I can be, in terms of constantly imagining what I will see,' he says. But even at the 'end of the world', the spectre of climate change looms. 'It's affected by climate change as much as anywhere, sometimes even worse.'

Ryan's ethos is 'to write the story only you can write'. In an era where 6000-word long-form pieces might only be read through to the last word by a tiny fraction of those who visit a website or pick up a magazine, he believes the only person a writer can ever truly write for is themselves. 'If you approach your craft in that way, other people are going to find it and be like "Holy shit, I didn't know this" and they'll be interested by it.' And if those 6000 words are colourful and exhilarating enough to hold the attention of even just 1 per cent of readers and take them right to the end of a journey to a distant asteroid or a voyage on an Antarctica icebreaker, then, he says, 'you've done enough'.

Bianca Nogrady is a Blue Mountains-based science journalist whose work has appeared in *Nature*, *The Atlantic*, *Wired UK*, *Scientific American*, *Undark* and *Australian Geographic*. She is two-time editor of *Best Australian Science Writing*.

Jackson Ryan just before he left for Antarctica, via Hobart.
Photo by Joy Lai





Keira Knightley as Anna Karenina. Photo by Alamy

On Literary Merit

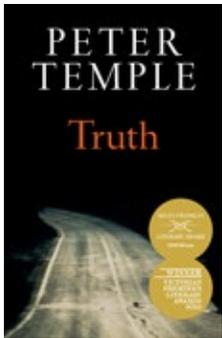
We may find it easy to give a book one star, or five, but what do we really mean by the phrase ‘literary merit’?

The reading group meets once a month, on a Friday night. There are nine of us at full strength, all women and mostly lawyers; as a writer and literary critic, I am one of the outliers. We discuss fiction and non-fiction, written by men and women, of the present and the past. We have a wine-enhanced but otherwise formal and focused discussion of the book to hand, and the person whose turn it is to lead the discussion must also bring the supper.

As this long-established group’s most recent recruit, I have always accepted without question its conventions and rules. One of these, which I embrace, is that fruit and cheese followed by coffee and cake constitutes a delightful evening meal. But another makes me uneasy: the quantification of literary merit. For at the end of the serious half of the evening, before we move on to supper and gossip, we must each give this month’s book a score out of ten.

It’s a way of closing the discussion, of feeling that we have achieved something. It focuses our minds; most of us feel we should give reasons for our score. The average score is somewhere around seven, though I have seen a handful of threes, and once a ten. But although we discuss individual strengths and weaknesses, we usually circle around the question of what we think literary merit actually is.

The most brutal answer to this question is that merit is whatever the dominant culture, the individual or group in power, and/or the prevailing orthodoxy says it is. This is true of any endeavour not susceptible of precise, objective measurement. Ask any failed would-be beauty queen. If there are measurable criteria for a position or a part or a prize — do they have a PhD? Can they sing a convincing high C? Did their soufflé collapse? — then, for anyone who fits these and is therefore successful, their endeavours can be reasonably supposed to have got them there on merit. But the question of what literary merit is has been coming up periodically in my professional and pre-professional life since 1971, when I started university and immediately began to wonder about the logic of an English I ‘survey course’ with Chaucer’s *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*



Above, from left: The cover of *Truth*, featuring a photo by Bill Henson
Peter Temple, at the State Library of NSW, 22 June 2010, the year he won the Miles Franklin Award for his novel *Truth*. Photo by Renee Nowytarger / Newspix

at one end and Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* at the other. My introduction to literary scholarship, to those great works of English literature that were presented to us as being representative of what Matthew Arnold called ‘the best that has been thought and said’, was chronologically bracketed by a Geoffrey and a Joseph, with an assortment of Williams, Johns and Davids in the middle.

The representation of women writers in such significant sections of the literary infrastructure as university curricula and national prizes is not my subject here, but it provides a good example of how fluid our notions of merit are, and how dependent they are on social change. My own views on this topic are just as subjective as anyone else’s, but out of necessity in my professional life, I have been thinking about it for a very long time, and have come to a fairly detailed set of ideas about what literary merit might or might not be.

I think there are three kinds. The first is to do with textual and structural skill: clarity of line in narrative or argument, character construction, dialogue, imagery, metaphor, sentence rhythm, word

choice, breadth and variety of vocabulary and syntax. The second is about content: deep understanding of subject and theme, clarity of vision, convincing representation of the world and of ideas about it, including the individual writer’s view of good and bad in the world. And the third is the kind of merit

... the question of what literary merit is has been coming up periodically in my professional and pre-professional life since 1971

that effectively uses the first kind in the service of the second: style as the best expression of substance.

For many readers, literary merit lies in their personal, sometimes physical, response. They will tell you that when they read this book, they laughed,

they cried, they threw up, they were sexually aroused, the hair on the back of their necks stood up, they flung the book across the room. They will confidently judge a book to be bad if they are bored by the substance or annoyed by the style, or if they don’t like any of the characters, or if they think the book is not ‘relevant’ or ‘relatable’, or if it contains implicit or explicit expression of social or political views with which they disagree. In my former life as a literary academic, I once had to mark an essay by a fundamentalist Christian

student who dismissed *Wuthering Heights* as a bad book on the grounds that it was un-Christian.

But have these personal responses no currency at all when it comes to deciding about merit? A former academic colleague presenting a seminar paper on reader-response theory gave it a title that was asking a serious and important question: ‘If It’s Crap, Why Do I Cry?’

The notion that writing has no literary merit if it expresses, at any point, a world view or opinion that you dislike and reject is an irrational one, you might think. But I belong to the generation of serious female readers who came to the conclusion, as feminist literary theory gained ground in the 1980s, that DH Lawrence — in the 1970s still a much-revered author and featuring prominently in English Department courses across the land — was an insufferable sexist porker, and threw all his books away.

I can’t stomach them to this day, but the point here is that my personal distaste has little to do with the presence or absence of literary merit. All it means is that I find his views of sex and women disturbing and degrading, and glance askance at his brand of sexualised mysticism. Ernest Hemingway, like Lawrence, was a great and original writer, but I never want to read any more of his books either.

When such writers as Helen Garner or JK Rowling, hitherto revered for their work, suddenly say or do something that damns them forever in the eyes of the people who were formerly their biggest fans, the word ‘betray’ pops up a lot. In Garner’s case, this was her views as expressed in *The First Stone*; in Rowling’s, her public stance on matters transgender. The idea that one has been ‘betrayed’ by a writer suggests a personal, even intimate, connection: an assumption that the writer’s earlier work somehow made a personal promise that has now been violently broken. These readers’ emotional responses to the writer shift accordingly, and they decide that the books they used to love must, after all, be bad.

But, harking back to the point about using style in the service of substance, here’s a scene from Garner’s *The Children’s Bach*:

... she picked up off the counter one of those little four-page bulletins on duplicator paper which announce the results of inter-pub darts and pool competitions. There was a joke at the bottom of the page. She read it.

‘Gynaecologist to dentist: “I don’t know how you can stand your job, smelling people’s bad breath all day.”’

Her legs surprised her: that old, almost forgotten sensation, as if all the blood was draining rapidly out of them, leaving them fragile and chalky, unable to support her. They do hate us, she thought. The weight of disgust that loaded the simple joke made her bones weak. She thought, I can’t bear it, I can’t. She thought, I should be able to bear it by now. It has just caught me off guard.

Young feminists maybe have been angry with Garner, and some of them remain angry, but this particular scene is nothing less than a piece of feminist activism.

The idea that one has been ‘betrayed’ by a writer suggests a personal, even intimate, connection

Lionel Shriver’s novel *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, with its dismaying subject matter, its overt violence, its unpleasant characters and its grim world view, distresses many people but it is an undeniably good book. Shriver is

openly hostile to identity politics and has made deliberately provocative gestures to this effect at literary events. In a recent article in *The Spectator* she even argued that Britain should worry about eventually being overtaken by citizens of colour, recalling the openly racist and grotesquely paranoid theory of the ‘Great Replacement’.

Yet she is also the woman who wrote this:

... the trouble seems rooted in the nature of beauty itself, a surprisingly elusive quality and one you can rarely buy outright. It flees in the face of too much effort. It rewards casualness, and most of all it deigns to arrive by whim, by accident. On my travels, I became a devotee of found art: a shaft of light on a dilapidated 1914 gun factory, an abandoned billboard whose layers have worn into a beguiling pentimento collage of Coca-Cola, Chevrolet, and Burma Shave, cut-rate pensions whose faded cushions perfectly match, in that unplanned way, the fluttering sun-blached curtains.

Like so much good writing, this combines depth of quality and originality in the observations themselves with choice after choice of the *mot*

juste, of Shriver finding and pouncing on the word that says most exactly what she means. Elusive. Dilapidated. Beguiling pentimento, fluttering sun-blached curtains. Not ‘bleached’, which is what nine out of ten people would have written: ‘blanched’. Which is more particular, and more evocative, and more precise.

The problem is that one instinctively wants to devalue the writing of someone whose ideas and pronouncements one dislikes, and more forcefully to deny literary merit to a book that suggests or implies those ideas and pronouncements. For example, and despite the fact that his name was widely bandied about for years as a potential winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, I feel that way about Philip Roth. But it is intellectually dishonest. And it is lazy.

So if literary merit does not reside in readers’ individual and subjective responses, where then does it reside? Rather than trying to write a

prescriptive and proscriptive set of rules, which is almost as dreary for the writer as it is for the reader, it makes more sense to choose an example and examine it on its merits. Which brings us to a significant moment in the history of Australian

literature: the announcement in Sydney on a cold winter’s night in 2010 that Peter Temple’s novel *Truth* had won the Miles Franklin Literary Award.

Franklin, in establishing the prize in her will, wrote in 1954 that it should be awarded to ‘a novel which is of the highest literary merit and presents Australian life in any of its phases’. She also named the people she wanted as judges for the prize; one of these was the legendary editor Beatrice Davis, who specifically excluded genre fiction from the category of ‘literary merit’.

But that was then, and this is now: *Truth* is crime fiction. It’s not exactly a sequel, more of a companion, to Temple’s previous novel *The Broken Shore*, which had been longlisted for the award in 2006. The appearance of Temple’s name in the Miles Franklin lists was one sign of the changing attitude to crime fiction and to genre fiction in general: critical assumptions about a hierarchy of literary worth had begun to break down, and the insistence on a clear demarcation between ‘literary fiction’ and ‘genre fiction’ was not as strong as it used to be.

Taken together, *The Broken Shore* and *Truth* display every aspect of ‘literary merit’ you could wish for. The panoramic scope of their subject matter establishes a ruthless critique of Australian society at its worst: corrupt politicians, the sexual abuse of children, the secret collusions and mutual back-scratchings of people in high places, the ingrained and endemic racism.

Both novels’ evocation of place and setting is often breathtaking, full of first-hand knowledge and intimations of foreboding that seem to emanate from the very architecture and geography. Their plots are densely structured cat’s-cradles of assorted scenarios from which the reader comes to realise only gradually that everything is connected to everything else. And there are sudden plot turns that kick the investigations along, such as the moment in *Truth* when Villani realises where the bad guy’s gun has been hidden — ‘It came to him’ —

or the scene near the end of *The Broken Shore* when the deputy headmaster of the elite private school goes rogue in the middle of a guarded conversation, sends away the protesting school lawyer, and tells the detectives what they need to know.

Both novels inhabit the same fictional ‘world’, with the same cast of characters whose backstories are sketched in with great economy and clarity; their general cast of mind is conveyed through small details — it tells us much about Villani, the Head of Homicide, that a sharp-eyed drama teacher once cast him as Prospero in a school production of *The Tempest* — and their motivations are revealed detail by small detail. But most of all, Temple has an astonishing skill in conveying the feeling between his characters: the slow accretions of trust, the red haze of hatred, the fine strands of hostility in the weave of desire.

Sometimes these relationships are demonstrated through his uncanny ear for dialogue, especially for the ironic, dry-as-a-chip speech patterns of a certain sort of Australian man and sometimes to comic effect that lightens the darkness of his vision. This conversation in *Truth* between Villani and his offsider Birkerts shows the low-key affection and accord between the two characters and makes me laugh out loud every time I read it:

The Broken Shore and Truth display every aspect of ‘literary merit’ you could wish for

‘... some mystical lawyer arse she met in Byron Bay. At a wellbeing spa.’

‘Wellbeing spa,’ said Villani. ‘Just trips off your tongue, doesn’t it? What the fuck is wellbeing?’

‘Respect your body. Think positive thoughts. Live in the moment.’

‘What if the moment is absolutely shit?’ Villani said. ‘What if you have no respect for your flabby fucked-out body? What’s the other one?’

‘Positive thoughts,’ said Birkerts, eyes on the road. ‘You think positive thoughts. I don’t think you’re thinking positive thoughts now. At this moment. I feel that.’

Temple’s skill with language is an almost incidental pleasure. Just in the first few short chapters of *The Broken Shore*, a succession of images conjures up the world through which the main character, Joe Cashin, is moving. His dogs, a couple of black standard poodles, ‘stood with tails up, furry scimitars’. A local woman has ‘a face cut from a hard wood with a blunt tool’. Roadkill being pecked at by ravens is ‘vermillion sludge’. Potato fields are ‘dense with their pale grenades’. On a country walk in a misty early morning, the dogs are ‘appearing and disappearing, bounding patches of dark in a pale-grey world’.

For those of us who love crime fiction for its own sake, the richness and depth of these two novels has a lot to do with the pleasure of observing the way they play with the well-established conventions of crime fiction, at once using and subverting them. Each is essentially a police procedural. In both novels the police detective is a damaged loner with big problems and signature tastes in music, alcohol and/or books. Both have the tight plot full of red herrings and false trails, and the deft interweaving of a romance sub-plot. And there are some deeply horrible moments as the action unfolds, not just of physical violence but also of psychological derangement and of hair-raising, all-consuming dread.

But in her comments about *Truth* after it won the Miles Franklin, judge Morag Fraser said something that goes to the heart of both books and their quality: ‘We did not think much about the conventions of crime fiction except to note that Temple was able to observe them rather as a poet observes the 14-line convention of the sonnet or a

musician the sonata form: as a useful disciplinary structure from which to expand, bend or depart.’

The most radical departure in *Truth* is the narrative technique, which puzzled and even annoyed many readers at first because of its elliptical, rapid-fire style. But while Villani is not the actual narrator, the story is told mainly from his point of view, and his thought processes and interiority are conveyed through run-on sentences and fragments of syntax that add up to a modified stream of consciousness, a technique firmly associated with literary high modernism. ‘At his desk, the trilling, the incoming paper. Soon, two calls on hold, two people outside. The morning went, he ate a salad roll at 11.30, standing at the window, phoning Laurie.’

And *The Broken Shore* blows one of crime fiction’s conventions out of the water at the very end; while the usual trajectory of a crime narrative is one of strong closure and the restoration of order, this story ends with some grim new awakenings and investigations as Cashin, pondering some possible new evidence, calls Tracy in the city office :

‘It’s Joe,’ he said. ‘Do me a favour, Trace. Kids missing in June, July, 1988. Boys.’

‘No end to it,’ she said.

‘Not on this earth.’

The Broken Shore was our book for discussion at one meeting of the reading group a few years ago. Everyone but me gave it a nine or a nine and a half. I gave it a ten. I have re-read it, and *Truth*, at least twice since then. Everything about the language, the plotting, the understanding of human behaviour, the evocation of places I know well, the critique of Australian society, the ideas about good and evil and crime and punishment, everything drags me in and pulls me under. And every time I re-read them — just as with traditional high points of literary merit, like *Middlemarch* or *Anna Karenina* or *A Passage to India* or indeed *The Tempest* — I find something new. In them, and in myself.

Kerryn Goldsworthy is a critic, writer and essayist. Her most recent book is *Adelaide*, reissued by NewSouth in 2020. She is a fiction reviewer for *The Age/Sydney Morning Herald*.

Doing Laundry on New Year's Day

(after Brigit Pegeen Kelly)



Illustration by Rosie Handley



So this is how it starts, again,
the sun a big drum, wind rattling the gutters,
waves churning our linen off the coast.

What was stillness overnight, now nothing's not moving
in the garden: frangipanis spin-dry damp pants,
boxers pegged to the clothesline

above the pebblecrete where our dying dog Minky
chugs from her bowl. *A Pale View of Hills*,
which I've been meaning to read,

flips about on our paint-stained wooden table,
bleaching my thoughts as drowned bees
are propelled across the surface of the neighbours' pool,

the roses' pink frocks explode, rosellas and corellas
flock to our shuddering rug of grass
like fast-flying socks

and a leaf, unclipped from a red gum, is twisted
up into the revolving sky, the dirge of the banana trees'
green sleeves bunting away at kids unravelling

their tongues to rainbowed ice.
Inside, my daughters in their Christmas blues
roil their hands around in a large yellow

Lego head like they might clean
each little piece of its fragmented brain
if only they had foam and water.

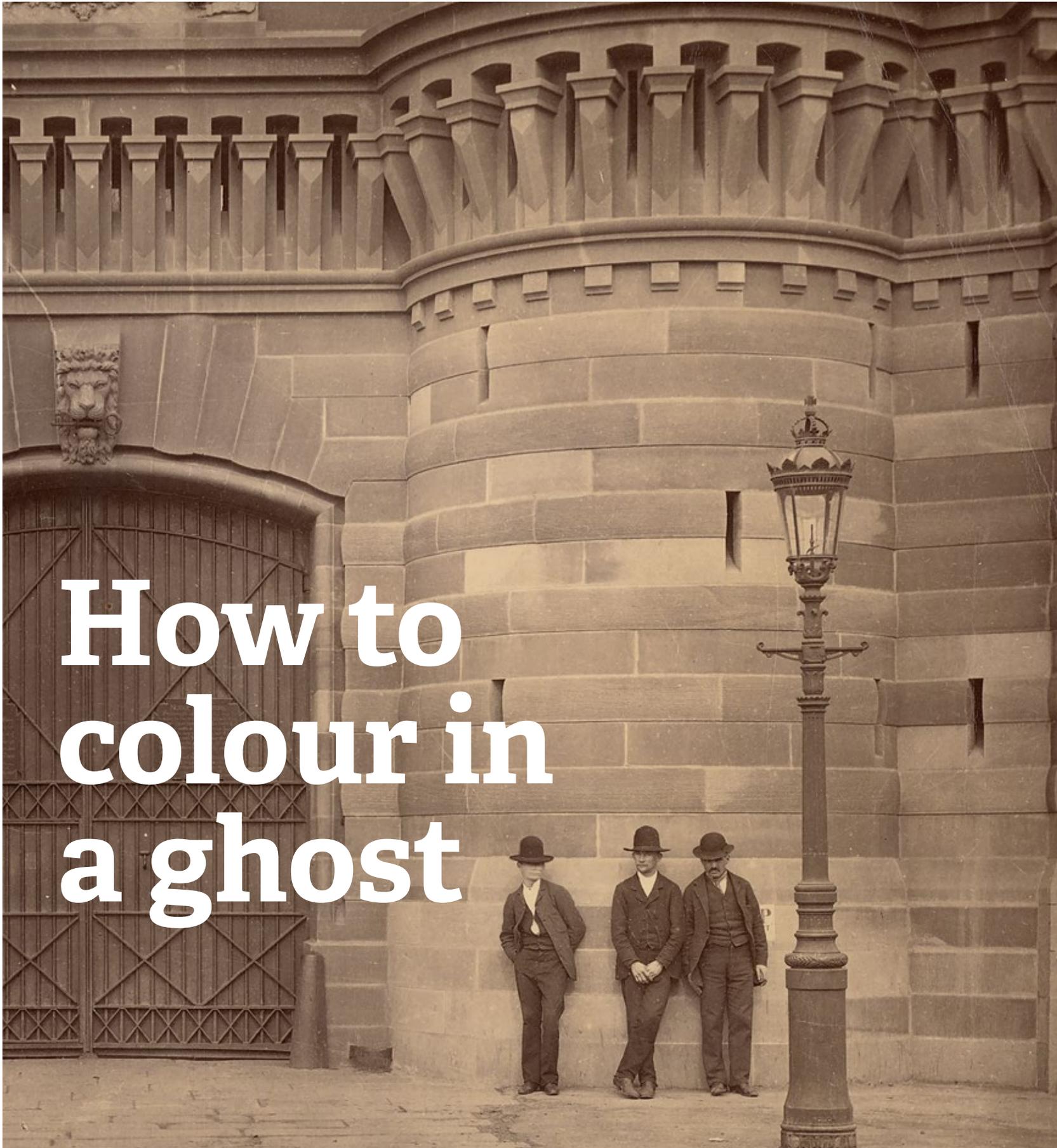
And it's here I lose my head, forget
the incoming storm, where before I'd reckoned
I shouldn't have to wait long today,

conflating that with our not having long to wait
for the churning comet from whatever movie we watched
last night to wash waves over all we think

still needs doing, and later
for the twinkling frangipanis, moving imperceptibly,
to shine down pink and white.

Toby Fitch

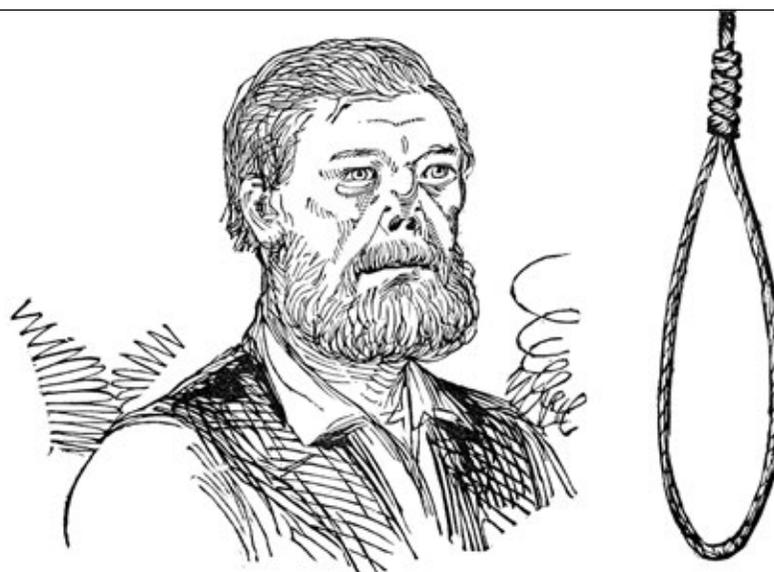
Toby Fitch is poetry editor of *Overland* and a lecturer in creative writing at the University of Sydney. His most recent book of poems is *Sydney Spleen* (Giramondo, 2021).



How to colour in a ghost

Entrance to Darlinghurst Gaol, 1887

WORDS Rachel Franks



THE COMMON HANGMAN

The challenges of bringing a hangman known as ‘Nosey Bob’ back to life.

The selection of a biographical subject is never straightforward. Inviting someone to live in your mind and in your soul for a few years is a complicated decision; even if you feel you know your topic well, those early days of courtship can be difficult. The biographer, typically, must bypass first-date questions around favourite books and preferred foods, and make more confronting enquiries around faith and politics. I also needed to ask in my case, how much money would you need to be paid before you killed a man?

For most, no cache of gold would ever force their hand to homicide. For Robert Rice Howard, however, the price for judicial execution was set at £156 per annum. The longest-serving hangman for New South Wales may have never received a pay rise, but he was offered the occasional travel allowance in addition to his salary. First appointed as an assistant executioner in 1876 by the colony’s sheriff, Howard was quickly promoted to the top job. Across his years working on scaffolds, he hanged sixty-one men and one woman before he gave up the worst position on the government’s books in 1904. He had earned, roughly, £70 per noose fitting.

The colony’s most infamous public servant had been a successful Sydney cab driver in the mid-nineteenth century. Most printed accounts of Howard’s life state that he lost his nose after an altercation with a vicious horse. The damaged cabbie then lost much of his business, and the bloke who came to be known as ‘Nosey Bob’ took on the much-hated role of hangman. Howard, once handsome but now disfigured, may

have felt that he did not have many options. A permanent position with the colony’s Department of Justice might have carried the shame of being the executioner, but it also offered financial security for himself and his family.

Becoming a hangman is hardly anyone’s childhood dream, just as writing about one is not an obvious choice for a biographer. Yet, Howard — a central component of the system of law and order during the days of the death penalty in New South Wales — is a fascinating case because he is shrouded in myths. One of the best-known stories about Nosey Bob, for example, is that he lost his nose after being kicked in the face by a horse. This is a story that has been told over and over, but it is also one that has never been proven. Another tale is that his daughters lived lives of lonely spinsterhood, because nobody wanted a hangman as a father-in-law.

It has also been widely assumed that Nosey Bob was an incompetent executioner who routinely botched his job. Instead of neatly breaking a person’s neck, it was said, Howard would compound the suffering of those who had been sentenced to death. Labelled the ‘Champion Choker’, quite a few of Nosey Bob’s clients were, regrettably, strangled slowly once the trapdoors of the scaffold gave way. There is no denying that Howard had the odd bad day at work, but the idea that he often bungled when he dealt with a felon is just another myth.

In fact, so much of what is generally accepted about the history of this important Sydney identity is confused and contradictory, demonstrating how easily myths can, over



'The Last Scene', *The Bulletin*, 31 January 1880

time, be accepted as truths. The newspaper editors and journalists of Howard's day worked to exploit the executioner in debates for and against capital punishment. Fact and fiction often merged seamlessly with Nosey Bob who was easily recast as someone who was different, even evil. He was never just the hangman; he was always the *noseless* hangman.

Unfortunately, shifting fabrications to one side to find the truth is not as easy as pulling out a man's personnel file. In contrast to many biographical subjects, Howard has no rich archive to raid. There are no shelves of boxes dedicated to the memory of his life or his work. He was, after all, just a hangman. As early as the 1870s there were complaints about the information that had, and had not, been kept about the executioners of Australia's oldest colony.

Newspapers present a few facts and a lot of innuendo, with broadsheets and tabloids often serving as paper boxing rings for conflicting stories on Howard to fight it out. A careful review of thousands of articles does provide an

outline of Nosey Bob, a hangman who was also a devoted family man. A keen gardener who loved his horse and his dog. This outline seems well defined at times, but it can quickly dissolve. There were days when I felt that Howard was sitting next to me, but all too often he was just a ghost.

So, how do you colour in a ghost? How do you bring a man, for a few hundred pages at least, back to life? There are documentary fragments of this hangman's years that survive, but the specifics of what, where and when are scarce. Archives and libraries have preserved enough evidence to prove that Howard was born in early 1832 in Norfolk, England. It is also known that he married in his mid-20s and started a family before immigrating with his wife, Jane, and their three young children, to Australia in 1866. The Howard family grew when another child was born in Brisbane and two more children were born in Sydney. Contesting some of the common assumptions about Howard's homelife, there were lots of weddings and many grandchildren.

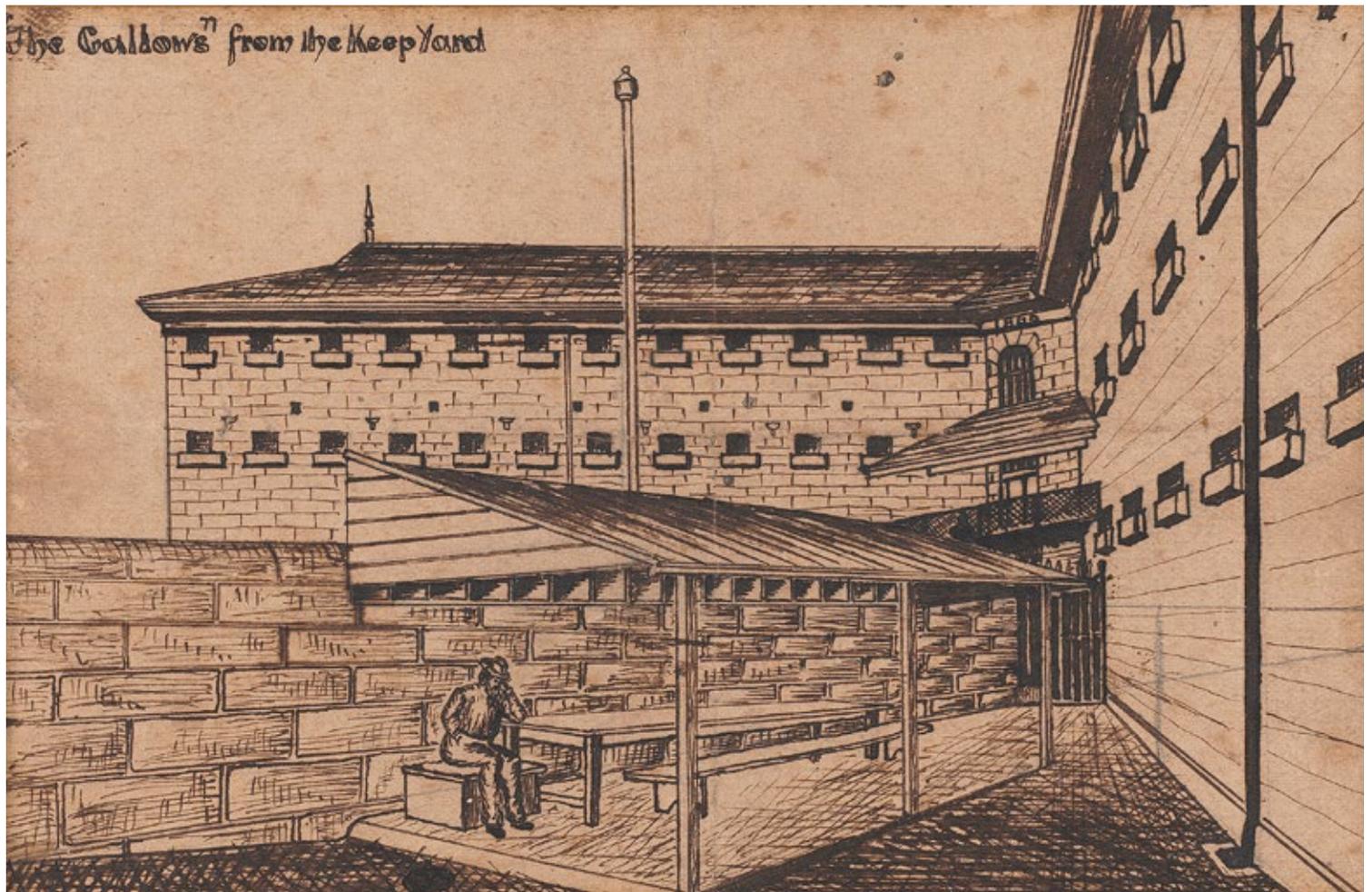
Despite numerous disappointments — including missing correspondence, ledgers and reports — there is some information that details Howard's career as an executioner. It is, perhaps, inevitable that a hangman's life is lived through his deaths.

Nosey Bob hanged felons across New South Wales, but almost half of his work was completed behind the imposing sandstone walls of Darlinghurst Gaol where he dealt with some of the most famous criminals of colonial Sydney. On the gallows in the crook of 'E' Wing, near Darlinghurst Road, he dispatched Louisa Collins, accused murderer and the last woman executed in New South Wales, on 8 January 1889. He hanged Frank Butler, Australia's first serial killer, on 16 July 1897. He also took care of murderer and bushranger Jimmy Governor, a First Nations man whose violent rebellion against racism saw him on the wrong side of the law, on 18 January 1901.

Through comparing published execution reports with the official records and to the interviews that Howard gave across the 28 years that he did the Sheriff's dark work, I discovered a man unlike any of his predecessors. Though his profession was reviled, Howard was comparatively normal. Not your typical neighbour from across the street, but he was not

the stereotypically cruel executioner either. He was a quiet man, occasionally cantankerous, but someone who was always ready to do a good deed. After his retirement Howard lived in his modest timber cottage at North Bondi, on Brighton Boulevard, just off modern-day Campbell Parade, where he had moved in the 1880s. He did a bit of fishing, and he enjoyed a drink. Nosey Bob famously trained a horse to carry a billy

**It is, perhaps, inevitable
that a hangman's life is
lived through his deaths.**

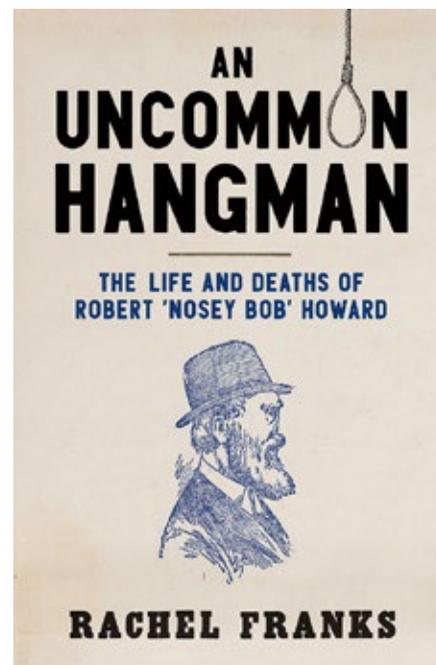


The Gallows at Darlinghurst Gaol, no date

and make a round trip from his home to a local establishment; the billy carried a sixpence there and beer on the way back.

Nosey Bob passed away on 3 February 1906. When a short obituary on him appeared in *Freeman's Journal*, two weeks after his death, it included a suggestion that the 'stories told of Robert Rice Howard, the retired executioner of New South Wales, who died at Bondi the other day, would make an interesting book'. This idea of a book about Howard was one that I have thought about many times since I first came across his story in 2014. I would spend an hour or two every now and then searching for information and slowly rebuilding the life of a man who, now largely forgotten, was once Sydney's most recognisable government official. As a pandemic circled the globe and tightened its grip, I spent more and more time with Mr Howard. In looking for a noseless hangman, I found much more than a distraction from a chaotic world; I found a friend.

Dr Rachel Franks is the Coordinator, Scholarship at the State Library of NSW. Her biography of Robert 'Nosey Bob' Howard, *An Uncommon Hangman*, will be published by NewSouth in May.





Ashendene Press, 1922

The printer's mark



That curious penguin on the spine of your favourite paperback

isn't there just for decoration. It is a printer's mark or device, a trademark or logo that asserts the work as a particular publisher's product.

Glance along your bookshelves and you will find other examples of symbols, initials or the publisher's name.

This practice began in the second half of the fifteenth century, in the early years of the printed book in Europe. The first printers' marks were found on the last page or on the title page of the book, rather than on the spine. The adoption of a printer's mark claimed the work as the product of a particular printer or workshop. The first known mark can be found on the *Mainz Psalter*, produced by Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer in 1457. This mark

depicted two shields bearing a saltire, a diagonal cross and a chevron surrounded by three stars. At the outset these were marks of the printer, but the practice was gradually adopted by publishers.



Before the introduction of the printing press in Europe, hand-written manuscripts often included a statement at the end, listing the date of completion and the location. Occasionally the scribe's name or initials were also included, along with the person who had commissioned the work. The term for this final text is a colophon, from the Greek word κολοφών,



meaning summit, or finishing touch. This convention was carried across to the design of the printed book. The printer's mark was added to the colophon but gradually moved to the title page.

By the end of the fifteenth century, thousands of books were being printed across Europe and England. It was not unusual for rival printers to produce pirated copies of popular works. The use of a printer's mark strengthened printers' claims to be the source of the original edition. Licences or regulations by printers' guilds sometimes protected printers' rights, but these were limited to smaller jurisdictions, cities or single countries. Copyright legislation would not be introduced until the eighteenth century.

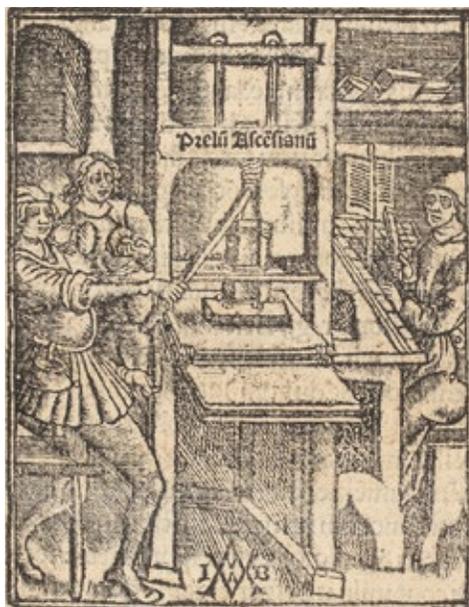
Following the same trajectory as book illustrations, the earliest marks were simple designs produced by using a woodcut stamp. Later, more intricate woodcuts and engravings were incorporated into the design of the book's title page during production.

The design of a printer's mark used visual puns, wordplay or sometimes a rebus, a puzzle combining illustrations and letters to depict a motto or printer's initials. Sacred symbols, the cross and the orb, real and mythical animals, heraldic symbols, and scientific instruments were used in thousands of combinations. The sixteenth century was the highpoint for printers' marks, when lavish illustrations incorporating a printer's mark decorated title pages.

Many famous images and symbols originate from printers' marks. The design used by Venetian printer Aldus Manutius depicts a dolphin wrapped around an anchor. The printer's mark used by French printer Robert Estienne shows a man standing by an olive tree, symbolising the tree of knowledge. Christophe Plantin, in Antwerp, used a pair of compasses held by a hand extending from a bank of clouds, the compass points signifying labour and constancy.

The first mark to incorporate an illustration of a printer at work was Jodocus Badius, based in Paris between 1503 and 1535.

Use of these marks has declined over the centuries but has never disappeared. In the late nineteenth century, the rise of the Private Press movement led to many modern printers'



Badius, 1517



Caxton's mark carved into sandstone on the southern facade of the Mitchell building

marks, including the devices used by the Kelmscott Press, Ashendene Press and Golden Cockerel Press.

Today, printers' marks appear in works by fine and private press publications produced by specialist printers.

Several of the Mitchell Library's external decorative features pay tribute to the work of early printers. As you walk between the two buildings of the State Library towards the Domain, opposite the Library's coffee shop, look up to your left. On the southern façade of the Mitchell building, you will see carved in stone the mark of William Caxton, the first English printer.

On the same façade, the now-closed southern entrance is marked by two bronze doors that commemorate the marks of six early printers — Jan Veldener, Aldus Manutius, Lucantonio Giunta, Jean Petit of Paris, the aforementioned Fust and Schoeffer, and William Caxton — represented in the Library's collections.



Estienne, 1575

The Library That Made Me



Tim Soutphommasane in Cabramatta.
Photo by Joy Lai

WORDS **Tim Soutphommasane**

A nondescript building in Cabramatta named after a former prime minister holds secret powers.

Growing up in southwest Sydney I was used to a lot of things being named after Gough Whitlam. The man's name was everywhere. My under-11s cricket team played at Whitlam Park in Busby. I swam at the Whitlam Leisure Centre in Liverpool. And I spent many hours at the EG Whitlam Library in Cabramatta.

A grey concrete building sitting a few hundred metres from the Cabramatta railway station, the library was my retreat during high school. We lived in the suburb of Bonnyrigg Heights. As a student at Hurlstone Agricultural High School, my daily commute involved getting a bus or a lift to Cabramatta station, where I'd catch the train to Glenfield, four stations away. On the way back home, two or three days during the week I'd stop at the library for a few hours after school.

Entering the EG Whitlam Library, I would walk past the reception area and wind round to the cavernous heart of the library. Most visits would involve getting started at the monstrous and unwieldy IBMs at the stand-up computer terminals. I always enjoyed the feeling of getting started, the sense of resolve and purpose. It might now sound odd to generations accustomed to finding answers by typing into Google, but back then your best shot was to begin with a search in the library catalogue.

It was the mid-1990s. Cabramatta was still known as a centre of Sydney's heroin trade; drug deals and junkies were commonly encountered on the suburb's streets. But you wouldn't have known it, inside the library. It was a sanctuary for high school kids from the area. Not

that the Whitlam Library was fancy. It mightn't have been the best stocked or resourced place, but the library still felt like my own secret intellectual armoury.

It must have been in Year 8 that I discovered my first book on psychology. I can't remember the title, but I can still recall the lessons about visualising what you wanted to do, and about the power of affirmations in focusing the mind. In Year 9, as an enthusiastic debater, I remember borrowing books on public speaking, even if I struggled to put into good effect their advice on learning to speak extemporaneously instead of relying on notes.

Around that time, in 1996–1997, I began searching for answers about multiculturalism. Pauline Hanson had just announced herself on the national stage with her declaration that Australia was being 'swamped by Asians'. I remember typing the word 'multiculturalism' into the Whitlam Library catalogue.

One result that came up was *Understanding Multiculturalism and Australian Identity*, written by then federal Labor politician Andrew Theophanous. The book introduced me to ideas about social justice and equity, and the political philosophy of John Rawls. An American thinker, Rawls was best known for his theory of justice — in particular, his metaphor of the 'veil of ignorance'. Imagine, Rawls wrote, if you were to construct the rules of society without knowing your particular position in it: without knowing your sex, your race, your class, your upbringing, your physical ability. Wouldn't you want to ensure the rules in that society would protect the most vulnerable, just in case you weren't in a position of advantage?

My visits to Whitlam grew more frequent in Years 11 and 12 once I began

concentrating on the HSC. I was on a mission to get the marks needed to be admitted to a Combined Law degree at the University of Sydney. That called for going above and beyond. And there was only so much that Cliff's Notes or the study aids you'd find at Dymocks could provide: you needed some original research.

I struck gold when in a wander through the reference section upstairs in the library I came across a pristine hardback volume of AC Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*. Bradley's lectures were a revelation: 'The centre of the tragedy, therefore, may be said with equal truth to lie in action issuing from character, or in character issuing in action.' This discovery lent me the ammunition I needed to attack those exam questions on *Othello* and *Hamlet*

for 2-Unit Related English.

It is always tempting to impose a certain order on one's past. It would be easy to say that my high school

encounter with political philosophy and multiculturalism presaged my own work as a political theorist in the years to come. Or to think it was more than just a minor coincidence that I would end up pursuing study at Balliol College, Oxford, which happened to be AC Bradley's old college.

Then again, experiences can plant a seed without you even knowing. And that, I would say, is the hidden power of your humble suburban library.

Tim Soutphommasane is a professor and political theorist at the University of Sydney and a former Race Discrimination Commissioner. His most recent book is *On Hate*, published by Hachette.

... the library still felt like my own secret intellectual armoury.

WORDS Richard Neville

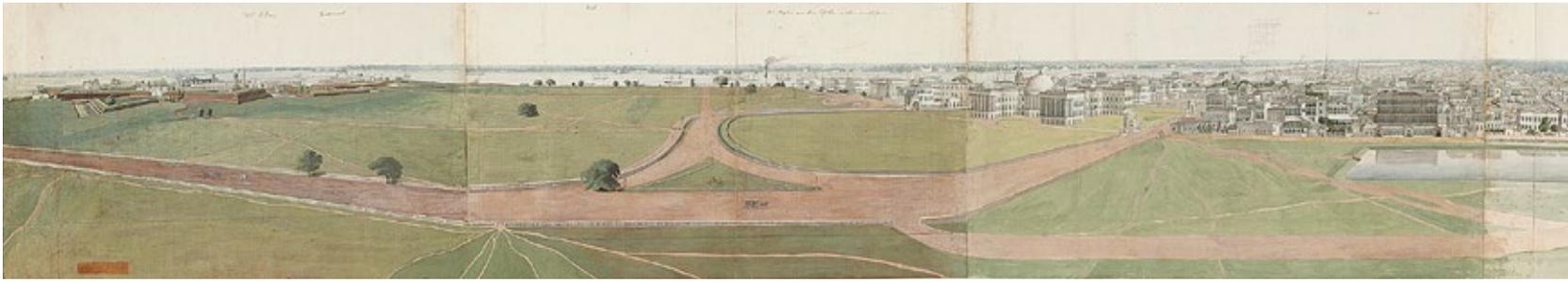


Jacob Janssen *Singapore from on board the sunken ship Pasco, December 28, 1837*, watercolour (detail)



Grand Vistas

Sixteen panoramas will be displayed in the inaugural exhibition of the Library's new Drawings, Watercolours and Prints Gallery.



Jacob Janssen *Panorama of Calcutta from the Ochterlony Monument on the Meydan, 1832*, watercolour

In December 1841, a peripatetic Prussian artist, Jacob Janssen, exhibited in his studio an in-progress panorama of Sydney, the city where he had only recently arrived. The panorama could be viewed alongside his illustrated vistas of Calcutta, Singapore and Rio de Janeiro, all places he had lived and worked. Now, 180 years later, Janssen's panoramas of Calcutta and Singapore will be on display again, in the Library's Watercolour, Prints & Drawings Gallery.

This new gallery will showcase the Library's vast collections of watercolours, drawings and prints. We are excited about being able to unearth and explain — in many cases for the first time — the hidden strengths of our pictorial collections.

The first exhibition, *Grand Vistas: panoramas from the collection*, shows a selection of this intriguing genre, which flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century. In their most commercialised formats, they were large 360-degree paintings of cities, landscapes or events such as military engagements. Panoramas were displayed in purpose-built spaces that positioned the visitor at the centre, surrounding them with the image.

Their scale could be enormous. Henry Ashton Barker's 1801 *City of Constantinople and its Environs, taken from the Town of Galata*, for example, was said to cover 10,000 square feet. It is represented in this exhibition by a wonderfully detailed 4.4 metre-long print. And visitors to panorama impresario Robert Burford's 1831 panorama of Hobart, based on Augustus Earle's watercolours held in the Library, encountered life-sized paintings of convicts and First Nations people.

While panoramas were presented as truthful renderings of a place, audiences and the media were often sceptical: the *Morning Post* facetiously described Burford's Sydney as a 'Panorama of England's Arcadia', while the *Times* wondered why it was that 'one of the finest spots in the universe is appropriated ... to the reception of the very dregs of society'.

Amateur Australian artists and other colonists, however, enthusiastically incorporated panoramas into their own work. Sensitive to European ambivalence about Australia's convict origins, artists appreciated the panorama's emphasis on detail. They showcased public buildings, churches and private residences in their quest to prove the success and moral integrity of the colonial enterprise.

Soldier and prolific amateur artist Edward Close appeared to have no interest in gaining commercial benefit from his 3.6 metre-long panorama of Newcastle. But only two days after he finished it, on 11 June 1821, he wrote to Governor Macquarie asking for a land grant in the Hunter district because he had decided to leave the army to pursue farming. Indeed, his panorama reflects the potential for investment — his own — in the land surrounding Newcastle.

Jane Currie's panorama of Fremantle, c 1832, appears to have been drawn as a personal record of the new colonial outpost to which her husband was briefly posted. Similarly Robert Perrott's 1862 panorama of Port Macquarie (where he was posted as a court official) was dominated by a disproportionately large St Thomas's Church, perhaps an attempt to salvage the town's unsavoury reputation as an earlier penal settlement.



Henry Aston Barker, *A Series of Eight Views Forming a Panorama of the Celebrated City of Constantinople and its Environs, Taken from the Town of Galata, 1813*, aquatint

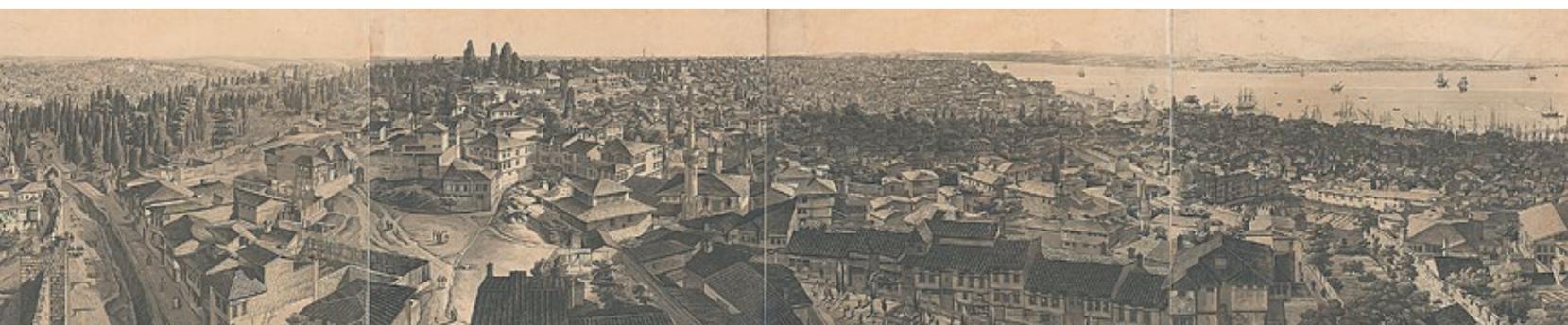


Jane Eliza Currie *Panorama of the Swan River settlement*, c 1832, watercolour (detail)

Artists understood that panoramas were mostly read by audiences as statements of fact. Whether for public exhibition in London or for private circulation amongst family, colonists felt that panoramas spoke to their truth of the success of the British Empire in the antipodes.

Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian

To support the Library's Drawings, Watercolours and Prints Gallery Appeal, please visit sl.nsw.gov.au/appeal or call 02 9273 1488. All donations are tax deductible and will go towards our work to build, protect and display the Library's significant 'works on paper' collection. As part of this important project, the *Grand Vistas* exhibition will open to the public on 28 May.





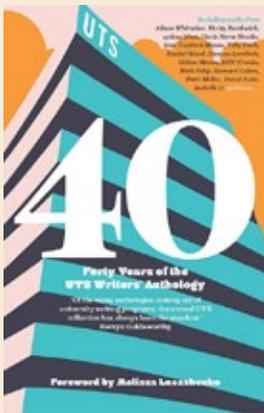
Bloom: The UTS Writers' Anthology 2021

Foreword by Zoe Norton Lodge

40: Forty Years of the UTS Writers' Anthology

Foreword by Melissa Lucashenko

Brio Books



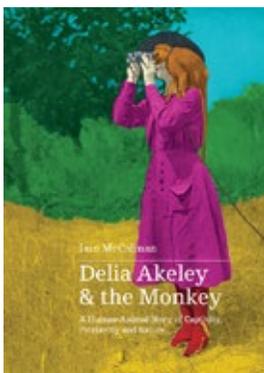
The annual UTS Writers' Anthology, showcasing work coming out of the prestigious creative writing program at the University of Technology, Sydney, is celebrating its 40th anniversary. To mark the occasion a special anniversary edition, *40*, has been released alongside the 2021 edition, *Bloom*.

A veritable feast for lovers of Australian short fiction, prose, poetry and drama, the two collections feature writing from some of our finest authors, including Gillian Mears, Alison Whittaker, MTC Cronin and Emily Brugman, as well as stories selected from the current crop of emerging writers at UTS who are just beginning to make their mark on the literary landscape. *Bloom* takes its inspiration from the Australian wattle

featured on its cover, which regenerates and blooms after fire — a symbol of resilience and the blossoming of the creative spirit after the trials and tragedies of the past two years.

The beauty of reading these volumes together is that we get to look back into the collective consciousness of four decades of Australian stories, before fast-forwarding to 2021. What concerned us back then? What concerns us now? What do we hope for, or fear? The answers can be found in repeated stories of personal struggle and survival played out across both urban and rural landscapes. A gritty seed of hope can always be found.

In her introductory essay, writer Delia Falconer, a lecturer in creative writing at UTS, states that 'Each of these pieces is like



Delia Akeley and the Monkey:

A human–animal story of captivity, patriarchy and nature

by Iain McCalman

Upswell

This is a fascinating story about a remarkable American woman, Delia Akeley (1869–1970), and her attempt to humanise and civilise a primate from the wild. I read this book over one weekend and could not put it down. It is a captivating and intriguing true story, forgotten until now.

Our gripping tale starts with Delia, or 'Mickie', and her taxidermist husband Carl Akeley, in East Africa, where they are hunting bull elephants for the Natural History Museum in New York. Iain McCalman vividly describes the indiscriminate carnage of wildlife carried out by the Akeleys' expedition. Enduring considerable physical and emotional hardship on this safari, Delia doggedly supported Carl's 'elephant madness' and, through her own marksmanship, saved his life.

A gifted historian, McCalman skilfully sets the couple's deteriorating relationship against the complex realities of imperialism and racism in Africa in the early years of the twentieth century. Delia's decision to kidnap a baby female monkey from an African forest had tragic consequences. McCalman sensitively describes the evolving emotional relationship between Delia and JT the monkey, each embodying feminine ferocity and defiance. The descriptions of monkey–human antics in a Manhattan apartment are both humorous and bizarre.

Through Delia's colourful adventures, McCalman gives us an amazing story about a woman who, above all, was a talented museum collector, explorer and ethnographer.

Sue Hunt

a time capsule, from which the compressed atmosphere of a place and era bursts back out'. Indeed, as someone who grew up in Sydney in the 1970s and 1980s, these stories transported me back into the atmosphere of those times, to memories of the mistrust of the 'westies' and Housing Commission kids we find in Damien Lovelock's 1984 story 'Sermon on the Mount', to the gay bashings in the eastern suburbs that echo uncomfortably in Joshua Camilleri's 2021 story in *Bloom*, 'They had Two Heads'.

Melissa Lucashenko points out in her introduction to *40* that the theme of unresolved violence, which we encounter in the startling portrait of an enraged sheep farmer in Jessica White's 2002 story 'In the Evening', is central to the Australian nation and our history. In neither collection can we look away from it. In Natalie Kershaw's 2003 story 'The Camperdown Cemetery

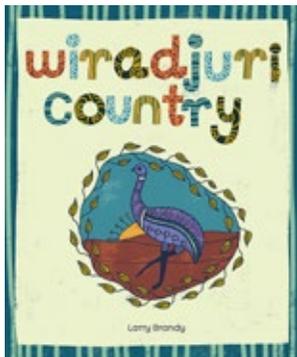
Family Album' we learn of the tragic fate of eleven-year-old Joan Norma Ginn, her violent death woven into the fabric of that suburb's history. It is sad to observe the daily experience of domestic violence and abuse faced by women and children in this country, and the lasting legacy of that violence.

These tragic events play out across the suburbs and towns of Australia and find a voice in many stories in these anthologies. Kay Nankervis's 2002 story 'Two People' stands out, a chilling account of coercive control within a middle-class marriage. Rachel Ward's ironically titled 1993 story 'Everlasting Love' is told from the point of view of a wife and mother who has become so habituated to the violent outbursts of her husband that she can predict them with wearisome regularity. Eleanor Campbell writes poignantly of her teenage trauma in the 2021 coming-of-age story 'Reading to Face the Demons'. In

Zahid Gamielien's 'Looking into a Beech Wood Shack', a young woman is verbally attacked on a Sydney train but manages to find her voice and fight back. Written with brutal honesty and courage, these accounts make an important contribution to the national conversation about violence.

There is joy here as well; tender stories of the love of a cherished grandmother, the bond between a man and his dogs, stories that will make you laugh and smile. UTS continues to enjoy the distinction of having a literary community that fosters the brightest of Australia's up-and-coming creative writers. Look out for the talented Chloe Michele, whose 'Fizz' and 'Ways to exist in fields out of reach', make for compelling reading. The future of Australian storytelling is in safe and strong hands. Well done UTS, and may your creative spirit continue to flower.

Renee Holman



Wiradjuri Country

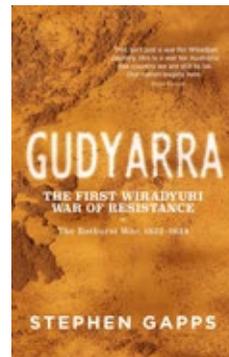
by Larry Brandy

NLA Publishing

Wiradjuri man Larry Brandy shares stories, traditions and knowledge in Wiradjuri language, on nguram-bang (Country). This land is known by the distinct borders of three rivers: Wambuul (Macquarie River), Galari (Lachlan River) and Murrumbidya (Murrumbidgee River). Wiradjuri

nguram-bang (Country) has many dreaming stories since the balanda (beginning), particularly of waawii (the rainbow serpent) who sleeps in this land. Brandy describes the native flora and fauna that inhabits the bila (rivers), woodlands, grasslands, rocky outcrops and murriyang (sky world). He encourages galingabangbur (children) to learn language and look after nguram-nbang (Country), as our balugirbang (ancestors) have. In this beautifully illustrated and wholesome book written for children, Brandy revitalises Wiradjuri language, and makes our culture accessible to all.

Kerry-Ann Tape (Ngiyampaa Wiradjuri yinnar)



Gudyarra: The First Wiradyuri War of Resistance

by Stephen Gapps

NewSouth Publishing

Too often the widespread narratives of the frontier wars are framed as being completely dominated by one side. But we know, through the stories passed on by our old people, that great warriors like Windradyne led coordinated and often successful resistance warfare against the expansion

of the early colony. In *Gudyarra*, historian Stephen Gapps weaves together historical settler accounts and contemporary Wiradyuri perspectives and oral histories to tell the story of fierce Wiradyuri resistance during the Bathurst War of 1822–1824. Details of the lands stolen, lives lost and the devastation wrought during this time make for challenging and confronting reading, but that is the dark truth of gudyarra (war, in the Wiradjuri language) on this continent. It is a truth we must all come to face.

Marika Duczynski (Gamilaraay)

Letters of the law

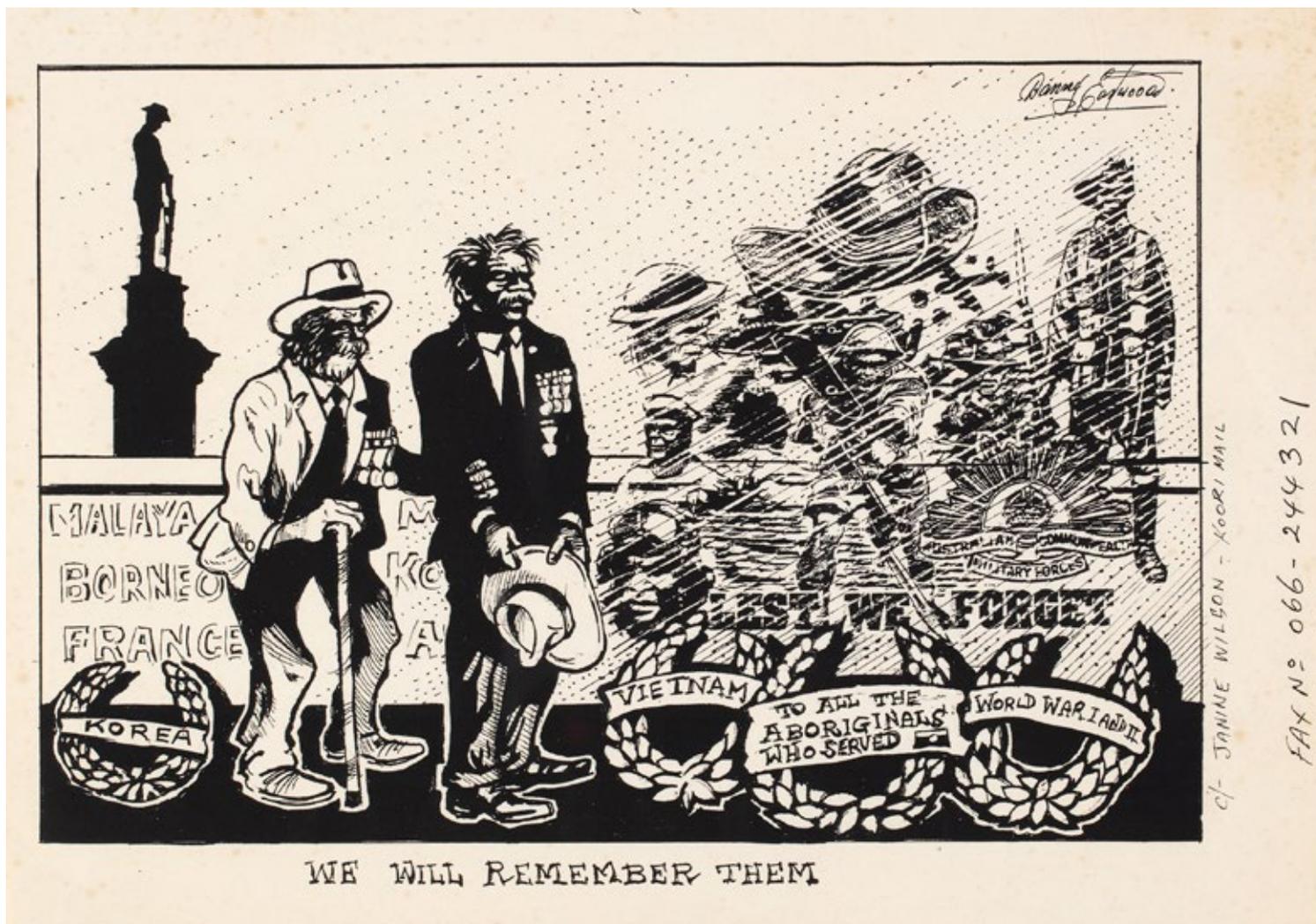


These well-worn leather-bound volumes are letter books from the legal firm Martin and Sons that was based in Taree.

Over 600 cartons of documents, including day books, ledgers and cash books, came in to the Library between 1969 and 1974. There were also 700 letter books, containing correspondence with clients from the 1890s to the early 1970s.

In a letter of thanks to Mr Eric Martin, Suzanne Mourot, former Mitchell Librarian, wrote in March 1974, 'it will I am sure be a most valuable source for the history of the Taree district and for social history generally'. A restricted label sits lightly on the spine to ensure correspondents' privacy was protected while they were alive. The Library has a rich store of records from legal firms across New South Wales stretching back to the early nineteenth century.

Danny Eastwood's *Koori Mail* cartoons



Artist Danny Eastwood's reverence for Indigenous veterans is solemnly shown in this drawing, published in the *Koori Mail* newspaper, following ANZAC Day, in May 1992. It pays homage to Elders, past and present, who've served in Australian conflicts abroad. Other cartoons by Eastwood are typically more whimsical, reflecting his take on contemporary issues affecting First Nations peoples. Eastwood, based in western Sydney, is Australia's best-known Aboriginal (Ngiyampaa) cartoonist, having contributed to the fortnightly *Koori Mail* newspaper since 1992. Established in 1991, the *Koori Mail* is a national newspaper that focuses on Indigenous people, issues and events, and is based in Lismore, NSW. Eastwood's original cartoon drawings for the *Koori Mail* newspaper were acquired by the Library in 2019.



Plants with eyes

Flora Dalinae by artist Salvador Dali is a book of botanical illustrations with a surrealist touch.

Acquired from an international dealer during the 2021 lockdown, these dazzling botanical illustrations by Salvador Dali make a wonderful addition to the Library's collection of artist books. Created in the late 1960s and published in Paris by Maurice Gonon, this limited-edition portfolio of 10 etchings, each signed in pencil by Dali, was inspired by one of the greatest European botanical illustrators, Pierre-Joseph Redouté (1759–1840), whose editions of *Les Liliacées* and *Les Roses* remain outstanding examples of botanical description and illustration.

In *Flora Dalinae*, the artist takes us on a fantastical journey through imagined botanical specimens where flowers appear as human beings, or with human body parts. Dali has taken the rose, dahlia, begonia, lily, Marguerite daisy and other specimens, and the sun and moon, and playfully reinterpreted and subverted the western tradition of botanic illustration, creating a collection of whimsical compositions. The series includes many surrealist elements from Dali's imagination.

Dali, a versatile artist whose work includes some of the most famous paintings of the twentieth century, worked in multiple media — painting, sculpture, design, drawing, film and fashion. He learned the art of intaglio printing from Señor Nuñez, a renowned engraver at the Municipal Drawing School in Figueres, Dali's Catalan hometown. In 1934, Dali exhibited a group of drawings and engravings inspired by a French poem, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, and over the next three decades created visual interpretations of many literary works in a Surrealistic style, including *Alice in Wonderland*, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, *The Divine Comedy* and *Faust*, all of which became sets of prints.

Flora Dalinae is a joyously outlandish artist book, produced at a time when this publishing tradition was flourishing. Writers, artists and publishers

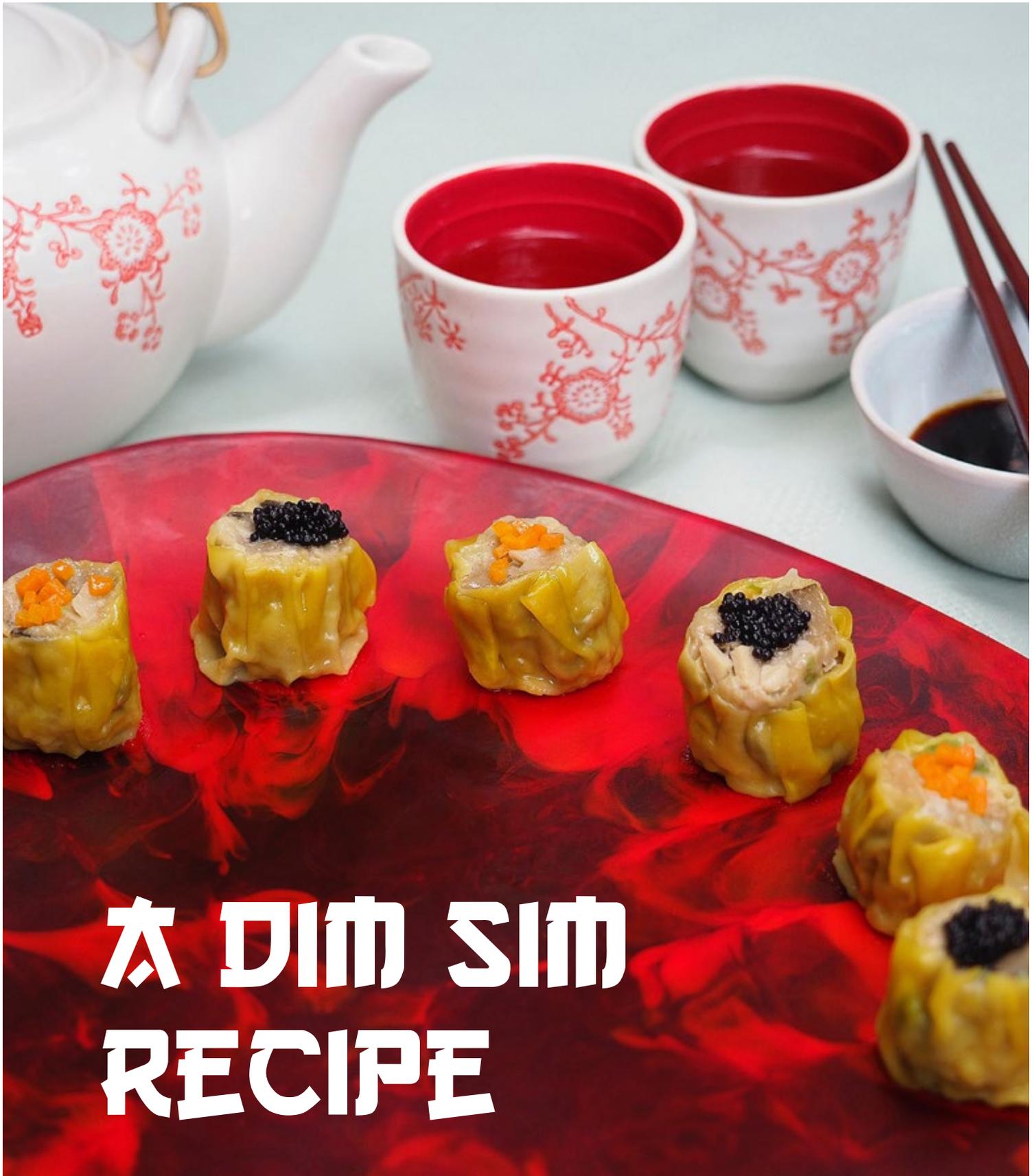
found a new avenue to disseminate their work and ideas to an audience beyond art galleries.

This portfolio enhances the Library's already significant collection of historic botanical works. Dali's amusing work, however, is a revitalisation of the traditional, scientific field of botanical illustration. Not necessarily a homage to Redouté, but a wink and a smile with a Daliesque flourish. Unpacking the parcel containing this treasure from the vendor was a wonderful treat that brightened up a sombre few months during the pandemic.

Elise Edmonds, Senior Curator

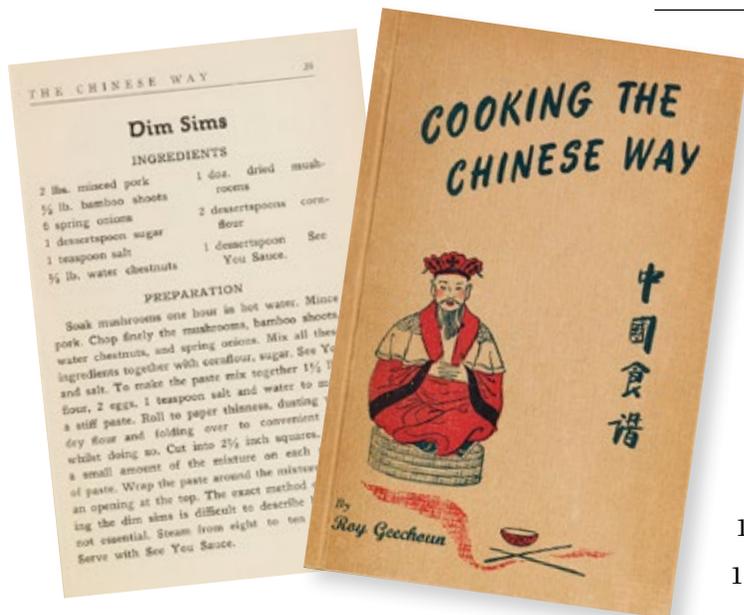


Curator Elise Edmonds holds the artist book, which has a suede cover and dimensions of 78 x 59 centimetres



太 DIM SIM RECIPE

Dim Sims served two ways: *Sio Bee* pork dumplings garnished with cubed carrot, and *Siu Mai* with a pork and prawn combination and caviar on top. Photo by Dominic Hon



From *Cooking The Chinese Way* by Roy Geechoun, 1948, WD Joynt & Company, page 39. Tested and revised by home cook Dominic Hon, 2022. Dom's notes are in bracketed italics.

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 2 lbs. (900 g) minced pork ¹ | 1/2 lb. (225 g) water chestnuts ² |
| 1/2 lb. (225 g) bamboo shoots ² | 1 doz. dried mushrooms ³ |
| 6 spring onions | 2 dessertspoons cornflour |
| 1 dessertspoon sugar | 1 dessertspoon See You Sauce ⁴ |
| 1 teaspoon salt | <i>(Easy shortcut option: 1 packet wonton wrappers⁵)</i> |

dim sim, *n.* a dish of Chinese origin, made of seasoned meat wrapped in thin dough and steamed or fried. [*? Cantonese tim-sam snack*]

– *The Macquarie Dictionary*

When the Library suggested that I try out some recipes from an early Chinese cookbook in its extensive collection, I seized the opportunity, hoping to rekindle some childhood food memories growing up in my hometown in Kuching, Malaysia.

As an early teen, Sunday brunch after church was a weekly ritual to look forward to. It was always casual, a chance to catch up with friends or rellies. There was one place — the local open air markets with a stall there — that was renowned for their 'Dim Sims' — or *Sio Bee*, as the locals called them in Hokkien — with their delicate skins enveloping a delicious pork filling. Other choices included extra large buns (*Tai Pao*) with a whole egg and pork filling. The combination was a whole meal in itself. Both were served with a sweet dipping sauce.

The recipe from Roy Geechoun's cookbook was simple and fun to make. It also proved to be very tasty — as good as or better than many restaurant versions!

PREPARATION

Soak mushrooms one hour in hot water. Mince pork. Chop finely the mushrooms, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts, and spring onions. Mix all these ingredients together with cornflour, sugar, See You Sauce and salt.

(The original recipe gives the additional instruction below to make the dim sim wrapper skins. I didn't test the quantity listed, but it sounds as though it makes an awful lot of pastry and could be a messy hassle! I used ready-made wonton or gow gee wrapper skins instead, they come packaged in a stack of 30 to 50 individual skins.⁵ Get the circular ones.)

To make the paste (*I presumed the author meant 'pastry' rather than paste*), mix together 1½ lbs. flour (680 g), 2 eggs, 1 teaspoon salt and water to make a stiff paste. Roll to paper thinness, dusting with dry flour and folding over to convenient size whilst doing so. Cut into 2½ inch squares. *(Circular shaped skins would give a much neater result.)*

Put a small amount of the mixture on each square of paste. Wrap the paste around the mixture, leave an opening at the top. The exact method of shaping the dim sims is difficult to describe but it is not essential. Steam from eight to ten minutes. *(For a nicer presentation, top the dumplings with some finely diced carrot before steaming, or alternatively, garnish with some fish roe or caviar — or even finger lime — for an indulgent treat.)*

Serve with See You Sauce. *(Combine equal quantities of sweet soy sauce kecap manis with sweet chilli sauce. This sweet sauce perfectly complements the savoury flavours of the dumplings.)*

1 This original recipe uses pork only. Yum Cha restaurants these days seem to serve the Cantonese-style *Siu Mai* which uses a combination of pork and prawn.

Replace the pork mince at a 2 to 1 ratio, i.e. 600 g pork to 300 g cubed prawns.

2 Canned bamboo shoots and water chestnuts are fine.

3 Dried shiitake mushrooms are preferable for this recipe.

4 Soy Sauce.

5 Available ready-made from Asian grocery stores in the refrigerator section.



Photo by John Vallance



Photo by @blondeasian_



Photo by @see.taste.do

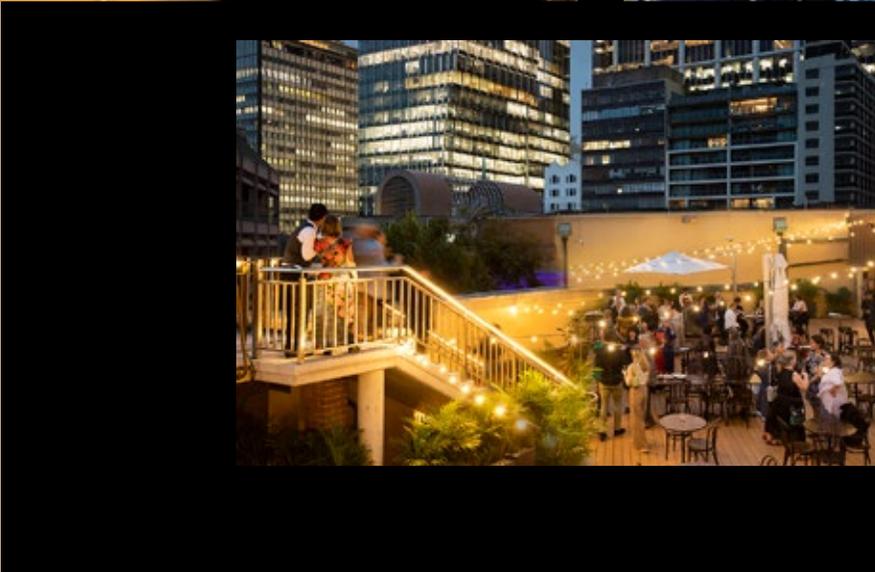




Photo by @see.taste.do



THE LIBRARY BAR

Party lights, office lights and natural light merged to create a festive glow in December, when Premier Dominic Perrottet launched the Library's new rooftop bar.

On top of the historic Mitchell building, with killer views of the harbour in one direction and the city's skyline in the other, The Library Bar is the best venue in town to enjoy golden hour.

Enter through 1930s arched timber doors on Hospital Road, before being ushered to a secret lift. Four floors up, you will see the baby grand piano that was hoisted up by crane, but your eyes will be drawn to the bar.

Armed with a 'Library Martini', you might head out to the courtyard with its oversized white umbrellas. Or upstairs for a coveted table on the deck.

The Library Bar is open Wednesday to Saturday from 4 to 10 pm for cocktails, wine, craft beer and grazing.

sl.nsw.gov.au/library-bar/ @thelibrary.bar



Photo by @blondeasian_



Photo by @simonfoodfavourites



Photos by Joy Lai, unless otherwise credited

20 questions

- 1 Place these books in height order from shortest to tallest: elephant folio, folio, octavo, quarto.
- 2 What do the names Walter Lehmann, Henry Handel Richardson and Miles Franklin have in common?
- 3 Which Scottish-born food writer was described as ‘Australia’s original domestic goddess’?
- 4 Who said: ‘I think I’ve proven on my shows that you can converse through cooking, which is such a beautiful language’?
a) Silvia Colloca b) Maeve O’Meara c) Luke Nguyen
- 5 A special green and gold cocktail was invented to launch the Macquarie Dictionary in 1981. True or False?
- 6 Which celebrated Australian said: ‘The poster is to advertising what the string quartet is to music.’ a) Donald Horne b) Donald Fish c) Donald Bradman
- 7 Which iconic restaurant in Chinatown served its last meals in December 2021 after almost 40 years in operation?
- 8 What was on the way out, and what was on the way in, on 14 May 1984?
a) The \$1 note and the \$1 coin b) The \$2 note and the \$2 coin c) Both of the above
- 9 Sydney cab driver Robert Rice Howard (‘Nosey Bob’) became NSW’s longest serving hangman before or after he lost his nose after being kicked by a horse?
- 10 What ‘special numbers’ were introduced in Australia in July 1967?
- 11 Who said: ‘They say you can’t judge a book by its cover, but I’ve always believed a cover should speak to the story, and that is no truer than with my latest book’?
a. Anita Heiss b. Alice Pung c. Angela O’Keeffe
- 12 Author of *This Much is True*, Miriam Margolyes, received her Australian Citizenship certificate from which Prime Minister?
- 13 Where did the 1982 ‘Right to Work’ protest march to Sydney start out from?
- 14 What item, designed by Harold Thomas, made its debut in Adelaide in July 1971?
- 15 What innovation was installed in Market and Kent Streets, Sydney, in 1933?
- 16 Byron Bay in NSW was named after English poet and peer Lord Byron. True or False?
- 17 Which US First Lady said: ‘I have found the most valuable item in my wallet to be my library card’?
- 18 Which long-running ABC TV show begins with a song about an ursine interloper?
- 19 Which building stands on the land known to traditional custodians as Tubowgule, meaning ‘where the knowledge waters meet’?
a) Parliament House, Canberra b) The Sydney Opera House c) The National Gallery of Victoria
- 20 American beat poet Allen _____ toured Australia on his one and only visit in March 1972.



Find the answers to this quiz at the bottom of page 97.



You should become an *Openbook* person!

If you love books and writing, photography, history, art and ideas you probably already are. Keep up with fresh and diverse voices by joining us four times a year.

Openbook starts conversations, celebrates new talent, takes you into the State Library's underground stacks, examines new acquisitions, shares recipes and offers hours of enjoyable reading.

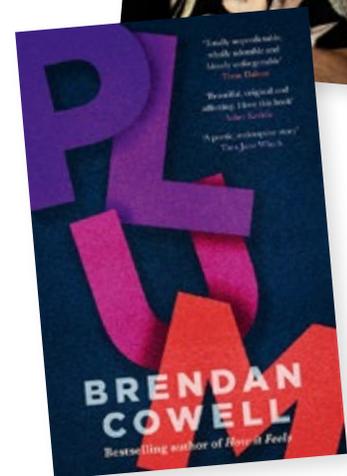
Thanks to our friends at HarperCollins Publishers, the first 50 people to subscribe will receive a free copy of award-winning actor, writer and rugby league fan Brendan Cowell's novel *Plum*. Peter 'The Plum' Lum is a former star rugby league player who is forced to face the fact that he's had a few head-knocks too many. This boofy bloke must go on a journey of self-care and self-discovery. Reviewers have showered the book with praise, noting the 'muscular viscerality of [Cowell's] language'.

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Events

31 MAR

B List book club

Host Bri Lee will be in conversation with Walkley Award-winning writer, broadcaster, feminist and social commentator Jane Caro AM to talk about her first adult novel, *The Mother*. \$15 onsite (free online). Grab your copy of this gripping domestic thriller from the Library Shop shop.sl.nsw.gov.au/



21 APRIL

Join Dr Ian Hoskins

as he explores a unique series of nineteenth-century maps of Sydney Harbour's waterfront suburbs, held in the Library's collection. Published by the significant Sydney cartographic firm Higinbotham and Robinson, you'll have a rare opportunity to view these maps up close in the Library's beautiful Map Rooms. \$20, light refreshments included. This event is part of the Library's Scholars at Six series.

27 APRIL
Family history

can reveal surprising and sometimes moving lost stories from your past. This one-hour session will introduce you to the State Library's diverse family history collections to help get your research started. Free, online.

Exhibition



9 APRIL TO 8 MAY

Photos1440

See the best published and unpublished images by *Sydney Morning Herald* photographers. Free, 9 April to 8 May 2022.

Mounted police patrol Bondi Beach, as unperturbed locals enjoy the late winter sunshine during Sydney's second lockdown. Photo by Steven Siewert

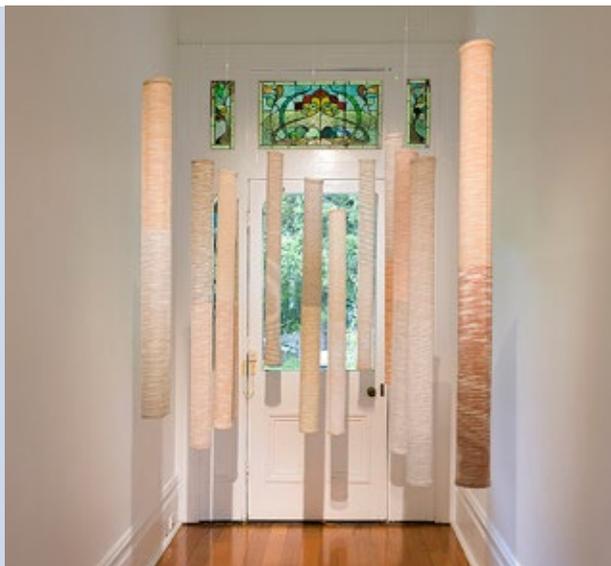
LAST DAYS**Maps of the Pacific**

View some of the most rare and remarkable maps, charts, atlases and globes of the Pacific held in the Library's extensive collection. Don't miss the free curator-led tours running weekly until the exhibition closes on 24 April 2022.

Elsewhere

A Tangled Bank

During the 2021 Sydney floods, when the eastern bank of the Nepean River broke, we saw the meeting of rain, river and land. Against this backdrop, *A Tangled Bank* brings together contemporary artists who draw on organic materials – often found, recycled or repurposed – to create works about the environment, migration and displacement. A free exhibition at Penrith Regional Gallery until 17 April. penrithregionalgallery.com.au



Sairi Yoshizawa, *Amidst*, 2020, installation view, *A Tangled Bank*, Penrith Regional Gallery. Courtesy the artist. Photo by Garry Trinh



19 MAR

The Sydney Harbour Bridge turns 90 today! On this day in 1932 thousands of spectators gathered to witness the birth of an icon. The State Library has a huge collection of photographs, oral histories and ephemera that document the construction of the Bridge, as well as a fascinating five-part podcast series: thebridge.sl.nsw.gov.au/
A Memory of Sydney, 1936 by VFP Allen (detail)

On this day

Openbook magazine is published quarterly by the State Library of NSW

Autumn 2022
ISSN: 2652-8878 (Online)
ISSN: 2652-886X (Print)
E&D-5762-2/2022

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SUSTAINABILITY

Printed in Australia by IMMIJ using Spicers Paper Monza Recycled Hi Gloss 250 gsm and Monza Recycled Satin 115 gsm. This paper stock is FSC® certified and is made from 100% recycled post-consumer waste.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Leon, 2020, by Nick Moir.

.....
Quiz answers page 94:
1. Octavo, quarto, folio, elephant folio; 2. All are pseudonyms of Australian female writers; 3. Margaret Fulton; 4. c) Luke Nguyen; 5. True; 6. b) Donald Fish; 7. The Martigold; 8. a) The \$1 note and the \$1 coin; 9. After; 10. Four-digit postcodes; 11. a) Anita Heiss; 12. Julia Gillard; 13. Wollongong; 14. The Aboriginal Flag; 15. Traffic lights; 16. False; 17. Laura Bush; 18. *Play School*; 19. b) The Sydney Opera House; 20. Ginsberg

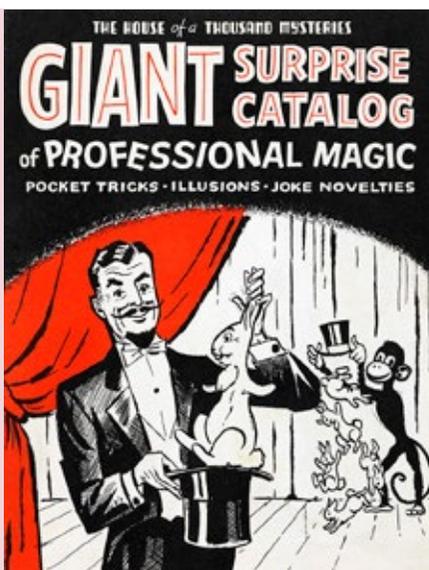


How's Tricks

Step behind the velvet curtain and be amazed as the history of stage magic in Australia is revealed. Free exhibition, until 27 March.

World Press Photo

View over 150 powerful and evocative images selected from the 2022 World Press Photo Contest. The winners will be announced on 7 April. Free exhibition, 21 May to 19 June 2022.



Don't miss

8 MAR

International Women's Day

Help us celebrate the amazing achievements of women in sport – from surfing to footy, cycling to hockey, diving to netball. The State Library has released a new collection of interviews with Australian athletes on Amplify. You can help to make these oral histories more accessible by transcribing them today. amplify.gov.au/statelibrarynsw

Athlete Melissa Wu. Photo by Tanya Evans



Special date



2020 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Photo by Dean Sewell



“ ... libraries are about freedom. Freedom to read, freedom of ideas, freedom of communication. They are about education (which is not a process that finishes the day we leave school or university), about entertainment, about making safe spaces, and about access to information.”

Neil Gaiman: ‘Why our future depends on libraries, reading and daydreaming’, *The Guardian*