IABA Asia-Pacific x ASAL 2025 Conference

The Story and The Self: Navigating Truth Genres in Literature

30th June-4th July 2025

Flinders University, Adelaide + Online

Conference Booklet and Abstracts

Hosted by Flinders University, in collaboration with James Cook University and Griffith University

Conference organising committee: Associate Professor Kylie Cardell, Professor Kate Douglas, Dr Emma Maguire, and Dr Shannon Sandford

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Kaurna people, the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands we gather on. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of the Kaurna people to Country, and we respect and value their past, present and ongoing connection to the land and cultural beliefs.

The University acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which its campuses are located, these are the Traditional Lands of the Arrernte, Dagoman, First Nations of the South East, First Peoples of the River Murray & Mallee region, Jawoyn, Kaurna, Larrakia, Ngadjuri, Ngarrindjeri, Ramindjeri, Warumungu, Wardaman and Yolngu people. We honour their Elders past, present and emerging.

About IABA Asia-Pacific x ASAL 2025

The International Auto/Biography Association Conference, Asia-Pacific (IABA A-P) and the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL) are pleased to collaborate on this conference event.

The Story and The Self: Navigating Truth Genres in Literature

Are we living through two seemingly contradictory cultural moments? We fear the rise of AI, deep fakes, and pervasive media bias. We are deeply suspicious about our investments in the truth, and the stories we accept into our lives. In the same cultural moment, those working in literary studies, the creative arts, media, and performing arts, and especially auto/biography studies, are deeply curious about the increasingly blurred lines between fiction and non-fiction. The rapid rise of literary subgenres such as speculative biography, autofiction, biopics, and other generic hybrid forms have seduced practitioners and scholars alike. We enjoy the playfulness, innovation, and provocation of texts that bend genres.

This conference explores the tension/s arising from our contradictory relationship with truth genres in the public sphere. How do stories make claims to truth and reality? How do stories and media shape ideas of selfhood and identity? What changes–now and historically–have made an impact on shifting interests in truth, stories, and self?

As part of this collaborative conference, we are delighted to feature distinguished keynote speakers:

Barry Andrews Address – **Leah Jing McIntosh**
Dorothy Green Lecture – **Associate Professor Julieanne Lamond (ANU)**
ASAL Early Career Researcher Keynote – **Dr Eloise Faichney (U Melbourne)**
IABA Asia-Pacific, Whitlock Early Career Researcher Keynote – **Dr Chloe Green (ANU)**

General Information

Conference Committee

Associate Professor Kylie Cardell (Flinders University)
Professor Kate Douglas (Flinders University)
Dr Emma Maguire (James Cook University)
Dr Shannon Sandford (Griffith University)

We acknowledge with appreciation the support of Flinders University and the Association for the Study of Australian Literature.

Contact

Delegates can contact the conference committee via email at
iaba.asiapacific@flinders.edu.au

In case of emergency during the conference, please contact Kate Douglas on: 0402 440 223

Location

The IABA Asia-Pacific x ASAL conference is a mixed mode event held in person at Flinders University City Campus and online via Microsoft Teams.

For those attending the conference in person, Flinders City Campus is located next to the Railway Station in the Festival Plaza precinct.

One Festival Tower
Station Road
Adelaide SA 5000

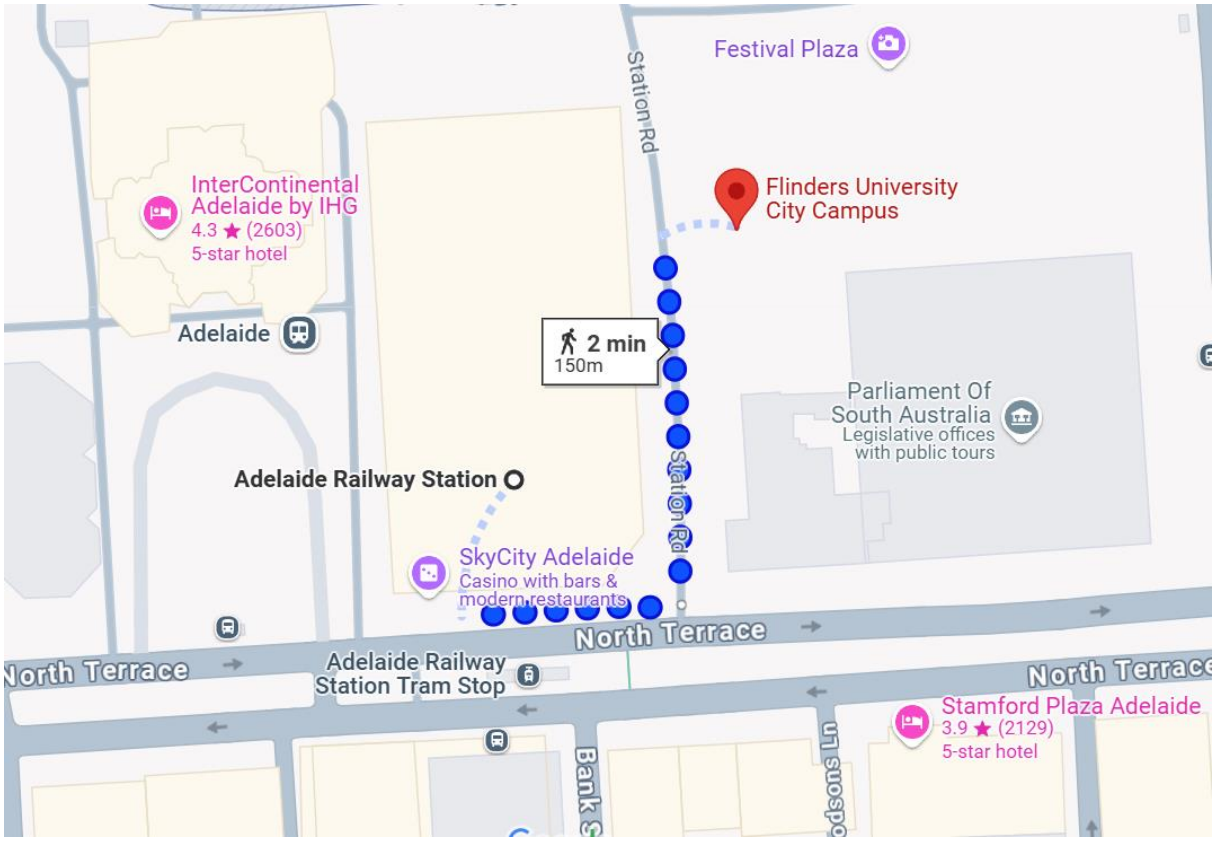
Wi-Fi/ Internet Access

Wi-Fi is available through eduroam or the dedicated conference network. An access code for the conference Wi-Fi will be distributed at the venue during the conference.

Getting to the Venue

For public transport users, it's a short walk from the Railway Station to the Flinders campus (see map below). From North Terrace, turn onto Station Road and walk approximately 100m to the final building. Look for the yellow Flinders University flags outside the entrance to the Flinders building. While other entrances are interconnected, the main Flinders entry is clearly marked with the university logo above the doorway and the distinctive flags.

Please note that Station Road is pedestrian-only, so vehicles cannot access it directly. If you're arriving by car or rideshare services (such as Uber or DiDi), the most convenient option is to be dropped off on North Terrace, then walk down Station Road to the venue.



Accessing the Conference Area – IMPORTANT **PLEASE READ**

The conference will take place on Level 14 of Flinders Festival Tower. Once inside the building, please head up the escalators, where our friendly volunteers will be waiting to assist you with lift access to Level 14.

Please be aware that Level 14 requires swipe card access for entry. However, delegates are free to leave the conference area and return to the lobby at any time, as no swipe card is required to exit the floor or building. The Festival Tower lobby is located on Level 1.

In the foyer area of Level 14 will be a sign with directions to the two main conference spaces as well as the registration table (see map below). Conference sessions and plenaries will all be held in the following rooms:

- Room 1407 – Function Space
- Rooms 1426a and 1426b – Collaborative Learning (this area has been partitioned into two sections, each with its own entrance).

There are plenty of quiet break out spaces available for delegates to use – including comfortable lounges, tables and chairs, and booth seating. Our level also comes equipped with a preparation kitchen, kitchenette/bar area, and restroom facilities.

As our conference is on a secure level with controlled access, we propose the following to manage entry and exit of delegates to/from the conference.

Volunteers will be positioned in the Festival Tower lobby on Level 1 to provide access to Level 14 during these designated periods:

- Mornings – before Session 1/keynotes
- Morning tea breaks
- Lunch breaks
- Afternoon tea breaks

Unfortunately, we cannot maintain volunteers at the lifts throughout the entire day. Our volunteers will not be available on Level 1 to grant access **during scheduled keynote lectures, sessions, or panels.**

We strongly recommend arriving early or on time for sessions and keeping movement outside our level to a minimum during the day, as re-entry cannot always be guaranteed once you leave the conference area.


Executive Lounge
BOARD ROOM, 1410
Function Space
EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM, 1409
KITCHEN
EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM, 1419
Executive Reception
Entry via Lifts
EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM, 1420
PRINTER
Professi Development
LOCKERS
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING, 1426A
MEETING ROOM, 1434
MEETING ROOM, 1431
MEETING ROOM, 1430
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING, 1426B
MEETING ROOM, 1429
RAILWAY STATION

Information for Presenters

IN PERSON PRESENTERS

We recommend bringing your presentation materials (such as PowerPoint slides, notes, or visuals) on a USB drive. While the university has AV facilities available, we cannot guarantee access to your personal accounts or cloud storage on the day.

ONLINE PRESENTERS

The conference program contains Microsoft Teams links to the conference, which you can access at any time. Please be mindful that sessions may be streamed, so we recommend entering the meeting with your microphone muted.

Make sure your audio, lighting, and camera setup are tested and ready well before your presentation. You'll be able to share your slides or visuals directly during your presentation – so, there is no need to send anything to the conference committee in advance.

To prepare, open your PowerPoint (or equivalent) file before joining the meeting. When it's your time to present, click the "Share" icon (usually an upward arrow) in the Teams toolbar and select the appropriate window or screen that shows your full-screen slides.

Further information on how to share your slides/screen can be found here

Self-trouble Shooting

Sound: If you can't hear the presenter, please check that your speakers or headphones are connected and that the volume is turned up. In Microsoft Teams, **click the three dots** (more options) in the meeting toolbar, select **Settings > Devices**, and make sure the correct speaker is selected under the **Audio devices** section.

Other solutions or trouble-shooting options can be found here

Wi-Fi: Please test your Wi-Fi connection in advance and use a reliable device to participate. It may also be worth having a charger cable nearby. If you are having connectivity problems, consider turning off your video to free up bandwidth.

Online Audience Members

As some sessions may have over 50 participants, we ask that audience members keep their microphones muted while speakers are presenting to avoid background noise. For the best viewing experience, you may wish to select "Speaker view" so the active speaker appears prominently on your screen.

Each session will have a chair to introduce speakers and facilitate Q&A. You're welcome to type questions into the Chat once the speaker has finished, or unmute yourself when called

upon by the session chair. To open the Chat, click the Chat icon in the toolbar (usually at the top right of the screen in Teams).

You may keep your camera on or off as you prefer, though please note that keynote lectures may be recorded for reasons of posterity.

Information for Chairs

Please familiarise yourself with the location and mode of participation (i.e., in person, online, hybrid) for your assigned session. As a reminder, time allocations are as follows: **20 minutes for in person presentations** and **10 minutes for online presentations.**

1) Prepare in advance by checking you have the correct names, institutional affiliation, paper titles and brief biographical notes for your introduction – provided in full below.

2) Make sure all speakers are present. If someone is missing or joining the session late, inform the audience that you will start the session on time and late presenters will have an opportunity to present when ready.

3) Should connectivity problems with Microsoft Teams arise before or during the panel, contact one of the conference organisers immediately.

4) Start on time, and welcome everyone to the session. Please remind those watching on Teams to mute their microphones.

5) Say the session name so people know they are in the right place. Be brief in your introductions but make speakers and the audience feel acknowledged and included. Remind speakers of their allotted time.

6) Please keep speakers to time – in fairness to all. We recommend timing each session with a stopwatch on your phone and giving each speaker a short signal 3 minutes before their time is up.

7) After all the presentations are over, invite questions. It's advisable to have one of your own to ask in case the audience members are hesitant.

8) Try to provide opportunities for questions from multiple people, rather than allow one person to dominate the conversation. You may need to repeat questions so everyone can hear/understand.

9) Don't feel pressured to accept all questions, especially if time is running short. Pick out 3 or 4 and then encourage participants to contact each other informally later.

10) If you are chairing a mixed session with some people online and some in person, alternate between audiences – again, be selective if there are a lot of questions.

11) At the end, thank the speakers and everyone who attended and remind participants which sessions are directly following (or, if there is a break scheduled).

IABA Asia-Pacific x ASAL 2025 Events

Workshop – Monday 30th June

All delegates are welcome to attend the following workshop:

Research Methods for Contemporary Publishing Studies: Insights from the Community Publishing in Regional Australia Project

Alexandra Dane (U Melb), Beth Driscoll (U Melb), Caitlin Parker, Sandra Phillips (U Melb **–** online).

Location: Flinders City Campus, Festival Tower, Level 14

Duration: 3 hours (including a break) **–** 2:00-5:00pm

Mode: Hybrid (synchronous). In-person participants will do some activities in small groups; online participants will have instructions to do those activities remotely, with chat support from workshop leaders.

For further information, please contact Beth Driscoll: driscoll@unimelb.edu.au

The Community Publishing in Regional Australia project is funded by an ARC Linkage grant and aims to find new ways to support the increasing number of regional Australians, including regional Indigenous Australians, who use digital technologies to write and publish their own books. The project runs as a partnership between the University of Melbourne, University of Queensland, four local councils (Alice Springs Town, Broken Hill, Burdekin Shire, and Winton) and three industry organisations (Busybird Publishing, Booktopia and the Small Press Network). The belief animating the project is that a dynamic story can be told about cultural heritage, digital change, storytelling, and the history and future of the book in Australia by turning attention to the self-publishing activities in diverse regional communities.

In this workshop, participants will learn and practice methods that have been integral to this project, and which have potential application in a range of research and teaching settings. We will begin by discussing relationships with industry and community partners and how these can enable knowledge exchange. We will then explore a range of complementary methods for investigating contemporary book writing, production, and distribution. Participants will get the opportunity to work 'hands on' with a small, mixed dataset comprising recordings and transcripts, physical objects, and Austlit records. By engaging with this data, participants will explore the possibilities and limitations of different methods including thematic analysis of interviews; paratextual and object analysis; tracing the book supply and distribution chain; and metadata scraping and coding. The session will be hybrid, and early career academics are especially welcome.

Barry Andrews Address and ASAL Prizes – Monday 30th June

Location: Flinders City Campus, Festival Tower, Level 14

Duration: approx. 3 hours **–** 5:30-8:30pm

Join us for one of the highlights of the ASAL conference: the annual Barry Andrews Address, this year delivered by Leah Jing McIntosh! The event will open with the presentation of ASAL prizes, in recognition of outstanding contributions to Australian literature and literary scholarship, including:

- Walter McCrae Russell Award
- Alvie Egan Award
- Mary Gilmore Award for Poetry
- Rosemary van den Berg Prize
- ALS Gold Medal

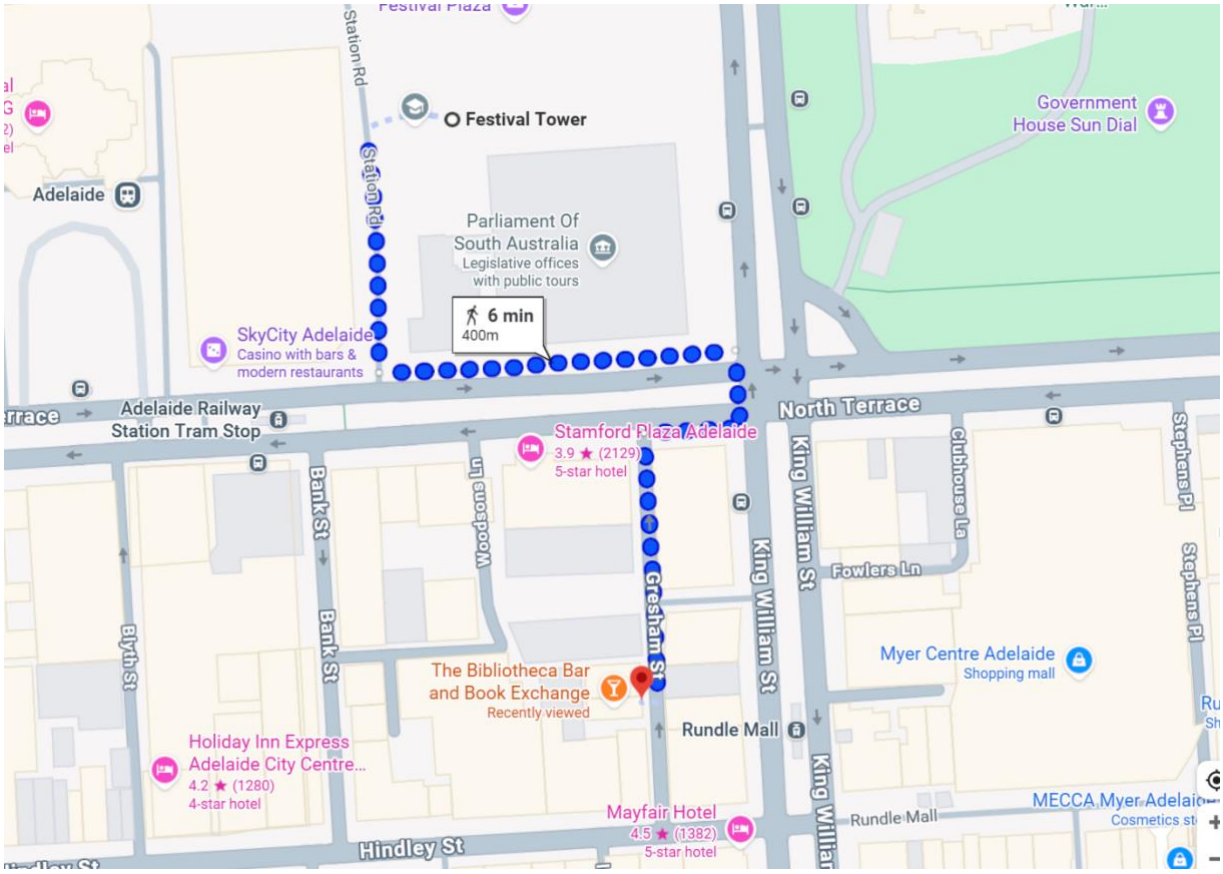
Please arrive promptly at 5:30 for a 6:00pm start. Drinks and nibbles will be provided.

Creative Reading Night – Tuesday 1st July

Location: Bibliotheca Bar, 27 Gresham Street

Celebrate the 'opening night' of the Story and the Self Conference with a speed read book event showcasing local Adelaide authors at The Bibliotheca Bar and Book Exchange at 27 Gresham Street – on the opposite side of North Terrace (see map below). This bookish venue has a great selection of the finest whiskies, book-themed cocktails and mocktails enjoyed with an equally curated selection of tasty quick bites from the new work and old of local writers like Danielle Clode, Lisa Hannett, Heather Taylor-Johnson, Amelia Walker, Jennifer Mills, Nicholas Jose, Lauren Fuge and (possibly) more!

Join us 5.30-6.30pm on Tuesday 1st of July and stay on for drinks and dinner on nearby Hindley Street.



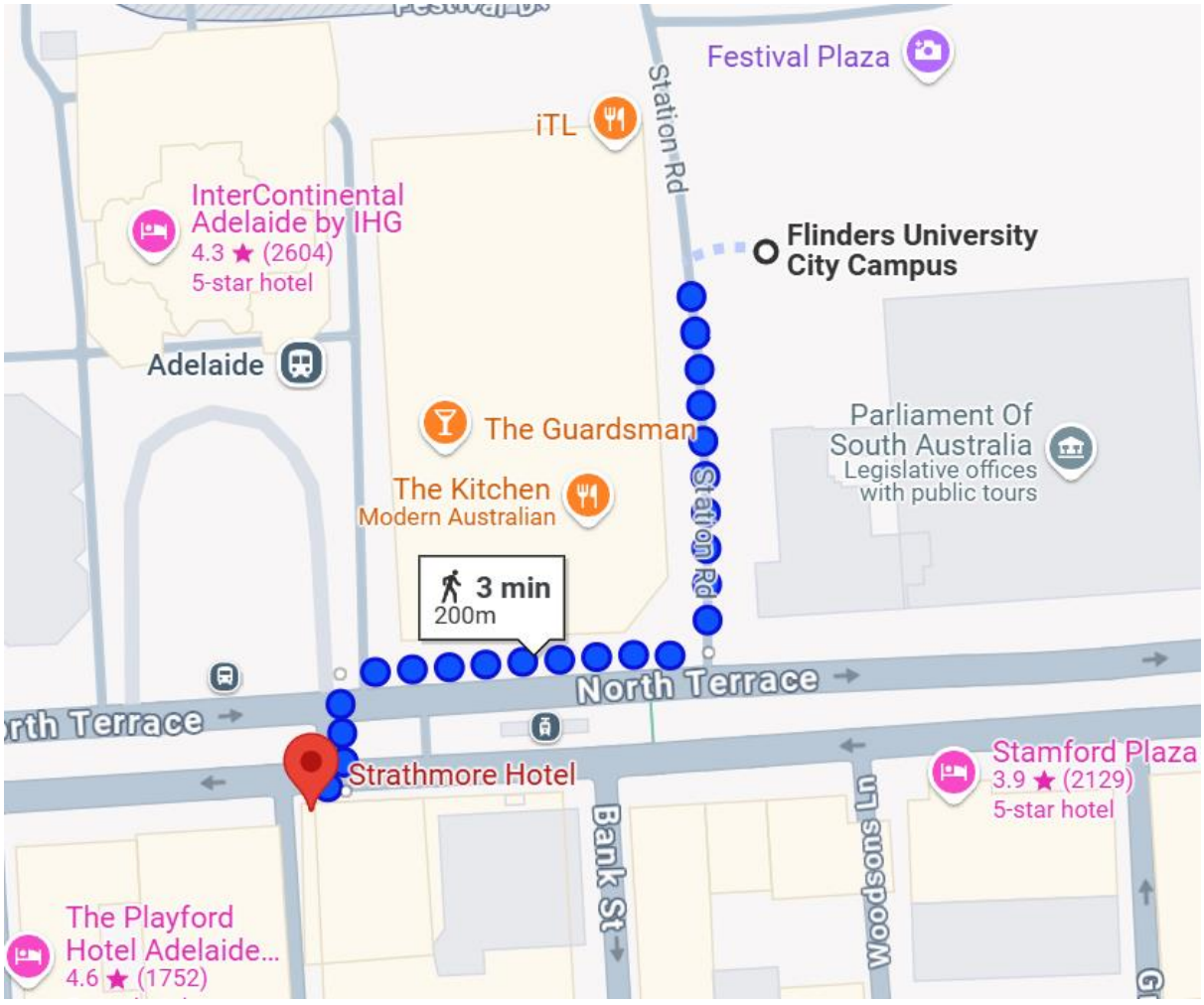
Conference Dinner – Thursday 3rd July

Location: The Strathmore, 129 North Terrace

For those registered to attend, the conference dinner will be held on Thursday 3rd July at The Strathmore Hotel – a short walk from the conference venue opposite the Sky City Casino, Convention Centre and Railway Station (see map below).

Located in the heart of Adelaide's CBD on vibrant North Terrace, The Strathmore is an iconic city pub known for its relaxed atmosphere, modern menu, and unbeatable location. A favourite social spot for locals and visitors alike, it's the perfect place to unwind with friends, enjoy a meal, or soak up the city's energy from the upstairs balcony.

Our conference dinner will be held at 6:30pm in the Verandah Dining area upstairs at The Strathmore. It will be a great opportunity to relax, connect, and celebrate the conference together in one of Adelaide's most welcoming venues.



IABA Asia-Pacific x ASAL 2025 Keynote Presentations

Barry Andrews Address

Leah Jing McIntosh

Monday 30th June
7:00-8:00pm, Room 1407 Function Space

“Of words, of memories, of lies”: On Asian Australian autofiction

In a nation historically (and presently) so hostile to the fact of the non-White body, how might such hostility appear in our writing work? This paper considers how Asian Australian autofiction both sits within, and arcs against, the short history of Australia and its literary tradition, so often marked by hoaxes and imposture. Thinking alongside the work of André Dao, Brian Castro and Nam Le, this paper proposes that the autofictive gesture opens new possibilities for the racialised writer. In *Shanghai Dancing* (2003), Castro writes, “everything in history is always wrapped in a tissue; of words, of memories, of lies.” Shifting restlessly between fact and fiction, disclosure and disavowal, these writers tear at this tissue.

Leah Jing McIntosh is the founding editor of *Liminal*, an anti-racist literary project based in Naarm. She received her Masters in English from University College London, and is currently completing her PhD on Asian American autofiction at the University of Melbourne. In 2024, she directed the Liminal Festival, in partnership with the Wheeler Centre; in 2022, she edited *Against Disappearance*, an award-winning collection of essays on memory and the archive. Seeking to create new spaces and opportunities for community, Leah has established national literary prizes, fellowships, and an international writing workshop. This past May, she received the Special Award at the NSW Literary Awards, for an exceptional contribution to Australian literature.

Dorothy Green Lecture

Associate Professor Julieanne Lamond (ANU)

Tuesday 1st July
9:00-10:00am, Room 1407 Function Space

On Following: Writing long distance walking in Australia's high country

In this paper, I consider the impact of life narratives about long-distance walking on a stretch of Bidawal, Monero-Ngarigo, Gunaikurnai, Jaithmathang, Taungurung, Mitambuta, Ngarigu-Currawong, Dhudhuroa, Waywurru, and Wurundjeri Country, an area otherwise known as the Australian Alps bioregion, or Australia's high country. Focusing on two recent works – *From Snow to Ash*, by Anthony Sharwood, and *Over This Backbone*, by Ya Reeves – I consider how the practice of long-distance walking influences and is influenced by life writing narratives in print, and in increasingly transmedial ways across film, podcasts, and social media.

I read long-distance walking as an inherently cultural and intertextual practice that is embedded in forms of colonial masculinity but that can also be entangled with the threat of and recovery from sexual violence, especially for women. In considering it as a practice which has significant impact on the ecology of the high country, I am also thinking about the role of our discipline in documenting and assessing the damage literature can do.

Julieanne Lamond is Associate Professor of English and Head of the School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics at Australian National University. She has published on the history of reading, gender and literary reception, and the work of many Australian writers. Her monograph, *Lohrey*, on Tasmanian writer Amanda Lohrey, was published by Melbourne University Press in 2022 and won the 2023 Walter McRae Russell Award.

IABA Asia-Pacific, Whitlock Early Career Researcher Keynote

Dr Chloe Green (ANU)

Wednesday 2nd July
9:00-10:00am, Room 1407 Function Space

What's Experimental about Life Writing?

By some metrics, experimental life writing is everywhere; hybrid, fragmented, and fictionalised forms of auto/biographies are filling shelves in bookstores, receiving critical and popular acclaim, and are increasingly the subject of academic attention. As forms like autofiction, autotheory, lyric essays and experimental memoirs move from the fringes to something closer to the centre, we are observing the formation of a distinct field cohering across these sites and others, which disrupts wider assumptions about the conservative essence of life writing. However, there has been little attention to what makes life writing experimental as a whole; how does experimental life writing diverge from the extant traditions of experimental writing more broadly, and what alternative traditions can it constitute in its wake? Working through some case studies from recent years, this talk details how experimental life writing puts the category of life writing under stress, twisting and tweaking what counts as a believable story, or a story of a life itself. By framing the debate not around novelty or pure formalism, this talk outlines some stakes for this emerging field, and proposes a claim specific to the field of life writing. As I will explore, works of experimental life writing intervene boldly into the world, rather than merely reflecting it, and create subjectivities that can only be produced through innovative literary forms. To experiment with life writing is, in this sense, to experiment with the limits of what a life can look like.

Dr. Chloe R. Green is a lecturer in English at the Australian National University, where they research life writing, the medical humanities, and contemporary affective cultures. Prior to this she was an Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow at University College Dublin. Their first book, *Writing Contested Illness: Experimentation in Contemporary Women's Life Writing*, will be published with Edinburgh University Press in September.

ASAL Early Career Researcher Keynote

Dr Eloise Faichney (U Melbourne)

Thursday 3rd July
9:00-10:00am, Room 1407 Function Space

List of Abstracts – Individual Papers

(in alphabetical order)

Emel Zorluoglu Akbey
Ghostwriting as Cultural Translation in Melek Hanoum's Memoir: *Thirty Years in the Harem*.

This paper explores the memoirs of Melek Hanoum, the wife of Kıbrıslı Mehmed Paşa, whose unique position as a French-born woman in the Ottoman elite offers insight into the intersection of gender, power, and cross-cultural identity. However, the fact that her memoir, *Thirty Years in the Harem*, was ghostwritten complicates traditional notions of truth and self-representation. Rather than viewing ghostwriting as a loss of authenticity, this paper argues that it serves as a form of cultural translation, shaping how her identity and experiences are mediated for a European audience.

Ghostwriting does not merely distort Melek Hanoum's voice but actively translates her experience in a way that aligns with Western Orientalist expectations. This raises critical questions about authorship and narrative control: Whose gaze dictates the final version of the story? Is it Melek Hanoum's, the ghostwriter's, or an imagined European readership's? By positioning her memoir within the framework of transcultural identity, this paper examines how her narrative negotiates between Ottoman and European cultural spheres, creating a self-representation that is neither entirely Ottoman nor fully Western.

This study also questions Melek Hanoum's memoir within broader discussions on women's life writing and memory. Rather than passively recording lived experiences, memoirs—especially those mediated by ghostwriters—are carefully curated performances of the self. In this context, memory is not simply recalled but actively shaped by social and literary conventions. By reconsidering the role of ghostwriting as a strategy of self-representation rather than a loss of authenticity, this paper offers a fresh perspective on agency, authorship, and the politics of voice in Ottoman women's writing.

Emel Zorluoglu Akbey is an assistant professor at Erzurum Technical University. She obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Sussex. She published articles on women writers, identity, and autobiography. Her major research interests include women writers, postcolonial feminist literature, psychoanalysis, and transnational-transcultural literature. She is currently working on Anglophone Muslim women writers.

Evelyn Araluen
Spectropoetics, hauntology, the archive and truth-telling in Aboriginal creative practices

Archives of colonial (mis)representations of Aboriginal identity and history have proved to be a generative creative domain for Aboriginal artists seeking to undermine the continuing circulation of racist inscriptions of Aboriginality. Themes of reconstruction, rematriation, and reverence for those erased by colonial archives have been interrogated by writers and artists such as Alison Whittaker, Jeanine Leane, Neika Lehman, Paola Balla and the Unbound Collective, deploying hauntological and spectropoetic practices to emphasise the continued spiritual relationship of Aboriginal peoples to memory, land, and ancestors, and affirm the role of desire in reclaiming and repatriating stolen histories. These works move beyond the act of reading the archive towards acts of radical re-inhabitation of the spaces and histories

from which these stories are being recovered, embodying what Harkin describes as the inheritance of future-memory (2014), but are also often invested in the disrupture of the colonial infrastructure of containment and curation in which these stories are accessed through the state.

The 'archival poetics' of Aboriginal writers have been subject to a recent interest by Australian and international scholars. This paper seeks to sidestep the iterative and descriptive approaches popularised in Australian Literary Studies by interrogating the interaction of visual arts practices with spectropoetic or hauntological literary projects and gestures towards refusal (Tuck, 2009), contrapuntal storytelling (Said, 1993), inscriptive disobedience (Araluen, 2022) and the negative lyric (Dunk, 2020). By deepening the theoretical apparatus associated with these works in dialogue with interdisciplinary artistic practices, this paper seeks to add critical nuance to this growing subject of scholarly interest.

Evelyn Araluen is a Goorie and Koori poet, editor and educator. She is a co-editor of *Overland Literary Journal*, co-convening editor of the *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, Chair of the Board of Directors at the Institute of Postcolonial Studies, and a Lecturer at the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Studies and Cultural Development, the Victorian College of the Arts. Her debut poetry collection *DROBEAR* (UQP, 2021) won the 2022 Stella Prize, and her second collection *THE ROT* is forthcoming with UQP in November, 2025.

Hossein Asgari
Forugh Farrokhzad: of 'Sin' and her Demons

Forugh Farrokhzad was born in Iran in 1935, and her first collection, *The Captive* appeared in 1955. Farrokhzad wrote about love, lust, and desire at a personal level, initiating an unprecedented poetic discourse on women's sexuality from a female perspective. Focusing on "Sin", one of her first published poems, this article examines why "Sin" stands out as one of Farrokhzad's most significant poems, despite its inelegant style. Further, through close reading of two poems—"Only Sound Remains" and "Green Delusion"— this article challenges the common belief among critics that her life can be divided into two separate phases: one characterized by confusion, self-doubt, and remorse during the creation of her first three poetry volumes, and another of "rebirth", defined by self-confidence, growth, and autonomy when she wrote *Another Birth* and the poems published posthumously. This article argues that ambivalence and fluctuations between self-doubt and self-confidence stayed central to Farrokhzad's life and its mirror, her poetry, due to her unconventional approach to love and desire, which was reproached by the society of her time and fed into her inner conflicts.

Hossein Asgari studied physics and creative writing. His debut novel, *Only Sound Remains*, was shortlisted for both the Miles Franklin Literary Award and the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards. His second novel, *Desolation*, will be published by Ultimo Press in 2025. He currently works as a postdoctoral researcher at UniSA Creative.

Mark Azzopardi
Patrick White: The Novel and the Telephone

Patrick White loved the telephone. We know this from White's published correspondence and the gratuitous telephone conversation, between White and his friend Desmond Digby, that concludes *Flaws in the Glass*. Prefacing this conversation, White praises the telephone as a technology that helped him "[overcome] a little of my shyness in conversations where my vis-à-vis remained unseen." In this presentation I take up the association between telephony and what is visually and epistemologically "unseen" in White's novels. Focusing on *Happy Valley* (1939) and *The Living and the Dead* (1941), I examine how White's characters utilise the telephone as an instrument of social and erotic exchange. I also explore some of the ways in which telephony shapes the modernism of White's early novels. One of the defining features of White's early writing is the ironic contrast between characters' spoken dialogue and their interior lives. White's characters tend to communicate laconically with each other, while readers are given much fuller access to characters' thoughts and sensations via narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness and free indirect discourse. While White would later complain that his early novels were overly derivative of Stein and Joyce, the way these novels are put together creates an important role for the telephone. Characters say things to each other over the telephone they do not say face to face, even as their attempts to communicate are botched, delayed, or have their lines crossed, as happens when Elyot Standish tries to call his sister Eden to tell her that her lover is dead. The telephone enables two physically separated characters to communicate at the same time, and several characters accordingly use the telephone to conduct romantic relationships and arrange secret meetings. Not being able to see the person at the other end of the line also carries an erotic dimension for some of White's characters, who take pleasure in imagining the body of the person they are speaking with based on the sensuous medium of voice (an activity which can also be botched, as when Catherine Standish answers the phone and hears the voice of her husband's lover). Finally, the telephone in White's early novels remains, as it was for White and Digby, the supreme instrument for gossip, and I conclude by considering some of the similarities between gossip and White's presentation of his characters' inner lives.

Mark Azzopardi is a faculty member at Temple University, Japan. His publications have appeared in Australian Literary Studies, the Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, and the edited collection *E. L. Doctorow: A Reconsideratio*n (Edinburgh UP). Mark is currently working on a project about Patrick White and modernism.

Nina Baeyertz

In-corp-orating fragments of a life: Queer/ing life writing of addiction

This paper explores how writing the body through somatic process and fragmented form can produce more truthful, helpful representations of substance use and recovery, creating cohesion for people who (have) use(d) alcohol and other drugs (AOD), while challenging normative understandings of addiction.

Memoirs of addiction are often in neoconfessional mode (Gilmore), but narrative arcs of shameful “rock bottoms” leading to sober salvation fail to represent the variation of lived experiences of substance use. Individual-centred progress narratives can also cloud the social, environmental conditions of addiction, with Victorian ideas of addiction as a moral failing extending into the neoliberal construction of problem use being the responsibility of the individual. This research examines instead how addiction and recovery in memoir can be

conceived not simply as an individual's narrative arc, but made up of relational body-written fragments, where AOD use exists as part of an ongoing socio-material network of becoming.

In this paper, I offer a creative process of in-corp-orating fragments of blurred/traumatic substance-using life narrative with fragments of sobriety, pleasure and community, through employing an embodied writing practice grounded in corporeal feminist theory and assemblage thinking. I suggest that bringing the substance-using/sober body and its web of relations into a collated collection of textual fragments may cohere the autobiographical subject's 'shattered self' (Herman, Atkinson, Gibbs) into a materially grounded structure, one that doesn't require redemption or conclusion.

I investigate how my own fragments of life writing can be in-corp-orated in this way, as part of a lineage of queer/ing addiction life writing (Wojnarowicz), where writing the body is an act of self- and world-making (Baker, Eades), and can become a vital intervention into normative representations of addiction.

Nina Baeyertz (she/they) is a PhD student at La Trobe University, where their research project focuses on queer/ing addiction life writing. She was the 2022 recipient of LTU's Allan Martin Prize for best interdisciplinary Honours thesis in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, for her thesis *The Aporia of Writing Shame*, and has been published in Meniscus Journal.

Alice Bellette
Re:tracking: The politics of citation and the repatriation of Alexis Wright

The Swan Book is a rich novel that rewards its readers with each revisit. It is often lumped into the 'cli-fi' category, and its presence as the subject of academic writing often reflects this analytical reading. However, during my own research, I noticed an alarming trend emerging as authors continued to cite an analytical framework asserting *The Swan Book* as a magical realist novel. The main issue with a superimposed literary framework – in this case magical realism – is that it represents a kind of intellectual neo-colonialism. Taking cue from Sara Ahmed's emphasis on a politics of citation, this presentation seeks to do two things: firstly, to trace the extent that a magical realist reading of *The Swan Book* has reached, using tools from citation metrics. And secondly, to question the legitimacy of a magical realist analysis of Wright's novel, particularly taking into the consideration of Wright writing from her embodied experience as a Waanyi woman and therefore the extent to which analytical frameworks have abstracted her from her own work.

Alice Bellette is a writer, researcher and palawa descendant. She holds a PhD in Australian Literature and is currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Indigenous) at the University of Melbourne. With an Australian Research Council funded grant she co-produced *Welcome?*, a limited-series podcast, telling stories about colonised landscapes, and the people who meet in them.

Lisa Bennett
Why don't you just make a novel out of this? Truth and Invention in Early Medieval Women's Speculative Biographies

For several years, I have been consumed with writing speculative biographies about regular (but nevertheless remarkable) Viking Age women as well as their mythical counterparts, which has led to the publication of two books – *Viking Women: Life and Lore* (2023) and *Viking Women: Myth and Magic* (forthcoming, 2026) – and also informs my new project about women from "Arthurian" England. These are all hybrid works – part biographical retelling, part historical context, part memoir, part travel narrative – informed by and constructed from fragments of early medieval manuscripts, lines of poetry and runic inscriptions, grave goods and other material evidence, personal experience, and carefully considered invention.

At conferences and readings, I'm often asked about the combination of "fiction" and "fact" in my books: *Why don't you just make a novel out of this?* To date, my off-the-cuff responses usually highlight the perception of non-fiction as "truth", and the weight this perception lends to our engagement with medieval women's stories. As the anonymous author of the 13th century Old French *Le Roman de Silence* observes, "I'm not saying that there isn't a good deal of fiction mingled with truth, in order to improve the tale, but if I am any judge of things, I'm not putting in anything that will spoil the work, nor will there be any less truth in it, for truth should not be silenced." However, in this short paper, I want to unpick the different knots of 'truth' that tie speculation and non-fiction together – along with my role as interlocutor between these modes ("if I am any judge of things…") – in order to provide some more useful answers to this question.

Lisa Bennett is an Associate Professor of Creative Writing and English at Flinders University. She is a specialist in Old-Norse Icelandic literature, the Viking Age, genre fiction, and creative practice. Her most recent books are *Viking Women: Life and Lore* (Thames and Hudson, 2023) and *Story Thinking and the Real-world Applications of Sci-Fi and Fantasy Writing* (Bloomsbury, 2025). Under her pen name, Lisa L. Hannett, she is an internationally recognised, multiple award-winning writer of five collections, a novel, and over 80 speculative fiction short stories.

Vanessa Berry

Living/Writing: Time structures in autobiographical practice

Time structures such as the day, month and year often provide frameworks for autobiographical writing. They are foundational to genres of self-narrative such as the diary or journal; they bring containment to memoir and the essay. They also operate as a mechanism for accessing the writer's experiences in specific moments in time. The immediacy and intimacy of such real-time writing emphasises its correlation with truth, where the text reads as closer to the writer's true experience and self. This paper examines this living/writing relationship in two projects: *A Body of Water: A Year's Notebook* (1990) by Beverley Farmer, and the unpublished *Mind of Hour* by Bernadette Mayer. Spanning a year, *A Body of Water* is a writing journal that interweaves Farmer's short stories, revealing the interrelationships between them and the transpositions between Farmer's experiences and her fiction. Mayer's *Mind of Hour* was a repeated literary experiment in recording the movements of thought over the course of one hour. The text reveals the limits of verisimilitude as Mayer struggled to present a 'more accurate picture of thought'. Written in the late 1980s/early 1990s, both works were produced just prior to the advent of Web 1.0.

and preserve analogue modes of autobiographical practice that continue to resonate, as their hybridity prefigures the genre experimentations of 21st century life writing.

Vanessa Berry is a writer who lives and works on Gadigal land. Her projects are centred in autobiography, memory, history, archives and objects. Her fifth book, *Calendar,* will be published in October 2025 by Upswell. Vanessa is a Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Sydney.

Meg Brayshaw
Dymphna Cusack's Dictaphone; or, Doing and Feeling with the Realist Novel

For almost two decades now, literary scholars have debated where our focus should lie at this moment of global omnicrisis and institutional failure. If we are to justify our continued existence, should we anchor our scholarly practices and pedagogies in attention to the meaning of the literary work and what it does in the world, or in the experience of the individual reader who engages with it (see, for example, Felski 2015, 2020; Kornbluh 2017, 2019)? Should we privilege analysis or attachment? Given its capacity to both immerse readers and reflect public life, it is not surprising that the realist novel has emerged as a key front in this battle between commitment to reading for meaning or experience. This paper waves something of a white flag by advocating for a method of reading realism that incorporates doing *and* feeling. It unpacks this method by correlating it with the means by which Dymphna Cusack composed her popular, politically committed mid-century realist fictions. Due to illness, Cusack relied on a Dictaphone from the late 1940s, and several of her dictated drafts are held by the National Library. On these tapes, we hear Cusack adopt accents for her characters, get frustrated at lapses in inspiration, continue to narrate as guests arrive and converse in the background, and address her typist by name as she asks for changes and corrections. Cusack intended her novels to serve as public interventions into political discourse, but the Dictaphone drafts show that she composed them via a method that was embodied, immediate, performative, and interpersonal. In this way, when we take the circumstances of its production into consideration alongside its purpose and reception, Cusack's fiction allows us to think about what realism does in the world, how we feel when we read it, and posit that these questions are not as easily disentangled as the either/or suppositions of the method wars would have us believe.

Meg Brayshaw is the John Rowe Lecturer in Australian literature at the University of Sydney. She is working on two projects: a literary history of mining in Australia, and a monograph about women writers and the making of the realist novel from 1926 to 1997. At Sydney University Press, she is academic editor of the Sydney Studies in Australian Literature series.

Sian Petronella Campbell
The Function of the Speculative in the Contemporary Autofiction Novel: Gothic Horrors and Shifting Truths in Gabriel Smith's *Brat*

"Each time you remember you re-write ... the important thing is that you don't let other people affect your own memories," writes Gabriel Smith in his 2024 autofictional gothic horror *Brat.* In Smith's *Brat,* Gabriel's authorial surrogate (Noys, 2015) or avatar (Schmitt, 2022) "Gabriel", has moved back to his deserted family home; his father has died and his

mother, suffering from a form of dementia, has been moved to a care facility nearby. "Gabriel's" skin has begun peeling off his body, he's being haunted by visions of someone wearing a deer mask, and he can't escape the feeling that he's being watched: "When I woke, it felt like someone was watching me. I sat up in bed for a second. Then I turned on the lights. But there was nobody in the room." (*Brat,* 20) All the while the family home takes on the quality of a haunted house, where mould and wild things grow and nothing is quite what it seems.

Contemporary autofiction is explicitly an experimental, hybrid form of creative writing, concerned not with truth *or* invention but, crucially, with both. Siddharth Srikanth argues that "for authors of autofiction both autobiographies and novels are formally inadequate to register the truths about the modern self" (351). This paper examines the ways in which speculative autofiction operates, and the potentiality of the speculative mode for the autofiction novel. Marjorie Worthington notes of the autofictional text that "perhaps the argument could be made that while much of it did not really happen, every word still is, in a literary sense, "True"" (476) If speculative fiction helps us envision and materialise alternative futures (Vint, 2021) then speculative *autofiction* might allow us to re-write our memories and access new modes of life writing that let us reconceptualise "truth" and "untruth".

Sian Petronella Campbell is a writer and PhD candidate at RMIT's non/fictionLab, where she is researching the various potentialities of contemporary autofiction. She holds an MA in Writing and Literature from Deakin University and a BFA in Creative and Professional Writing from The Queensland University of Technology.

Kylie Cardell

Jess Hill's *Reckoning*: The Personal Essay as Genre of #MeToo

My current research seeks to map and understand more about the essay as a form of Australian literature. While there are strong literary essay traditions in the UK and US, Australian authors have not always found it easy to publish essays in this country. Maria Tumarkin, writing in 2015, noted that when essays did circulate, those by literary "giants" tended to predominate. Nearly a decade later, the state of play for essay writing and publishing has changed. Daniel Juckes in his recent book-length essay on the Australian essay, argues that we are "living in the moment of the essay." His sweeping love letter to a lively contemporary field is further evidence that the essay is a dynamic and increasingly visible literary genre in Australia, one that I argue should also be approached as a form of contemporary life writing.

This paper contextualises Australian literary essays that also mobilise or strategically navigate autobiographical representation. I explore this in my discussion by turning to the essay at the site of an "occasion" that Leigh Gilmore has argued is an opportunity to reconsider and understand the politics of genre and form in relation to survivor storytelling: #MeToo. What is the significance of the essay as a genre by which subjects negotiate the challenges and transits of speaking-up in the broader cultural moment created by #MeToo? How does the essay function as narrative justice or in relation to the ethics of representation for marginal subjects and experiences that is also a theme of the #MeToo movement?

In this paper, I turn to an example of #MeToo essaying that is also an engagement with the essay as a genre of public intellectual discourse and a prestigious form of Australian

publishing, the Quarterly Essay. Jess Hill's *The Reckoning* (2021) is a cultural-historical account of #MeToo that also presents an example of the authority and persuasiveness of first-person narration. An instance of the essay as a mode of public intellectual discourse, Hill uses the flexibility of the essay form to make critical space for personal storytelling and individual testimony, including Hill's own.

Kylie Cardell is an Associate Professor in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Science at Flinders University. She is a founding and executive director of the Life Narrative Lab, the International Autobiography Association Asia-Pacific (IABA A-P), and is Essays editor for the journal *Life Writing*. She has published extensively on new and evolving forms of life writing and is the author of *Dear World: Contemporary Uses of the Diary*. She is the editor of the collection *Essays in Life Writing* and (with Kate Douglas) of *Telling Tales: Autobiographies of Childhood and Youth*.

Victoria Circelli
Maternal Roots and Becoming (M)Other in Janette Turner Hospital's *Charades*

This paper will examine the promise of "homecomings" and "roots" in expat Janette Turner Hospital's first Queensland novel, *Charades* (1988). In a *One Thousand and One Nights* fashion, Turner Hospital's Charade constructs stories of her Queensland childhood to Physicist Koenig. Despite her divulgences, Charade remains mysteriously other to Koenig and herself. She spends the novel, her adolescence, sifting through the thousand and one charades of her upbringing and maternal/paternal lineage, claiming to "belong to loss and absence". What follows is Charade's sifting of her lineage; her own memories reconstructed, as well as her mothers' (multiple maternal lineages) pasts. This is a reshuffling, as Charade tells Koenig her multiple "beginnings" and "favourite versions" of her heritage. Charade is not a formation of one narrative/maternal 'line' but a multiplicity of becomings, problematising the concept of universal and singular truths. By deconstructing and transgressing notions of the paternal for the sororal and storytelling for silence, this paper will uncover the philosophical implications of Charade's own identity deconstruction and re-formation.

This paper will demonstrate how Turner Hospital disrupts the misinformed lie of the land, that memory, the past, and place are not static points in a map that have no other bearing on the present. By visually and poetically illustrating how memory and place can be morphed and injected into the present, therein lies an agency and active transformation of past lineages and the places associated with them, so that Charade may draw herself out of "silence" and reintegrate into embodied and mobile places.

Victoria Circelli is a PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide. Her thesis is on the writings of Janette Turner Hospital, with an interest in themes of dislocations, nomadism, cartography and Australian identity through a feminist post-human lens.

Cirenmeiduo
Weak Otherness: A Critique of Contemporary Global Communication in Michelle de Kretser's *The Life to Come*

Michelle de Kretser's *The Life to Come* critiques global communication under neoliberalism, exploring its impact on vulnerable groups and the tension between competing notions of truth in literary discourse. This paper, drawing on Augusto Ponzio and Susan Petrilli's concept of "semioethics," argues that through the character of Pippa, the novel illustrates how a self-centered, market-driven approach to communication leads to the exploitation and marginalization of those perceived as the "other". Pippa's communications, whether personal, mediated through social media, or expressed in her literary work, are characterized by a lack of genuine empathy and a disregard for the complexities of those around her. This results in a world where the absence of effective communication contributes to the erasure of identities and the deepening of isolation for marginalized or vulnerable individuals.

The novel challenges readers to consider the ethical responsibilities inherent in communication, urging a shift from self-serving communication to one that recognizes the intrinsic value of others. By exposing the shallowness in Pippa's neoliberal worldview, de Kretser highlights the need for a more inclusive and compassionate approach to interaction, one that transcends individualism and embraces the richness of diverse experiences. Ultimately, *The Life to Come* serves as a powerful reminder that genuine communication, one rooted in respect for otherness, is essential for creating a more interconnected and humane society. The author also places immense trust in the life to come as she states "it belongs to the young. I have great faith in them; in you." (Wood)

I am **Cirenmeiduo**, a Tibetan Phd candidate at Shanghai International Studies University. My interests include late 19th-century English fiction, contemporary Asian-Australian refugee narratives, and semioethics. I am currently developing my dissertation proposal on otherness-based communication in contemporary refugee fiction.

Danielle Clode
Science, Nature and Story: Using the I or the Eye

The need to provide a compelling and engaging narrative arc often results in stories about science and nature being overshadowed by the personal human perspective. It is tempting to use personal lived experience (with autobiographical or biographical points of view) to provide structure or connection with complex or distanced topics. This strategy has many benefits but risks overshadowing the topic matter with anthropocentric perspectives and can restrict the material to simplified or subserving forms. Intellectually complex concepts may be avoided, over-simplified or made less accurate in the pursuit of emotionally driven arcs. This challenge is particularly pronounced, for example in science and nature biography, where the subject may be less interesting than their subject matter (or vice versa). In nature writing, this approach tends to perpetuate the sidelining of non-human subjects. The rise of the I – or first person point of view has seen a fall in the use of the third person observational eye, a more traditional or old-fashioned science and nature perspective. This presentation will explore, through practice-led research, what impact these approaches have and how we can present narratives that are less human centred while still engaging for humans to read.

Danielle Clode is an interdisciplinary scholar and full time writer with a background in both creative arts and life sciences. She is the author of thirteen creative nonfiction books

encompassing history, natural history and biography as well as a range of essays, articles and academic publications across a diverse range of subjects. Danielle currently serves on the board of the Australian Society of Authors, Authors Legal and the Copyright Agency and is an associate at Flinders University.

Aidan Coleman
***An Odalisque of Feeling*: The Metaphors for the Self in the Poetry of John Forbes**

Employing Hazel Smith's concept of the surbol, I review the metaphors for the self employed throughout the oeuvre of the Australian poet John Forbes (1950-1998). Forbes was profoundly influenced by his New York predecessor Frank O'Hara (1926-1966). In-the-never-to-be-submitted Master's thesis Forbes wrote on O'Hara, one chapter—the only one he went on to publish—concerns O'Hara's in memory of my feelings, a poem in which O'Hara constructs a number of selves. Like O'Hara before him, much of Forbes' work presents a scepticism towards the self, and both poets metaphors for the self can be described as surbols—a term Hazel Smith employs to describe 'objects and events' that 'hover between surface and symbol' in the work of New York School poets, who 'turned the surface into a kind of depth'. Forbes metaphors, which often tend towards elastic conceits, function in radically different ways to O'Hara's. But while O'Hara's metaphors proclaim the boundless self-confidence, of a Harvard-educated poet writing from what was arguably then the cultural capital of the western world, Forbes metaphors—written from the margins of literally culture—are laden with self-doubt, and are imbued thematically with romantic, even erotic, failure.

Aidan Coleman is a Senior Lecturer at Southern Cross University on the Gold Coast, and the coordinator for the Associate Degree of Creative Writing. He is the author of three books of poetry, which have been shortlisted for national awards. His research has been published in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, *JASAL*, *New Writing*, *Text*, *Social Alternatives*, and *Westerly*, and he has published book chapters on eco-poetry, Shakespeare and Australian modernism on Routledge and Cambridge UP. A biography, *Thin Ice: A life of John Forbes*, is in press with Melbourne UP. Aidan is the Reviews Editor for *Text* and Poetry Editor for *Social Alternatives*.

Barry Corr
Watkin Tench's Referencing of Milton's *Paradise Lost* in his Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay, 1789, and A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson, in NSW, 1793

I propose to explore Watkin Tench's referencing of Milton's *Paradise Lost* in his *Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay,* 1789, and *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson, in NSW,* 1793. As a Royal Marine officer, Tench like many other public servants, both past and present, buried his personal observations cryptically in his works so as not to offend the hand that fed him.

When Tench paused on Prospect Hill in 1789, 'surveying the wild abyss' before heading west in search of a rumoured river, he drew upon John Milton's account of Satan's journey to Eden to seduce Adam and Eve. It was this largely unnoticed critical moment in the writing of

Australian history that led to thirty years of research and the signing of a contract with UNSW to publish *Surveying the Wild Abyss: Unravelling the Settler narrative* in 2025.

Tench's records of the exploration of the Hawkesbury River 1789-91, were the first steps in revealing that when historical evidence is hidden or even non-existent, one must inductively research the language used in the existing historical sources, contextualising it in its contemporary cultural setting, tracing the thought and language back to its wellsprings. *Surveying the Wild Abyss* explores the ramifications in time and space of the 'historical truth' of the settlement of one small part of Australia. If this work has an understanding of 'truth' it lies within the Holocaust writings of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno.

Barry Corr: My identity and experience have been enriched as a student on the 1965 Freedom Ride, and teaching in Aboriginal education at school, district and state levels. Since retiring I have been researching the Hawkesbury's Frontier War and my book *Surveying the Wild Abyss* will be published by UNSW this year.

Jane Costessi
The life and work of Geraldine Halls: Navigating truths, stories, and selves

My biographical research focuses on Geraldine Halls (née Jay, 1919-1996), a significant Adelaide-born writer who defied conventions in life and fiction. Using mixed methodologies and previously untapped primary sources, notably Halls's archived papers and corpus, and interviews conducted with her associates, my empirical research seeks to illuminate a largely overlooked figure in Australian cultural history.

In her lifetime, Halls was internationally acclaimed, particularly for her unorthodox mystery fiction as 'Charlotte Jay'; altogether more remarkable, however, appears her broader (astonishingly rich) body of work, and her multi-faceted life and achievements.

Between 1947 and 1971, she lived in Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Thailand, Lebanon, India and England, becoming one of the first post-war Australian novelists to engage with Asia. She was also, in later life, a dealer of antiques and Japanese prints. In 1954, she received Mystery Writers of America's inaugural Edgar Award for Best Novel, for her New Guinea-set thriller, *Beat Not the Bones* (as 'Charlotte Jay'). Other novels (as Geraldine Halls) encompass diverse genres and themes, including historical fiction, and sharp social satire, typically skewering subjects she considered obnoxious or absurd. My research also investigates a key discovery: a cache of early works published under a previously unknown pseudonym.

In several respects, Halls evokes another expatriate author, Christina Stead. Like Stead, Halls frequently fictionalised elements from her eventful life and extensive travels; she saw most of her books issued only overseas by major publishers, and experienced greater acclaim outside Australia (in the U.S. especially). Halls remained tight-lipped about auto fictive elements pervading her fiction (including her Bildungsroman, *This is My Friend's Chair*, 1995), however, I propose that a key to unlocking her work is to read it biographically. In addressing major information gaps about Halls and her work, I present fresh consideration of her texts, and her place in Australian literature.

Jane Costessi is a University of Adelaide MPhil candidate, conducting new research on Adelaide-born novelist Geraldine Halls (aka 'Charlotte Jay'). Awarded the Fred Johns

Scholarship for Biography, Jane has produced new entries about Halls for the revised Wakefield Companion to South Australian History, and Australian Dictionary of Biography.

Samuel J. Cox
***Icarius* Bound: C.R. Jury's Concealment of the Self**

C.R. Jury is a notable local literary figure woven into the very fabric of Adelaide's literary history. Referred to by Geoffrey Dutton as a "dilettante of the best kind," Jury was a scholar and teacher at the University of Adelaide during a pivotal moment. Although a classicist and poet with conservative literary tastes, he became a vital supporter of the young firebrands of Adelaide's literary scene in the late 1930s. It was Jury's support that enabled the fiery final issue of *Phoenix* magazine to be published in 1939. When that magazine was extinguished by conservative elements in the student union, it was Jury who provided the inspiration and financial backing, as patron, for the new title: *Angry Penguins*.

Despite Jury's deep connection to a seminal period in Australian cultural history, his own work has received little attention. A poet and playwright who had "fallen into passionate calf-love with Greece" as a young man (qtd. in Miles 15), his archaic—even anachronistic—tastes appear to sit uncomfortably with his support of youthful iconoclasts. Yet Jury's classicism, in fact, a radical act of concealment: it provided a conservative medium through which he could subtly but openly ennoble homosexual love. In Jury's most definitive treatment, the verse play *Icarius*, the eponymous character flies too close to that invisible sun—the self—and suffers the tragic consequences. Yet, Icarius' demise was Jury's cathartic rebirth, his symbolic flight out into the open.

Dr. Samuel J. Cox is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Tübingen. He completed his PhD in 2023 at the University of Adelaide, where he remains a fellow. He won ASAL's A.D. Prize in 2022, ALS's PhD Literary Prize in 2023, and was highly commended for the Kay Schaffer Award in 2024.

Shimi Moni Doley
June Jordan's *Soldier* and the Liminal Self in the Multiple Locations of Difference and Vulnerability

June Jordan in her memoir *Soldier: A Poet's Childhood* articulates the silenced voice of a child caught in the quagmire of an oppressive adult world, both white as well as black. The prologue encapsulates in a concentrated form the thematic concerns of her memoir – her being raised like a boy by her father, her childhood fears, her father buying books for her to inculcate literary taste and boyish pursuits and the brutal beatings of her father to toughen her up and train her to be a soldier for her race. It traces the contours of an Afro-Caribbean working-class girlhood in the Brooklyn district of New York in the late 1940s America but what queers the pitch here is her father's decision to raise her as a son he never had and, because, as a black girl, she amounted to nothing. The constructed self and the narrative voice in the text is in a constant struggle to break down the masculine-feminine duality and show through the images in her work the way to transcend this duality. This new framework articulates a hybrid representation of female Selfhood blending varied subject positions and, thus, displaying a compound identity. Her Selfhood was invested with a black female body, a gender socialized to be masculine, a genius with no peer in the black community, a location

in the working class and a vulnerable child. The narrative captures in short crisp sentences the snapshots of memories from her childhood. - an evocation which records the vulnerability of childhood and the oppression of racism and sexism. This retrospective journey to her past through the consciousness of the child June manifests itself in the ambivalent self-image of victim/warrior.

Dr. Shimi Moni Doley is an Asst. Professor in the Dept. of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi and has a teaching experience of more than 20 years. Her areas of interest are Gender and Women's Studies, Literature of North-East India, American Literature, and Life Writing. Topic of Ph. D Thesis: Chimera of the Self: African American Female Subjectivities and the Politics of Life Writing. Published several papers on American Literature, Gender Studies, Life Writing and Fiction.

Kate Douglas
'Don't Worry About Me': Children as Writers and Critics in Tham Luang cave rescue Collective Auto/Biographies

For 18 days in 2018, one story dominated global news headlines: Twelve young soccer players (aged 11–16) and their coach were trapped in the Tham Luang Nang Non cave in northern Thailand. Heavy rain caused flooding, making the rescue effort highly complex. In a large-scale international operation involving thousands of workers, the boys and their coach were successfully rescued.

Unsurprisingly, the fairytale rescue became the subject of numerous non-fictions, including eight books. Notably, three were written by rescue divers from the UK and Australia: Rick Stanton's *Aquanaut: A Life Beneath the Surface – The Inside Story of the Thai Cave Rescue* (2021), John Volanthen's *Thirteen Lessons that Saved Thirteen Lives* (2021), and Richard Harris's and Craig Challen's *Against All Odds: The Inside Account of the Thai Cave Rescue and the Courageous Australians at the Heart of It* (2020). There were also three books written for children and young adult readers: *Titan and the Wild Boars: The True Cave Rescue of the Thai Soccer Team* (2019) by Susan Hood, Pathana Sornhiran, and Dow Phumiruk; *All Thirteen* by Christina Soontornvat; and the *Against All Odds* Young Readers Edition by Craig Challen and Richard Harris.

My research focuses on children's life narratives, considering children both as writers and critics of non-fiction texts. While watching the news footage and reading the Harris/Challen young adult version as part of a children's book club I was running, I learned that the children had written letters to their parents while trapped in the cave. Now, with this large, mixed archive of life storytelling about the event, I am curious about how central the children's own voices have been in shaping the collective auto/biography of their extraordinary experience.

This paper investigates the positioning of the Thai children's voices in life narratives of the Tham Luang cave rescue. I will also briefly draw on the voices of children from the aforementioned book club as interpreters of life narratives. From which angles can we hear and see children when it comes to life stories constructed about and for them?

Kate Douglas is a Professor of English at Flinders University, South Australia. Her primary research interests are child-authored life narratives, life narratives for children, and life narratives about childhood. Her latest book is *Children and Biography: Reading and Writing*

Life Stories (Bloomsbury). Kate is a member of the IABA Executive Committee and the leader of the IABA Asia-Pacific network. She is also one of the series editors for Bloomsbury's New Directions in Life Narrative.

Melanie Duckworth
Christobel Mattingley and the Galah Trees

Jane Bennett writes, "texts are bodies that can light up, by rendering human perception more acute, those bodies whose favoured vehicle of affectivity is less wordy: plants, animals, blades of grass, household objects, trash" (2012). South Australian writer Christobel Mattingley's novel for children, *The Battle of the Galah Trees* (1972), is one such text. The book was inspired by the destruction of ancient, pre-colonial, river red gum trees near Christobel's home in the suburb of Burnside, Adelaide, and her involvement in a campaign to successfully save another such tree marked for destruction, which still stands on Glynburn road. Drawing on archival material including notes, drafts, letters, interviews, newspaper clippings, and photographs, this paper aims to elucidate the ways in which bodies 'light up' and influence each other: the bodies of trees, birds, children, readers, writers, texts. Christobel loved the trees and the galahs that nested within them. As the trees were destroyed, she forced herself to watch and wrote down everything: the sounds of the distressed birds, the bulldozers, the smells of diesel and crushed eucalyptus leaves, and the colour of the broken trees' red flesh. The bodies of the beautiful trees, carved into chunks, looked like meat. She knew there was a story in the trees, but until the other tree was saved, her heart was too broken to write it. On one level *The Battle of the Galah Trees* is a children's book about environmental activism, but on another level it is an act of love, a text which exists in a web of other texts and bodies. This paper, combining archival research with literary analysis and attention to the materialities of the more-than-human, seeks to illuminate this web of relationships.

Melanie Duckworth is an Associate Professor of English Literature at Østfold University College, Norway, and has published on Australian literature, children's literature, and critical plant studies. Melanie is currently working on a biography of Christobel Mattingley and was the recipient of a National Library of Australia Fellowship in 2024.

Tara East
'To come right up against it': Wonder and Water in Robbie Arnott's *Flames* and *The Rain Heron*

Robbie Arnott's novels, *Flames* (2018) and *The Rain Heron* (2020) offer a vividly magical reimagining of the Australian landscape, with a strong focus on the waterways of lutruwita (Tasmania). Like traditional fairy tales, these works offer 'potent cocktails of beauty, horror, marvels, violence, and magic' (Tatar 2010, p. 55). In this paper, I argue that Arnott's novels are part of an emerging tide of fairy tales that figure the natural world as the source and site of fairy-tale wonder. These ecological fairy tales build on the Carter generation's feminist revisionary work, with their strong focus on reconsiderations of gender and sexuality, by challenging the ways that the natural world has been flattened and ignored in earlier fairy-tale works.

Through an examination of the ways in which water and its creatures embody, express, inhabit, and inhibit wonder in *Flames* and *The Rain Heron*, this paper reveals how Arnott's ecological fairy tales–like the mirror owned by Snow White's mother–reflect and refract the natural world, figuring it as self and other, companion and habitat, threat and haven. I argue that, just as Angela Carter and her peers recognised that we desperately needed new stories about complex, queer, strong and strange women, Arnott (and his peers) recognise and respond to the contemporary need for new stories that lift us up beyond the fear of, or for, the natural world. Stories that will support us in imagining, and creating, new futures.

Dr Tara East is an Australian writer and early career researcher. Her research focuses on creative practice, writing methodologies, Practice-led Research, and climate change fiction. She is a writer of speculative fiction and her short stories have been published in *Andromeda Spaceways Magazine, SWAMP Magazine,* and *TEXT journal.* Her scholarly work has been published by *Journal of Creative Writing Practice* and *Writing from Below.*

Sam Elkin
Detachable Pen+s: An Autofictional Legal Saga

This 10 min online paper will discuss my debut book Detachable Pen+s: A Queer Legal Saga, published by Upswell (Aus) and WLU Press (Canada) in 2024. Labelled as narrative non-fiction, this book, which blurs the lines between fiction and non-fiction has turned up in bookshops in everywhere from biography, gender studies, Australian studies, feminism to humour writing. I will discuss my creative development of this work, entirely fictionalising all client stories to maintain confidentiality, and writing about my experiences of transitioning in a novelistic format while also weaving contemporary Australian news stories into the text to illustrate the growing moral panic over transgender identities. I'll touch on the thorny question of who can write about trans lives, and the cost of writing non-fiction in a small, oppressed community that engages in collective trauma responses such as lateral violence and community in-fighting around scarce resources and social recognition.

Sam Elkin is a writer, radio maker and community lawyer living in Footscray. In 2022, Sam co-edited Nothing to Hide: Voices of Trans and Gender Diverse Australia and in 2024 published his debut book Detachable Penis: A Queer Legal Saga which was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for humour writing.

Jessica Elton
'An Occasionally True Story': Anachronistic Heroines in Contemporary Film and Television Biopics of Women from 2018-2024

Contemporary biopics of women combine popular film and television genres to create their comic, anachronistic, and historical heroines. Released from 2018 onwards, films like *The Favourite* and television series such as *Dickinson* (2019-2021), *The Great* (2020-2023), and *My Lady Jane* (2024) focus on already well-biographied historical women and aim to playfully challenge their existing narrative in collective memory. The approach of these biopics differs in that their historical protagonists are primarily speculative characters often developed by investing in counter-history and characterisation that revels in a tone of absurdity. Moreover, central to these selections is an engagement with popular and post

feminisms, whereby the female body is a site for which conflicting discourses, themes, and ideology intersect. By comically and anachronistically challenging who these historical women "really are", the approach and tone with which these biopics dissect their protagonists also deconstructs the biopic as a genre. Whilst building on established biopic types, such as queen and author biopics, these selections also weave together popular film and television genres of comedy, romantasy, and period dramas. This results in anachronistic features like sharp modern dialogue and pop music soundtracks, which both reinvigorates and extends the genre, and reframes their historical protagonists. This approach is significant due to the current discourses surrounding women and how feminism is used and presented in the current media landscape, particularly in this post-#MeToo era. Rather than coming to a stable identity at the denouement of these biopics, the image of their heroines, or at least the commonly held belief about their image, is fractured and destabilised.

Jessica Elton is a PhD Candidate in Screen and Media at Flinders University. Her first-class honours thesis highlighted how Pablo Larraín's *Spencer* deconstructs popular Diana narratives of fairytale, melodrama, and tragedy. Her current research focuses on how life narratives of royals, authors, and celebrities are constructed in contemporary film and television biopics of women from 2018-2024.

Julie Fletcher

Self to Story: Navigating Truth Genres in Tibetan Testimonial Literature: Ani Pachen's *Warrior Princess*

Within the Tibetan diaspora, since 1959, the gathering and circulation of testimonial accounts of oppression, human rights abuses, resistance, imprisonment, and tortures has been a key form of cultural production in exile, and central to rights-based transnational activism for this community. These accounts have been gathered, translated, and circulated as in-person oral testimony, human rights and non-government organisation reports, museum display, pamphlets, collections of testimony, and full-length literary testimonial narratives. Testimonial narration is about truth-telling: speaking out, finding voice, to narrate, uncover and expose what has been hidden, secret, or silenced. Tibetan testimonial narratives are mobilised and circulated as part of international claims and campaigns for Tibetan collective rights to identity, sovereignty and self-determination, as well as individual human rights. As such, questions of truth, authenticity, and the evidentiary status of these accounts are important. At the same time however, Tibetan testimonial accounts are highly mediated "made things", often collaboratively produced through layered processes of interview, translation, writing and publication of the texts. Within these processes, tensions can arise between the moral imperatives of narrating marginal and traumatic experience, and the evidentiary requirements of human rights activism. Further, in writing for international readerships, collaborative processes can complicate questions of authenticity, control, and framing of the narrative.

This paper will explore some of the complexities of self, story, truth and genre in a collaboratively produced Tibetan testimony, Ani Pachen and Adelaide Donnelly's (2000) *Sorrow Mountain: the remarkable story of a Tibetan warrior nun.* Telling the important story of a young woman who led a group of resistance fighters against the Chinese PLA, before being captured and imprisoned for 21 years, and subsequently escaping to freedom in India,

I consider the ways this co-authored text rests upon, but also deviates from, the conventions of testimonial narrative as truth genre.

Dr Julie Fletcher is Senior Lecturer in Humanities and Social Sciences, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia. Her primary research interests are in cultural politics, life narrative, testimony, and human rights. Her current research is focussed on testimonial narrative and human rights in the Tibetan refugee community.

Patricia Frazis
Authority and Identity in Self-Narrated Audiobooks

In the past two decades, audiobooks have become increasingly engrained in contemporary literary culture. Audiobooks have seen more growth than any other sector of the publishing industry, with double digit growth reported by the American Audio Publishers Association for the eleventh year in a row in 2023 (Anderson, 2023, p.4). However, they remain at the margins of literary criticism. While most audiobooks are narrated by professional narrators and voice actors, some authors narrate their own work. This self-narration is particularly prevalent amongst authors of autobiographies and memoirs. The recitation of ones' own work is not a phenomenon unique to the contemporary audiobook, however very little research has considered the impact of self-narration on authority and identity in audiobooks (for example, see van Maas, 2018; Severs, 2011; Harrison, 2011).

This paper examines the impact of self-narration on authority, identity, and characterisation in autobiographical fiction through a close reading (or close listening) of *Lost Children Archive* by Valeria Luiselli, narrated by Valeria Luiselli (Ma) and Kivlighan de Montebello (the Boy) with William DeMeritt (Pa) and Maia Enrigue Luiselli (the Girl). I apply Cathy Lane's conceptualisation of vocal compositional techniques in spoken word works (2006, pp.5–6) alongside Cannon and Rubery's re-assertion of "the interdependence of speaking, hearing, and writing" in sound studies and literature (2020, p.315) to consider how Luiselli's narration as Ma interacts with the text to establish the character's narratorial authority and truth. I find that as Luiselli embodies her fictionalised self, Ma *becomes* Luiselli and implicitly adopts not only the authority of the Author, but also the audible characteristics of Luiselli's identity. Luiselli's accents in English, Spanish, and French each negotiate with the text to complicate Ma's identity as a transnational Mexican woman and, by extension, her narratorial authority regarding the institutionalised and social racism she encounters in the novel.

Patricia Frazis is a PhD candidate at the Australian National University, Canberra. Her research examines the use of voice, music, and ekphrasis in audiobooks through close reading and creative practice. She has been published in *The Westerly* and *Publishing Research Quarterly* and her writing often explores family dynamics and diasporic experiences through music and sound.

Ken Gelder
Melancholy (unhomely) Australia

This is a short paper from a book I'm developing called *Unhomely Australia*: a sort of sequel to a book I published with Jane M. Jacobs back in 1998 called *Uncanny Australia*. The focus

of this new book is what is often called these days 'the housing crisis', and it argues that even as Australia imagines itself as a home-owning nation it routinely turns home-owning into a (near-)impossibility (your home isn't 'yours') – and flips inhabitation into its traumatic opposite. The paper begins with some comments on the Strathmore home in *The Castle* (1997), which we discussed briefly in *Uncanny Australia* because the Kerrigan family had notoriously based their claim for white settler suburban home ownership on the precedent of the 1992 High Court ruling that a group of Torres Strait Islanders, led by Eddie Mabo, held ownership of Mer (Murray Island) – a decision that also overturned the historical doctrine of *terra nullius*. I note that the owner of the actual Strathmore house in *The Castle* was renting it out at the time; afterwards, she felt that both the film and the renters had desecrated a property that, in white Australian popular consciousness, was considered a kind of sacred site. She tried to sell the house but couldn't. Eventually – in 2017 – the house was saved from demolition, lifted off the property, and carried off in pieces to northern Victoria where it is now an Airbnb: a place no one can claim as a home.

This paper introduces a couple of trauma-producing events to do with the Australian home: home invasion, and home renovation. We can trace home invasion back to 1788, of course, and 'Invasion Day' gives us a national counter-narrative to the white Australian sentiment 'I still call Australia home' (you might leave, but you always come back: the opposite of dispossession). Muruwari playwright and novelist Jane Harrison's *The Visitors* (2023) gives an interesting Indigenous perspective on this foundational moment of home invasion. By contrast immigrant narratives often carry their own traumatic registration of a 'homeland' that doesn't want them: this is the theme of Felicity Castagna's *No More Boats* (2015), for example. 'Home invasion' was declared a criminal act in Queensland in 1997 (the same year as *The Castle*); and towns like Alice Springs are increasingly cast as sites of violent home invasions these days, the subject of much anxious governmental rhetoric and policy making. I look briefly at a minor example of home invasion in a recent novel, Melanie Cheng's *The Burrow* (2024): where someone throws a brick through a granny flat window of an inner-city Melbourne home. 'After the invasion', the novel tells us, 'Amy felt unsafe even in the main house. The creaking floorboards and groaning pipes, once familiar sounds, now frightened her'. This is precisely the unhomely (uncanny) effect of home invasion, the trauma it produces: the entire home becomes uninhabitable.

The Burrow is also about the loss of a young child and a home renovation that has stalled. It generates a melancholy for both the 'lost object' of the child and the impossibility of ever seeing a home completed. This paper introduces the topic of home renovation in this context, looking at Virginia Lloyd's *The Young Widow's Book of Home Improvements* (2008) and Amanda Lohrey's *The Conversion* (2023). Lloyd's book, as she puts it, 'chronicles my pathological focus on my house, particularly fixing its chronic rising damp problem in the wake of my husband's [John's] death [from bone cancer] in October 2004'. With John, she writes, 'I had never felt so at home in my life'; but after his death, Lloyd notices her home is riddled with decay, with rising damp: 'If the water saw an entry point to our house, it invited itself in.' So this is another home invasion narrative, as well as a narrative of loss: which generate a melancholy attempt both to memorialise the dead husband and 'keep the damp from returning'.

Amanda Lohrey's *The Conversion* sees a couple buy an old church in a country town, with plans to renovate. 'Could you pretend a church had never been a sacred site?' the novel wonders. But the husband Nick dies (as in Lloyd's narrative) and the wife, Zoe, never completes the task (as in Cheng's narrative). Later, Zoe dreams of Nick tapping on the

windows outside, a bit like Heathcliff: this is close to a haunting, something that is also of much interest to my *Unhomely Australia* book. Coming long after the Mabo case, the novel recognises the prior occupation of Aboriginal people, with home renovation sitting uneasily alongside a history of Aboriginal dispossession. Renovation becomes a fetish event in the novel, always traumatic, even psychotic – a friend in Melbourne complains that her neighbour's home has built 'a brutal black cube on the back…the most schizophrenic building I have ever seen'. These are aspects of home renovation (the desecration of a church, the turning of a sacred site in *The Castle* into an Airbnb, renovation as a melancholic act) that I hope to develop in the book I'm planning.

Ken Gelder is an Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Melbourne and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. His most recent books are *The Colonial Kangaroo Hunt* (Melbourne UP 2020) and *Colonial Adventure* (Melbourne UP 2024), both co-authored with Rachael Weaver.

Katy Gerner
Stereotypes of characters with disabilities in popular girls' books from 1868 to 1926

Fictional stories play an essential role in our understanding of our culture and its belief systems, including our expectations of people with diverse needs in our communities. My research analyses the stereotypes of characters with disabilities in popular girls' books from 1868 to 1926, while referencing the cultural, political, religious, and philosophical beliefs about disability at this time.

This time period is particularly interesting because of the growth in medical knowledge, as well as the oscillating in literary works between religious interpretation of disability and the medical model. It was also a time when the prevailing thought movements included eugenics, degenerationist theories, New Thought and Christian Science all of which had specific commentaries on disability issues.

I examine books by Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888), Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924), Susan Coolidge (1835-1905), Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874 –1942) and Ethel Turner (1870-1958). These writers, and therefore their readers, began to move from romanticised and sentimental depictions of life to narratives which represent reality accurately and vividly. Alcott, Burnett, and Coolidge's works are excellent examples of domestic realism but still contain many fanciful stereotypes. However, Montgomery's descriptions of *some* of her characters with disabilities are so realistic, that one aches to diagnose them, and some researchers have done so. Turner was the most realistic of the authors, with her child characters being rebellious and even disturbed, as a result of their father's neglect and violent discipline.

My research will demonstrate how and why disability stereotypes are used to show that a character has inspirational, villainous, or comic personal qualities and discuss these stereotypes' possible impacts on personal, professional, familial and cultural behaviours.

Katy Gerner teaches adults with disabilities for TAFE. She has written 20 and collaborated on four school textbooks. She is enrolled in a Master of Research. Katy has presented at the LM Montgomery 15th Biennial Conference, in 2022, and the Australian Fairy Tale Society conference in 2023.

Paul Gillen
Jack Lindsay's Autobiographies of an Idea

In six decades of prolific writing and publishing the autobiographical writings of Jack Lindsay (1900-1989) comprise a relatively small fraction of his gargantuan output but are nevertheless copious. The first item was a 1948 essay for Meanjin ("Zarathustra in Queensland"), followed by three autobiographies of his first 40 years (*Life Rarely Tells* 1958, *The Roaring Twenties* 1960, *Fanfrolico and After* 1962, reprinted in one volume in 1982). Later there was the memoir M*eetings with Poets* (1968) and some late reminiscences. Another book-length manuscript written in the 1970s called *The Fullness of Life: the Autobiography of an Idea* was published online in 2015 by Ann Cranny-Francis.

However, there is more. Lindsay wrote continuously about himself, his experiences, his ideas, and the people he knew, especially if they were poets. Most of this writing remains unpublished, although some of the diaries and thousands of letters survive in libraries.

The entire archive is interesting for many reasons. At least one bears very closely on the theme of this conference. It turns out that significant portions of Lindsay's three volume autobiography was originally composed decades earlier as fiction. Lindsay apparently discarded the original manuscripts when he rewrote them, but fragments and at least one entire short story from this earlier body of work survive.

Of greatest interest to me is how Lindsay went about expounding his passionately held but formidably idiosyncratic communism in his autobiographical works. In a sense they are all "autobiographies of an idea." Conversely, in attempting to explicate Lindsay's creed, I have found myself inexorably drawn into referencing his life experiences. My talk will reflect on the dialectic (or "crisscrossing" as Lindsay preferred to call it) of life and literature, and of fact and fiction.

Paul Gillen is writing a doctoral thesis on Jack Lindsay's vitalist communism.

Madison Godfrey
The Mosh Pit of the Prose Poem

The prose poem can be understood as a poem wearing the costume of a paragraph. Visually encountered as a box of text without enjambment, the text's formatting evokes signifiers of narrative prose. This playfulness towards the expectations of genre evidences the form's subversive potential as a site where gender is both performed and transgressed. This paper discusses the contemporary prose poem in relation to the ideological investments and stylistic qualities of mosh pits. On a spatial level, this correlation stems from their similar conditions of confinement. A mosh pit is a collective term applied to a group of audience members who congregate tightly, near the stage of a live music event. This proximity facilitates a communal experience of embodiment that blurs individual subjectivities, therefore emphasising the constructed nature of the self.

As noted by Holly Iglesias in *Boxing Inside The Box* (2004), the prose poem acts as a pressure cooker. The form's intensity facilitates a heightened state of self-reflectivity, especially in prose poems that position the gendered self as subject matter. This reflectivity is furthered by the form's experimental approach to time, described by Paul Munden as an "elastic treatment of the moment" (2017). Mimicking the sensory experience documented

by mosh pit participants, the prose poem denies chronology through fleeting images and fragmented memories.

As domains of embodied intensity and charged momentum, where words are crammed together as though devoted fans – prose poems and mosh pits share transgressive possibilities. Just as the mosh pit has historically been a space of subcultural contestation; the prose poem is inherently invested in a destabilisation of categories. By scaffolding articulation within a constrained box, the prose poem reproduces and hence challenges the rigid expectations surrounding enactments of gender. By imagining identity beyond the box, formally and ideologically, prose poems about gender illuminate the form's subversive potentiality.

Dr Madison Godfrey is a writer, editor, educator and the author of *Dress Rehearsals* (2023) and *How To Be Held* (2018). Their PhD, from Curtin University, was awarded the Vice Chancellor's Commendation and Niall Lucy Award. Currently Madison is a creative research fellow at the Forrest Research Foundation. They live on Whadjuk Noongar land.

Yuwei Gou
***Graft*: Growing Up with Displacement**

Maggie Mackellar's non-fiction book *Graft* (2023) explores her life on a farm in Tasmania. Following significant family loss and trauma, Mackellar left her academic position at the University of Sydney and moved to the wilderness near Hobart to start anew. Her writing delves into themes of vulnerability and resilience in the face of migration. The term "graft" in the book refers both to Mackellar's practice of finding surrogate mothers for lambs abandoned by ewes and to her own process of adapting to a new life on the farm. The farm's natural rhythms, with their blessings and hardships, propel Mackellar's journey forward. The cycles of nature, marked by frequent occurrences of birth and death, infuse her writing with the strength needed to reimagine herself in a new environment.

How do we graft ourselves into a new place when compelled to move forward and leave the past behind? Is there such a thing as a good or bad graft, or does any graft inherently entail loss, transformation, and invisible pain and growth? By analysing Mackellar's ***Graft*** alongside my personal experiences, this paper will explore themes of grafting, displacement, and migration.

Yuwei Gou lived in Adelaide from February 2018 to February 2023. She earned her PhD in literature from the University of South Australia in 2022 and worked for the UniSA Library after graduation. She currently resides in Chengdu, China, where she teaches English at a local university.

Alexandra Gregori
Conversing with the Past

Kylie Cardell and Jane Haggis ask, 'what is a letter?', imploring us to think about the ways in which the traditional forms of the letter have been replaced by communication practices such as instant messaging - or as Cardell and Haggis put it, '"chat" rather than "conversation"' - where we need only expose a snippet of ourselves. To some, letter writing is a thing of the past. But for historical researchers, letters provide crucial insights into social

relationships and experiences of pioneering women such as my great grandmother and her sisters: the Goodes.

Letters bound my great grandmother to her sisters for decades, creating a thread of communication that bridged the physical distance across thousands of miles, and years spent apart. For me, over a century later, it is also a way to bridge time, and to know my ancestors more intimately.

Despite the inevitable gaps in the story – some letters were kept, many others discarded – and the handwriting and palimpsest that often makes those that have survived difficult to decipher – there is enough to patch together their story, as I am doing in the form of the speculative biography I am writing for my PhD.

Cardell and Haggis write of 'the artifice and conventionalities of self-presentation.' Certainly, there was a science to writing letters - a formula if you will. Yet the closer those writers and their recipients were, the less formal or formulaic their letters became, and the more clearly we can visualise them. In the case of Christina Krakowsky and her sisters, my own present has met my past, introducing me to recent ancestors who not only share my DNA but often my values, motivations and inspirations.

Where there are inevitably gaps in the correspondence, speculative biography: a means to combine historical fact with plausible invention, or as Kiera Lindsey puts it, 'informed imagination'. This paper wades into the large question of truth in representation: does my method of speculative biography create problematic constructions of "truth"? I explore the possibilities that exist at the interstices of letters and speculative biography.

Alexandra Gregori has a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and a Master of Arts in Gastronomy from the University of Adelaide. She has completed an Honors Degree in History from Flinders University and is now working on her PhD, an interdisciplinary speculative biography of her great grandmother, Dr. Christina Krakowsky and her seven sisters.

Isabella Gullifer-Laurie

'Unrevised and personal moments innocent of posthumous longings': The letters of Elizabeth Hardwick

Writing of autobiographies and archives, the critic and novelist Elizabeth Hardwick remarked: "our power of documentation has a monstrous life of its own, a greater vivacity than any lived experience." This paper identifies traces of the autobiographical in the fiction of Hardwick and the poetry of her ex-husband Robert Lowell by examining the form and significance of the letter. Lowell's controversial use of Hardwick's personal letters in his poetry collection *The Dolphin* (1973) has been well documented, particularly following the collection and publication of their correspondence in the volume *The Dolphin Letters*. In a letter to Elizabeth Bishop, Lowell remarked that his edited use of Hardwick's letters was warranted because it made "Lizzie real beyond my invention." Hardwick herself considered the letter as both a spontaneous and private means of correspondence, and as a medium for public self-invention clearly intended for the archives: "letters are above all useful as a means of expressing the ideal self; and no other method of communication is quite so good for this purpose." What does the letter mean, as it is transformed, rewritten, diluted, elided, fictionalised, and edited? How does it exist as a document placed in relation to another text, such as poetry or fiction? This paper considers Hardwick's relationship to the letter by

turning to her final, autobiographical novel *Sleepless Nights* (1979) which employs the letter to address a "Dearest M." Reading this text alongside her correspondence with Lowell and Mary McCarthy, this paper engages with the formal qualities of the letter as an article which moves between truthful documentation and invention.

Isabella Gullifer-Laurie is an MA candidate in English at the University of Melbourne, where she is completing a thesis on Renata Adler, Joan Didion, and Elizabeth Hardwick. Her criticism has been published in *Sydney Review of Books*, *Chicago Review*, *Meanjin*, *The Saturday Paper*, and elsewhere.

Elisabeth Hanscombe
Maternal Responses in Father-Daughter Incest Narratives: Difficult Family Accommodations

This paper interrogates notions of mothers' complicity in the abuse of their children. It seeks to understand their secondary trauma in relation to such abuse within the patriarchal confines of family.

As a psychologist, and childhood survivor of sexual abuse, I interrogate societal tendencies to blame mothers for the behaviour of men who subject their children to sexual abuse. This response has not softened despite increased understanding of the difficulties women face – both practical and psychological – wanting to leave an abusive situation, even when it impacts their children.

How can we reconcile maternal duty of care with personal grief and physical and mental vulnerability? How can we better understand women's silences as both constraint and agency?

My experience as survivor of a family in which sexual abuse and violence perpetrated by her father impacted on her mother, siblings and self informs my interest. I have written two memoirs which address this triangulated family relationship in part or entirely. In addition, as a psychologist, I'm well equipped to interrogate the rippling affect/effect of misogynist events in which daughters and mothers are put at odds and individually vilified.

Through this paper I hope my research helps us better understand the trauma suffered by maligned and vulnerable partners/women/wives trapped in father/daughter abuse crises, and their representation in narratives of all genres/forms. Implicit in this enquiry, the agency and wellbeing of survivor children.

Elisabeth Hanscombe, who holds academic status at Flinders University, is a psychologist and writer with an interest in psychoanalysis, testimony, trauma, and creative non-fiction. Her book *The Art of Disappearing* was published in 2017, and her second*, The Museum of Failure*, is out early 2025. Find her at http://www.sixthinline.com.

Kay Harrison
Cunt drunk: Storying abject subjectivity through the queer Gothic body in Dorothy Porter's *The Monkey's Mask*

In a 2007 interview, the year before she lost her battle with breast cancer, Australian poet and author Dorothy Porter said: "Why should poetry be the virginal wall flower? It has always been a lightning rod for the sacred, the extreme and the daemonic". The exultation of

the carnal in *The Monkey's Mask* exemplifies this refusal of poetry as staid, "virginal". The 1994 verse novel stories abject subjectivity through the queer Gothic body, feminising and eroticising the male domain of the detective novel. Fusing the poetic with the popular, the heightened with the realist, it evokes a domestic gothic milieu that revels in the personal and the everyday. The body is implicated, irreducible; *le petit mort* becomes both obliteration and creation. In this paper, I argue that the novel foregrounds the "volatile body" as "the very stuff of subjectivity," after philosopher Elizabeth Grosz. In her search for university student Mickey Norris, lesbian detective Jill is haunted by Medusas, monkeys and modern-day monsters, by scaly things and stinking cadavers. Her engagement with queer desire – both murderous and revitalising – enables a "failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing" that enables new ways of being and knowing", after queer scholar Jack Halberstam. The novel's genre-bending form dismantles heteronormative temporalities and upsets reader relations, exploiting the lyric poem's slippage, interruption and compression of time to disrupt the progression of the detective/murder plot. After queer scholar Sara Ahmed, I argue that its focus on the body "attend[s] to a multiplicity of pasts, and their traces in the present, … open[ing] up the "promise of the "not yet",' creating a space for the 'other'.

Kay Harrison is a writer and PhD candidate (creative practice) at UNSW Sydney. Her research locates a queer regional imaginary, after queer feminist scholar Gayatri Gopinath, within Australian female and non-binary authorship since 1980. It asks how queer representations in four critically under-read novels reimagine the 'female' body.

Margaret Henderson

Queer Enough to be a Woman's Punk Memoir?: Jayne County's Chronotope of Freak Times and the Making of Women's Punk Memoirs

M. M. Bakhtin's' concept of the chronotope—the ensemble of space-time relations characterising texts and genres—has been relatively neglected by literary critics (including feminists) and, when used, has been mostly reserved for the analysis of novels. My forthcoming book-length study of women's punk and post-punk memoirs (*Adventures far from Home*), however, makes the chronotope central to examining how this specific sub-genre of women's life writing operates stylistically and as a set of historical and personal narratives of punk and post-punk time-places. I take my cue from Bakhtin's contention that in the chronotope, "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. . . . The image of man [sic] is always intrinsically chronotopic." In this paper I discuss Jayne County's *Man Enough to be a Woman* to show the potential of a chronotopic reading practice for women's autobiography and memoir, particularly for those texts that desire the status of historical accounts.

I argue that County, as one of the earliest women punk memoirists, sets some critical parameters for women's punk memoirs and is a forerunner to punk's current revisionist histories. Her trans account of living (across and beyond) pre-punk and punk times and places—what I term a freak chronotope—is configured by an outrage-ousness produced by the confining dominant chronotopes of post-World War II USA, with a resultant stylistics of schlock, the grotesque body, and the picaresque. These are County's way of making an other's time-space, with artistic failure at its core, characteristics that continue to resonate

in women's punk and post-punk memoir. County's freak chronotope thereby suggest punk's—and particularly women punk memoirists'--continuing debt to queer, as well as the hostility of the music industry and of punk culture towards women and queer musicians.

Margaret Henderson lectures in the School of Communication and Arts at the University of Queensland. She is the author of *Kathy Acker: Punk Writer* and *Marking Feminist Times: Remembering the Longest Revolution in Australia*, and co-author (with Anthea Taylor) of *Postfeminism in Context: Women, Australian Popular Culture, and the Unsettling of Postfeminism*. She has also published widely on contemporary women's writing and feminist material culture and heritage, and is currently working on a book-length study of punk and post-punk women's memoirs.

Dylan Holdsworth
Care, Community and Challenge: Cripistemology and Australian Polio Survivor Life Narratives

Prior to COVID-19, polio had the most profound impact on Australian public health consciousness of any communicable disease in living memory. Polio life narratives are one avenue for polio survivors to share their experiences and reflect on their own personal (and communal) histories as well as those of public health, while also providing alternative knowledges for nondisabled audiences, 'offer[ing] an important, if not unique, point of entry for inquiry into the responsibilities of contemporary citizenship' (Couser 2009:15). 'Narratives do cultural work', and disability autobiographies not only 'frame our understandings of raw, unorganized experience' (Garland-Thomson 2007:122) but situate these experiences *within* history and culture. Disabled writers can often challenge the presumed centrality of the 'auto' and the 'graph' in autobiography, radically (re)conceptualising the form and genre, and disrupting discrete self/other, auto-/allo-, and individual/communal divisions. Drawing on cripistemological (Johnson and McRuer 2014) and ethics of care scholarship, this paper analyses three Australian polio life narratives: *The calliper kids: eleven journeys of polio survivors* (2009); *In the world alone: my story* (2019) by Wendy Craig; and *Andrew remembers: and remembering Andrew* (2020) by Andrew Burbidge. Through interrogating how alternative approaches to form, writing practice/praxis, and community and self-care, this paper challenges the individualised model of the autobiography, pressing for a more complex reckoning with disability, community and models of assistance in examining life writing.

Dylan Holdsworth is a Medical Humanities ECR. He is interested in understanding how disability is conceptualised and experienced in society, media and culture. His recently published book, *The Government of Disability in Dystopian Children's Texts* (2024), critically analyses how power operates in the representations of disability in dystopian children's literature and film.

Craig Howes
What we talk about when we tell true stories— location, representation, and narrative

Just as life writing gradually became the preferred covering term for those interested in biography and autobiography, for some critics and scholars, most notably Sidonie Smith and

Julia Watson, so too has life narrative come to offer "a more capacious and flexible set of frameworks" for "mapping a global history" of acts and practices of life representation extending beyond the confining connotations of "writing."

In this ten-minute virtual presentation, I would like to raise a couple of questions about the versatility of narrative to encompass entirely what we are choosing collectively to engage with, aesthetically and politically. Drawing in part upon Anna Poletti's sharp observations in their accurately but deceptively titled *Stories of the Self: Life Writing after the Book* (2020), I will consider to what degree their focus on "a larger and deeper interconnection between life, media, and matter" (5) might cause us to rethink our inherited, perhaps mistakenly self-evident, notions of "stories" and writing."

In keeping with the IABA regional focus, I will draw counter-examples from Indigenous Pacific understandings of narrative—its natures, its values, its capaciousness. More specifically, I will look at what happens historically to Euro-American biographical narratives when translated linguistically and culturally as part of the acquisition and deployment of literacy in Hawai'i, but also to the hybrid critical and theoretical language developed, and continuing to be developed, for describing, evaluating, and justifying the translating, adapting, and appropriating of such narratives for some very recognizable, but also some very different ends.

Craig Howes has directed the Center for Biographical Research since 1997, co-edited *Biography: An International Quarterly* since 1994, and taught English at the University of Hawai'i since 1980. One of the founders of IABA in 1999, he has managed its listserv, now with over 1,900 subscribers, for twenty-five years.

Tony Hughes-d'Aeth
The Truth of *Nitram*: Representing the Port Arthur Massacre

Justin Kurzel and Shaun Grant's film *Nitram* (2021) is based on the Port Arthur massacre in which 35 people were shot dead by Martin Bryant on 28 April 1996. The film was a critical success, winning every major cinematic category at the 2021 AACTA awards. At Cannes, Kurzel was nominated for the Palme d'Or and Caleb Landry Jones won the Best Actor award for his performance as the fictionalised Martin Bryant. However, the film was controversial in Tasmania, where depictions of the event remain contentious, even after twenty-five years. The film has also received relatively scant attention in scholarly circles, which is at odds with its critical acclaim, though consistent with the Tasmanian reaction.

Nitram observes a strict diegetic taboo, stopping at the precise moment that the shooting at the café commences. However, while we never reach it in the film, the massacre exists at all times in *Nitram* in the form of necessary extra-diegetic knowledge. Shot in characteristic Australian cinematic realism, the film instigates an empathetic crisis in which the pitiful life of Nitram is always framed by the unthinkable reality of the massacre he will perpetrate.

In this paper, I consider the particular limits of realism that the film reaches. I also use the film to situate the register of truth in more general terms, distinguishing it from the dimension of the real. The brokering of truth and reality comes about via the affect of pain, where the pain of watching this film precipitates the question of meaning. However, the question of meaning (significance) in this film can only be drawn back into view at the risk of obscenity.

Tony Hughes-d'Aeth is the Chair of Australian Literature at the University of Western Australia. His books include *Like Nothing on this Earth: A Literary History of the Wheatbelt* (UWAP, 2017), *Paper Nation: The Story of the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* (MUP, 2001) and *Netflicks: Conceptual Television in the Streaming Era* (UWAP, 2024).

Andy Jackson
***I would break / Into blossom*: Poetry, Power and Disabled Masculinity**

"*I would break / Into blossom*: Poetry, Power and Disabled Masculinity" is a lyric essay that asks whether, in an era of the "manosphere" and an insurgent "broligarchy", poetry is capable of undermining hegemonic masculinity and fostering new ways of embodiment.

Thinking through two landmark poetry anthologies specifically compiled for men – *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart* (1992) and *Poems That Make Grown Men Cry* (2014) – I explore the way incohate bodily affect can be harnessed by poems and by their framing. What place does emotion play in the reception of poems presented as being relevant for men? Do the poems that are published in both anthologies confirm or unsettle traditional models of masculinity? How might the breaking of the poetic line be coincident with the breaking of the mask?

The essay is informed by, adapts, and brings into conversation Raewyn Connell's theorising of masculinities, bell hook's discussion of emotion and love in *The Will to Change* and John Stoltenberg's pro-feminist book *The End of Manhood*.

Woven through these readings are autobiographical reflections on my life as a disabled man, unable and unwilling to sit comfortably within expectations of masculine self-sufficiency and emotional detachment. It considers the necessity and insufficiency of emotional awareness through reflections on my brief experience training to work on a helpline for men concerned about their use of violence, as well as through a disability-informed poetics.

The essay concludes by reflecting on the affective and archetypal reconfigurations of masculine possibility in recent poems by Australian writers David Stavanger, Jarad Bruinstroop and Anders Villani, in order to build a model of male embodiment predicated on an embrace of precarity, relationality and caesura.

Andy Jackson is a poet, and a creative writing teacher at the University of Melbourne. His poetry collection *Human Looking* won the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Poetry. He is the co-editor of *Raging Grace: Australian Writers Speak Out on Disability*. He writes and rests on Dja Dja Wurrung country.

Roshni Marath Jairaj
Why Does the Pulchadi Play Hopscotch? Ethics and Creativity in Writing the Transnational Self.

This paper explores the multifaceted concept of home through practice-led research, centered on my memoir-in-progress, Why Does the Pulchadi Play Hopscotch?. The memoir chronicles my transnational journey as a Non-Resident Indian (NRI) across Dubai, Singapore, India, and the UK, reimagining home not as a fixed noun but as a fluid and evolving verb—a process shaped by movement, memory, and self-reflection.

Written in English with elements of Malayalam, the memoir captures the complexities of cultural hybridity and linguistic plurality. It reflects on how mobility shapes a fragmented yet dynamic identity and examines the ethical considerations of representing others in life writing. By treating home as an active process, the memoir seeks to reframe traditional ideas of belonging. This presentation highlights the role of creative practice in engaging with these themes while addressing:

- Ethics in non-fiction storytelling: Navigating the responsibilities of representing family, culture, and the diasporic experience.
- Narration, point of view, and the self: Employing non-linear structures and layered perspectives to articulate the challenges of transnational identity.
- Memoir as a medium: Exploring how life writing accommodates fragmented experiences and the interplay of multiple languages and cultures.

The accompanying critical reflection examines how practice-led research bridges the creative and theoretical, offering insights into the ethics of life writing, the intersections of memory and narrative, and the challenges of writing from a hybrid perspective.

By situating the NRI experience within broader discourses on mobility, identity, and storytelling, this work demonstrates how creative practice can expand the boundaries of memoir and contribute to a deeper understanding of home as a dynamic and evolving concept.

Roshni Marath Jairaj is a PhD candidate at the University Of Leeds, focusing on creative practice and storytelling in memoir writing. Her practice-led research explores transnational identity and the evolving concept of home, particularly through the lens of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) experience. In addition to her academic work, Roshni is a stand-up poet, delivering prose poetry that reflects on themes of belonging, language, and cultural hybridity.

Akshitha Javahar and Tania Mary Vivera

Navigating Cyborg Identity, Individual Utopia, and Truth in Autofiction: A Study of Nnedi Okorafor's *Death of the Author*

In many instances, utopian visions have historically prioritized societal collectivism at the expense of individual experiences. Clint Jones and Cameron Ellis, in their introduction to *The Individual and Utopia*, highlight how individual experiences are frequently marginalized in utopian studies, with "one-dimensional figures" dominating utopian narratives. Additionally, utopias also exhibit ableism, frequently excluding or marginalizing individuals with disabilities. However, Nigerian-American author, Nnedi Okorafor's *Death of the Author: A Novel* (2025), imagines a future society through the eyes of a protagonist with physical disability, who bears a strong resemblance to Okorafor herself. This paper seeks to illustrate that Okorafor's work serves as both autofiction and a utopian narrative, highlighting the crucial role of individual experiences of persons with disabilities, within utopian settings. The paper would also argue that the cyborg identity adopted by the protagonist in the novel serves both as a symbol of her empowerment, and as a representation of her identity as a person with a disability. Introducing the term "individual utopia", to refer to works of autofiction that fuse elements of science fiction and utopia, the paper would also contend that this should be recognized as a new characteristic of autofictional works. Ultimately, this

paper would also examine the broader implications of Okorafor's work in relation to the overarching concept of truth.

Akshitha Javahar is a doctoral student at St. Teresa's College, affiliated with Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, India. She is also a Junior Research Fellowship holder from the University Grants Commission of India. Her research interests include postcolonial science fiction and fantasy.

Dr. Tania Mary Vivera is an Assistant Professor of English at St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, Kerala, India. She has published extensively in reputed international peer-reviewed, and UGC-CARE-listed journals and has presented high-impact research papers at prestigious national and international conferences, including those held in Malaysia and the United Kingdom.

Nicholas Jose
Michelle Cahill's *Water Music*

Throughout her writing, poet, fiction writer, editor and essayist Michelle Cahill has written about water, increasingly so since her 2016 collection of poetry The Herring Lass, as she has responded in her work to the experience of movement across water in migration and other maritime travel, of coasts, ports and islands, the disruptions of both climate disaster (bushfires) and pandemic, and the consequences of isolation and intersection. Among the poems in The Herring Lass that point forward to Cahill's literary engagements with voyage narratives that decolonise and subvert, the long poem 'Youth, By Josephine Jayshree Conrady' is a spectacular, generative instance. From there the presentation looks at Cahill's more recent poetry of islands around the Australian coast and her prose 'letters back' to other writers in this space, crossing water to Borges, Woolf, Pessoa and more, as she deploys (auto?) biographical material for her own creative and interrogative purposes.

Nicholas Jose has published seven novels, including *Paper Nautilus*, *The Custodians*, *The Red Thread* and *Original Face*, and three collections of short stories. His non-fiction includes *Chinese Whispers, Cultural Essays* and an acclaimed memoir, *Black Sheep: Journey to Borroloola*. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Writing and Society Research Centre, Western Sydney University and Emeritus Professor of English and Creative Writing at The University of Adelaide.

Gabriella Kelly-Davies
Truth Telling in Biography: The Limits of Plausibility

This paper explores the inherent tension between truth telling and the limits of plausibility in biographical writing. Biographers painstakingly piece together fragments of evidence and clues into a mosaic, striving to uncover the truth of their biographical subject. However, each biographer creates a unique mosaic, depending on which sources they study, how they interpret the evidence and their narrative strategy. Other variables include the biographer's background, gender, education, life experiences, character and worldview, which influence the version of the truth they portray. The fallibility and subjectivity of human memory, unreliable interviewees and narrators, incomplete and biased historical records, and the

inherent prejudices of both biographers and subjects also hinder the pursuit of objective truth.

This paper will argue that the value of a biography lies not in its adherence to a single, monolithic 'truth,' but in its ability to offer an authentic and authoritative exploration of a human life. While gaps in the historical record call for biographers to use their imagination to recreate a life, biographers have traditionally avoided carrying the fiction too far to the point of disregarding the truth. One litmus test for a biographer to ensure they avoid straying too far into fiction is considering the limits of plausibility. By acknowledging the limitations of historical evidence and the subjective nature of biographical interpretation, biographers invite readers to engage in a critical and reflective dialogue with the past.

Dr Gabriella Kelly-Davies published *Breaking Through the Pain Barrier. The Extraordinary Life of Dr Michael J. Cousins* in 2021. She studied biography and history at ANU's National Centre of Biography and, in 2023, was a visiting doctoral student at Oxford University's Centre for Life Writing. She has studied narrative nonfiction and creative writing, and her postdoctoral research project is crafting a text on biographical decision-making.

Ümit Kennedy
The Ethics of Life Online After Death

When we die most of us will leave behind a significant digital footprint and record of life. Our various, multimodal social media accounts are not merely a record, but a conscious crafting of life and identity. They are an automedial expression of agency and personhood in relationship with others and in constant development. When people die, their online identities (accounts, profiles, posts) remain. Their online networks continue to interact with, and therefore develop, the automedial life. If automedia is a process of being and becoming online, which demands that we view life online *as life*, how should we approach this life after death? *Who owns this life?* What does it mean to delete life online? This paper explores the ethical dilemmas that surround life online after death. Drawing on recent personal experience of losing a loved one, I examine the complexities of caring for their automedial life after their death. Specifically, I discuss the YouTube videos they left behind. Recognising the automedial and relational significance of these videos, I explore questions about agency, ownership, legacy, and care. I conclude that handling life online requires deep consideration of the inextricably intertwined nature of identity.

Dr Ümit Kennedy is a Digital Media and Life Writing scholar with a special interest in identity and community online. Her research areas include genres of vlogging, influencer culture, automedia, virtual and auto ethnography, and ethics online.

Libby King
Unbelievable: Narrative Form as Cultural Intervention

The early twenty-first century has seen a flourishing in both the creation and popularity of works that combine truth genres with forms such as fiction and critical theory. While the invention of these forms is not new, their contemporary popularity carries a significance that I take to mean: people are looking for new ways to understand the world.

Hybrid forms are full of what on the surface appear to be contradictions. How, for example, do forms that prioritise "opaque" (Dix 2018, 1) or "resonant" (Zwicky 2023, 117) meaning over definitive statements and the safety of a clear thesis foster truth? How can forms that deliberately muddy notions of authenticity have a clarifying influence on believability?

In this presentation, I will unpack how narrative form influences the concept of believability, shaping which stories are believable and which stories appear too unreal to be true. By challenging content through narrative form, I suggest that hybrid works act as cultural interventions.

Finally, using the components of autofiction summarised by Hywel Dix in his introduction to *Autofiction in English*, I will suggest that there are two fundamental features of hybrid forms: firstly, they are always primarily concerned with concepts of truth; and, secondly, the mechanism through which these ideas about truth areas negotiated and understood is always primarily through form rather than content.

Libby King is a PhD student at Flinders University in South Australia researching how blended narrative forms respond to the needs of early twenty-first century storytelling. Her work has appeared in *The February Journal*, *Project Passage*, *Island Magazine*, *PRISM International*, *Meanjin*, and *Grain*.

Revathy Krishnan

One Crisis, Different Survivors, Differing Stories: Understanding Narration, the Storied Self and Social Situatedness in Truth Genres on the 26/11 Mumbai Attacks, India

The presentation explores how the social situatedness of *storying selves* determines narrative truth in celebrated truth genres such as life writing and how these varying stories of lived experiences shape public truth about heavily broadcasted events like the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai. The 26/11 terror attacks (2008) executed by Lashkar-e-Taiba targeted prominent locations in Mumbai city, where common people became unexpected victims. While historiographers and filmmakers have attempted to tap the event in academic and creative formats, recent works of life writing on 26/11 shed insights on how individuals *conceived* and *experienced* differently from varied standpoints and how their differing narratives contribute to an alternative "truth" about the event. This highlights the centrality of politics of memory and representation in contemporary life narratives and how these parameters distort the idea of an objective truth genre. Rudrani Devi's memoir Soul Survivor: A Healer's Pilgrimage and Homecoming (2011) and Kanchan Kanojia's I Heard Bullets: Rethinking Resilience in the Wake of 26/11 (2022) are autobiographical and biographical writings, respectively, written on the lived experiences of survivors who found themselves trapped in the labyrinth of the 26/11 attacks. Rudrani Devi recollects her encounter with the terrorists at Hotel Oberoi Trident as an American tourist and her journey of resilience through spiritual practices. On the other hand, the subjects of remembrance in the latter text hail from a landscape of debilitating socio-economic conditions and were offered limited choices between resilience and sustenance. Feminist epistemological approaches like the stand-point theory and the concept of multidirectional memory (Micheal Rothberg) address these disparities in narration as stemming from the postulates that knowledge is socially situated and memory is structurally multidirectional—thus, the social situatedness of the survivor shapes their narrative responses to a crisis. This paper will

scrutinise and compare how the storying selves in selected works emplot lived experiences of a single event (here 26/11) differently and how their social situatedness influences their narrative agency (Hannah Meretoja) and production of "truth" in contemporary life writing.

Revathy Krishnan is a doctoral scholar pursuing a Ph.D. in English at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, India. Her research interests lie in memory studies, Indian Anglophone literature, post-terrorist life writing and trauma Studies. She has co-authored and published an article titled "Drawing Eco-sickness: Industrial Disaster Comics, Postmemory, and The Minamata Story: An Eco Tragedy" in the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* in 2022. She is also a member of the Indian Network for Memory Studies and part of the Centre for Memory Studies at IIT Madras.

William Kummer
Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This*

Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* is labelled a novel but has been marketed as autofiction: a contentious but popular term for a "text [that] purports to be both fictional and autobiographical" (Gronemann 241). This tension is twofold in Lockwood's text, as the nameless narrator, after having been raised to "to a certain airy prominence" on the back of a viral post and finding herself invited to panels to pontificate on "the new communication, the new slipstream of information," undergoes a crisis of meaning (13). Concerns about what constitutes real life run throughout *No One Is Talking About This*, and this paper considers the way the text's structural progression mirrors the narrator's transformation from seeking connection online to reflecting, in the aftermath of tragedy, that even in person interactions "did not feel like real life exactly, but nowadays what did" — autofiction's inherent hybridity amplifies this message and speaks to this time and place (206).

Lockwood moves from disjointed, disconnected scenes in her novel's first half, which in their totality resemble a social media feed, to a more strictly narrative-centric representation of her family's shared experience of Proteus Syndrome through her niece's short life. She weaves vague traces of narrative into an endless stream of quips and references, resembling her extratextual engagement with "Weird Twitter." She contrasts the radicalizing potential of the Internet, "the sewers of communal thought," with her experience of a "*communal mind*" as her family sat in the NICU, "looking at that singular gray brain on an MRI," ultimately revealing the healing capacity of disconnecting to reconnect (Lockwood 130, 205).

William Kummer is a fourth year PhD candidate in Wilfrid Laurier University's English and Film program. He has been published in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* and co-authored the chapter on life writing in *Companion to the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*.

Martin Langford
Is Literature Really a Type of Nonfiction?

Contemporary bookstores display books in categories. One category that consistently appears – which may or may not include poetry, drama and classics – is literature. Clearly, people think they see some sort of difference between literature and the other categories in the store. But what is the basis for this distinction? If it is not just a matter of the

incorporation of long words and alien cultural contexts, is it possible that literature is being thought of as a type of non-fiction?

This paper will consider whether there is a difference between texts that are read with one's anxieties, and texts which resolve to a point of understanding, ending with a brief consideration of what that difference – if any – might mean for one particular genre, poetry.

Martin Langford has published eight books of poetry, the most recent of which is *The Boy from the War Veteran's Home* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2022). He is co-editor (with J. Beveridge, J. Johnson and D. Musgrave) of *Contemporary Australian Poetry* (2016), and was poetry reviewer for *Meanjin* 2011-2023. He is a PhD student at Newcastle University.

Isobel Lavers
'Listen to the crows. To the wind. Let him go': Motherhood, identity, and the more-than-human world in Maggie MacKellar's *Graft*.

In the opening pages of her 2023 memoir, *Graft*, Maggie McKellar immerses herself body and mind within the vivid environment of the Tasmanian farm where her story takes place: "Soft thud of wallaby on my heart, pad of wombat (1)." This is a story, McKellar seems to insist, of the self in and as the natural world. In this way, *Graft* is concerned with identity; a theme further cemented by MacKellar's ongoing interrogation of what it means to be a mother to two children who are nearing independence. And, while seemingly distinct, these separate narrative arcs become one as MacKellar, her sense of self fractured by her children's recent independence ("Who am I, if I am not a mother? (87)"), seeks to reimagine and repair her identity by immersing her subjectivity within the more-than-human landscape that surrounds her.

This paper is concerned in turn with the ways memoir can be used as a technology in reconstructing identity. Specifically, I look at the ways narrative entanglement of the self with the more-than-human empowers an identity building – or rebuilding –practice. Through a close reading of *Graft,* I analyse how MacKellar utilises and experiments with memoir form in order to intertwine her body with the body of the nonhuman, and question what sort of identity is born from this union. Further responding to MacKellar's use of illustration, her varying perspectives and narrative voices, and her sustained engagement with autotheory, I am also distinctly interested in the aesthetics of MacKellar's identity building model. How, that is, do MacKellar's experimental, aesthetic endeavours enable her identity building practice?

Isobel Lavers is a doctoral candidate at the Australian National University. Her doctoral research interrogates representations of motherhood in life writing, experimental life writing, queer, postcolonial and feminist studies. Isobel has published in *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* and has an article forthcoming in *Biography*.

Jeanine Leane
Shifting the Shape of Storytelling: Writing First Nations Lyric Nonfiction and Realism

In 2019, Cowlitz writer and scholar Elisha Washuta and non-Indigenous scholar Teresa Warburton, curated a collection of First Nations creative nonfiction called *Shapes of Native Nonfiction* focusing exclusively on 'form' – the act of *being* through telling and writing,

rather than a focus on providing information to a non-First Nations reader or performing an identity that is familiar in settler colonial society. In their introduction Elisha and Teresa offered a broader definition of lyric creative nonfiction as:

> *Writing that focuses exclusively on form – the act of being through telling; a form that is unpredictable and that derives meaning from the act of writing itself.*

Inspired by this anthology's form-focus writings and the potential space such forms opened up for First Nations Australian writers, in 2024, Munanjali writer Ellen van Neerven and Wiradjuri writer and scholar Jeanine Leane, commissioned and co-edited a selection of First Nations lyric nonfiction called *Shapeshifting* (UQP 2024), which showcased a whole new literary genre taking shape and form in First Nations writing communities. *Shape Shifting* explores through a diverse collection of writings the shifting shape of the First Nations literary landscape and the ways in which the whole genre of nonfiction and its craft and construction is considered and expanded into the future.

Jeanine Leane is a writer, poet, essayist and teacher from the Wiradjuri peoples of the Murrumbdigee River near Gundagai. Jeanine's poetry, essays and stories have been published widely in literary journals such as *Overland*, *Meanjin*, *Rabbit* and *Westerly*. She is currently the poetry editor at *Meanjin*. *Gawimarra gathering*, Jeanine's second poetry collection, was released by University of Queensland Press in 2024 and her novel, *Purple Threads*, was re-released in 2023 as part of the UQP First Nations Classics series.

Kira Legaan

'A Life in Fragments': What biography means for a body that has become its own testimony for ritual and sexual abuse

This paper will discuss the challenge of creating a manuscript in which the fragmentation of self is so integral to its narration, that generic memoir just wasn't possible. Utilising van der Kolk's premise that the past is neurally and physiologically alive in our body (1995), and Cathy Caruth's notion of traumatic 'latency' (1991), I will interrogate my own experience of 'creativity' and 'truth telling': asking what biography means for a body that has not only survived the experience of sexual and ritual abuse, but in its authoring, becomes a conduit for somatic testimony. Through the lens of Meera Atkinson's (2013) traumatic affect and Quinn Eades' proposition that we can 'write the wound' (2017) I will address the bodily responses that my own writing practice generated and consider the embeddedness of traumatic history.

Questions of coherence and verisimilitude always accompany writing memoir –- as Douglas states, 'there is no such thing as pure autobiography' (2010). So how can I claim to write truth when I have fictionalised my own story, composed it in fragments, told only pieces of a life? I discovered it was necessary to take detours through hybridity and digress into unconventionality in order to better portray my story. To make poems, scripts, fairy tales, and more stand in for chronology, memory and to borrow Lambek's term their 'discontinuity' (1996). This multi-genre approach, where fiction takes precedence among a scattering of fact, became the most functional structure I could find to express the temporal disunity and loss of articulation that accompany these forms of profound trauma. In its essence this presentation endeavours to examine the praxis of trauma and creativity in the hope of better understanding its potential.

Kira Legaan completed her Doctorate of Arts at The University of Sydney in 2023. She is a teacher at the university, and her areas of research include trauma and affect theory, literary criticism and creative writing. She has presented at conferences and been published in both Australia and the UK.

Susan Lever
Rumour and Reputation: The Rise and Fall of A.D. Hope

By the end of the 1960s A. D. Hope had an international reputation as Australia's leading poet and was a significant critical figure at the centre of Australian literary studies. At its foundation in 1978, ASAL made him one of its inaugural patrons. By the end of the 1980s, though, some younger writers and critics had turned against him, so that he came to epitomise the conservative resistance to modernism in Australian poetry. Rumours circulated about his role in the Ern Malley affair, his cruelty as a critic and his inadequacy as an academic. His originality as a poet was forgotten as he was stereotyped as an imitator of the English canonical poets of the past. There has been no biography of Hope to challenge these versions of him and to rectify misunderstandings.

This paper looks at the elements in the rise and fall of his reputation, including the central place of poetry in literary education in the 1960s, the development of Australian literary studies, the activism of the 'Generation of 68' poets and more recent accounts of the lives of his contemporaries that tend to dismiss his role. The adulation of American poetry by young poets in Australia and the critical obsession with modernism has relegated Hope's work to an anachronistic curiosity. This paper examines way in which a poet, once widely admired as a forceful and original voice, has been pushed into the shadows.

Susan Lever is general editor of the Cambria Press Australian Literature Series and a Life Member of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature. She reviews regularly for *Australian Book Review* and *Inside Story*. Her latest book is *Creating Australian Television Drama: A Screenwriting History* (ASP 2020). https://sydney.academia.edu/SusanLever/

Alexander Lwin
Evil Detectives: Questions of Truth and 'Knowing' in Japanese Mystery Fiction

The mystery novel, as a genre, has long been tied to positivistic ratiocentricism and epistemological questions of knowing. Because the traditional structure of the mystery novel is reliant upon the interpretation of signs, the genre appears to assert a particular, conservative idea of knowing: that there is immutable, fundamental truth which can be logically 'deduced' — and, implicitly, that this act of knowing is a good thing (or, at the very least, resolves problems.) This ratiocentric philosophy is embodied in the figure of the detective: the medium through which the clues — or signs — within the text are interpreted and the solidity of truth is established. As the mystery novel appears to be the archetype of ratiocentricity, postmodern practitioners of the genre — such as Auster or Robbe-Grillet — have often critiqued ratiocentric ideology through subverting the structure of the genre. These texts tend towards forming their critique by emphasising the ineffectiveness of the detective: using the detective's inability to know to portray a wider impossibility of 'knowing.' In this paper, I posit that Japanese mystery fiction routinely critically engages with these questions of knowing from a different perspective to its Western counterpart through

the character archetype of the Evil Detective. Unlike the failed detectives of the anti-detective novel, the Evil Detective is successful in interpreting the clues and producing the solution. However, because the reader is positioned against the detective, the denouement of the text presents an uneasy relationship between the reader and the truth. Is truth constant and self-evident, or is it something malleable and freely manufactured? Does knowing actually have resolutory power, or is the truth largely arbitrary? By forcing the reader to confront these questions, the Evil Detective works to subvert our common conceptions of truth. In this paper, I will demonstrate the way in which the Evil Detective presents the reader with questions of 'knowing' with reference to the works of Maya Yutaka, as well as the character of Furudo Erika in Ryukishi07's *Umineko no Naku Koro Ni*.

Alexander Lwin is Phd candidate at the University of Western Australia pursuing a doctorate in literary studies. His primary area of interest is in mystery fiction from a metatextual and/or intercultural lens. His current thesis explores the interplay of language and culture in forming Japanese mystery fiction.

Emma Maguire
Call to Action: The Literary Afterlife of Digital Feminism

Leigh Gilmore (2023, 2) writes that although #MeToo has been imagined as an event or "moment", it is in fact part of "a longstanding intersectional feminist lineage" of "narrative activism"—which Gilmore defines as "storytelling in the service of social change."

In this paper I examine digital feminism as a fulcrum in this lineage, and one that has had a lasting impact on truth genres in the public sphere, especially those involving personal storytelling and testimony around sexual violence. From the late 2000s to the late 2010s the feminist personal essay that was shareable, likeable, and click-baitable proliferated. These essays were digitally published on quasi-feminist and left-leaning media websites like *Jezebel*, *MamaMia*, and *The Guardian*, and circulated via social media platforms. Drawing on and feeding the commoditisation of feminist discourse, these essays used women's personal experiences as a way in to discussions of injustice and/or the latest "hot" topic. Women's personal experience and first-person voice became valuable commodities in this media landscape.

This paper traces a lineage of automedia from the viral blog post, through to the feminist personal essay, to the long form of literary memoir with an emphasis on how the media economy produced particular (marketable) ways of speaking from and about women's subjectivity that would ultimately lead to the watershed moment of #MeToo. This history is evident in the post-#MeToo wave of women's memoir, and I read Roxanne Gay's (2017) *Hunger* and Bri Lee's (2018) *Eggshell Skull* through a transmedia framework to see how the genres emerging from digital feminism shaped women's long form narratives of girlhood sexual trauma. I argue that these are two prominent #MeToo memoirs, and that exposing their transmedia reliance on autobiographical strategies honed in the form of the digital feminist personal essay provides vital connective tissue embedding #MeToo in a longer history of (life) narrative activism.

Emma Maguire is a Lecturer in English and Writing at JCU. Her research investigates girls' and women's auto/biography, with attention to the technological and economic dimensions

of mediation. Emma is a member of the Life Narrative Lab, a Steering Committee member of IABA Asia-Pacific, and Deputy Editor for *Life Writing*.

Jen Majoor
Sister Sledge. How Drawing Childhood Photographs Brought Truth to Fiction

Photographs of childhood evoke a range of feelings that depend on embedded meanings and memories. But what happens when childhood photographs portray a skewed reality? How do past images reconcile identity over time? A number of writers, including Susan Sontag in *On Photography* and Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* have commented that photographs are affected by performance and curation. They conceal, rather than reveal.

In this paper, I will present an epistolatory short story from my creative practice PhD. The work was based on a fictional letter to my anonymised sister and used narrative and graphic techniques, with my own childhood photographs re-sketched in a cartoon-like style, with conscious and unconscious intentionality guiding the manipulation and distortion of the images. These drawings reflected my affective responses to the original photographs. Having removed the photographs' pane-of-glass ambiguity, the drawings allowed for deeper understanding of and compassion for the shared history between my sister and me. 'The truth,' or the truth as I understood it, was illuminated. In addition, my drawings amplified the embodied queer identity I recognised as present, yet negated, in the childhood photographs – an identity that remains a source of tension in the adult relationship I have with my sister. This queering of my childhood photographs in an autobiographical fictional setting then permitted an exploration and rewriting of the family experience of grief and loss.

Drawing my childhood photographs for meaning involved holding two periods of time at once – the then and now – which Barthes proposed was like a 'madness,' and the reason for a photograph's '*noeme*' or 'essence.' Drawing the '*noeme*' of emotive childhood photographs and embedding them with narrative in autobiographical fiction can creatively yet truthfully, retell stories about family, sexual identity, grief and loss.

Jen Majoor is completing creative practice PhD at UNE funded by an RTP Scholarship. She is a past recipient of the Writers Victoria Grace Marion Wilson Regional Writers Award, was previously longlisted in the Queensland Writers Centre Publishable Manuscript Development Program and has been published in *The Autoethnographer*.

Bianca Martin
Narrative Justice and Reclaiming Truths in Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Life Writing

Following its popularisation via digital hashtags and celebrity culture, #MeToo has maintained momentum through the expansive genre of life writing. As a narrative-driven moment, #MeToo references a history of feminist consciousness raising using personal and collective testimony to expose the pervasiveness of sexual violence. Life writing published since #MeToo signals a renewed perspective by writing beyond the personal, seeking to uncover the structural and systemic inequalities that have historically perpetuated sexual violence and silenced survivors.

Australia's iteration of #MeToo is widely criticised for overlooking the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. I propose that contemporary Indigenous

memoirs offer critical examples of a necessary, intersectional approach to understanding #MeToo in Australia. *Black and Blue* by Veronica Gorrie (2021), *Tell Me Again* by Amy Thunig (2022), and *Because I Love Him* by Ashlee Donohue (2024) demonstrate how the act of reclaiming denied truths through writing can reposition survivors as credible and authoritative—what life writing scholar Leigh Gilmore refers to as narrative justice.

Gilmore envisions the memoir as a site of alternative jurisdiction, where the text becomes a form of extra-judicial testimony (2001). These memoirs reflect on experiences of child sex abuse that, upon disclosure to family, were subsequently met with doubt, disbelief, and silencing. By depicting doubt and denial in the face of truth-telling, these authors connect their experiences of sexual violence to a wider complex net of intersecting and compounding structural violences experienced by Indigenous Australian survivors. Drawing on the work of Larrakia and Tiwi scholar Eugenia Flynn and Biripai scholar Tess Ryan, who have both written on the connection of colonialism and sexual violence, I will theorise how these memoirs use narrative to reclaim personal truths within such structures and offer an expanded reading on #MeToo in Australia.

Bianca Martin (she/her) is a PhD candidate at James Cook University. Her research investigates how contemporary experimental sexual violence narratives can be read as a form of narrative activism in light of #MeToo. She has been published in *Literacy Learning: The Middle Years*, *Zines Journal*, and *Writing From Below*.

Adele Marum

Misreading Colette in Anaïs Nin's *Diary*

Though *The Diary of Anaïs Nin, Volume I: 1931-1934* (1966) recounts Anaïs Nin's erotic affair with June Mansfield in Paris in 1932, scholarship is yet to study Nin's representation of female homosociality and her engagement with queer modernist aesthetics. This paper addresses these omissions, drawing on extensive archival work to examine the presence of Colette's representation of female homoerotic desire in Nin's original and published diaries. In 1928, Nin read the newly published *La Naissance du Jour* and the earlier *Claudine* volumes, comparing her writing style to Colette's in an undated entry entitled "Colette et Moi." This comparison treats the *Claudine* volumes as autobiography, a misreading illustrated by her replacement of "Claudine" with "Colette" when listing the *Claudine* titles she has read – "Colette a Paris," "Colette en Menage," and so forth. This misreading is not accidental; rather, it adapts the *Claudine* volumes' scenes of female erotic desire to stage an intimacy between a girlishly weak Nin and an older and "tougher" Colette. I show that Nin replicates the erotics of this encounter in her account in the published *Diary* of her affair with June Miller.

Anne Freadman, following Philippe Lejeune, notes that part of Colette's modernist innovation is her destabilisation of the pact between the reader and writer of autobiography, where the reader understands the life story that they read to be that of the person writing it (2-3). The homoerotic intimacy of "Colette et Moi," I argue, responds to Nin's unease about this generic innovation by insisting on an autobiographical pact between herself and Colette. I suggest that Nin inaugurates what Harold Bloom might term a narrative of influence between herself and Colette when she promises to "do more" in her writing on women's intimacy than Colette. Turning to the published *Diary*, I ask: does Nin's

published account of her affair with June Miller “do more” than Colette in terms of the challenge of writing the intimate in ways that address a public readership? How?

Adele Marum is a PhD candidate with interests in twentieth century American and French life writing and manuscript studies. Her thesis reads Anaïs Nin’s diary as a material practice of the everyday.

Nicole Matthews
Standing Wood: Using Creative Non-Fiction to Explore the Boundaries between Selves and Non-human Others

This presentation will consist of a reading: part of a chapter of a memoir I am currently writing about alcoholism, masculinity and intergenerational hauntings. Each chapter of the memoir is organised around an object – vintage doors, a pair of walking boots, a speck of dust – and the reading consist of part of a chapter entitled “Standing Wood”. This piece explores the relationships between various types of firewood and the character of the Wood Cutter, following the relationship of the narrator, the Wood Cutter and combustible wood as it evolves across time and space. The piece plays with the idea of giving voice to standing wood – trees that are dead but still present and burnable. It narrates the movement of humans (as well as ice and seeds) across continents. Various types of timber are animated – bog oak and abandoned fish crates from the peats of Scotland, mallee root from the arid country of the Riverland – to explore the boundaries between subjectivity and objecthood. Standing wood is not just a metaphor for human characters in the piece, but is also metonymic and literal. It uses creative non-fiction begins to try to map some practices, relationship and stories that weave together and co-constitute these humans and the firewood that warms, comforts, shames and defines them.

Nicole Matthews teaches media and cultural studies at Macquarie University in Sydney. Her most recent book (written with Naomi Sunderland) was *Digital Storytelling in Health and Social Policy* (Routledge 2017). She has published articles and essays at the conjunction of media, disability and deaf studies in a wide range of journals including *Life Writing*, *Signs*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Television and New Media*, *Media, Culture and Society*, *Storytelling*, *Self and Society* and *Australia Feminist Studies*.

Tenille McDermott
Autofiction and Auto-Fiction: Notions of Authorship in the Era of AI

As Hywel Dix has noted, while French-language scholarship has spent several decades engaging with autofictional literature it is only relatively recently that the study of autofiction has emerged as a major topic of interest in English-language criticism. Autofictional texts blur the boundaries between biography and fiction, and writer and character, in ways that highlight the constructed nature of authorship and narrative identity. Recent advances in machine learning that have led to the development of large language models capable of producing complex and sophisticated text prompt us to reconsider ideas of authorship and authenticity in similar ways when considering text generated by machines. While the outputs of large language models are growing more and more sophisticated, the algorithms they are built on inherently lack direct access to embodied

experience and have no understanding of what it means to live in the world. Instead, these models rely upon complex layers of algorithms trained upon enormous sets of textual data to create statistical models that can output text which mimics the human writing they have been trained upon. This paper outlines an approach to creative writing which incorporates both human autofiction and mechanical auto-fiction to explore notions of authorship in the age of artificial intelligence. This approach troubles notions of narrative identity and authorship by situating an autobiographical exploration of complex family dynamics within a speculative plot in which the protagonist is forced to confront their own human authenticity, and incorporates machine-generated text produced by a bespoke language model. Through the lens of creative practice, this paper will demonstrate the ways in which notions of authorship can be troubled by contrasting the role of the writer in autobiographical fiction and the use of machine-generated text in creative work.

Tenille McDermott is a PhD candidate in creative writing at James Cook University in Townsville. Her practice-led research explores the intersections between time, narrative, and machine-generated text. She is the co-editor of *Sūdō Journal* and her creative work has been published in *Jacaranda Journal*.

Angela Meyer
Life experience and literary affect: Rereading Helen Garner's *The Spare Room*

I have identified as a 'reader' in public, personal and professional arenas since 2007 through my blog *LiteraryMinded*, my social media, published writing and in the classroom. As such, my bookshelves are an extension of a narrativised self. After a series of seismic personal shifts, I stood in front of my bookshelves feeling a disorienting disconnection to their contents – and from the versions of myself they reflected. In this paper I revisit Helen Garner's *The Spare Room*. Writing about it on my blog in 2008, I note, 'I realise this novel will take hold of me over the years. Things that are ahead – inevitable illnesses of parents, family, friends.' Through this rereading I explore how narratives of self can be (publicly and privately) constructed/reconstructed when literary 'truths' meet or diverge from personal ones. Additionally, *The Spare Room*, as an autobiographical novel, brings layered considerations around 'truth', such as how narrative construction and the employment of literary techniques (such as specificity) reveals or provides resonances of the 'true/real'. The paper is part of a larger, long-term project of rereading favourite books, tracking former selves in marginalia, dog-eared pages and reviews (such as those on my blog). This process engages critically with narrative, character, themes, style, and socio-historical resonances while also exploring the phenomenology of literary affect: Is there is a 'right' time to read a book? How does engaging with the same works across time (for reader–writers in particular) shape both personal and creative identities? Extending on the work of theorists like Iser and Ricoeur, I consider how the reading–writing process operates as an interdependent cultural cycle, one that mirrors reciprocal exchanges in nature – where literary insights are compost for both creative practice and the evolving self.

Dr Angela Meyer is a lecturer in the Master of Writing and Publishing at RMIT. She has worked as a bookseller, book journalist, editor and publisher, and is the author of the novels *A Superior Spectre* and *Moon Sugar*, the award-winning novella *Joan Smokes*, and a book of flash fiction, *Captives*.

Nicole Moore
Mid-century Realisms: Platforms for Truth in the Cultural Cold War

Renewed interest in realism's modalities names 'capitalist realism' (Fisher), 'worlding realism' (Goodlad), 'peripheral realism' (Cleary), and First Nations realism (Wright, Leane), among other forms, and seeks to question the abrogation of this literary mode in the wake of twentieth-century capitalism's foreclosures on history. At the same time, realism remains the most naturalized cultural mode in Australia (Buckridge, Coates), perhaps globally, across many platforms that reproduce everyday authenticity as a fungible token of shared sociality. Mid-century realism in Australia was a high stakes endeavour, in contrast. Sent into cultural battle across the economic, social and political divides of the Cold War, realism was a flag-bearer for the worth of suppressed, marginalised, ignored and censored Australian experiences, made newly readable. The lives of Australia's working class were central to this endeavour, in the face of superpower-sanctioned state repression. As the archive of titles now shows, the forms of grassroots infrastructure built to express these experiences were committed to representing that class's diversity and solidarity — from First Nations land and labour rights to migrant exploitation, women's equal pay and forthright queer desire.
This paper offers views into this now somewhat forgotten cultural history, with a focus on publishing practices. It will explore the aesthetic impact of the Australasian Book Society, from an ARC Discovery Project with Christina Spittel, revisiting breakthrough titles from this subscription model leftwing publisher.

Prof. Nicole Moore researches and teaches at UNSW Canberra. Through 2022-2023 she was the Visiting Prof. of Australian Studies at the University of Tokyo. She is editor of the Anthem Studies in Australian Literature and Culture series, and her biography of writer Dorothy Hewett will be released by Melbourne UP in 2026.

Dashiell Moore
'The present invasion might be repeated many times over': Blackbirding and Plantation Labour in Australian and Pacific Literatures

This paper considers a range of literary and historiographical representations of blackbirding and plantation labour. This approach adapts a critical framework of archipelagic memory used to challenge isolationist narratives of incarceration and forced labour (Glissant 1997; Kabir and Raimondi 2024). In the existing literature on this subject, scholars have revealed continuities in labour systems from the Atlantic and Indian Oceans into Australia (Christopher 2020), as well as settler-colonialism and border protection (Perera 2009; 2022), while drawing attention to the paradox of Australia's island-continent status (McMahon 2016). Focusing on critique and works by Tracey Banivanua Mar, Faith Bandler, and Manisha Anjali, I theorise an archipelagic landscape of memory that frames the appearance of a historical event or carceral structure. These writers reframe truth genres in Australian histories of incarceration and detainment, performing a kind of history work that has become critical to public discussion of slavery in Australia. How and why can the islands and plantations of blackbirding be remembered, and what leads to its being forgotten in cultural and historical memory? In asking these questions, writers consider how it could be that an experience of removal could be concealed and reproduced in other times and places. The

paper therefore explores how Australian and South Sea Islander writers engage historical narratives on the subject of Australian slavery, drawing on archipelagic frameworks to bring their efforts into a shared light.

Dashiell Moore is an ARC DECRA Fellow in English at the University of Sydney. His research interests include world literature, island studies, postcolonial theory, and Indigenous studies, with a particular concentration in Australian and Caribbean writing. A key focus of his work is on inter-colonial intersections in literary production, which was the subject of his recent monograph, *The Literary Mirroring of Aboriginal Australia and the Caribbea*n (2024). He is currently exploring further research in literary representations of the carceral archipelago as a DECRA Fellow, and due to commence a Roderick Visiting Fellowship at James Cook University in 2025.

Gemma Nisbet
Towards Queerness: Metaphor, the Essay and finding meaning in between

If—as Nicole Walker argues—'the stuff of metaphor is the stuff of pure make believe', then the use of metaphor in nonfictional writing 'signals a different kind of nonfiction ethic than the truth and nothing but the truth'. And yet, Walker suggests, 'nonfiction'—or at least, certain kinds of it—'traffics mainly in metaphor', not only in the ways it makes connections with its readers, but also in its potentials to expand meaning and thus help a writer 'mean two things at once'. In this paper, I consider how metaphor can function in autobiographical writing to expand meaning in regard to representations of queerness as I seek to produce writing that is not only *about* queerness but also aspires *towards* queerness in its form, aesthetics and logic. To do so, I will draw on the example of my current practice-led research, a book-length essay which braids together my experience of coming out as a queer person in my late thirties with my contemporaneous chance encounter with a lungfish, living in a tank in a lonely corridor in a building at one of the universities where I work. At the intersection of the two is an interest in notions of liminality and resistance to binaries, in the way queer theory and identities offer insight in this regard, and in the way the lungfish also seems to exist in a state of in-betweenness, as a 'living fossil' which lives mostly underwater but can breathe air. This will allow me to reflect on the unstable boundary between fact and fiction in life writing, particularly when representing subject matter that seems to resist epistemic totalities.

Gemma Nisbet is a Lecturer in Professional Writing and Publishing at Curtin University, and an Adjunct Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia, where she completed a PhD in Creative Writing in 2023. Her first book, *The Things We Live With: Essays on Uncertainty* (Upswell, 2023), was shortlisted for the 2024 WA Premier's Prize for an Emerging Writer.

Polly North
The Personal Turn in Diaries

Diaries - life-writing's most personal and indistinct scion - play a significant role in 20th and 21st-century iterations of the 'personal turn'. At *Mass-Observation* in 1937*,* diaries were integral to social researchers' attempts to bridge the gap between public and private

memory. In the 1960s, they helped make the 'personal political' for second-wave feminists. Now, 'intimate histories', autoethnographic, autofictional, and autotheoretical perspectives link diary-hermeneutics to widening political representation, activism, and participation and to increasingly scrutinising and interactive mass media.

Such appreciation of diaries is widely considered to have developed from the 1970s onwards. Late 20th-century academics began to explore this messy territory, apparently for the first time discovering the potential of the diary to draw out socio-historical perspectives in new and revealing ways. And yet, in fact, diaries had long been sought out, distributed, and studied: this was no 1970s revelation. Scholars have turned to personal stories to enrich their work for millennia. Ancient Greek (and later Roman), Chinese, and Japanese scribes used personal stories for early histories and military and courtly propaganda. Alexander the Great's journals add vital details to Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, and half of the one hundred and thirty chapters of China's *Sima Qian* are personal accounts of over one hundred individuals. Fast forward two thousand years, and the prototype autotheoretical work of modernists, and – importantly – diarists, like Strachey, Maurois, and Woolf, and the autofiction of Joyce, Adams, Stein, and Qichao mark, perhaps, the 'personal turn's' most self-conscious outing. This paper explores the significance of the diary-form to contemporary 'personal turns' and challenges the established narrative of discovery within current diary scholarship.

The first section recounts how new research shows that a host of British 19th-century publishers, learned societies, and early diary-academics enthusiastically unearthed and published diaries in standalone books or serial publications. Exchanges between stakeholders in the publication process, and the curatorial and editorial commentary accompanying these publications, illustrate that 19th-century interest in diaries was wide-ranging, extensive, and had distinct characteristics.

The second section's analysis of this newly gathered corpus adds depth to 21st-century understandings of what triggers and sustains engagement with diaries and thereby the 'personal turn'. The final section explores how and why 19th-century and current researchers have taken up life-writing forms, specifically diaries, as part of their academic endeavours; compares and contrasts historical and contemporary waves of the 'personal turn'; and picks out key motivations and enabling factors that prompt and sustain interest in personal stories as an object of study.

Polly North is founding director of The Great Diary Project. Established in 2007, the GDP is now the largest European archive of unpublished diaries. She is passionate about the preservation of diaries by 'ordinary' people. Her most recent interview is "Diary: A life page by page" BBC World Service (2024) Orcid: 0000-0002-9880-4917

Roger Osborne and Wayne Bradshaw
A Northern Affair: Victor Kennedy's *Northern Affairs* in/and Australian Magazine Culture

It is not particularly controversial to observe that the history of Australian publishing has been condensed in—though not confined to—the south-eastern quarter of the continent. It can, at times, be tempting to view the writing from Australia's northern and westerly reaches as historical marginalia. Nevertheless, Frank S. Greenop, in his *History of Magazine Publishing in Australia* (1947), recognised Victor Kennedy's *Northern Affairs* (1931–32) as 'the first attempt since the goldrush days to produce a provincial magazine' in the country. The magazine's editor, the journalist, poet and story writer Victor Kennedy, is now better

known for his later connections with the Jindyworobak group, but this earlier foray into publishing in Far North Queensland reveals his nascent ambitions to develop a magazine that would provide an opportunity for local and visiting writers 'to interpret the life, aims and ideals of the people of the Farthest North'. In its short life, *Northern Affairs* achieved its aims with varying success, but it provides a record of a moment in which an organ for regional writing intersected with national debates about the development of an identifiably Australian literary culture. This paper examines Victor Kennedy's *Northern Affairs* as a miscellany of magazine departments that addressed both local and national concerns in the context of the literary, cultural, and political debates of the 1930s. The paper positions the magazine in regional and national contexts in order to isolate a unique tone of address that might be a sign of Kennedy's future literary directions, and identifies the ways in which writing from and about Far North Queensland extends beyond the parochial to engage with culture on a national scale.

Roger Osborne is the Roderick Associate Professor of English Literature at James Cook University. Roger's research centres on Australian literature and British Modernism through the lens of book history, print culture, and scholarly editing. He is a contributing editor to the Cambridge Edition of the works of Joseph Conrad. In 2023 his work *The Life of Such is Life: A Cultural History of an Australian Classic*, was joint winner of the 2023 Walter McRae Russell Award for literary scholarship, and, with David Carter, he is currently completing the second volume of *Australian Books and Authors in the American Marketplace*.

Wayne Bradshaw is Adjunct Lecturer, University of Tasmania, Australia, where he completed a PhD in literary studies investigating the impact of egoist philosophy on the historical development of the modern manifesto. He is the author of *The Ego Made Manifest: Max Stirner, Egoism, and the Modern Manifesto* (Bloomsbury, 2023) and is currently working on projects related to the Angry Penguins literary movement and the nineteenth-century Antipodean poet and radical, Arthur Desmond.

Catherine Padmore
On Truth, the Writer's Self, and Biofiction in Marija Peričić's *The Lost Pages*

Author biofictions are a popular subset of the wider genre of biofiction (see the work of Monica Latham, Bethany Layne, Michael Lackey, Laura Savu, Paul Franssen and Ton Hoenselaars, for example). The readerly joys of this are manifold: seeking a 'real' encounter with the writer; the intellectual sport of seeing how the revenant writer's work and life have been deployed, and why; meta-provocations about such biofictions' role in larger debates around creation and legacy.

In this paper I discuss a recent addition to this corpus: Marija Peričić's Vogel-winning novel *The Lost Pages* (2017), which appears to present the newly discovered memoir of Franz Kafka's contemporary Max Brod. Kafka is here a character, presented to readers as filtered through Brod's eyes and experiences. Historically, what we know of Kafka comes through Brod, a biographical portrait that has recently been challenged by new biographies and the release of unedited versions of Kafka's diaries.

Peričić's choice to locate the narrative within the perspective of this lesser-known historical associate shifts traditional understandings to reposition the writers and their works in important ways, simultaneously reinscribing and challenging prevailing understandings of

the canonical writer depicted. The novel questions authorial identity and power dynamics and demonstrates a concern with literary legacies: What happens to authors' reputations and works after their deaths? What is the 'truth' of the author and how does this understanding affect readers' engagements with their texts? Peričić's novel offers important insights into ongoing debates about the complex and evolving relationships between fiction, history and biography, between truth and hoax, and between authors and their readers.

Associate Professor Catherine Padmore teaches creative writing and literary studies at La Trobe University, with research interests in historical and biographical fictions.

Heui-Yung Park
Distorted Truths or Lived Realities? Patriarchy and Racism in *Ten Thousand Sorrows*

Korean American adoptee Elizabeth Kim's 2000 memoir, *Ten Thousand Sorrows: The Extraordinary Journey of a Korean War Orphan*, has been highly controversial, facing criticism for its Orientalist perspective—particularly for allegedly fabricating her birth mother's death in Korea and calling it "honor killing." Kim was born in South Korea in the 1950s to a Korean mother and an African American GI, who left for the United States before she was born. After her mother's death, she was taken to an orphanage and later adopted by a white middle-class American family. In the memoir, Kim recounts witnessing her mother being killed by her own family for having an illegitimate, mixed-race child—an experience that left her deeply traumatized. However, skeptical readers, including Korean studies specialists, have questioned the accuracy of her account, arguing that her depiction of her mother's death and being ostracized and stigmatized in Korea represents the country as "a primitive, backward, misogynistic place" and therefore reflects an Orientalist viewpoint. This paper argues that, despite its several inaccuracies regarding Korean customs and history, *Ten Thousand Sorrows* captures the patriarchal and racist climate of postwar Korea in the 1950s. Furthermore, it highlights parallels between Eastern and Western male-dominated societies and racial discrimination. Accordingly, this study will examine the memoir within the socio-cultural context of postwar Korea while also exploring Kim's parallel experiences across both cultures.

Heui-Yung Park is an assistant professor of English at Dankook University in Cheonan, South Korea. Her research interests include life writing studies, diaspora studies, Asian American literature—particularly Korean American literature—and Korean literature.

Sarah Peters
Staging Stories of the Self in a Solo Show

An Incomplete Encyclopedia of Hugs is a semi-auto/biographical one person play about hugs, grief and love. Woven between anecdotal stories of the best and the worst of hugs, Juno shares three memories of being the last person someone spoke to before they died. Two of these stories are based on the lived experience of the playwright and one is mostly fictional, created to support the dramaturgical structure and dramatic action of the narrative.

Through practice-led research I am interrogating the dramaturgy of writing complex relational stories based on personal experience into solo performances. How do playwrights communicate entire worlds and multiple relationships through the single body of the actor?

How and when do they lean into the reality of their experience to solve a dramaturgical problem, and when and why might they lean into fiction? What care is taken (for the playwright, the audience, their collaborators) when writing the self into performance? In this paper I draw on examples from writing *An Incomplete Encyclopedia of Hugs* and interviews with four other theatre makers to interrogate these questions through the intersecting lenses of embodied dramaturgy (Maudlin et al 2023) autotopography (Heddon 2008), and the Brechtian verfremdungseffekt (Kelly 2020).I suggest that fictionalising elements of lived experience and making the familiar somewhat strange in its theatrical representation, can be part of a playwrights ethic of care when writing themselves into their work.

Sarah Peters (she/her) is a playwright and Senior Lecturer in Drama specialising in verbatim theatre and community-engaged theatre making. Her research investigates collaborative theatre making processes within an ethic of care, solo performance, and dramaturgies of theatre. Her co-authored monograph, *Verbatim Theatre Methodologies for Community-Engaged Practice* was published with Routledge in 2023. Sarah's most recent play 'An Incomplete Encyclopedia of Hugs' was produced by South Australian Playwrights Theatre (Adelaide) in 2024, and Conundrum Theatre (Singapore) in 2025.

Pratibha
The Precarious Selves: Rethinking the 'I' in Autobiographical Narratives by Dalit Women

There is a growing body of autobiographical protest literature being produced by Dalits that attempts to testify their oppression and make a political intervention to remedy their cultural erasure under the Brahmanical hegemony in the caste system. Couched in polemical rhetoric, typically, these narratives are posited as testimonies or socio-biographies, where the self is perceived to stand for the marginalized community, claiming to provide an authentic description of the collective suffering. Taking these ideas as a point of departure, it is proposed, though it must be acknowledged that by attempting to write autobiographical accounts, Dalit women have indeed wrested some agency to script and shape their socially acknowledged identities, this agency is premised on a precarious ideological 'I'. It is argued in this paper that the ideological 'I' accessible to Dalit women, comprises of an intractable jumble of contested ideas about paradoxical religious beliefs, progressivist Phule-Ambedkarite ideals and Marxist class-consciousness, convoluted by caste and gender intersectionality, creating curious dilemmas. These dilemmas are reflected upon and worked through in their autobiographical narratives by Dalit women to craft their 'narrated selves'. Pertinent examples of analysis from texts in English translation such as *The Prisons We Broke* (2008), *Pan on Fire* (1988), *The Weave of My Life* (2008), *Antasphot* (2013), *Karukku* (2000), *Sangati* (2005), *Viramma, Life of an Untouchable* (1997) would illustrate the arguments made above.

Dr. Pratibha is currently Assistant Professor of English Literature (at School of Liberal Arts) and Business Communication (at School of Management), Bennett University, India. She is also the Chair of Media & Communication Area, School of Management, Bennett University since August 2022. She earned her PhD (2022) and MPhil (2016) from Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, and has presented her ideas at several national as well as international conferences including the 89th Annual Conference of the Association for Business Communication in United States, The Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

in Belgium, University of Reading in United Kingdom, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University in Turkey, California State University, Long Beach, USA, University Sains Malaysia and Ireland India Institute at Dublin City University, Ireland. She also has many research publications on Dalit Literature to her credit which can be accessed from her Academia Profile. For connecting with her please write to pratibhabiswas85@gmail.com.

Jordyn Presley
Navigating the Ethics of Relational Illness and Disability Life Writing through 'Thoughtful Rummaging'

As I come to the end of my PhD, I reflect on what it means to navigate the truth of not only my lived experiences, but also my mother's and the wider disability community I represent. I have taken on the mantle of disability advocate, unflinchingly sharing my experiences of mild cerebral palsy and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) alongside the story of my mother's lupus experiences. It has not been an easy journey, but it is one I continue to embark on so that the stories of illnesses and disabilities, especially those that are incurable and largely invisible like ours, are understood and legitimated.

In this paper I discuss how I have come to navigate the ethics of relational illness and disability life writing through a strategy I coin as 'thoughtful rummaging'. Building upon Anna Poletti's wonderful notion of the 'implied rummager' in their article 'The Implied Rummager: Reading Intimate Interiors in Andy Warhol's *Time Capsules*', I understand that this figure represents the audience of a carefully curated box of artefacts. As a relational life writer addressing my work to my mother, and to my audience in general, the audience of such a work is invaluable. However, Poletti left me wondering about the curator, in my case the writer, of such a collection. I was left questioning: how could I use rummaging, a process that seems to be deeply tangible, as a way of navigating the ethical challenges of representing a relational life narrative concerning vulnerable topics and people? Ultimately, my exploration of my process for navigating such concerns intends to offer new ways to ethically and compassionately share relational stories of illness and disability.

Jordyn Presley is a regional Australian creative writing PhD student and enabling educator interested in disability advocacy through ethical relational autosomatography. She has been published in *Kill Your Darlings, Tulpa Magazine, Deadset Press* and *Salty Tales Anthology.* Jordyn is a co-founder and a managing editor of *Paper Road Magazine*.

Harsha Prince and Preeti Kumar
Speculative Biography: Reconstructing Sethu Lakshmi Bai in Manu S. Pillai's *The Ivory Throne*

Manu S. Pillai's *The Ivory Throne* is a historical reconstructive narrative of Queen Sethu Lakshmi Bai of the kingdom of Travancore, a princely state at the southern end of pre-independent India. The author presents a blend of historical research and narrative storytelling that closely aligns with speculative biography. He reconstructs the forgotten queen through historical sources while filling gaps using interpretation and storytelling. But he backs up his conjecture with meticulous archival research including official and legal documents, state proclamations, personal correspondences and memoirs.

The paper aims to examine how Pillai reconstructs the life of Sethu Lakshmi Bai using a microhistorical approach, focusing on the life of one ruler to reflect upon the broader socio-political changes of the time by blending archival data with informed speculation. Drawing from the theories of Donna Lee Brien, Hyden White and Alum Munslow the paper argues that biographies use interpretations and speculations and also expose the creative process of historical biography instead of obscuring it under the pretence of objectivity. In her work *Speculative Biography: Experiments, Opportunities and Provocations* Brien's observation shows how combining historical data with creative interpretation can enhance our understanding of historical figures. Hyden white in most of his works argues that historical narratives are constructed like literary texts and shaped by the same strategies of fiction to create compelling narratives. In *Deconstructing History* Alun Munslow examines history from a postmodern deconstructive perspective. Using this theoretical lens the paper examines Pilla's combination of fact and fiction challenges the traditional biographical approaches and reevaluates how historical reality is created and perceived.

Harsha Prince is a doctoral scholar at St Teresas College, Ernakulam Kerala, which is affiliated with Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, India. She is also a Junior Research Fellowship Holder from the University Grants Commission (UGC) India. Her research interests include Historiography, Speculative Biography, Colonial Modernity and Meta-narratives.

Dr Preeti Kumar is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English at St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam. She has researched the areas of Life writing, Gender Studies, Multimodal narratives and Historical Narrative. She has published high-impact research papers in various International and National journals and is credited for the translation of the work *The Lore and Legends of Ernakulam Shiva Kshetram.*

Kendrea Rhodes

Footsteps and Corridors: Reading the Asylum Gene and what others said about us. A Mad Studies, history of emotions, and creative practice approach to fragments of lived experience at the Ballarat Asylum

This paper explores archived records written by administration and medical professionals at the Ballarat Asylum (Lakeside Psychiatric Hospital) from the 1930s and 1980s. Comparisons will be drawn between the meaning/power of medical and mental health record writing, using Mad Studies as a framework, creative practice to read and present gaps and silences, and an intergenerational emotions historical approach. The relevant historical contexts of the records, images of the records, and the subjects of the records will be prominent in this paper. Both Kendrea and her long-lost great-grandfather walked the corridors of the Ballarat Asylum, albeit 50 years apart. Kendrea silenced herself after incarceration due to stigma and shame. Society and time silenced her great-grandfather. An aim of this presentation is to show the complexities of this research—of memory and memorialising, storytelling, ethics, emotions, family history, and archival practices. This paper is interdisciplinary, employing autoethnography, creative writing, poetry, Research-Creation (Loveless), historical and archival research, qualitative interviews, and digital, audiovisual and visual art.

Kendrea Rhodes (she/her) is a visual artist, writer, psychiatric survivor, and creative writing PhD candidate at Flinders University. Kendrea was awarded the 2024 AAWP Postgraduate Paper (scholarly) Prize, and has recent publications in *FWD : MUSEUMS Journal*, *Provenance (Public Record Office Victoria), Art/Research International*, and *NiTRO Creative Matters*.

Shereen Ricupero
Walking the Motherline: Conceiving Matricentric Psychogeography

In this paper, I argue that stories of motherhood and maternal identity can be mobilised by a psychogeographical practice employing a maternal lens, to identify the nuance of the mothering experience and its impacts on the evolving maternal self. I will show that creative nonfiction narratives guided by a matricentric psychogeographical walking practice provide a way to explore maternal subjectivity over time as revealed by place, incorporating elements of fiction and other genres to complicate and expand current maternal representations.

I will employ matricentric feminist theory and motherhood studies to examine how the conflation of mothers with the home and the suburbs and the act of domesticity has produced what Ellen Toronto describes as a type of 'non-existence' rooted in patriarchy, defined by a collective ignorance of maternal subjectivity and experience. Working with Andrea O'Reilly's definition of the matrifocal narrative, I will build on the concept of feminist psychogeography to propose that a matricentric psychogeography practice can produce texts that amplify stories of mothers. I will illustrate how a matricentric psychogeographical approach to writing can produce matrifocal narratives rooted in lived experiences of place, informed by memory and the absent presences that are evoked by embodying places touched by the past. Using two examples, *A Ghost in the Throat* by Doireann Ní Ghríofa and my own creative work set in Applecross Western Australia, I will discuss how these texts use elements of fictionality within their truth-telling to centralise the ways mothers evolve through their changing relationships with the city, the suburbs, the home, and their former and future selves.

Shereen Ricupero is completing a PhD at Curtin University researching psychogeography, motherhood and maternal identity in creative nonfiction. Shereen's creative works have appeared in Hunter Writers' Centre's *Grieve* Anthologies (NALAG prizewinner 2022), in *Suburban Archaeology*, *IOTA Maelstrom*, *Sick AF* and *Art on the Move* exhibitions, and upcoming exhibition, *The Storm*.

Chloe Riley
The Autistic Madwoman: Masking, Womanhood, and Patriarchal Ableism in *Jane Eyre*

Since Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and its iconic madwoman figure have remained canonical in feminist and disability literary theory. Gilbert and Gubar's reading famously casts *Jane Eyre* as a novel about a woman's struggle to resist and survive patriarchal oppression, as she learns to harbour her feminist rage — a struggle which reaches its climax through her signature encounter with the madwoman Bertha. Gilbert and Gubar's reading remains at the heart of discourse on *Jane Eyre*, as feminist and disability scholars celebrate and problematise the portrayal of Bertha's madness as a poetic metaphor for feminist rage. However, there remains limited discourse on Jane Eyre *herself* as a neurodivergent and disabled figure, and how her

experiences of learning to live under patriarchy are heavily shaped by patriarchal forms of ableism. Furthermore, such discourse neglects to recognise the significance of Jane's encounter with Bertha as an Other, *unmasked* neurodivergent figure. This study of *Jane Eyre* will draw from Julia Miele Rodas' reading of the titular character as autistic, in response to Gilbert and Gubar's canonical reading. Ultimately, this paper argues that 'plain Jane's progress' is not merely a journey of learning to suppress feminist rage to adhere to normative standards of femininity. Rather, Jane's narrative can be more accurately read as an *autistic* girl's journey of learning to mask her autism, so she may survive patriarchy's ableist standards of femininity — a journey which reaches its turning point when she meets the *unmasked* Bertha.

Chloe Riley (they/she) is a neuroqueer Australian writer and doctoral candidate at the Australian National University. Their short fiction has been published in Australia in *Verge* and in New Zealand in *Aotearotica*. Their doctoral research investigates the politicised representation of women's deviance and criminality in neo-Victorian fiction.

Stacey Roberts
What is it to be a working-class woman in Dorothy Hewett's *Bobbin Up* (1959)?

This paper examines the many iterations of working-class women's experience in Dorothy Hewett's 1959 novel *Bobbin Up* and argues that this depiction subverts expected stereotypes in both character and genre. Based on Hewett's own experience working in an inner-city Sydney textile factory in 1949, the novel features an assemblage of women characters employed at the Jumbuck Spinning Mills: older and younger women, married and unmarried, mothers, grandmothers, childless and expecting. These women are portrayed individually and as a collective, providing a complex and nuanced representation of a multitude of ways the working-class identity can take shape. Hewett argued that the characters drawn from the actual "mill girls" she worked alongside are "living, breathing Australian working-class women who speak with a living tongue" (Virago reprint introduction 1985 xvi), making claims to both truth and reality in her fiction.

In addition to perforating character stereotypes, *Bobbin Up* also eschews convention in its structure and style. Easily categorised (and dismissed) as a work of social realism, the novel's modernist techniques, shifting narrative, and loose, episodic composition defy such simple classification. This paper is concerned with the representation of cultural identity – female, postwar, working-class – and the concerns and considerations of depicting such identity in fiction. It ultimately argues that the blurring of the lines that separate fiction from non-fiction and of those that partition genre enables a more satisfying articulation of Australian women's stories.

Stacey Roberts is a PhD candidate in English and Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne. Her most recent work examines the use of vernacular and dialect in Ruth Park's *The Harp in the South* (1948).

Tom Sandercock
Locating the Lost Transgender Child: Reading Anti-Trans Australian Literature

In *What Gender Should Be* (2024), Matthew Culler grimly notes that "A global movement seeking the elimination of trans people has emerged" (3), which the second Trump administration has accelerated. The increasing visibility of trans people circa the 'trans tipping point' in 2014 has since seen a backlash of explicitly anti-trans discourse across the globe, including in Australia. At the heart of these anti-trans discourses are a set of truth claims informed by pseudoscience and religious fundamentalism which routinely utilise the figure of the child who must be protected or recovered from the corrupting and seductive forces of gender ideology. As sardonically caricatured by Judith Butler in *Undoing Gender*, these concerns ask: "What happens to the child, the child, the poor child, the martyred figure of an ostensibly selfish or dogged social progressivism?" (Butler:110). This fear of 'loss' and 'death' over the child has palpable resonance within the Australian context and the history of narratives concerning the 'lost child' trope. Just as white settler children lost in fiction steal focus from literal stolen Indigenous children, the 'lost' child within anti-trans writing steal focus from those who are genuinely harmed by messaging that dehumanises trans people, including trans children or children of trans people. This paper will present an overview and analysis of key examples of anti-trans literature within the Australian context—from life writing to children's picture books—that expose a moral panic over gender ideology and the 'at-risk' or 'lost' child. This paper examines how the figure of the child—embodying an investment in the reproduction or transformation of society—and the fears about the child's seduction by a vague insidious gender ideology, disrupts not only gender normativity but threatens the (white settler) nuclear family, revealing implicit gendered, sexualised, and racialised construction of the nation.

Tom Sandercock is an ECR in literary studies and gender and sexuality studies with specialisations in youth texts and trans and queer representation. He is published in *Journal of Gender Studies*, *Outskirts: Feminisms Along the Edge*, and *Writing From Below*, and his first book is *Youth Fiction and Trans Representation* (Routledge, 2023).

Sohini Sarkar

The Role of Metaphor in Illness Narrative: A Focus on Patient Dis/Empowerment in Cancer

Illness narratives encompass implicit, double and implied meanings that are conveyed through metaphorical and rhetorical devices narrated by patients and later told by others to maintain the coherence of the events in the story. These meanings that emerge in these stories through metaphorical representations suggest one thing by associating it with another. War metaphors in such stories about suffering are believed to have little beneficial effect on the patient community as they put pressure on them with the expectation of being permanently positive. Scholarships have produced work mostly on people from Western societies and have discussed the mood of war metaphors of varied age and gender. However, the existing literature shows few studies on the nature of illness metaphors used in non-Western societies. This study argues how cancer care in non-Western societies uses metaphors expressing emotional well-being within the health discourse of such illness narratives. The research is grounded in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's Conceptual Theory of Metaphor (1980) to understand the nature of war metaphors within the selected texts, inherently telling the emotional state of the patients and how well they are coping with their illness. This study found martial metaphors within illness narratives to be both empowering and disempowering, depending on how they were used, sometimes restoring

agencies and other times featuring coerced resilience within the patients. By analysing these metaphors, this study will indicate the need for sensitizing medical language and the requirement for a patient-centric approach in cancer care.

Sohini Sarkar is a PhD Research Scholar in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee. Her research interests include Health Humanities, Illness Narratives and Leisure Studies.

Elizabeth Smyth
The Long Sentence

This session is a reading of place-centred memoir set in the Wet Tropics of far north Queensland. The text centres on a domestic ritual of cleaning and is positioned globally and temporally through engagement with podcasts on international politics and digital minimalism. The work reveals an anthropocentric attitude to nature through both the destruction and maintenance of the non-human (insects, mould, etc). In terms of writing style, the entire text of 1480 words comprises only 11 sentences, hence the title, which echoes the extensive time and minutia involved in domestic work and evokes the house as a prison for domestic workers. Memoir was chosen to develop an intimate relationship with the reader and form a seemingly reliable account. The piece may also be read as gendered writing, with a woman cleaning and men uninvolved.

Elizabeth Smyth is a research associate at the Roderick Centre for Australian Literature and Creative Writing. She has published in *Meanjin*, *JASAL*, *TEXT, New Writing*, Tropical Writers anthologies, *The Conversation*, and *Georgic Literature and the Environment*. She is a past recipient of Varuna Residential and QWC Maher fellowships.

Rachel Spencer
Examining Literary Lives through Speculation

This paper will analyse the blending of biographical and fictional techniques in two speculative literary biographies: *The House of Doors* by Tan Twang Eng and *Tenderness* by Alison MacLeod. These works are marketed as novels, yet they both rely heavily on the reader "believing" much of their content. Eng's novel, about English writer Somerset Maugham and the milieu he inhabited in Penang in 1921, straddles biography and historical fiction. MacLeod's novel, set partially in the same era, is an imagining of the circumstances that gave rise to D. H. Lawrence writing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. *Tenderness* also includes a time-blending segue into the character of Jaqueline Bouvier-Kennedy (later Onassis) and the circumstances in which she found herself when her husband John Kennedy was being considered as a potential presidential candidate.

Is the fact that Maugham, Lawrence and Kennedy – Onassis are long deceased an important factor in considering the ethical ramifications of inventing details about real people whose lives are used as material? This paper will examine the tension between the ethical issues and the creative processes involved in crafting speculative biographies, especially in the growing market for speculative biographies about literary figures.

Rachel Spencer's professional life is a collage of legal practice, academia, creative writing, management, and bookselling. Her diverse research interests include legal ethics and the ethics of true crime writing. She spends a lot of time in a colourful messy room trying to write auto-fiction and short stories but often gets sidetracked, sometimes by emails from the various not for profit boards she is on, sometimes by trying to get her two manuscripts published.

Gerard Starling and Brigid Magner
'Dark-hued' Stories of Work: Reckoning with John Morrison's Literary Legacy

John Morrison (1904-1998) was an English migrant based in Melbourne/Naarm whose politically engaged stories feature characters grappling with workplace inequality, poverty and other injustices. A lifelong advocate for the trade unions, Morrison was a member of the Realist Writers movement and regular contributor to the *Overland* journal. In his lifetime, Morrison received the Patrick White award for Literature and the Order of Australia Medal for services to literature, however his writing has now faded into obscurity, like many socialist realist writers. His name is little-known and his out-of-print books are occasionally found on the shelves of secondhand stores in his adopted city.

As educator and student, we were surprised to find that we were both familiar with Morrison's stories, for different reasons. In this paper, we tell of our shared dive into Morrison's extensive archive kept at the University of Melbourne and Gerard's reckoning with his grand-uncle John's legacy, while trying to build his own literary career. Due to ambivalence in the family about Morrison's single-minded writing life - and its sacrifices - Gerard had not fully realised how many intersections there are between him and his grand-uncle. In this braided presentation, Gerard will narrate his discovery of his grand-uncle's life and work, while Brigid contextualises Morrison's writing about working men in Melbourne/Naarm. Together we will try to fathom the reasons for Morrison's neglect and propose new ways of reading his Melbourne/Naarm-based stories.

Gerard Starling is a neurodiverse writer born and raised in Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs on Wurundjeri Country. Prompted by his experience as a construction worker, Gerard critically probes contemporary masculinities. He is commencing a PhD at RMIT University in 2025.

Brigid Magner is a literary studies teacher and co-director of the non/fictionLab at RMIT University. Her monograph *Locating Australian Literary Memory* was published in 2020.

Kim Swivel
'Impeccably Researched': How the Digital Age is Changing (my) Australian Historical Fiction

Today, writers of historical fiction can research as they have never done before. A plethora of resources exist online, from the National Library of Australia's Trove databases to countless articles by history enthusiasts and experts alike. At the same time, readers of historical fiction can check the facts of novels, and often judge authors on their research. This new and developing shared research space between readers and writers is challenging the authority novelists have traditionally assumed over historical fact in their work. This is occurring even though readers do not usually understand the way authors play with facts to achieve effects

of authenticity, fill gaps in the historical record or fulfil readers' expectations. However, historical fiction author and scholar Melissa Addey (2021) has questioned the emphasis placed on and expectation of factual accuracy altogether, asking if it unbalances our appreciation for the creative 'playframes' in which writers work with facts.

Recent scholarship, such as Stephanie Russo's *The Anachronistic Turn: Historical Fiction, Drama, Film and Television* (2024), has noted the trend towards a playfulness with the past, as well as a forgoing of the goals of accuracy and authenticity, especially in neo-historical fiction. But there is at present little consideration of how ready access to historical information in the Digital Age might impact the narrative decisions of fiction writers. Using an autoethnographic approach, I consider how my own practice as a historical novelist has changed over the course of my thirteen historical novels published between 2007 and 2023 – a period that spans the development of the iPhone, Amazon's Kindle and all of the online research tools that have become indispensable today.

Kim Swivel is author of thirteen long-form fictions, under penname Kim Kelly. Her work has been short- and longlisted for various awards, and her latest historical fiction, *Ladies' Rest and Writing Room*, won the 2023 Finlay Lloyd 20/40 Prize. She is currently undertaking a Creative Writing PhD at Macquarie University.

Heather Taylor-Johnson
Stories of Family Trauma at the Interstices of Fiction and Non-Fiction

Little Bit is a literary work examining family trauma from three generations of women: my grandmother, mother, and myself. Because truth is slanted in different directions depending on who's telling it, and because memory as it translates truth is inherently faulty, I'm duty-bound to recognise that my mother's truth about her life with my grandmother as detailed in the 'Debbie' sections of the book is likely riddled with unintentional fabrications. More difficult to accept but equally important, my own truth as I narrate the writing of *Little Bit* in the 'Heather' sections is also untrustworthy. Therefore, I've written our sections in third person, stressing the fictious nature of recall. My grandmother, however, has no truth; she's no longer alive and isn't able to defend the choices she made in bringing up my mother, and yet she's the only character in the book who speaks in first person. So what have I written? A novel? An autofictive novel? A skewed biography? A deflective memoir? I suppose it is all of these, though none are definitively correct.

This conference call offered eighteen suggestions of presentation themes, and trying to situate *Little Bit* within one was complicated. Though I'm not overly concerned with giving it a label, labels can be necessary, as it is in the case of finding the book in the nonfiction section of one bookstore and in the fiction section of another. Do I label this paper as a discussion of narration, point of view, and the self? Of speculative biography or biofiction? Of autofiction? Autobiographical fiction? Experimental literature? They all fit as descriptors, but there's one suggestion that ignores the craft and those hefty decisions that make or break a label, and comes closest to representing the book's truth: 'Stories of grief and loss at the interstices of fiction and non-fiction.' Transcribing the terms 'grief and loss' into 'trauma' (not an unnatural thing to do) and placing the word 'family' before it solves my problem with labels and begins to make sense of the book's genre confusion.

Heather Taylor-Johnson is an American-born, multi-form writer, living and working on Kaurna land near Port Adelaide. She's the author of five poetry collections and a verse novel. The anthology she edited, *Shaping the Fractured Self: Poetry of chronic illness and pain*, is read in disability circles around the world. Her essays have won Island's Nonfiction Prize and been shortlisted for the Australian Book Review's Calibre Prize, while her second novel, *Jean Harley was Here*, was shortlisted for the Readings Prize for New Fiction. She's an arts critic, mentor and assessor, and runs a modest writers' retreat in the Fleurieu Peninsula. She's an Adjunct Researcher at the J.M. Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice at the University of Adelaide, where she received her PhD in Creative Writing.

Qixiu Tian
Reimagining Diaspora: Individuality and Introspection in Isabel Li's *A Chinese Affair*

A Chinese Affair (2016) is Isabel Li's debut work of sixteen short stories. It captures the diversity and complexity of modern migration experiences while raising questions about the suitability of the concept of diaspora as a common element of Chinese-Australian experience. In the collection, transnational landscapes and encounters pervade these interconnected stories along with a commitment to the intimate and meditative. Distinct from representations of earlier waves of Chinese migration, particularly those involving earlier sojourners, this work examines the challenges and aspirations of "new Chinese settlers", revealing the shape of alternative storylines that are still only rarely heard. The reflective prose of *A Chinese Affair* reframes little narratives by weaving together individual experiences of social alienation, racism and loneliness. This inward turn stems from an intention to view society through the lens of individual subjects, particularly new Chinese migrants, whose experiences, guided by individual reason and pursuit, markedly differ from the early Chinese diasporic narrative.

In the collection, Li's interweaving of individual stories evolves into a loose novelistic texture, subtly straining at the limits between generic literary categories. Memories and images become increasingly entangled as characters from different tales reappear and connect, blurring the boundaries between stories and mirroring the kind of boundary-crossing, "in-between" modes of cultural practice. Each story, as a singular narrative, represents an inward gaze that penetrates into the heart of the quotidian detail. The collection, meanwhile, is a multifaceted whole that offers a layered examination in which individual stories appear as signs shifting in unstable relationship to the totality of the shared migrant identity. The dialectical relationships staged between the individual story and the collection makes it possible to indicate a way of getting to these complex negotiations of private introspection and collective diasporic experience.

Qixiu Tian examined representations of China in contemporary Australian literature. She identified significant shifts in portrayals of Chineseness in poetry, theatre, novels and short stories. Her research contributes to the understanding of decolonisation as an ongoing process within and beyond Australia.

Amanda Tink
Simultaneously expecting and rejecting the truth: Alan Marshall's audiences, publishers, and life

Though literary critics often describe the blending of life writing and fiction as a recent trend, such hybridity has a long history in disabled writing. Similarly, blurred lines between autobiography and fiction are frequently framed as exclusively a matter of authorial style. For disabled authors, however, these choices are often also strongly influenced by publisher and audience reception.

I will discuss the friction between these factors through the example of the Australian disabled author Alan Marshall. Ever since Marshall's book *I can Jump Puddles* was published in 1955, it has continually been referred to as his childhood autobiography, even though he published it as fiction. Having been a published author for over a decade, Marshall knew that the nondisabled majority of his audience wanted to read something close to their stereotypes of a six-year-old boy partially paralysed by polio, and so did his publisher. Consequently Marshall emphasised his cheery moments, and left out the rest of the truth, and it was a best-seller. When he gathered up the courage to publish the rest of the truth of his childhood twenty years later – including the presence of other disabled people, and the prejudice they all experienced – it bombed.

This paper discusses how Marshall balanced the truth that his audience claimed to want, the details they refused to acknowledge, and the reality of his life trapped between them.

Dr Amanda Tink is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at UniSA Creative, University of South Australia, and Adjunct Research Fellow at Western Sydney University's Writing and Society Research Centre. She is a proud neurodivergent/disabled person with research interests in Australian disabled authors, crip poetics and memoir, and the Nazi genocide of disabled people. She is currently working on the Australian Research Council discovery project "Finding Australia's Disabled Authors: Connection, Creativity, Community."

Lise van Konkelenberg

'Leave Space for More': Who Can Speak in Mad Studies?

In the popular imagination, madness is the absence of rationality. In Miranda Fricker's terms, people who find themselves accused of being mad (if only in safe language of a psychiatric diagnostic label) are commonly undermined in their capacity as knowers. But in the emerging field of Mad Studies, scholars who reclaim the label Mad express their epistemic authority and expertise in academic publications that challenge the dominance of the medical model of mental illness. Among the author's rhetorical strategies in these texts are episodes of "lived experience" and analysis from a Mad standpoint where what is true may not align with documented fact.

I am in my first year in a higher degree by research taking Mad scholarship as my primary texts. I will be looking into what has been called a broader 'autobiographical turn' in the academy, exemplified by methodologies including reflexivity, personal criticism, autoethnography and more recently autotheoretical approaches. As a Mad scholar and using the lens of Mad theory I pursue how genre and epistemology are related in the realist but nevertheless constructed academic text and, following from Black, Feminist, Queer, Crip and Post-Colonial theorising, how life writing is a praxis that expands academic space.

Lise van Konkelenberg recently began PhD research at Flinders University, where she completed her Honours degree in Life Writing which received the Richard Conyers Prize. Her

research practice, including *The Agony of Ecstasy* which was aired in November 2014 by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, is informed by lived experience.

Jodi Vial
Poetics of Place

My PhD creative work, *All the water a body can hold,* is situated within a field of women's creative non-fiction that is not purely life writing, not only place writing, not just historical but also poetic. The unifying element is a sense of the author seeking to *situate* themselves in place, through known landmarks (natural or otherwise) that are nonetheless laden with personal meaning and emotional significance to be explored.

In defining a poetics of place, I draw from Gaston Bachelard's description of the poetic imagination as an "inner immensity" (185), in which there exists both an expansion and a reflection of self, into and onto the world around it. To explore the poetics of place is to fully expand notions of self and place beyond what is geographically and physically tangible, and to enter a realm of memory and imagination.

The opening paragraphs of *All the water a body can hold* describe in detail the experience of a morning swim at Merewether Ocean Baths, in which I am encountering multiple place 'archives': my own embodied trauma, the social and cultural history of Newcastle as a site of glorified masculine effort and achievement, and the storied layers of the surrounding landscape – ocean, cliff face, and built environment. In experiencing embodied and emotional transcendence of those realms – "My body is pressed against a concrete wall, but I have no borders or boundaries. The water holds me as if it is endless." (Vial 5) – I am freed momentarily from old ideas of self and place, encountering both in a new and transformative way.

Jodi Vial writes poetry, short fiction and creative non-fiction, with a focus on the intersection of literature, landscape and history. She submitted her PhD thesis in Creative Writing at the University of Newcastle in September 2024. Jodi lives and writes on the unceded lands of the Awabakal and Worimi people.

Erin Vincent
Resurrected Ruins: Experimentation and Fragmentation in Han Kang's autobiographical hybrid novel, *The White Book*

South Korean writer Han Kang's *The White Book* (2017) is her most autobiographical novel to date, it is also her most experimental. It tells the story of a writer (Kang) who, while on a writer's residency in snowy Warsaw, wanders the city streets and begins to notice that the remains of buildings that 'had been smashed to pieces, literally pulverised' during WWII have been incorporated into the new structures (Kang, 2017, p.25). These resurrected ruins brought to mind Kang's older sister who had 'met the same fate as that city,' dying in the heart of winter on her parent's kitchen floor less than two hours after her birth (ibid., p.27). This traumatic event, the ruins of which would echo through Kang's family, is the subject of *The White Book,* a novel in which Kang imagines her sister resurrected and walking through the city in Kang's place. In my paper I intended to examine *The White Book* in relation to the fragmentary nature of trauma and intergenerational trauma and the tendency for 'traumatic memory to be dissociated, and to be initially stored as sensory fragments without a

coherent semantic component' (van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995). Kang's experimentation in the form of fragments, gaps, omissions, lists, prose poetry, photography, and fragmented language perfectly captures the fragmentary nature of her own grief, the grief felt by her mother, and the grief that has permeated her family, resulting in an undefinable book that Kang has said she calls a novel or a novella but that 'maybe someone will call it a prose poem or a narrative poem, or someone will call it an essay' (Kembrey, 2017).

Erin Vincent is the author of the memoir *Grief Girl* (Pan Macmillan AUS/Penguin Random House US). Her work has appeared in Meanjin, The Guardian, Electric Literature, The Offing, and elsewhere. She is currently studying for a PhD in creative writing focusing on fragmentary literature written by women in the 21st century.

Mahin Wahla
The Story, the Self, and the Scrutiny: Muslim Women's Political Memoir in Contemporary Australia

This paper examines the memoirs of Australian Muslim women politicians Mehreen Faruqi (*Too Migrant, Too Muslim, Too Loud*, 2021) and Anne Aly (*Finding My Place*, 2018) as narrative spaces where the story, the self, and scrutiny converge. The paper argues that Aly and Faruqi do not merely adapt the memoir form; they trouble it, remake it, and use it to stage a politics of refusal. *Too Migrant, Too Muslim, Too Loud,* and *Finding My Place* are more than life stories; they are complaints. They register the burden of having to explain oneself within a genre structured by liberal demands for transparency and truth and within a nation-state that invites diversity only when it does not disrupt. In a cultural and political climate where Muslim women are continually positioned as strangers, over-visible yet misunderstood, a memoir becomes a form of survival. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's philosophical concepts of *use*, *strangerness*, *willfulness*, and the *feminist killjoy*, this paper explores how Aly's and Faruqi's memoirs exemplify what it means to inhabit the condition of the question and to write as an act of epistemic and affective refusal. Their memoirs engage in a process of textual veiling and unveiling—not of the body, but of the self under regimes of visibility that frame Muslim women as always too much or not enough. Veiling, here, becomes a narrative tactic: to withhold, to pause, to redirect. Unveiling becomes conditional, deliberate, and never a total offering. These narrative gestures of veiling and unveiling are acts of *willful wandering*—interruptions of the reader's desire for confession or coherence and of the institution's hunger for representation that affirms rather than unsettles. In so doing, these memoirs accomplish what Ahmed calls *diversity work*, but on their terms. They are not just counter-narratives; they are philosophical interventions into the ethics of readability, the labor of legibility, and the costs of being known in contemporary Australia.

Mahin Wahla is a final-year doctoral candidate in Literature and Cultural Studies, supported by a competitive international scholarship from Pakistan's Higher Education Commission and the Faculty of Arts International Postgraduate Research Scholarship at Monash University. She specializes in the intersections of gender, origin, religion, and race in the memoirs of Muslim women politicians from 21st-century Australia and the US. Her academic interests include diasporic Muslim communities, transnational solidarities, and the intersections of politics and culture in literary texts. In 2022, Wahla received a paid commission from the

Australian Book Review (ABR), served as a Committee Member for the School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics (LLCL) Colloquium at Monash University, and represented LLCL in Monash University's 2024 Three-Minute Thesis competition.

Amelia Walker
Autofictional influences on ordering poetic life writing: Writing silenced themes through patterned repetition and variation

In this presentation, I sketch ways in which autofiction can inform the ordering of poems in larger collections, particularly in cases of poetry as life writing. As illustration, I discuss how the autofictional works of Serge Doubrovsky informed my most recent poetry collection, *Alogopoiesis* (Gazebo Books). The word 'alogopoiesis' is a portmanteau of 'alogia', meaning reduced or absent speech, and 'poiesis', an etymological precursor of both poetry and making. So, 'alogopoiesis' indicates making poetry from silence, which in my book bears two significances: one, poems of lived experience concerning intimate partner violence, queer heartbreak, and mental illness; and two, the techniques of erasure poetry, fragmentation, and patterned repetition the book uses to evoke subjugated knowledges and affective truths of queer and feminine life experience that frequently elude articulation via dominant literary genres. In my presentation, I explain how Doubrovsky's use of threads and spirals inspired me to think of my collection in terms of a 'book-as-poem'. The term 'book-as-poem' signals the idea that the sequencing of individual poems within a collection can be read as a macro-poem. My presentation includes a historical review of techniques poets and editors have used to order collections. Discussion of how autofiction informed my approach is then followed by attention to additional influences on my approach including trauma writing, short story cycles, and theories of poetic form and metaphor. My aim is not to dictate any single method or set of recommendations for ordering poetry collections or other works, but rather to open thought and discussion about the possibilities of books-as-poems, and how autofiction alongside other life writing praxes may inform novel approaches to evoke truths of lived experience that seem difficult to raise via dominant literary and discursive strategies.

Amelia Walker (she/her) lives and writes on Kaurna Yerta, where she lectures at the University of South Australia. She is co-editor of *Ludic Inquiries into Power and Pedagogy in Higher Education* (Walker, Grimmett & Black, Routledge, 2025) and author of *Reading and Writing for Change* (Bloomsbury Academic, forthcoming in 2025).

Rachael Weaver
'A Rare Bird in the Lands': the Early Visibility of Extinction in Colonial Australia

This paper is drawn from the second part of a larger article on anthropogenic or unnatural extinction, which questions prevailing narratives that situate the recognition of anthropogenic extinction primarily in Northen Hemisphere contexts, focusing on widely recognised bird species such as the great auk and the dodo. It argues instead that human-caused extinction was a visible and contested topic in colonial Australia—and by extension, the Global South—well before the late nineteenth century. Drawing on archival sources, colonial literature, and early natural history accounts, it demonstrates how extinction discourse was deeply entangled with colonial expansion, resource exploitation, and the

dispossession of Indigenous peoples. The paper highlights paradoxical attitudes toward native species, where some were mourned and legislated for, while others were deemed obstacles to colonial progress and actively targeted for eradication. It concludes by briefly considering Australia's island bird habitats, and exploring the disproportionate vulnerability of island endemic species, emphasising the combined pressures of introduced predators, habitat degradation, and climate change.

Rachael Weaver is an ARC Future Fellow in English at the University of Tasmania. She is the author of *The Criminal of the Century* (2006) and, with Ken Gelder, *The Colonial Journals, and the emergence of Australian literary culture* (2014), *Colonial Australian Fiction: Character Types, Social Formations, and the Colonial Economy* (2017), *The Colonial Kangaroo Hunt* (2020), and *Colonial Adventure* (2024). Her current project is *The Economics of Birds*, which considers the ways species have been valued since the beginnings of European colonisation in Australia.

Millicent Weber
Intermedial(in)- authenticity in the Print and Audio Editions of Siang Lu's *The Whitewash*

This paper discusses how Siang Lu's *The Whitewash* engages in an ongoing negotiation of authenticity on textual, paratextual, and media levels. *The Whitewash* (published 2022 in print by University of Queensland Press, and as an audiobook by Wavesound) is a mock oral history that centres on the production of fictitious martial arts film *Brood Empire*, and through this explores whitewashing in the Asian film industry. The novel both signals and undercuts its own authenticity. It does this through the interweaving of meticulously factual with both plausible and hyperbolic fictional detail; through the paratextual usage of footnotes, timelines and appendices, voiced by a textual narrator in the audiobook; through its form, as a supposed oral history, complete with direct internal contradictions between character testimonies; and through the voicing of this oral history by the audiobook's large cast of diverse characters and judicious use of music and foley. In this paper I analyse the print and audiobook editions, together with an interview with the author conducted in December 2024, to explore how *The Whitewash* leverages its own inherent intermediality to repeatedly perform and call into question the construct of authenticity.

Dr Millicent Weber is a Senior Lecturer at the ANU, and ARC DECRA Fellow researching *Audiobooks and Digital Book Culture* (2024-2027). Her research explores how new media and cultural formations, including audiobooks, digital media, and live events, reshape the production, circulation and reception of books in the twenty-first century.

Emma Whatman
'A Culture of Limitation': The *Welcome to Sex* Controversy and the Battle Over Sex Education Publishing

In July 2023, *Welcome to Sex*, a sex education book for teenagers by Dr. Melissa Kang and Yumi Stynes, became the centre of heated public debate in Australia. Marketed as a no-nonsense guide to sexuality and relationships, it faced conservative backlash, with critics labelling it a "child sex manual" and calling for its removal from bookstores and libraries. This response, marked by moral panic, censorship, and accusations of "grooming", reveals what

Tania Ferfolja and Jacqueline Ullman (2020) describe as a "culture of limitation" in Australia, where discussions of gender and sexuality are constrained by social and political forces.

This paper situates the *Welcome to Sex* controversy within the broader history of sex education publishing in Australia, examining how non-fiction books for young people function as contested sites of knowledge production. While such books reflect dominant narratives of selfhood, gender, and sexual agency, they also actively shape them. Despite the book's success (selling out after its removal from shelves) the backlash and continuous harassment of co-author Yumi Stynes highlight persistent tensions between progressive sex education and conservative efforts to control public discourse.

By analysing how *Welcome to Sex* was framed in media debates, this paper argues that sex education books are critical yet precarious sites of young people's access to sexual knowledge. The backlash was not merely about content but about who is permitted to discuss sex, gender, and agency, and on what terms. The controversy exposes how narratives promoting inclusivity, pleasure, and sexual health are systematically delegitimised, while conservative discourses of shame, taboo, and restriction are upheld as moral authority. What stories are deemed legitimate sources of knowledge? Whose experiences of selfhood and sexuality are validated, and whose are erased? Rather than simply reflecting social anxieties, sex education books actively shape cultural understandings of gender and sexuality, making them battlegrounds in broader struggles over truth, identity, and control.

Dr Emma Whatman is an early career researcher, lecturer, and writer from Melbourne, Australia. Emma has been widely published, and her research explores contemporary feminism and feminist history, young people's cultures, and sex education. She works in media and communications, and gender studies at the University of Melbourne.

Jessica White

Patricia Carlon: A Hidden Crime Fiction Writer

Patricia Carlon (1927 – 2002), an Australian crime fiction writer, only became known in her home country towards the end of her life, when her novels – widely published in the United States and United Kingdom – were republished in Australian in the 90s. Although she authored forty romance stories in Australian magazines, as well as eleven suspense novels, critical attention to her output has been meagre. Carlon was also profoundly deaf since age 11, but her deafness only became widely understood following her death. Even her publishers were unaware of her impairment, as she communicated with them by letter.

Deafness is sometimes associated with secrecy and passing, and Carlon's choice of genre – the suspense novel — was likely influenced by her impairment. Many of the themes of Carlon's works – alienation, darkness, entrapment and communication — can also be traced to deafness. Additionally, Carlon used a range of pseudonyms in her early romance writing.

Despite Carlon's prolific output and masterful crafting of her novels, little critical attention has been paid to her work and how this was shaped by deafness. Susan Wyndham gestured to the influence of Carlon's impairment in her obituary of Carlon, but no other critic has contemplated the links between Carlon's deafness and her writing, and none in detail.

This paper attempts to redress the neglect of Carlon's writing. In particular, it considers the way Carlon hid her deafness and how this influenced her genre and themes. In doing so,

it aims to draw attention to the way that disability is not a deficit, but a source of lateral thinking and creativity.

Dr Jessica White is the author of the novels *A Curious Intimacy* and *Entitlement*, and a hybrid memoir about deafness, *Hearing Maud*, which won the 2020 Michael Crouch Award for a debut work of biography and was shortlisted for four national awards, including the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Nonfiction. Jessica has received funding from the Australia Research Council, Creative Australia, Arts Queensland and Arts South Australia and has undertaken national and international residencies and fellowships. She is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing and Literature at the University of South Australia, and chief investigator on the ARC Discovery Project 'Finding Australia's Disabled Authors: Connection, Creativity, Community' (2024 – 2025). Her essay collection, *Silence is my Habitat: Ecobiographical Essays*, will be published by Upswell in October 2025.

Liqian Yang
Connection between the West and the East – Nicholas Jose's Transnational Writing in *The Rose Crossing*

Nicholas Jose's novel *The Rose Crossing* (1994) is motivated by a story about crossbreeding of the Chinese rose and the European rose. A new kind of rose was discovered on an island in the Indian Ocean in 1789. Its colour, shape, and fragrance combined the characteristics of both European and Chinese roses, but how the hybrid rose arrived at that far-off island remained a mystery. 'Chinese roses (Rosa chinensis) were imported to Europe and North America in the 1790s and early 1800s as part of a general enthusiasm for Oriental products and decorative arts, including teas, porcelain, silks, and carpets.' Following this, modern roses appeared. Jose completes the story and develops it into one concerning communication and integration between British and Chinese in mid-to-late 17th century, specifically the impact of the integration of Chinese and western cultures. Through the perspective of the English scientist Edward Popple, Jose describes the process of a European's acceptance of Chinese culture through his sanction of the love between his daughter (Rosamund) and a Chinese man (Zhu Taizao, a prince of the late Ming Dynasty). My paper will use Kathleen Woodward's interpretation of the second mirror stage to analyse Edward Popple's emotional and identity shifts in his attempts to rationalise his acceptance of Chinese culture. This in turn sheds light on the transcultural aspirations of Jose's novel, itself connecting European and Chinese historical and cultural contexts.

Liqian Yang finished her PhD last September. She majors in Modern Literature under Professor Mark Byron's supervision in Department of English, University of Sydney. She works as casual academics in Discipline of English and Writing/Media and Communications in University of Sydney. Her thesis title is 'Modernity: From the West to the East'. Her submission to the conference is from one chapter in her thesis concerning Nicholas Jose.

Emily Zong
Racial Geology and Alluvial Subjectivity in Chinese Australian Gold Rush Fiction

This essay locates *alluvial subjectivity* as a geosocial imaginary and a decolonial praxis in Chinese Australian Gold Rush Fiction. Alluvial deposits are the most common type of gold

left by flowing water and alluvial mining is a common method of gold seekers washing, panning, and cradling riverbed sediments for gold minerals. As a material technique for separating gold from soil, alluvial mining embodies colonial geo-logics that alienate land, person, and matter on the resource frontier. I analyze how alluvial language and imagery – mud, sludge, deluge, earth, and river – intersect self and sediment in the selected novels that challenge liberal possessive humanist representations of Chinese overseas gold rush as narratives of global capitalism and diasporic entrepreneurship. Alluvial subjectivity proposes a geomorphic aesthetic that reveals the material and discursive processes of colonial racialization, while also opening cosmological, decolonial, and genderqueer possibilities for Asian diasporic ecological belonging. This essay traces how these texts mobilize the alluvial as a geosocial register that resists colonial divisions and racial erasure by hybridizing extraction and erosion, land and water, and ancestral memory and deep time. In doing so, it contributes to a decolonial reading of the Chinese diasporic gold miner, and the extractive self at large, as a geologic subject whose inhuman becoming embodies at once oppressive and transformative politics.

Dr Emily Zong is Assistant Professor of environmental humanities at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her research explores cultural imaginations of place, species, and climate in migrant and refugee narratives, with a focus on Asian diasporic literature and culture. She is the author of *Planetarity from Below: Decolonial Ecopoetics of Migration and Diaspora* (University of Michigan Press, forthcoming 2025) and co-editor of *Decolonising Asian Diasporic Ecocriticism*, a forthcoming special issue of *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*.

List of Abstracts – Panels

Women and War
Anne Brewster and Sue Kossew

Anne Brewster
Yumna Kassab's *Politica*: War and Witnessing

Yumna Kassab's recent novel *Politica* (2024) showcases her longstanding interest in the thematics of violence, revolution and war. It addresses what she calls 'very difficult subjects'. In paratextual commentary on the novel she identifies a dominant narrative that the Western media perpetuates about Arabs, which aligns 'Arab revolutionaries with terrorists and Arab revolutions with terrorism'. *Politica* is set in an unnamed Arab region. Kassab explains that she wanted to write about Arab revolutionaries 'without them being named as terrorists'. She aims instead to focus on the generalized topic of the suffering that issues from war. In its analysis of war this paper draws on Jumana Bayeh's theorization of the literary Arab rebel.

Despite its avowed anonymity, the fiction is complex and layered and refers in passing to real life events, including incidents of war in the Middle East. As a writer of second-generation Lebanese heritage, Kassab also negotiates familial memory. Her strategy is to mobilise a hybrid textuality of 'fictional, political theory' which combines a referential imperative – and that of commemoration – with the 'freedom' of fiction, which allows her, she argues, to '*imagine* Arab history: I am free to go wherever I want with the story'.

Storytelling is facilitated in the novel by the powerful voice of a reluctant and forlorn genie, a figure borrowed from pre-Islamic Arabic tradition. The genie chronicles the stories of the precariate – bearing witness to villagers whose stories and lives might otherwise have been consigned to silence. The stories that it tells are marked by the fragmented and episodic temporality of trauma. They are oriented towards the not-yet-formulated future as we see in the final outward- and forward-looking image of the diasporic scattering with which the novel concludes.

Sue Kossew
Writing War: Two Recent Australian Women's Novels

The recent publication of Canadian academic Donna Coates's *Shooting Blanks at the Anzac Legend: Australian Women's War Fictions* (2023) has drawn attention to the national reluctance to hear the voices of women writers on the topic of war. While she concentrates her study mainly on fiction written during times of war, this paper analyses two recent novels that look back on canonical wars, World Wars I and II, from a contemporary perspective. Both writers draw on their own family histories, providing, I argue, a perspective on war that is anti-heroic and that emphasises the ongoing intergenerational inheritance of wars.

Portland Jones's novel *Only Birds Above* (Fremantle Press 2022), set in Western Australia, revisits both the First and Second World Wars, depicting overseas war service and POW trauma across two generations of Australian men. In doing so, it attends to the harrowing ongoing effects of war on veterans and their families.

Catherine McKinnon's *To Sing of* War (2024), while set in [Papua] New Guinea in 1944/45, has a wide scope, ranging from New Guinea to Japan and the USA. It highlights the complex global repercussions of war and the often-silenced issue of gendered violence against women, one kind of war that women have been fighting "since ancient times."

Both novels revisit historical stories and sites of war, in the process uncovering what journalist Paul Daley has described as "unpalatable truths" and "dark secrets" that have mostly been suppressed in the national imaginary. At the same time, each writer considers the ethics of writing about war in fictional genres. This paper suggests that, for Jones, literature is a way of memorialising untold family stories; for McKinnon, it is a way of expressing what "history books leave out".

Presenter Bios:

Anne Brewster lives on Kaurna country. She is an Honorary Associate Professor at UNSW. Her books include *Giving This Country a Memory: Contemporary Aboriginal Voices of Australia* and, with Sue Kossew, *Rethinking the Victim. Gender, Violence and Contemporary Australian Women's Writing*. She is series editor for *Australian Studies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives.*

Sue Kossew is Emeritus Professor of Literary Studies at Monash University. Her books include *Writing Woman, Writing Place: Australian and South African Fiction* (2004) and *Rethinking the Victim: Gender and Violence in Contemporary Australian Women's Writing* with Anne Brewster (2019). She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Writing and Publishing Truth Genres in Regional Australia

Sandra Phillips, Caitlin Parker, Alexandra Dane and Beth Driscoll

Many culturally significant Australian books are written and published outside of mainstream structures. The Community Publishing in Regional Australia project seeks to understand the nature of this often-overlooked creative practice, and to explore the diversity of truth telling, cultural preservation and self-expression that is occurring through book making. Over three distinct but interrelated papers, this panel explores contemporary independent and self-published writing from Australia's regional and remote areas. We offer an examination of Indigenous Knowledges and narratives in the context of truth-telling literatures as anti-colonial work; an interrogation of the opportunities and limitations of archival records of Australian life writing from the regions; and an exploration of the enduring importance of the printed book in the preservation of life stories and histories.

Noting international comparisons in Truth as reparative work, Sandra Phillips poses the question: does Australia have a problem with Truth? Indigenous writers independently publishing in regional Australia are best understood within the culture of what WEH Stanner called 'the great Australian silence' and 'cult of forgetfulness' in his 1968 ABC annual Boyer Lecture. This paper explores the case study of Running Water Community Press, an Alice Springs-based, author-led Indigenous publishing co-operative that demonstrates, through its governance and output, the opportunity and challenge of telling truth inside of national silence and forgetfulness. An alternative mode of truth-telling encountered through the project's fieldwork is also canvassed.

Caitlin Parker then turns to the records of Australian literary production, the AustLit Database, raising questions around what these records reveal about independently and self-

published autobiographical works in regional Australia. These books, and their records, are important lenses through which to learn about publishing and book cultures within regional Australia, as the narratives provide insights into the lives of regional Australians without mediation via publishing houses located within Melbourne and Sydney. This paper will generate a picture of the breadth of autobiographical publishing happening across the continent and highlight how autobiographical works endure in different ways: as books circulated to a community of readers and as records in national bibliographic databases.

Finally, Beth Driscoll and Alexandra Dane explore the act of publishing, or book making, as a part of storytelling and creative expression. Through four case studies—John Spencer's *On Both Sides of the Fence*, Tony James, *50 Years a Railway Worker*, Christine Adams' *Sharing the Lode*, and Rainie Gillies' *Winton, Working and Wags* (Spur 'n Eight, 2021)— we consider both the paratextual and socio-contextual elements of the texts to argue that the materiality of contemporary self-published books in regional Australia is bound up with the stories and histories that people want to share, now and into the future.

Presenter Bios:

As Associate Dean Indigenous, **Dr Sandra Phillips** leads Indigenous strategy from within the Office of the Dean for impact across the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne. Sandra's professorship in publishing and communications also draws from her industry experience as a former publisher and editor. A Wakka Wakka and Gooreng Gooreng mother and grandmother, Sandra is chief investigator on Community Publishing in Regional Australia (LP210300666) and Reading Climate: Indigenous Literatures, School English, and Sustainability (LP220200724).

Caitlin Parker recently completed her PhD in Publishing and Communications at The University of Melbourne. Her research focuses on the intersections between book history, literary studies, and law.

Alexandra Dane is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Communications. Her research focuses on the production and circulation of power in contemporary book cultures. She is the author of *White Literary Taste Production in Contemporary Book Culture* (2023, Cambridge UP) and is a chief investigator on the Community Publishing in Regional Australia linkage project.

Beth Driscoll is Professor of Publishing and Communications and Deputy Dean (Academic) of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne. Her most recent books are *What Readers Do: Aesthetic and Moral Practices of a Post-Digital Age* (Bloomsbury Academic 2024), *The Frankfurt Kabuff Critical Edition* (WLUP 2023, with Claire Squires) and *Genre Worlds: Popular Fiction in the Twenty-First Century Book Culture* (UMass Press 2022, with Kim Wilkins and Lisa Fletcher)

Asian Biofiction as World Literature

Michael Lackey (University of Minnesota, Morris, USA), Madoka Nagado (University of the Ryukyus, Japan), Chunhui Peng (San Jose State University, USA) and Zhiquan Cai (Wuyi University, China)

Michael Lackey

Metaphorizing Lives in Hong Ying's *K: The Art of Love"*

Madoka Nagado
The Influence of Shishōsetsu (I-Novel) on Biofiction in Keiya Iwai's *I Am Kumagusu*

Chunhui Peng
Presentism in Zhang Wei's Biofiction/Biodrama of Lady Tan

This panel will discuss Asian biofiction and its relevance to world literature, addressing one or more of the following critical areas. First, it considers the place of Asian biofiction in world literature and its contribution to world building. How does Asian biofiction fit into world literature, and what's its role in genre development? Can Asia-focused biofiction analysis offer new perspectives on auto/biographical writings in general? How does Asia-focused biofiction research methodology provide fresh views on history and historiography? What trends emerge from diachronic analysis of Asian biofiction? Secondly, this panel is interested in cross-cultural encounters in this genre. How does Asian biofiction engage with transcultural influences? How do authors mediate cross-cultural, translingual representation? How do the authors negotiate the relationship among self, characters, and audiences? What about the identity issue and the identity politics in this genre? Third, this panel concerns the question of authenticity in narrating historical events and figures. How does fictionalization function in these writings and how is authenticity justified? How does the author position himself/herself in relation to historical records and research? What kind of preconception is upheld in these writings? How do history and the present moment converge in these works? How do the authors revitalize and revise historical memories in these endeavors?

Presenter Bios:
Dr. Michael Lackey is Distinguished McKnight University Professor at the University of Minnesota. He is also one of the editors-in-chief of Bloomsbury Academic's Biofiction Studies series as well as an editor of the journal a/b: Auto/Biography Studies.

Dr. Madoka Nagado's main fields of interest are life writing, transmedia studies, and disability studies in British and Japanese literatures.

Dr. Chunhui Peng works in the fields of memory studies and auto/biographical studies with a focus on contemporary Chinese literature and culture. Her co-edited volume *Mass Violence and Its Aftermath: Memory, Justice, and Community* is forthcoming with Bloomsbury.

Dr Cai Zhiquan's research deals with biofiction as well as life-writing studies of Anglo-American and Asian literatures.

How Do We Judge the Truth of Narratives? Expectations, Techniques, and Receptions
Nishtha Pandey, Md Asif Khan, Chinmaya Lal Thakur and Advika Singh

The panel aims to explore how readers arrive at what they take to be the truth of narratives—whether these be conventional and literary or innovative, contemporary, and auto-fictional. The four papers therein approach this question in three ways. One, they ask how audience perceptions of texts that cover the same subject matter differ because the

texts get classified differently. Second, with specific regard to auto-fiction, they explore how the author's expectations about the reception of their work may not resonate with the reader's singular engagement with the same. Finally, they delve into how the form of a literary work—its structure and technique—relates to the economy of truth that its narrative establishes. Overall, the panel will ask if it means anything to look for the "truth" of literary works in criticism or to evaluate how one work may be more "truthful" than others.

Accordingly, Nishtha Pandey's paper will explain how travel has emerged as the leitmotif of auto-fictional writing. It will argue that the brouhaha over Rachel Cusk's memoir *Aftermath* and the relative calm with which her Outline trilogy of novels has been received—even though they deal with the same subject—reveals different "truth values" that readers ascribe to texts that are presented to them differently. Md Asif Khan will underline the way the auto-fictional work complicates the contexts in which it is received. Khan will read Annie Ernaux's *A Man's Place* and *A Woman's Story* as works which paradoxically assert their "truthful", non-fictional character as well as their openness to readers having singular experiences while perusing them.

Chinmaya Lal Thakur's paper focuses on three different works by Richard Flanagan that deal with the same incidents. Thakur will argue that intertextual quality in Flanagan's writings makes it virtually pointless for readers to ask which text provides a more truthful and authentic account of a particular incident. Similarly, Advika Singh will suggest that J. M. Coetzee's Jesus trilogy of novels makes it nearly impossible for their readers to glean any "truths" from their narratives on account of the opacities of their structure, allusions, and ekphrasis.

Nishtha Pandey
The Unpalatable Memoir versus 'Selfless' Autofiction: Rachel Cusk's *Aftermath* and the *Outline* Trilogy

Recent texts of autofiction and memoirs specifically authored by women and non-binary authors, for instance, Deborah Levy's memoir trilogy *Things I Don't Want to Know* (2013), Olivia Laing's *To the River* (2011), and Rachel Cusk's *Outline* (2014) trilogy may as well be seen as travel writing due to their patterned dependence on the relationship between the narrator's travels and their reflections on personal life events. The aim of the proposed presentation is twofold. First, it seeks to examine the role of travel in staking truth claims on autobiographical prose through an examination of Rachel Cusk's *Outline* trilogy. Second, it juxtaposes Rachel Cusk's memoir *Aftermath* with her auto-fictional *Outline* trilogy to examine why works of autofiction are considered more palatable by readers than memoirs with the same subject matter due to differences in the truth claims made by the two.

While 'tell-all' memoirs by predominantly male authors with contentious themes may often be read as evidence of 'tortured genius', similar memoirs dealing with themes such as breakdown of marriages, maternity, conflicted emotions about motherhood, the female and queer body and trauma are often read with disdain for the writers' inability to play gendered roles perfectly, which risks rendering their expression as inauthentic. For instance, *Aftermath* was under intense scrutiny due to Cusk's fraught insistence on not sharing custody of her kids with her husband post their divorce despite him being a stay-at-home father. The scathing criticism of her 'bulimic' (Zambreno) expression in *Aftermath* led Cusk to proclaim it as "creative death" that led her to head into "total silence", an 'anorexic' position that is teased out further in the *Outline* trilogy, novels that were celebrated for their radical

narrative techniques. The presentation aims to enquire how varied articulations of female subjectivity and experiences are scrutinized due to truth claims made by confessional memoirs and examine how changes to form make these articulations acceptable.

Md Asif Khan
The Poetics of Truth: Notes on Form in Annie Ernaux's Early Works

A strict avowal of truth-telling informs Annie Ernaux's entire oeuvre. Ernaux has maintained, both in her writing and para-literal engagements, that her work is purged of fictional elements and instead gives readers access to the reality of her lived experience. She has resisted claims that attempt to categorise her work as autofiction, even though her texts maintain formal and thematic allegiance to this genre. The truth-telling status of these writings is sustained at the level of form and content; the development of a form denoted as 'flat writing' to reflect and capture the reality of the author's lived experience as a *trasfuge de class* or a class defector foregrounded through meticulous archival research, meta-commentaries and strict adherence to dates. Such aesthetic choices alongside providing a quasi-objective view of the author's life build trust among Ernaux's readership and make them believe they are being offered an intimate and unmediated peek into the author's experience.

However, in an early work that inaugurated Ernaux's entry into flat writing (*A Woman's Story,* 1987), the narrator situates her writing "a cut below literature". Though Ernaux wants her writing to be perceived as 'truthful' and 'authentic', in its reading, she wants writing to "happen" that is it be experienced by readers as literature — as events that happen to readers and cause radical shifts in their being. How does this paradoxical position of Ernaux's writing shape the politics of the text and its reception? How does such non-conformity towards accepted notions of genre renegotiate our accepted understanding of autobiography and literature? This paper will converse with scholarship around life writing and Maurice Blanchot's meditation on the idea of literature to closely read two English translations of early texts by Ernaux, namely *A Man's Place* (1983) and *A Woman's Story* (1987), and arrive at answers and observations on how form operates in Ernaux's work.

Chinmaya Lal Thakur
The Purpose of "Truth" in Storytelling or, Reading Richard Flanagan

Richard Flanagan's *Question 7* (2023) is a hybrid work that combines creative writing, historiography, travelogue, and memoir. It has been celebrated internationally and has received the 2024 Baillie Gifford Prize. Amidst much-deserved acclaim, what has gone unnoticed in analysis of the work is the way it comments on Flanagan's earlier novels, especially his debut *Death of a River Guide* (1994) and the Booker awardee *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (2013).

In *Question 7*, Flanagan recounts the horrible experience of nearly drowning to death when he worked as a river guide in Tasmania. He also states that he had attempted to write about the same circumstance in *Death of a River Guide*. However, when writing the novel, he could not write "about what had happened". Instead, he wrote the novel "to exorcise what had happened" (Flanagan, 265). Similarly, Flanagan reveals in *Question 7* that his father had been one of the POW forced to work at the Burma or the Death Railway during the Second World War. However, even as *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* is based on his

father's terrible experiences, he states that he could not "understand" or "resolve" them. When he was writing the novel, he thus felt that "it was a way of divining the undivinable" but realised that he "understood nothing" when he finished writing (Flanagan, 213).

The proposed paper will examine what is entailed in reading the two novels in the light of the comments that Flanagan makes in *Question 7*. It will argue that the reader's experience of perusing the novels gets nuanced further when such intertextual references enter the mix. The reader is then faced with the question of how texts come to mean what they mean instead of the question of judging as to which text may be a (more) truthful representation of a particular circumstance.

Advika Singh
If Truth be Told: Difficulty of Revelation in J.M. Coetzee's Jesus Novels

J.M Coetzee's novels The Childhood of Jesus, The Schooldays of Jesus, and The Death of Jesus are set in two fictional cities where a man and a boy given the names Simón and David respectively, arrive after having crossed the seas to a land where everything from the language to the socio-political landscape are strange and must be learned anew. Opacities are numerous and permeate the form of the narrative through slippages, interruptions, and loaded theological, historical and intertextual references. Several of the characters have sharply drawn judgements and modes of meaning-making through which they operate and define themselves and those they encounter. Dimitri's overflowing passion leads him to murder the one he fervently claims to love, Ines' motives for accepting to be David's mother are never revealed, the children of the orphanage claiming to be the recipients of David's message and taking out a procession in his name, and David himself whose words and actions remain mercurial and concealed.

The reader seems to be invited to participate in trying to understand and arrive at a judgement of these often-provocative truth claims, particularly through the character of Simón, who persistently labours and endeavours to investigate or understand but who always, inadvertently misses something crucial, if not entirely, especially when he wants to grasp most desperately at the 'meaning' or the 'message'.

The proposed paper will read the narrative strategies, slippages, and interruptions to interpretation posed by the plot and dialogue as an aesthetic of these novels. I will argue that in the concealment and nondisclosure, what seems to be revealed is what is at stake in trying to understand a 'truth' one finds strange and what is demanded of one trying to be 'open' or 'hospitable' towards that which is unintelligible to them.

Presenter Bios:

Dr Nishtha Pandey is an associated researcher with the Centre for Memory Studies, IIT Madras, India. Her recently completed doctoral thesis looks at loss and erasure as global form of the contemporary novel through an examination of novels by contemporary female authors Jenny Erpenbeck, Valeria Luiselli, Rachel Cusk, Ali Smith, Olga Tokarczuk, Elena Ferrante and Geetanjali Shree. Her work has been published widely including the journals *Green Letters* and *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. Her email is nishthapandey7@gmail.com.

Md Asif Khan is a doctoral researcher at the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. His current research explores Annie Ernaux's writings of and around shame.

His areas of interest include novel theory, Continental philosophy, postcolonial theory, Dalit writing and contemporary auto-fictional writing.

Chinmaya Lal Thakur teaches English at Shiv Nadar University in Delhi/NCR, India. He has recently completed his PhD on subjectivity in the novels of David Malouf at La Trobe University, Melbourne. He has published widely in the areas of postcolonial literatures and cultures, modernist writings, the contemporary novel, and Deconstruction.

Advika Singh is a doctoral researcher in English at the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She is currently working on her dissertation titled ""Being the arm and being the axe and being the skull": J.M. Coetzee's Jesus Trilogy and the Difficulty of Reading".

Approaches to Story/Being
Beth Yahp and Lachlan Brown

These two presentations stem from a larger project, *Story/Being: Critical and Creative Approaches* edited by Jan Shaw, Philippa Kelly, and Liam Semler. As the editors write, "Story/being is a complement and sequel to *Storytelling: Critical and Creative Approaches*, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2013 […] This collection explores the premise that by using story/being, we can apprehend ourselves, our histories, our aspirations and ideals, in more complex and profound ways. This is not just about trying to get purchase on ourselves, but also about getting purchase on how we do so. If the slash in story/being means anything, what does it mean? Can we make it speak? To us and to others? Environmentally, emotionally, from the archive and in the borderlands?"

Beth Yahp
Being Storied

In this hybrid memory presentation (text, photos, collages), Yahp considers how silences are storied as much as what is told and how these absences/gaps may be passed on intergenerationally. Yahp's family – migrant, postcolonial – marked by personal and collective cultures of "not-speaking/not-telling" – has its own ways of being storied. Yahp asks: How do being and storying weave together through, into and despite the silences/censorings within her family? What other forms and presences might these stories assume? Through a meditation on her father's life, from childhood in wartime Malaya to his migration to Hawai'i in later life and his grappling with old age and dementia, Yahp traces the certain stories (like people) who have been erased or have erased themselves physically/socially within the family and in wider society (missing sisters and aunts, or elders who have been 'stored away' in bedrooms or aged care homes, for example). She considers the places where her family's stories and silences may reside - in lost or destroyed objects, awkward or incomplete conversations, or in the family members' bodies as enigmatic knots or illnesses or repetitions – and the consequent ways in which the family narrates itself to itself and to others.

Lachlan Brown
Running into Poetry

Since late 2018 I have run around 21,500km, mainly by repeating 10km loops alongside the Murrumbidgee river in Wagga, and setting out on weekly longer runs using sections of 42km Wiradjuri Walking Track. Over the same period, I have gradually started to write poetry that reflects upon local landscapes as well as psychological states that accompany running. My poems include shorter sonnet-like pieces ("Aurora"), longer ruminations ("Any Saturday, 2021. Running Westward") as well as commissions based on other places ("Flow State" is set on the Parramatta River in Sydney).

This presentation is a meditation on the processes of story/being that have accompanied my running/writing practice. In it I explain who I might be ***running with***, both poetically (from Donne's "Riding, Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward" to Browning's "Pheidippides") and philosophically/ sociologically (from Shoard's "Edgelands" to Bauman's 'Liquid Modernity'). But I am also ***running toward*** particular unrealised or unrealisable goals, and so the presentation will consider what this opening out onto infinity (or infinite reflection) might signal from a theological perspective (namely, apocalypse and redemption). Of course, there is also the matter of ***running away*** and so I will discuss what might drive a poetics of evasion (with respect to Charles Olsen's "Projective Verse") or landscape skimming. Finally, I analyse the things I am often ***running into***, those saturations of mind and land that occur in postcolonial Australia, as well as the oscillations between appearance and reality that feel necessary within our digitally-inflected modes of being. In examining these areas, I take account of the ways that technique and poetic form draw alongside the practice of running, as well as the ways that the somatic experiences of running feed into the practices and disciplines of creative writing.

Presenter Bios:

Dr Beth Yahp is an award-winning author, editor and creative-writing teacher of adults and children. She has published short fiction and travel and memoir feature articles in Australia, South-East Asia and Europe. Her novel *The Crocodile Fury* is translated into several languages and her libretto, *Moon Spirit Feasting*, for composer Liza Lim, won the APRA Award for Best Classical Composition in 2003. Beth has worked as an editor and taught creative writing for many years, including at the University of Technology, Sydney, Macquarie University, the American University of Paris, and currently at the University of Sydney. She completed her Doctorate of Creative Arts in travel and memoir writing at the University of Technology, Sydney. She was the presenter of *Elsewhere*, a program for travellers on ABC Radio National (2010-11).

Dr Lachlan Brown is a Senior Lecturer in English at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga. He is the author of two books of poetry published by Giramondo. Lachlan has collaborated with artists including Tony Curran, James Farley and Kate Smith. His poem 'Any Saturday, 2021, Running Westward' won the Newcastle Poetry Prize.

Harsh Truths

Nicholas Duddy and Joseph Steinberg

Nicholas Duddy

Truth, Memoir, and Drama in David Finnigan's *Kill Climate Deniers*

In 2014, David Finnigan received a $19,000 grant from Arts ACT to develop a play about climate change. Perhaps unsurprisingly, *Kill Climate Deniers*, a drama about a group of environmental activists taking Parliament House hostage, proved controversial. 'What sane government donates to a project urging others to kill fellow citizens, even as a "joke"?', wrote Andrew Bolt in the *Herald Sun*. The public backlash extended beyond the Australian conservative commentariat, with one *Breitbart* columnist offering a title for an alternative play: '*Kill the Greenies*.' In the wake of this uproar, Finnigan cancelled the production of the play.

Yet after winning the 2017 Griffin Award, *Kill Climate Deniers* finally received a full-scale production at Sydney's Griffin Theatre Company. In light of the play's history, Finnigan revised his original playtext by recasting his critics as characters and adding metatheatrical scenes where 'David Finnigan' himself directly addresses the audience to recount his experience. As a result, *Kill Climate Deniers* now resembles something closer to what Johnny Saldaña calls 'autoethnodrama', where 'the playwright's personal memories, experiences, and perceptions' become 'sources for the dramatic text'. While *Kill Climate Deniers* has been staged across Australia, Finnigan continues to revel in formal fluidity and narrative instability: the playwright has collaborated with musicians and filmmakers to adapt it into an album, film script, dance party, and walking tour of Parliament House.

Kill Climate Deniers resists categorisation. Both on the page and the stage, the play's 'train-smash structure', as director Lee Lewis describes, collapses and expands theatrical genres and dramaturgical conventions – epic theatre, documentary drama, performance art – to offer a polemic against what Finnigan deems 'the calcified climate change debate'. This paper will consider how Finnigan dissolves barriers between drama and memoir, the story and the self, to interrogate the political theatre of climate change.

Joseph Steinberg
Truth-Tellers and Illywhackers

In 2013, Gerald Murnane published a catalogue enumerating the contents of his self-curated 'Chronological Archive'. 'In each drawer,' he writes, 'at least twenty coloured signposts draw attention to items of more than usual interest'; over two pages, Murnane lists more than a hundred of these signposts. His list is a cranky litany of frustrations ('Deakin University was run by lunatics'), hesitations ('Should I tell Literature to get fucked?'), and naming, shaming, beefing: 'Judith Wright – hypocrite and liar'; 'I rebuff Helen Garner with much force'. But whatever reservations we might entertain about Murnane's predilection for literary mudslinging, they shouldn't prevent us from noticing the telling act of positioning that underpins his list's second-last label: 'Peter Carey exposed at last'.

Answers to the question of what the file contains must for now remain hypothetical. It could well turn out to be empty. Yet it's easy enough to draw out the opposition on which his charge relies: Murnane will somehow expose Carey, whom he believes to have in some way deceived us. This is an opposition consistent with what is perhaps Murnane's most intriguing claim about his own writing: that his prose, as he insists in 'The Still-Breathing Author' (2020), is best described as '*true fiction*' or *'considered narration*'. Yet to call Carey a con artist is to define him on terms consistent with *his* conception of writerly craft. Murnane's reliable narrator finds his natural enemy in what Robert Macfarlane identifies as one of the cardinal preoccupations of Carey's oeuvre: 'mendacity'. What Murnane's signpost therefore exposes is not so much Carey as an element of antagonism between their fictions,

two opposing views on the question of fiction's *fictionality.* This paper takes up this tension as emblematic of a broader writerly fixation with such questions, a fixation that has taken on a new set of stakes with creative writing's emergence as a tertiary discipline.

Presenter Bios:
Dr Nicholas Duddy is a Forrest Postdoctoral Fellow in English at the University of Western Australia. His writing has appeared in *Antipodes*, *The Arthur Miller Journal*, *Comparative Drama*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Meniscus*, *The Saltbush Review*, and *TEXT*.

Dr Joseph Steinberg is a Postdoctoral Fellow in English and Literary Studies at the University of Western Australia. His essays, reviews and interviews have been published in *The Cambridge Companion to the Australian Novel*, *SRB*, *ABR*, *ALS*, *AHR*, *JASAL*, *The Cambridge Quarterly*, and *The Review of English Studies*.

Teaching the Truth: Navigating Non-fiction in the Contemporary Classroom
Part 1

Rachel Sykes (The University of Birmingham, UK)
Confessional labour: Teaching with drafts in the non-fiction classroom

This essay reflects on my experiences teaching a module on 'confessional' writing (2017-2020) and student resistance to studying the labour of non-fictional writing, particularly poetry, diaries, and letters on themes of heartbreak, sex, grief, and other heightened states.

In order to highlight the labour of writing that either writers or critics call 'confessional', I often taught the most famous writers – Sylvia Plath, Oscar Wilde, Anaïs Nin – with or through their drafts. Using Nin as an example, the drafting process was never completed, with Deidre Bair (1995) claiming Nin kept both real and 'fake' diaries which she drafted and redrafted throughout her life. The lack of a stable document – in addition to the module's consideration of constructions of selfhood and identity through the writing and rewriting of autobiographical 'truths' – was by far the most controversial idea on the module. Some students claimed it was unethical in a 'post truth' world to show the laborious untruths of non-fiction, others found it devaluing of the 'genius' of marginalised writers for whom 'confessional' was as much an accusation as a methodology. One student simply stated that seeing the draft work of a favourite writer 'ruined' the experience of reading them altogether.

Thinking about these reactions in the context of 'confession' as an already contentious framework for non-fiction, this essay uses its discussion of teaching with drafts to reflect on student demand for non-fiction on both English and Creative Writing programmes and the simultaneous undervaluing of these texts as sites of labour and creativity. Against ever-present debates about the demand for 'authenticity' as a sign of value in the first-person narratives we read, teach, and consume, the repeated discomfort expressed in my classroom is key, I argue, to the ways in which studying non fiction can broadly develop media literacy for students in increasingly important ways.

Rachel Sykes is Associate Professor in Contemporary Literature and Culture at University of Birmingham where they teach gender studies, critical theory, and digital and popular

cultures. Their recent work focuses on confession in literary and popular culture, including *Fleabag* and the production of autobiography within universities.

Nicole Stamant (Agnes Scott College)
'Life Writing as Leadership': Teaching Life Writing in the General Education Classroom

Ten years ago, my institution--a majority-minority, historically women's gender-inclusive college in the Southeastern United States--launched a new general education curriculum: SUMMIT. This program's central three pillars are in leadership development, global learning, and digital citizenship, and our general education courses fall into these domains. Two courses function as a year-long sequence for all first-year students: in the fall, students take a course in leadership development, titled "Leadership Prologue," and in the spring, they take a course in global learning, called "Global Journeys." The Leadership Prologue course, the focus of this piece, is particularly crucial to student success because it functions as both a first-year seminar/introduction to college and as an introduction to leadership. Our institution's model of leadership relies on the cycle of reflection, analysis, and action, and instructors from across the college teach sections focused on subjects as diverse as environmental leadership and climate change, scientific inquiry, social business, communication and media, and Ancient Greece. My course, "Life Writing as Leadership," suggests that, through bearing witness, giving testimony, and engaging in the processes of self-reflection and narrative activism, the work of life writing is leadership. The texts we consider include TED Talks, speeches, graphic memoir, biofiction, and testimonio and assignments reinforce students' textual engagement as well as their own understanding of leadership. Students write reflectively as well as critically, negotiating different forms of life writing and self-construction to consider audiences, the work of reflection and narrativizing experience, and composing for various media. We consider rhetorical situations and arguments, how life writers of varying kinds engage autobiographical representation as resistance, leadership and art-making, the potential for imaginative lives and practices to be considered leadership, and how models like bridge leadership or reciprocity challenge conventional ideas of positional leadership. As a general education course, students bring their myriad interests and intended majors into the classroom to further complicate and develop their own definitions of leadership and their capacity to lead.

Nicole Stamant, Fuller E. Callaway Professor of English at Agnes Scott College, in Decatur, Georgia, specializes in Life Writing and American Literature. Most recently, she is the author of *Memoirs of Race, Color, and Belonging* (Routledge, 2022) and serves as the managing editor of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*.

Lisa Ortiz-Vilarelle (The College of New Jersey)
Teaching the Truth: Navigating Student Bias in the Life Writing Classroom

The teaching of life writing offers powerful and impactful opportunities for students to reconsider much of what they think they know about the world and about themselves. Using my own experience for inspiration, this presentation considers student feedback on life writing in courses in which the content challenges their privilege. By examining correlations between *what* narratives we teach and *who* are the students we teach them to, I demonstrate how personnel scoring is impacted when faculty present students with

opportunities to grapple with uncomfortable truths about the lived experiences of others who are systematically disadvantaged. In examining the "truths" of teaching non-fiction, this presentation will also draw attention to how flawed mechanisms for feedback allow students to vent their biases against faculty as a way to reinforce their dissatisfaction with content that confronts racism, sexism, imperialism, colonialism, and the power dynamics of socio-economic class that impact the production and reception of storytelling about life. This work focuses on the women and faculty of color in a profession where "fewer than 13 percent of full-time faculty are Black, Latina/o or Native American" and who are disproportionately vulnerable when teaching diaries, memoirs, testimony and other life writing that comes under the contentious categories of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Lisa Ortiz-Vilarelle is Professor of English at The College of New Jersey. She specializes in Multiethnic and Inter-American autobiographical studies. She is Editor of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*. Her books *Américanas, Autocracy and Autobiographical Innovation: Overwriting the Dictator* (2020) and *Women's Academic Career Narratives as Autobiography: In the Spaces Provided* (2023) are published in Routledge Press's Auto/biography Studies Series.

Orly Lael Netzer (Carleton University)
Lives of the Nation: On Teaching Life Writing in the Canadian Studies Classroom

In our introduction to *Teaching Life Writing* (2022), Amanda Spallacci and I noted that the key question in auto/biography pedagogy is how we teach life stories, rather than what we teach (375). Later that year, I transitioned from teaching English literature to teaching Canadian Studies. As I began designing and delivering my courses, I was struck by this very question and its ripple effects — what is the role of life stories in Canadian Studies classrooms, how do I teach life stories within a distinctly national framework, how do I invite students to engage with life stories beyond their perception as historic documents or evidentiary materials, encourage them to understand autobiographical practices as modes of knowledge making and sharing, and how do I foster a learning space that ethically engages with life stories and calls students in (rather than calls out)?

In redesigning existing courses (with titles like "Debating Canada"), or in creating new courses on topics of state-sanctioned injury and discourses of reconciliation and redress, I was guided both by this set of questions and the knowledge that my new classrooms include students who come from very diverse backgrounds yet the majority of whom major in political science, communications, international relations, history, and ethnography, and who intend on working in a variety of government positions (in Canada and elsewhere). My presentation will reflect on this moment of transition and the three years I have since spent teaching in an area studies department in a Canadian university (Carleton University, in Ottawa). In particular, I will address materials, course objectives, lesson planning, and assignment design. In so doing, I will reflect on the ways that I invited students to engage with the tensions embedded in autobiographical truth (rather than assumptions of authenticity), memory (rather than identity), representation (rather than history), and agency (rather that presumptions of voice and silence).

Orly Lael Netzer (she/her) explores the public work of testimony in contemporary Canada. Working at the intersection of autobiography, memory, and cultural studies, Orly's work is

driven by questions of relations, asking how are publics invited to inherit difficult knowledge through life stories. Orly has a PhD in English Literature from the University of Alberta (2020), is the editor of *In Search of Right Relations: Provocations on Ethics and Life Stories* (forthcoming Wilfrid Laurier University Press) and co-editor of *Teaching Life Writing: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Routledge, 2025).

Part 2

Terri Tomsky (University of Alberta, Canada)
An Inventory of the Traces: Decolonising life narratives as theory and subject reconstitution

Throughout my teaching on human rights and postcolonial theory, I have often found life narratives and non-fiction accounts key to revealing diverse worlds and epistemologies, often alongside experiences of injustice. I choose narratives that speak to subjugated knowledges and the histories of how that knowledge was discounted or suppressed. In reading them, we encounter experiential modes of witnessing that are critical to forms of anti-colonial and decolonial politics. Take Behrouz Boochani's prison autotheory, *No Friend, but the Mountains* or Jamaica Kincaid's long essay, *A Small Place*, both of which place the lived racialized experience at the heart of their critical anticolonial thought. Or consider the work of Frantz Fanon or Edward W. Said, both of whom leveraged their experiences as professional observers of lives (as a psychiatrist, as a literary critic), to write thoughtfully of their own experiences working within racial and colonial structures. As Said wrote in his introduction to the first edition of *Orientalism* (1978), his study was "an attempt to inventory the traces upon me, the Oriental subject, of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals" (25). Indeed, for Said, Orientalism is not some abstract theory, but rather, a "cultural reality of, [and] the personal involvement in having been constituted as, 'an Oriental'" (26).

I turn to texts like these in my pedagogical practice to encourage students to dwell on their own personal stories and reconsider how they are constituted as subjects within institutions and social spaces. As part of their coursework, students are invited to write op-ed pieces or personal journals that explore how their embodied experiences—which include queerness, racialization, class position, disability, and gender—can animate modes of political consciousness. Through such activities, reflecting upon their discontinuities in relation to entrenched norms, students facilitate critical perspectives that denaturalize or dislodge certain assumptions and authorities. In other words, in my classroom, students practice autoethnography and self-reflexivity, and experience how such writing can draw out new perspectives on social structures, ideologies, and their violences, even if these personal writings may also unsettle the self, by revealing complicity within those structures. Drawing on my teaching experience, this essay explores the contribution of life narrative to theory, critical practice, and insights into what, to paraphrase Said, we might call an inventory of the "traces" on bodies and lives.

Terri Tomsky is an Associate Professor in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada. Her research examines memory politics in postcolonial and post-socialist literatures. She has published on human rights literary studies, life writing, cultural memory, trauma, cosmopolitanism, and the Global War on Terror.

Leila M. Pazargadi (Nevada State University)
Retracing Memory: Using Multimodal Scaffolding to Create Autographics in the Classroom

This article explores the way in which students at Nevada State University use multimodal scaffolding to create their own autobiographical comics strip when reading and analyzing graphic memoirs in my composition and literature courses. More specifically, in the courses wherein I teach Art Spiegelman's *Maus* alongside Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis,* students have the chance to compare two autographics that creatively explore concepts like war, trauma, history, and the negotiation of memory. Often, my students are reading and interrogating these narratives for the first time, so they are particularly struck by the deceptively complex comics aesthetics and layered life storytelling.

In order to better understand and appreciate the way in which Spiegelman and Satrapi balanced the ethical and historical considerations of their narratives with the technical aspects of their comics renderings, I created an assignment where students must present a brief excerpt from their life story in a six-frame comics panel. For this assignment, students must first create a mind map answering a question that helps them to brainstorm about a turning point in their lives. After the mind-map, students then create a short, textual narrative about their specific experience. Lastly, they use this narrative to create a six-panel comics panel that visually depicts this moment from their lives. Either through the use of hand drawing or programs like Pixton, students create their own six-frame comics strip, which they post to the class's discussion post. Alongside their comics strip, they must also reflect on the following questions: *why did I choose that particular moment? What was the process of accessing my memory like? What did I have to change, omit, or augment to visually depict a small fragment of my life story? What did I struggle with?* As part of their discussion, students must also respond to at least two other posts, to ensure a lively discussion ensues. Ultimately, this multimodal, scaffolded assignment allows students to reproduce the very strategies and aesthetics they are evaluating in my courses. As recent research has shown, digital multimodal works have many benefits, especially for emergent bilingual students who are "adding varied linguistic resources to their expanding semiotic repertoires" (Pacheco et. al 149). Furthermore, Robin Jocius notes that digital tools are assisting students to create multimodal compositions that allow them to better synthesize and share their identities.

For the first time, many are using the comics aesthetic to express themselves. What is particularly striking is the level of personal disclosure and trauma that students decide to share. Whether they are inspired by the traumatic elements of *Maus* and *Persepolis*, or find the medium liberating, students engage in a high-level of vulnerable disclosure. Compellingly, classmates cheer each other on throughout the discussion post, while also pondering deeper questions about themselves in connection to the creation and study of autographics.

Leila Moayeri Pazargadi is Professor of English at Nevada State University, currently teaching composition, postcolonial literature, life writing, ethnic American literature, and Middle Eastern literature courses. Her research focuses on Middle Eastern women writers producing autobiographical material in fiction and nonfiction after 9/11, but it also extends to include scholarship on the visual forms of comics and Persian photography of the Qajar era. In 2014, she had the honor of receiving NSC's *iTeach Heritage Award* and Occidental College's *Erica J. Murray Young Alumni of the Year* award for her teaching efforts and co-founding of the

Nepantla Summer Bridge Program at NSU. She received her Doctorate of Philosophy in Comparative Literature with certification in Gender Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2012.

Vanessa Berry (The University of Sydney, Australia)
Good Exercise: The writing exercise and life writing

Writing exercises are foundational to creative writing teaching, routinely forming a part of classroom activities. These exercises often call upon writers to draw from their own lives, as ready-to-hand material with which to experiment and to swiftly and intuitively generate writing in different genres and forms. What are the implications of using personal material - memories, experiences, observations, and life narratives - as the material for writing exercises, and how might this centre life writing within creative writing teaching? Building on research into the interdisciplinary pedagogical reach of life writing and its ethical application in the classroom (Douglas and McNeill, 2017; Netzer and Spallacci, 2022), this article examines the writing exercise as a pedagogical practice and a life writing practice. Designing exercises around life writing enables writing in the moment through the perceived accessibility of the writer's life experiences, memories and observations. It can also bring the writers' life experience to the foreground in ways that can be unpredictable, unexpected and perhaps uncomfortable. Commonly used prompts such as 'I Remember', based on the Joe Brainard poem, and exercises that work from observations of the recent or daily, are case studies for how and why creative writing teachers use writing exercises in the classroom, and the fundamental presence of life writing in creative writing pedagogy.

Vanessa Berry is a writer who lives and works on Gadigal land. Her projects are centred in autobiography, memory, history, archives and objects. Her fifth book, *Calendar*, will be published in October 2025 by Upswell. Vanessa is a Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Sydney.

Kylie Cardell, Kate Douglas, Emma Maguire, Shannon Sandford (Flinders University, James Cook University, Griffith University, Australia)
'Feeling Bad' as a Teachable Moment in the Life Narrative Classroom

In the Australian context, the word "sorry" has held particularly potent resonances since 2008. On the 13th of February that year, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered a formal apology to Parliament on behalf of all Australians, to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, particularly the Stolen Generations. We now have National Sorry Day on the 26th of May every year. Ideally, this has brought a greater awareness of the aftereffects of colonisation on Indigenous Australians, and the need for greater efforts across all of Australian society, towards Reconciliation.

Within the context of Higher Education, and in our capacities as Life Narrative scholars (but as non-Indigenous educators), we acknowledge the importance of working with Indigenous life writing texts in our classrooms. We want to communicate to our diverse cohorts of students how we can each make a contribution to Reconciliation by witnessing Indigenous histories through life stories.

In this paper we explore some of our experiences teaching Indigenous life narratives, and argue how the concept of "apology" plays a role in how non-Indigenous students

encounter and witness Indigenous life narrative in the university classroom. We reflect on the presence of Indigenous students in the life narrative classroom as discussion leaders. We explore how we draw on our positionality as teachers (as Australian citizens; as global citizens), and how "feeling bad" can become a teachable moment.

Kylie Cardell is Associate Professor in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Science at Flinders University. She is a founding and executive director of the Life Narrative Lab, the International Autobiography Association Asia-Pacific (IABA A-P), and is Essays editor for the journal Life Writing. She has published extensively on new and evolving forms of life writing and is the author of *Dear World: Contemporary Uses of the Diary*. She is the editor of the collection *Essays in Life Writing* and (with Kate Douglas) of *Telling Tales: Autobiographies of Childhood and Youth*.

Kate Douglas is a Professor in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at Flinders University (Australia). Her research and teaching interests are in life narrative studies: the ways that people tell their life stories or the stories of others across various literary and cultural mediums. Kate's research has a strong focus in childhood studies. Her most recent publication is *Children and Biography: Reading and Writing Life Stories* (Bloomsbury, 2022).

Emma Maguire is a Lecturer in English and Writing at James Cook University. She researches digital media, auto/biography, and gender. Her book *Girls, Autobiography, Media: Gender and Self-Mediation in Digital Economies* was published in 2018 with Palgrave Macmillan.

Shannon Sandford is a Lecturer in the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science at Griffith University. Her primary research interests surround self-representation, embodiment, and marginalised lives in comics, graphic narratives, and digital media and culture. She has co-edited special issues on life writing in *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* and *Journal of Australian Studies*. Her research has been published in *Life Writing*, *New Writing*, *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, and *Textual Practice*.

Leena Käosaar (University of Tartu, Estonia)
Walking with the Past: Teaching Life Narrative Through a Wartime Memory Walk in Tartu

How can we teach students to engage with memory as lived experience—layered, fragmentary, embodied—rather than just a narrative to be analyzed on the page? In April 2025, during a Nordplus Intensive Course "Studying Nordic and Baltic Lives. From Theories and Methods to Creative Approaches" in Tartu, Estonia, I led a memory walk through the city that served both as a teaching tool and a personal act of return. It was a cold, wet afternoon. At the foot of the former Stone Bridge, I handed around photographs of my hometown from our family archive. In one prewar photo, the bridge stands intact in its full elegance; and then after the 1941 bombings, it lies in ruins—its gateway reduced to rubble, one rounded arch still partially standing. On the back of one photo, my grandfather's elegant handwriting: "Photographed July 31, 1941." That photo, once held by his hands, has now passed from mine to a new generation of students. The walk traced the scars of war that remain mostly invisible to the city's younger generations and the thousands of students of the University of Tartu today—vast green spaces where buildings once stood, new developments quietly covering historical trauma. At the Botanical Gardens, I mentioned Teodor Lippmaa, the

director killed during the bombings, and we paused briefly among the early spring crocuses and scillas before continuing on.

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on the pedagogical value of memory walks in teaching life writing. Drawing on autoethnographic practice and transgenerational walking methodology developed by Lesley Murray and Helmi Järviluoma, I explore how such embodied approaches help students encounter narrative truth as something lived and felt. Drawing on Karen Till's work on memory and place, this reflection considers how urban landscapes—though seemingly fixed—are continuously reinterpreted and haunted by the traces of past lives and losses. Places, like texts, are archives of affect and memory. Through the ordinary act of walking, as Christina Moretti suggests, memory becomes relational, sensory, and dialogic. Teaching through my own family's archive and the altered cityscape of Tartu allowed me to bring personal history into conversation with public space—an experience of truth-telling that resists closure and invites presence. Such walking practices make visible what has been overwritten, offering students not only historical context but a deeply felt way of knowing.

Leena Käosaar is an Associate Professor of Cultural Theory at the Institute of Cultural Research at the University of Tartu in Estonia. Her research interests include the tradition of Estonian life writing and post-Soviet life writings, Baltic women's deportation and Gulag narratives, women's diaries and family correspondences, self-representational writing of traumatic experience, relationality, memory and mobility/the mobility of memory as well as creative nonfiction (life story writing) that she teaches at the University of Tartu alongside courses on literary and cultural theory, gender studies and Estonian literature. Since the spring of 2022, she has focused, within the framework of the project "Taking Shelter in Estonia: The Stories of Ukrainians Fleeing from the War," on collecting the life stories of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia to support Ukrainian memory in the context of radical, often traumatic changes and mass migration caused by the military aggression of Russia on Ukraine.