openbook

Obsessed with birds | **Romance** and reality | **Hungry** for change

SPRING 2021

Flamin' galah,
photo by Caroline Cattle
@carolinecattle

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.

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See another side of Luna Park in our feature *Sheer lunacy*

View of Dodgem Building, 1981, photograph by Dr Douglas Holleley

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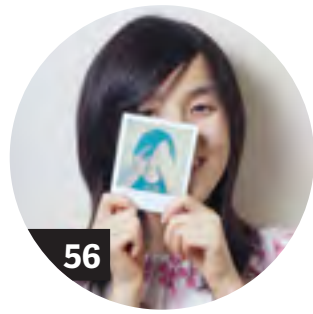

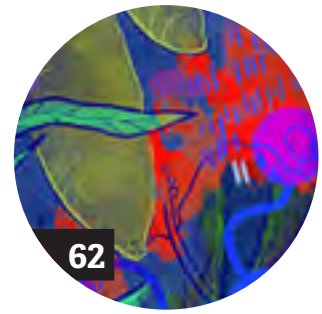

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NEW SOUTH WALES

NSW GOVERNMENT

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COVER
White cockatoos take flight at one of their favourite haunts, Gum Flat, so called for the beautiful river red gums lining the banks and floodways of the Gwydir River, east of Moree, NSW, photo by Melanie Jenson

Self-portrait by Dr John Vallance

No generation ever takes things entirely on trust from its predecessors. We must always think things through for ourselves.

Welcome to *Openbook*

Many, many years ago, a dear friend told me that she was embarrassed by my eclecticism. At the time I was hurt. Being eclectic was not a worthy aspiration where I came from. People were expected to have a more or less settled view of the world. It may be grounded in their social class, family dynamics, race, political convictions, religious faith or philosophy, but even now there is an expectation that the 'solid' person should have settled views. The eclectic picks and chooses items of interest wherever they may appear.

Settled views — with some important exceptions of course — are what you reach at the end of the road, rather than when you are still travelling. Personally, I've always felt an affinity with the Texan rancher Samuel Maverick, whose notoriously unbranded cattle gave their name to a certain — and often threatening — type of independent thinker.

Openbook is not about settled views, however woke or reactionary individual readers may feel it is. Don't expect necessarily to find your own ideas reflected here; some might be, many will not. It is part of the Library's experiment in exploring our collections in new ways and encouraging you to do so too. The holdings of the Library do not present a single, coherent view of the world. No generation ever takes things entirely on trust from its predecessors. We must always think things through for ourselves.

This issue is the next stage of the experiment. I thank my colleague Cathy Perkins, the current editor who has done so much to establish *Openbook* after many years as editor of its successful parent, *SL* magazine. Cathy is taking a year out to pursue further research and we wish her all the best with it. In her place for a year, we are lucky to welcome non-fiction writer and long-term book publisher Phillipa McGuinness as editor and we all look forward to seeing how things develop under her guidance from the next issue.

You may find *Openbook* eclectic, you may find it unsettling. But equally, I hope you won't be embarrassed.

Dr John Vallance FAHA
State Librarian

Quiz answers page 90: 1. c) a book up to 64 cm tall; **2.** dinosaurs; **3.** a) Sulari Gentill; **4.** The Transit of Venus; **5.** Ellen van Neerven; **6.** a) Archie Roach; **7.** False; **8.** True; **9.** SBS; **10.** Dame Nellie Melba; **11.** *All Our Shimmering Skies*; **12.** *Truganini*; **13.** Jonathan Franzen; **14.** b) food writing; **15.** a) Cape of Good Hope; **16.** True; **17.** December; **18.** Adelaide; **19.** a) serenity; 20. *Bad*

openbook *obsessions*

Letters

After having received an *Openbook* subscription as a gift from my mother, I was interested in the variety of stories it told. I was particularly captured by Amanda Laugesen's 'Strike Me Pink!' article. The way in which language and slang have developed in Australia and the influences that it has had are extremely telling of our society. I found the historical titbit of the female forms of common words such as 'Larrikiness' and 'Australiaenne' extremely funny and, unlike the author, I think they should have a raucous comeback into the modern lexicon.
Holly Fleetwood

My two copies of *Openbook* (Autumn and Winter 2021) provide continuing delight in the great diversity of the contents. Marcus Zusak and Debra Adelaide gave particular pleasure with their quirky fiction, Mark Dapin's 'Shanty Town' provided new insights while Patrick Mullins on censorship was intriguing. The articles and photographs throughout are fresh and appealing. I have read and re-read my two copies and will be keeping them on my bookshelf to dip into from time to time. Thank you for these and I very much look forward to further editions.
Jennifer Dewar

Congratulations on *Openbook*. I read every issue, almost cover to cover, which is more than I can say for most magazines. It is also a pleasure just to hold and admire. Keep up the great work!
Mark St Leon

Openbook is essential lockdown reading. I particularly love the short stories and the photo essays, and the quiz has been great fun to do with friends over Zoom.
Carlea Jenkins

Look out for

A shout-out to two wonderful publications new to the print world just like us: *Galah*, a modern voice from the bush, and *Wondergrround*, a spirited and intelligent journal exploring human connection to landscape. See words by *Wondergrround* editor/publisher Georgina Reid on page 60.

Lively tale

Go on a rollicking adventure through the Library's fabulous treasures in the new picture book *The Best Cat, The Est Cat*. Written by popular children's author Libby Hathorn and illustrated by State Library designer Rosie Handley, it's available from November 2021.

Leisurely read

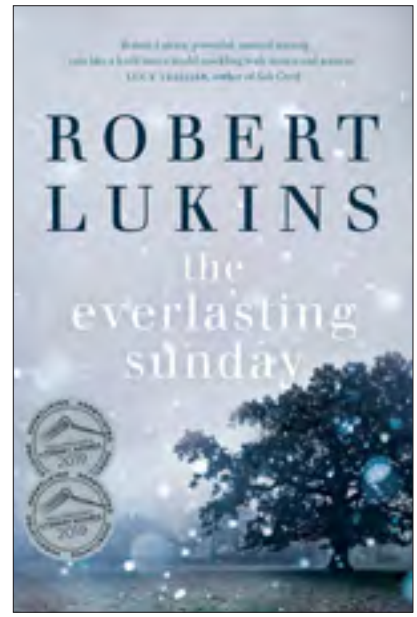
Join us for Australian Reading Hour on Tuesday 14 September. Stop what you're doing and immerse yourself in a good book (or magazine!). Share a photo on social media using the hashtag #AustraliaReads and tag us @statelibrarynsw australiareads.org.au

Love a bookshop

Love Your Bookshop Day is 9 October, and the Library Shop is offering *Openbook* readers 10% off all purchases that day. Show your love by ordering a book or a gift. Free delivery. Shop online using the promo code OPENBOOK shop.sl.nsw.gov.au

Robert Lukins, photo by Eve Wilson

Robert LUKINS



Autumn 2022

A book, *Loveland*, will be published and I'm still not sure how much of all this I will include in the story I tell of the novel. When the time comes, I hope only that I find some pride. I hope I can add it to the good side of the scale, to work against the weight on the bad. If your scale ends up anywhere near level then you're one of the rare ones.

Winter 2021

I'd never spoken of this because I spent so long moving on from it. It makes me sick to think of trying to gain from it. To have it become the story I sell. Yet, here we are. Here we are because not speaking about all this has become its own trap. A little cell with padded walls. So here we are and I'm writing this down to see how it feels. What it achieves.

Winter 2019

I sit on a mossy rock on the side of a Tasmanian mountain. It's freezing, it's just dawn, and I've come again to the end of things. I raise my arms and laugh like I'm in a bad film and I give in. I ask nature, the universe, all that, to deliver me a vision. I go to the place that I've avoided for so long, where things are uncertain and magic can be true. Where reality is a wall that leaks.

Easily it comes, the vision, and it comes in the form of a story. Complete and all-consuming. Two women standing in the shallows of a Nebraskan lake, fire all around. I laugh again to be back in that bad film.

Summer 1998

The weeks, months, of sleeping wherever feels safest. Garages, the concrete outside the Gabba, the hollow beneath one of the fig trees in the park. Making calls from public phone boxes. Saying the things I'm required to. It's Brisbane so the nights are warm and I only need to worry about someone stealing my stuff.

Summer 1997

The first time the police nab me I'm naked. They guess I'm high, I suppose. The summer of breaking into cars and houses and stealing worthless things. Jumping out of moving cars. Getting to the top of the buildings in the city and making the leap between rooftops. The summer of visions. So then a year, a year and a half, off-and-on in the psychiatric hospital. The days sitting outside on plastic chairs; the guests making a smoking circle under the shade of the big gum. The escapes and the police. The room with the padded walls (they really have those). The funerals. The rounds of ECT. The overdoses and the coma.

Here, at the end of things, a mind could change reality. Not the perception but reality itself. Or was it that the line between the two was permeable? This was it. The line between things is permeable. It's a realisation that I would learn to shield myself from. You can't get by in the regular world with this thought. You bury it. You talk it away. You take up yoga. The thought would remain though, quiet and distant: the line between worlds is permeable.

In the 2019 NSW Premier's Literary Awards, Robert Lukins' *The Everlasting Sunday* was shortlisted for both the UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing and the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction. His new novel, *Loveland*, will be published in March 2022.

WORDS **Elise Edmonds**

Sheer lunacy

A classic Sydney tale of harbourside real estate, vested interests and community battles to protect our heritage.

I just made it to the old Luna Park — the one that opened in 1935. It was a freezing Saturday in June 1979 and I was celebrating a schoolfriend's eighth birthday. I remember the wind whipping around us as we wandered around the park. As a child who didn't enjoy scary rides, I probably stayed close to the supervising adult and watched the others on the most hair-raising ones. But I summoned all my bravery and joined the rest of the kids on the ghost train. That very night, the ride was reduced to smoking ruins and seven people lost their lives.

Forty-two years later, a $1 million reward is being offered for new information about the horrific fire on the evening of Saturday 9 June 1979. The review of the case was prompted by the ABC's three-part investigative series *Exposed: The Ghost Train Fire*, which unearthed new witness accounts that point to arson.

Six children and an adult were killed in the fire, which at the time was blamed on a mechanical or electrical malfunction. The fun park was closed immediately, and just over a month later, on 31 July, tenders were called for using the site.

The land on Milsons Point — a piece of prime harbourfront real estate — held mouthwatering development potential. Proposals had come in over the years for a world trade centre complex of tower blocks, along with hotels, marinas and car parks.

As the tenders were going out, a grassroots community group known as the Friends of Luna Park came together to fight development.

On a bright, cold Saturday in late June 1980, a year after the fire, the Friends held a 'Save Luna Park' day. A motley group of Sydneysiders led by some of the Luna Park artists — among them Martin Sharp and Peter Kingston — marched from the Sydney Opera House, across the Harbour Bridge and down to the park's well-known entry face at Milsons Point. The Opera House was chosen as the starting point, Peter Kingston told me recently, to make it clear that these were 'two houses of culture facing each other across the Harbour'.

Families and other fans of the fun park held placards reading, 'Save our heritage', 'I'm a Lunaparcatic', 'Face up to Luna Park' and 'Luna Park belongs to the children of Sydney forever'. A free concert in front of the face, headlined by Sydney band Mental as Anything, was a 'big drawcard', according to Kingston.

Kingston's childhood memories of the park underpinned his desire to save it. 'I loved going there as a kid,' he says. 'I lived at Parsley Bay and it was a chance to get the ferry. The experience began when you got to the Quay and got on a Luna Park ferry. The excitement when you saw the face! I loved just about everything — in particular the Big Dipper roller coaster — it really was something special. When the gates opened, we'd run to the be first to get on the roller coaster. I remember the smell of dagwood dogs and the sounds — of Tom Jones singing "Deliah" ... and we were let loose into this place. Everything was fantastic.'

By September 1980, Harbourside Amusements Pty Ltd had won the bid. They intended to establish an amusement park on the site, promising a water slide, dodgems, video and pinball machines and a pirate ship. It was not until 1985 that questions were asked about the owners and directors of the company and their relationship to the notorious crime boss Abe Saffron or 'Mr Sin'. A 1987 investigation by the Corporate Affairs Commission revealed that the company that had hired arcade machines to Harbourside was controlled by Saffron and that two of its directors were his relatives Col and Harold Goldstein. Several other directors were either

Luna Park entrance face, 1981, photograph by Dr Douglas Holleley. Photographs reproduced courtesy Dr Douglas Holleley

'Goodbye Luna Park, 1935–1981', auction catalogue

Crowd shot of protestors at the Save Luna Park event, 28 June 1980, photo by Graham Rendoth

related to or had extensive business dealings with Saffron.

In preparation for the new entertainments, the remaining rides would be sold or demolished. For two days in 1981, the park was on sale. The auction catalogue cover says it all: 'Goodbye Luna Park, 1935–1981'. An insert inside, next to the itemised listings, reads like an epitaph on a gravestone:

> Time has caught up with the Luna Park that so many of us have come to know and love. Yet the way it was ... the enjoyment it gave us ... those memories will remain.
>
> There will be another amusement park built on the site, but it will never be the Luna Park we all knew.
>
> Buy yourself a little piece of Sydney's history.

Soon after the auction began at 10 am on Sunday 31 May, the carousel and the Gebrüder Bruder fair organ were sold to an American bidder for $140,000 and $20,000 respectively. The carousel animals were sold separately and also shipped offshore. The large glass Teahouse building was sold to car dealer Peter Warren at Warwick Farm in western Sydney, and is reportedly still in his car yard.

'It was a rainy day,' Peter Kingston remembers, 'Wonderful pieces kept coming up.' He persuaded one of the park's then leaseholders, Leon Fink, that a painting by one of the original Luna Park artists, Arthur Barton, should go to Stanton Library in North Sydney. Barton had started work at the park in 1935 and remained the resident artist until he retired in 1970. His Coney Island murals and other artwork were influenced by the detailed caricatures of English artist Heath Robinson.

Among the other items saved for posterity was a model of the River Caves ride, which was purchased by the then North Sydney mayor, Carole Baker, and also went to Stanton Library. Kingston regrets that the Friends didn't place any conditions on the art. 'The artwork should not have been for sale,' he says. 'None of the murals by Arthur Barton should have been sold.'

Kingston says he 'ended up taking a few things', having purchased models of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves from the River Caves ride. 'I actually owned the River Caves, bought for $10 that day.' But it wasn't possible to move it off the site, and in the end it was demolished along with Davy Jones' Locker — 'smashed with a bulldozer'.

One significant victory came after Martin Sharp rang his mother to ask for a donation to save the Turkey Trot, Barrels of Fun, Joy Wheel, Mirror Maze and other traditional rides from Coney Island. 'His mother purchased them, so they could stay there,' Kingston recalls. 'Thanks to Mrs Joan Sharp, thanks to her, they are still there.' Two days later, demolition began.

It wasn't only the artefacts that needed preserving, but the scene itself. On the day before the auction, when the general population was invited to inspect the auction offerings, photographer Dr Douglas Holleley captured the old Luna Park for posterity.

Dr Holleley reflected recently on his Luna Park photographs, which the Library acquired in 2016. He admits he hadn't been passionate about the fun park in the beginning. 'As a child I had actually been scared half to death of the place,' he tells me. 'It was a pretty intimidating kind of environment. It always had an element of danger to it.' But its imminent demolition drew him in.

'I couldn't believe this site was going to be trashed,' he says. 'It is such an integral part of the city.' On his first trip to take photos, he began to appreciate the beauty of the dilapidated fun park. 'It turned out to be magical day — full sun, then some clouds would come over, and then full cloud. I was happy with what turned out.'

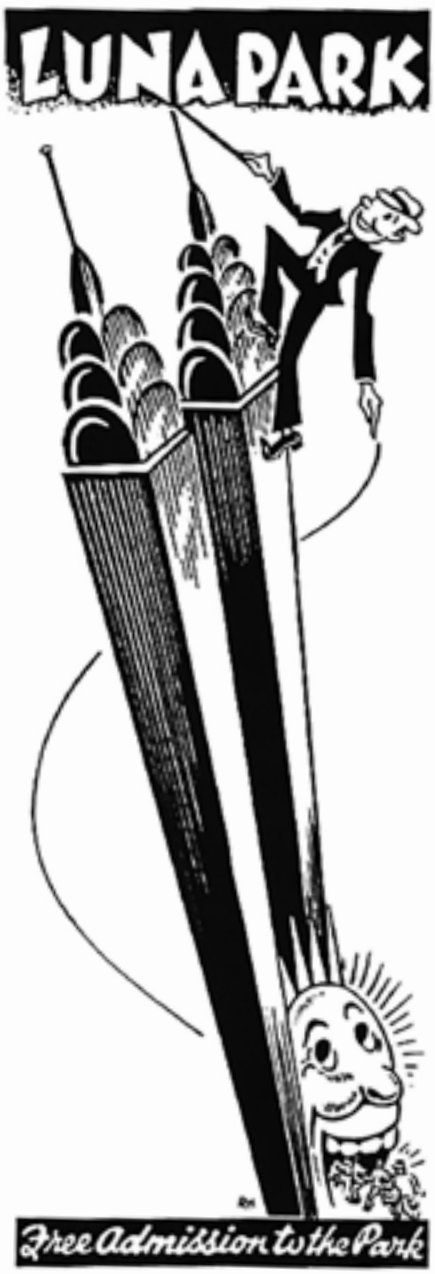
He documented the worn and weary face, the turret pastel castle that housed the dodgems, and the peeling paint of Davy Jones' Locker. Some vibrant colours remained in the park's striped awnings, Pirate Pete's Sea Battle ride and the Rotor signage, but the place would change irrevocably over the next six months.

A very different Luna Park reopened in April 1982 with a new entry face — a poor copy of the original — and many rides imported from America. This version of Luna Park remained for six years before it closed in 1988. At the end of that year, the face was removed and the towers on either side were broken up with a chainsaw and discarded.

Despite the site's neglect, the Friends of Luna Park kept up the campaign.

1991 image missing the iconic entry face and towers, Luna Park, Dodgem, photograph by Dr Douglas Holleley

Facade of Davy Jones' Locker, 1981, photograph by Dr Douglas Holleley



Detail from *Turkey Trot: Luna Park and Coney Island newsletter*, 1992, Friends of Luna Park

'There were good people fighting for Sydney,' recalls Peter Kingston of those early years. 'And then the baddies arrived. It was venal.' It was also dangerous. Over the years the Friends had made powerful enemies and received death threats.

Eventually, thanks to lobbying by the Friends, North Sydney Council and community backing, the *Luna Park Site Act* was passed in October 1990. It ensured Crown ownership of the site, which would be dedicated to public recreation and entertainment for the people of New South Wales. It was a rare moment for Sydney — a piece of Harbour foreshore with drop-dead views was being withheld from private interests.

Even though the park remained closed until early 1995, Dr Holleley continued his routine of returning every five years or so. 'It became a marker for me,' he says. I would go back after my birthday.' His 1991 images of the partly demolished site are particularly poignant: derelict buildings, mould-stained awnings, faded and peeling paint. Indeed Holleley's work argues for the importance of maintaining the memory of the fabric of our cities. He sees a city as a kind of a kind of collective brain of its citizens and when its buildings, and our memory of them, are obliterated he maintains it is not overstating the case to say that each one lost is like a little lobotomy.

Dr Holleley captures the unsettling atmosphere and erratic afterlife of the abandoned amusement park; the ghostly remains of gaudy facades and empty avenues that once were full of laughing, screaming people; the bustle and hoopla of the carnival long gone.

After several false starts in the 1990s, and years of restoration and renovation, Luna Park as we now know it opened in 2004. At the northern end, inside the 1930s era Coney Island Funnyland, we can still enjoy the heritage rides saved by the Friends (and Martin Sharp's mother) from demolition back in 1981, all brought up to twenty-first-century safety standards. Other rides were transported south from Brisbane's Expo 88.

To remain financially viable, Luna Park has had to keep evolving. Its venue hire business — including a permanent, fully sound-proofed 'big top' — and annual 'Hallowscream' week attract a range of visitors beyond the traditional thrill-riders. The park employs 130 full-time staff, swelling to 1000 during the peak summer months.

'We had to learn that the public looks for different things,' says the current Director, Warwick Doughty, whose company won the bid to run the park in 1999. He and his staff have been gradually upgrading and replacing rides. 'Lots of the rides had old technology and weren't complying to what is currently required under the Australian Standards,' he says. Among nine new rides in this year's upgrade — the biggest in the contemporary fun park's history — is a new Big Dipper. While the Covid-19 lockdown has caused delays, they hope to open for the December/January school holidays.

Warwick loves to watch visitors enjoying themselves on the rides, 'Everyone gets off the rides smiling,' he says. 'We sent the staff on the new Sledgehammer to test it. Some of the staff went on thinking they would hate it and they all came off smiling. It's the thrill of doing it and coming out the other side. Conquering a fear.'

Old Luna Park remains alive in memories, in photographs, and in the artefacts that found their way into heritage collections. Peter Kingston continues to deposit original artworks and objects from Luna Park with state and local collections — the Library's Luna Park collection of photographs, architectural plans and memorabilia has grown in recent years. The park also maintains its own archive, which includes material from the contemporary site.

I visited Luna Park again, about a year ago. Apart from the Coney Island building and the retro rides inside, I didn't recognise much. I admired Arthur Barton's masterpieces along the walls and upper galleries of the cavernous space. Everything looked as though it had always been there. As you would imagine, it felt a lot smaller than when I visited as an eight-year-old. And this time, I wasn't scared.

Elise Edmonds, Senior Curator

Luna Park, Coney Island exterior, 1991, photograph by Dr Douglas Holleley

Take 5 HATS

WORDS **Margot Riley**

Cocked

In 1836 John (Jemmy) Piper, a young Wiradjuri man from Bathurst, was recruited by surveyor Thomas Mitchell as a professional guide on a major expedition along the Darling and Murray rivers into present-day Victoria. Piper's skills as a hunter, scout and interpreter proved invaluable, so Mitchell rewarded him with gifts that included 'my own red coat, and also a cocked hat and feather which had once belonged to Governor Darling'. Mitchell praised this portrait — a hand-coloured lithograph print by the 'ingenious artist' WH Fernyhough — as an accurate likeness of Piper.

Trendy

The comic song 'The Garibaldi Hat' was first performed to 'much applause' in July 1861 at Sydney's Royal Victoria Theatre by the young American singer George Marsh. The sheet music for the song, with words by the theatre's manager Robert P Weston, features a title page illustration by leading artist ST Gill. Deemed 'one of the best specimens of lithographic art yet seen in the colony' (*Freeman's Journal*, 14 September 1861), it shows people promenading outside the Pitt Street theatre. A fashionably attired young woman, and the men admiring her (see detail above), all wear versions of the latest trend in hats: a soft, brimless cylindrical cap named after the well-known Italian folk hero and nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi.

Airy

The Hatmen's Association of NSW launched 'Panama and Straw Hat Week' in November 1934 to encourage Australian men to adopt lighter headgear for summer. Once a mark of sophistication for the well-dressed man, the authentic Panama hat (far left) is made from the plaited leaves of the South American toquilla plant. Its weave allows for air flow as well as sun protection. Shot by photographer Ernie Bowen outside the Pitt Street premises of City Hatters — which guaranteed 'excellence of quality and style' — this image was used to promote the retailer's 'Genuine Ecuador Panamas'.

Fruity

When the postwar world's highest-priced hat designers began turning out improbable hats made from unlikely materials, the editors of *Pix* magazine challenged 19-year-old Sydney milliner Judy Grace to get creative with 16 shillings worth of fruit. Tangling a few bananas, strawberries, passionfruit and a sprig of parsley in a snood (a type of loose hairnet), Judy whipped up this amazing headpiece. Photographed by Steve Dunleavy for the 27 August 1949 issue, the hat had an obvious advantage — once you got tired of wearing it, you could eat it!

Iconic

The Sydney Opera House was still a decade away from completion when the sculptural silhouette of architect Jørn Utzon's controversial design caught the imagination of young Melbourne hat maker Peter Morton. His Opera House Hat featured on the 25 July 1962 cover of the country's leading women's magazine, *The Australian Women's Weekly*, after it won an award in the 'special occasion' category of the Millinery Manufacturers' Association's spring/summer preview held in Sydney that month. Made of stiffened white organza, with bands of black ribbon applied over a rising crown of shell-shaped tiers, the flyaway roofline is instantly recognisable, even in this chicly abstracted recreation.


VARSSITY

WORDS **Ashley Kalagian Blunt**

Language that binds

Images and interviews from linguistically diverse communities reflect the Library's goal of collecting history as it happens.

I moved to Sydney in 2011 with a plan to stay for 12 months. Six years later, I had an appointment with the Department of Immigration to finalise my citizenship application. The man who called me to his desk gave an officious nod as he took my sheaf of identity documents.

'That's the first time I've seen a marriage certificate from Manitoba,' he said, seeming to break out of his routine script. 'You're about the 4800th person I've processed. That's me personally. There are people here who have done a lot more.'

'It must be fascinating,' I said, 'seeing all these different people.'

'It would be if I had time to talk to them, but I have to process you and move on. Everyone has a story to tell though. I often meet people at the end of a long journey. For some it's been a terrible struggle. For others, it's been easy. For me, it was an accident.'

I leaned in, keen to hear how one accidentally becomes Australian. But my paperwork was done, and he sent me on.

People shift across the globe like grains of sand on dunes, blown by the winds of violence and poverty and, as in my more privileged case, deep-rooted restlessness. We settle into existing communities, and sometimes, collect together to forge new ones.

Growing up in Canada, my dad knew his grandfather, Paravon, was from 'the old country'. (He makes air quotes as he shares this.) But he and I didn't learn the details of Paravon's journey until decades after his death. Horse hooves had approached the family village in the night, we discovered, waking Paravon, who was perhaps 11 years old. He climbed into a tree for a better view of the approaching Turkish soldiers. While he hid there, everyone in the village was slaughtered and their homes set alight.

Paravon ended up in an orphanage, and then, a few years later, on a ship to Canada, where one remaining uncle had worked since before the state-orchestrated massacres that became known as the Armenian genocide. Paravon arrived with his wife, Mariam, whose story is even more incomplete. Her family had left her, their youngest child, with Turkish friends, who risked their lives by protecting her. Perhaps that became too dangerous; whatever the reason, Mariam was in the orphanage when she met Paravon.

In 1920 the couple arrived in St Catharines, on the shore of Lake Ontario, where a handful of Armenian factory workers was growing into a community of survivors. They helped to build the first Armenian church in Canada. Eight decades later, I attended my grandfather's funeral at that church, the priest speaking in Armenian, a censer swinging.

I didn't grow up near St Catharines. In fact, Sydney was the first place I lived where there was an Armenian community. I volunteered with the Armenian Art Advisory Council, feeling chuffed

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities of Sydney and regional NSW, 2011–14, part of a photographic series by Louise Whelan

every time their meetings slipped into Armenian, even though I didn't understand.

Because Australia's immigration laws relaxed a little after the Second World War, in the 1950s and 60s an influx of Armenians migrated from countries including Jordan and Lebanon, where they'd found uncertain refuge after the genocide. Their family narratives contain layers of dislocation. Australia's first Armenian church was founded in 1957, in Surry Hills.

The State Library's collection features photographs taken between 1989 and 1996 by Armenian photographer Teny Aghamalian. A christening service at the Armenian Apostolic Church in Chatswood — the priests in their elaborate robes — is juxtaposed with Armenians at home, in their kitchens and loungerooms. Seeing them fills me with warmth; this could be my father's extended family. There's nothing that makes the photos particularly Australian, until the last in the series, which shows an anti-Pauline Hanson demonstration.

I see in Sydney the community vitality that existed in St Catharines when Paravon and Mariam were raising their six children: Armenian schools, church feasts, magazines, radio shows, art exhibitions and sporting events. But St Catharines is a small city, and by the time my dad was growing up, the community had started its slow fade into history. It requires a lot of effort to maintain a culture distinct from the majority, and people like my grandfather had married *odars* — outsiders, non-Armenians — which meant the language wasn't spoken at home.
In my experience, it's language that binds. When I lived in Korea, I clung to fellow English speakers out of social necessity. When I lived in Peru and Mexico, my Spanish became conversational but I never felt fully myself unless I was talking — and joking — in my first language.

Being a native English speaker makes it simpler to blend Australianness into my identity. Even with our nations' shared heritage, however, there are cultural gaps. I find myself translating and decoding, adjusting my behaviour. After I published a memoir on becoming Australian, a reader from Peru asked me to speak to her Latina book club. 'This would mean a lot to us, especially as migrants,' she said, 'understanding that if a Canadian had issues when moving to Australia, then it is not that bad for Latin Americans to find Australian society a bit different.'

All these things are on my mind the day I meet Samuel Majok, an Anglican minister and refugee from South Sudan, who lives in Blacktown. Paravon and Mariam likely couldn't have imagined what they might have in common with a South Sudanese community in Australia, but three generations later, as I attend a church service delivered in Dinka, I'm captivated by the parallels to my Armenian family's early years in Canada, their efforts to heal their community through their faith. The room is full of young families, sitting on socially distanced plastic chairs, their eyes sneaking from the sermonising minister to me.

Afterwards, Reverend Samuel and I sit down to talk with his friend, D-Mo Zajac. Aside from their mirrored smiles, they make a visual contrast: Samuel is tall, with round cheeks and dark skin, while D-Mo is slender, blond and Polish. (A coincidence: my father's mother was Polish, though on marrying she left her family to fold herself into the Armenian community. Speaking to D-Mo, I wonder about the lost traces of my Polish heritage.)

Born in 1982, Samuel was the third of his parents' 10 children. They lived in the village of Wanglei until he was nine, when Sudan's second civil war reached them. 'Children were thrown in the fire in the nearby village,' he recalls. His family fled.

For the next six months, they were on the road by 6 am every day, walking south, away from the fighting. The war followed. Persistent bombing forced them to cross into Kenya. Samuel spent the next 15 years in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

He describes Kakuma as 'people in a warehouse'. Even with a ration card, they ate one meal every two days. Later, his father was murdered, likely because of his work training Christian ministers. When he first started sharing his story, Samuel says, 'I couldn't finish this part.' The murder remains unsolved.

His father's closest friend had resettled in the southern Sydney suburb of Caringbah, and when his church community learned of the murder, they worked to bring the family to Australia. But they couldn't apply for all 11 family members together, so it was Samuel's mother and her daughters who arrived in Western Sydney in 2004. Three years later, he and his brothers followed, with the exception of one sister, who lives in Nairobi, and his eldest brother, who remains among almost 200,000 people at Kakuma.

Listening, I can trace Paravon and Mariam's story — the flukes of survival, the years of starvation, the jarring asylum in a previously unimagined place, and the efforts to rebuild community.

It was D-Mo who introduced me to Reverend Samuel. She works as a photographer, and the Library's collection includes her photos documenting culturally diverse festivals, protest meetings, rallies and religious events. 'Photography is about driving connection,' she says.

The Armenian community in Sydney, particularly schools and church ceremonies, 1989–95, photos by Teny Aghamalian

D-Mo moved to Australia in 2006. That year, at an anti-racism rally, she befriended two South Sudanese men. The first time she visited their church, she wanted to take photos, but people warned her off. She spent six months building a relationship, visiting people's homes and singing and cooking with them. Now her photos span more than a decade, and her ties to the community runs deep. Samuel baptised her youngest son.

He believes D-Mo's work connects people to the South Sudanese story. 'Without her, maybe other people wouldn't know.'

While he's grateful for his life in Australia, especially its safety, he struggles with the cultural gap, the different food and clothing, even the ways people greet each other. 'It's hard to say hello to Aussie neighbours,' he says. D-Mo echoes this. 'Australian communities feel segregated — not racially, but personally.'

Samuel describes himself and his community as 'becoming more Australian. We're influenced by the second generation. As parents, we always worry our kids will become Australian.'

Armenians have a term for this diasporan process of losing cultural identity over generations, as has happened in my family. They call it white genocide.

But Samuel's plan for his seven children, now aged between two months and 10 years old, is for them to attend high school in Kenya or Uganda, studying in English at an international school, and staying with family over school holidays, immersed in their language and culture. He knows other South Sudanese families that do this.

'This way,' he says, 'they wouldn't take their life in Australia for granted.'

I wonder who my dad or my grandfather might have been, had they been able to spend their high school years in Armenia.

For my part, the 10 years I spent researching my family and the intergenerational impacts of genocide gives me slivers of insight into Samuel's experience, as well as the descendants of other genocide survivors, like D-Mo, who learned later in life of her mother's Jewish ancestry.

I feel that connection agtain when I speak to Maria Savvidis about her archival work at the Library, and she shares the story of her mother and father, Greek migrants who met in Sydney. Her father is Pontian Greek, from Anatolia, another group targeted by the Ottoman Turks during and after the First World War.

Maria grew up speaking Greek. 'The only time I spent with Australians was at school,' she says. She felt oddly at home in Turkey, where she recognised words her father had used. It reminded me of something an aunt told me, that when Paravon and Mariam didn't want their family to understand, they'd speak in Turkish.

Maria and I meet over Zoom, her deaf cat interrupting with what sounds like wow! wow!

Africultures Festival, Wyatt Park, Lidcombe, NSW, 2019, photo by D-Mo Zajac

The Hanochas Tefillin — Shlomo Dov Ber, Bondi, NSW, 2016, photo by D-Mo Zajac

Speaking about the Library's multicultural archival collections, Maria's eyes light up.

'Growing up with migrant parents myself, I know how important it is to see yourself reflected in collections,' she says. 'Our collection is focused on documenting life across New South Wales. We want to collect history as it's happening.'

To be an archivist is to have a one-sided conversation with the future, to offer a less imperfect record of the present. The Library collects both photos and oral histories, and has ongoing projects to acquire oral histories from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, with recent collections including a focus on refugee and migrant stories, and from people of Islamic faith.

In the archive, you can tour through the loungerooms of families from Montenegro, Iceland and Congo, who are now living in Berala, Doonside and Casula. You can also listen to a tremendous collection of people — diverse in culture, ages, religions, walks of life — narrate their life stories.

As an oral historian and photographer, Louise Darmody knows the power of inviting others to share their histories. She recorded her own father's story of survival at sea after his crew's flying boat plane crashed during the First World War.

'That was the start of my real interest in telling stories. If I hadn't sat down to record that story, I never would have known all the details.' This resonates for me as well. If I hadn't decided to write about my Armenian family, I would know hardly anything about Paravon and Mariam's lives and how their community formed and faded.

'We are complicated, fascinating creatures,' Louise says, 'and we don't take enough time to talk about that.'

For the Library's collection, Louise interviewed people of Islamic faith in New South Wales, from a range of cultural backgrounds, ages and professions, giving them the opportunity to share their families' stories and how their faith shapes their lives in Australia.

Listening to the oral histories, I make more connections. When author Randa Abdel-Fattah discusses growing up in Sydney, she mentions a fellow Islamic family. 'Each of them would change their name depending on the circles they moved in.' It was the same for Paravon and Mariam's children. My grandfather was Nigoghos to his family, and Nick everywhere else.

The Library preserves many other glimpses of the diversity of people and communities that make up New South Wales. Still, there are gaps. When I have the chance to speak with an Assyrian family, I search for Assyrian records in the collection. There are few, and no photos or oral histories, though curiously, the archive contains two Assyrian relics, seals made of 'hematite or similar'.

When I meet Lolita Emmanuel, an Assyrian Armenian, and her parents, Ninos and Susanna, they give me a copy of *Kinarah*, a book celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Assyrian Australian Association. 'That will tell you everything you need,' Ninos says.

And it does — about how the first wave of Assyrian migrants came to Sydney in the 1960s, settling in Randwick, but soon found the rents too high. The community purchased property in Fairfield, building a church as well as a club. The latter opened shortly after Ninos arrived from Iraq in 1980, fleeing government persecution.

Ninos' involvement with Assyrian rights activists at university caught the government's attention. A friend warned that his name was 'on the list'. Ninos quickly organised a visit to family in Sydney, and applied for political asylum once here. Others didn't escape. 'Three of the people I knew were caught and hanged.'

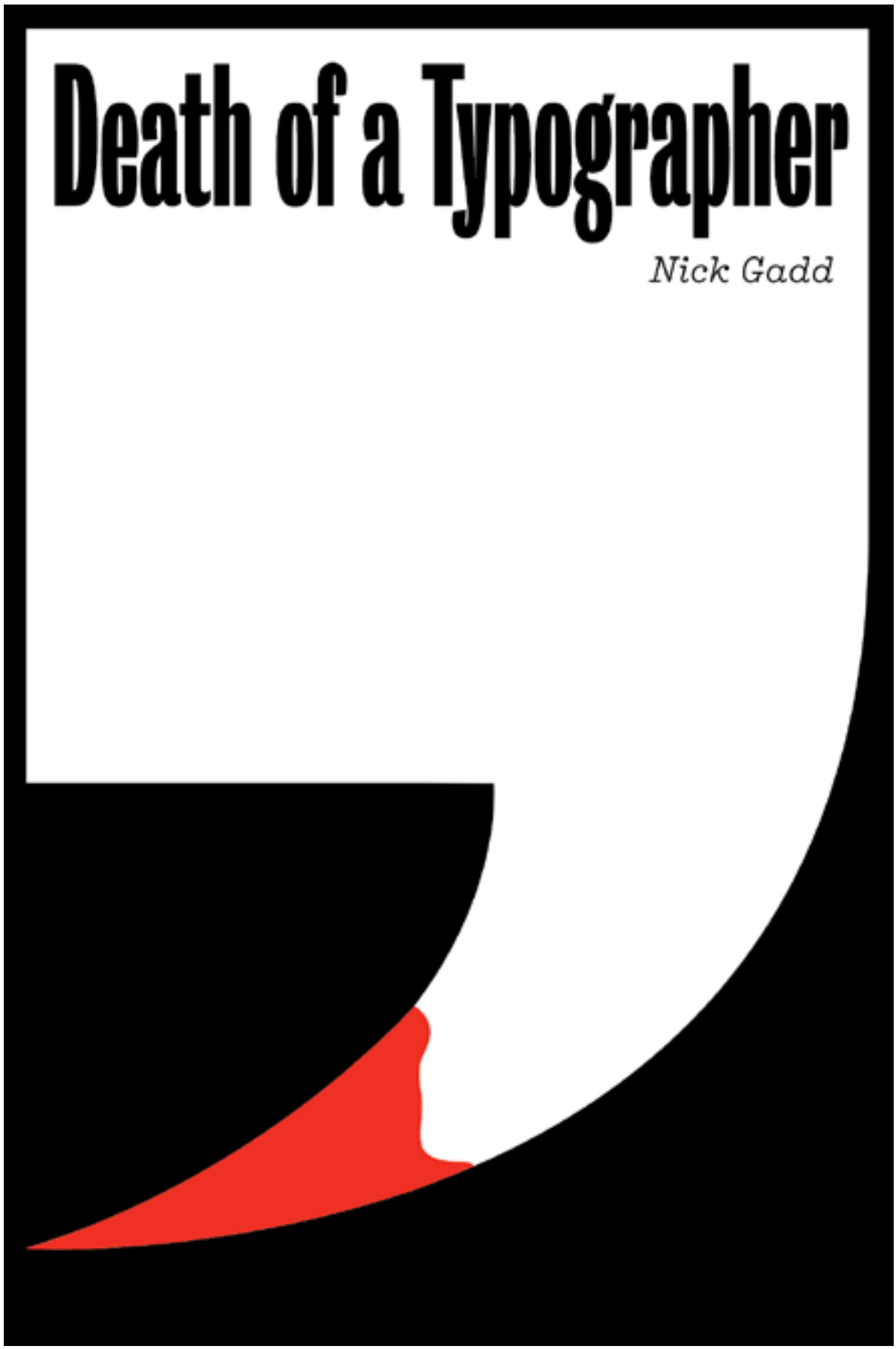
Now he works for SBS Assyrian Radio, and over 200 members of his extended family live in Australia. The community has grown to 20,000, and runs clubs, an Assyrian Resource Centre, and an Assyrian school. That's where Lolita is currently developing her language skills, alongside studying a Doctor of Musical Arts at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. 'It was music and art,' she says, 'that enabled me to articulate my own connection to the Assyrian culture.'

As the Emmanuels share their family's story, I find myself hoping Assyrian oral histories will one day be added to the Library archive.

Not long after my visit to the Department of Immigration, I sat among 178 soon-to-be citizens at Sydney Town Hall, on the land of the world's oldest continuous culture. We had come together, people from around the world, to be part of something meaningful and inclusive.

Australia has residents from over 250 countries, more than currently exist. Every one has a story to tell, and those stories are full of connections.

Ashley Kalagian Blunt is the author of *How to Be Australian*, a memoir, and *My Name Is Revenge*, a novella and collected essays about the Armenian genocide and its connections to Australia.


Death of a Typographer
Nick Gadd

WORDS **Katrina Lobley**

Surface art

Book cover design is an intricate and sometimes baffling process that brings together authors, readers, publishers, booksellers and designers.

Melbourne author Nick Gadd couldn't have penned a happier design story for his murderous thriller if he'd tried. His novel *Death of a Typographer* came out of many years of conversations with his friend Stephen Banham, font nerd and graphic designer. So when it came to preparing the novel for publication, Banham was a natural choice as its designer — a suggestion that Gadd's publisher, Australian Scholarly Publishing, embraced. The striking result, featuring a quotation mark that resembles a bloodied weapon, was co-winner of the Designers' Choice Cover of the Year at the 2020 Australian Book Design Awards. Inside the book, Banham also displayed his design chops, using a different font for each chapter title.

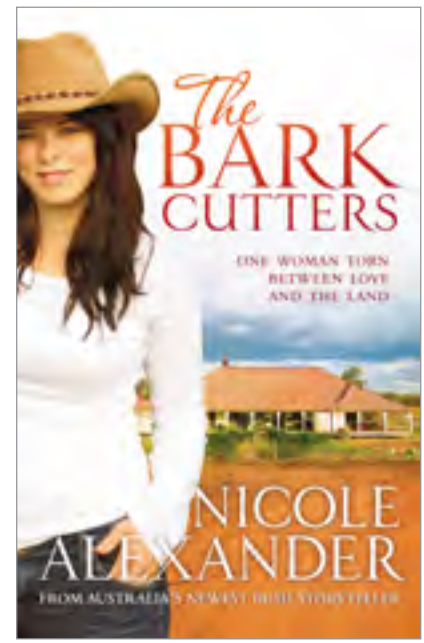
'Originality is not always valued in cover design,' says Gadd. 'A lot of mainstream publishers don't want covers that look different — they want covers that look like last year's bestseller. If *The Dry* was a big hit last year, they want a cover that looks like *The Dry*. I'm with a small, independent publisher where authors have more chance of being heard.'

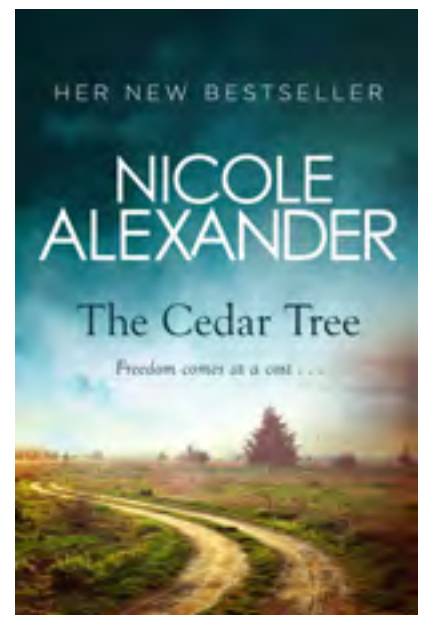
New authors are often surprised to learn they have little, if any, say about their book's cover. Writers can also be reluctant to push back on design concepts, not wanting to affect the relationship with their publisher. They also know that other forces — such as sales and marketing expertise — are at work. Speaking up can become easier, though, with more publishing experience.

Moree author Nicole Alexander has written 10 historical fiction novels, starting with *The Bark Cutters* in 2010. 'The first time I sat down with Random House and they showed me the cover for that book, I was like, "Oh, I wasn't expecting that",' recalls Alexander, who is also the judging panel chair for adult novels in this year's ARA Historical Novel Prize, Australia's richest genre-based literary award.

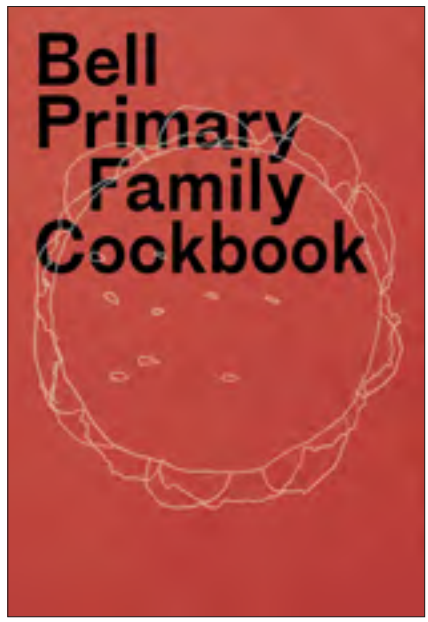
'It had a girl on the front with a cowboy hat on and a homestead in the background. I realised they'd bought straight into the popularity of *McLeod's Daughters* [a TV series that ended in 2009]. That was a really good example of how what's happening culturally or in the entertainment world can affect what's happening in other creative industries.'

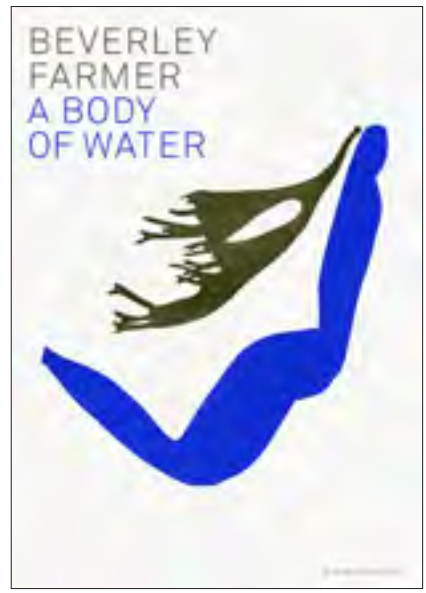
The covers of her two most recent books, *Stone Country* and *The Cedar Tree*, feature landscapes. This design evolution, Alexander says, more accurately reflects that her books are



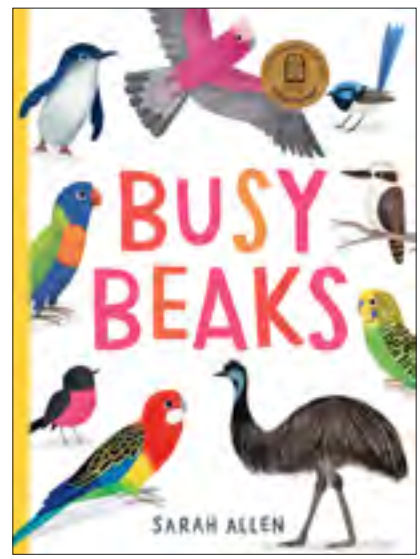


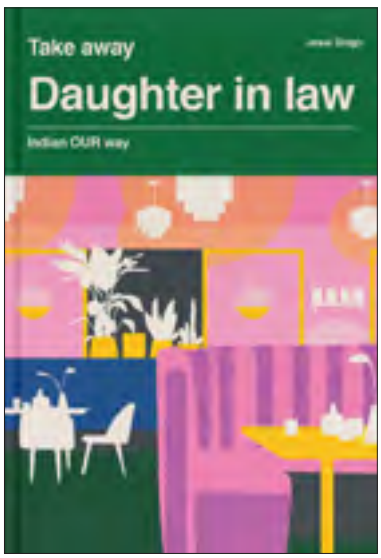

HER PERILOUS MANSION
SEAN WILLIAMS


Bell Primary Family Cookbook


BEVERLEY FARMER
A BODY OF WATER


CHANGE
starts with us


BUSY BEAKS
SARAH ALLEN


Take away
Daughter in law
Indian OUR way


LONER
GEORGINA YOUNG


COMIDA MEXICANA
SNACKS, TACOS, TORTAS, TAMALES & DESSERTS


ALL OUR SHIMMERING SKIES
TRENT DALTON


Plastic Free
The inspiring story of a global environmental movement and why it matters
Rebecca Prince-Ruiz & Joanna Atherfold Finn


THIS IS HOW IT ENDS NOT HOW IT ENDS
JEHAN CASINADER

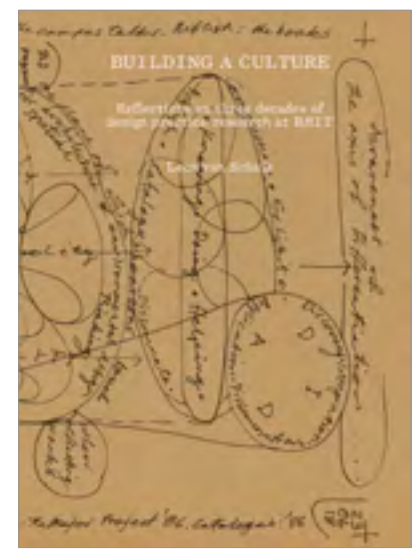

SIGNATURE
PAUL CARTER


WE ARE WOLVES
KATRINA NANNESTAD


Planet City
1 city
10,157,030,257 people
221,376 km² of building
1,412,514 neighbourhoods
121,307 km² of hydro electric canals
49,645,671,570 solar panels
932 zettabytes of data
2,357 algae farms
684,931,536 heads of lettuce
342,465,700 fish
42,877,520,340 fruit trees
7,047 languages spoken
2,555 cultural festivals and holidays
42,457 TV channels
0,396,867 dentists
148,200,920 km² of protected park
Liam Young
Ewan McEoin
Holly Jean Buck
Sandra Sasaki
Kim Stanley Robinson
Andrew Boland
Nato Hopkinson
Ryan Griffin
Georgos Kallis
Benjamin Bratton
Chris Dufton
Ariella Sanchez Velasco
Xia Jia
Ashley Dawson


IF WE WERE VILLAINS
M.L. RIO


conversations with artists
anni albers


BUILDING A CULTURE

about Australia's pastoral history rather than rural romance.

When Alexander was first published, she was 'just happy to be there and agreed with the experts'. These days, because her books involve so much painstaking research, her current publisher, Penguin Random House, 'always comes back to me to say, "What do you think?"' She tweaked the colours for *Stone Country*'s cover to better suit its Northern Territory setting and pointed out that *The Cedar Tree*'s initial design featured a tree that wasn't a cedar.

They say you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. Yet as Jay Lansdown, owner of the Constant Reader Bookshop (with two locations on Sydney's Lower North Shore), says: 'Everybody is actually judging a book by its cover. As a bookseller, it's really important for us to be able to get as much of our stock face-out so people are looking at covers rather than the spine. The reason you want to do that is because books sell on their covers — without a doubt.'

One book doing just that, says Lansdown, is *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse* — a whimsical advice book that came about after English artist Charlie Mackesy posted a moving illustration on Instagram. 'That's one of those books we have on the counter,' Lansdown says of the surprise international bestseller.

A book might also feature different covers as it changes formats or countries. One cover change that puzzled Lansdown, for instance, was for Charlotte Wood's 2015 novel, *The Natural Way of Things*, published by Allen & Unwin. 'The original design with the wattle was incredible and everyone loves it,' he says. 'Then it came out in the smaller format with a lady with a shaved head [and endorsements down each side] and it was like, 'What did you do that for?"'

HarperCollins ANZ creative director Mark Campbell can help answer that. 'You go for the biggest market possible the first time it goes out,' he says. 'You might do a very literary cover and, if the book does well there and you think it has a chance to do better in a chain store, you sometimes bring it out in a second format and you change the cover. That's because they're trying to get different readers for each edition of the book.'

After all, the window for grabbing a reader's attention is tiny, says Campbell, who runs the HarperCollins Design Studio, which assigns work to both inhouse and freelance book designers. 'You've got three to five seconds to grab people so you want them to understand what kind of story they're going to get. But, as I always say, "Don't give them too much". There are some genres [such as romance and crime] where the books all look the same and then some like literary fiction where you want to look really different. Literary fiction always ties itself closely to whatever the current graphic design trend is. They can be as avant-garde as you want them to be.'

A new challenge that's come along for book designers is the 'cover reveal' trend on Instagram. Because the book cover is a rectangle within a square viewed on a phone, says Australian Book Designers Association (ABDA) president Hannah Janzen, 'the standard book cover is now also judged on how it's viewed as a postage stamp-sized tile'. Books are often also seen for the first time as a tiny cover in online stores such as Amazon, she says.

'This means we have an even smaller amount of time as a designer to grab the viewer's attention,' says Janzen. 'Often this is done through a lens of bright colours and bold typefaces, which help a book pop at a minute size.' When traditional book launches and author speaking events were cancelled during last year's lockdown, she says, new books were almost solely viewed as tiny images on websites. 'I had a number of cover briefs change during lockdown due to things like the chosen Pantone colour or embellishment was difficult to clearly convey digitally and something else was chosen to better suit the online market.'

Certainly, bright colours reigned at this year's ABDA Book Design Awards, where Darren Holt's intricate design for Trent Dalton's *All Our Shimmering Skies* was named both Best Designed Commercial Fiction Cover and Designers' Choice Cover of the Year. 'Of course there are colour trends,' says Campbell. 'The publisher of [Dalton's] *Boy Swallows Universe*, Catherine Milne, who is our head of fiction at HarperCollins, has published a lot of books in the last year or so that are pink and orange and purple. I say to her, 'Oh, we're getting into your colour palette now!' She's drawn to it.

Rick Morton's *My Year of Living Vulnerably* is pink and orange, and Nikki Gemmell's *The Ripping Tree* is pink and red and purple. We were trying to work out why she's drawn to those colours. It's a lovely, warm, happy colour palette and maybe after the last year of everything that's happened around the world, it's just a pleasing colour palette to look at and it makes you feel happy.'

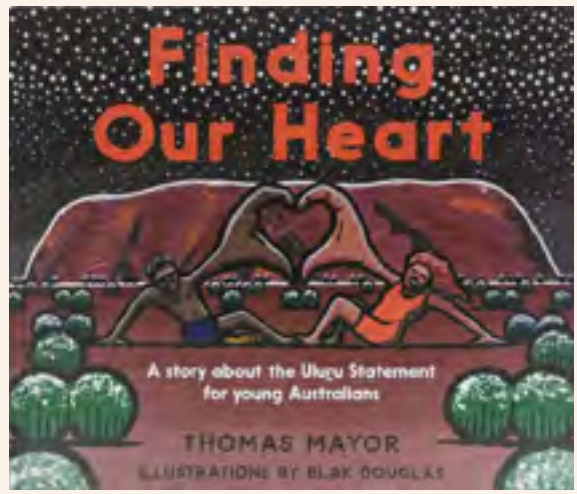
Janzen also wonders if the pandemic inspired 'a trend of surrealism as a reaction' to the times we find ourselves in. 'We've seen many covers with deconstructed shapes, jarring angles and cubism playing with the ideas of space and reality, such as *The Mother Fault* designed by Sandy Cull,' she says.

'We have also seen a trend of titles with interruptions, where beautiful typographic titles are interrupted, obscured or hiding part of the title to create suspense such as [Mark Mordue's Nick Cave biography] *Boy on Fire*, designed by Hazel Lam, and *Lindy Lee*, designed by Claire Orrell. There's also an increase of rough sketches and handwritten text, pixel art, blurry images or text, collage-style (specifically a lot of bodies without heads or heads without bodies) and a good dose of millennial pink.'

Campbell took out an ABDA design award in 2020 with his cover for Felicity McLean's *The Van Apfel Girls Are Gone*, which included tendrils of hair draped over the embossed title letters. 'I painted those hairs in [on the computer],' he says. 'I sampled three different colours because blonde is a difficult hair colour and it looked really realistic. There's a mystery in that book and it's slightly creepy so having the hair over the letters like that made it feel a little more uneasy.'

Ultimately, Janzen says, 'we want the book to have a conversation with you and call to you from the shelf ... The goal is to get you to pick up the book.' Campbell puts it this way: 'I love what a book cover does between readers and authors and designers — it's like a whole kind of secret society. I just think that's really special.'

Katrina Lobley is a Sydney-based freelance writer.



The Australian Book Design Awards celebrate the bravest and brightest, the most original and beautiful books published each year.

During the two-stage judging process, ABDA president Hannah Janzen says entries are initially assessed as they are seen online, with up to 10 photographs showing the cover, internal spreads and finishes (such as the holographic foil that featured on the cover of Julia Baird's book *Phosphorescence*). 'Designers are obsessed with finishes,' says HarperCollins creative director Mark Campbell.

Janzen says: 'In a world of Instagram and online sales, this is how many books are most commonly viewed and purchased by modern readers. It means books have to stand the test of the "small web tile" as well as the beautiful-in-person test. Long-listed books are reviewed in person so each book can be held and the art of a well-chosen paper stock and subtle embellishment may be appreciated.'

The ABDA awards also raise the profile of short- and long-listed books, something authors such as Thomas Mayor appreciate. The Torres Strait Islander's children's non-fiction illustrated book *Finding Our Heart*, which explains the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart in simple terms, was short-listed in the 2021 awards. 'Anything that gives books like mine exposure — because it's actually about a campaign and something we can do to change the nation — is always a wonderful thing,' says Darwin-based Mayor. The judges noted that it was 'an original and important book', with both the design and content echoing its title. As more than one judge commented: 'It has heart.'

A regional perspective

In these days when we're all staying close to home, we invited farmers and photographers in Hay, Wagga Wagga, Wilcannia, the Macleay Valley, Finley and the Riverina to share their perspectives of life on the land. Here is a selection of images that brings out some of the patterns, the light and the open spaces of rural and regional New South Wales.

Above: Cotton harvest in the Murrumbidgee shire near Carrathool, May 2021

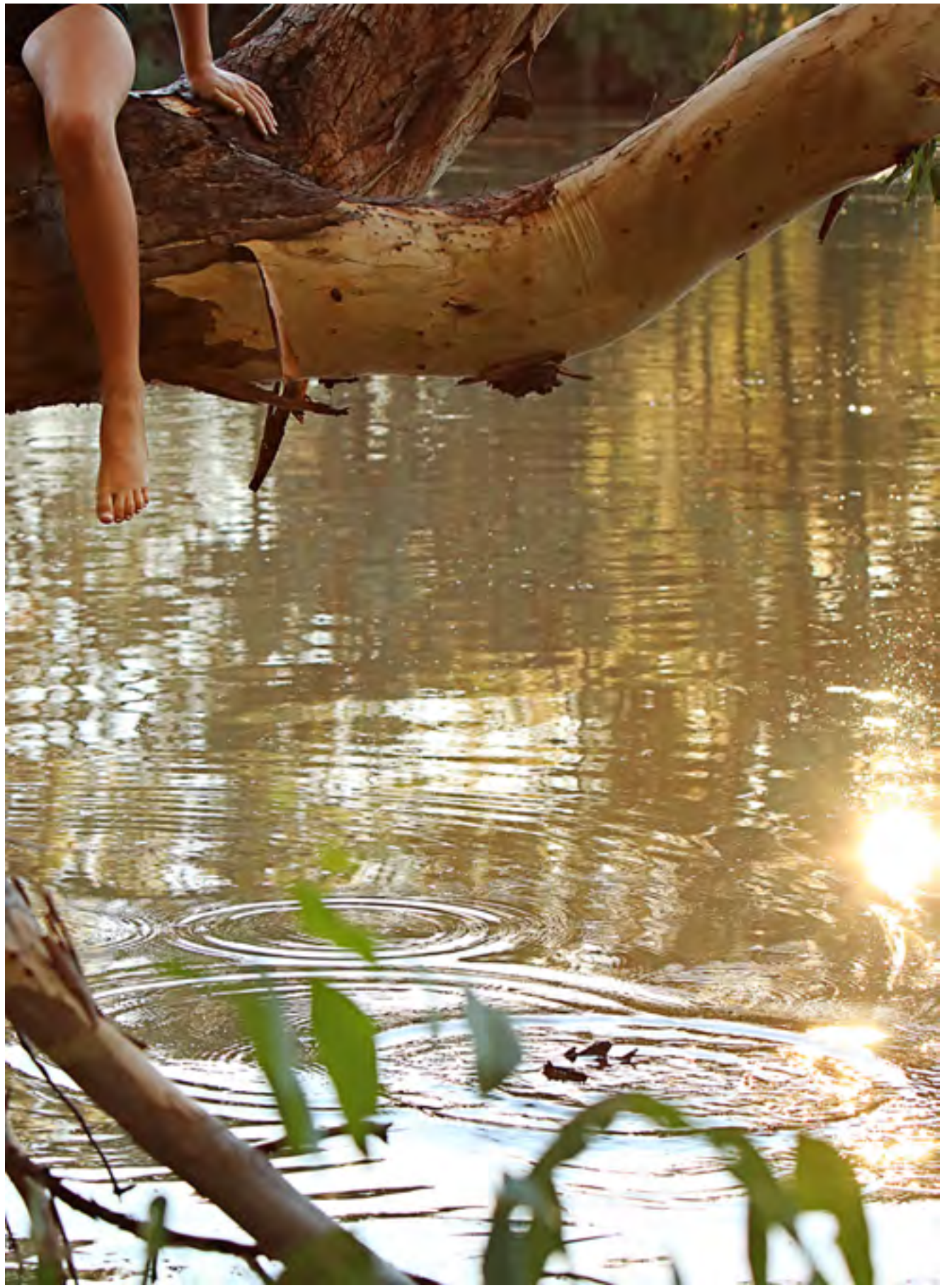
Opposite: Taken early on a winter's morning just after the fog had lifted. These ewes had been brought in off the plains for drafting at lamb marking time.

Photos by James Harrison @shotbyharro

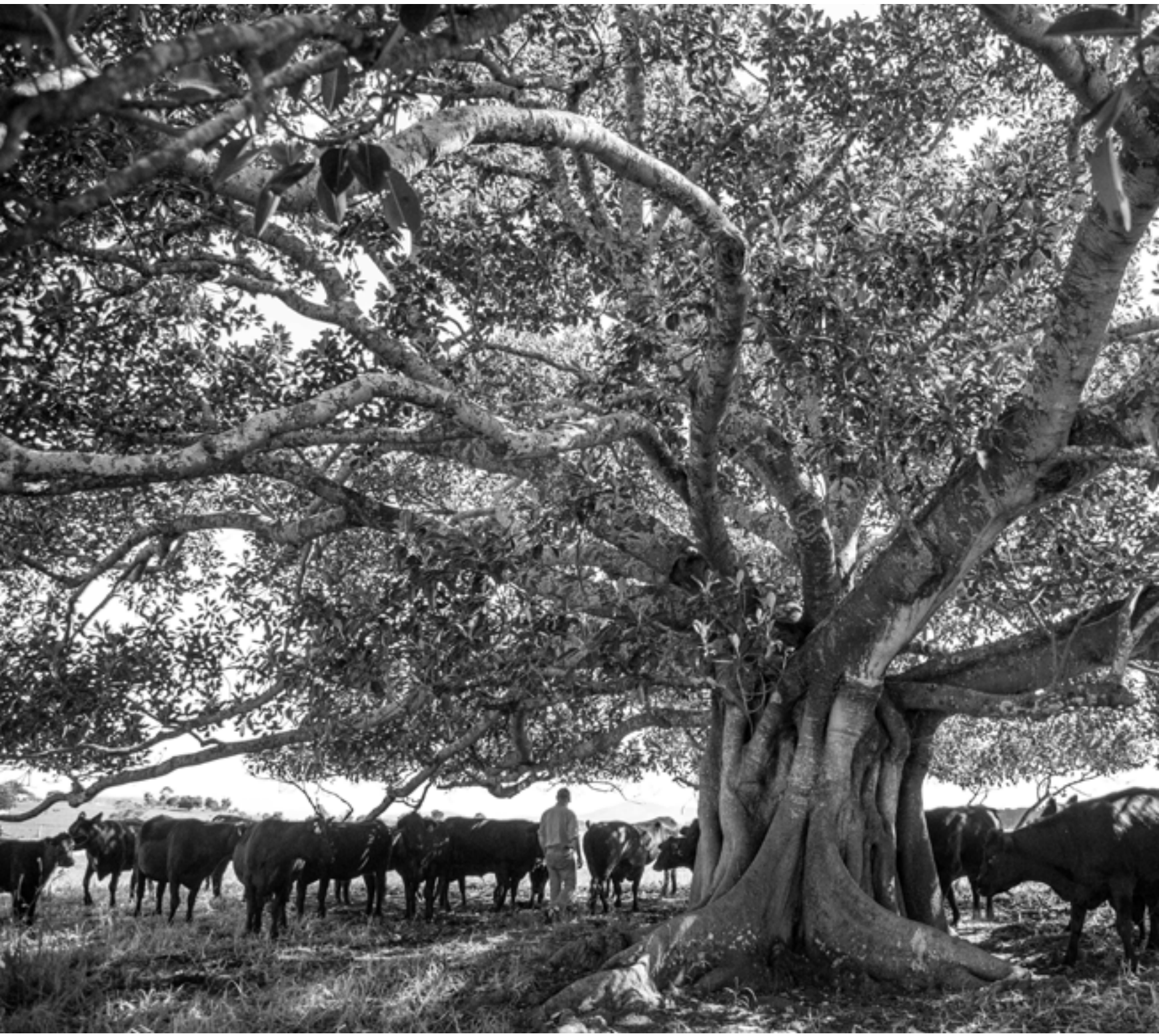
Sunrise with my girl Daisy, on the Murrumbidgee River, photo by Caroline Cattle @carolinecattle

Living on the Murrumbidgee River has an uncanny calming effect for me. We have previously seen the river flood causing destructive circumstances to our home but we have anchored and fought past that memory. We wouldn't want to raise our family anywhere else.

— Caroline Cattle



Big River, photo by Caroline Cattle @carolinecattle



The Clarkes have been in the Kempsey region since the late 1800s. Beef producer Ron Clarke is pictured with some of his family's stock, beneath a beautiful old fig tree on their property in the Macleay Valley. Photo by Ruby Canning @mavstarphotography

Farmers share precious bonds with their stock, photo by Ruby Canning @mavstarphotography

Playing hide and seek in the cotton marshmallows, Finley, southern Riverina, photo by Philly Robertson @farmerphilly

Large cotton bales weigh around 2100kg and can produce over 38,000 pairs of socks, photo by Philly Robertson @farmerphilly

I grew up in Geelong, married a corn and cotton farmer, and followed my heart to the tidy town of Finley, southern Riverina, which has a population of 1921 ... plus 1.

— Philly Robertson

An outback proposal: Ben proposed to me after weeks of mustering last summer. He pretended there was wire stuck underneath the ute on the way home, crawled underneath it, and yelled 'Don't worry, I found it!' He then presented me with a ring, and a big, cheeky smile. I was so shocked I fell onto my knees next to him! Photo by Sarah Groat, Wilcannia @crozier.pastoral

Yeah the boys! They are beautiful rams — you can give them a scratch when you are walking them to water, they are so quiet!
Photo by Sarah Groat, Wilcannia @crozier.pastoral

My girls and their pals on Oura Hill in the sunshine.
Photo by Caroline Cattle Wagga Wagga @carolinecattle

A perfect end to a scorching summer's day. A swim in the dam to cool off, sausage sandwiches for dinner and an awesome sunset for entertainment.

— Beth Liddicoat

Photo by Beth Liddicoat, Riverina @raggiebell

Illustrations by Rosie Handley

WORDS Sulari Gentill

The company of rats

The ratcatchers' ship had come in. Years ago. It brought prosperity to all the ratters in Sydney, though no one could be sure exactly which vessel had borne the stricken rodents to the new Commonwealth. A medieval death slipped ashore, crept into the shadows and dispersed. The world went to war and limped home, the Spanish Flu killed millions, but the bubonic threat lingered, lurking and persistent.

Every few years a new ship docking in the harbour city would refresh the contagion, begin a new outbreak and remind the good citizens of Sydney that the ratcatchers were all that stood between them and disaster.

The wharves, warehouses and factories were baited and hunted with the help of the public purse — a price on every tail and incinerators to deal with the spoils. In the inner city the ratters with their billy cans and dogs became a familiar sight. Once in a while, they would be called to one of the grand houses of Woollahra. On those occasions, the ratcatchers would conduct their business discreetly.

When Mary Brown, his housekeeper, mentioned that the ratters would be coming to Woodlands House, Wilfred Sinclair did not question the need. He'd lived with rats in the trenches, seen them devouring the last dignity of fallen men. While Wilfred was not generally given to romantic notions, rats were clearly creatures of the Devil and he was content to return them to their master.

Apparently, Mary had learned that Rosemont across the road was overrun. 'And poor Mrs Carrington-Onslow widowed only this past August,' she said, shaking her head at what some were asked to bear. Even so, the housekeeper was adamant that the ratter would find nothing in Woodlands. Rosemont's misfortune was surely due to the paucity of staff in its employ.

'Mrs Carrington-Onslow makes do with only a girl to cook and clean and a man to tend the garden.' Mary sighed, an expression of compassion which betrayed a hint of self-satisfaction. Woodlands employed a dozen maids, cooks and gardeners. It was well defended against any uninvited guest. But Mary was a god-fearing woman who knew that pride goeth before a fall, and so she declared she would hear the ratcatcher out.

'Thank you, Mary. I'm sure you have it all in hand.' Wilfred took his bowler from the stand in the vestibule, pausing before the mirror to set it straight on his head. The rakish angle he'd favoured since returning would not do for the next week. Indeed, he'd informed the fellows that he would not be attending any parties or like entertainments. Not while he had charge of the enfant terrible.

His youngest brother, Rowland, was, according their father, a delinquent, intent on ruining the good name of Sinclair. Wilfred was inclined to believe that Henry Sinclair's assessment was a little unreasonable, but perhaps the boy had run wild since his brothers had gone to war. Whatever the case, a decent fraternal example would not hurt. It would, after all, only be a week before Rowland went home to the family property near Yass for the summer.

Wilfred stepped out when he heard the Rolls Royce Silver Ghost turn into the long driveway. He smiled faintly, imagining Rowland's reaction when the new motorcar had collected him from the station. Wilfred planned to phase out all his father's horse-drawn carriages, to modernise. At the very least, transforming the livery stables would assist with any potential rat problem.

Rowland climbed out without waiting for the chauffeur to open the door. Wilfred braced himself. His youngest brother was, at 14, tall for his age, and looked out at the world with the dark blue eyes that seemed common to all the Sinclair men. Otherwise, he bore little resemblance to Wilfred but he was fast becoming the image of Aubrey Sinclair, who had been born in the years between them and had fallen in France. Wilfred was unsure if Rowland was aware of the fact that he was a living ghost of their late brother, a visual reminder of what was lost.

He tried not to have his thoughts stray to Aubrey every time he looked at Rowland, but it was a conscious effort.

Rowland ran up the stairs two at a time, loosening his King's School tie as he did so. 'Hello Wil.'

Wilfred shook his hand. 'Rowly! You look well. What say you about the new motor?'

'She's smashing!' Rowland returned his gaze to the Silver Ghost. 'Why don't we take her out ourselves. I could drive —'

'Steady on, Sport. We have a chauffeur and you don't know how to drive!'

'How hard could it be —'

Wilfred inhaled. God, it was like talking to Aubrey again. 'I expect you're hungry,' he said firmly. 'I was always famished when I was your age ...'

***

Franklin Rupert Oldfield might have been any man of means and enterprise. The creases in his suit were sharp, freshly pressed. A gold fob chain and gleaming pocket watch adorned his waistcoat and he wore spats over the polished patent of his shoes. It was only the dogs — fox terriers of varying pedigree — that gave any indication of his business. Even so, Wilfred Sinclair would normally have left any conversation with the man to the housekeeper — it was certainly not his custom to deal directly with tradesmen — but for the fact that Rowland was already patting the dogs and talking to the urchin who had arrived with the ratter.

He made a mental note to speak to his brother about overfamiliarity, and, because there seemed no other way to extract the boy politely, he introduced himself.

Oldfield was well spoken, though he formed his words slowly with cautious enunciation, in what Wilfred suspected was an attempt to sound refined. Still, one couldn't fault the man for speaking the King's English.

The ratter's boy was thin — nearly as tall as Rowland but there was barely any breadth to him. He wore no coat and in the sunlight the bruises and welts on his back were visible through the threadbare cloth of his shirt. Even so, he smiled broadly, clearly delighted by Rowland's admiration of his dogs.

Wilfred informed Oldfield that his housekeeper had seen no evidence of rats at Woodlands.

'Of course not, sir. They're devious creatures. Infiltrators ... By the time you know they're there, it's too late — they have the house!' The ratter inclined his head. 'If I might demonstrate?'

'I don't know that that's necessary —'

But Oldfield had already signalled. The boy whistled. A terrier bolted for the kitchen door and scurried inside the house. Screams as the staff were startled by the intrusion.

'Now look here!' Wilfred began angrily.

The screams grew louder, more shocked, and the terrier ran out with a live rat squirming in its mouth. The boy whistled the dog back and put the rat in a large billy can.

For a moment no one said anything — the only sound was the distressed exclamation of the maids and the hollow scratching of the rat in the tin.

'Very well,' Wilfred said finally. 'You better talk to Miss Brown about checking the house.'

Oldfield nodded. 'I reckon you'll find it a prudent investment, sir.'

Wilfred glanced at the boy with the billy can. He was skin and bone. 'If you call in at the kitchen before you begin, Mary will give you breakfast.'

Oldfield's smile was strained. 'Thank you, sir.'

***

'The rat is trained,' Rowland said quietly.

'What?' Wilfred murmured as he contemplated the billiard table. Rowland was proving surprisingly competent with a cue.

'The rat Hector put in the billy. It's trained.'

Wilfred reached for the chalk. 'Hector? Oh, you mean the ratter's boy. Really, Rowly, you cannot befriend —'

'I saw him feed the rat.'

'You don't have to train an animal to eat, Sport.'

'Hector was talking to it ... I think its name is Vernon.'

Wilfred looked sharply at his brother. The ratters had spent half the morning surveying the house, methodically tapping on walls, checking for droppings and so forth. He'd been busy dealing with some business for the King and Empire Alliance, but Rowland had seemed fascinated by the machinations of trapping rats and spent the day following them around Woodlands House.

'The rat's trained, Wil. They brought it with them.'

'For pity's sake Rowly — why the Dickens didn't you tell me? The devil only knows what they've managed to pilfer already!'

Rowland hesitated. 'Did you see ... I didn't want Oldfield to take it out on Hector.' He frowned. 'Mary was keeping an eye on them and the silverware, in any case. I suspect they're only after a fee for ridding Woodlands of imaginary rats.'

Wilfred cursed. He would not be played for a fool and he did not like looking one in front of his brother. 'Well, we'll see about that.'

Rowland put down his cue and leaned back on the table. 'He wouldn't let Hector eat anything ... even what Mary gave them for breakfast. Something about

Hector getting too fat to fit into the walls — the old bastard —'

'Language!' Wilfred warned. He sighed. The ratter's boy had been very thin. 'Look, Rowly, Oldfield is his father. There's not a lot we can do.'

'We could —'

'The law does not interfere with how a man deals with his sons ... or allow anyone else to do so. Short of shooting Oldfield there is nothing we can do.'

'But —'

Wilfred pressed his brother's shoulder. Rowland was the youngest by many years. He expected their mother had mollycoddled him somewhat. It was not surprising that he was a little soft. Thank God the war had come and gone before Rowland was old enough to serve. If he'd survived, it would have broken him anyway. 'The ratters will be back tomorrow,' Wilfred said resolutely. 'I'll have a word with Oldfield. Perhaps the prospect of arrest for fraud, might have some effect.'

Rowland said nothing. Wilfred tried to cheer him up. 'I expect you're looking forward to getting home to Oaklea. No doubt Mother and Father will be glad to see you.'

Rowland was non-committal.

Wilfred nudged him. 'I hear you've caught the eye of a certain Miss Jemima Roche.'

'Did Father —?' Rowland began clearly alarmed.

'No. I have my own sources. You forget I grew up in Yass.' He laughed. 'I expect Father is displeased.'

'Father is often displeased.'

With that Wilfred could not argue. Instead, he suggested they go into the city and see a show so that Rowland would have more about which to tell his sweetheart than trained rats.

***

Oldfield did not return to Woodlands. He might have done so if he had not perished across the road. Initially it was feared that the ratter had died of bubonic plague as did many in his profession, but after making a few discreet enquiries, Wilfred learned that a razor had done the job. Again, that was not particularly unusual — razors had become the weapon of choice among the criminal classes of late — but it was also not accidental.

'What about Hector?' Rowland gazed out of the drawing-room window towards Rosemont. 'Is he all right?'

Wilfred shook his head. 'The police didn't find him. They have collected Oldfield's animals. I expect someone will take the dogs ... I don't particularly like the rat's chances.'

'We could take the dogs ... and the rat — keep them for Hector.'

'Rowly, I'm not going to adopt half-a-dozen flea-bitten terriers — let alone a flaming rat!'

'Hector will need them,' Rowland persisted.

'For pity's sake, Rowly. You are at school with the sons of the best families — surely you don't need to become chums with the ratter's boy?'

Rowland stared at him wordlessly. Inwardly, Wilfred cursed. Aubrey used to do that.

'I doubt he'll be back, in any case,' he said wearily. 'The police suspect it was the boy who cut Oldfield's throat.'

Rowland started to say something, and then he stopped. 'Why?'

'I'd say it was obvious.' Wilfred sighed. 'Mrs Carrington-Onslow told the police that Oldfield was cruel to the boy, starved and beat him.'

'Can you ask about the dogs. Please. It took him years to train them ... he'll want them back.'

Wilfred groaned. 'I suppose it's not their fault that they belong to felons but honestly Rowly, what the devil are we supposed to do with half-a-dozen ratting dogs.'

'Hector will come back. He wouldn't abandon his dogs.'

***

If anyone of less impeccable reputation than Wilfred Sinclair, DSO, had requested the ratter's dogs, he might have not have been successful. The terriers were, after all, found at the scene of a murder. But since there was no suggestion that the hounds were involved in the murder, and Sinclair seemed to be acting out of concern for the animals' welfare, the Police Commissioner agreed to release the animals into his care, at least until some other claimant came forward. The rat had not been recovered.

Wilfred's custody of the dogs was, however, short-lived. The terriers had no sooner been released onto the lawns of Woodlands House, when they bolted, slipping through the iron bars of the entrance gates and across the road to Rosemont. Wilfred cursed, first at the dogs and then at Rowland, who had talked him into taking charge of the mongrels. Rowland sprinted after the terriers and, afraid that his brother would somehow make matters worse, Wilfred ran after him. By the time he caught up, the ratter's dogs had slipped through the gates of Rosemont and were scratching at its front door. Rowland jumped the fence before his brother could stop him. Wilfred had little choice but to follow.

On the besieged landing, Wilfred grabbed one dog by the scruff of the neck and shouted at Rowland to control the others, while he knocked on the door to apologise. The housekeeper opened it only a crack but that was enough for the terriers who pushed and wriggled through the space despite the servant's attempts to shut it again. Wilfred winced as they heard something crash and shatter inside. The housekeeper left the door to attend to the growing havoc, and Wilfred stepped in so that he and Rowland might help put things right.

The dog Wilfred had by the scruff now twisted out of his grasp and joined its packmates running headlong through the house. The housekeeper was frantic, and then Mrs Carrington-Onslow herself emerged. Wilfred offered apologies and barked at Rowland to grab the dogs, which considering their number, might have been an unreasonable demand. The terriers had converged upon a spot at the end of the hallway and were jumping towards the ceiling. Rowland stood in the midst of them, just staring up.

'Rowly, what are you doing?' Wilfred demanded convinced now there was something wrong with his brother.

Rowland pointed above him. 'There's something up there, Wil. The dogs can smell it.'

'I demand you gentlemen leave my house forthwith!' Despite her age and diminutive appearance Mrs. Carrington-Onslow had a large voice.

Wilfred grabbed a dog in each hand, clamping one under his arm so he could seize a third. He ordered Rowland to do likewise. But Rowland didn't move, standing with his head cocked towards the ceiling.

'Rowly!'

'I heard a whistle,' Rowland said. 'Hector's up there. He's whistling his dogs.'

The housekeeper paled and crossed herself. 'A whistle. He whistled? That's not possible. Madam ...'

'Dear Lord, he's alive,' Mrs Carrington-Onslow gasped. 'Freddie will kill him!'

Wilfred dropped his dogs. He had no idea what the women were talking about, but he decided he should have a look. 'How do I get up there?'

'There's a ladder in the kitchen,' the housekeeper said. 'Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear ...'

'I'll fetch it,' Rowland volunteered as the housekeeper disintegrated.

'Who's Freddie?' Wilfred asked as Rowland dashed off.

'My boy, poor dear Frederick.' Mrs Carrington-Onslow was barely audible.

'I thought he fell in France.'

'No, he left.' She whispered now, leaning close. 'He was always sensitive; he couldn't bear it.'

'And he's been hiding in your attic? All these years?'

'He's not well. Only I could calm him ... but now ...'

Rowland returned with the ladder and held it as Wilfred climbed up. Wilfred pushed the manhole cover away and hoisted himself through. The attic space was dim but not dark, small curtained dormer windows letting in just enough light. The stench was almost physical in its force. He saw the ratter's boy first, lying beneath one of the windows. His forehead was bloody and he seemed only partially conscious, turning his head from side to side and whistling in delirium. Wilfred called down to the housekeeper to send for a doctor and find some brandy.

And then he saw the Fredrick Carrington-Onslow, whom he had known before the war, but who was much changed. Although he could not have been more than 30, Carrington-Onslow's hair was white as was the unshaved stubble on his face. His ankles were shackled and chained to the iron frame of the bed on which he sat. He rocked in place, shivering, and when he doubled over coughing, Wilfred glimpsed the egg-sized lumps on his neck.

Wilfred could hear Mrs Carrington-Onslow sobbing below. He cursed. What the hell had gone on here?

Wilfred stood slowly and sidled towards the ratter's boy. Carrington-Onslow screamed, pulling the chain taut as he lunged for Wilfred.

'Freddie, it's Wilfred Sinclair. Calm down, old chap. I just want to get this boy to a doctor.'

Carrington-Onslow squatted on the spot and waited, trembling uncontrollably, his breathing laboured. Wilfred pulled out a handkerchief and held it over his nose and mouth.

Rowland came through the manhole. He glanced at Carrington-Onslow before he turned to Wilfred and Hector. 'Is he alive?'

'It seems they both are,' Wilfred said. 'Cover your face, Rowly, and go back down. I fear Freddie may have plague.'

Rowland covered his face but he didn't retreat, instead climbing into the attic and to his brother's side.

'Let's hope that Mrs Carrington-Onslow and the housekeeper don't take away the ladder and trap us up here,' Wilfred said exasperated that Rowland had not thought of that distinct possibility.

'They won't,' Rowland replied confidently. 'They were just trying to save Freddie. I think he must have killed Mr. Oldfield,' he whispered. 'They thought he'd killed Hector too. And so, they left Hector's body up here so that they could blame him for his father's murder.' He helped Wilfred pull Hector onto his feet between them. 'They didn't know he was still alive.'

Wilfred shook his head as he regarded the broken, sick man chained like a dog a few feet away. A deserter and a murderer and quite possibly a madman.
Had the war done this — or was it the shame, and guilt that followed, the life in hiding and disease?
Or just the company of rats.

Voices from below now rose above the unabated barking of the ratter's dogs.

Wilfred exhaled. Help had arrived, finally.
He shouted down a warning that Carrington-Onslow had the plague before he and Rowland lowered Hector down.

Freddie Carrington-Onslow sat by the bed, inconsolable now. 'Vernon ...' he sobbed.
'Where are you, Vernon?'

Sulari Gentill is an Australian author, best known for the Rowland Sinclair Mysteries. Her standalone postmodern novel *Crossing The Lines* won the 2018 Ned Kelly Award for Best Crime Novel, and *The Woman in the Library*, a new thriller, will be released in May 2022.

Sulari Gentill will appear at the BAD Sydney Crime Writers Festival (2–5 December) badsydney.com

WORDS Tanya Bretherton

The CRIME FILES

A true crime writer shows how she uses the archives to reveal histories that rarely come to light.

When Scottish migrant Sarah Boyd was arrested for murder in 1923, Sydney detectives were surprised by how cooperative she was. When asked about her missing baby daughter, the small, frail woman answered, 'I want to tell the truth'.

Although police had been confident they could get Sarah to talk during an interrogation, they didn't anticipate how easy it would be to get to the truth. 'I put a handkerchief in its mouth and I shoved it tightly,' she blurted out as they were loading her into the back of a police car. 'I tied its ankles together with another piece of string but by that time it was dead.' The detective sergeant responsible for Sarah's capture described her confession as chilling.

I stumbled across a newspaper article about this high-profile infanticide case about five years ago when I was researching the history of child protection in New South Wales. I learned that Sarah Boyd was 28 years old and living in a boarding house with her three-year-old son, Jimmie, when she gave birth to her second child, a baby girl. She had only been in Sydney for a few months. Shortly after the birth, Sarah killed the newborn and hid the body in a suitcase, which she threw into the deep waters of Circular Quay. The suitcase, and its grim contents, washed up on a Mosman beach a few days later.

Several aspects of the story intrigued me. Sydney Harbour is a beautiful place — much loved by locals and tourists. I had a hard time imagining it as the scene of such a grisly event. And Sarah, as a mother who murdered her own child, had done something utterly unimaginable. I had to know why.

I didn't set out to write a true crime story. By trade, I'm a sociologist rather than a criminologist. I am interested in people, and in the way institutions shape lives. In pursuing Sarah's biography, I was driven by one question — what could have happened in this woman's life to bring her to this point?

As a first step, I travelled to the State Archives at Kingswood in western Sydney to see if I could locate any court

Sarah Boyd, 1923, NSW Police Forensic Photography Archive, Justice and Police Museum, Sydney Living Museums

or police documents relating to Sarah's prosecution. There I found the transcripts associated with her criminal trial in the Supreme Court of NSW, the record of the Coroner's inquest into her child's murder, and the entry records for her period of imprisonment at the State Reformatory for Women at Long Bay.

Court transcripts and police depositions can be cold, clinical documents, heavy with legal jargon. They can also be rich sources of information about victims and perpetrators, and the social and economic context in which people lived.

In her interview with police, Sarah talked about her everyday life in simple yet vivid terms. As a migrant woman who left Scotland for the Antipodes in search of a better life, what she found here was misery. Unmarried, pregnant and unemployed, she struggled to survive in a country vastly different from her own. Witnesses at the trial confirmed this bleak picture of Sarah's life just before her second child was born. She could barely afford to care for her son, Jimmie, whom she loved dearly. She had so little money she borrowed clothing, even underwear.

Criminal trial transcripts detail the police investigative process undertaken by police, as well as the crime itself. A young, ambitious police officer, Constable Wright Sherringham, described the steps he took to find Sarah, and the evidence he collected along the way. A ticket from the Model Laundry Company in the city had been found wrapped up in the material that held the murdered child's body. As the company kept

Part of Mosman Bay and Bolivia Bridge (where the suitcase was discovered), c 1920, Ted Hood

meticulous records, including customer addresses, the ticket led police to Sarah.

I was looking for a fuller picture of Sarah's life that would take me beyond the awful details of the crime. Using digitised census records from Scotland, New Zealand and Australia, I traced Sarah's roots to Paisley in Scotland in the 1800s. Then I used census information, newspaper articles, church and baptism records and criminal court transcripts to examine the social, cultural and economic milieu of Paisley at the time.

Sarah was born in a grim house in a grim street in a grim town. She was raised by a widowed father in a tiny, overcrowded home with many siblings. The Boyds, and all their neighbours, worked in the same textile mill. The conditions there were poor, the pay low, and the hours long. Many local people died of brown lung disease, a bronchial illness caused by inhaling dust and fibre fragments at the factory. The Boyds were already living an economically precarious existence. Then Sarah got pregnant.

Sarah was an ordinary woman, struggling to make ends meet. If she had kept a memoir or a diary, no one would have considered it important enough to be retained. So we don't have the luxury of what might be called heirloom history in the form of private letters or estate papers. We can't know exactly what Sarah was thinking. But small fragments of her life remain, scattered across a range of administrative and official documents in the archives.

Birth, deaths and marriage records and parish registers confirm that Sarah was not married. Her pregnancy would have brought great stigma and shame to the family. With no social welfare and without her family's support, her situation would have been bleak indeed.

I began scanning migration records to see what I could learn about Sarah's journey to New South Wales. Steamship passenger lists carry important pieces of biographical information, including a traveller's full name, age, marital status and occupation. They also record ports of arrival and departure. Incoming passenger records allowed me to follow Sarah's perilous journey from Scotland to Wellington in New Zealand in 1920 and then to Sydney in 1923. When a measles outbreak during her passage took many lives, Sarah was lucky to survive. I also learned that she worked as a tailoress, and that she had falsely represented her status as married.

Darlinghurst Courthouse, 1870, where Sarah's trial took place, photo by Charles Percy Pickering

We can't know exactly what Sarah was thinking. But small fragments of her life remain, scattered across a range of administrative and official documents.

The extensive records on child protection in New South Wales — including the 'boarding out' or foster system and the many orphanages — helped form an important backdrop for this story. It was only when I gleaned the circumstances of child removal in this era that I began to grasp the immense disgrace that came with having a child out of wedlock. The state was quick to deem a parent 'morally unfit' if they were single and/or unwed. Even the act of surrendering a child to an orphanage attracted great stigma for both parent and child.

Words can be used to tell Sarah's story, but so too can photographs. Sarah was born in 1895, so it was likely that few — if any — photographs would have been taken of her before her imprisonment. Only three images of Sarah can be found — her gaol entry photographs. In them, she is tiny (only five feet tall) and appears even smaller with her shoulders slumped in defeat. There is undeniable sadness and loss in her eyes.

My 18 months of research into Sarah's story culminated in 2018 with the publication of *The Suitcase Baby*. I've since written three more books of historical true crime, each telling a story from a different era of Sydney's history. My books always begin with a crime but unfold as deeply personal stories.

For each case, I study the social and economic context. I examine the family history of both perpetrator and victim. I try to understand what happened just before the terrible event, and take some measure of its aftermath. It's the depth of the material in the archives that makes it possible to explore simultaneously the individual biography and the crime.

Writing true crime has been an opportunity to share women's history in a different way. As tragic as Sarah Boyd's story is, it gives us many insights into the economic challenges and vulnerabilities that many women faced at the turn of the twentieth century.

Dr Tanya Bretherton is the author of *The Suitcase Baby*, *The Suicide Bride*, *The Killing Streets* (winner of the 2020 Danger Prize) and *The Poison Wife*, all published by Hachette.

WORDS **Bernadette Brennan**

Romance and reality

A biographer faces withdrawal symptoms as she leaves behind an immense archive.

I've been thinking about addiction. Partly because I have spent the past three years researching and writing a biography of the Australian novelist Gillian Mears, a self-described addict; partly because I feel an acute sense of loss in emerging from Mears' expansive archive.

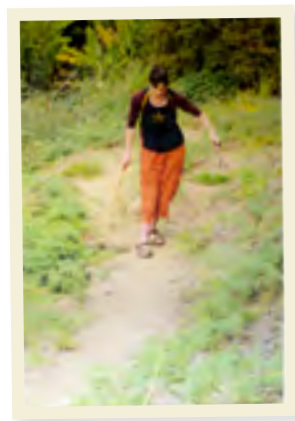
Working in an archive can be an immersive and addictive experience. In a 1994 lecture, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida spoke about what he termed 'archive fever', a 'compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive'. I know the grip of such fever.

I first experienced the joy of sustained archival research while working in Helen Garner's embargoed archives in the National Library of Australia. On completing *A Writing Life: Helen Garner and her Work* (2017), I began casting around for another project. Just one more time, I told myself, one more stint in the archive of a female Australian author.

I considered Gillian Mears to be one of the most interesting and important Australian writers of the last 40 years. Born in 1964, she was of the generation that came after Garner, Kate Grenville and Beverley Farmer, all of whom she counted as mentors and friends. Over 30 years, Mears published three award-winning novels, nearly 200 stories, poetry, feature journalism and a children's book. She is perhaps best known for her 2011 novel *Foal's Bread*, a powerful and tragic story of love, ambition and loss which won the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Fiction in 2012. In May 2016, after living for decades with the increasingly debilitating effects of multiple sclerosis, Mears chose to end her life.

As a writer and person, Mears grappled with country-town dynamics and the opportunities afforded to girls, environmental degradation, migrant belonging, white privilege, power and gender relationships, fluid sexual identity and living with a grave disability. When a friend mentioned that Mears had made scrapbooks and deposited them in the Mitchell Library, I was hooked — and later amazed. Mears' archive turned out to be one of the largest collections of literary papers in the Library's holdings. After careful negotiations with the archivists, I met Mears' immediate family and began the process of obtaining the necessary permissions to dive in.

For much of 2018 and 2019, I arrived at the Mitchell each morning, just prior to the bronze doors swinging open. I came to recognise the regulars who, once inside the reading room, quickly settled into work at their preferred desks. Alongside them, waves of HSC students prepared for looming exams. In the special collections area older couples researching family history came and went, elderly gentlemen made enquiries about the Library's historic parish documents and a smattering of academics like myself appeared to be in for the long haul. I relished the sense



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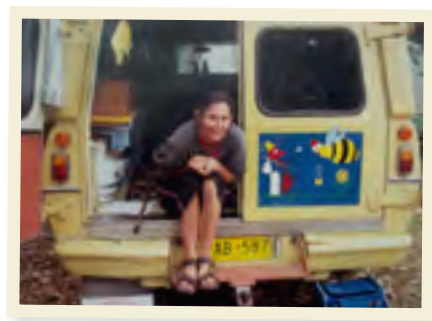


Photographs from Gillian Mears' albums in the Library collection, c 1978–2015, including her time in 'Ant and Bee' and Venezuela

of community and common purpose. To a large extent though, once my nominated archival box was retrieved, weighed and handed over, all else faded.

In the archive, real time and place dissolve. Time becomes the time of the archive, which is necessarily time past. Mears recorded her risky and adventurous life in meticulous, and sometimes chaotic, detail. To read through her papers was to journey through her tumultuous love affairs, travel escapades, extraordinary literary successes, personal and professional crises, debilitating illness and dance with death. Hours passed while I witnessed her fight a near fatal case of endocarditis, travel solo around the country in a reconditioned 1970s ambulance, and undergo shamanic cleansing rituals in the Venezuelan Andes.

While the archive houses the past, it always has an eye to the future. Aware that she was amassing material for posterity, Mears strove to shape and control the narrative that she was certain would be told of her life. On the one hand, she considered her note-keeping to be a secretive impulse related to her addictive personality and thought no one would ever understand her multi-layered hidden depths. On the other, she poured her most intimate thoughts, sexual fantasies, daily news and literary ruminations into her diaries, and took calculated steps to ensure that one day they would become very public.

Over the years, Mears returned to and emended the diaries before sending them off to the Library. Those later comments were invaluable for understanding the trajectory of her self-awareness.

Being immersed in someone else's life begins to colour your perception. You see echoes everywhere. Your thoughts and dreams are no longer quarantined.

More surprising was a note I came across from 1997. As she made a case for depositing what was the second tranche of her papers in the Mitchell, Mears explicitly addressed her imagined biographer:

> something in me views the historical record as very important, even if it is only a record of a barely successful writer's health in the late 20th C or her life in a small town. A sentence or 2 that makes her laugh or that brings him closer to a feeling of enlightenment. (Although I have to say, whenever I do think fleetingly of a reader of this of the future, I always imagine a young woman, with time on her hands obviously and a shy manner.) Sometimes I think I know her. Perhaps she will be me again, reborn, and still searching for the answers I hope to find in my writing.
>
> Anyway, whoever you are, hello, I acknowledge you may exist when I am dead and that you'd prefer I wrote in my mother's hand, which is so large and flowing and easy to read.

Conscious that I was being played, I became even more intrigued. Mears' direct and repeated overtures to her biographer, which continued throughout the years, complicated and enriched the sense of intimacy and connection to the subject that a biographer inevitably develops in the archive.

Journalist Janet Malcolm, who critiqued the ethics of biography while spending her professional life dedicated to it, compared the biographer to a 'professional burglar, breaking into a house, rifling through certain drawers that he has reason to think contain jewellery and money, and triumphantly bearing his loot away'. It is true that there are those jaw-dropping moments of discovery, instantly recognisable for their worth. Some of them will make their way into print, others the biographer will judge to be best left undisturbed.

There are also moments of sheer delight: for example, Mears' remembrance of approaching Patrick White in Centennial Park to autograph her copy of *The Vivisector*. 'You hold the dogs then,' he grumbled, and the 17-year-old 'held his pugs on a type of long rope as if sailing them like kites'. Elsewhere Mears described Helen Garner, who attended a UTS seminar delivered by Raymond Carver, as 'a small woman who eats cherries with efficiency and grace'.

Compulsively shy, Mears delighted in cultivating 'paper friends'. She was a prolific correspondent with a wide range of people, including many of Australia's best-known writers, artists and photographers. Her archive contains thousands of letters, including extensive correspondence with Garner, Gerald Murnane and Elizabeth Jolley; letters that reveal much about subjects beyond the particular archive.

In her essay 'A House of One's Own', Malcolm suggests that when we are reading letters 'we understand the impulse to write biographies, we feel the intoxication the biographer feels in working with primary sources, the rapture of firsthand encounters with another's lived experience'. It was fascinating to discover that Mears, who often used letters as a form of flirtation, crafted them over multiple drafts. She seemed always to have an eye to the historical record. Periodically, she sent stamped, self-addressed envelopes to her sisters and select others asking that her letters be returned at the end of each year.

In 1995, when Mears made her first substantial deposit of letters to the Library, she tried to convince herself that she was doing so for tax relief as well as for the sake of her current relationship:

> I don't believe old love letters have a place in our present. I don't believe it is a good idea for them to lie around in filing cabinets, waiting for readers' eyes who shouldn't see them. I prefer the thought of them in the State Library archives where one day I will visit, perhaps when I am in my 40s or 50s, 60s or 70s and marvel and marvel and read properly all the words that people who were once also young wrote to me.

For some correspondents the sense of betrayal was devastating. On discovering what she had done they insisted she place caveats on their letters being accessed without their permission. Mears did so and the caveats still stand. In his 2019 story collection *Womerah Lane: Lives and Landscapes* the artist Tom Carment writes that reading his letters to Mears in the Library after her death 'felt strange and slightly uncomfortable'. For me, being a similar age to Mears and reading the letters when she could not, the experience was poignant, sometimes riveting and eventually, given their sheer volume, exhausting.

A writer's archive invariably leads to other archives. These letters led me to the Library's holding of Elizabeth Jolley's letters, to Leigh Summers' archive and to Janet Hawley's papers in the National Library. Mears' one-time lover, writer Alan Close, gave me nearly six kilograms of their correspondence, which will soon

The sculptural entrance to Marr Grounds' house Narra Bukulla (Yuin language for Black Stump)

be added to the Library's collection. The composition of the archive continues to grow.

Of course, it was not all romance. On a physical level, the long days I spent in uncomfortable chairs pouring over documents led to significant back, neck and eye strain. Also, an archive which extends to 27 metres of material held in 154 boxes —and includes, in addition to the thousands of letters, emails and text messages, manuscript drafts, newspaper articles and reviews, notebooks, hundreds of diaries, nearly 6000 photographs and over 4000 negatives, 30 hours of sound recordings, 200 drawings and paintings, pressed flowers, school reports and a weight of torn cardboard and scraps of paper covered with Mears' writing — felt, more than once, overwhelming.

Indeed there came a point, after some difficult weeks pouring through extensive diary entries detailing Mears' emotional pain and psychological darkness, when I sought escape. It is not only time and place that seem to dissolve in the archive, but also the essential barrier between researcher and subject. Being immersed in someone else's life begins to colour your perception. You see echoes everywhere. Your thoughts and dreams are no longer quarantined. Perhaps in keeping with the spirit of excess that I was encountering, I abandoned the archive to spend a week swimming in pools around the coast of Iceland.

One of the great joys of researching a biography is that the archive sends the biographer out to meet people they might not otherwise encounter. During 2020, while the Library was closed, I wrote from home and travelled, when permitted, up and down the coast of New South Wales and across into Queensland meeting Mears' family, friends, peers, therapists and lovers.

I spent a memorable day at Marr Grounds' property, Narra Bukulla, in the Mimosa National Park, wandering with his daughter Marina among stunning sculptures and regenerated bush and swimming in the icy water of Bithry Inlet just as Mears had done. In Nimbin, I joined the djembe drumming group, a Mears favourite. In Grafton her father, Peter, took me on a tour of the significant sites of her life there. It was Grafton Show Day and at the showground Mears' sister Yvonne was guiding young riders in their first dressage appearance on Mears' treasured horse, Koru. The next day, her younger sister, Sonya, took me to Diggers Camp, the site of so much of Mears' joyous adolescent life and adult passion. It was the first of many visits to Grafton and the north coast of New South Wales.

For years, Mears misinterpreted her father's maxim that 'time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted' as meaning that one should value remembrance and give careful consideration to one's past. She wrote about the misinterpretation in her letters, diaries, essays and fiction, smiling wryly at herself because there was nothing she treasured more than dwelling in the past, always with fondness and regret. She amassed the material that would become her archive as an affirmation of the importance of her past and a defence, perhaps even a plea, against being forgotten.

My first full sweep of the archive, which took more than a year, gave me enough notes for a four-volume biography. Throughout 2020, with Covid-19's enforced isolation, I slashed and shaped the material. *Leaping into Waterfalls: The Enigmatic Gillian Mears* is published this month. Meanwhile, as I write this essay during Sydney's extended lockdown, I find myself once again scouring the Library's manuscript catalogue, my archive fever unabated.

Bernadette Brennan is the author of the award-winning *A Writing Life: Helen Garner and Her Work*, and the newly published *Leaping into Waterfalls: The Enigmatic Gillian Mears*. She is the recipient of the Copyright Agency's inaugural Fellowship for Non-Fiction Writing.

Photo: @leetranlam

WORDS **Bri Lee**

Hungry for change

A writer's efforts to promote diversity in food writing have been driving change.

Most people have a rather romantic image in their minds of a 'food writer'. It's probably even more glamorous than the cafe-hopping, pen-twirling poet or novelist, because it's all that plus dinner and drinks. And, like modern art, lots of people think 'I could do that too'.

The day I spoke to Lee Tran Lam she had 'a restaurant story' due that night that needed to be rewritten because of the latest lockdowns, seven podcast episodes of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being Hungry* to edit and upload, 'a bunch' of Q&As for the Diversity in Food Media website to finalise, her Sunday night FBI radio show *Local Fidelity* to plan, and some 'pay-the-bills' style copywriting that needed attention.

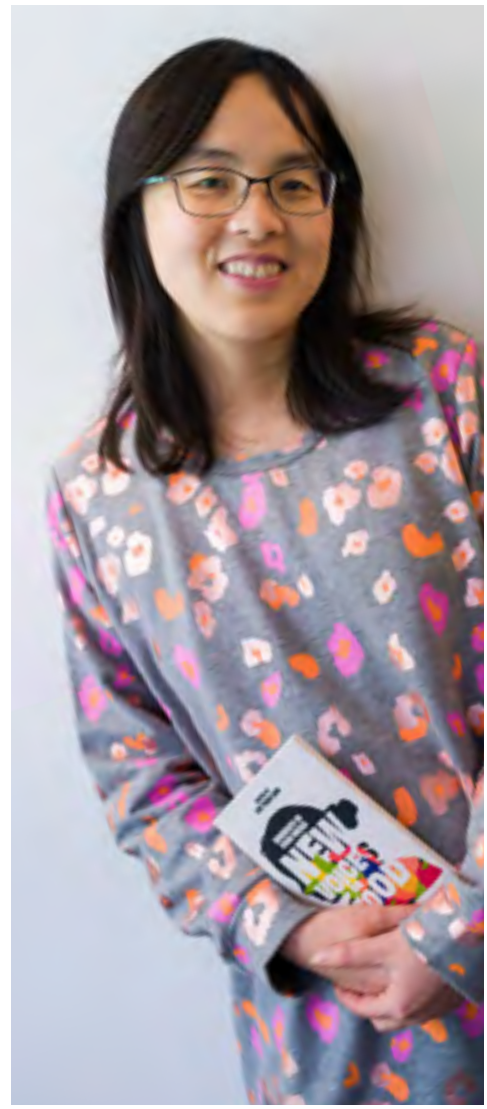
Her most regular bylines these days are with *SBS Food* and the *Sun Herald*; having worked on *InsideOut* magazine and the *Good Food* website while building her portfolio for more than a decade, she's now a freelancer. Her Instagram account @leetranlam is a solid-gold resource for food news and dinner ideas, and a good portion of her working life is spent elevating the voices and cuisines of the displaced and underrepresented. In other words: no, not many people could 'do it too'.

Lee Tran grew up eating at Vietnamese restaurants in Cabramatta with her migrant parents. She remembers ordering broken rice and bánh xèo ('Vietnamese crepes'), and being served her grandmother's scrambled eggs with bitter melon, without 'really appreciating' any of it. 'There are tourism campaigns around Cabramatta about how it's such a culinary destination,' she says, 'but when I grew up there, I was embarrassed there wasn't a McDonald's. I thought there was no proper food.'

When she interviewed chef Arthur Tong recently, he spoke about the 'cultural void' that comes from 'rejecting all this knowledge, rejecting your culture'. It's something a lot of people with migrant parents have gone through, he told her: 'As a much older person, I think, "Oh my god, I completely appreciated the wrong thing".'

Like many Australian writers (myself included) Lee Tran got her first-ever byline in *Voiceworks*, a literary journal for writers under 25. It was back in 1996, with her short story 'Without Appetite'. 'I did a degree in print media,' she explains to me with a laugh when I ask her about her career progression, 'which is pretty funny because no one would offer a degree in print media now.'

Another foundational component of her ongoing ethos was her beginning in zines — small handmade magazines



Lee Tran Lam, photo by Will Reichelt



Photos: @leetranlam

— at the age of 16. 'I think that really has influenced a lot of what I do,' she says. 'Because anyone can do it. If you can use a photocopier, you can make a zine.'

The word I would use for Lee Tran's approach to her profession is 'accessible' or maybe even 'democratic'. It's something she thinks about a lot: who is 'allowed' to write at all, let alone about food. 'I only ended up in food media because I ran a food blog for eight years before I got a "proper job", thinking I would never get a job in food media because I wasn't someone who, you know ... I'm vegetarian. I'm not a massive drinker. I didn't grow up with parents who had a wine cellar.'

Perhaps the image most people have of 'food writer' is so bourgeois precisely because many food writers are unrepresentatively bourgeois. 'I think anyone can write about anything as long as they have respect and cultural context and understanding,' she says. 'But so many people who cover food just have really similar lives. They're often white, often from really privileged backgrounds. The way they spend money is not necessarily representative of how other people may spend money.'

The homogeneity of food writers both makes and reinforces outdated ideas about the culture and business of food. 'For a long time, food media was about "What is a good restaurant? It has a good wine list. It has white tablecloths and a chef who trained in Europe." But there are so many restaurants that don't reflect that. And if you think about how people eat out, they don't all want to go to an expensive restaurant run by a French-trained chef.'

An even broader problem is the chicken-and-egg of who gets to write about food and what foods are therefore valued. Lee Tran says a 2018 article on the ABC website by Colin Ho and Nicholas Jordan — 'Australians love Asian food, so why doesn't it win as many awards as Italian?' — is 'probably the most important piece of food writing in Australia in the past 10 years'. Ho and Jordan used statistics from *Gourmet Traveller*, *Good Food Guide* and *Time Out* to show the overrepresentation of white chefs and European cuisines in chef-of-the-year awards and 'hats' given to restaurants. 'But when you change the criteria from best eats to cheap eats,' they write, 'Asian cuisines dominate.' As Lee Tran points out, 'Asian food is only appreciated if it's cheap. And then you kind of end up in this box where Asian food can never be anything more than cheap.'

There's a sense of absurdity, too, when the owners of traditional food media platforms insist their system is a meritocracy. As Lee Tran argues, it only limits their potential. 'The thing is, Australia's food scene is so multicultural,' she says. 'I just think it's richer for everyone, no matter what your background. Imagine having a dining vocabulary that includes koshari, which is Egypt's national dish, and it's so delicious: spiced tomato sauce and fried lentils, rice, fried onions. So yum. And then knowing about kottu roti from Sri Lanka where the strips of egg are almost like noodles in a stir fry. And, you know, your life is better if it's got za'atar in it, if it's got furikake in it, it's just so much more enriching and delicious.'

Sometimes she still gets 'the vibe' that institutions are doing diversity out of a sense of obligation rather than a genuine belief that it makes for better content. But she also sees some cause for optimism. Change is happening, albeit slowly.

She gives the example of the latest *Good Food Guide* announcing readers could expect different kinds of restaurants in this year's publication. 'To better reflect our dining landscape,' the statement reads, 'we have altered our scoring system to cover a wider range of eating experiences. We're interested in places that are the best examples we can find of their dining style ... Expect more cuisine styles and new, diverse voices. Expect a shift in the way we have always done things. We want to showcase restaurants that

represent who we are as a dining population. We believe this shift is a strong step in the right direction.'

Lee Tran and I also have a good chat about an article by Yvonne C Lam in February's *Gourmet Traveller* explaining why 'the power and privilege behind problematic restaurant names' was damaging to the industry and culture. The story got some predictable backlash, but I remember reading it the morning it was published, and feeling thrilled that such a traditional masthead was finally willing to 'go there'. It would seem things have changed since that 2018 article by Ho and Jordan, and Lee Tran has been a catalysing agent for progress.

I first came to know of her work only last November, just as her book *New Voices on Food* was about to come out. That anthology of emerging and mostly unpublished writers grew out of her brainstorming about how she could make a difference to her industry in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter movement re-invigorating conversations about racism and representation in the Australian media.

'That just started so many conversations about who gets heard, about diversity, representation, inclusion,' she says. 'And I remember feeling a little powerless because I thought, well, I'm just a freelancer. I'm not an editor who has a budget who can commission people. So what can I do? That's when I started the Instagram account, Diversity in Food Media, where I profile people from underrepresented backgrounds.'

Some editors complain about 'not knowing anyone' to commission who isn't white, so Lee Tran set out to remove that excuse by putting together a database of excellent talent in food writing. Then she had a conversation with the people at Somekind Press, a crowdfunded and community-based micropublisher founded in 2020 to help keep Australian hospitality venues alive and creatives busy during the pandemic. 'I asked them, would you be interested in publishing an anthology of 10 or so contributors from underrepresented backgrounds on food, and they were so keen.'

That was in July 2020; they announced the book in September, and then there was 'a really wild time' for Lee Tran of being 'up till 3 am every day going through everything', replying to people and making sure everyone's work was respected. 'Sometimes it's good to have never done something before,' she says with hindsight and a smile. 'Because if you knew how much time it would take you'd just be so overwhelmed.'

Despite the surplus of talent to sort through, the book came out in December, and Lee Tran also worked with Farah Celjo from *SBS Food* to get another 10 or so of the submitted pieces published there. 'It was all about trying to create new avenues and trying to give people more opportunities.' In May 2021 Sydney Writers' Festival and Casula Powerhouse presented 'New Voices on Food', a panel with Lee Tran; Sweatshop member and co-owner of Southern Soul Sydney Tyree Barnette; *The Lebanese Plate* food blogger and 'Spread Hummus Not Hate' activist Lina Jebeile; and Minyungbal woman and strategist for the First Nations company Currie Country Arabella Douglas.

Lee Tran is hearing from writers who've been commissioned by editors who have spotted them in the book or on the Diversity in Food Media database. In other words: the plan is working. 'So many people submitted to *New Voices* because it wasn't about your CV, wasn't about whether you'd done anything before. Wasn't about whether you were "qualified".' When people wanted to know what she was looking for she asked them, 'What is something only you can write?' Once a zine-maker, always a zine-maker, it seems. 'With so many things, it's just about thinking you're allowed, right?'

In this sense, she feels she is part of a group of people — formerly outsiders — moving up through the world and ranks of food media. Hetty McKinnon, for example, 'who started out by selling her food on her bicycle, which she would deliver to people in Surry Hills. And then she got asked to do her *Community* cookbook, which she self-published. And some publishers had turned her down because they thought her book would be too narrow, right? That it wouldn't have resonance for all of Australia outside of Surry Hills. And then look at how she's turned out. *Community* has sold more than 100,000 copies.'

Lee Tran also mentions Helen Yee, who started one of the first food blogs, *Grab Your Fork*. 'Isn't it interesting,' she says, 'that we're all women of colour, who kind of just ended up in food media through non-traditional means?'

These stories, these people, their zines and podcasts, their small businesses and Instagram accounts, are often more compelling because they're genuine. 'No one is telling you, "You need to hit this demographic" or "You have to mention these buzzwords". You're doing it because you're exploring your own voice. And those things I find more powerful than something that's been like carefully market-researched by senior management.'

An industry has to keep growing and changing if it wants to make the most of the talent and flavour the country has to offer. Fortunately for our hearts and minds and mouths, Lee Tran Lam shows no sign of slowing down.

Bri Lee's latest book is *Who Gets to Be Smart*. She hosts the monthly B List book club at the State Library of NSW.

WORDS Georgina Reid

Coming home

A life, as much as a gathering of words, is a story of places. It begins and ends with soil beneath feet, water within heart.

Let me tell you about a place where I began again. Where I will always be beginning.

Here. Dyarubbin, the Hawkesbury River, traditional land of the Darug people. Upriver from Brooklyn, where the water is wide and quiet. A place of mud, mangroves and green-brown-black water; of sandstone cliffs and sea eagles arcing across shining skies.

Here is a place I didn't know I needed to be.

Long ago I was told by a tarot reader with white-blonde hair and purple eyeshadow, in the storeroom of a vintage clothing shop on Enmore Road, that I would move north to a place of trees and water. I didn't take much notice. Water was never something I thought I needed. She also told me, in-between informing impatient customers of the price of that leopard-print jumpsuit, that I would meet a man from another hemisphere, with daughters. My face, as usual, gave me away. 'Maybe not daughters then, maybe female dogs', she qualified swiftly. But no, daughters. And yes, water.

I grew up on a farm in central west New South Wales. A place gridded with notions of production — fences in straight lines, wheat and sheep (mostly) complying. Trees as punctuation marks, not paragraphs. This landscape, layered with stories as thick and complex as its rich, dark red-brown topsoil, is the bedrock of my being. I always imagined I'd return.

Between the farm and the river, between the headwaters and the estuary, I lived in the city. In a pretty place by the sea, an attic in a rambling old terrace, and a house with a wild peach tree in the courtyard. Fifteen years, and all that time I longed for soil, not concrete, under my feet. For hills, not tall buildings, tethering the horizon. For plant-life, not human-life, pushing up against me.

In the city I met a man — the man from the north with two daughters. I settled into love. It, too, was a return of sorts. We moved to the river, after years of searching for soil that could grow a home. We happened upon this place by chance. A lucky meeting, a casual invitation, a confluence of needs.

'If you're looking for a challenge, there's an abandoned house two doors down,' our soon-to-be neighbour mentioned. We were visiting for lunch, having been introduced by their son, who told us about this settlement, about river life.

It seems we were looking for a challenge. Reaching the house from the path along the riverbank was adventure enough. Thirty years of neglect equals forest-in-front-yard. We pushed our way through the wilderness. The house was unlocked, and we crept inside. Tiny, dark, curious. Half-finished bathroom complete with pink spa. 1990s kitchen with striped sky-blue benchtops. Wonky aluminium windows minus architraves. Paint-splattered timber floorboards and a rusted-out wood stove in the kitchen. Old timber windows with shattered glass panes opening out to the river. Broken bed frames, bookshelves heaving with romance novels, dust as thick as topsoil.

The bones were there, despite the mess. A 1950s river shack set gently in the landscape. A boatshed down on the riverbank, embraced by she-oaks. A wilderness of weeds.

We spoke on the phone with the owners. They agreed to sell.

Georgina Reid, 2020 © photo by Daniel Shipp

The most dilapidated house on the most sinuous river sent my dreams of rolling hills and farmland downstream with the tide. We were on our way home to a life I had never imagined, an idea and a place that had never once floated through my mind as even a vague possibility. This life pinned to the edge of the river is not even obvious in hindsight. I am still surprised.

It is like we were pulled here. By the tide, the mangroves, the place itself.

We *were* pulled here. And now we work. Because to be the custodian of a place — whether a few metres or many — is a great privilege and responsibility. We're fixing up the house and we're removing the weeds and I'm gardening. And gardening and gardening. Not to make something new, but to make space for what is already here. The place, the plants, the stories.

It is in the garden next to the river that I come to understand a little of what it means to be here. And it is this: there is no such thing as an ending. Just endless beginnings, endless becomings.

The river and the soil, they will teach you this.

Georgina Reid is the editor and publisher of *Wonderground* print journal and *The Planthunter* online magazine: theplanthunter.com.au

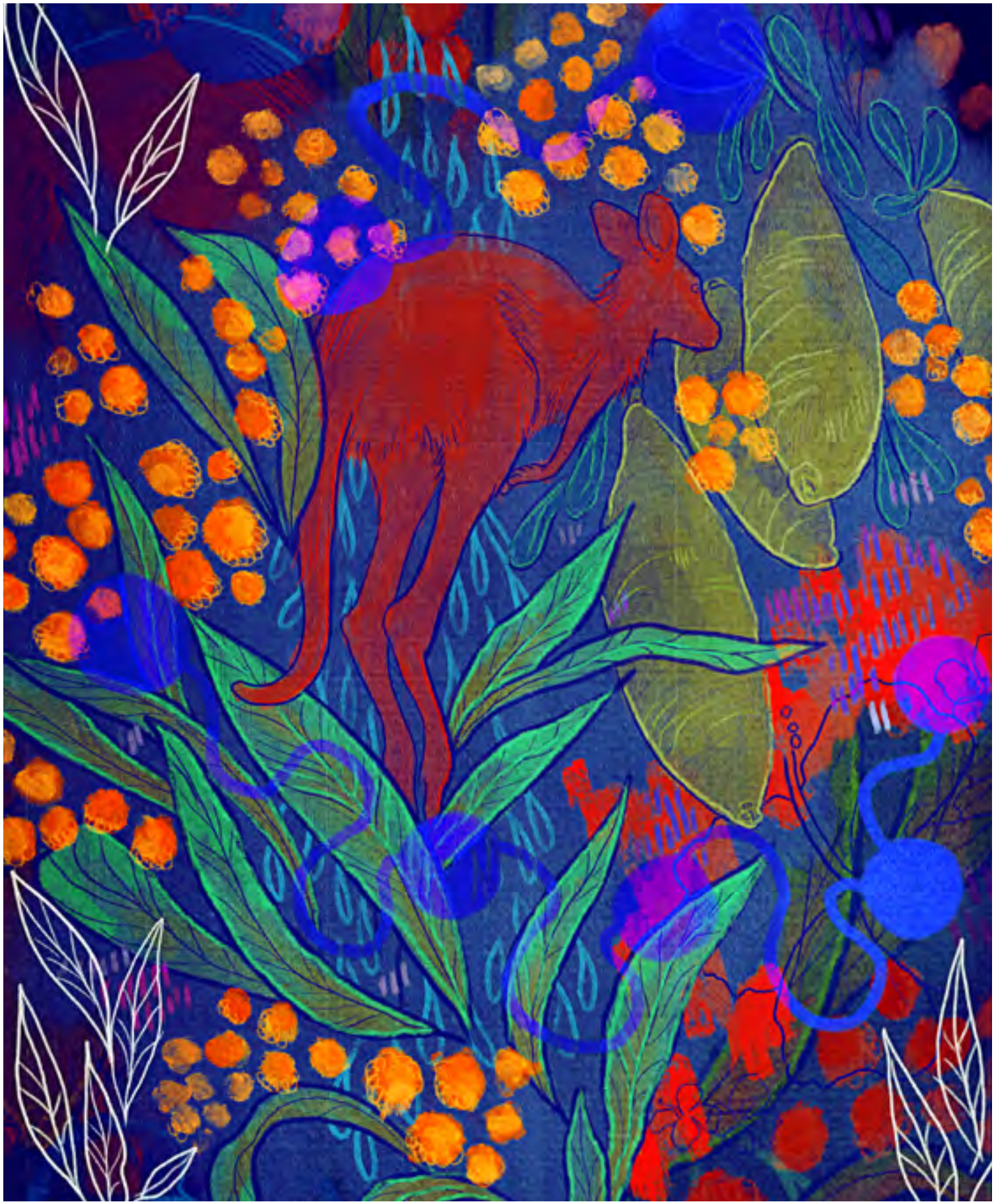
Six seasons

in my homelands, this starts with the wattle
flowering.
we know this time for the cold winds moving
leaves.
kangaroos are well-fed and warm
finger limes fruiting.
hibiscus is in flower
macadamia nuts are ripe and ready for
eating.
each season is a time for change.
this I want to know watching
learning.
feel light on golden flowers
stay to collect roots.
cool whipping winds will eventually ease.
a new season will start with warmer
weather.
silky oak in bloom, another
flowering.

Ellen van Neerven

Ellen van Neerven is an award-winning author, editor and educator of Mununjali (Yugambeh language group). Their latest poetry collection *Throat* won Book of the Year, the Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry and the Multicultural NSW Award in the 2021 Premier's Literary Awards.

Charlotte Allingham (Wiradjuri and Ngiyampaa) is a graphic artist and illustrator.



WORDS **Russell McGregor**

Paradise Parrots (male), 1848, by HC Richter, from John Gould's *The Birds of Australia*

A fleeting RETURN

Beauty and rarity were irresistible in the search for the Paradise Parrot one hundred years ago, as they are for birders today.

Alec Chisholm (right) with Professor Sydney Skertchly in Queensland, c 1920, State Library of NSW

It was hot and dusty on Manar Park Station in south-east Queensland on 1 November 1922. Grazier Cyril Jerrard and his guest, the birdwatcher and journalist Alec Chisholm, were searching the parched grasslands for an extremely rare bird they knew lived there. The previous day, they'd trudged for miles across the desiccated landscape without success. Now, collecting firewood to boil the billy at lunchtime, Alec got lucky. Hearing an unfamiliar call, he looked up into a tall eucalypt and found what they were looking for.

It was a female Paradise Parrot. 'There was no mistaking the slim, graceful form,' Alec enthused in a 1924 article on seeking rare parrots. 'A moment later I gasped with delight, "Oh, you little beauty!" For there was the male Parrot, the gorgeous red of his underparts gleaming in the midday sun.'

As the name suggests, the Paradise Parrot is an exquisite bird. The scientific name given by nineteenth-century ornithologist John Gould is even more glowing: *Psephotus pulcherrimus*, which roughly translates as 'multicoloured and superlatively beautiful'. For birdwatchers like Cyril and Alec, the combination of beauty and rarity was irresistible, as it still is for birders today. But the fascination with the Paradise Parrot in 1922 went deeper: only the year before, the species had been resurrected from extinction.

The Paradise Parrot population had plummeted in the late nineteenth century, and no sightings had been reported since the turn of the twentieth, so in the 1910s several ornithologists pronounced it probably extinct. Alec demurred, and in 1918 launched an appeal for sightings through Queensland newspapers.

Most responses led to disappointment. One of the more promising leads came from a bushman living between Bundaberg and Gladstone, who reported that the parrots lived nearby and a neighbour had one in a cage. Following this up in April 1920, Alec and a friend travelled 400 kilometres by rail, walked another 16 kilometres along rough tracks, then rowed across a mangrove-lined creek in a leaky boat while sandflies savaged every inch of skin they had left bare. Eventually, they reached the caged bird, only to find it was a common Red-winged Parrot.

After four years of false leads and mistaken identifications, Alec finally had positive news. On 11 December 1921, Cyril Jerrard told him he had seen a pair of Paradise Parrots on his property near Gayndah. Four days later, he reported seeing them again, this time accompanied by five or six others that appeared to be their offspring.

If such an avian rediscovery occurred today, Gayndah would be instantly flooded with thousands of twitchers, birdwatchers, ornithologists and onlookers. But things moved more sedately a hundred years ago, and the parrot's rediscovery was not made public until July 1922. Alec (who initiated the publicity) took 10 months to visit the site, and he was the only birder who did so. Presumably, it was thought best to leave things in the hands of the man on the spot, Jerrard, who was known to be a keen and competent naturalist.

When Alec did visit Gayndah, it was for only two days, and by the standards of today's birders he was very meagrely equipped. His kit comprised no more

First ever photograph of a Paradise Parrot, a male at the entrance to his nest, 1922, by Cyril Jerrard, National Library of Australia

than a pair of field glasses and a notebook. Of course, he also brought a wealth of skill and experience in finding and identifying birds by both call and appearance: those requisites of birding have endured through all the changes of technique and technology since.

A birder today, in the situation in which Alec found himself on 1 November 1922, would inevitably take hundreds of photographs through a telephoto lens. Alec took none. He was an accomplished bird photographer, but the cameras of the day were cumbersome contraptions unsuited for photographing flighty birds in the field. Bird photography then almost always entailed finding a nest, where birds could be expected to sit still for more than a moment.

That was the case for the Paradise Parrot. It was Jerrard who took the photos, and doing so demanded determination and ingenuity. After finding the parrots' nesting tunnel in a termite mound, in March 1922 he constructed a hide about two metres away using rough-cut stakes and old hessian bags. There he squatted uncomfortably, waiting for the birds to alight. In language that might now seem quaint, he recounted taking the first ever photographs of wild Paradise Parrots:

> It was a hot afternoon and my place of confinement was small and ill-ventilated, and in consequence, it was not long before I was 'larding the lean ground' (like Falstaff) with moisture from my person. Ere an hour had passed, however, there came a magic sound that banished all sensations of discomfort and made me hastily draw the shutter of my camera and grasp the release, while simultaneously I peered through the interstices of my shelter.
>
> ... It was one of the supreme moments of my life. I pressed the release, and at the slight click he [the male Paradise Parrot] hopped back on to the fence. But he was not really alarmed, and I had barely time to change the plate before he was back on the mound. I waited. The female had now come into view on the fence. The male approached the nest hole, just where I wished him to pose, uttered a sweet inviting chirp to his mate and peered into the hole. In answer, as it seemed, to her lord's reassuring word, the female alighted on the summit of the mound. Oh kind Fortune! I 'fired' again, both birds posing for just the instant required. I felt sure I had them clear and sharp, and so it proved when the plate was developed.

We don't know how many photos Jerrard managed to take, but over about a month he seems to have secured no more than half a dozen clear images. And he was a skilled photographer.

In Jerrard's narratives of his Paradise Parrot encounters, the thrill of the chase and parallels with hunting are palpable. They remain so among birdwatchers today, but back then a good deal of birding involved hunting in more than a metaphorical sense. Birders commonly carried guns and collected specimens: that is, they shot birds, skinned them and stashed away the preserved skins in cabinets. They also watched and admired living birds, as birders do today. But with rudimentary optical equipment, clumsy cameras and unwieldy guidebooks, having a bird in the hand was often the only way of guaranteeing correct identification.

Fortunately for the Paradise Parrots of Gayndah, Cyril and Alec had forsaken the gun for more modern modes of birding with binoculars and camera. So had many of their birding colleagues, especially those of the younger generation. Birding was undergoing a fundamental transformation, moving away from specimen collecting toward a pastime more like that practised today. It was not a painless transformation, and in the 1920s amateur collecting was the subject of increasingly heated controversy. Among its leading opponents was Alec Chisholm.

Befitting the new style, the rediscovered Paradise Parrots were not transmuted into skins. But their prospects were not bright. The pair on Cyril's property laid a clutch of five eggs in 1922 but none hatched. He never found a nesting success. Over the course of the 1920s, he and his neighbours sporadically saw pairs of Paradise Parrots and, once, a flock of nine feeding in a millet field. But they were last seen in the Gayndah district in August 1929, and by the middle of the next decade Cyril and Alec were publicly expressing concern about whether the birds survived.

The spectre of extinction haunted Australian birding in the 1920s, as it does a hundred years later. Ornithologists worried that annihilation was, or soon would be, the fate not only of the Paradise but also of a dozen other parrots plus many more bird species. They had a fair idea of the causes.

Cyril Jerrard explained the Paradise Parrot's decline in 1924:

> The one undisguisable fact, however, is that the advent of the white man has spelled destruction to one of the loveliest of the native birds of this country. Directly by our avarice and thoughtlessness, and indirectly by our disturbance of the balance so nicely preserved by nature, we are undoubtedly accountable for the tragedy of this bird.

Although he was a grazier, he admitted that 'the most fatal change of all' was wrought by the pastoral industry. Alec also nominated pastoralism,

especially the associated burning of grasslands, along with trapping for the aviary trade and the ravages of feral cats, as the major factors. He ended his 1922 book, *Mateship with Birds*, with a chapter titled 'The Paradise Parrot Tragedy', in which he mourned that '"the most beautiful Parrot that exists" has been brought to the very verge of extinction by human agency.'

Cyril and Alec may have put their finger on the causes of the Paradise Parrot's decline, but they were unable to do much about it. Alec wrote prolifically about the parrot, publicising its plight and pleading for its preservation. The public was receptive, up to a point, but his pleas were inadequate to counter a social ethos that privileged economic gain over avian loss. Besides, ornithologists then had a lamentably restricted repertoire of strategies to save endangered species.

Today, we have official lists ranking species into categories from 'Critically Endangered' to 'Least Concern'; we have detailed scientific studies of the risks facing threatened species and a vast array of remedial measures available. There are gaps in the science, and economic gain may still be prioritised, but there is a potential to rescue endangered species today that was lacking in the 1920s and 30s. Indeed, such rescue strategies are currently in progress for the Paradise Parrot's close relative, the Golden-shouldered Parrot of Cape York Peninsula — so far, successfully.

The Paradise Parrot was not so lucky. Little was done to transform the species' rediscovery into its survival, other than entreaties by Alec and a few of his birding companions plus an aborted attempt at captive breeding. Sightings dwindled and misgivings grew.

Yet many birders held hopes that the parrot still lived in remote corners of the land. Alec, for one, continued to believe in the bird's probable survival until his death in 1977. (Cyril fades from the story long before, having died by accidental drowning in 1943.) Alec knew it was not a matter for dogmatism, telling his friend Jim Bravery in 1965 that 'the Paradise Parrot probably still exists ... but of course one can't be certain.' Reported sightings kept coming sufficiently often to quell whatever doubts he had.

A spike in reported sightings came in the 1960s and 70s, perhaps a result of the outback's increasing accessibility by four-wheel-drive vehicles and the growing popularity of birdwatching. In 1966, a report from a kangaroo shooter near Hebel in south-western Queensland drew an excited response from Alec. 'The species has been rediscovered,' he told his friend Janey Marshall, 'apparently quite definitely.' But the kangaroo shooter's story soon joined the ranks of many others that fluttered on the edge of the imagination.

Expeditions were mounted to find the bird. In 1992, for instance, 10 expert birders and National Parks officers combed an area of Queensland's Central Highlands where the Paradise Parrot had been reported. 'We were motivated by credible 1990 reports of the parrot being observed on a cattle station in the Dawson Valley', recalls expedition leader Pat Comben, a keen birder who was then Queensland's Minister for Environment and Heritage. 'After days of tough birding, we found no trace of the Paradise Parrot. On the final day, as I stood on an isolated sandstone bluff, uncertainty remained. I looked across the vastness of the largely unvisited area we were trying to cover. Not prime habitat, but big enough and isolated enough to hold tight its secrets.'

Only two years after Comben's expedition, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature moved the Paradise Parrot's ranking on its Red List from Threatened to Extinct. It's the only mainland Australian bird species to carry that lamentable label. Some birders continue to believe — or hope — that the parrot survives. Some still search for it. Their optimism is admirable, but it is sadly prudent to accept the verdict of extinct.

Only one living person has seen live Paradise Parrots. He is Eric Zillmann, now aged 98 and living in Bundaberg.

Cyril Jerrard inspecting an abandoned Paradise Parrot nest in a termite mound near his property in the Gayndah district, 1922, State Library of NSW

He last saw the parrots on his parents' property near Gin Gin in 1938 when he was only 15. But the memory is still vivid. 'I can see the bird now as clearly today as back then', he told renowned birder Greg Roberts in 2011. Eric and his father regularly saw a pair of the parrots when out mustering cattle in the 1930s but thought little of it at the time because, as he put it, 'we did not know that the parrots were so rare'. In later life, he became a celebrated naturalist and legendary birder, but childhood encounters with Paradise Parrots remain among his most cherished memories. Reflecting on them, Eric said, 'I am humbled by what I regard as the most uplifting experience of my life.'

For Eric, remembering his long-ago sighting is a humbling experience. For the rest of us, who have never seen a Paradise Parrot and never will, the remembrance of its passing may also be humbling. At the very least, it might remind us of our obligations to the birds and other living things around us.

Russell McGregor is Adjunct Professor of History at James Cook University in Queensland. His latest book, *Idling in Green Places: A Life of Alec Chisholm*, was shortlisted for the 2020 National Biography Award.

Then & now

Corner shops

U Peters corner store, George Street, Waterloo, 1957, by Jack Hickson

In the days before self-serve checkouts, 24/7 petrol stations and on-demand deliveries, most Aussie families flocked to their nearest corner shop for all their daily top-ups.

WORDS **Annie Tong**

Wingello Village Store

This much-loved general store and post office sits in the heart of Wingello in the Southern Highlands. Its history dates back to 1865, according to the owner, David, who took it over 12 years ago after moving to the town with his wife and eight children.

Today, the store has a blog and its newsletter is packed with community information including the library bus timetables, school news, bin collection dates and game nights. 'When people come in, they always get a warm greeting,' says David. 'Some of our older customers pop in every day on their daily walk, and we often get calls from people outside the town asking, "Have you seen grandpa today!?"'

After bushfires tore through the town on 4 January 2020, the store set up the Wingello Fire Relief Fund to help families in need. In the aftermath of the blaze, David was quick to open his doors, offering tea and coffee, hot meals and hugs.

Lilyfield G&M Corner Shop

In a quiet spot in Sydney's inner-west, the Lilyfield G&M Corner Shop has been around for more than 40 years. Its current owner, Tony (pictured), has been behind the counter for 23 years.

A first-generation migrant from China, Tony had no experience running a shop before arriving in Australia. He jumped at the opportunity to take over the business because he wanted to build a better life for his family.

Tony has local customers who have visited the shop since they were little kids, the shop remaining a constant in their lives, a place of comfort and nostalgia. 'I have many regular customers who still come in every single day. The older ones get the newspaper and top up their Opal Cards. They always say, "Tony don't ever leave! We need you!"'

My beautiful nanna Amy would write her shopping list out on a Saturday morning and off we'd go to buy the staples. I especially remember the bread section — it was way down the back of the shop in a special little area. Fruit and veg at the front and everything else in between.

– Pamela Votano

Wyrallah Road & Smith Street Corner Shop

In 1955, when Sheila and Bryan took over this corner shop in Lismore, they were an enterprising young couple keen to start a new chapter in their lives. They packed their bags and moved to the neighbourhood with their four children Jim, Marie, Maureen and Margaret and later Patricia.

Marie (pictured with family), who was 10 at the time, says they were literally 'kids in a lolly shop'. As well as lollies and ice-creams the shop supplied the staples that families needed, seven days a week in the days before supermarkets became the norm.

'During quiet times at the shop, we still had jobs to do. We weighed up sugar and salt, ensured the meat slicer was clean ... the shelves dusted and the floor swept,' says Marie, whose parents sold the store in the early 1960s. 'It was a valuable learning experience in so many ways.'

George & Dina's Corner Shop

You can find almost anything in Surry Hills these days, but back in the 1960s you'd go straight to George & Dina's Corner Shop. Pamela, who grew up in the area, tells us it's a place she'll never forget.

'My beautiful nanna Amy would write her shopping list out on a Saturday morning and off we'd go to buy the staples,' she says. 'I especially remember the bread section — it was way down the back of the shop in a special little area. Fruit and veg at the front and everything else in between.'

As a young child, Pamela was a frequent visitor to George & Dina's, as well as the butcher next door, the local fruit and veg shop, the delicatessen, the newsagent and the pie shop. 'So many memories ... my uncle actually married the daughter of the paper shop!'

Bourke & Fitzroy Streets corner grocery store, c 1916–1955, photo by Sam Hood

Mudgee Corner Store

This corner-store-turned-cafe in the centre of Mudgee is all about keeping it local, fresh and sustainable. Their motto: 'We're not your traditional corner store, we have so much more!'

The shop stocks its own homemade relishes and granola, as well as products from local artisans including candles, ceramics, chocolate, sourdough, honey and olive oil. They've even introduced an online ordering system, if you're in a rush.

It's a 'fantastic cafe with excellent food, service and country hospitality', says regular visitor Adam. 'I was in need of a morning coffee and Mudgee Corner Store was nirvana found,' says another visitor, 'From the friendly good morning when you walked through the door to the cup of delicious coffee, it was perfect.'

WORDS **Howard Tanner and James Broadbent**

Elizabeth Bay c 1888 from the Mort Family Album. State Library of NSW

The garden at 'Clarens', c 1892, by early female photographer Laura Praeger, State Library of NSW

Grand designs

Photographs reveal the grand inner-city gardens that were once the glory of Sydney.

With its substantial city buildings, grand homes and fine gardens, Sydney was held up to the wider world in the second half of the nineteenth century as evidence for the success of the remote colony of New South Wales. Images of the city filled the handsome photographic albums that were prepared by professional studios, such as Kerry & Co.

One of the finest of these albums — now lost — was produced in 1882 by the NSW Government Printer for presentation to Queen Victoria; a more modest example, probably sent to Britain in the late 1880s by members of businessman Thomas Mort's family, was acquired by the Library in the early 2000s.

The album shows how sparsely the harbour foreshores were developed in contrast with the images of Sydney's bustling streets. All that can be seen on Point Piper is bushland and the scar of Wolseley Road under construction. Recreation on the harbour was popular, with yachting regattas and rowing races typically followed by ferryboats packed with spectators. Professional cameras had advanced to a point where they could capture a moving vessel with accuracy, as they did the handsome paddle-steamer SS *Brighton*, the pride of the Manly ferry fleet.

An intriguing photograph entitled 'Elizabeth Bay' reveals a line of substantial houses at the end of Macleay Street, Potts Point, and extending along Wylde Street. Each has a large garden descending to the harbour, rich with subtropical plantings and substanial Norfolk Island pines. The grounds are dotted with summer houses and shade structures described as 'hot houses'. Sandstone stairs descend to boat docks and elaborate bathing pavilions along the waterfront.

The suburb of Potts Point — named after an early landowner — evolved from the late 1820s when land grants enabled senior civil servants to build villas to the west of Macleay Street. Their estates removed almost every trace of Aboriginal occupation. The street's eastern sites, with their outlook to expansive harbour views, became available later.
GE Peacock's 1849 painting *Mr Gregory's Garden*, Potts Point shows one of the first of these, a consciously designed garden with a harbour vista flanked by symmetrical beds of subtropical plants.

By the 1850s, Potts Point had become Sydney's most fashionable residential address. With self-government and recently acquired gold and pastoral wealth, an affluent, newly confident society built villa residences with increasingly elaborate landscaped grounds.

A finely detailed survey plan of Potts Point from 1889 shows a pattern of large houses and complex garden layouts to the east of Wylde Street, which had been established in the preceding decades.

Photographs from the 1860s illustrate the emerging gardens of Tor Cottage, Percy Lodge and Clarens, which stood side-by-side. Percy Lodge was built in the late 1850s for the widow Eleanor Terry (nee Rouse), a member of a well-known pastoral family. Inherited wealth from her first marriage to John Terry — whose father Samuel's enterprises and assets gained him the title 'the Botany Bay Rothschild' — had enabled her to commission a fine house in this fashionable enclave.

Visitors entered the grounds of Percy Lodge through carriage gates on Wylde Street and proceeded down a gravel drive to a carriage loop set on level ground to the east of the house. Here they could appreciate both the view across the harbour and the architectural refinement of the two-storey house with its extensive verandas. Entering the flower garden through a rose arbour, they would enjoy a dense planting of shrubs and perennials, with trees screening the neighbouring properties.

Eleanor's second husband, Major Thomas Wingate, was acknowledged as a talented amateur photographer. Pictures attributed to him illuminate the relatively uncomplicated grounds of Percy Lodge and Tor Cottage, contrasting with the elaborate domain of nearby Clarens.

Sir James Martin, who developed the garden at Clarens, was Premier of New South Wales for three terms and later Chief Justice — Martin Place is named after him. A learned lawyer and a classical enthusiast, he determined that the grounds of Clarens would convey his scholarship and erudition. He engaged two expert stonemasons, William Leandro Jones and Walter McGill, to realise his vision.

The garden's centrepiece was a copy of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates at Athens. Placed on a rocky outcrop, it focused the axial vista between the house and Clark Island in the harbour. A sequence of classical urns, statues, and a pair of sphinxes complemented a grandiose set of sandstone stairs and balustrades. When first completed, around 1866, it was all sandstone and no vegetation, as was captured in several dramatic, highly stylised photographs attributed to Thomas Wingate.

For the photographer, the classical urns and statuary created a grand stage, providing the backdrop for a powerful record for posterity. These carefully composed tableaux show the Martin family, dressed in the height of mid-Victorian fashion, posing against the architectural backdrop. The imposing sandstone structures were later engulfed by lush subtropical vegetation. As an architecturally elaborate Sydney waterfront garden, Clarens has never been rivalled.

These waterfront gardens were not to last, subsumed by the expansion of the Garden Island Naval Base during the Second World War and various apartment developments since then. The Monument of Lysicrates was moved to Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden in 1943, where it remains as an elegant feature. A few traces of the Clarens garden survive within the naval compound.

Of the dozen or so landscaped properties on the point, only the houses Bomera, Tarana and Jenner survive. All of the fine waterfront gardens of Potts Point have long gone, but photographs show how they expressed the significant wealth and aspirations of mid-to-late nineteenth-century Sydney.

Howard Tanner AM and Dr James Broadbent AM are architects, authors and exhibition curators.

James and Isabella Martin and members of household at Clarens, Potts Point, c 1860, attributed to Thomas Wingate, Sydney Living Museums

WORDS **Lisa Murray**

Going to ground

To learn the history of a town, start in its quietest place.

For someone like me, who's been curious about cemeteries since the very beginning of my life as a historian, this year's History Week theme 'From the Ground Up' takes on a literal meaning. A stroll in a cemetery rewards the inquisitive researcher and can provide many leads for studying local and community history.

Cemeteries are not for the dead; they are for the living. Of course, their function is the disposal of the dead. But their meaning is created by the local community. Forget the main street with its town hall and post office, the cemetery is where I always start my local research. Until the 1960s, when cremation became the favoured disposal method, most people were buried in their local cemetery. It's a microcosm of the town and documents many of the events and people that have shaped a locality.

The landscape and monuments of cemeteries were originally designed to encourage visitors. While some might baulk at the idea today, cemetery strolls were widely practised in the late nineteenth century. Our cemeteries should be 'a place of festive or pensive resort as in many other countries', the *Sydney Morning Herald* argued in 1862, since 'an occasional stroll through the avenues of the well-kept cemetery will afford instruction without depression'. The 1879 *Pfahlert's Hotel Visitors' Guide*, or, *How to Spend a Week in Sydney* agreed, encouraging visitors to join the locals for a Sunday stroll in a cemetery.

Today, the cemetery is where you'll discover a town's stories from the ground up: its highs and lows, its heroes and its villains. But the tales won't be obvious at first. You need to take your time. Slow down, observe.

The location is the first clue. The site of a burial ground was chosen not only for ease of digging graves, but also in recognition of public health concerns, town demographics, and religious and cultural values. The location of the Glebe Cemetery at East Maitland, for example — one of the earliest in the Hunter district and the resting place of convict architect Francis Greenway — reminds us of surveyor TL Mitchell's original plans for the town and the way its centre has shifted to West Maitland.

Australian churchyards reflect early religious affiliations and settlement patterns. Many in New South Wales and Tasmania are associated with the Church of England, while in South Australia a significant proportion catered for 'dissenting' religions, particularly Lutheran and Methodist. The general cemetery at Orange was originally a complex of separate denominational burial grounds with individual entrances. The divisions are still visible today in the gates, pathways and fence lines, although the cemetery is managed as one.

Boorowa Cemetery, NSW, photo by Mark Dunn

'RIP on the 19th hole', Tambaroora General Cemetery (near Hill End), photo by Lisa Murray

I practice 'contemplative recreation' whenever I visit a cemetery. I don't dash for the big monuments — the obvious statements of influence, civic pride or money. I prefer to wander slowly among the tombstones, reading the inscriptions and looking at the symbolism.

Some historians have argued that most of the headstones and epitaphs in Australia were simply picked from a catalogue, with little imagination or individuality. While it's true that catalogues were used, the observant cemetery visitor will notice many small variations that reflect personal choices and values.

There's much to admire in the skilled carving of a sandstone headstone, and I look out for the names of stonemasons at the base: part artist's signature, part advertisement. A cluster of talented sculptors and monumental masons in the Goulburn district — among them R Larcombe, TA Sealy, WJ Furber and J Turner — produced exuberant, ornately carved headstones for the Roman Catholic community. Their sculptures of seraphs, crockets (hook-shaped decorations), Celtic crosses, diving doves and the occasional mourning scene can be found as far afield as Collector, Boorowa and Canberra.

While many people prefer the look of nineteenth-century headstones, I've come to appreciate twentieth-century memorials. One of my favourites, at the cemetery outside Hill End, has used astro turf to create a golf fairway across the grave plot; the inscription reads 'RIP on the 19th hole'.

You can detect subtle shifts in our social history just by reading headstones. What were the popular names in a particular era? I've noticed that 'Australia' became a trendy middle name for women in the lead up to and just after Federation. Forget baby name books; a cemetery is a more tranquil way to review the options for naming your child. Dates of death can also be significant. I've been struck by the number of times a former soldier has died on 25 April, silently pointing to the trauma of war.

A community's grief for a life cut short is often recorded on tombstone inscriptions. Accidental deaths testify to the perils of the sea, the challenges of life on the land, or the dangers of industrial work. The famous memorial to the wreck of the Dunbar at Camperdown Cemetery commemorates one of Sydney's worst maritime disasters. Clusters of deaths in a particular month or year may indicate a wave of disease that swept through a town, and miniature grave plots are a stark reminder of the high rate of infant mortality endured by families and communities well into the twentieth century.

Tragedy and distress are everywhere. A marble headstone in the St John's Anglican churchyard at Booral, now sadly broken in two, records the deaths of Alan and Mary McAskell, who were murdered at the local wharf on 30 January 1878. While this violent case that shook the community was never solved, the epitaph promises that justice will one day come for the righteous: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord'.

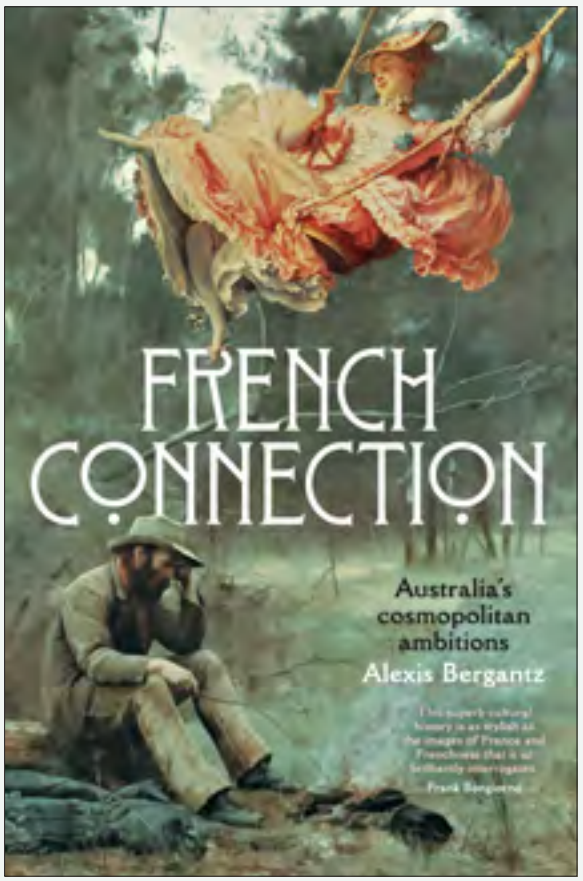
Less dramatic events can be deduced from similarities and differences in neighbouring headstones. The shapes and lettering styles reflect trends in design but, as every genealogist will tell you, they can also help demonstrate family origins and relationships or, through an absence, point to a family rift.

When visiting a graveyard we should always ask ourselves who is being represented and who is missing. Those who are marginalised or outcast through race, poverty or social stigma are often shunted to the side in unmarked graves, or even banished from the cemetery. The Aboriginal bushranger Joe Governor was buried outside the Anglican Cemetery at Whittingham, near Singleton. It was only years later that a plaque was placed where his unmarked grave is believed to be.

So, what are you waiting for? On your next lockdown stroll, why not head to your local cemetery? You might be surprised at what you discover from the ground up.

Dr Lisa Murray is the City of Sydney Historian and the author of *Sydney Cemeteries: A Field Guide*. She is the Library's 2021 Hertzberg Fellow.

Orange Cemetery, NSW, photo by Lisa Murray



French Connection

by Alexis Bergantz

NewSouth Publishing

Marking Bastille Day in July this year, the host of a local radio show asked listeners why Australians have such an interest in — and even a love of — French culture. Responses ranged from a love of croissant and cassoulet, to a fascination with French cinema and the sound of the language.

In his fascinating new book, *The French Connection: Australia's Cosmopolitan Ambitions*, historian Alexis Bergantz skilfully explores our interest in 'Frenchness' and how French ideas have influenced our culture. He shows that French connections have been part of the Australian story from very early in our European colonial history.

Despite the ambitious French voyages of exploration to the Pacific in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, France's colonial aspirations in the region were largely thwarted. We continue to marvel, however, at the possibility represented by the visit of La Pérouse and the First Fleet's sighting of the French ships in Botany Bay in January 1788.

Alexis Bergantz, originally from Alsace in the north-west of France, reveals the richness of our cultural engagements with France, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century. 'For a new nation

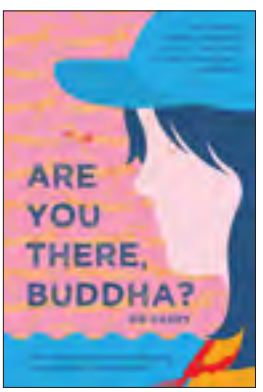
How to Make a Basket

by Jazz Money

UQP

Jazz Money writes in a voice that is blood-felt and full of love, where each embrace expands history and personhood, and the internal world is inextricably linked to the world of river, tree, sky and earth. This collection weaves Wiradjuri and English into an intricately modulated voice that speaks truth, honours history and celebrates with joy. It is both formally adventurous and narratively gripping, creating a dexterous balance between the concentrated language of a poet in flight and the world-sharing warmth of the storyteller. These poems will be read aloud, and whispered between friends and lovers. They speak in a new voice that shares a culture 'hoping beneath an endless song'.

Rico Craig



Are You There, Buddha?

by Pip Harry

Hachette Australia

With a nod to Judy Blume's classic *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*, this free verse novel offers a fresh take on the teen genre. Many readers will recognise themselves in Bee as she negotiates family life, friendships, mean girls and the ever-present threat of climate change. Her story is set to an all-too-familiar backdrop, with scorching heat, endless drought and raging bushfires filling the air with smoke and ash. As the heat of summer gives way to crisp autumn mornings, Bee gains confidence in herself, giving readers the sense that they can do the same.

Susan Brown

avowedly 99 per cent British,' he writes, 'the Australian fascination with France suggested a space of possibility where Australia and Australians were imagining themselves as a cosmopolitan nation-in-the-making.' He encourages us to consider whether these cultural exchanges are reflected in some of the cosmopolitan values of contemporary Australian society.

French Connection is engagingly written and its research encompasses an array of sources — from colonial newspapers to personal diaries and state and consular archives. It recounts experiences from the 1840s to the First World War of men and women, new arrivals and old, French and Australians, whose worlds were defined in some way by a French connection.

For so many Australian visitors to France, the country's art and literature, and its more liberal attitudes to gender and sex, offered a different way of life. In 1912 the artist Norman Lindsay and writer HM Green wrote homages to glittering Paris, its brightly lit boulevards and cafes and its people — the very essence of Frenchness, with their 'easy unconventionality' and modernity.

The stories uncovered in *French Connection* are often surprising. I enjoyed learning about Monsieur Desneaux's Paris House in Phillip Street that was frequented by Sydney intelligentsia for several decades; the entrepreneurship of the Joubert brothers of Hunters Hill from the 1840s to the 1880s; visiting wool buyers from Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing; the decade-long war for control of Melbourne's Alliance Française; the Australian response to the Dreyfus Affair of 1894–1906; and the experiences in 1903 of Australian-born Lydia Delarue, whose family papers are in the State Library collection, when she travelled to the French countryside to explore her French identity.

One of the most fascinating chapters, 'The Scum of France: A Reckoning with Australia's Convict Past', presents the history of French convicts in New Caledonia in the late nineteenth century. When France annexed New Caledonia in 1853, Australian newspapers feared an invasion of 'the moustachioed sons of Gaul'. In 1874, when Communard Henri Rochefort escaped from New Caledonia to Newcastle, colonists were shocked at the idea that the Australian colonies — where transportation had recently ended — might become a penal outpost for France. This account casts important light on the French penal colonial project and our own attitudes to convictism, race and identity.

Berganz's *French Connection* is an engaging exploration of the complex entanglements of French Australian relations in the early twentieth century. Above all, it casts new light on how 'Frenchness' influenced the creation of modern Australia.

Susan Hunt

In Moonland

by Miles Allinson

Scribe

In this slender volume, Miles Allinson, author of the award-winning *Fever of Animals*, manages to encompass a lifetime. Several of them in fact. It is, at its heart, a novel about fatherhood. It's also about memory, masculinity and the burdens of a finite existence. Set in distinct but connected periods — contemporary Melbourne, an Indian ashram in the 1970s, and the not-too-distant future — Allinson's tale of a man searching for the truth about his father refuses to be pigeonholed. Filtered through many pop-cultural references (much appreciated by this reader), it asks you to think about our place on the planet while still managing to be deeply and personally affecting.

Richard Gray

Gentle and Fierce

by Vanessa Berry

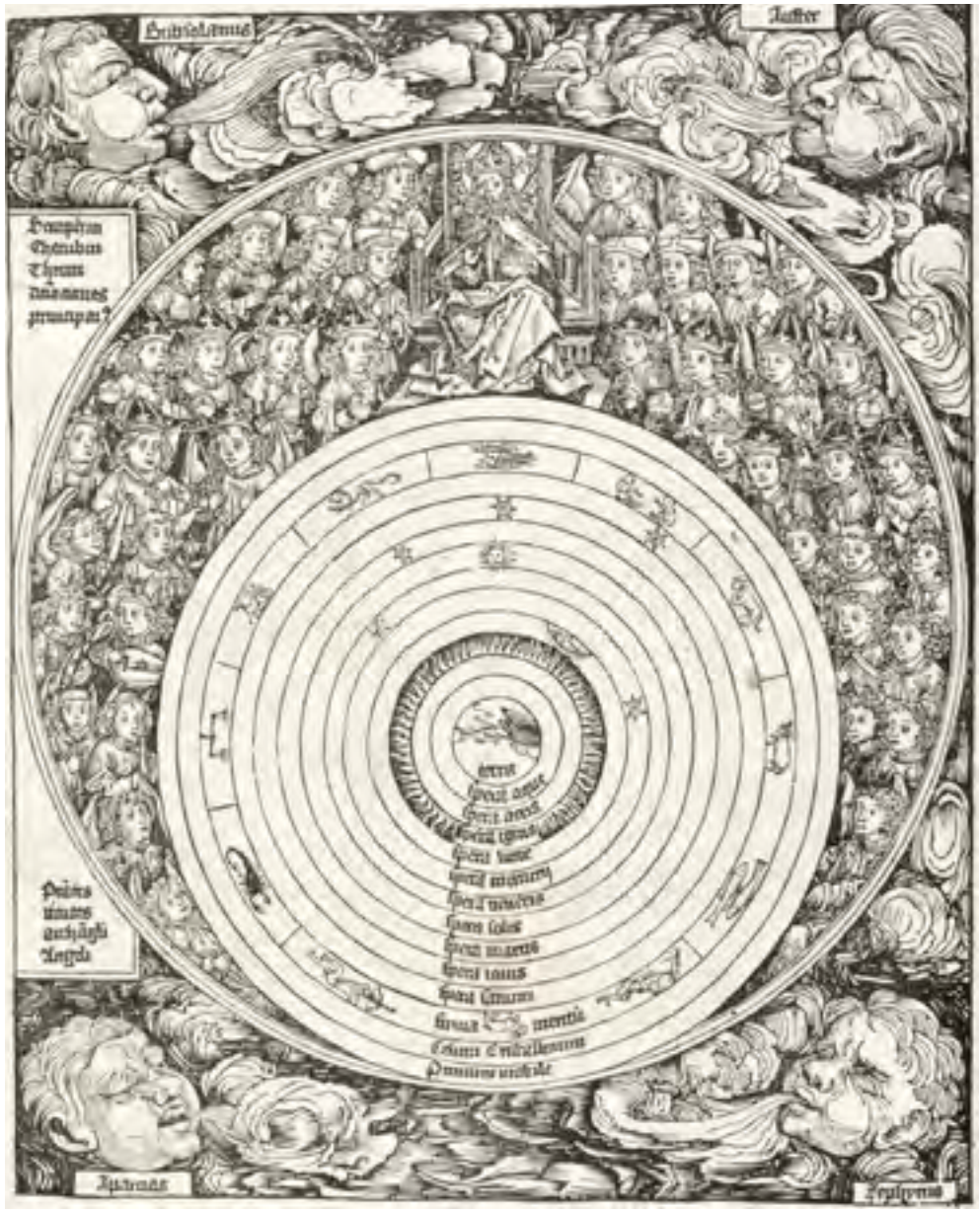
Giramondo

Gentle and Fierce is an anthology of love stories dedicated to the relationships we have with animals — some real, some imagined, some ceramic. It shows how human interactions with animals of all sizes in urban Australia often signpost significant and tender moments in life, encompassing stories of childhood, growth, grief and joy. The author explores the delicate balance — or imbalance — of co-existing alongside our fauna and at times bumps up against the climate change existentialism many of us grapple with. A relatable and enjoyable read for all animal lovers.

Jenna Bain

All books available from the Library Shop with free delivery: sl.nsw.gov.au/shop

A revelation



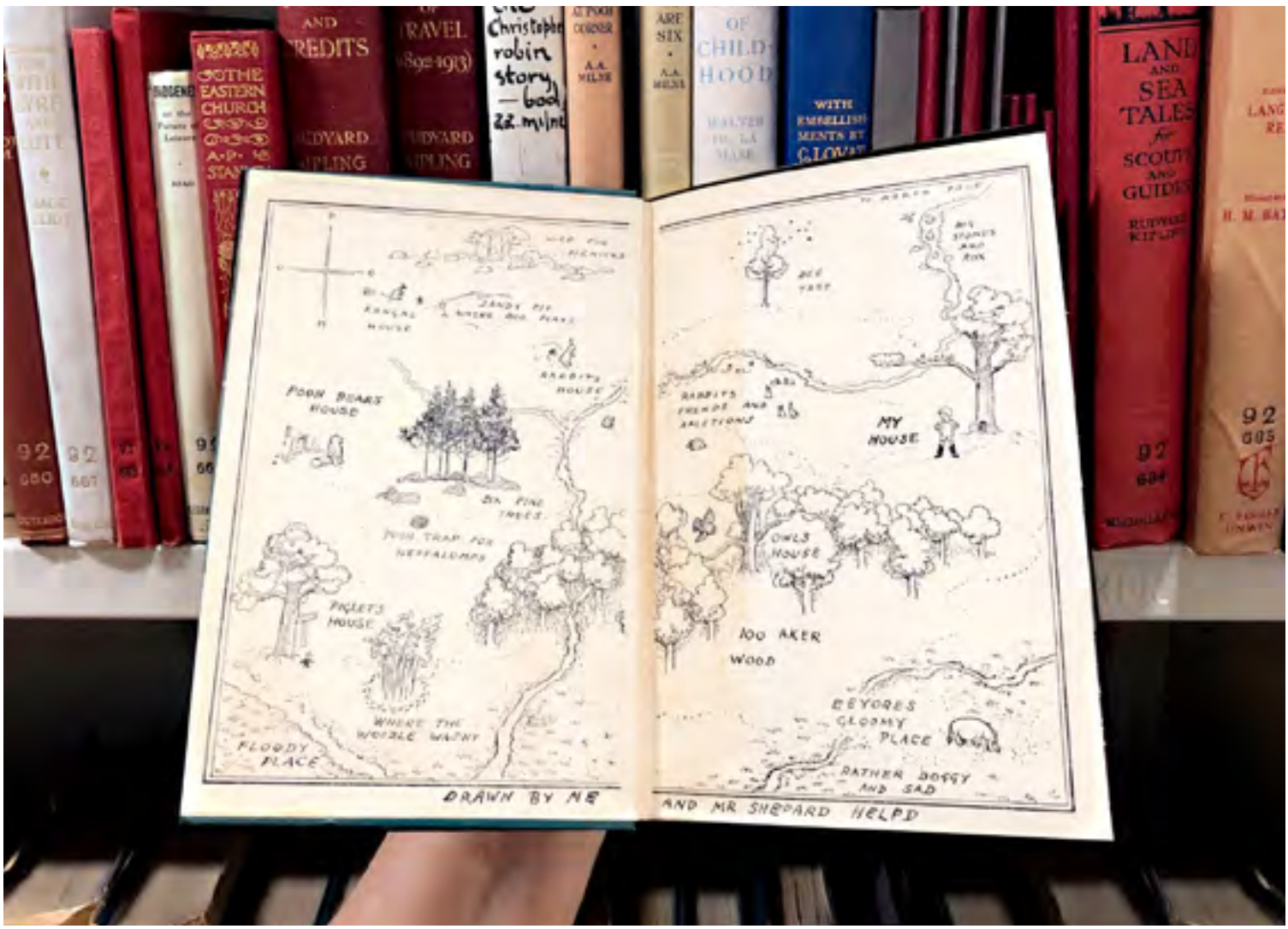
Among the books in the Library's collection printed before 1500 — there are about 230 — one of the most famous is *Liber Cronicarum* or *The Nuremberg Chronicle*, printed in Germany in 1493. When the intricacies and possibilities of printing in Europe were still being explored, Anton Koberger published this history of the world in seven ages, which includes 1809 woodcuts prepared in the workshop of Michael Wolgemut. Koberger's godson, the great Renaissance artist and printmaker Albrecht Dürer, was Wolgemut's apprentice. This image is from the book's first section, which charts the biblical period from creation to the deluge.

***The Nuremberg Chronicle* is on loan to Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane for the exhibition *Revelations*, celebrating the historical innovations of the printing press.**

A perturbed world

Look at the state of the poor world! In Hal Eyre's 1919 cartoon, the world takes the form of a flustered gent in a top hat and long coat, trembling at rumours coming out of the 1918–1919 peace conference. Eyre's satirical cartoons for the *Daily Telegraph* during and after the First World War tackled themes of national identity and political power play. In Sydney's second long lockdown — when the world is again perturbed by rumours and fake news — Eyre's cartoon reminds us that it was always thus!

A forest



This shelfie includes rare first editions of English writer AA Milne's stories about the hapless but kind-hearted teddy bear Winnie the Pooh. Seen here is the endpaper of the 1926 edition of *Winnie the Pooh*, featuring EH Shepard's illustration of the Hundred Acre Wood — the lush imaginary world where Pooh had adventures with the boy Christopher Robin and their friends. Many of the Library's early editions of AA Milne's books were donated by the businessman and book collector Sir William Dixson.

A plague

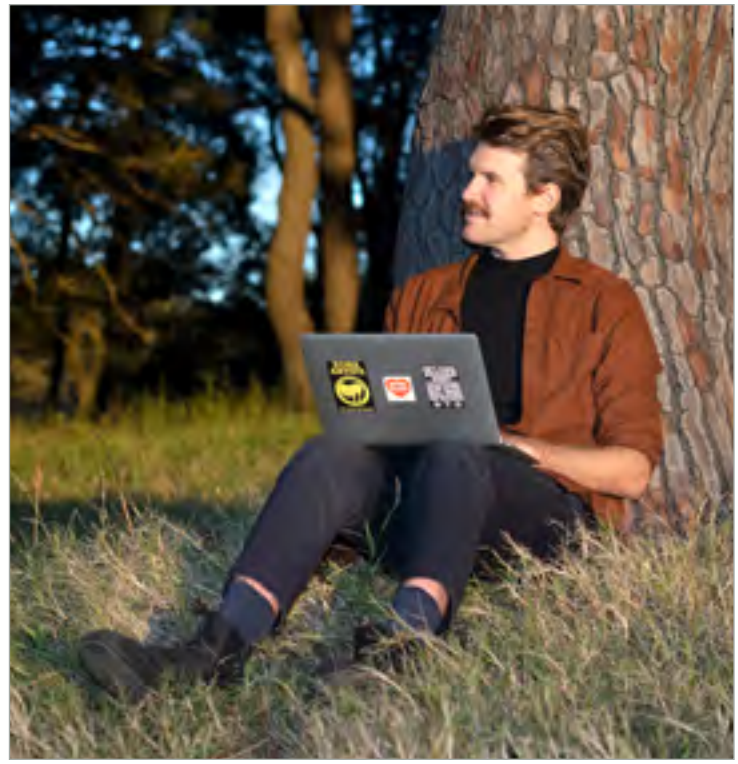
The men in Sam Byrne's *Rabbit Plague* grimace as they shovel rabbit carcases into carts for disposal. Showing Broken Hill in 1893, the recently acquired painting brings to mind today's mouse plague and the many plagues of invasive species that have desecrated Australia's environment since colonisation. Byrne was 10 at the time, and lived in the town, although he didn't paint this scene until the 1960s. Having worked at the BHP mine for 51 years from the age of 15, he took up painting after he retired in 1949.

Rabbit Plague: Raking Up Rabbits, Broken Hill 1893 is reproduced courtesy of the estate of Sam Byrne

WORDS **Mathilde de Hauteclocque**

Finding **the poetry**

A researcher gains sustenance and insight by exploring the Library's new catalogue.



Giacomo Bianchino, photo by Bruce York

In April 2020 as the pandemic set in, writer and teacher Giacomo Bianchino returned to Sydney from the City University of New York and found himself in need of a library collection and space to work in.

As well as teaching online, Giacomo is completing a PhD in comparative literature focusing on interwar political poetry. He's comparing the relationship between politics and poetry in the work of fascist and communist poets of the time.

Back in Australia, he wasn't sure how much the library collections here could support his work on poets like the American Ezra Pound and the Italian Gabriele D'Annunzio, who both had ties with Mussolini's fascism.

But early forays into the State Library's catalogue revealed a number of useful books by and about the Australian poet Jack Lindsay, son of Norman and another of Giacomo's subjects. He also found books to prepare for his oral examination, like autobiographical volumes by the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid, as well as a collection stocked with resources to sustain a research project on the rights of migrant workers in Australian agriculture.

Giacomo's year at the Library has coincided with the transition to a new catalogue, a two-year project to make it easier and more enjoyable to search the collection.

As a researcher, Giacomo understands the importance of having information about a resource and access to it in one place. 'I'm always sceptical of the back button on library websites,' he says. 'I feel like I'm going to erase the whole search!' He appreciates that the new catalogue's design, which presents each record on a single page, addresses that fear.

Giacomo is particularly impressed by the Library's ongoing program of converting books into machine-encoded text. 'Being able to visualise where your search terms are concentrated in a text is very handy in terms of making immediate decisions and streamlining research,' he says.

But the strength of the new Library catalogue is not simply its technological advances. Giacomo sees the possibility of making similar discoveries to those unearthed through 'old fashioned' browsing. He recalls turning points in his academic career when he stumbled on books in stores or libraries and found what Ezra Pound called 'the luminous detail' that changed his thinking on a topic.

'For me, the new catalogue has been refined to such an extent that performing a search is like chiselling a piece of stone — you're approaching it from different directions until gradually it takes shape.' During the early stages of his research on the politics and economics of Australian agriculture, he started with layman's terms and found a huge number of resources which he filtered for scholarly articles, government resources and committee reports. 'As you refine, you'll stumble across a single title which will condense the thoughts you had on a particular topic better than you could have articulated yourself. That can change the course of a project.'

Lone Hand covers, left 1915, right 1916

Giacomo had a similar experience in his research on Jack Lindsay, tracking niche sources to their collections and then finding an audio interview and letters. Along the way, searching for 'Australian poetry periodicals', he turned up the covers of *Lone Hand* magazine. 'The covers of the early war years were full of patriotic imagery but as soon as you hit 1916, the title pages become these pre-Raphaelite women which lasts until the mid 1920s until it changes again. That says a lot about a changing notion of the Australian reading public, about commodity culture and politics and printing mechanisms of the time. And that's purely from the catalogue assembling and displaying the images in one place.'

As Giacomo turns his mind back to New York, the return of face-to-face teaching, the fourth year of his PhD, and the resumption of his own creative writing, his thoughts revert to poetry: 'Wordsworth said the distinction between prose and poetry is that a poem can be read infinite times. Being able to write something that's eternally fresh that you can return to and always get something out of, that's got to be the ideal.'

Perhaps, in an age when nearly all his young students' learning is still online, the same ambitious goals should be set for the Library's catalogue, so that searching the collection is not only useful but also a little poetic.

Mathilde de Hauteclocque is an archivist at the City of Sydney Archives.

5

Five fun ways to use the State Library's new catalogue:

1. *Explore vintage maps of your neighbourhood*
2. *Uncover books that are hundreds of years old*
3. *Find a new phone wallpaper or zoom background*
4. *Download high-quality copyright-free images*
5. *Browse newspapers online for free*

Visit the new catalogue:
collection.sl.nsw.gov.au

Photo by Joy Lai

Gâteau St Emilion

Ingredients

Caramel custard
100 g white sugar, divided
2 tbsp water
30 g cornflour
5 egg yolks
500 ml milk, divided
2 tsp vanilla (or 1 vanilla bean seeds)
50 g butter, room temp, cubed

Genoise sponge
113 g unsalted butter
1 tbsp vanilla extract
1/4 tsp almond extract (optional)
8 large eggs, room temperature
225 g granulated sugar
1/4 tsp salt
196 g cake flour

Mocha ganache
115 ml single cream
1 tbsp strong coffee (optional)
113 g dark chocolate, chopped
1 tbsp glucose syrup (optional)

Optional extras
pistachios and glace cherries

Method

Custard: In a heavy bottomed saucepan simmer 50 g sugar and water over medium heat, swirling the pan but not stirring, until the caramel turns amber brown.

Whisk together cornflour and remaining 50 g sugar in a medium bowl until combined. Whisk in egg yolks and then 150 ml milk.

Remove caramel from heat and stir in remaining 350 ml milk. Return pan to medium heat, add vanilla and salt, then bring to simmer.

Remove pan from heat. Slowly add about a quarter of the hot mixture to the bowl with the egg yolks, whisking all the time. Slowly stream in the remaining hot mixture, whisking continuously until you have a smooth custard.

Pour the entire mixture back into saucepan and, over medium-low heat, stir continuously until mixture is thick and smooth, about 5 minutes.

Remove pan from heat and stir in butter. Cool, then cover the surface of the custard with cling film to prevent a skin from forming. Store in the fridge.

Custard can be made two days ahead and kept refrigerated. Remove from fridge 30 minutes before assembling cake.

Cake: Grease two 20 cm cake tins and line the bottoms with baking paper. Heat oven to 175° (do not use fan).

In a small saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat and cook until the milk solids sink to the bottom of the pan and become brown, about 5 minutes. Drain the butter into a medium bowl, leaving the milk solids behind. Stir in the vanilla and almond extract; set aside.

Put the eggs, sugar and salt in a large heatproof glass or metal bowl. Set the bowl over a bain-marie (pan of simmering water). Do not let the bowl touch the water and do not let the water boil. Whisk continuously until the sugar has dissolved (take care not to overheat).

Remove bowl from heat. Using an electric mixer, whisk mixture until tripled in volume and very pale, approximately 10 minutes. Gently fold the flour into the egg mixture, one-third at a time, maintaining as much volume in the eggs as possible.

Finally, add a large spoonful of the cake batter to the cooled browned butter. Stir gently to fully incorporate, then add this mixture back into the bowl with the rest of the batter.

Divide the batter evenly between the cake tins. Bake 25–30 minutes until very lightly golden brown. Do not open the oven door during cooking. Cool in the tins for 10 minutes, then remove the cakes to a wire rack and allow to cool fully. Cakes can be baked the day before.

Ganache: Heat the cream until simmering; add chopped chocolate then remove from heat. Cover and let sit for 5 minutes until chocolate has melted. Stir to combine, then add glucose syrup (adds shine to the finished icing) and coffee. Allow to cool slightly. Ganache should still be pourable.

Assemble: Place one cooled cake, bottom side down, on your platter or cake stand. Spread custard evenly over the cake. Sprinkle with glace cherries and pistachios, if using. Add the second cake, with the flat side facing up. For even, clean edges, trim the sides of the cake with a serrated knife. Pour ganache onto the centre of the cake. Slowly spread the ganache evenly until it reaches the edge of the cake and forms drips down the sides (if you prefer a cleaner look, just keep ganache on the top of the cake). Set in the fridge for a minimum of 30 minutes. Slice and serve. Keeps for 3–4 days stored in an airtight container in the fridge.

Note from cook Sarah Miller

This recipe from *Luncheon and Dinner Sweets* (1922) — with layers of soft sponge cake, creamy custard and rich chocolate ganache — transported me back to my childhood in America, where Boston Cream Pie was a favourite dessert.

I'm not sure how the author C Herman Senn would feel about my American twist on the French classic Gateau St Emilion. I've tried to combine the sophisticated flavours of the original recipe with an easier method of assembly and presentation.

As with most recipes from this era, exact quantities are not given, so I drew from my modern cookbook collection for inspiration. The recipe can be easily adapted, for example by adding fresh fruit or using a different sponge.

When I signed up to write this article, I didn't know that we would all be plunged back into lockdown. It's all the more reason to make this showstopping gateau that would take pride of place in any bakery window. I hope you enjoy making it (and eating it) as much as I did.

Amani Haydar

Lawyer, artist and women's advocate Amani Haydar honours her mother's life in her new memoir.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO HAVE YOUR MOTHER'S STORY PUBLISHED? (AMANI'S MOTHER, SALWA, WAS MURDERED IN 2015 BY HER HUSBAND, AMANI'S FATHER.)

It's huge. I've carried this story in my heart for years now and to be able to share it after so much reflection, with this level of detail, feels like both a triumph and a relief. It is also a bittersweet experience because it is a story I wish I didn't have to tell. I feel a deep sense of responsibility sharing Mum's experiences with the world but I'm looking forward to seeing what conversations will emerge from this work and how it will contribute to ongoing discussions about women's safety in Australia.

WHAT SURPRISED YOU, IF ANYTHING, WHILE RECORDING THE AUDIOBOOK?

I was surprised at how hard it can be to read out loud! It was a tedious process at times, but I think the final product is so worthwhile. We've also included something really special in the audio that I think will be incredibly moving for listeners. I have a whole new appreciation for audio as an artform.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE YOUR WORK AS AN ARTIST WITH YOUR WRITING — DO THEY COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER OR COMPETE FOR YOUR ATTENTION?

Both! A painting can sometimes inspire a new writing breakthrough and writing can sometimes inspire a painting. I see both mediums as part of my creative process. For me, they sit together like a picture book; some things are best said in an image, others need to be articulated and processed in writing. I approach both intuitively and generally prioritise whatever project is calling to me with the most urgency.

YOU HAVE SAID THAT YOU PAINT A PORTRAIT OF YOURSELF AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT YOURSELF OVER TIME?

I've been doing this since I entered the Archibald Prize in 2018 — that's four large self-portraits. I have learnt that self-perception is a fluid thing that is heavily influenced by our environment and political context. I see some strong parallels between self-portraiture and memoir; they both demand that we look inwards and interrogate inconsistent, unresolved feelings as well as reflect on our context and surroundings.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU TO COLLABORATE WITH OTHER WRITERS AND ARTISTS?

I love collaborating with other creatives. Maintaining a creative practice is otherwise incredibly solitary! My favourite collaboration to date was part of an exhibition of my work at the Peacock Gallery in Auburn in 2019. I collaborated with MsSaffaa, a paste-up mural artist, to develop a mural using some of my illustrations. I loved learning about her process of turning small drawings into large prints and the techniques she uses to assemble the images into huge collage-like murals. Our mural included poetry by Phoebe Grainer, which I painted onto the wall by hand, and our catalogue included an essay by Maryanne Taouk.

***THE MOTHER WOUND* HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS 'A STUNNING FEMINIST MEMOIR'. HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO FEMINISM?**

My relationship with feminism has evolved a lot since I was younger. For me, feminism provides a framework and a lens with which to understand and analyse my experiences and ways of thinking that can help us solve problems. I am mindful of the ways that mainstream feminist literature has often left out the voices of Indigenous women, migrant women and other marginalised groups. My approach is to think of feminism as a vehicle for justice; if it's not helping us achieve justice and equality for the most marginalised groups, then who is it serving? How do we make our feminist projects better and more inclusive?

HAS THERE BEEN A RECOGNISABLE SHIFT IN THE WAY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS TALKED ABOUT IN A CULTURAL, SOCIETAL OR LEGAL SETTING?

I believe the shift has mostly happened in public discourse and this has begun to create legal change. Just yesterday (29 June 2021), following an enquiry, a NSW Parliamentary Committee found that coercive control should be criminalised. There are some important critiques and reservations around this and it will be interesting to observe what overall impact the laws will have for survivors. It will change the way we think about abuse, allowing the law to identify patterns of abuse rather than just one-off incidents.

AS A MOTHER, SISTER, ARTIST, WRITER, LAWYER AND ADVOCATE, WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

I'm proud of my mum and the way she navigated barriers in her life. I am proud of my sisters who have been consistent in their support and continue to achieve their personal goals. I am proud to be telling Mum's story and my grandmother's story and honouring their lives.

WHAT WILL YOU DO NEXT?

I'll be making some art for a couple of upcoming projects over the next few months. I'll also be writing a contribution for an upcoming anthology, presently titled *Another Australia*. My next big goal is to finish my master's degree and write a novel. I've wanted to push myself creatively and write fiction for a while and I think I can do that now that I've finished *The Mother Wound*.

Amani Haydar's *The Mother Wound* is published by Macmillan Australia and is available online through the Library Shop.

20 questions

1. The term ‘elephant folio’ refers to:
a) Shakespeare’s longest plays b) pachyderm ears c) tall books
2. What creatures might be lurking on your local library bookshelves at 567?
3. Who is the author of the Rowland Sinclair crime series?
a) Sulari Gentill b) Liane Moriarty c) Kerry Greenwood
4. What rare astronomical phenomenon links a British-born naval captain and an Australian-born novelist?
5. Which award-winning poet declared ‘All my crushes have been books’ in their poem ‘Crushed’ (*Throat*, UQP)?
6. Who was inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame in 2020?
a) Archie Roach b) Helen Reddy c) The Seekers
7. Charles Dickens’ *The Uncommercial Traveller* chronicles his 1862 visit to Australia. True or false?
8. Like ‘barbie’ and ‘mozzie’, the word ‘selfie’ is Australian in origin. True or false?
9. Which Australian media organisation was established on 1 January 1978?
10. Which internationally famous Australian was born Helen Porter Mitchell?
11. Which book by Trent Dalton won two 2021 Book Design Awards?
12. What 1993 song by Midnight Oil is also the winning title of the 2021 National Biography Award.
13. Which American writer championed Christina Stead’s *The Man Who Loved Children* nearly 70 years after it was published?
14. What is Lee Tran Lam best known for?
a) travel writing b) food writing c) sports writing
15. The 26 merino sheep that arrived in Australia in 1797 boarded their ship in:
a) Cape of Good Hope b) Valencia c) Southampton
16. The paper segments of maps that cover the surface of a globe are called gores. True or false?
17. The UN International Day of People with Disability is celebrated on the 3rd of which month?
18. Luna Park was first located in which capital city before it was packed up and moved to Sydney in 1935?
19. Complete the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow quote:
‘The love of learning, the sequestered nooks,
And all the sweet _____ of books.’
a) serenity b) lucidity c) cacophony
20. Which Michael Jackson song shares the same title as a Sydney-based crime writers’ festival?

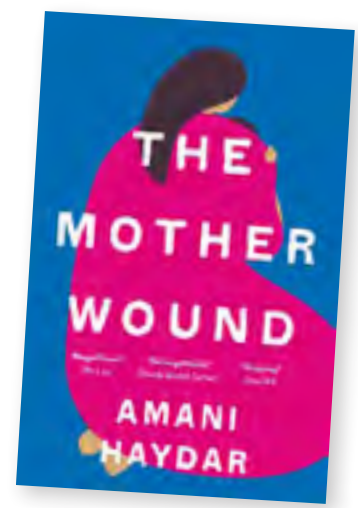
Are you an *Openbook* person?

If you love books, history, art and ideas, your answer is yes. So join us!

Openbook starts conversations, celebrates new talent, takes you into the State Library's underground stacks, tantalises your tastebuds (yes, there are 100-year-old recipes) and provides hours of enjoyable reading.

Plus, the first 50 people to subscribe will receive a free copy of *The Mother Wound* by Amani Haydar.

See interview with Amani Haydar, pages 88 & 89.



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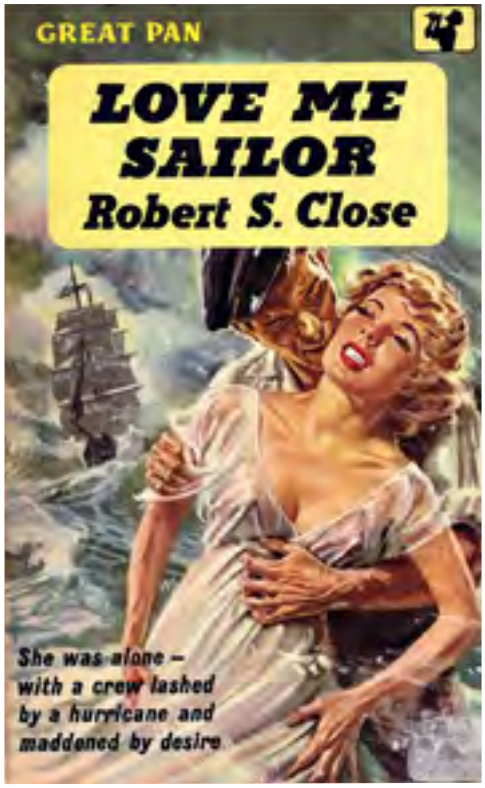


Sex and censorship all at sea

In 1946, decades before Banned Books Week (26 September – 2 October) was launched, Robert S Close's *Love Me Sailor* was ruled obscene and its author jailed. Set on a commercial sailing ship, or windjammer, the racy novel centres on the voyage of the lone woman on board.

Three Adelaide booksellers were prosecuted for selling *Love Me Sailor*; Close was found guilty of obscene libel and sentenced to three months' imprisonment; and his publisher Georgian House was fined £100. Because of writing like this:

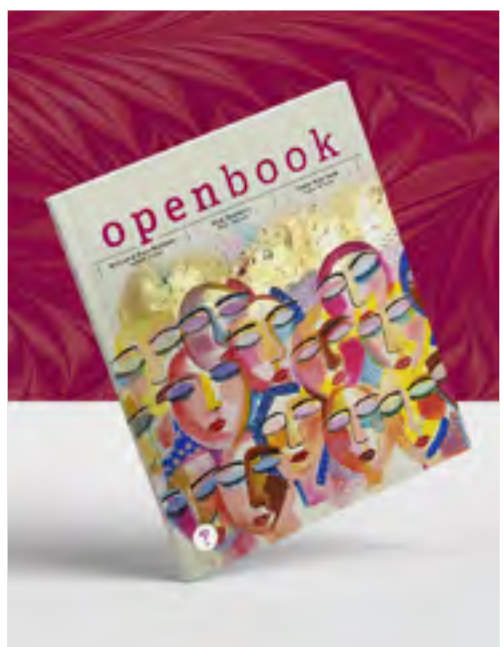
> Then avid hands unbuttoned his coat. He was trembling. She drew his head down and he knew the warm, scented taste of her breasts. The gleaming candle of her body rose out of her drooped shift ... and drooped slowly, slowly ... as if wilting from the roaring heat in him, on the bed, on the pillows. He collapsed on her fumbling with wild urgency. Strange seas drew him into a cavern of warmth.

'The decrepit English law under which I was sentenced to gaol for writing *Love Me Sailor*,' Close declared in 1948, 'could be used to imprison almost every other Australian author tomorrow.' Close may have been exaggerating, but *Love Me Sailor* is an interesting instalment in the annals of censorship. Such was the outrage about sex in print that the book was not only banned, it was reportedly burned in public too. Writers and artists argued for Close's right to publish, fighting to liberalise censorship in the postwar period. Close himself decamped to Paris, joining libertarian artists and writers in the cafes of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

The Library holds a first edition of *Love Me Sailor*, which includes a letter pasted inside referring to the 'rumpus'. Drawings by naval illustrator Geoffrey Chapman Ingleton appear throughout, although later editions' lurid jackets promised different attractions. The book's confronting tagline was: 'Thirty Men Vowed They'd Have Her'. Times change: today, any 'rumpus' would come not from state agents of censorship, but from the voices of #MeToo.

Fine design

Our very first issue of *Openbook* has won the Magazine category (Level B – larger organisations) in the 2021 Museums Australasia Multimedia & Publication Design Awards. The MAPDAs are considered the Academy Awards for cultural institutions, with prizes awarded for design and communications excellence across 17 categories. *Openbook*, designed by Rosie Handley, was judged alongside tough competition — *Discover* from Museums Victoria and *Art Toi* from Auckland Art Gallery were shortlisted. Our popular *Creative Kids Box: Sea Münsters* comic and playing cards, designed by Dominic Hon, also scored top honours in the Children's Book category.



A librarian walks into a bar ...

The State Library is on track to make the much-loved (and much-missed, due to Covid) cultural institution fully accessible to visitors and readers for the first time, including parts of the historic Mitchell building rooftop. Once a popular spot for staff to eat lunch and play the odd game of quoits, the rooftop is being reimagined as a small bar with views of the Harbour and across the Domain. The new venue will offer Sydneysiders and visitors a unique experience while helping to encourage people back into the CBD. It's part of a larger government-funded transformation project for the Library that will create better access to the Macquarie Street and Mitchell buildings, a new underground auditorium, photography gallery and an expanded cafe and bookshop. Plans are also afoot to restore the original floor in the Mitchell Library Reading Room, which will provide much-needed additional space for readers while improving access and circulation challenges on the level below. According to State Librarian John Vallance, 'Our building works will create more public space for the public to use and enjoy.'

Learn more: sl.nsw.gov.au/major-building-plan

Staff on roof of Mitchell Building, 1943, photo by Ivan Ives, *Pix* magazine

And the winner is ...

Premier's History Awards

Australian History Prize
People of the River: Lost Worlds of Early Australia by Grace Karskens (Allen & Unwin)

General History Prize
The Wardian Case: How a Simple Box Moved Plants and Changed the World by Luke Keogh (The University of Chicago Press & Kew Publishing)

NSW Community & Regional History Prize
Landscapes of Our Hearts: Reconciling People and Environment by Matthew Colloff (Thames & Hudson Australia)

Young People's History Prize
Tell Me Why for Young Adults by Archie Roach (Simon & Schuster Australia)

Digital History Prize
FREEMAN by Laurence Billiet (General Strike and Matchbox Pictures)

National Biography Award

Main award
Truganini: Journey Through the Apocalypse by Cassandra Pybus (Allen & Unwin)

Michael Crouch AC Award (best debut work)
One Bright Moon by Andrew Kwong (HarperCollins Publishers)

Read judges' comments: sl.nsw.gov.au/awards

Online events

14 SEPT

A Foreign Country: Travels through the Past

A fortnightly lecture series: science and print culture in colonial Tasmania (14 Sept); legacies of Atlantic slavery and British colonialism (28 Sept); the memory of nations (12 Oct). Free online

30 SEPT

The B List Book Club

Host Bri Lee will be in conversation with Sarah Dingle about her latest book, *Brave New Humans*, an astonishing exposé that reveals the uncomfortable realities of assisted reproduction and its very human fallout. Free online

Exhibition

Sydney Elders

This beautiful online exhibition brings together four of Sydney's respected Elders — Aunty Sandra, Uncle Chicka, Aunty Esme, and Uncle Dennis — to tell a very personal story of Aboriginal Sydney. Curated by Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones.
elders.sl.nsw.gov.au

Photos by Joy Lai

Elsewhere

National Young Writers Festival

Hear from young writers who create across stage, page, web and beyond. This hybrid event takes place in Newcastle on the October long weekend. Free, 30 September to 3 October
youngwritersfestival.org

Boundless

Australia's leading festival of Indigenous and culturally diverse Australian writers returns to Bankstown Arts Centre on 30 October. The festival will bring together established and emerging voices, giving space to writing in many forms.
boundlessfestival.org.au

Boundless festival, illustration by Elin Andersson

Free Public Library 1869, Kerry & Co

On this day

30 September 1869

The Free Public Library — now known as the State Library of NSW — was officially opened by the NSW Governor Earl Belmore. Originally located on Sydney's Bent Street, the Library started out with only three staff and 20,000 books, many of which the government purchased from the Subscription Library for £1500. Today, it's home to more than 1.5 million books and is located at 1 Shakespeare Place.

Ava Thormann at a Zoom classroom session, photo by Sarah Cawsey

NSW at home

How are you spending your time in lockdown? Whether you're attempting home haircuts, juggling work and home schooling, starting a new project or just taking it day by day, we'd love to see how you're getting by. Share a photo on Instagram or Twitter using the hashtag #NSWatHome. Your images will be added to the Library's collection so that we may help tell this story of this time to future generations.
sl.nsw.gov.au/nswathome

Don't miss

5 OCT Drought, Flood, Heat, Dust

Scholar Rebecca Jones explores the effects of extreme weather on people living in arid, inland Australia in the early 20th century. Free online

2–5 DEC

BAD Sydney Crime Writers Festival

Hear from former French spy 'Jack Beaumont' about his crime novel *The Frenchman*; Robert Drewe on his encounter with a murderer; and Mark Dapin on some of Australia's most audacious prison escapes. The Library's own Rachel Franks will give audience members a chance to solve the 1903 murder of NSW Constable Joseph Luker.
badsydney.com

Save the date

18-24 OCT

Aussie Bird Count

Calling all twitchers, birders and fans of Australia's feathered friends ... Here's your chance to get involved in the nation's biggest treasure hunt: the Aussie Bird Count. The data collected assists BirdLife Australia to understand more about the birds that live in our backyard. Register at **aussiebirdcount.org.au**

See page 64 for Russell McGregor's fascinating story on the Paradise Parrot.

Idea for Night Parrot painting (detail), c 2014, painted by William T Cooper

Writing is one way
of putting a life into perspective,
but like an aunt from the olden days
I piece together many other things:
photos into albums,
posies into vases,
squares of knitting into rugs
... leaves into compost,
lines of poetry into sand ...

Gillian Mears, *Paradise is a Place* (1997)