

openbook



Robert Drewe
reflection

Mykaela Saunders
poem

Inga Simpson
essay

Jessie Cole
story

Image courtesy of Dr Christian Thompson AO and Michael Reid Sydney + Berlin





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.

A work in progress by Anna Glynn



Contents

Features & stories

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>12 Calling the Koori Knockout
Broadcaster Brad Cooke knows more than most about rugby league, and the Koori Knockout</p> <p>36 The future is fungi
Michael Lim and Yun Shu</p> <p>44 The tree of life
Sam Cooney profiles
Indira Naidoo</p> | <p>48 Desert trees
Inga Simpson's beautiful piece about walking the Larapinta Trail</p> <p>56 The long history of the power of positive thinking
Alex Roginski finds that the power of positive thinking isn't a recent concept</p> | <p>60 The flat roofs of Sydney
Architectural historian Davina Jackson sees innovative design on Sydney's lower North Shore</p> <p>66 The Recalcitrant Priest
Damian Gleeson writes about one of the first Catholic priests in the NSW colony</p> <p>74 Do we still have time for Henry Lawson?
Susan Hunt asks the question</p> |
|--|---|---|

A note from the Editor

Spring *Openbook* is a special tie-in issue with the Byron Writers Festival, which is taking place in late August, for the first time in two years, on the lands of the Arakwal Bumberbin and Minjungbal peoples of the Bundjalung Nation. The festival's theme, Radical Hope, seems especially relevant. We are proud to profile or publish works by many of the writers appearing at the Festival in the pages of this issue — Jessie Cole, Robert Drewe, Fiona Murphy, Indira Naidoo, Matt Okine, Mykaela Saunders and Inga Simpson. The work of Lismore photographer Elise Derwin, who has captured much of the ongoing devastation caused by the floods, is on the cover. It's an image full of colour and hope, enough to put a spring in your step.

Phillipa McGuinness



Photo essay

- 18 **Knocking it out of the park**
Barbara McGrady

Fiction

- 28 **Broken glass**
Jessie Cole

Poetry

- 54 **Rain and Blood**
Mykaela Saunders

Regulars

- 6 **State Librarian's letter**
- 7 **Openbook obsessions**
- 8 **Self-portrait**
Fiona Murphy
- 10 **Take 5**
Wattle season
- 64 **The library that made me**
Robert Drewe and an unforgettable teacher — not in a good way
- 70 **Book reviews**
The Lessons of History, Uncle Wes's poems, Carmel Bird's latest non-fiction, *Jesustown* and reflections on being a writer
- 72 **Spotlight**
Anna Glynn reveals what she did while she was the Library's artist in residence

- 78 **Cooking the books**
A luncheon inspired by the Queen's 1954 visit
- 82 **Spotlight**
Nova Reperta — Renaissance inventions
- 84 **Spotlight**
Maggie Patton shares her favourite decorated initials
- 90 **Interview**
Comedian Matt Okine answers a few questions
- 92 **Behind the shot**
Andrew Quilty and the last days of war in Afghanistan
- 94 **Quiz**
- 95 **Subscriber giveaway**
- 96 **What's on**



Self-portrait by Dr John Vallance

As you open another *Openbook*, think about what you are doing.

I've recently been re-reading Homer's *Iliad*. There's a passage in the sixth book which contains what many believe to be the very first reference to writing in the western tradition.

Two warriors are talking of their ancestors. 'So many as are the generations of leaves, so many are the generations of men.' One of the warriors came from the same town as a hero called Bellerophon, endowed by the gods with great beauty and grace. His King, Proteus, grew jealous after the Queen developed a passion for the gracious beauty.

Bellerophon did not respond to the Queen's advances, and when Proteus came to hear of the situation, he resolved to have Bellerophon killed in a far-off land. He arranged this by giving Bellerophon a tablet engraved with 'baneful and soul-destroying signs' and asked him to deliver it to the King of Lycia.

Bellerophon was unknowingly delivering his own death warrant. He could not read, but his Lycian host could — and went about setting him a series of ever more deadly

tasks. He had to start by killing the Chimaera — a monster with the head of a lion, the body of a goat and the tail of a snake — before going on to fight the Amazons. Bellerophon won in the end, but only after a terrible struggle.

The first reference to writing is also a reference to the life-or-death importance of reading. If Bellerophon had been able to read, this wouldn't have happened. It's no different today. A policeman told me only last year that it is not uncommon for our courts to find that defendants cannot read or write.

As you start on this new issue of *Openbook*, with its special focus on the Byron Writers Festival and the flood-ravaged Northern Rivers, it's worth reflecting on the fundamental importance of literacy at the heart of any strong community.

However hot Bellerophon might have been and however useful in an emergency, at least we have the gift of reading and writing and that's something worth celebrating.

Dr John Vallance FAHA
State Librarian

Quiz answers page 94 1. The Uffizi Gallery Florence, Italy 2. Spring vegetables such as broad beans, leeks, zucchini and asparagus 3. Printemps 4. Vernal 5. Snowdrops 6. The banning of DDT by the US in 1972 (in Australia it was 1987) 7. *The Rite of Spring* 8. Red hair 9. Jacarandas 10. Koori Knockout 11. The Ern Malley poetry hoax in 1943 12. Iisa Lund 13. Drambuie and Scotch whisky 14. Steve Monaghetti (1991, 40.03 minutes) 15. Title deeds for Uluru and Kata-Tjuta were handed back in an official ceremony on that day 16. Hitler's invasion of Poland on that day 17. *Nimblefoot* 18. In the MacDonnell Ranges in Central Australia 19. The Byron Writers Festival, 26–28 August 20. Michael Winkler's *Grimmish*, on the 2022 shortlist

openbook *obsessions*



Billy Goat Swamp

Artist Fernando do Campo works with ‘one foot in the field and one foot in the archive’. The archive from which his Billy Goat Swamp series of paintings has emerged is made clear in the title of the work shown here: *The birdwatcher in the Mitchell Library*. While he was artist in residence at the Library, do Campo – the birdwatcher whose hands we see – researched histories of animals introduced to Sydney. His Royal Botanic Gardens painting (see inside back cover) shows what was once Sydney’s main zoo. We see the menagerie and wonder if the companions of the title are human or animal, colonisers or local flora and fauna.

Abigail Moncrieff wrote in her essay accompanying do Campo’s recent exhibition that with ‘a palpable joy in the processes of looking and knowing, do Campo enriches our experience of the urban fabric of Sydney’. So true. But vivid though his colours are, his rediscovery of the animal and plant histories buried below our feet, and all around us, is also a little unsettling.

Fernando do Campo
The birdwatcher in the Mitchell Library (with rock dove and golden whistler)
Acrylic on canvas
61 cm x 46 cm 2022
Photo by Shan Turner-Carroll
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney

Maude Boate, Queen of Lismore

Maude Boate is the resplendent, larger-than-life creation of Michael Gates, a fourth-generation Lismore local. Her costumes inspired *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, have been on display at the Lismore Regional Art Gallery as part of an exhibition called *Maudeville* and are held by the Powerhouse Museum. In 2022, after years of no drag, Maude and Tropical Fruits Inc, the Northern Rivers LGBTQI+ group, frocked up to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of a faraway queen. In the interim, during lockdown, there was always bin night, when Maude transformed the humdrum into something glamorous.

Denise Alison, who runs the Humans of Lismore Facebook page, has documented Maude’s fabulousness over the years in text, photos and video. The unfathomable destruction of the Lismore floods, and the continuing displacement of so many people in the region, recall the defiant sentiment of the song that is lip-synched more often by drag queens than any other: I will survive.



Photo by Denise Alison



Portrait of author Fiona Murphy taken in the gardens of Campbelltown Arts Centre. Photo by Joy Lai.

Fiona Murphy

My earliest memories of books and words are of awe and suspicion. It seemed magical that each squiggly shape represented sound. And yet, my classmates readily gave voice to each tiny mark, chanting the alphabet and charging through books with joy and understanding.

It took me years to learn how to read, and longer still to learn how to write. My memories of this particular time shift towards feelings of terror and shame. After all, I knew that I was to blame: I was deaf and dumb.

Passing as hearing became a point of pride.

For over 20 years I kept my hearing loss a secret. I learned how to hide my confusion in crowded rooms; how to subtly ask people to repeat themselves (“That’s so interesting, tell me more”); how to read faces, scanning from eyebrows to lips, capturing the contours of each syllable.

I became good at hiding my deafness. So much so that in rare instances of honesty, people refused to believe me. They would tell me that I was *too capable*; *too confident*; *too clever*. Passing as hearing became a point of pride. I wanted people to believe that I was all those things, even if I didn’t believe it myself.

Despite becoming literate, and eventually a bookworm, I continued to feel skittish about writing. Each school assignment would be run through with red.

I constantly mixed up tenses, swerving from the past to the present, unable to grasp suffixes. Single syllable words (a, the, an, at) somehow always eluded me.

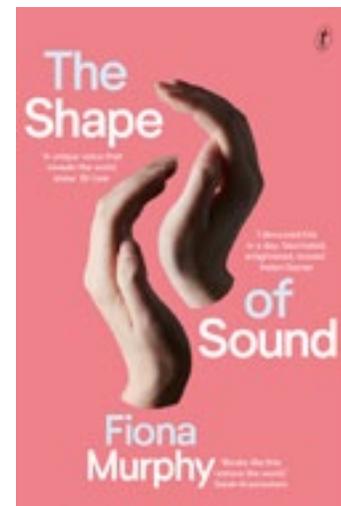
For years I considered these mistakes to be irrefutable evidence that I shouldn’t become a writer. It wasn’t until my late 20s that I learned that these are signs of language deprivation. Signs that are common among children with hearing loss. I revisited my memories of school with the clarity of rage. Why are deaf children still denied sign language?

Not long afterwards, I began to learn Auslan and, for the first time, felt a sense of ease within a language and within my body. This shift coincided with a new-found confidence with writing. Along with it came awards, fellowships, international residences, a book deal. My grasp on grammar hadn’t changed. Rather, I had found my voice.

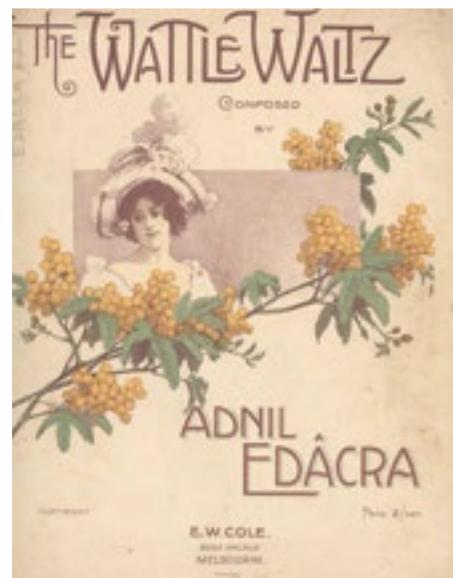
Deafness does not just exist in one’s ears. Deafness is a state of being. It is also, I believe with increasing conviction, a mode of writing. To me, deaf writing *feels* like a deaf conversation — it resists linearity, it is responsive and recursive, deeply layered, fast moving and expansive. It is formally inventive, assertive and playful. It is Cece Bell, Ilya Kaminsky, Jessica White, Sara Nović, Raymond Antrobus, Judith Wright.

I’m now proud of how my deafness seeps onto the page. It continues to do so in surprising and unexpected ways. My book editor, Penny Hueston, pointed out that my descriptions of sound always involve taste, sight or touch.

I reflexively felt a sense of shame, and then blossoming delight. These weren’t mixed metaphors. They were accurate; they were gloriously deaf. My descriptions of sounds remain exactly how I experience them: warm, sweet, firm, shining, blue.



Fiona Murphy’s book *The Shape of Sound* is published by Text

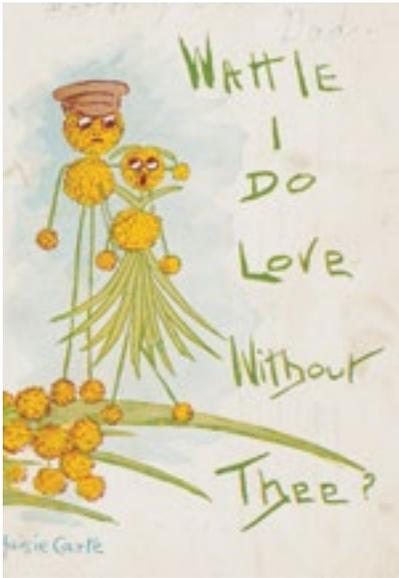


Diverse

Wattles welcome in the spring and are among the first plants to regenerate after fire. This watercolour drawing is by John Lewin, and is dated 30 August, 1805. Wattle belongs to the resilient and diverse botanical family of *Acacia* plants. With more than 1070 species of *Acacia* trees and shrubs identified, they have bloomed all over the Australian continent for more than 30 million years. Highly valued in Indigenous culture, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have used wattle in myriad ways, as a material for crafting weapons and shelter, and for fuel, food and medicine: grinding wattle seed into flour for bread, harvesting wattle gum as an antiseptic for treating cuts and abrasions, and brewed as a drink to remedy coughs and colds.

Artful

Long before the golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) was officially designated as our national floral emblem in 1988, wattle blossoms were recognised as characteristic of the Australian bush. The search for national symbols had first emerged in the nineteenth century and gathered momentum in the decades leading up to Federation in 1901. Imagery inspired by native flora and fauna began appearing on decorative and utilitarian objects, and in literary and artistic works including sheet music like this for ‘The Wattle Waltz’ by Adnil Edâcra. Printed in Melbourne in 1890 and sold for 2 shillings, the composer’s name is probably an pseudonym for Linda Arcade – Linda was the daughter of EW Cole, proprietor of the Coles Book Arcade. Though it is unlikely that Linda Cole composed this music.



Patriotic

The outbreak of World War I halted efforts to proclaim wattle as one of Australia's national emblems. Throughout the conflict, sprigs of wattle were enclosed in letters sent by loved ones to soldiers serving overseas as a reminder of home. It was also worn to commemorate those lost in battle. Between 1915 and 1916, New Zealand artist and actress Maisie Carte-Lloyd used her 'happy sense of humour' to design two patriotic postcard series featuring the beloved golden bloom 'cleverly treated to form quaint human figures' and captioned in 'a smart play on the word wattle'. Priced from 2 to 6 pence, over 100,000 postcards were sold to raise funds for the war effort. This card was sent by seven-year-old Frank to his 'Dear old Dad', Sergeant Arthur Burrowes, recovering from wounds in Europe in 1918–1919.



Symbolic

Wattle Day was proposed in the early 1880s as a celebration of our natural environment. Coinciding with Canada's selection of the maple leaf as its national symbol in 1891, one drawback with the choice of wattle was that it grows in other countries, whereas the waratah is uniquely Australian. In the end, wattle won out, perhaps because of its ubiquity. Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide held their first Wattle Day on 1 September 1910, each city decked in wattle blooms wound around telegraph poles for the event. At Sydney's Central and St James stations, wattle sprigs were pinned to pedestrians' jackets while children sold golden bunches on street corners to raise money for the Red Cross as seen in this 1935 photo by Sam Hood. Wattle Day was changed to 1 August in 1916 to enable sellers to capitalise on the earlier-flowering Cootamundra wattle. Through the 1920s and 1930s, Wattle Day remained associated with raising money for charity, but fell out of favour after World War II. National Wattle Day was re-established on 1 September 1992.



Celebratory

This costume design celebrates the golden wattle of NSW. The watercolour drawing and design were created by Thelma Thomas for the March to Nationhood Procession staged in Sydney on 26 January 1938 to mark the sesquicentenary of European colonisation. Born in Broken Hill, Thomas (later Afford) was teaching art at an Adelaide high school when her talent for designing costumes was spotted. She moved to Melbourne to study film and stage costuming, and undertook design work for the Victorian Centenary Pageant of Nations there in 1934. Back in Adelaide by 1935, Thomas designed the costumes for South Australia's lavish Centenary Pageant of Progress, earning praise for her designs that featured strong colours, unusual materials, and idiosyncratic expressions of abstract heritage concepts. In 1937 she resigned from teaching to pursue a career as a theatrical costumier. In Sydney, Thomas completed the trifecta of heritage extravaganzas, spending three months in the Mitchell Library researching designs for over 300 costumes that were worn in the state's 150th anniversary pageant.

CALLING THE KOOORI KNOCKOUT



Grand final winners of the 34th Koori Knockout.
The Cec Patten-Ron Merritt Memorial Redfern
All Blacks lift their captain, Graeme Merritt, in the
air after the game. Redfern Oval, Sydney, Monday,
4 October 2004. Photo by Jamie James

One of the most important sporting and cultural events on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calendar returns.

This coming October long weekend on the South Coast, around the Shoalhaven, the most anticipated event for Aboriginal people in NSW is happening: the 50th NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout. Commonly known as the Koori Knockout, this huge gathering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will last for four amazing days. An estimated 30,000 people – players and spectators – will travel from all over the state for what is the largest rugby league knockout carnival anywhere in the world.

2022 will see seven different competitions: men's, women's and five junior divisions of boys and girls. Around 180 teams will compete, each with 25 players, totalling a whopping 4500 players representing up to 40 different Aboriginal communities from across NSW.

First held in 1971 at Camdenville Oval in St Peters in Sydney, the Knockout was initiated by six young Aboriginal men: Bill Kennedy, Bob Morgan, Danny Rose, Bob Smith, Victor Wright and the late George Jackson. They saw it as an opportunity to bring together Aboriginal players and highlight their abilities so that the talent scouts would see what they had been overlooking. Only Bruce 'Larpa' Stewart, who played for the Roosters, and Eric Simms, who played for the Rabbitohs, had managed to establish themselves as regular first-graders in the 1960s. The founding Knockout teams were La Perouse, Koorie United, Redfern All Blacks, Kempsey, Walgett, Moree and a combined Mt Druitt–South Coast team. The first Knockout winner was La Perouse.

I think this is why I'm so passionate about the Koori Knockout. I'm a Bidjigal man from La Perouse, the small community on the northern part of Botany Bay (Gamay). Rugby league and the Bay were all we had as kids growing up in La Pa. If you didn't play footy, you watched it. La Perouse has produced some very successful athletes over the years, including rugby union's Ella brothers, Mark, Glen and Gary, and their amazing sister Marcia, who became the first Indigenous Australian representative in international netball. Many Aboriginal players from La Perouse have made it into the NRL and have also played Knockout in the black and white La Perouse team colours.

I wasn't that much of a player myself, although I have fond memories of captaining an under-19s La Perouse exhibition team in 1992 against a talented Moree Boomerangs team, one of our greatest rivals. I was fortunate to play alongside some future stars of the game, including Anthony Mundine, Wes Patten, Robbie Simpson and Matt Mitchell, father of Latrell, now star fullback for the South Sydney Rabbitohs. We were too good for the Boomerangs that day – one of my all-time favourite photos is me holding the winning shield.

These days, I'm the lead Knockout commentator for National Indigenous Television (NITV) and have been lucky enough to call the past 13 grand finals. It is easily the highlight of my year. As well as calling the Sunday and Monday of the event, I work on the KO App. In 2016, with my brother Mitchell Ross, head of the Indigenous-owned technology and office supplies company Muru Group, I created a score-keeping app to enable people on other grounds, and those not at the event, to follow each game live. Now approximately 11,000 people use the app, which includes interviews with attendees and players, as well as event updates.

NITV's involvement since 2007 means that community members unable to attend the event can watch from the comfort of their homes. I was informed one year that many of our brothers and sisters in NSW jails are glued to the TV during Knockout. I can imagine their pride, watching their mob run out, hearing familiar names and wishing they could be there to see it up close.

Over the past 50 years, the Knockout has become a highly professional, widely recognised event. Many claim it is the best rugby league played anywhere, surpassing the NRL competition. I've heard it called 'Koori Christmas', or 'a modern-day corroboree', with people turning up from all over NSW to gather on the land of the previous year's men's-division winner.

The COVID pandemic saw a two-year hiatus, so 2019 winners the South Coast Black Cockatoos have had an agonising wait to host the big 50th anniversary event. The South Coast team defeated Griffith Three-Ways United in an impressive display, with a nice mix of experienced and talented young players. That year, the Black Cockatoos were a memorial team in honour of James Wellington, a regular player at Knockouts who passed away the previous year. Memorial teams are commonplace at Koori Knockouts and are a powerful way to honour the loss of a loved one linked to community. The South Coast Black Cockatoos were led by James's brother Ben and managed by their sister Melissa. Ex-NRL star Dylan Farrell was also on the team, which included one of the many father-and-son combinations from across the competition — Jason Sullivan and his St George Illawarra Dragons son Jayden 'Bud' Sullivan. Bud Sullivan was the star of the show, the young halfback showing his skills with ball in hand and kicking goals in the strong breeze. The Griffith team wasn't bad either, with the likes of Andrew Fifita and Nicho Hynes.

I've heard it called 'Koori Christmas', or 'a modern-day corroboree' ...

This year's event, to be held across two grounds in Nowra and Bomaderry, will be the responsibility of Ben Wellington and Melissa Wellington, and their committee. In 2016, for the 'Road to the KO' YouTube series, I interviewed Associate Professor Heidi Norman, Koori Knockout historian and then-committee member for the Redfern All Blacks. I asked her about the cost of hosting an event. Her response was staggering: '\$750,000 in cash and in-kind support', she said, was required to host the 2016 event. A large event needs appropriate infrastructure — security, health and safety, sponsorship, volunteers and so on — not only to successfully manage 30,000 participants and attendees, but to comply with council regulations.

But there are financial benefits too. Local councils have estimated that the return for regional centres hosting the Knockout can be in the vicinity of several million dollars, even though most host communities just break even. So it is sad that some communities throughout NSW over the past 50 years have looked down on this extraordinary event. There have been incidents of racism, with cases of heavy-handed policing and hotels closing pools because they don't want Aboriginal people to swim in them. In Nambucca Heads one year, shops were so fearful, they all closed. Often these same people, and their local newspapers, state post-event that crime went down in the period of the Knockout because the 'troublemakers were busy'. Talk about backhanded compliments!

But host committees' relationships with police and local businesses have improved, and the Knockout is being better received by non-Indigenous people. When non-Indigenous communities embrace the event, it not only creates a more enjoyable experience for Aboriginal people, but locals reap the financial benefits from thousands of people spending in their town. I remember a few years back, in Dubbo, a BBQ chicken and devon shortage was being reported. KFC even ran out of chicken. We do love our chicken and devon.

MORIAL GRANDSTAN



A very proud moment for Brad Cooke holding the winning shield in 1992

The Knockout's main drawcard is obviously the players. One thing that stands out is the large number of professional NRL and NRLW players competing each year, such is their love for their mobs and their respective communities. They also show great loyalty, in spite of the risk of serious injury that could affect their career, never passing up the chance to go back and play with their brothers, sisters, cousins and, in some cases, mothers and fathers. Cody Walker, five-eighth with the South Sydney Rabbitohs, laughs as he talks about the unpredictability of Knockout football. 'You never know if a centre is going to jam in on you,' or some '17-year-old kid step you silly'. Walker plays with his family in a team he helped establish, the Bundjalung Baygal Warriors. Back in 2011 with another group of Warriors, the Mindaribba Warriors, his team won the Knockout.

Other NRL players you are likely to see at a Knockout include Josh 'The Foxx' Addo-Carr (Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs); Latrell Mitchell (South Sydney Rabbitohs); Jesse Ramien (Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks); Tyrone Peachey (Wests Tigers); Nicho Hynes (Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks); Andrew Fifita (Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks); William Kennedy (Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks); Albert Kelly (Brisbane Broncos); Dane Gagai (Newcastle Knights); Daine Laurie (Wests Tigers); James Roberts (Wests Tigers); Will Smith (Gold Coast Titans); Brenko Lee (Brisbane Broncos); Edrick Lee (Newcastle Knights) and Connor Watson (Sydney Roosters). They'll be lining up with – and against – former greats of the game including Greg Inglis, Dean Widders, Dennis Moran, Jonathan Wright, Travis Waddell and many more.

But often the real stars of the Knockout are those players from both the bush and urban areas who didn't, for whatever reason, make the highs of the NRL. I'm thinking of players I've called over past Knockouts such as Aaron Brierley from Yuin Monaro, Mundarra Weldon from Moree, Ryan James from the South Coast Black Cockatoos or the Briggs brothers of the Newcastle All Blacks (NAB). Historically, it's the players without illustrious first-grade careers who are the ones that people, especially older people in the community, talk about as the Knockout's all-time best players. Names like Charlie McHughes, Sonboy Peckham, Brett Davis, Michael Lyons and Garry Ardler.

I have seen 'stacked' teams (when star players not necessarily from the team's area are brought in) who get knocked out in round one, beaten by strong community sides that know each other's games inside out. I've watched dominant performances by the Briggs brothers of NAB playing tough, the Rose brothers of Walgett Aboriginal Connection driving their team to success, and the incredible run of the Redfern All Blacks who succeeded thanks to discipline and hard work on and off the field.

The women's competition has been going for many years, and many believe that the women's Knockout has been the driver for more professional leagues. It has been largely dominated by the Redfern All Blacks, who won a staggering five Knockouts in a row. Indeed, Redfern is the most successful team overall, winning 11 men's Knockouts since 1972.



League superstar Greg Inglis has played in many Knockouts. Here he signs autographs for fans at Tuggerah in 2019. Photo by Barbara McGrady

BRAD COOKE'S MOST MEMORABLE KNOCKOUT MATCHES

2007 Grand Final: Wollumbin vs La Perouse

2008 Grand Final: Narwan vs La Perouse

2009 Grand Final: Walgett vs Mindaribba

2011 Round Game: Yuin Monaro vs Moree

2011 Grand Final: Mindaribba vs Yuin Monaro

2013 Grand Final: Newcastle Yowies vs Mindaribba

2013 Semi-Final: Newcastle All Blacks vs Newcastle Yowies

2015 Round Game: La Perouse vs Nambucca

2015 Round Game: Walgett vs Griffith

2015 Grand Final: Redfern All Blacks vs Newcastle All Blacks

The 2019 Women's Grand Final, held in Tuggerah on the Central Coast, was won by the Wellington Wedgetails in a tight tussle with Bellbrook Dunghutti Connections. The star of this match was forward Litisha Boney, who plays for the South Sydney Rabbitohs. So many amazingly talented women have gone on to even greater success in the NRLW, as well as in state and national competitions, and as Indigenous All-Stars: Nakia Davis-Welsh (daughter of former Balmain star Paul Davis), Rebecca Young, Simone Smith, Caitlin Moran, Jasmin Allende, Eunice Grimes and current stars of the NRLW, including Shaylee Bent, who plays with the St George Illawarra Dragons, and Caitlan Johnston, who plays for the Newcastle Knights.

Pathway development for younger players has also grown rapidly over the years, with five junior divisions in the Knockout. Just as the 1971 event organisers hoped, scouts turn up to watch the 'kids' run around and show their skills. The highlight for those who make it to Monday's grand final is not only having their game being played live on NITV for the world to see, but getting rare professional vision for a highlight reel they can later show to potential NRL or NRLW teams. Unfortunately, the Knockout has seen sad times. One that stands out for me is the sudden passing of Narwan Eels big prop Alf Atkinson. He was my favourite in the 2008 Knockout held at Kingscliff, on the NSW-Queensland border. With barnstorming runs and brutal defence, Alf led the way up front for the Narwan side, which included Dean Widders and Dennis Moran. But, early on in the first men's semi-final, Alf came to the sideline and collapsed near his bench. The game stopped while paramedics worked on him. He was taken away in an ambulance, everyone crossing their fingers he would be okay. After consulting with the elders from Narwan, and with Alf's family, the team played on, defeating Waterloo and advancing to the grand final. Before that game started, the players were informed that Alf did not survive, a devastating moment for all at Narwan. In one of the most emotional moments I've ever witnessed, Alf's eight-year-old-son Preston led the team out onto the field, wearing his dad's jersey. In true warrior spirit, Narwan overcame a 14-point deficit to La Perouse late in the match, claiming the grand final and winning the Knockout. The lasting image for me is of Preston being held aloft on the shoulders of Widders and Moran, cheering their victory.

Not to be outdone by the Kooris of NSW, 'Murriss' in Queensland also have their own rugby league event, the Queensland Murri Carnival. It began in 2011 and is now named after rugby league immortal Arthur Beetson.

The all-important draw of the men's competition is one of many highlights leading up to the event each year. The anticipation builds as team names are drawn from a barrel and match ups are announced. Delegates gasp when an arch enemy is drawn, or when nearby communities draw each other. Many times, two teams favoured to go all the way are drawn to play each other in the first round. 2011 Manly premiership winner and Walgett legend George Rose believes that drawing a top seed isn't always a bad thing. 'If you get a tough opponent first up and win, it can set up your whole Knockout.' Walgett have experienced first-round defeats, but Rose is philosophical: 'We can then rest and enjoy the football like everyone else.'

The Koori Knockout is the most amazing time for our mobs to get together, catch up with people they haven't seen since the last Knockout, remember family members we have lost in the past year and watch our young men and women, boys and girls, wear their community colours proudly. After waiting three long years to attend a Knockout I cannot wait until the South Coast mob finally get to host the 50th Koori Knockout. I know it will be an amazing event, one that all Kooris can be proud of.

Brad Cooke, a Bidjigal man, is an experienced broadcaster and producer. He will be calling the 2022 Koori Knockout for NITV. The Koori Knockout exhibition opens at the State Library of NSW on 24 September.



Knocking it out of the park

These photos from two Koori Knockouts, one held in Dubbo on 1 October 2015 and the other in Tuggerah on 1–2 October 2019, are by leading First Nations photographer Barbara McGrady. Her shots of the action on the ground, on the sidelines and in the stands capture the drama, exhilaration and hard yakka of the Knockout.

McGrady is a Gomeroi–Gamilaraay Murri woman born in Mungindi, in north-west NSW, who lives in Sydney. Her body of work forms an extraordinary chronicle of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life, particularly in the sporting arena. She will be in the Shoalhaven for the 2022 Koori Knockout, building on the huge archive of memories she has created for players, fans and families.

I see everything that
I photograph through
a black lens.

Barbara McGrady

Straight outta Walgett. The Walgett Aboriginal Connection and Griffith Three Ways United teams, Koori Knockout, Dubbo, 1 October 2015





The Bourke Warriors under 17s team receive their pre-game team talk, Dubbo, 1 October 2015

Lesha Duckett of the La Perouse Panthers, Dubbo, 1 October 2015





Newcastle Yowies' Brad Russell tackled by a player from Combined Countries, Tuggerah, 1 October 2019



The Briggs and Moran family,
at the Koori Knockout, Dubbo,
1 October 2015

Newcastle All Blacks
try-scoring machine Aaron
Smith, Tuggerah, 2019





The eventual winners of the 2015 Knockout, Redfern All Blacks, at their pre-match pep-talk, Dubbo, 1 October 2015

The crowd gathered on portable chairs and under umbrellas on the grass at the Koori Knockout, Dubbo, 1 October 2015. The stand was overflowing







Moree Boomerangs supporters at Dubbo, 1 October 2015

Mahalia Murphy of the Mindaribba Sisters playing in a game her team would go on to lose against the Redfern All Blacks at the Koori Knockout in Raymond Terrace in 2014





Toomelah Tigers supporters at the Koori Knockout in Dubbo, 1 October 2015, cheering their team on



Victorious La Perouse Panthers U16s team, Tuggerah 2019



Illustrations by Rosie Handley

BROKEN GLASS

At the hospital they jolted Franco out of the ambulance, wheeling him, floppy and unresisting, into Emergency. Doctors and nurses were already waiting. They rushed him through heavy swinging doors but they held me back.

‘This one needs bagging,’ the paramedic called to the doctors, his words echoing through the rebounding doors.

What the fuck is bagging?

I sagged outside, my face pressed up against the tiny window, shivering against the sudden onslaught of air conditioning. I couldn’t see Franco, just an assortment of medical machines. Outside the bright buzz of that room, the hospital seemed deserted. I pushed myself away from the window and wandered down a hallway, looking for assistance. Tucked away, around a few corners, was a lone woman sitting behind a brightly lit bench.

I approached her, shaking.

‘My boyfriend’s been in a car accident, we just came in the ambulance,’ my mouth filled up, wet and salty. ‘My neighbour’s got my kids, and I came without my phone or purse,’ I stuttered. ‘Could I have some money to use a pay phone and call her?’

The woman reached down beneath the bench and handed me the white hospital phone. I dialled Meg’s number. Besides Franco’s, it was the only number I still knew.

‘Meg, I’ve come up in the ambulance,’ I blurted. ‘He was hurt this time. The ambos said *head injury* and *brain swelling*, but no-one’s talking to me.’

‘Oh Lil,’ Meg’s sigh was ragged.

I cried softly into the end of the phone, my body juddering. The woman behind the desk glanced up at me sadly.

‘I better go, I’m on the hospital phone. I’ll call you when they talk to me, okay?’

The woman behind the desk put the phone back down beside her without a word.

I walked back to the doors of the room they’d taken Franco into, peering inside the tiny windows, but there was nothing more to see. Stunned, I watched the lights on the machines. If it wasn’t for their rhythmic movements, I would have believed time had stopped.

A nurse walked past the window and glimpsed my face. She opened the door a sliver. I couldn’t see past her.

‘You can’t stand there,’ she said. ‘I’ll show you somewhere you can sit.’

She led me off to the side and opened up a small door. Inside was a couch pushed up against locked double doors. There was a trolley with cups and tea and coffee.

‘The jug’s there,’ the nurse said, pointing to a sink with an electric jug.

‘Can you tell me what’s happening?’ I stammered. ‘Is he alright?’

‘Hasn’t anyone spoken to you?’

‘No. I don’t know anything. I came in the ambulance but they wouldn’t let me in that room.’

‘Are you his girlfriend?’

I wondered if I should try to explain who Franco was to me — my high school sweetheart, my first love, the father of my kids. It all seemed too hard.

‘Yes,’ I said simply.

‘Were you in the car?’

‘No, he was with mates. We just live down the road. I came to pick him up.’

‘He has a very high blood-alcohol reading. Was he the driver?’

I shook my head. Not this time.

‘The doctor will be in to see you soon,’ she stated, closing the door behind her.

On the afternoon of the car crash, we’d had a barbeque at home. Franco didn’t bring friends home often — it was too far out of town. I’d made a new skirt in the morning, blue and red and printed with abstract flowers. I wore it at the barbeque, though it felt slightly too bold for the daytime. Outside on the grass I was overdressed amongst the T-shirts and board-shorts of the men. I’d sewn the skirt a touch too long, and with bare feet I kept stepping on the hem. I chatted with Franco’s mates, who drank their beer and tried not to look away from my eyes as I spoke. They seemed strangely afraid of me, as though I might at any time say something wholly unexpected or unbearable.

My small sons danced about, delighted with this sudden audience of men. They clambered on their backs and begged for rides, pulled them out to the swings and asked for pushes and raced around to find their favourite toys and offer them up for inspection. Oscar and Noah were enchanted but I looked on with rising horror as my sons pushed out their chests and laughed uproariously at jokes they couldn’t understand, mimicking within minutes these outward displays of manhood.

On the table the empty beer bottles began to swell and I felt a knot forming deep in my belly. How much would the men drink? How long would they stay?

Franco’s mates started to gather, as if to leave. My children came to stand beside me.

‘We’re going to go down to touch footy,’ Franco told me. ‘We’ll play and then come back to eat.’

His dimples flickered on his cheeks, and I knew he was already drunk.

‘But who’s driving?’ I asked, looking across at the sprawl of beer bottles.

‘Well, it won’t be fucking me,’ he shot back, his dimples deep, his smile defiant.

I thought of all the times he’d driven home drunk, of all his near misses. Franco had crashed his car five times on the long way home, and each time had stepped from the wreckage unharmed, without even a scratch. Today I’d thought him safe, at home, bringing the party with him, but now this last-minute adventure down to the footy grounds. I felt my eyebrows tighten, but I looked at the ground as the men headed in a pack towards their cars.

Oscar and Noah drooped with disappointment beside me.

In the quietness left behind, I cooked pasta and sat down at the table to watch my children eat.

‘Why don’t you marry Daddy?’ Noah’s voice was muffled, his mouth full of spaghetti.

I studied the sauce-smear face of my youngest son and shook my head with a smile. ‘Nup.’

‘Daddy’s too *exhausting*.’ Noah’s tone was commiserating.

‘Men like Daddy shouldn’t shave,’ Oscar proclaimed loudly.

‘Why do you say that?’ I asked.

‘Because he always gets the shaving cream on his ears.’

I tried to hide my smile.

‘What sort of man is Daddy?’

Oscar glanced at me as though I had asked the most basic, most obvious of questions.

‘Silly.’ He turned his sauce-speckled palms upwards in a gentle shrug. ‘Daddy’s a silly sort of man, you know?’

Two sets of orange lights flashed in the distance, illuminating the night sky. My arms felt wooden on the steering wheel. Big white ambulances parked in the middle of my small-town road.

No-one said anything about ambulances.

I pulled up on the grass and clambered out the car door. The wreck of Franco’s car lay abandoned further along the road. His car was strangely rounded, all the sharp edges smoothed away, the red paint scratched off, revealing the silver of the metal beneath. In the flare of the ambulance lights the shattered glass on the bitumen sparkled intermittently. I looked down at my bare feet.

There is glass everywhere but I have to cross.

Gingerly, I picked my way through the broken glass. The nearest bloke lay on his back with his knees raised. His face was criss-crossed with thin bloody lines, his nose large and swollen, his eyes already turning black.

‘Lil, I’m okay. They just told me to lay down ‘cause I felt dizzy.’ He sounded forlorn, anxious. ‘I’m so sorry, Lil.’

‘Sorry for what?’ Heart banging. ‘Where is he?’

‘Behind the ambulance.’ He pointed, his broken face crumbling. ‘He went out the car window. We lost him when the car rolled.’

I ran around the ambulance. Franco lay on the ground, his head cradled in another bloke’s lap.

‘Lil, you’ve got to keep him still,’ the man said. ‘He keeps fighting me to stand up. Help me calm him down, while they get him ready for the ambulance.’

‘What happened?’ I wiped away gushing tears.

‘I missed the corner,’ the friend said. ‘He was unconscious when we found him. He only just came to.’

I looked down into Franco’s glazed eyes. He was bare-chested, his body covered in fleshy burn-like grazes. Pieces of black tar were wedged into his arms, and a large line of skin hung loose but bloodless on his forehead. His face was pale but otherwise unmarked. I leaned over and placed my palm on the middle of his chest.

His eyes suddenly focused. ‘Lil!’ He grasped my arm and pulled, ‘Help me up!’

Numbness was overtaking me. I could feel it inching up my body. I was losing feeling.

‘You have to stay put,’ I whispered, pressing down lightly on his chest. ‘You have to stay where you are.’

‘No, help me up!’ he bellowed. ‘I want to go home, they won’t let me.’

My face was wet, spilling tears.

‘I can’t Franco, you’re hurt.’ I held his chest firmly. ‘You have to go in the ambulance.’

‘No, no. Help me up, Lil.’ Franco’s eyes flicked about wildly, his arms flailing.

The ambulance officer approached. ‘Mate, you’re going to have to stop this carrying on.’

Then he turned to me. ‘It’s the shock. They always carry on like that when they’ve been drinking and it’s a head injury.’

‘A head injury?’

Helpless fury built inside me.

‘He won’t be able to tell until he gets to hospital and they do the tests. I can’t tell you anything except that he’s seriously injured. Who are you?’

‘He’s my boyfriend, my partner. The father of my kids.’

The paramedics brought forward the steel trolley and I moved aside. My whole body began to shake. A man and woman I hadn’t noticed walked over and stood beside me, dressed in pyjamas.

‘We heard the crash, and then that one ran over and asked if he could use our phone,’ the woman offered up, hesitantly, pointing at the man cradling Franco’s head. ‘They were doing burnouts, we knew it was gonna be bad.’

Burnouts.

I thought of my children at home waiting. I thought of how many times I had taken that call.

‘He your fella? The bloke who’s hurt?’

I nodded. ‘What should I do?’ I lifted my singlet to wipe my gushing eyes. ‘Should I go with him in the ambulance?’

‘He’s your fella, course you should go.’

‘But I didn’t bring my bag, my phone,’ I said, holding up my empty hands. ‘I fell asleep putting the kids to bed. When I got the call Meg rushed over to watch my kids. She won’t know where I am.’

‘Meg Tagget? She your neighbour?’ the woman asked and I nodded.

‘We’ll track down her number. We’ll let her know,’ the man said, focussed, not looking past me.

The officers loaded Franco into the ambulance and I rushed back across the broken glass to bang on the door.

‘I want to come. Can I?’

‘Alright,’ the man sighed. ‘But you have to sit in the front. It’s regulations.’

The ambulance lights flashed, but there was no siren screeching. I was travelling inside a soundless scream. My neighbours had come out of their houses to line the narrow road and watch the ambulance pass by. Pyjama-clad children huddled against their parents’ legs and stared as we passed. Inside the ambulance it was white and brightly lit, and I felt garishly on display in my bright, sleep-creased skirt.

In the back, Franco struggled against the paramedic, pushing out with wild arms as the man tried to tend to him.

‘It’s just down the road, man,’ he thrashed about. ‘Just turn around now and drop me off.’ He gripped the loose flap of thick skin that protruded from his forehead, pulling it hard. ‘What the fuck is this thing on my head?’

‘Lie still, mate. Calm down,’ the paramedic was stern.

‘It hurts, it hurts —’ Franco yelled, trying to sit up.



‘Where’s the pain?’ The paramedic asked.
‘Where’s it hurting, mate?’

My rage was erupting, spreading out around me like slowly inching lava. Impotent in the front of the ambulance, I kept leaking unwanted tears. The driver glanced sideways at me but he didn’t speak.

In the back Franco grew frenzied.

‘I’m going to have to dose him up,’ the paramedic called to the driver. ‘Do you think one hundred milligrams is too much? With the possible brain swelling?’

‘If you can’t calm him down you’ll have to,’ the driver shouted back. ‘He’s probably injuring himself with all that jumping around.’

I watched through the glass as the paramedic in the back readied the syringe and dodged Franco’s flailing limbs to empty it inside him. In seconds, Franco’s eyes closed and he was quiet.

Out on the highway, the ambulance sped up. We veered wildly across the overtaking lanes, lights flashing, siren screaming. The road was deserted and the roaring of the siren seemed disproportionately loud in the emptiness of the night. My feet stung from the tiny shards of glass and I lifted them up to the black upholstered seat and tucked them under my too-long skirt.

The hospital seemed to be in the midst of renovations, so the waiting room was not a room but a hallway, blocked off at both ends. I waited, goose-bumped with cold, feeling the walls begin to edge in towards me. There was no clock but I was outside of time, in a nowhere place. Now and then I stood and opened the door, peering out around its edges, but there was nothing to see.

Eventually, the door opened and a doctor walked in.
A youngish man with a shuttered face.

‘You are the girlfriend?’
‘Yes.’

He sat next to me on the couch.

‘Well, he is in a critical condition. We have had x-rays done and it looks as if he may have a fractured spine.’ He held up an x-ray to the light and pointed to the fracture in Franco’s neck.

‘He’s broken his neck?’

‘Well, we’re not exactly sure. The x-ray indicates there is a break, but he’ll be getting some CAT scans soon to verify it. These will also show the extent of the brain swelling. On top of this, he has a collapsed lung and quite a severe lesion on his hip. A hole to be exact.’

Burnouts.

I stared at the doctor’s face. Quiet stillness was my version of rage.

‘The ambulance officer said he went out the window of a rolling car, that he wasn’t wearing a seatbelt, that he was thrown a fair distance,’ he continued. ‘It’s amazing that he didn’t sustain more injuries really. No broken bones.’

No seatbelt.

‘He’s always been lucky,’ I whispered.

‘His blood-alcohol reading was very high,’ the doctor stated. It felt like an accusation, but I didn’t even drink.

‘He never used to drink before I had kids,’ I said, crossing my arms.

‘You have kids?’

I was 26, but I knew I looked younger. He probably thought I was a teenager.

I nodded. ‘Six and four.’

The doctor looked away, rubbing two fingers against his forehead.

‘When you say broken neck, are you talking paralysis?’ I asked, struggling to understand the implications. ‘Is that what you’re saying?’ I squeezed my crossed arms against my chest. The numbness was rising, higher and higher.

‘Well, at this stage it’s hard to say. It looks as if it’s broken but it’s just sitting there, the bones are just sitting in place. I cannot say at this stage what the spinal cord damage is.’

‘But he was moving around so much in the back of the ambulance they had to sedate him.’

‘Yes, well, that is in his favour, but certainly at this stage it’s too early to tell.’

‘So, he may have a broken neck, and he may be paralysed, and he may have brain injuries?’

‘Yes. The CAT scans will tell us more.’

I wanted to reach up and pinch my cheeks just to feel something.

‘Can I see him?’

‘We will take him off for the CAT scans in the next hour.

When we get the results of those I will come back and get you, okay?’

I watched the doctor go. It felt futile to ask him anything more.

Fractured spine.

Broken neck.

Brain injury.

Collapsed lung.

Spinal cord damage.

A hole.

Waiting in the blocked-off hallway to nowhere, I sat on the couch in my creased skirt with my stinging feet, shivering uncontrollably in the too-cold air conditioning. I thought of the question Meg had asked me last time Franco had crashed – ‘What would it take for you to leave him?’ Nobody had ever asked me that. Franco’s smile always won everyone over. Not Meg. I ran my finger over the soles of my feet, feeling for the tiny shards of glass.

Back at home, I lay exhausted on the couch. The boys climbed over me, snuggling tightly against my body.

‘Will Daddy get better?’

There was no broken neck, no spinal cord damage, but Franco’s skull was fractured in three places and his brain was dangerously swollen.

‘Yes, he’ll be better soon.’

‘Will his bones grow back together?’

‘Yes, bones mend.’

‘Will he always have bandages?’

We veered wildly across
the overtaking lanes, lights
flashing, siren screaming.





I knew it was time to speak the words...

‘No baby, no.’

I thought about the glass still in my feet. Meg once told me that her aunt had fallen into a glass cabinet, shattering it, and for years afterwards she’d feel an itch somewhere, scratch it, and a tiny piece of glass would come away beneath her fingers. These fragments had stayed hidden in her body — unknown to her — but they’d worked their way slowly to the surface.

‘Will Daddy be back for my birthday?’

‘No baby, it’s too soon.’

‘Will Daddy be able to walk?’

‘Yes, he’ll walk soon.’

‘Will Daddy get me a present for my birthday?’

‘I don’t know, darling, you’ll have to wait and see.’

Three weeks later Franco was home, still bandaged and swollen. A nurse came to the house to show me how to change his dressings and to check on the hole in his hip. Franco was not to drink alcohol for three months, not to play sport for a year. He watched me suspiciously, as though I had devised this special punishment myself. He refused to eat, his flesh shrinking from his bones. Gaunt and hollow-eyed, he followed my movements around the house, wincing at the raucous sounds of the children playing.

In the morning, I helped him shower. Crouching down to dry the drips from his calves, I looked up at his shuttered face.

‘You know what this means don’t you?’ The words popped from my mouth, unbidden.

‘What?’

I watched Franco’s face, wondering if I should speak the unspeakable. ‘You need a change in lifestyle.’

Franco lifted his naked arms to cover his face, their undersides pale as the moon. He warded off my words, and I clenched my teeth tightly inside my closed mouth.

‘You know that, don’t you’

‘Lil, how can you say those things now?’

I looked away from him, gathering up his dirty clothes.

‘Okay, not yet. But soon. Soon I will say them.’

—

After two months Franco began to joke and smile and I knew it was time to speak the words. In the kitchen the rosewood benches gleamed in the morning cool. Franco leaned his body half out the sliding door, examining the scars on his arms and hands in the sunlight.

All the things I wanted to say ran through my mind —
Trust is a dead thing in our home.

Like an animal caught somewhere, unseen.

Decaying, slowly, filling the air with a stench we can’t locate.

But when I spoke the words were simple, ‘If you can’t commit to stopping drinking, you’ll have to leave.’

Franco glanced up in surprise. Even after all this, he hadn’t seen it coming.

‘I don’t have to stop. I can just drink a small amount.’ His face was closing over.

‘Franco, I can’t lie awake expecting that call,’ I widened my feet, focusing on the feeling in my legs. Holding my ground.

‘I don’t believe you,’ Franco was all accusation, as though I was lying. ‘What about the kids?’

I thought of my children, their delight in the men at the barbeque. Their hunger to be close. But I had walked over broken glass to get to him. It was enough.

‘You can stay until you can drive again, that’s it.’

Franco shrugged, looking away, and I felt a glimmering of hope deep inside. Freedom loomed. Freedom from the long nights of waiting. Freedom from the weight of all my worst fears —

Fractured spine.

Broken neck.

Brain injury.

Collapsed lung.

Spinal cord damage.

A hole.

Or just plain —

Dead.

Maybe he’d made some kind of deal with himself to never leave me, and his only avenue of escape was to keep crashing his car.

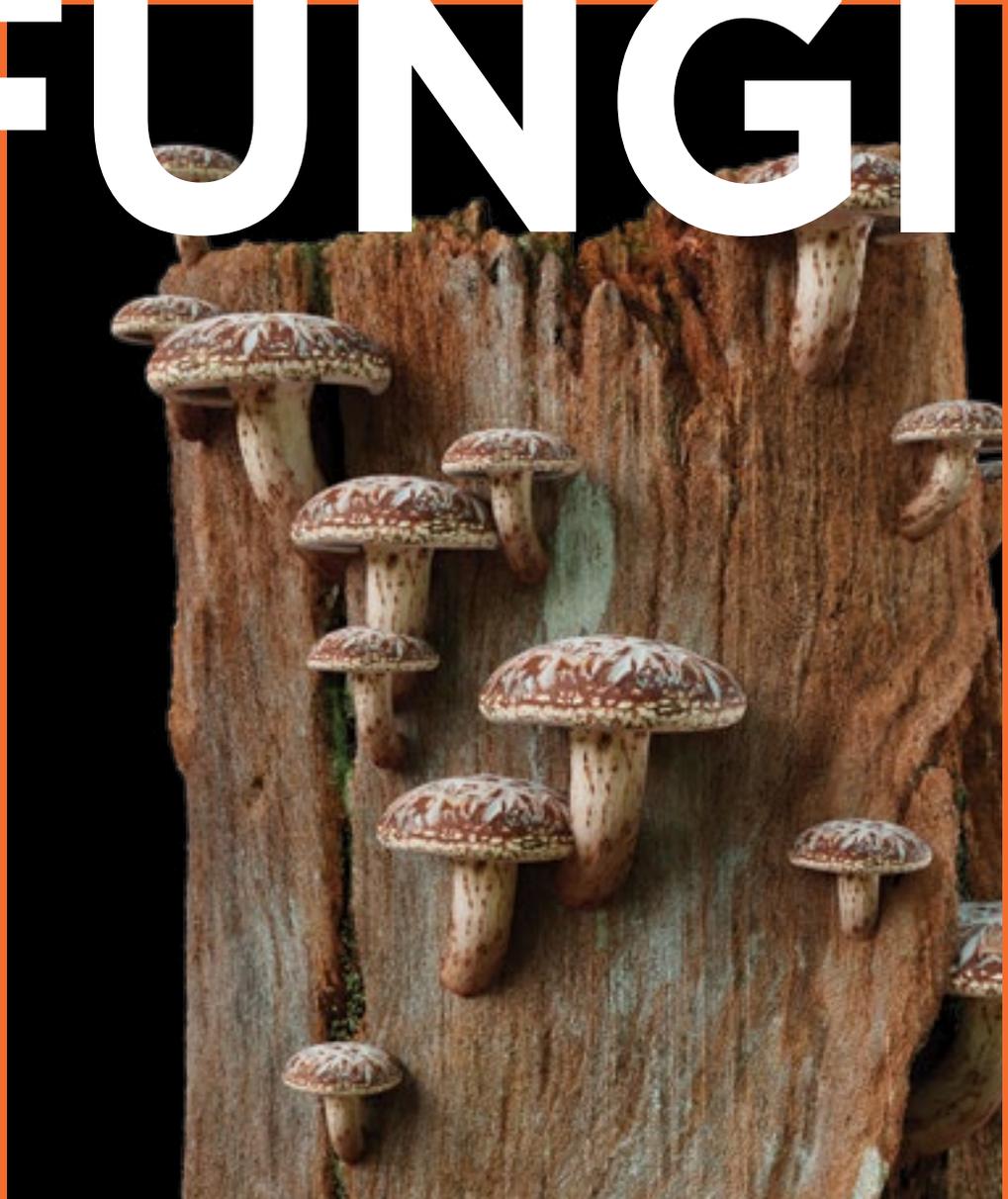
You can leave me. I wanted to say. *You don’t have to die.*

‘I just can’t do the waiting,’ I murmured instead. ‘The waiting for that call.’

I looked past Franco, through the wide-open doors to the boundless green. The crickets screeched and I closed my eyes, the loud hum vibrating through my mind. When I opened my eyes, Franco had stepped away and the green swelled before me, sun-bright and aglow. I walked outside to stand in the sun, looking up at the sky through the flickering sway of the leaves.

Jessie Cole is the author of the critically acclaimed novels *Darkness on the Edge of Town* (2013) and *Deeper Water* (2014). *Staying: A memoir* was longlisted for the 2019 Colin Roderick Award and shortlisted for the Victorian Premier’s Literary Award for Non-fiction. Her new memoir, *Desire: A reckoning*, has just been published by Text.

THE FUTURE IS FUNGI



Lentinula edodes growing on oak.
This fungi species prefers oak logs
due to their nutritious wood and ability
to retain water. A single log can produce
mushrooms for up to five years
Artwork by Joana Huguenin

Without nature's alchemists, the world as we know it would not exist. Now we are beginning to understand fungi's restorative role.

When it comes to the natural world, we take far more than we give back. Far from our humble beginnings living in harmony with the land and the ocean, the human collective has harnessed our power and we have organised ourselves into magnificent cities and cultures. While our ancestors were striking flint to start a fire, now we can create nuclear fusion, the very process that powers our sun and the stars. By many measures, we have performed unimaginably well. But we have forgotten that nature is not a part of our world — we are a part of nature.

Our temporary lease here on Earth is just that, ephemeral. Modern civilisation, steeped in culture, technology and belief in progress, represents a mere 0.00002 per cent of Earth's 4.5-billion-year history. Given our fleeting existence, we should revere the processes our planet has been undergoing for billions of years, processes that will continue long after we are gone. Instead, we are in competition with natural systems and outcompeting them.

Luckily for us, there's a natural kingdom with a billion years of experience waiting to share its wisdom. The kingdom of fungi offers us a chance to redefine our relationship with the natural world and provides glimmers of hope amid the accelerating rate of climate change.

Fungi shape and transform environments. They underpin the wellbeing of nearly all terrestrial ecosystems. Despite spending most of their lives hidden underground, or inside plants and animals, fungi are responsible for critical ecological processes. Some fungi weave through the earth, decomposing matter and recycling nutrients to build healthy soils where plants and animals can flourish. They are the interface between death and life — without them, the world would be buried under fallen trees, the remains of animals and infertile soil.

Various fungi form intimate and intelligent partnerships with all forms of life, supporting the health of most — if not all — organisms. The production of beer, wine, chocolate, bread, penicillin and detergent depends on fungi. A potent group, known as psychedelics, contains psychoactive compounds that can initiate transformative experiences of love, creativity and connection. We both grew up in ethnic Chinese families where traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) practices are woven into the way we eat and live. Revered in TCM, fungi such as reishi, enoki, wood ear are often treated as both food and medicine. We were also fortunate enough to have had transformational psychedelic experiences, which have shaped the trajectory of our lives.

It is safe to say that without fungi, the world as we know it would not exist. Fungi are nature's alchemists and may hold untold answers for our future on Earth.

The kingdom of fungi
offers us a chance to
redefine our relationship
with the natural world ...

1

The **CAP** (pileus) is at the top of the mushroom structure. It looks like an umbrella and provides a protective covering for the gills.

2

The **GILLS** (lamellae) hold spores in their thin, papery blades under the cap.

3

The **UNIVERSAL VEIL** is a layer of tissue membrane that envelops an immature mushroom to protect it during its development. This breaks apart when a mushroom matures, leaving remnants on the cap and sometimes forming a volva at the bottom of the stipe.

4

The **PARTIAL VEIL** is a tissue membrane that is much thinner than the universal veil. It covers and protects the gills from the edge of the cap to the stipe as the mushroom is developing. Once the mushroom is mature, the partial veil breaks away to expose the gills, leaving a ring (annulus or skirt) around the upper part of the stipe.

5

The **STIPE**, sometimes called a stem, supports the cap so that the gills can easily release their spores into the wind. At the base of the stipe is the volva left by the universal veil.



6

SPORES are a fungus's microscopic reproductive cells. Many fungi release their spores into the air to restart the fungal life cycle far from the parent mushroom.

7

MYCELIA are white, thread-like filaments made up of hyphae that form the vegetative part of a fungus.

It's a fungal world, we are just living in it.

Neither plant nor animal, fungi represent a distinct third kingdom, overlooked for much of scientific history. Unlike plants that photosynthesise, and animals that ingest and digest food, fungi secrete enzymes into the environment to break down food externally, before absorbing it into their mycelium, a root-like network that grows through the soil. These enzymes are similar to those in our mouths — leave a piece of bread on your tongue and within seconds, digestive acids in your saliva will turn the bread into wet mush. But fungi have a remarkably wide taste palette compared to humans, consuming everything from stale bread to plastics and even nuclear waste. This method of feeding means fungi can penetrate the toughest of substances to extract nutrients, before transferring them into their cells.

Fungi have evolved to feed on almost any organic and non-organic matter. Parasitic fungi infect and feed off living hosts. Saprophytic fungi decompose dead or dying matter for energy. Some fungi form mutually beneficial relationships with plants or animals for food. The largest groups of these 'mutualists' include mycorrhizal fungi, which are networks of underground mycelium that interact with the root systems of plants. Fungi share nutrients and water with plants in exchange for sugars. Mycelium is only one cell wall thick, so can easily extract nutrients from a range of complex materials, breaking them into elementary substances such as water, carbon dioxide, nitrogen, phosphorus and calcium — superfoods that allow plants to flourish.

Mycorrhizal relationships are far more complex than a single partnership between a fungus and a plant. Hundreds of mycelia can be attached to one plant and, conversely, a mycelium can be attached to hundreds of plants. Mycelium is so fine that a teaspoon of soil can hold hundreds of kilometres of it. Over an area as large as a forest, that is a long information highway for fungi and plants to relay resources and chemical signals. And they do, constantly. Forests, grasslands and woodlands are not landscapes of individual trees competing with one another for survival. These ecosystems have

been formed over millions of years, and their participants have the ability to negotiate, cooperate, trade, steal and compromise — all in the absence of a brain. Fungi connect them all, underground mycelia weaving the forest into a dynamic network of incredible scale.

Dr Suzanne Simard, an ecologist at the University of British Columbia, made a striking discovery, published in *Nature* in 1997: that carbon produced from one tree can be shared with its mycorrhizal partners and with other trees. She called this the 'wood wide web'. Today, the phrase 'wood wide web' is used to describe the mycelial highways that function like a forest's organic internet. Plants within the network can transfer sugars, hormones, stress signals and carbon. Simard mapped the mycorrhizal networks in numerous forests and found that they were structured similarly to neural networks in the brain, or like nodal links within the internet. The oldest and largest trees had the most mycorrhizal connections, trees that Simard called 'mother trees'. These social 'creatures' supported the rest of the network by feeding seedlings, injured or shaded trees, warned others of attacks, and transferred their own nutrients to neighbouring plants before they died.

Yet not all scientists agree that fungi and trees behave altruistically. Dr Toby Kiers, professor of evolutionary biology at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, for example, believes that 'both parties may benefit, but they also constantly struggle to maximise their individual pay-off'. Using market economics as a metaphor, Kiers's team published studies showing that plants and fungi trade under free market principles. In some experiments, fungi hoarded nutrients in their mycelium to decrease the supply. With increased demand from plants, fungi inflated the price for the same nutrients. In Kiers's work, capitalist fungi and plants display similarities to humans in their ability to manipulate the supply and demand of the forest market.

Fungi are sentient without thought, sophisticated without cognition. It's a fungal world, we are just living in it.

Three ways fungi can save us



Fungi as a water filter

Mycelium is known for its insatiable hunger for organic matter. The common oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*), for example, is able to process and neutralise bacteria such as *E. coli*, working with its mycelial membrane to filter out microbial pathogens from contaminated water. A 'mycofilter' can be created with a hessian sack filled with wet straw and woodchips and inoculated with myceli. Inexpensive and simple to set up, the small size of the mycofilter means that it can be installed around farms, urban areas, roads and factories. A roadside mycofiltration system can help decontaminate wastewater before it makes its way back into our waterways.

Tradd Cotter, an American mycologist and owner of the company Mushroom Mountain, runs workshops on setting up mycofiltration systems. 'We're using a cage that looks like a crab pot, that can be refilled with wood chips. It'll last for a year or two. And if the cage stays put, it can be emptied out and refilled with new wood chips.' Mycofiltration is in its infancy, but many people are experimenting with this fungal capability.

Fungi as a forest and soil builder

'Mycoforestry' refers to the use of fungi as a forest and soil builder. Wood debris in forests from logging can be chipped into smaller pieces, then inoculated with native saprophytic fungi species to accelerate decomposition of organic matter. This redirects vital elements and nutrients back into the soil for use by the rest of the forest. Fungi also produce glomalin, a sticky substance that binds soil particles and builds soil architecture, and which fungi use to store carbon. Trees connected to a mycelial network absorb carbon from the atmosphere and transfer it into the mycelium for storage. Fungi can play a critical role in regulating the global climate.



Artwork by Joana Huguenin



Botanical drawings of mushrooms from the Library's rare book collection.

Fungi as a farmer's friend

Bill Mollison, co-founder of permaculture, spent a decade in the Tweed Valley in northern NSW designing principles for farming inspired by nature. Permaculture creates self-sufficiency, regeneration and interconnectedness that can be applied to all aspects of life. Think of rain barrels, solar panels, composting bins, worm trays, chicken coops, home mushroom farms or experiments with fermentation. In fact, the prevalence and centrality of fungi in permaculture systems has spawned the term 'mycopermaculture'.

Imagine a mycopermaculture system in your garden, which recycles garden waste into nutritious food for fungi. As the mycelium consumes your garden waste, it creates a launchpad for the fungi sporing bodies to develop, creating an abundance of potential edible and medicinal mushrooms and fodder for animals roaming your garden (animals love mushrooms). The by-products can be put into your garden's soil to enhance its nutrients and microflora. Small and slow systems are easier to maintain than big ones. With patience, commitment and the right resources, even city-living, first-time gardeners can make a big difference.

Fungi provide us with the hope that we can not only survive, but thrive, despite the challenges that we face on our planet. Fungi may be one more step towards healing our planet.

Michael Lim was born in Sydney. When aged 21, he co-founded an online brand that is now one of Australia's largest eyewear chains. Early transformational experiences with psychedelics inspired his fascination with the fungi kingdom and prompted a career change. He now dedicates his time to researching fungi, psychedelics, ecology and anthropology.

Yun Shu was born in Shanghai. After a successful career in the banking sector in Sydney and London, she took a more spiritual path and is now dedicated to the study of consciousness, using language and culture as tools for connection and healing.

Michael Lim and Yun Shu are co-authors of *The Future is Fungi*, published by Thames & Hudson in 2022.

Botanical drawings from James
Sowerby, *Coloured figures of
English fungi or mushrooms*,
published 1797-1809





Pleurotus ostreatus, or oyster mushroom, has been extensively researched and tested in myco-remediation. It can break down oils, pesticides, herbicides and other industrial toxins.

Artwork by Joana Huguenin

THE TREE OF LIFE

In the depths of grief,
Indira Naidoo turns
to the natural world
around for answers.

Illustration by Katherine Zhang



You already know Indira Naidoo. Still, it would be remiss of me to not stop for a moment and recognise that into which she has grown: one of Australia's most popular broadcasters and public figures. During her 30-year award-winning journalistic career, she's hosted and reported for ABC's *Late Edition* nightly news and SBS's *World News Tonight*, starred as a special guest presenter on ABC TV's *Gardening Australia*, and hosted three seasons of the SBS TV series *Filthy Rich and Homeless*. She was once the media manager at Choice, where she created the now-annual Choice Shonky Awards for the worst consumer products. She has also worked for the UN in Geneva and has been a long-term ambassador for Sydney's homeless crisis centre, the Wayside Chapel. Her first book, the best-selling *The Edible Balcony*, was published in 2011; the follow-up, *The Edible City*, was published in 2015. And now she has written and published a third book, though this one is different to anything she's ever done.

The Space Between the Stars is many books at once. It is a biography of a person lost, a memoir of the aftermath for a person left behind, a collection of interviews and profiles of intimate observers of the hyperlocal, and a clarion call to turn ourselves more towards nature. It suggests that the natural world can heal and provide answers, especially because it seeks *not* to do so. All this in less than 200 pages: 23 short chapters bound within a beautiful cloth-covered hardback cover.

It was only when I began reading her book that I realised that Naidoo and I live only a few minutes from each other. This was a delight because it meant I was able to immediately recognise much of what she describes in the book as she moves through her local urban environment, and even more because she's caused me to see the streets and parks I walk through every day more intimately and profoundly.

We arrange a time to talk, and I ask Naidoo about this focus on our neighbourhood. The answer should've been obvious; she says that 'it only really came about this way because we were all in lockdown, and I only had five kilometres around me I could go. The library, where I would normally go when doing research and interviewing and writing, was closed. And so I had to find these guides who I could spend time with within our five kilometre overlaps, and it had to happen outside. It all took two years in total.'

The intimate observers of the natural world who Naidoo features in the book are many and varied. There's Phil, amateur astronomer and willing instructor for other potential stargazers, who ventures onto Naidoo's apartment balcony "one evening with his telescope to show her various far-flung wonders. University researcher and dedicated feather-hunter Kate, who created the world's first 'feather map', which pinpoints exactly where various bird species are located at various times of the year, shows Naidoo just how many different feathers we are all likely to walk past in just a few minutes' stroll.

Further into the book, Diego, an edible weed forager, reveals to Naidoo a bounty of ingredients poking up in all kinds of patches and corners of the suburbs. Renowned comedian Steve, also an avid birdwatcher, introduces her to 'atlassing' — returning to the same place time and time again to observe the birds in a particular area. Michael, teacher of kite-flying to anyone who wants to learn, lets Naidoo run about a park holding on to a string. Esteemed entomologist, 'antman' Ajay, crouches over with Naidoo so they can watch the various types of ants going about their daily business. She even teams up with her granddaughter, Abbie, after a rainy day, both on a mission to find only the very best puddles, study them, and perhaps even splash in them if deemed appropriate.

Of this latter exploration — but also of all the slowing down and paying attention she attempts — Naidoo writes in the book:

'When you're a child you're closer to the ground. You notice what's around your feet — feathers, or shells on the beach, shiny pebbles, lichen-covered sticks, tiny ants. Their world is your world. Children are more conscious of being *in* the earth, not just *on* it. They develop a *topophilia* or place-love for these treasured spaces. They do handstands, build caves and castles, roll around and daydream in it. They develop an intimacy with these earth places that the adults in their world eventually pull them away from by insisting that they *Don't put things in your mouth*, or *Always wear shoes* or *Don't walk on the grass*. Eventually the calling cards of nature — like feathers — become something removed, foreign and dirty.'

I remark that this, I guess, is something all adults lose from their childhood. She agrees: ‘I thought before writing this book that I was a person fairly present in the world. Then I was presented with an opportunity in my grief to really find the joy in the most simple things, especially those in nature around me. Two years earlier I would’ve seen these things, but not really *seen* them. And the way I listen now, and hear things, and feel the weather on my skin ... A lot of my senses have really heightened in the past couple of years.’

As Naidoo says, this isn’t a book simply about paying more attention to nature — or, rather, this new attention of hers wasn’t just a lark — but was caused by a deeply traumatic event in her life. Indeed, she views her turn towards nature as what saved her. ‘This was the first big grief I’d ever experienced in my life,’ she tells me, ‘so I really had no preparation for what it was going to be like.’

‘Not that any grief is really like any other grief. Grief is just a very singular, individual experience. We all lost the same person in the same circumstance, but depending on our angle and your proximity, it was completely different. Everyone in my family stepped onto quite a different path. And that in itself is quite a lonely thing.’

I ask if this loneliness is where the book came from, and she confirms: ‘I had to make sense of the way I was thinking and feeling, for myself, essentially, and journaling and writing has always been the way that I’ve done that. I’ve always jotted ideas and notes down since I was quite small. It’s part of my journalism, so I don’t think of it differently.’

However, she wasn’t even thinking of writing a book. ‘My publisher contacted me right out of the blue, in the middle of a lockdown, and said she thought there’d be interest in a book about biophilia and the power of nature and was that something I thought I could write given some of the books I’ve written in the past. She didn’t know my sister had died.’

Naidoo then tells me all about the extraordinary fig tree that plays such a huge role in *The Space Between the Stars*. ‘I had already started walking to my tree in the gardens as a way to deal with my despair, so I was gaining a sense of solace from that. But the question was, could I actually write while in my grief? I didn’t think I could. I didn’t think writing, or even nature, could heal you with such a big grief. It was almost a proving to myself, putting the hypothesis out there, to see if it was possible. And I really didn’t know at the beginning of writing the book, because I wrote it fresh a few weeks into my grief, with only the last section written a year later. I was surprised, not only watching my

healing process, but also watching the process of writing and delivering the book; I didn’t think either of them would happen.’

I put to her that one of the lines in the book that most struck me reads, ‘I am trying to solve a murder mystery no detective could ever crack. And that’s because it’s not a whodunnit, but a *whydunnit*. The victim was the assailant.’ I say that I imagine sitting down to write a book about the suicide of her sister and her grief and her turn to nature might have seemed a completely overwhelming task. Yet she came up with quite an inspired structure for the book, one that sought out or invited in to her world different individuals, people who pay intimate attention to some part of the world or universe around us, more closely than most of us adults do.

‘It absolutely was the thickest, densest blanket that descended upon me in terms of the writing part,’ she says. ‘How I could possibly explore this story and this very big grief — and in a time of huge national grief and global grief, layer upon layer upon layer, so, so dense, and so muddied. And yet I had this innate belief that my art-making would lead me to where I needed to go. Surrendering to that belief was really the key to beginning the process of how to write this story.’

I circle back once more to ask her about the text of the book itself, for it could’ve been so heavy as both an object and a read, could’ve been so much more dense, intense and longer than it is. There is so much more that might have been explored — within herself, and within the various people she spends time with, and learns from. Yet the book is quite light and dynamic. And nimble — it doesn’t get bogged down at all. Was this very deliberate?

‘I was very conscious of the heaviness of suicide,’ Naidoo says. ‘And while I was going through this grief, I couldn’t find any reading material at all that helped me, nothing that really captured what I was experiencing, nothing that made me feel better. And maybe there just isn’t a way to feel better through reading. But I’m generally an optimistic person. Also the journalist in me wanted to find a way through, to find answers. None of the usual psychobabble books that get recommended helped, nor did the famous grief memoirs. And then, completely accidentally, I happened to find a whole lot of nature guides, ones that along with being full of scientific knowledge and research had very spiritual outlooks with how they just accepted things as they are. Which is just not a very journalistic way of looking at the world. They observe and accept.’

She pauses, and then tells me that the thing that surprised and helped her most is that these nature writers aren’t afraid of using their hearts as well as

their heads. ‘They helped me unlock my heart so that I could raise it to the level of my head. The connection through the heart first was to be my way through this.’

We’re just about out of time to talk, and Naidoo has mentioned more than once that she thinks of *The Space Between the Stars* as a fairytale, despite its clear non-fiction-ness, and so I ask why. ‘Most fairytales have these beautiful moments of joy,’ she says, ‘but then these terrible, dark, foreboding, horrible parts as well. And this story was a typical fairytale — it could’ve been written by the Grimm brothers, really.’

‘But what was really important and fortunate is that from very early on I didn’t set out to find the answer to “Why?”, which is the question we ask when death visits us — and much more traumatically so when the death is a suicide. I was very lucky that I knew, that I understood, very early on, that this was not going to be the question that I wanted to ask, that it was going to be a question of “How do I find meaning in what has happened?” Nature helped me realise what question to ask myself, because once I started embedding myself in nature I saw cycles of life and death and renewal, and I could find parallels to what was happening in my life. Does a tree ask “Why?” Does a plant? Of course they don’t. They don’t look for meaning in their presence because their presence is their meaning.’

Sam Cooney is a writer, editor, publisher and teacher who ran the literary magazine *The Lifted Brow* from 2012 to 2020 and founded the small press *Brow Books*. He now works for SBS.

Lifeline 13 11 14

Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636

Does a tree ask “Why?”
Does a plant? Of course
they don’t.



Photo by Joy Lai



Mature desert oak, with
immature desert oaks, and
Uluru, in the background.
Photo by Inga Simpson

Desert Trees

The Larapinta Trail shifts what a nature writer thought she knew about trees.

When I pictured walking in the desert, I didn't think about trees. Only red sand, rocky ridgelines and open space. Like many people, during 2020 I resolved to finally go to 'the Centre'. For me, it was more about the bushfires than COVID. Eighty per cent of the region where I live, on the South Coast of New South Wales, burned during the summer of 2019–2020. Although my own settlement was saved by a last-minute wind change, it's no longer possible to go anywhere without seeing black trunks and tortured regrowth, without being reminded of those months: smoke, evacuations, apocalyptic skies, the grim rain of black leaves. So many forests I've known all my life are forever changed. Other forests around the country, which I'd always meant to visit, also went up in smoke. I felt a new urgency to see as much as I could before it disappears. It's probably not irrelevant that I had turned 50 just as COVID hit, as the country, the world, was shut down. Life had become a fragile, finite thing. I needed to walk.

Traversing the landscape alone, at pace, particularly among trees, is when I feel most myself. It's how I process thoughts, feelings, grief. That's what was happening, of course, although it took a long time to admit it. Grief for the billions of trees, birds and animals that burned. For myself, too: how much I'd lost, which, in retrospect, amounts to a very long childhood; thinking wonder was enough. Suddenly I could see the consequences of 250 years of colonisation: the inevitability of the apocalypse we're now living in. It was *all* I could see. I was finding it harder and harder to relate to people who hadn't experienced the fires, who couldn't see. People who might say, 'It'll all grow back.' Or, 'But you're okay now, right?'

I booked to walk the Larapinta Trail, a 16-day walk along the spine of Tjoritja, or the West MacDonnell Ranges, in the Northern Territory. It wasn't an original idea; even nine months ahead, it was hard finding a spot. I'd be walking as part of a small group but, somehow, I still imagined being alone. As far as possible from the black leaves still washing up on the beaches, and the sense of alarm that was still waking me in the early hours, every morning.

I'm lucky to get my flights in between waves of COVID, for the trip to go ahead. Our guides, Michael and Lisa, collect me and another walker, Steve, from outside our hotel early the first morning. Bridget and Wendy are already in the back of the 4WD we will come to call 'the Troopy', and we pick up Darryl, Alex and two others. I'm one of the youngest but far from the fittest. We're all wired with excitement, anticipation, and a little trepidation. Together we will walk 223 kilometres, from Mparntwe (Alice Springs) to Rutjupma (Mount Sonder). This is Arrernte Country, and the trail weaves through ancient songlines.

After so long without a horizon it's a lot to take in, a whole new palette. The sky so very blue, the red quartzite sharp and hard underfoot. The first few days are hot. My mind is fully occupied with walking — and the blisters forming on my feet. But the views are vast and dramatic. We trace the ridgelines during the day and descend to the valley floor to camp.

I've been lucky with the season, too. After a big wet, budgies chatter and wheel in vast flocks, green-yellow murmurations, finches — zebra and painted — flit from tree to tree, ring-neck parrots fly by in pairs. The ground is carpeted with fluffy mulla mulla (*Ptilopus exaltatus*) in various shades of mauve.

There are so many more trees than I expected. River red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) sprawling along the riverbeds and around waterholes. Ghost gums (*Corymbia aparrerinja*) clinging to red rock high above us in gorges, their roots travelling 70 metres down to find water. When we cross the Alice Valley, between the Chewings

and Heavitree ranges, we see just how big they can grow. There are yellow-flowering witchetty bushes (*Acacia kempeana*), a multi-trunked acacia whose roots are a good source of witchetty grubs. And corkwoods, long-leafed (*Hakea lorea*) and fork-leafed (*Hakea divaricata*), with their deeply fissured dark bark and dense yellow flowers.

I recognise the elegant desert bloodwoods (*Corymbia opaca*) from their urn-shaped gumnuts, offering shade on the ridges and gullies. Food, too. A parasitic insect irritates the plant, forming a woody 'bloodwood apple' or 'desert coconut' as our guides call them. The flesh is a little coconut-like in texture and the juicy grub inside is the real treat.

When we walk downhill through a dense woodland of hill mulga undersown with purple mulla mulla, my body softens. *There are forests here*. Hill mulga, or irrkwarteke, is a species of acacia (*Acacia macdonnellensis*) native to central Australia. Steve and I stop to take pictures, in the side-light, lagging far behind Michael and the rest of the group.

Even the spinifex looks lush (as long as you don't touch it), its low humps just the right shade of green against the red. The gorges, waterholes and gaps are true oases, gardens lined with MacDonnell Ranges cycads (*Macrozamia macdonnellii*), brake fern and the sprawling native figs (*Ficus brachypoda*), teeming with birds.

But it's the fire-adapted species I'm most drawn to. The true mulga (*Acacia aneura*), with their dark bark and strappy green phyllodes, growing on the mountain flanks and in the gullies. Unlike most acacias, which are relatively short-lived, the mature mulga we walk through are more than a century old. Mulga grow slowly, only a metre every 10 years. During drought they can slow themselves down further or even put themselves on pause. They can shapeshift, too, bringing their leaves and branches together in a point, to channel every possible drop of moisture down to their deep taproot.

And the mallees — low-growing, spreading eucalypts with multiple stems springing from an underground lignotuber — which can survive in extremely shallow soils with little moisture. They seem to soften the exposed hillsides and ridges, blurring the red rock with blue-green. I eventually learn to distinguish the round-leaved mallee (*Eucalyptus minniritchi*) from the Finke River mallee (*Eucalyptus sessilis*) with its claret, beaked gumnuts. There's a mallee bloodwood, too (*Corymbia eremaea*), which, like the larger desert bloodwood, forms bloodwood apples.

There's another desert tree I keep thinking about. Ahead of the walk, I flew into Uluru.

But it was the desert oaks I fell for,
standing in that deep red sand,
like ancient desert beings.

Circumnavigating that monolith and seeing the Mutitjulu waterhole was so much better than I expected. Kata Tjuta, even more so. The Valley of the Winds was such an otherworldly experience, it's one of my all-time favourite walks. But it was the desert oaks I fell for, standing in that deep red sand, like ancient desert beings.

The desert oak, or kurkara, is a type of she-oak (*Allocasuarina decaisneana*). It's the only casuarina in central Australia. Like us, kurkara have juvenile and adult forms. The spindly young trees are not much more than tufts of grey along skinny dark trunks, a bit like a feather duster. What I'd taken for saplings are my age. They spend the first 50 years of their life sending down a deep taproot to access water. Only then do they grow up, transforming into majestic, branching shade trees. Like the mulga, kurkara are slow-growing. Some of those I walked among were 1000 years old. No wonder they have such presence.

Their thick corky bark protects them from flame and heat, while epicormic buds beneath their bark allow them to send out new growth after fire. Their cylindrical woody seedpods, the largest of all casuarinas, produce a prolific number of seeds, which germinate in the ash left behind.

That first night, falling asleep under the stars, the breeze whispering through their needles was like the ocean, a voice or an energy from the heart of this country. Their shushing soothed me, allowing a transformation to begin.

Nothing could have prepared me for the trail. The feeling of walking through the landscape, day after day, the gradual adjustment of my eyes, my body. I had to experience it for myself. When we reach Counts Point, one of the highest and most dramatic vantage points, I struggle with the scale; the ridgelines stretching on and on, the vast valleys and plains. To the west, still more than a week away, we can see our destination: Rutjupma, a pregnant woman reclining, sacred to the West Arrernte.

I find a shaded spot on the edge, to travel back in time. The pressure it must have taken, to buckle plates of rock into these parallel ridges running east to west. Tjoritja is one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world. 310 million years ago it was as high as the Himalayas — 9000 metres — but time, the forces of nature, have worn them down to 1140 metres.



Counts Point, Larapinta Trail.
Photo by Inga Simpson



Finke River with Rwyetyepme (Mount Sonder) in the distance. Photo by Inga Simpson

It's a passage from Kim Mahood's 2016 book *Position Doubtful* that helps me find my feet: 'It's old, flat eroded country, the isolated outcroppings of granite and quartz and sandstone, like the backbones of buried creatures.' Mahood is describing different country, the Tanami, in the far north-west, but here, too, it is only the spines left behind. As a visual artist, Mahood has a gift for expressing colour and perspective, which I appreciate even more now that I'm here. *Position Doubtful* and her earlier *Craft for a Dry Lake* (2000) are a kind of remapping of our relationship with the continent's interior and our First Peoples, deconstructing our mythologising of the desert.

The great inland sea is one of those myths, driving white explorers for centuries and becoming part of our collective consciousness. It isn't until I see the ripplerock — slabs of quartzite with raised, parallel lines — that I understand that

it was real. This rock was formed in moving water, the tidal zone of a sea, 800 million years ago.

Darryl, the oldest in our group, speaks from his neighbouring rock. 'We're so small.'

I nod. We are just specks, alive only for a moment. It comforts me, somehow, to realise our unimportance. To understand that life, this planet, will go on, despite us. Without us. All I need to do, for now, is to be present, to witness this beauty with this group of people.

It takes time, in any new landscape, to see. Just before we begin our descent from Counts Point, it's with surprise that I recognise a native pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*), although I must have walked past many more. The macro photograph I take of its open woody seed cones will turn out to be one of my best, trumping the desert rose and mountain hakea — because I already know it. A related species, white cypress pine (*Callitris columellaris*), grows on the

wild part of my family property, in central west New South Wales, that we call 'up the back'. All through the Weddin Mountains National Park, too, where I first went bushwalking. They're tough trees, growing alongside ironbarks, my heartwood. Typical of the way settlers named what they saw, they're not a pine tree at all but a conifer. In Wiradjuri, they are Garraa.

Eric Rolls, who was born in Grenfell, the town nearest where I grew up, describes the pollination of the pines in memorable fashion in *A Million Wild Acres* (1981), his environmental history of the Pilliga, in the north-west of New South Wales. When their cones burst open, they spurt streams of pollen into the air, which drifts in great clouds. 'If one is near a pine when all the cones burst together, one hears a crack like a pistol shot. The branches recoil and the tree shivers. One does not expect a tree to move in passion.'

I'm smiling when I walk on. Perhaps it's the connection with my childhood, a sense of things coming together that has me thinking maybe I could come to know this country. The trees anyway.

These landscapes have burned, too. From lightning strikes, mainly. I see the scars: scorched earth, blackened mulga, the smaller ones petrified in their contracted form, like an upside-down black turnip. The straw-coloured buffel grass, introduced by cameleers, is spreading right through the ranges. The grass makes for hotter fires, killing established trees rather than regenerating the landscape. The native pines and hill mulga are vulnerable, lacking a fire-survival mechanism. They're becoming scarce along the exposed ridges now.

I didn't see this country before these fires; it doesn't haunt me. In my swag beneath the milky way, nothing between me and the landscape, I sleep better than I have for months. Physical exhaustion helps. If I do wake, I just watch the stars arcing across the sky and count those falling to earth. I'm open, but no longer anxious.

One night, there's a strange shifting wind in camp and I have vivid dreams, waking in tears. I tell Lisa, while she's making our breakfast, and she says she had a similar experience.

'Spirits, maybe.'

I knew the landscape would be spectacular. But in the end, it's the people that make it. The experience binds us as we walk. There are no couples, so we lean on each other. It's a pilgrimage. Several of us have blisters requiring treatment

every morning, there are injuries, and when Alex makes the call to quit, the rest of us pull in tighter.

On our longest walking day, 30 kilometres, I've chosen to carry my camera gear rather than extra water. With 10 k to go in the afternoon sun, I'm cooked. Bridget, always moving up and down the line, talking with everyone, sees it in my face. 'Are you out of water?' When I nod, she sings out to Steve, who shares some of his.

We get high-fives and hugs from Lisa when we make it back into camp. I hadn't told anyone, but it's the furthest I've ever walked in a day.

We spend our final nights camped by the Finke, one of the oldest rivers in the world. It's thick with reeds and birdlife: reed warblers, egrets, herons, cormorants and dotterels, black-shouldered kites circle overhead. When we swim in those cold waters, with Rutjupma looking on, it's a kind of baptism, healing sore feet and aching joints. Hearts, too. We're all here for a reason. On the trail, by the fire at night, out it flows. Again, it's *Position Doubtful* that comes to mind, Mahood's precise expression of the way the body can feel 'an almost cellular affinity' to a place constructed in a completely different cultural imagination.

On the long drive back to Mparntwe, I see more of my desert oaks. Miles and miles of them, before we shift into different country. We fall quiet, in the Troopy, contemplating the distance we've covered. It's over. But we're planning another walk together, in the Pilbara, hopefully with our same guides, who we've grown fond of. I've found the Centre to be a place of such abundance; I'll never call it the desert again.

Inga Simpson's account of her life with trees, *Understory*, was published in 2017. Her cricket novel, *Willowman*, will be published by Hachette in October.

Rain and Blood



Illustration by Katherine Zhang



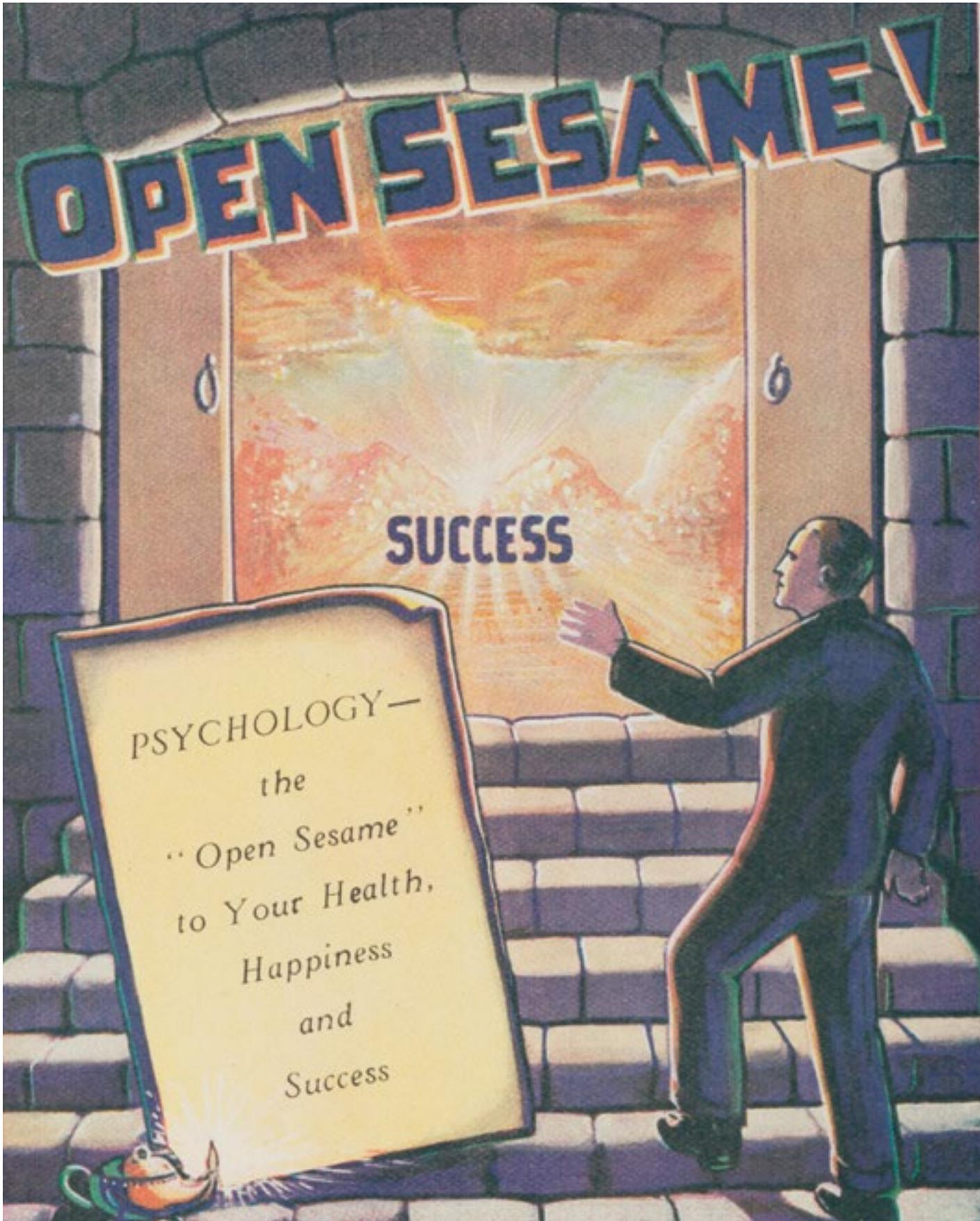
Bat eats the fruit,
seeds drop to the ground,
rain grows the seeds
and pools in buttress roots
to make a bed for mozzies to breed.

Mozzie sucks my blood
and is swallowed by the frog
who spawns in the pond
among the fish and eels;
her tadpoles grow up fast and strong.

Magpie drinks the water
and carries some froglets away –
snacks for her baby birds –
then the snake robs her nest
and I slide into the earth.

Mykaela Saunders

Mykaela Saunders is a Koori and Lebanese writer, teacher and community researcher who belongs to the Tweed Goori community. Mykaela is editor of *This All Come Back Now: An anthology of First Nations speculative fiction* (UQP, 2022).



'How psychology can open the door to success',
drawing from *The Binks Book*

The long history of the power of positive thinking

WORDS Alexandra Roginski

Self-help enterprises that advise how to be you — but better — aren't as new as you might think.

Your thoughts define your reality. You can heal. Choose love. Create success. Magic happens.

Such aphorisms ring through western culture, promising that a positive state of mind will transform a person's life. These ideas also underpin the self-help and 'wellness' industries, with books advising readers on how to live happier, more fulfilling and prosperous lives. And they manifest in the social media profiles of 'wellness' influencers who post self-healing slogans alongside pictures of fruit smoothies. The promise is simple: by overcoming internal barriers and adopting a positive mindset, readers and followers can seize transformation, health and success.

One example is 'Coach Mike', Mike Bayer, a regular guest on *Dr Phil*, the American talk show. In his 2020 book *Be Your Best Self*, he promises, 'I want to help you discover exactly how you can be you, only better, in order to feel fully equipped for navigating anything and everything.' A tough talker, Bayer preaches personal responsibility. 'You can either choose to live in your rut, your anger, or your pain or you can choose to turn your negativity into inspiration.'

Bayer's ideas are nothing new. Snappy self-help slogans and beliefs owe a sizeable debt to a nineteenth-century movement that claimed that positive and negative emotions determine our material realities.

Known as 'New Thought', this philosophy emerged in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century. It came out of the milieu of American Transcendentalism and other religious and scientific investigations into links between mind, body and soul. The mesmeric healer Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802–1866) was its founder.

Psychologist of religion William James, brother of writer Henry James, called this new philosophy a 'religion of healthy-mindedness'. In his classic 1902 book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A study in human nature*, James outlined how practitioners believed 'in the all-saving power of healthy-minded attitudes as such, in the conquering efficacy of courage, hope, and trust, and [held] a correlative contempt for doubt, fear, worry, and all nervously precautionary states of mind'.

'One hears of the "Gospel of Relaxation," of the "Don't Worry Movement," of people who repeat to themselves, "Youth, health,

vigor!" when dressing in the morning, as their motto for the day,' wrote James, nodding to the central role given to positive affirmations.

New Thought flowed across to the Antipodes, as do many American ideas to this day. Australian historians including the late Jill Roe, as well as Frank Bongiorno, have shown that by

Snappy self-help slogans and beliefs owe a sizeable debt to a nineteenth-century movement that claimed that positive and negative emotions determine our material realities.

the late-nineteenth century it infused the worldviews of progressives who turned away from mainline religions to instead seek wisdom and knowledge from within. Often, through healing experiences, they found their way into metaphysical faiths or into sympathetic

movements such as Spiritualism, Christian Science and Theosophy.

In Sydney in 1898, surveyor-turned-journalist Henry Cardew launched his journal *The Metaphysician*, which he published for more than a decade under various titles including *Progressive Thought*, *Science of Life* and *Progressive Thinker*. His fixation on progress reflected New Thought beliefs about the continuing improvement of humanity, seen as an inevitable journey towards a new age when peace and love would rule. A higher power or 'source' was endlessly accessible, they believed, by turning within. Helpfully, positive thinking could also attract wealth.

Like a proto-Instagram, these magazines — which also explored Christian Science philosophies — included snippets about fasting and bananas, tips for breathwork, advertisements for spiritual healers and herbalists, and muscle-building exercises from the 'physical culture' repertoire. *Progressive Thought* eventually included tear-out calendars with cartoons, aphorisms and a monthly affirmation, for example, 'I am fearless' or 'I will express the divine love in all my thoughts and actions.'

The magazine made explicit a causal link between thinking the wrong thoughts and physical illness. In the very first issue, an article titled 'Storm Centres' by EA Pennock drew an analogy between weather patterns, disease and the imperative of cultivating positive over negative emotions.

'I believe that cancer and ulcer are always expressions of a mental storm centre. An injury may first turn anxious thought to a certain spot, and as it is held there, a centre of impurity and disease is formed, into which all the diseased cells of the body find their way,' wrote Pennock. He later added that 'When love rules within and acts upon these cells, and all our energies are used for love's activities towards humanity, the Divine and heavenly order is being realised'.

From the early- to mid-twentieth century, popular psychology entrepreneurs increasingly repackaged their ideas for people seeking career success. This was

a response to both the emergence of the 'businessman' as an archetype of modern masculinity and the rise of industrial psychology, an academic area of study that integrated scientific principles of personality and mind into workplace management.

The entrepreneur and vocational adviser Walter S Binks, who was active in Melbourne by the 1920s, sold a gospel of cheer and determination tailored for the workplace. Selling a service in which he claimed to assess someone's character by reading their head shape and face, Binks remade himself from his earlier calling as a Methodist preacher. Part of this transformation included exchanging his middle name, 'Samuel', for the more poetic 'Shakespeare', and dubbing his business the 'Universal Opportunity League'.

A black-and-white photo-portrait of Binks — a man with a severe side-part and a quizzically furrowed brow — graced the early pages of one of his mid-century manuals, *The Binks Book: Essays for everyday living*. An illustrated book of essays and poems, it emphasised the importance of positive visualisation.

'Let us start right now to think of the things that we *want* to happen — and think of nothing else, no unfortunate alternatives, no failures, no disasters. Let us be positive people — the ones who get ambitions realised, by giving the subconscious mind a chance to help them,' Binks advised.

He outlined instructions for success that would not go astray in many contemporary self-help books: learn more about your mind and aptitude in order to select a suitable career path; set clear, bold goals; 'be self-assertive'. He reminded readers that 'You are the person concerned in making a really great success, in every way, of your own life'. And because healthiness stemmed from both mind and body, good diet was essential. 'Whoever dies a so-called natural death below the age of 120 dies of gastronomic suicide,' he proposed. 'You can overcome the disabilities of ill-health, or fear of ill-health. Of course you can.'

These were straightforward rules. But Binks's oeuvre, which reframed

every challenge as a task for positive thinking, revealed the imaginative elasticity required of New Thought's adherents during times of crisis. Born at the end of the nineteenth century, Binks was a young man when World War I erupted. Facing cataclysm, as with so many of his generation, he reached for the utopian promise of a coming golden age, performing the kind of optimistic squinting that William James considered central to the human condition. As James wrote in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 'We divert our attention from disease and death as much as we can; and the slaughter-houses and indecencies without end on which our life is founded are huddled out of sight.'

In 1916, aged in his mid-20s, Binks published a sermon titled *When War Ceases: or The World's Greatest 'Growing Pain'*. It framed battlefield carnage as one step along a path to 'the great panoramic scene of the future — a veritable millennium — a kingdom of heaven upon earth'. Rejecting the view of 'puny pessimists', he saw this time of violence as crucial to progress and national glory, part of a divine plan beyond human understanding.

With the pater that he would eventually apply to his self-help business and work in advertising, Binks offered a predictable prescription: 'take the attitude of cheeriness, always looking on the bright side, rather than the blue, determined to hold yourself in an optimistic, never-down-in-the-mouth, but courage-always-up attitude of mind and heart, through faith in the Infinite Source of Life and power which is back of all.'

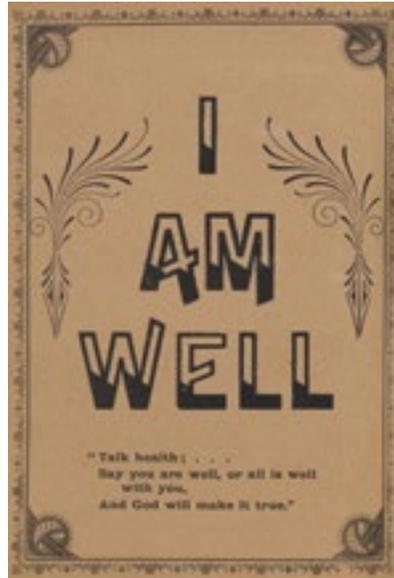
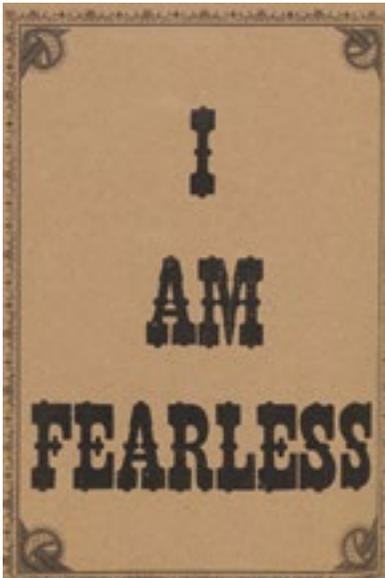
History shows that World War I did not usher in the golden age that Binks predicted. But it casts him as a forebear in an enduring culture of advice, a member of a small army of positivity pundits who continue to spread the word of personal responsibility and inspiration today.

Dr Alexandra Roginski was the Library's 2021 CH Currey Fellow.

DARE TO BE YOURSELF!



*The Motto
of the Masters*



Clockwise from top:
'Dare to be yourself', from *The Binks Book*
Portrait of Walter Shakespeare Binks
from the frontispiece of *The Binks Book*.
Photographer unknown
Inspirational sayings from
Progressive Thought magazine



A recent photograph of one of the world's first flat-roofed modernist houses, 'Fiesole', designed by Henry Austin Wilshire, in Claude Avenue, Cremorne. Photo by Joy Lai

THE FLAT ROOFS OF SYDNEY

A design feature used by big-name modernist architects appeared first in a handful of houses on Sydney's lower North Shore.

Flat roofs were an essential feature of modern houses during the twentieth century. Many fans of modernism believe that the style emerged with the white and glassy boxes designed by leaders of Germany's Bauhaus school during the 1920s. Historians point further back, to Frank Lloyd Wright and his first flat-roofed Prairie house, the Gale residence, built in Oak Park, Chicago, in 1909.

But a handful of Sydney architects were notable predecessors of modernism's main heroes. Between 1906 and 1909, they designed, built and published the designs of several flat-roofed houses. This was before Wright's legendary Wasmuth portfolio amazed European architects in 1910–11, and long before any of the flat-roofed pavilions 'pioneered' by famous European modernists including Adolf Loos, Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius.

Sydney's flat-roof phenomenon was led by three architects: George Sydney Jones, a grandson of the David Jones department store founder; Henry Austin Wilshire, son of Sydney's third Lord Mayor; and James Rutledge Louat, son of a French marine engineer. Wilshire and Louat built flat-topped villas in Cremorne and Mosman, while Jones published the first concept sketches for a flat-roofed residence, followed by two villas in Beecroft and Pennant Hills. Other architects who built flat-roofed houses on Sydney's North Shore in 1908–09 were Donald Thomas Esplin, Harold R Mead and Garton & Garton.

These Edwardian innovators — let's call them 'the North Sydney School' — aimed for an enduring Australian style appropriate to the climate after Queen Victoria's death and the Federation of Australia in 1901. They turned against the late-nineteenth century penchant for dark-chambered mansions with mountainous roofscapes, a trend exemplified by architect John Horbury Hunt's tall gables, cylindrical towers, witch-hat turrets and Parisian mansards with projecting dormers.

Instead, Sydney's proto-modern architects decided to update the roof terraces that topped traditional mudbrick houses found in many Mediterranean coastal towns. Aerial courtyards, sometimes shaded partly by vine-twined pergolas, provided families occupying small, dark dwellings with sunny, open spaces for entertaining and relaxation.



Currently tenanted as a duplex, 'Barncleuth' was designed by George Sydney Jones and built on a large corner site at Pennant Hills in 1909. Its roof deck still has views of Sydney Harbour.



One of a cluster of Henry Wilshire-designed flat-roof houses in Cremorne. 'Gabo', formerly 'Eddystone', was built in 1909. Partly renovated internally, its roof terrace has harbour views.



A Pretty Flat Roof Building at Mosman for Mr. A. R. Harris.
Henry A. Wilshire, Architect. William Ward, Builder.
Brick on Stone—Kiln-baked Malthoid Roof.

Another Wilshire-designed flat-roofed house, 'Takapuna' in Prince Albert Street, Mosman, as it appeared in *Building* magazine, November 1908. This house was later altered and now has a multi-pitched roof.



Mr. Wilshire's House, Neutral Bay. (Western Aspect.)

Henry Wilshire's own house, 'Fiesole', as it appeared in *Building* magazine, October 1907. It had no chimneys because all appliances used new-fangled gas or electricity.

For architects dealing with Sydney's comparable subtropical-temperate climate, roof decks seemed ideal to add valuable floor space and panoramic views to new houses built on hills and facing the harbour. Before World War I, savvy practitioners spotted business potential arising from new ferry services to the North Shore, new subdivisions of harbourside bushland, and the growing popularity of sunbathing and water sports. The splendid Clifton Gardens Baths, designed by Rutledge Louat, which opened in 1906, is one example.

George Sydney Jones and Henry Wilshire published magazine articles that explained their fondness for flat roofs. They highlighted the financial advantages of laying a 'waterproof' bitumen membrane over a roof plate of reinforced concrete, thereby avoiding elaborate timber roof frames that had to be floored, insulated, tiled and guttered.

Iron-reinforced concrete (using a system patented by French gardener Joseph Monier) and rolls of bitumen (especially Malthoid) were widely advertised, but were mostly used in government infrastructure projects and multi-storey office blocks. After checking detailed research on Wilshire's houses with Cremorne resident and Wilshire expert Garry Webb, we are confident that the North Shore cohort (along with Irving Gill in San Diego and Edgar Wood in Stafford, England) were the first western architects to transfer these innovations to houses.

Dr Davina Jackson's latest book is *Australian Architecture: A history* published by Allen & Unwin

Who were the architects of Sydney's first modern flat-roofed houses?

Henry Austin Wilshire

Wilshire was the architect of a 'pretty flat-roof building in Mosman for Mr AR Harris'. This house, named 'Takapuna' in *Sands Postal Directory*, still stands at 49 Prince Albert Street, Mosman, but its façade has been remodelled and the roof is no longer flat.

Henry Austin Wilshire's own house, 'Fiesole', built in 1907, is still standing at 15 Claude Avenue, Cremorne.

Between 1902 and 1907, Wilshire evolved an odd half-half house, with a high gable crashing into a flat-roof pavilion, at 28 Rangers Road, Neutral Bay. It is now demolished. Wilshire expert Garry Webb attributes the conflict of styles to a change of taste when Wilshire toured Europe and the United States in 1904–05.

Wilshire's largest flat-roofed house, at 6 Bannerman Street, Neutral Bay, appeared in *Building* magazine, on 15 January 1909. It was demolished and replaced by a block of apartments.

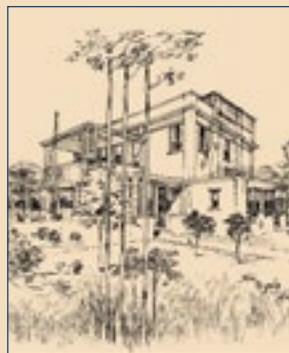
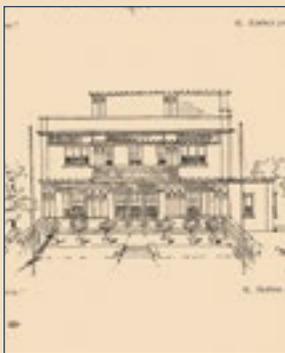
J Rutledge Louat

James Rutledge Louat built a flat-roofed mansion for theatre entrepreneur Edwin Geach, on a harbourfront site at 6 Milson Road, Cremorne in 1908. It was recently demolished.

Harold R Mead

Harold R Mead was the architect for two flat-roofed residential buildings in Manly – The Mansions boarding house and a row of four terraces. Both were illustrated in *Building* magazine on 12 May 1909.

George Sydney Jones



George Sydney Jones built a flat-roofed house, 'Rochester', at 63 Beecroft Road, Beecroft, for a doctor client. It is now part of the Arden Anglican School.

Jones completed 'Barncleuth', a two-storey villa with a roof terrace, at 17 The Crescent, Pennant Hills. This is now rented as a duplex.

George Sydney Jones's perspective sketches of a proto-modernist concept for an ideal 'castle in Spain'. Published in *Art and Architecture* in 1906

WORDS Robert Drewe

The library that made me

The Library That Made Me is entwined in my memory with *The Teacher Who Tortured Me*. Sounds overdramatic? Well, Miss Langridge had that effect on this former Grade Two pupil of hers at Dalkeith State School in Perth in the 1950s.

Like the first love, the sadistic school teacher is a memoirist's cliché. Be that as it may, my sole worry in life aged seven was the sarcastic and crimson-faced Miss Doris Langridge, who appeared always on the edge of violence and, from the moment I entered her class, seemed to detest me.

She disliked people from the eastern states anyway. That my Melbourne mother insisted on sending me to school wearing shoes completed my sins. In Dalkeith's gravel playground back then (a far cry from today) bare feet for boys was the norm. 'Covered feet', as Miss Langridge referred to them, were an affectation, an instant giveaway for wet English kids or sooky Melbourne mothers' boys.

Miss Langridge attempted to mask the bitter-plum redness of her face with overlapping layers of powder that subdued her colour to pink. Her bad posture meant she could thrust her face down to a child's level. On my arrival in her class, she eyed me up and down, then bent down and spat, 'Does your mother think her little darling will get a cold in the tootsies?'

The force of the word *tootsies* dislodged tiny clumps of powder from her cheeks and they floated in the air between us.

Looked at decades later, her nastiness reveals as much self-loathing as a dislike of seven-year-old boys, and of me in particular. As her 15-inch ruler displaying sample squares of *Major West Australian Timbers* whacked my knuckles once more, this time for not sitting up straight, she yelled, 'You're slumping, Robert Drewe! You mustn't slump!'

And then, surprisingly, she hissed, 'Do you want to end up looking like me?'

Looking like Miss Langridge! What a confusing nightmare image!

After school every Wednesday we had 'library', held by a couple of volunteer mothers in a detached asbestos building on the far side of the playground. As an early and avid reader I lingered there. You could only borrow two books at a time so I'd quickly choose the ones I wanted — maybe a *Famous Five* and *Just William* or *Doctor Doolittle* and a *Secret Seven* — and then spend the next hour perusing others. I was usually the last to leave, as I was on one particular afternoon. I'd over-stayed until the library closed. I would be late home, and in trouble.

There was a rule forbidding riding your bike on school grounds in case you struck someone. Although there were no recorded cases of this happening, it seemed sensible enough. But with no students left at this late hour, I hopped on the back of my bike (or rather, my trike — it was actually a more harmless tricycle) and, with my schoolbag and library bag on my shoulder, scooted the last three or four metres off the deserted playground.

Just as Miss Langridge drove past.

She leaned out of her Austin A40, shaking her fist and shouting, 'You're going to be caned tomorrow, Robert Drewe!' There seemed to be relish in her vehemence. Then passed a fitful night. I'm not sure I told my parents. Perhaps I knew there would be no sympathy for a child's position versus that of officialdom. Maybe they said I had to face the music. (Mother: 'That's a shame dear.' Father: 'Rules are there to be obeyed, son.')

At assembly next morning Miss Langridge informed the whole school of the heinous after-library crime that had been committed, and of the punishment the perpetrator — a seven-year-old book-borrower on a tricycle on the edge of an empty playground — would face as an example to everyone.

She wasn't done yet. Punishment shouldn't be limited to a caning. She kept up the suspense with her equivalent of medieval stocks. She made me sit cross-legged under the school clock for

the duration of morning recess while everyone stared, laughed and pointed at the villain.

Lunchtime eventually came but my sandwiches stuck in my throat. After 20 hours of anxiety since the committal of the crime, Miss Langridge led me into the craft room for my punishment. On the threshold she passed me over to the principal, Miss Holland, a woman of similar middle age and shape.

‘Here he is!’ she announced.

The light glinted on Miss Holland’s rimless glasses. My head swam as she closed the craft-room door behind us. I was dizzy with the smell of the hessian squares intended for Mothers’ Day potholders and the cold metal bin of modelling clay.

‘Hold out your hands.’ Then I was caned by Miss Holland, on my right palm, and on my left.

I’ve had a low threshold for senseless rules and institutional injustice ever since. Maybe Miss Langridge is partly responsible for my view of the world. The powerless and misunderstood individual strikes a loud chord.

Maybe being caned for losing myself in books lent a defiant aspect to my character, and led to my embracing books, defending them against their competition and, eventually, to writing them as well.

Robert Drewe’s novel *Nimblefoot* will be published by Hamish Hamilton in August.



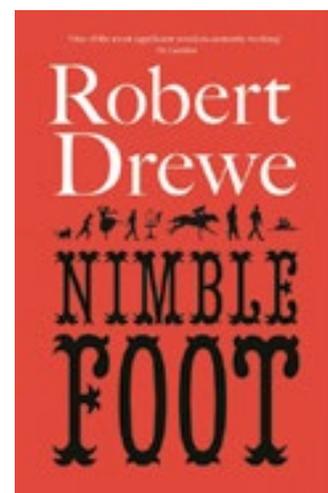
Photo by Jenny Bird

Postscript

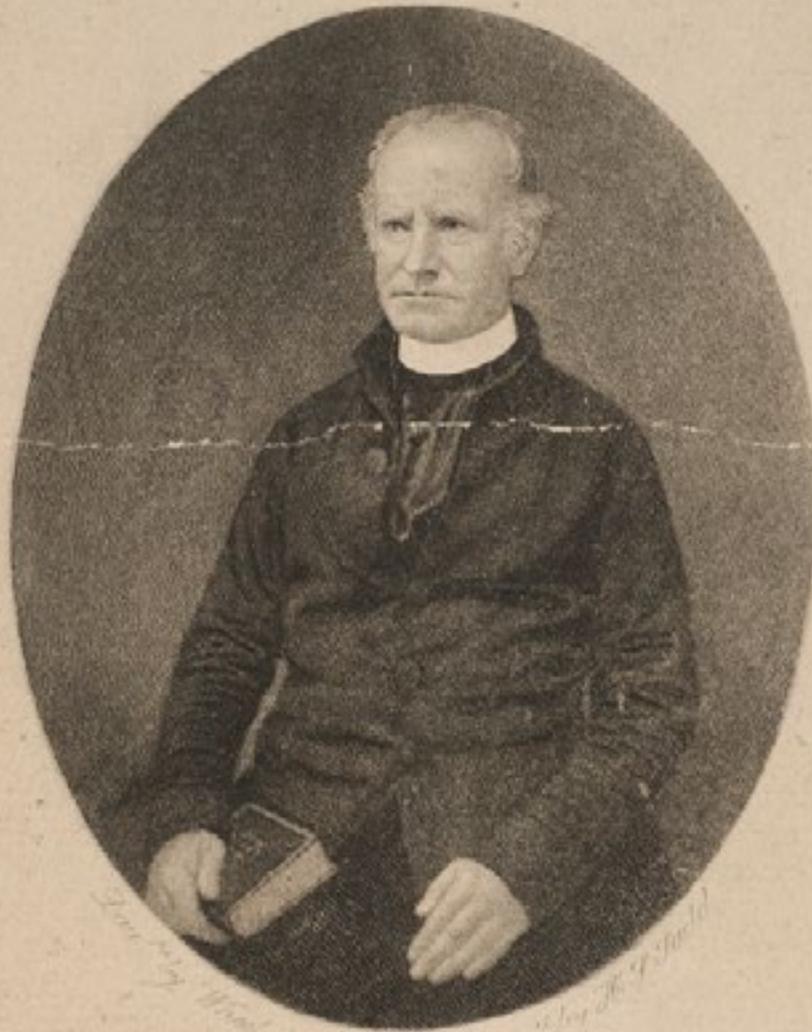
While speaking about memoir at the National Library of Australia and the State Library of Western Australia recently, I mentioned my early schooldays and my after-library caning.

After the Perth talk a woman approached me with the unwelcome news that she’d known the late Miss Langridge very well. Oh, God, I thought. I’ve over-stepped the mark.

‘You might be interested to know,’ she said, ‘that at the end of her life Doris bitterly regretted her attitude to the children she’d taught over two generations. She said, “I was an unhappy, resentful teacher and I took it out on the kids. When I kick the bucket, hundreds of grown West Australians will cheer.”’



THERRY, FATHER



Father Therry
R.C.

The late Rev. Archpriest Therry,
Died at Balmain, May 25, 1864.

P.
T

Father John Joseph Therry, c 1854. The inked inscription reads 'The late Rev. Archpriest Therry, died at Balmain, May 25, 1864'. From a daguerreotype by Wheeler & Co, engraved by HS Sadd

THE RECALCITRANT PRIEST

The little-explored Therry papers, one of the Library's largest nineteenth-century manuscript collections, are a window into the early penal colony of NSW.

Father John Joseph Therry, a native of County Cork in Ireland, was the first official Catholic priest appointed to NSW. Arriving in 1820 with his superior, Father Philip Conolly, Therry became a champion of the Irish cause, ministering in NSW and Van Diemen's Land until his death, in Balmain, in 1864. He was a spiritual leader, as well as a cultural and community advocate for the Irish. Yet the manner in which he represented himself to colonial officials generated considerable animosity, so much so that successive governors hoped that Therry — who was shielded by wealthy white emancipists — would retire to Ireland. The Therry collection illuminates not only the strengths and failings of the man himself, it forms a rich tapestry of the lives of those he served, both in the penal colony and in early-nineteenth century Ireland.

That the State Library of NSW houses this significant collection of personal, business and religious manuscripts at all — it totals more than 120 boxes — is somewhat miraculous. Carted around the country for decades, the Therry estate's main beneficiaries, the Jesuit Fathers, donated the complete collection in 1968.

Within the many boxes can be found official correspondence to colonial governors and officials,

clergy papers, convict and family petitions, marriage records, and names of subscribers (donors) to the growing number of Catholic churches across NSW and Van Diemen's Land. There are also details of Therry's many personal property holdings, diaries, homilies, speeches and official communications. Strikingly, many letters involve colonial or Irish disputes and more than a few make financial claims against Therry himself. While most correspondence is written in English, some is in Gaelic or Latin to bypass the prying eyes of the British.

The collection's largest component is extensive personal correspondence between convicts and their Irish families. Often heart-wrenching and intimate, the letters reveal the intensity and impact of forced separation on relationships caused by involuntary transportation, colonial struggles, prejudice against Catholics and ill treatment by 'masters'. They also reveal Therry's 'kingmaker' role as confidante of many Irish in the colony. These letters overturn traditional hagiography of Therry, showing instead a complex, controversial figure, whose recalcitrance, at times, was directed not only at colonial officials, but at authorities within his own church.

Many convict letters were scrawled on flimsy paper, their awkward sentence construction and

spelling errors sometimes indicative of low levels of education. Yet these were genuine attempts to convey correspondents' feelings and the hardships they experienced. Many a person on death row, including men who were Protestant or Jewish, sought Therry's spiritual assistance on the eve of their departure from this world. Letters from Ireland show educated and insightful women, shunned because of their husband's alleged political involvement, anxious to leave a deeply troubled country.

Overloaded with administrative, pastoral and cultural duties, Therry was by no means an exemplary administrator. The high volume of correspondence he received and his constant travelling throughout NSW must have made it difficult to keep up. As the Irish community's de facto postmaster, Therry received an influx of letters from each transport ship addressed to the 'Parish Priest of New South Wales'. Some were from clergy or from his own family. One typical letter, from his sister, begins, 'My dearest Brother, Two years have nearly lapsed before we had the happiness of receiving your letter of the 30th June 1823 and we shall be in the greatest anxiety till the receipt of the next.'

Other letters provided character references or explanations as to why a particular convict was convicted and transported. One, sent from a Dublin priest in 1827, began, 'The Bearer has been most attentive to his religious duties during a period of eleven months. His public conduct from report and observation has been strictly edifying — I recommend him to the kind and charitable attention of the Roman Catholic Pastor of Sydney.'

Therry distributed mail through his networks but, as was the case with marriage certificates, convicts' money and wills, he became the custodian of many letters, especially those discussing political issues such as the Insurrection Acts aimed at curbing Irish unrest before Catholic Emancipation in 1829.

A fundamental yet unnerving question is why he retained so many original letters intended for families in Ireland and for convicts in Australia. Were they copies? Or is it possible they were never sent at all?

We do not know if Therry's educated and loyal clerks, including Patrick Garrigan, Roger Murphy, Andrew Higgins, James Cassidy and Thomas Byrne, copied the letters. This would

have been a mammoth project, beyond their limited resources. There is evidence that *some* of Therry's official letters to governors were copied.

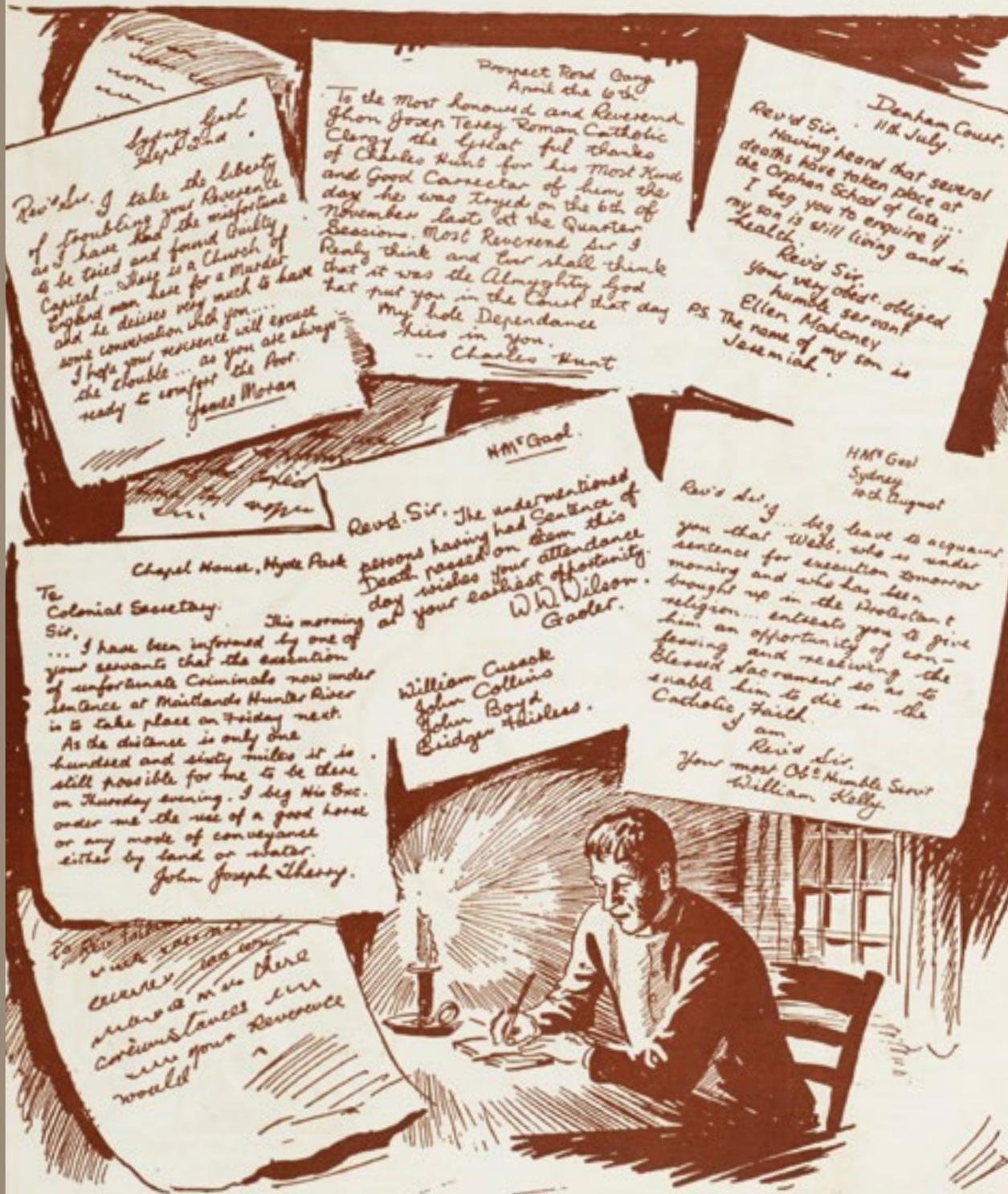
Many original letters do not appear to have left the colony, which helps to explain the frustration expressed by wives who felt their husbands were tardy in responding to communication. Johanna Lewis, wife of Patrick Sullivan, transported in 1822, wrote to her husband in July 1821, 'I am very uneasy in my mind ever since you left Cork and will be so, untill I hear from you.' Later in the same letter she wrote, 'Dear Pat there is a good many women going out to their husbands now, by their husbands making interest with the Governor ...' She signed the letter 'your Affectionate Wife till Death', not knowing she would never see her husband again.

Therry received an influx of letters from each transport ship addressed to the 'Parish Priest of New South Wales'.

For more than a decade, Johanna Lewis petitioned authorities in Ireland and Father Therry himself for free passage for both her and her daughter to join their husband and father. Johanna scolded him for only replying to four of her twenty letters. Patrick, a former shopkeeper from Cork, was an unlikely convict and was probably unfairly linked to the Rockite political movement. Refusing to attend Protestant services, he was sentenced to the Phoenix Hulk in what is now Lavender Bay before being re-transported to Norfolk Island. As overseer of a work gang, Patrick was brutally attacked and killed in 1833. Sadly, word did not reach Johanna. She sailed, though not with her daughter, on the *Neva*, which sank off King Island in 1835. A total of 224 people in Sydney Harbour, including Johanna, drowned. She and Patrick were finally reunited, but in a different world.

Damian Gleeson is the Library's 2022 Australian Religious History Fellow.

EVERY DAY LETTERS, NOTES AND MESSAGES WERE BROUGHT TO CHARLOTTE ST.
WHERE FR TERRY LODGED, ASKING FOR HELP.



My dear Rev. Sir,
I take the liberty
of troubling you
as I have had the misfortune
to be tried and found Guilty
Capital... This is a Church of
England man here for a Murder
and he desires very much to have
some conversation with you...
I hope your reverence will excuse
the trouble... as you are always
ready to comfort the Poor.
James Moran

Prospect Road Gang
April the 6th
To the Most honored and Reverend
John Joseph Terry Roman Catholic
Clergy the most grateful thanks
of Charles Hunt for his Most Kind
and Good Counselor of him the
day he was tried on the 6th of
November last at the Quarter
Sessions. Most Reverend Sir I
Really think and but shall think
that it was the Almighty God
that put you in the Court that day
My hole Dependence
Hers in you.
-- Charles Hunt

Denham Court.
Rev'd Sir. 11th July.
Having heard that several
deaths have taken place at
the Orphan School of late...
I beg you to enquire if
my son is still living and in
Health.
Rev'd Sir
Your very obedt. obliged
humble servant
Ellen Mahoney
P.S. The name of my son is
Jesseiah.

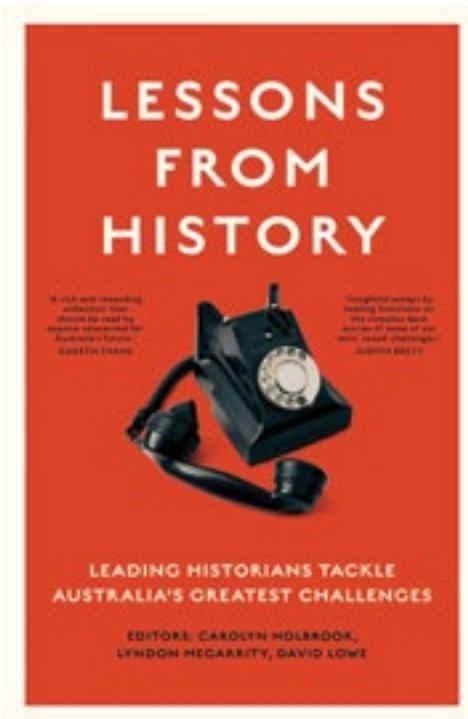
Chapel House, Hyde Park
To Colonial Secretary
Sir,
... I have been informed by one of
your servants that the execution
of unfortunate Criminals now under
sentence at Maitlands Hunter River
is to take place on Friday next.
As the distance is only one
hundred and sixty miles it is
still possible for me to be there
on Thursday evening. I beg His Exc.
order me the use of a good horse
or any mode of conveyance
either by land or water.
John Joseph Terry.

H.M. Goal.
Rev'd Sir. The undermentioned
persons having had Sentence of
Death passed on them this
day wishes your attendance
at your earliest opportunity.
W.H. Wilson.
Goal.

William Cusack
John Collins
John Boyd
Bridges Whistless.

H.M. Goal
Sydney
10th August
Rev'd Sir... beg leave to acquaint
you that Webb, who is under
sentence for execution tomorrow
morning and who has been
brought up in the Protestant
religion... entreats you to give
him an opportunity of con-
fessing and receiving the
Blessed Sacrament so as to
enable him to die in the
Catholic Faith.
I am
Rev'd Sir,
Your most Obd. Humble Servt
William Kelly.

To His Reverence
with extreme
creases as were
near as possible
circumstances in
are your Reverence
would



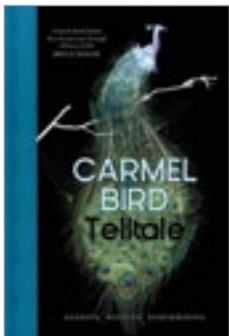
Lessons from History

edited by Carolyn Holbrook, Lyndon Megarrity and David Lowe
New South Publishing

Spanish philosopher George Santayana said: ‘Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.’ Routinely misattributed and misquoted, the phrase about memory can be as problematic as Santayana’s sentiment. The act of remembering is often thought to be sufficient to facilitate learning and to generate a different – hopefully better – outcome. From bad first dates to conflict in the workplace, there is a generally shared belief that if we recall what went wrong last time then we can fix it for next time. Even if the fixes are incremental. The act of recall, however, is not enough; we need to *interrogate* our histories.

Editors Carolyn Holbrook, Lyndon Megarrity and David Lowe each possess an instinct around the processes of cross-examining the past. In this way they ask us to see more clearly what has gone before, but they also ask how we might all play a part in what the future will look like. In this new work, *Lessons from History*, the past is not a far-off place. Rather, the past slips and shuffles around us – making us afraid, ashamed, proud or just uncomfortable – while the past also informs, or at least influences, what happens next.

Holbrook, Megarrity and Lowe suggest in their introduction that this is a book for ‘politicians, policymakers,



Telltale

by Carmel Bird

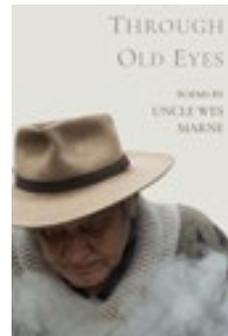
Transit Lounge

It was a slightly unsettling experience discovering that this book, of which I had no prior knowledge, had so much content with personal resonance for me. Carmel Bird, a celebrated writer of fiction and non-fiction, spent her pandemic isolation

rediscovering the books on her bookshelves and using them in a meditative exploration of the memories they stirred, and the events they related to from her life and from history.

We are separated in age by a couple of decades, so I suppose I wasn’t expecting such commonality. I loved being pulled back into my own past, where some of the same books hold precious personal memories – Brer Rabbit, Grimm’s *Fairy Tales*, Kipling’s *Jungle Book*, *Silver Skates* – and I found myself drawn to my own bookshelves, hoping to find some of the almost-forgotten books still there, and admiring the details of old bindings, which also clearly fascinate Bird.

Cathy Hammer



Through Old Eyes

by Uncle Wes Marne

Black Books

Through Old Eyes is a book of captivating poems written by respected Bigambul Elder, Uncle Wes Marne, and the first book to be published by Black Books since their relaunch in 2022.

At the launch of Uncle Wes’s book at Tranby College in Glebe, several members of different communities chose poems that had particularly resonated with them to read back to Uncle Wes as we celebrated his 100th birthday. You could see and feel how the readers were deeply moved by Uncle Wes’s writings and how his poems evoked, and gave a voice to, memories and experiences.

The reading of one poem, ‘Campfire Dreaming’, set my own mind drifting back to nights by a campfire with my own dearly missed father.

‘Each light up there was a campfire, lit by a warrior of old, the brighter the light, the better the man, who has travelled on before.

Did his father and his *father* before him, stroke their own glowing campfires bright?

Did they sit around them talking, of the good times every night?

There is a dark spot in the middle, where he couldn’t see a light, that is where he was going! When it came time for his fire to light.’

Cherokee Lord

community workers, journalists and engaged citizens, as well as historians'. This sells their collection of powerful essays short for it is, in fact, a book for everyone. For those who care about how we turn the pages of our own story and, perhaps more importantly, for those who do not (or, not yet).

The table of contents reads like a roll call of eminent commentators and historians, from Joan Beaumont, Frank Bongiorno and Peter Chang through to Ann Curthoys, Yves Rees and Hugh White. Together, these authors offer 22 essays on topics that cover an astonishing array of important issues. A clear structure and a useful index identify numerous entry points into a volume that explores climate change, international conflict, gender, race, religion and more.

As Frank Bongiorno warns: 'Interpreting the past might offer

clues and insights, but it does not normally present clear lessons that can be mechanically applied by policymakers to a present-day problem.' Such interpretations do, however, show us about cause and effect, including unintended consequences, in addition to teaching us how to ask questions of ourselves and others.

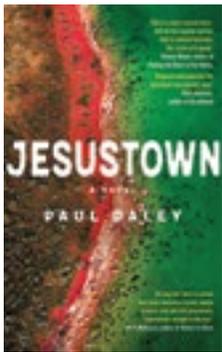
The idea of a golden past — one that, though brief, was calm and prosperous — is a fable. Our societies have always been dominated by complexity, inequality and risk. Yet, the world today is in many ways more dangerous than it has ever been. The rights of women, for example, are being wound back at an alarming rate. Misinformation feeds bigotry and divisiveness. Violence, on local and global scales, is a constant threat.

The time for sitting silently, for thinking these problems will be solved

by others, or that the world is in a cycle that will see states of flux automatically right themselves, is behind us. The time for forgetting is over.

This collaborative effort is not only a useful addition to public debate around our histories and futures, it is an urgent interjection into that debate. Santayana's exhortation to remember the past remains, but the need to understand and to critique that past is more vital than ever before. *Lessons from History* is a crash course in some of the many challenges that have emerged over recent decades and how we might go about contributing to the solutions to the serious problems that face us.

Dr Rachel Franks



Jesustown

by Paul Daley

Allen & Unwin

Paul Daley, Walkley Award-winning journalist and writer, ventures purposefully into this imaginary tale to explore the harsh realities of white colonisation in Australia's Far North. *Jesustown* is the story of a remote coastal Christian mission, home to 'The People' and overseen by enigmatic self-taught anthropologist

Nathaniel 'Renny' Renmark, their self-proclaimed 'saviour'. Renny attempts — and fails spectacularly — to protect and shield Indigenous people from government, police, churchmen, foreign fisherman and, most of all, from self-serving scientists who want to pillage their material culture and ancestral remains for museum displays.

We learn the painful truth of frontier violence and intergenerational trauma through the eyes of Renny's grandson Patrick, the novel's narrator, as he unravels his grandfather's mythologising and reveals his misdeeds. Daley felt compelled to write this shameful true story of our colonial past after visiting the 'Room of the Dead' at the South Australian Museum; there Aboriginal remains stolen under the guise of science are arranged in boxes and cabinets. First Nations peoples are determined to return their ancestors' bones to Country so that their spirits may finally rest. *Jesustown* is a brave attempt to open our eyes to a sorrowful part of our shared past.

Renee Holman



Open Secrets: Essays on the writing life

edited by

Catriona Menzies-Pike

Sydney Review of Books

Would novice creative writing students press on if they read these excellent but sobering first-hand accounts of being a writer?

So much work — thinking, writing, editing, rewriting — for so little financial reward. All

done on top of the side-hustles and day jobs needed to do any writing at all, and alongside pitches, grant applications, the roller-coaster of shortlists and prizes. Each essay exhibits hard work, insight and skill without, I would suggest, channelling some mysterious literary muse.

Yet these essays are of such calibre that a young student might feel inspired to hone their craft anyway, assuming they got beyond Fiona Kelly McGregor's breakdown of what various publications pay per word. (Were *Openbook* included it would be at the top.) As an account of creative and literary processes, Oliver Mol's 'La Vida' is hard to beat. Lauren Carroll Harris's account of precarity in the digital age is chilling. And should we ever seek to recall how it was to live through a pandemic, Suneeta Peres da Costa's 'The Ten Thousand Things', a wonderfully derailed essay on technology, would be a good place to start.

Phillipa McGuinness

WORDS Anna Glynn

A month in the library

COVID delayed my arrival in Sydney for my residency at the Library but I finally arrived — in a car full of equipment — after a journey from the South Coast. Used to dodging wombats, wallabies and echidnas, now I needed to navigate busy streets and rushing people.

During my residency I wanted to be led by curiosity as I looked at the Library's location, the history of the site, its surrounding landscape and its relationship to local flora and fauna. I needed a time machine, but in many ways the Library is just that. It is on the land of the Eora people of the Gadigal Nation, country that was never ceded. I thought often about what the sounds and smells of this place would have been like before colonisation. Now it is a site that embraces a physical structure, archives, records, manuscripts, books, artworks, film and audio. It also reflects all those people who have contributed to what the Library is today and who work for its future.

On my first day, I was led along winding subterranean corridors, up and down elevators and along yet more corridors before arriving at the Fellows Room. Here I set up base camp. During my time in this auspicious room, I encountered fellows whose friendship and stories added to my experience. Launching into my research, I talked to the helpful librarians, read, searched the catalogue, and walked through the buildings, photographing, videoing, collecting audio and setting up timelapse and trap cameras both within the Library and up on the roof.

My work challenges our Eurocentric interpretation of the world. I have created my own term, 'Eurotipodes', which sets out to upend the notion that the Northern Hemisphere is the right way up and we hang upside down in our opposite 'Antipodes'. To highlight this geographical and cultural bias, I often portray European imagery suspended upside down in the sky.

Animals appear frequently in my art, in painting, drawing and video. So one focus for me at the Library was on the creatures that would have been here before colonisation, as well as those that exist within the Library through the collection, the architecture and the decorative elements of the

building. As well as those living on and around the building, including, of course, ibises. The animal hunt was on!

Over my month as Honorary Artist in Residence, with the assistance of Library staff for which I am very grateful, I collected a folio of source material with which to create contemporary digital artworks: moving image and video, animation, photomontage wallpaper, photomontage stills and projections. Doorways and windows in the building become portals into the past where I reimagine narratives that merge contemporary photographs and video with historical images from the collection.

The image shown here, a work in progress, makes the entry to the Mitchell Library Reading Room a hyper-coloured gateway to the past, featuring a tableau extracted from colonial paintings. A horse and hunting dog hang upside down in a strange landscape, while a kangaroo and stork peer uncomfortably from within the building.

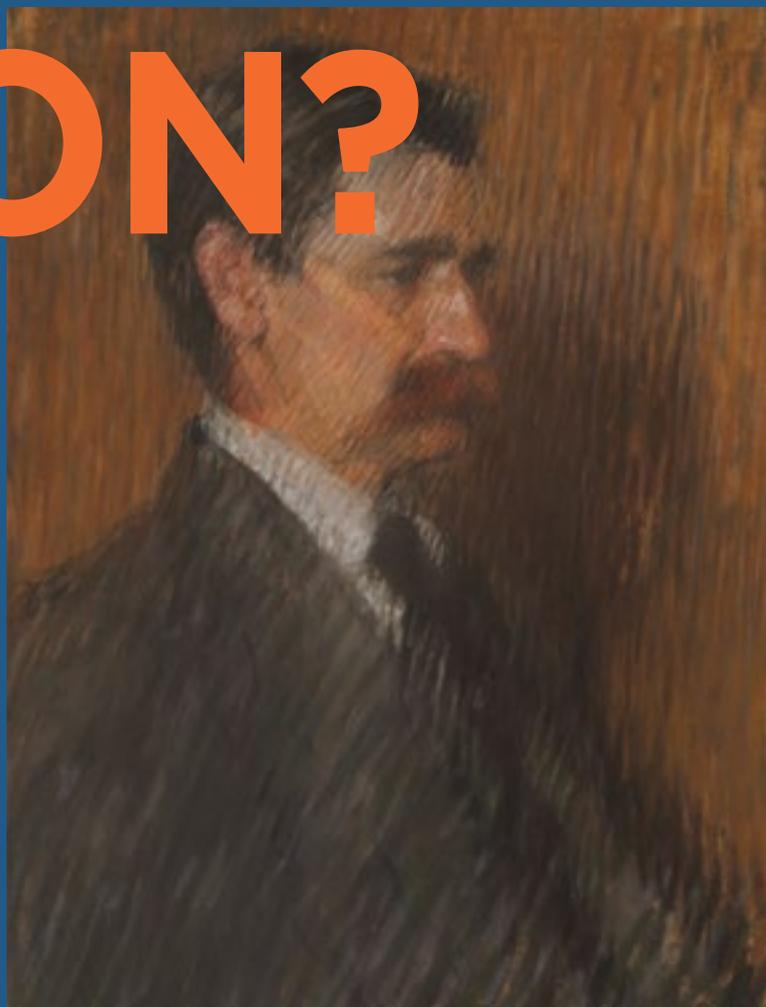
Anna Glynn is an award-winning Australian artist who investigates connections between humans, history, nature and place. Her work is held in private collections and by major Australian cultural institutions. In 2023 she will be Artist in Residence at Mt Wilson, NSW, and in the Finnish Arctic Circle. She lives in Jaspers Brush on the NSW South Coast. You can see more her work at annaglynn.com



A work in progress by Anna Glynn

DO WE STILL HAVE TIME FOR HENRY LAWSON?

It is 100 years since the famous writer and chronicler of bush life died.



Henry Lawson, 1914, pastel by Florence Rodway

WORDS Susan Hunt

Almost 100 years since his death, Henry Lawson's name appeared in the opening credits of *The Drover's Wife*, the film inspired by one of his most famous short stories. Leah Purcell's play, novel and 2022 film adaptation offer audiences a powerful reinterpretation of Lawson's classic story. Purcell, a Goa, Gunggari, Wakka Wakka Murri woman from Queensland, tells Lawson's 1892 tale about a woman looking after her four children while her husband is away droving, from an Indigenous perspective. Purcell's works encourage us to revisit the Lawson legend and the values that underpinned not only the society he wrote about, but those he held himself. This is particularly relevant as this year is the centenary of Lawson's death.

Lawson's public image and status as a balladist and short story writer were so great that he was given a state funeral on 4 September 1922. Prime Minister Billy Hughes, who attended, said that the country needed to honour 'the poet of Australia, the minstrel of the people'. Record crowds, from all stations of life, came to Sydney to show their respects.

Born in Grenfell in 1867, Lawson only lived to the age of 55. Some personal challenges, such as his deafness, the precarity of journalism and his creative decline, were beyond his control; others, such as his dependence on alcohol and his physical abuse of his wife Bertha, were not. Survived by his former wife, son Jim and daughter Bertha Louisa, Lawson was buried at Waverley Cemetery in Sydney. Also buried there were fellow Australian literary figures Henry Kendall and JF Archibald, publisher and editor of *The Bulletin* magazine and founder of Australia's famous portrait award, the Archibald Prize.

A long-time supporter of Lawson's, Archibald had encouraged the 'deaf, diffident poet of bush mateship' to write for *The Bulletin*. His first controversial poem, 'A Song of the Republic' in 1887, delivered exactly what Archibald had hoped for – radicalism. With later poems such as 'To an Old Mate', 'Up the Country', 'Faces in the Street' and the stories of *While the Billy Boils*, Lawson's reputation continued to grow. His personal experiences of the bush, and the hardships of drought and poverty, struck a chord with many Australian readers. He brought to life the voices of those on the margins – shearers, goldminers, drovers, boundary riders and, particularly in 'The Drover's Wife', bush women.

For Archibald, Lawson was more than a talented writer and poet. At the critical time of Federation, Archibald saw Lawson as a 'representative' Australian, able to define our national identity. Perhaps this is why Archibald commissioned the well-known artist John Longstaff to paint his portrait when Lawson and his family were enroute to London in 1900, a trip assisted by David Scott Mitchell, founder and benefactor of the Mitchell Library. Executed in virtually one sitting, it immortalises his name and place in Australian history. It remains an important record today in the collection of the Art Gallery of NSW.

The London experience, while full of promise, was a failure. Lawson returned in 1902 to a broken marriage, emotional instability and ongoing alcoholism, with frequent stints in jail.



Death mask of Henry Lawson by Nelson Illingworth

Other portraits survive from the many years of hardship and decline leading up to his death: Florence Rodway's superb pastel from 1914, William Johnson's iconic photographs from 1915 and the haunting death mask made by his friend the bohemian artist Nelson Illingworth (date unknown). The Library holds these, as well as a cutting of Lawson's hair collected by his friend Dame Mary Gilmore while he was in prison.

When Lawson died in 1922, his daughter, Bertha Louisa, was working as a librarian at the Mitchell Library. She and her mother had already begun safeguarding Lawson's reputation and others continued to promote his name. In 1927, for example, on the fifth anniversary of the writer's death, his friend J Le Gay Brereton described Lawson as a 'representative figure ... for his voice is the voice of a great democracy. He speaks for the many, not the few. City and country alike make themselves heard through him.'

The bronze sculpture erected in the Domain in 1931 continued this veneration of Lawson. Commissioned by the Henry Lawson Literary Society and executed by George Lambert and Arthur Murch, it further cultivated the bush legend by featuring the poet with his dog and a mate having a cup of billy tea. Then premier Sir George Fuller said when he unveiled the sculpture, 'no poet had ever expressed Australian sentiment or portrayed Australian life and manners in so natural and effective a manner.'

One hundred years on, some might debate that claim. But as *The Drover's Wife* on stage and screen shows, and a forthcoming musical event at the 2022 Canberra Writers Festival called 'Do we still have time for Henry Lawson?' asks, contemporary writers, musicians and filmmakers continue to draw inspiration from Lawson's powerful literary classics and social commentary.

Susan Hunt is Director of the Library Foundation.





Henry Lawson, 1915, photographs by William Johnson

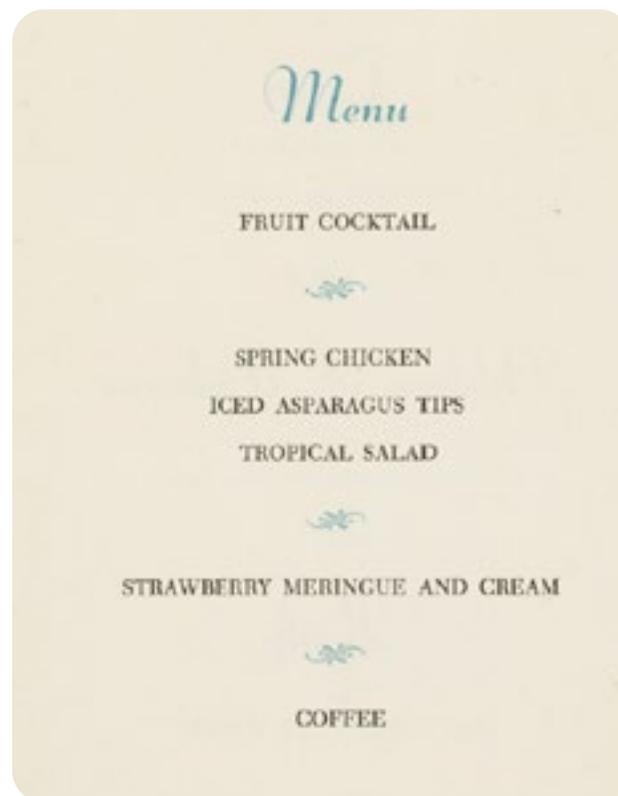
WORDS **Phillipa McGuinness**

Fit for a queen

The Queen's visit to Australia in 1954, when she was aged 27, prompted huge crowds and widespread displays of raw emotion, often verging on hysteria. And, at times, heatstroke. In its effusive coverage of parades, speeches and official openings, the media scrutinised all she did and said, but especially what she wore. Her visit is like a Kodachrome snapshot of the country covered in bunting and in a state of excitement about the first reigning monarch to visit.

In 1954, Australia's population was around nine million. Historian Jane Connors has written that three-quarters of the population – seven million people – are said to have seen the Queen *in person*. For some – school children for example – attendance at mass events may have been compulsory. All the same, it is hard to exaggerate the popularity of the monarchy and the deep reverence and personal affection people held for the Queen. Far more ambivalent towards the monarchy in 2022, most of us respect the longevity of the Queen herself, who has seen off yet another British prime minister in her 96th year, her Platinum Jubilee.

Queen Elizabeth attended a mind-boggling number of events across the country during February and March 1954. In the Library's collection of royal ephemera, we found a menu card for a luncheon with representatives of women's organisations held at the Trocadero in Sydney. There, the monarch was toasted by the premier's wife Mrs JJ Cahill and welcomed by the Hon. Gertrude Melville MLC, a Labor politician who fought for women's rights.



Given the weather, the food the guests ate for lunch was not heavy and is easily recreated. To find similar recipes to those on the menu card, we drew from a selection in the *Australian Women's Weekly* from the early 1950s, many of which came from readers who entered them in competitions. Given modern preferences, we eschewed any salad that required gelatine, or any kind of cooking, which a surprising number of salad recipes from that time used.

SALAD PLATTERS

The *Australian Women's Weekly Picture Cookery* devoted its relatively few colour plates to salads and sweets. It describes salad platters as follows:

Gay and appetising salads arranged on individual dishes provide the ideal hot-weather lunch or supper, or the nucleus of a 'help-yourself' buffet. Combine well-chosen ingredients to give the maximum interest, and arrange them on bright, colourful plates.

The general advice about keeping green leaves crisp is less relevant decades on, thanks to refrigeration at every stage of the supply chain, but is worth repeating:

Unless you are fortunate enough to have a supply of fresh green salad plants from the garden, you will often be faced with the problem of reviving a limp and wilted lettuce. Wash and shake the lettuce (or other salad plants) as directed above [that advice was not to soak the leaves], but leave some moisture on it. Put it into a mixing bowl, cover with a plate, put it in the coldest available place and leave it for an hour.



MELON BALL COCKTAIL

This recipe, reproduced in the *Australian Women's Weekly Cookery for Parties*, was part of a menu submitted by Miss J Maddocks of Neutral Bay, NSW, for a 21st birthday party. She won £50.

- 4 honeydew melons
- 4 canteloupes
- 4 watermelons
- 1 cup sweet sherry
- ½ cup sugar, mint springs

Prepare melons by cutting in two and removing seeds. Scoop out balls of melon, using a melon ball cutter, or cut into a ½ in dice. Place balls from melons in a large bowl, sprinkle with sugar and sherry, and place in refrigerator to chill. Use two cases of the watermelons for serving Melon Ball Cocktail. Cut melon lengthwise, levelling off inside after melon balls have been cut. A small slice can be cut from bottom of melon so that it will balance evenly. To serve, fill watermelon cases with melon balls and garnish with sprigs of mint. Place large serving spoons beside the cocktail so that guests may serve themselves. Place a small cluster of grapes beside each melon. Arrange fruit cocktail glasses nearby.

TINNED VS FRESH

In various recipes for tropical salads, the pineapples were tinned. Golden Circle, a cooperative of pineapple growers, was established in Queensland in 1947. When the future Queen Elizabeth was married that same year, the Queensland Government sent 500 cases of this new product to Buckingham Palace. Perhaps her heart sank when she saw yet more pineapple piled up on her plate as part of the tropical salad served at the luncheon.

In her recipe for Asparagus Mayonnaise, Mrs Walliker of Port Fairy, Victoria, gives the option to use tinned or fresh asparagus. We used fresh. But the 1954 recipe for mayonnaise is quite different to mayonnaise in 2022, whether home-made or store-bought. Nowadays, mayonnaise is more likely to be made in the French style, with egg yolk, Dijon mustard and oil (olive or grapeseed) drizzled in slowly, whisking all the while. Back then, however, it went like this:

With four and a half tablespoons of sugar, salt, flour, 3 teaspoons of dry mustard, 8 of the egg yolks left over from the meringue, water, vinegar, 6 tablespoons of butter and whipped cream. It is then cooked.

SPRING CHICKEN

In 1954, chicken was a special-occasion food for most Australians. While backyard chooks were common, they were used mainly for eggs. So chicken really was a meal for a queen.

The *Australian Women's Weekly Picture Cookery Book* advised that boiling and steaming fowls was the best approach when a bird wasn't young and tender. A spring chicken is a young chicken, but the *Openbook* test kitchen struggled to get the skin on a poussin (spatchcock) browned to an even consistency appropriate for a photograph. So, we instead poached chicken fillets by placing them in boiling water with fresh bay leaves, lemon and whole peppercorns that we then removed from the stove. It took about 15 minutes. Even if it had been a whole bird, the '2-3 hours until tender' that the cookbook advised would have been excessive.



STRAWBERRY MERINGUE

This recipe was submitted as part of a Buffet Dinner for Twelve by Mrs V Walliker of Port Fairy, Victoria. She won £100.

Make two quantities of the following recipe, mixing them separately.

1 level cup sugar
4 egg-whites (save egg-yolks for mayonnaise)
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon vinegar
whipped cream or substitute
strawberries (hulled, washed,
drained, and sweetened)

Add sugar slowly to stiffly beaten egg-whites; add vinegar and vanilla. Beat over boiling water 10 minutes. Ladle with large spoon on to a smooth thick sheet of brown paper on oven-tray. Shape into a round of about 1½ inches high, hollowing centre. It will spread, so keep in centre of tray. Put into a moderate oven (325 deg.F. gas 275 deg.F electric). Watch carefully for first 10 or 15 minutes and if sweet colours too much reduce heat. Cook ½ to ¾ hour longer. Lift meringue on to serving-dish. Make second meringue in same way. To serve, fill both meringues with a layer of strawberries (washed and sweetened), then cream. Decorate with strawberries.



All photos by Joy Lai

Engraving by Philips Galle after
Johannes Stradanus, *Conspicilla*
(Eyeglasses), c 1588



Inventing the future

A recently acquired set of prints shows what state-of-the-art technology looked like in Medici Florence.

Nova Reperta, or New Discoveries, is a series of 20 Renaissance engravings designed by Johannes Stradanus in the late 1580s in Florence and produced in Antwerp. Far less prosaic than this description suggests, these detailed works portray an extraordinary blend of mechanical invention, moral instruction and a boosterism about the future — with a nod to history — that Steve Jobs himself would have related to. Part reportage, part allegory and part scientific fantasy, they offer superb insight into everyday life in the late-sixteenth century.

The engravings show a range of technologies — and geographies — that we take for granted: America; a magnet compass; the printing press; iron clocks; distillation; silk; stirrups; a water mill; a windmill; an olive oil press; a sugar refinery; oil painting; eyeglasses; longitude; an astrolabe and engraving itself. War has not disappeared in the twenty-first century, but defence materiel no longer has a place for armour polishing and gunpowder, military innovations at the time. And antibiotics mean that thankfully, medicine no longer relies on guaiacum, a herbal remedy for syphilis that is the subject of one of the works.

The image shown here celebrates an invention all too familiar to those of us who are long- or short-sighted. In a market setting we see an eyeglass maker surrounded by merchants and shoppers — all of a certain age — seeing the world anew through their spectacles. The text below the image reads, ‘Also invented were eyeglasses which remove dark veils from the eyes.’

Antiphonal: Common of the
Saints, Neri da Rimini, 1328






Capital Idea



Decorated initials —
artworks in themselves —
have a long history.



Imagine it is 1328. Morning light filters through the window of a scriptorium. Italian miniaturist Neri da Rimini is illuminating a big Gothic initial at the beginning of a lesson within a large choir book.

Perhaps he is burnishing the gold leaf, freshly applied in the dewy morning air, with a special tool made by mounting a dog's tooth on a small wooden handle. Almost 700 years later, the gold on this historiated letter, which depicts Christ blessing a group of saints, (see opposite) still sparkles and glows on the page of the Rimini Antiphonal, one of the Library's great treasures.

Magnificent painted letters illuminated with gold, glorifying a sacred text or portraying significant biblical scenes, mark the high point in a long history of decorating initials, a practice that has been around for over a thousand years.

Just like the 'dropped cap' used in modern printing, decorated initials have a practical purpose. They are visual markers for a new chapter or the start of a new paragraph, drawing the reader's attention to an important part of the text. From that practical beginning, many styles and techniques have developed in the production, use and decoration of capital letters within a page of text.



Before the era of the printed book, initials could be simply 'rubricated', a term that comes from the Latin *rubricāre* and means 'to color red'. Using coloured ink, a scribe could highlight a letter as they copied the text onto the page. Alternatively, in a two-step process, the scribe would copy out the text but

leave a space for the letter to be drawn or painted later by a skilled illuminator who would add ornate flourishes, floral motifs and golden highlights. Sometimes, in a type of decoration called a historiated initial, this artist would create a scene reflecting the subject or story.

This page, clockwise from top left:

Illustrated A from *The Psalter or Psalms of David*, Essex House, 1902

Illuminated C from *The Book of Hours*, fifteenth-century manuscript

Illuminated I from *Antiphonal: Common of the Saints*, Neri da Rimini, 1328

Illuminated I from *The Book of Hours*, fifteenth-century manuscript

Illuminated B from *Privileges of the Cistercian Order*, Northern Netherlands, around 1480



When printing with moveable type was first introduced in Europe in the mid-fifteenth century, the design of printed books imitated that of hand-written manuscripts. This made them familiar to readers and scholars not accustomed to books that were now being

produced in greater numbers than had ever been possible. Nevertheless, a space was left for the decorated initial, a small guide letter often added by the printer to act as a reminder to the illustrator employed to later insert a decorated initial by hand. However, the time and expense involved in supplying hand-drawn and coloured initials for multiple copies led to the development of woodcut initials that could be printed along with the text. The printed initial could later be washed with colour if required. Techniques were also developed to print in more than one colour; one of the earliest examples is the Mainz Psalter, printed in 1457 by Fust and Schoeffer, which includes initials printed in red and blue.

The decorated W, F and T from *The Flower and the Leaf*, an illustrated Chaucer produced by Essex House Press, 1902. Ornamental letters drawn and coloured by Edith Harwood
Illuminated I from *Book of Hours*
Decorated N from *Ortus sanitatis*, 1517



From the sixteenth century, decorated woodcut initials were routinely printed with the text. While many woodcuts were designed to relate directly to the text, others had common features – flowers, geometric patterns and human figures. Letters were

recycled through different publications, often bearing no relation to the content of the book. Later in the seventeenth century, engraved metal initials were introduced. But over the next two hundred years ornate initials were rare; bold capitals or coloured type were often used to add emphasis to the beginning of a chapter or paragraph.



In the late-nineteenth century, however, responding to the mass production of books and a desire to revive traditional crafts, the decorated initial made a comeback. The key purpose of the private press movement was to design fine work and print beautiful

volumes. One of the best-known private presses was the Kelmscott Press in Oxfordshire, founded by William Morris in 1893. New typefaces, ornaments and decorated initials – traditional and modern – were produced by artists and designers to complement the subject and layout of the text.

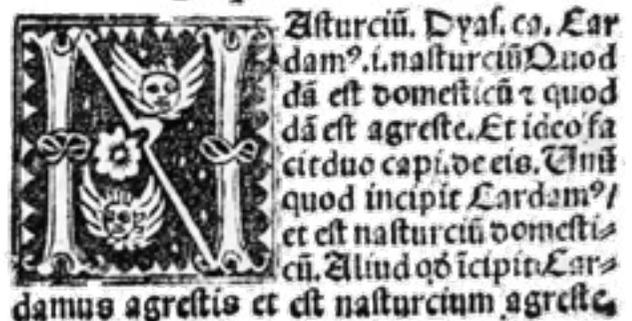


The role and design of the decorated initial or dropped cap continues to evolve with digital design and printing. Whatever their format, decorated initials improve readability while adding sparkle and pizzazz to the page.

Maggie Patton is Manager of Research and Discovery



Caput. ccciiij.



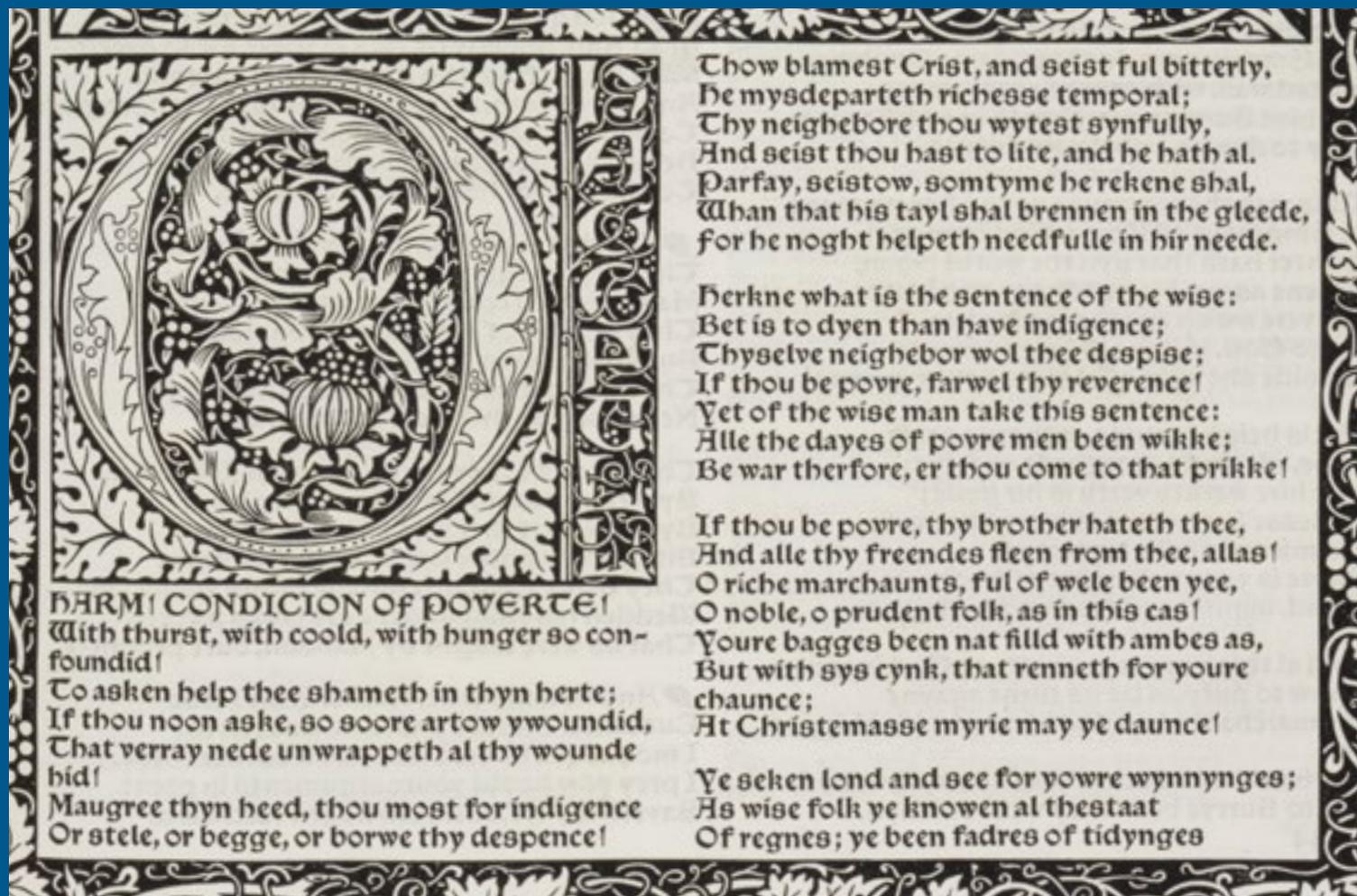
Ec sunt
 verba q̄ locut⁹ est
 moyses ad oēs isrl
 trās iordanē in s
 litudinē cāpestre
 tra mare rubr: in
 z asc̄or
 diebo



Primo dierū o
 quo mūdus ex
 cōdit. ul' quo re
 cōditor. nos mo

uicta libēat. **P**ulsis pcul
 porib. surgam' om̄s ocu
 nocte queram' pium: sic
 tā nouimus. **M**ras pces
 audiat. suāq; dextam po
 gat: ⁊ ceptos sordib.
 dat poloꝝ sedib. **U**t qui
 sacratissimo. hui' diei tpe
 quietis psallim'. donis b
 muniet. **T**am nē p̄na cla
 te postulam' affatum: ab

From top left:
 Bible, Latin. Vulgate, 1481
 Floral U from *Gradual of Cistercian*,
 mid-fourteenth century
 Illuminated P from a fragment
 of the *Psalter of Ferrara*,
 late-fifteenth century
 Illuminated D from *Book of Hours*,
 fifteenth century



HARM! CONDICION OF POVERTE!
With thurst, with coold, with hunger so con-
foundid!
To asken help thee shameth in thyn herte;
If thou noon aske, so soore artow ywoundid,
That verray nede unwrappeth al thy wounde
hid!
Maugree thyn heed, thou most for indigence
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy despence!

Thow blamest Crist, and seist ful bitterly,
He mysdeparteth richesse temporal;
Thy neighebores thou wytest synfully,
And seist thou hast to lite, and he hath al.
Parfay, seistow, somtyme he rekene shal,
Whan that his tayl shal brennen in the gleede,
for he noght helpeth needfulle in hir neede.

Herkne what is the sentence of the wise:
Bet is to dyen than have indigence;
Thyselve neighebor wol thee despise;
If thou be povre, farwel thy reverence!
Yet of the wise man take this sentence:
Alle the dayes of povre men been wikke;
Be war therfore, er thou come to that prikke!

If thou be povre, thy brother hateth thee,
And alle thy freendes fleen from thee, alas!
O riche marchaunts, ful of wele been yee,
O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas!
Youre bagges been nat filld with ambes as,
But with sys cynk, that renneth for youre
chaunce;
At Christemasse myrie may ye daunce!

Ye seken lond and see for yowre wynnynge;
As wise folk ye knowen al thestaat
Of regnes; ye been fadres of tidynge



A selection of hand-drawn initials.
Top row: from *The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio*, Edward Arnold, 1900
Bottom row: from *Psalter or Psalms of David*, Essex House Press, 1902

Matt Okine

One of the busiest — and funniest — guys in showbiz, Matt Okine is a former radio presenter, and now a podcaster, actor (in a series he devised) and musician. His first novel is *Being Black 'n Chicken, and Chips*.

YOU'VE BEEN WRITING FOR A LONG TIME AS A COMEDIAN, MUSICIAN, JJJ BREAKFAST CO-HOST AND FOR TELEVISION WITH *THE OTHER GUY ON STAN*. WHEN DID THE URGE TO WRITE A NOVEL STRIKE?

The story I tell in my book is one I've been wanting to tell properly for my whole life. I did a stage show of it, but I felt that the story needed the attention and focus, the dedication and finesse, that a novel deserves. I wanted to give it everything I could — I guess that's why I devoted two years of my life to it.

SO, IT TOOK TWO YEARS?

I always say that it took two years to write but six months to type! I do a lot of writing in my head. I have fond memories of driving a 4-wheel quad bike around Santorini with my partner and figuring out how to end the book. I've learnt that for me, sitting in front of my computer is not the best way to write.

***BEING BLACK 'N CHICKEN, AND CHIPS* IS SUCH A FUNNY AND HEARTBREAKING NOVEL. HAS IT AFFECTED HOW YOU APPROACH YOUR OTHER WRITING? OR IS IT MORE THE OTHER WAY AROUND?**

It was more the other way around. All the other work I've done — comedy, music, TV — informed the book. And I wrote this book with the movie in mind. My work is action driven. It makes for an easy read because it's not so introspective. I've read a couple of books recently where a main character doesn't *do* much but has lots of big important thoughts. For me that's not so interesting — things need to happen.

I don't mean bombs exploding and car chases — I'm in a world of 'show don't tell'. Working in TV really opened my eyes to how important that is in a book.

But you don't read books to feel happy all the time, but to feel *everything*. I don't want to have a story where a guy walks through a grassy field and smells flowers and that's it. You need the ups and the downs.

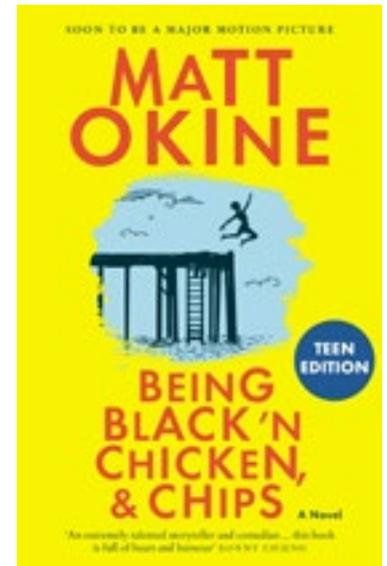
ARE YOU WRITING THE SCREENPLAY FOR THE FILM? WHERE WILL YOU SHOOT IT?

Yes, I am. We've just finished the first draft. There will be a few more drafts but in an amazing world we'll film it next year. Hmmmm, maybe the year after. But the wheels are definitely in motion.

I really want to get back to Brisbane to film it. In hindsight, I should have set the book there. That's where I grew up, in Indooroopilly. My dad's still there. The book is set in a fake town called Brindlewood, but I'd love to have Brisbane represented on screen as well.

HOW WAS ADAPTING *BEING BLACK 'N CHICKEN, AND CHIPS* INTO A YOUNG ADULT BOOK?

It was tough. To be brutally honest, if you had asked me if I had wanted to make a YA version I would have said no. Because I wrote the adult version to be absorbed by a really wide range of readers. All the things that happen of an adult nature, say [main character] Mike's exploration of his body and the silly things he does with his private parts, that's all part of a young boy's world.



SO, WHO ARE YOU MAKING UNCOMFORTABLE?

It's really only the adults, because they don't want to think about what young boys are doing. Maybe it's a bit insulting to call it a teen version because it probably skews a bit younger than that, to pre-teens. Also there are syllabus requirements, language levels and standards so you have to jump through some hoops. And other things like the size of the book and the price point.

There were a few references we needed to change because I was showing my age. Back then, in the late 1990s, getting the internet was a big deal. My editor said that Mike should be more grateful when he finally gets Foxtel and I was like, nup, 12-year-old kids can be little shits.

HOW DO THE LITERARY FESTIVAL BOOK CROWD AND THE STAND-UP COMEDY CROWD COMPARE?

Book crowds are much more subdued and polite. They generally skew older. Events are usually on at 11 o'clock in the morning. The expectation for one gag after another isn't there. Oh, and the audience isn't wasted! They're not yelling out. They're not quoting things you said on the radio six years ago.

I've really enjoyed literary festivals. It's nice to be relaxed and have thought-provoking, considered conversations as opposed to 'Here I am, Here's a joke, boom tish!'

But the big difference between comedy festivals and book festivals is the return on money. You go to a comedy festival and you make a lot of money. You go to a writers' festival and you make no money but

you meet interesting people. You sell a few books. Among artists, out of all the industries, I swear writers are getting stitched up the most when it comes to getting paid, making a living. But everyone is working really hard. It's not like there are heaps of super-rich big-wigs and they're exploiting artists. It's a never-ending grind to make money in the book industry.

YOU'VE ALWAYS GOT LOTS ON THE BOIL. WHAT ARE YOUR LATEST PROJECTS?

I'm working with a production company called Wooden Horse to develop the film adaptation of the book. They worked with me on *The Other Guy* as well. We've got two other TV shows in development.

A while ago I said I'd retired from comedy. But I went to the Melbourne Comedy Festival this year and saw people I knew putting on incredible shows, so I got the itch again. It will be interesting to see if I make a slow return to being back on stage. Telling jokes and funny stories on stage with a single microphone is a lot different to taking three years to get something made. I do a daily podcast with Alex Dyson called 'All Day Breakfast'. I've got an ARIA award-nominated kids band called Divercity. There's never a shortage of things to do.

DOES YOUR DAUGHTER LIKE YOUR MUSIC?

She loves it now, which is awesome. She didn't at first, but now she dances up the front shouting 'Dad! Dad!' God knows she's too young to enjoy most of my other work.

WORDS Andrew Quilty

31 August 2021, Kabul, Afghanistan

It was the date by which President Joe Biden had announced that all American military forces would be withdrawn from Afghanistan. The US Embassy in Kabul and its diplomatic staff, however, were to have remained.

When Biden made the announcement in early July 2021, he told reporters, ‘Do I trust the Taliban? No. But I trust the capacity of the Afghan military, who is better trained, better equipped and more competent in terms of conducting war.’

But by the early hours of 31 August, after a chaotic fortnight following the Taliban’s capture of Kabul – and with it, the country – it wasn’t only US forces who had departed Afghanistan, but all international military forces, as well as scores of foreign diplomatic missions. In addition, more than 100,000 other evacuees – mostly Afghans deemed to be at risk from the Taliban – were airlifted from Kabul’s international airport in one of the largest such evacuations in history.

By the evening of the 31 August, the airport was quiet. Evacuation flights had ceased. In fact, all flights had ceased. Taliban fighters who had flocked to the Afghan capital since its capture on 15 August toured the airfield in commandeered Afghan Army vehicles, on abandoned bicycles and on foot.

The initial turmoil of the transition of government was over.

The 20 year of war was over, for now.

Although there were tens of thousands of Afghans who had tried and failed

to join the mass evacuation, now, the temptation and risk of attempting was gone. While many feared the long term under the Taliban, at least now families could return to the safety of their homes. For me, a foreign passport-holder, who would eventually be able to leave when I pleased, the end of the two-week-long roller-coaster brought relief.

Walking through the airport, past armed Taliban fighters resting on the lawns, through an open gate and onto the airfield, where yet more fighters wandered the tarmac, still coming to terms with their victory, was bordering on psychedelic.

As dusk fell, one group of Taliban fighters laid scarves across the apron beneath a commercial airliner and prayed.

Andrew Quilty is the recipient of nine Walkley Awards, including the Gold Walkley, for his work on Afghanistan, where he has been based since 2013. He has also received the George Polk Award, the World Press Photo Award and the Overseas Press Club of America award for his investigation into massacres committed by a CIA-backed Afghan militia. *August in Kabul*, published by MUP, is his first book.



Photo by Andrew Quilty

20 questions

- 1 Where would you find Botticelli's famous painting *Primavera*?
- 2 Pasta primavera has what key ingredients (apart from pasta)?
- 3 If you love Paris in the springtime, which department store would be your happy place?
- 4 Which word means 'relating to or occurring in spring'?
- 5 What were poet Wordsworth's 'chaste venturous harbingers of spring'?
- 6 Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, had what practical effect?
- 7 Which composition by Igor Stravinsky was used in Disney's *Fantasia*?
- 8 If someone is named 'Rufus', what characteristic would you expect them to have?
- 9 The flowering of which tree is celebrated in Grafton in October to November?
- 10 What is the biggest annual gathering of Indigenous people that will take place on the South Coast over the October long weekend?
- 11 What are James McAuley and Harold Stewart most famously known for?
- 12 What is the name of the character played by Ingrid Bergman in the classic movie *Casablanca*?
- 13 Which two alcoholic ingredients are paired in the cocktail known as a Rusty Nail?
- 14 Who holds the record for men in the 14 kilometre City2Surf race, which runs in August in Sydney?
- 15 Why was 26 October 1985 important for the Anangu people?
- 16 WH Auden wrote his poem '1 September, 1939' as a response to what event?
- 17 What is the name of Robert Drewe's forthcoming novel?
- 18 Where would you find the cycad *Macrozamia macdonnellii*?
- 19 Which writers' festival are many of the contributors to spring *Openbook* appearing at?
- 20 Which novel is the first self-published book to be shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award?

Find the answers to this quiz at the bottom of page 6.





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 Simon & Schuster, the first 50 people to subscribe will receive a free copy of acclaimed writer Chloe Hooper’s book *Bedtime Story*.

A beautiful memoir, it is also an exquisite manual that shows how we use story to make sense of the world, both for ourselves and our children. The book has been described as ‘a miracle of light and meaning-making from one of our finest writers’.

Subscribe for yourself or for a friend

Your subscription will commence with the Spring issue. 12 months/4 issues \$50, includes postage in Australia

sl.nsw.gov.au/openbook

Library Friends receive *Openbook* for free as part of their member benefits. Get more info here: sl.nsw.gov.au/join/become-friend





From *Grandma's Treasured Shoes* (detail) by Coral Vass, illustration by Christina Huynh

Openbook magazine is published quarterly by the State Library of NSW

Spring 2022
ISSN: 2652-8878 (Online)
ISSN: 2652-886X (Print)
E&D-5870-8/2022

COVER PHOTOGRAPH
'Sophia' by Elise Derwin

EDITOR
Phillipa McGuinness

EDITORIAL TEAM
Vanessa Bond, Richard Neville, Susan Hunt, Maggie Patton, Louise Anemaat and Rawiya Jenkins

DESIGN & PRODUCTION
Evi O Studio

SUSTAINABILITY
Printed in Australia by IMMIJ Group 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.

STATE LIBRARY OF NSW
1 Shakespeare Place
Sydney NSW 2000
Australia
Phone (02) 9273 1414
sl.nsw.gov.au

CONTACT US
openbook@sl.nsw.gov.au

CORRESPONDENCE & SUBMISSIONS
Please email letters or article proposals to phillipa.mcguinness@sl.nsw.gov.au

No responsibility can be accepted for unsolicited manuscripts, artwork or photographs.

IMAGINE ... THE WONDER OF PICTURE BOOKS

UNTIL 9 JULY




KILL OR CURE?

A TASTE OF MEDICINE

UNTIL 22 JANUARY



AMAZE GALLERY

CHANGING DISPLAYS



Photo by Jamie James



KOORI KNOCKOUT

OPENS 24 SEPTEMBER



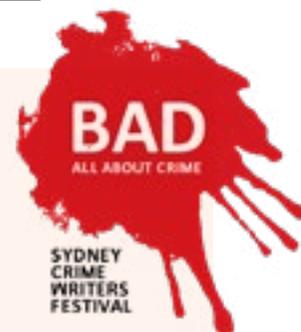
A series of Eight Views, forming a Panorama of the celebrated City of Constantinople and its Environs ... (detail), by Henry Aston Barker

GRAND VISTAS **UNTIL 16 APRIL**



Registrar General's Building. Photo © James Horan for Sydney Living Museums

SYDNEY OPEN **5-6 NOVEMBER**



Three prize winners walk into a bar ...

Join us for our first *Openbook* live event, presented in partnership with the BAD Sydney Crime Writers Festival (8-10 Sept).

Openbook editor Phillipa McGuinness will be in conversation with a killer line-up of prizewinning writers: Veronica Lando (*The Whispering*), James McKenzie Watson (*Denizen*) and Vikki Petraitis (*The Unbelieved*).

Friday 9 Sept, 3-4 pm, The Library Bar
Enter via Hospital Rd, Sydney
\$30 inc. BAD-inspired cocktail or mocktail
Bookings & program: badsydney.com



Fernando do Campo
Succulent garden with companions (Royal Botanical Gardens)
Acrylic on canvas
153 cm x 204 cm 2022
Photography: Shan Turner-Carroll
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney



I got my first library card
60 years ago and without
the public library I would
not have become a writer
and without the public library
many people would never
get access to books. These are
institutions we
should treasure.

Tony Birch, accepting the 2022 Christina
Stead Prize for Fiction for *Dark as Last Night*