

20 PERTH 21 FESTIVAL

LITERATURE & IDEAS

MEDIA KIT

MEDIA INFORMATION: Guest Authors
Please note – more guests will be added to the program

STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 9am AWST 21 January

2020 has been a beast of a year, defined simultaneously by a longing for the past and a desire to launch headlong into a disease-free future. Suddenly we are all nostalgic for the days when we could hug and travel and had never heard of a tiny flu-like virus that shared a name with a Mexican beer. So there has never been a better time than now to talk about Nostalgia. This year's Literature & Ideas program brings together scientists, performers, journalists and writers from across Western Australia and the world (via livestreaming), whose words explore the memory and longing that lie at the heart of feelings of nostalgia.

Spread across three weekends, the program kicks off on 13 February with A Day of Ideas, a gathering that helps connect the city with the river on which it sits. A series of interlinked conversations about the history, philosophy, science and future of our river provide a platform for Western Australians to think about the challenges and opportunities that are presented by this place where we find ourselves.

The conversations continue on 20 & 21 February as we take over His Majesty's Theatre for the Literature Weekend in the City. From sweeping historical fiction to musings about lost love and secret regrets, we mine the rich terrain of Nostalgia. It won't all be sentimental though – we'll also examine harder, more troublesome edges by exploring the revisionism inherent in political nostalgia and questioning the motives of those who pledge to re-make greatness that – perhaps – never existed.

We'll wrap things up with Wild Things, a day of family fun at Perth Zoo to celebrate the close of the Festival on 28 February, where the young ones can engage in a little bit of nostalgia too.

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Founder



Principal Partner



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Sisonke Msimang – Curator, Literature & Ideas



Cr. Nick White

After a successful inaugural Literature & Ideas Program under the theme Land Money Power Sex, **Sisonke Msimang** returns with another compelling and insightful program for 2021.

Sisonke is the author of two books - *Always Another Country: A Memoir of Exile and Home* (Text Publishing, 2018) and *The Resurrection of Winnie Mandela* (Text Publishing, 2019) and makes regular appearances on news programmes like The Drum, Q&A and SBS' Insight, as well as on the pages of The Guardian, Sydney Morning Herald and the New York Times.

Since moving to Perth in 2014, she has worked with dozens of Western Australian storytellers through her work with the Centre for Stories in Northbridge.

ALEXANDER THORPE

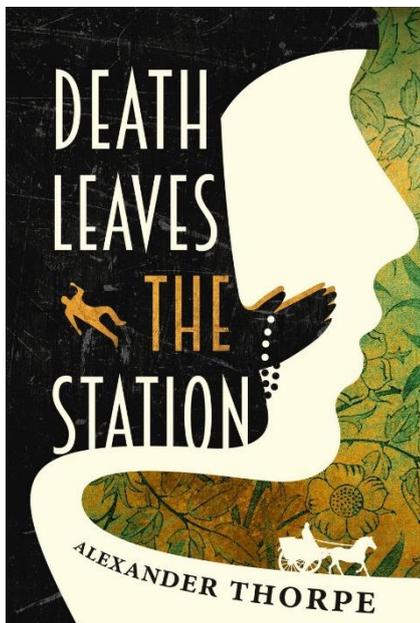
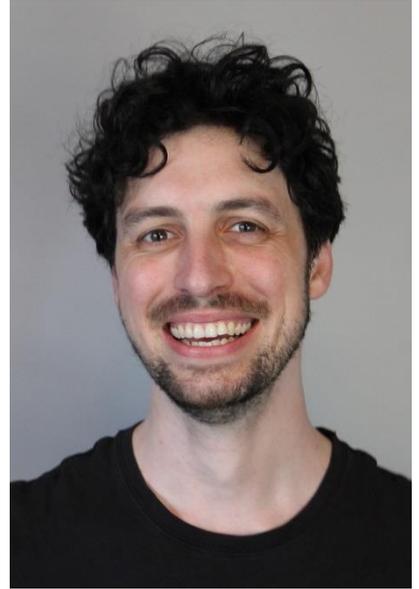
- Thorpe is from Western Australia, this is his first book, and he is part of an emerging confident crop of literary talents in the state.

Sisonke says:

This book mines nostalgia on multiple levels. It is a classic take on the old whodunnit, reminiscent of Agatha Christie. The book also takes West Australians to the 1920s, without sentimentalising or airbrushing the realities of the time.

Alexander Thorpe is from Fremantle, Western Australia. He has written advertising copy for pool cleaners and concrete supply companies, taught English in Joseph Stalin's hometown and almost managed to read half of James Joyce's *Ulysses* twice (which is more or less the same as having almost managed to read the whole book).

Alex has written for news outlets, travel journals, marketing companies and educational providers, and has recently completed his first novel, *Death Leaves the Station*.



***Death Leaves the Station* - Fremantle Press**

Death Leaves the Station is Alexander Thorpe's thoroughly delightful debut novel. Set in 1927, it is a classic whodunnit peopled with idiosyncratic and memorable characters, including a nameless friar, Mariana Harris with her mysterious Spanish parentage, and Detective Sergeant Parkes, whose moustache is used to excellent comedic effect.

Thorpe's witty descriptions are laugh-out-loud funny and his Latinate sentences are a pleasure to read. There is a serious side of the novel too, an unflinching depiction of early 20th century racism which is handled with care and respect.

The novel is tightly plotted and provides an enjoyable and thought-provoking insight into Western Australia's past.

ALF TAYLOR

- Uncle Alf was part of the Stolen Generation. He's been a seasonal farmer, a member of the Australian military and a poet and writer.

Sisonke says:

Alf Taylor's work walks the fine line between painful memories and the sweet.

Alf Taylor spent his childhood growing up in New Norcia Mission, Western Australia, and upon leaving he worked around Perth and Geraldton as a seasonal farm worker, before he joined the Armed Forces. After a marriage, seven children and a divorce, Alf found his voice as a writer and poet.

Alf's father's name was Rosendo Taylor and he married his Mother Queenie Harris who came from the Fraser Ranges, not far from Norseman. Her Mother belonged to the Ngadu people. from the Norseman area.



Cr. Emma Wynne

God, The Devil and Me

In this unique and highly entertaining autobiography, Alf Taylor chronicles his life growing up in the infamous New Norcia Mission, north of Perth in the fifties and sixties.

At once darkly humorous and achingly tragic, *God, The Devil and Me* tells of the life and desperation of the young children forced into the care of the Spanish Nuns and Brothers who ran the Mission. Their lives made up of varying degrees of cruelty and punishments, these children were the 'little black devils' that God and religion forgot. Written with an acerbic and brutal wit, Alf intersperses dark childhood memories with a Monty Pythonesque retelling of the Bible, in which Peter is an alcoholic and Judas is a good guy.

As a child, underfed, poorly clothed and missing his family, Alf sought refuge in the library in the company of Shakespeare and Michelangelo. He writes with joy about the camaraderie of the boys, their love of sport and their own company, but also notes that many descended into despair upon leaving. Most died early. Alf Taylor is one of the 'lucky ones'

BRIT BENNETT

- HBO cable channel won what has been described as a "wild auction" that included 17 bidders for rights to the story. The seven-figure deal will see *The Vanishing Half* made into a limited-series production.

Sisonke says:

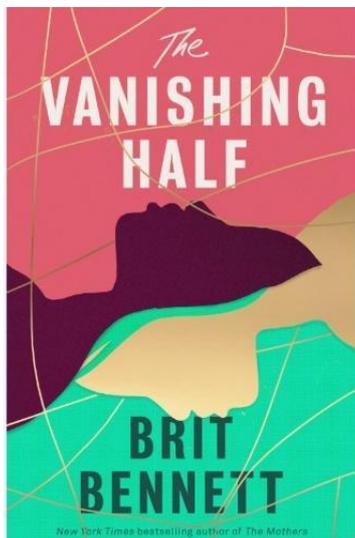
The Vanishing Half perfectly embodies the theme of this year's Literature Weekend - Nostalgia. Beginning in the 1950s and moving through to the 1990s the book is full of iconic imagery and reminds us that the past is not all it is cracked up to be.

Born and raised in Southern California, Brit Bennett graduated from Stanford University and later earned her MFA in fiction at the University of Michigan, where she won a Hopwood Award in Graduate Short Fiction as well as the 2014 Hurston/Wright Award for College Writers.

Her work is featured in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Paris Review*, and *Jezebel*. She is one of the National Book Foundation's 2016 5 Under 35 honorees.



Cr. Emma Trim



The Vanishing Half

The Vignes twin sisters will always be identical. But after growing up together in a small, southern black community and running away at age sixteen, it's not just the shape of their daily lives that is different as adults, it's everything: their families, their communities, their racial identities. Ten years later, one sister lives with her black daughter in the same southern town she once tried to escape. The other secretly passes for white, and her white husband knows nothing of her past.

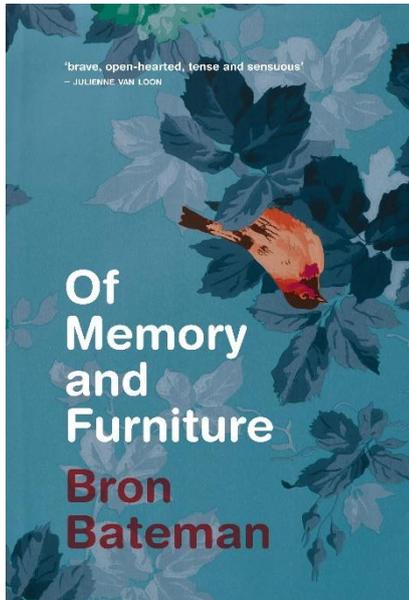
Still, even separated by so many miles and just as many lies, the fates of the twins remain intertwined. What will happen to the next generation, when their own daughters' story lines intersect?

Weaving together multiple strands and generations of this family, from the Deep South to California, from the 1950s to the 1990s, Brit Bennett produces a story that is at once a riveting, emotional family story and a brilliant exploration of the American history of passing. Looking well beyond issues of race, *The Vanishing Half* considers the lasting influence of the past as it shapes a person's decisions, desires, and expectations, and explores some of the multiple reasons and realms in which people sometimes feel pulled to live as something other than their origins.

BRON BATEMAN

Bron Bateman is a poet, academic and mother of nine. She is a lecturer, unit coordinator and tutor in the enabling program 'OnTrack' at Murdoch University.

Her research interests include cultural studies, creative writing, feminism, the body, and Gothic and gender theory. Her first poetry collection, *People from Bones* (with Kelly Pilgrim), was published in 2002. She has had her work published in collections and journals in Australia, the UK and the US.



Of Memory and Furniture - Fremantle Press

Of Memory and Furniture is a collection of poetry in four parts and explores experiences of female embodiment, sexuality, and relationships with family, lovers and institutions.

It is concerned with expressions of female sexuality in its myriad forms – heterosexual, lesbian, and experiences of non-normative sexuality – as well as issues of maternal subjectivity, mental health and abuse and, throughout, the role of memory in enabling healing. The poems are at once erotic and deeply thought through, intelligent and tender.

CHRIS FLYNN

Chris Flynn is the author of *The Glass Kingdom*, *A Tiger in Eden* and the bestselling *Mammoth*.

His fiction and non-fiction have appeared in *The Age*, *The Australian*, *Griffith Review*, *Meanjin*, *Australian Book Review*, *The Saturday Paper*, *Smith Journal*, *The Big Issue* and *McSweeney's*. Chris lives on Phillip Island, next to a penguin sanctuary.



Cr. Georgia Butterfield



***Mammoth* - University of Queensland Press**

Narrated by a 13,000-year-old extinct mammoth, this is the (mostly) true story of how a collection of prehistoric creatures came to be on sale at a natural history auction in New York in 2007.

By tracing how and when these fossils were unearthed, *Mammoth* leads us on a funny and fascinating journey from the Pleistocene epoch to nineteenth-century America and beyond, revealing how ideas about science and religion have shaped our world. With our planet on the brink of calamitous climate change, *Mammoth* scrutinises humanity's role in the destruction of the natural world while also offering a message of hope.

CRAIG SILVEY

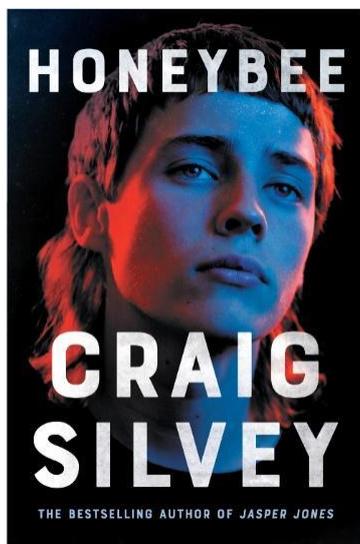
Craig Silvey is an author and screenwriter from Fremantle, WA. His critically acclaimed debut novel, *Rhubarb*, was published in 2004. His bestselling second novel, *Jasper Jones*, was released in 2009 and is considered a modern Australian classic.

Published in over a dozen territories, *Jasper Jones* has won plaudits in three continents, including an International Dublin Literary Award shortlisting, a Michael J. Printz Award Honor, and a Miles Franklin Literary Award shortlisting. *Jasper Jones* was the Australian Book Industry Awards Book of the Year for 2010.

The stage adaptation of *Jasper Jones* was produced by no less than five different companies, who all performed separate sell-out productions, the Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Belvoir, Melbourne Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre Company, and the State Theatre Company of South Australia. *Honeybee* is his third novel.



Cr. Daniel James Grant



Honeybee - Allen and Unwin

Late in the night, fourteen-year-old Sam Watson steps onto a quiet overpass, climbs over the rail and looks down at the road far below.

At the other end of the same bridge, an old man, Vic, smokes his last cigarette. The two see each other across the void. A fateful connection is made, and an unlikely friendship blooms. Slowly, we learn what led Sam and Vic to the bridge that night. Bonded by their suffering, each privately commits to the impossible task of saving the other.

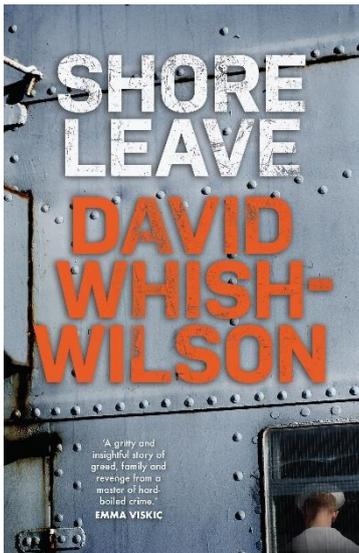
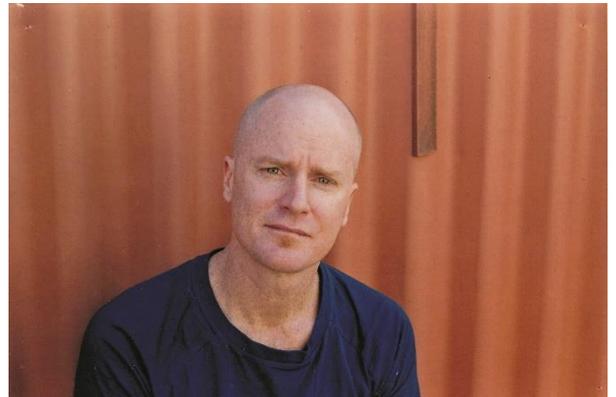
Honeybee is a heartbreaking, life-affirming novel that throws us headlong into a world of petty thefts, extortion plots, botched bank robberies, daring dog rescues and one spectacular drag show. At the heart of *Honeybee* is Sam: a solitary, resilient young person battling to navigate the world as their true self; ensnared by loyalty to a troubled mother, scarred by the volatility of a domineering stepfather, and confounded by the kindness of new alliances.

Honeybee is a tender, profoundly moving novel, brimming with vivid characters and luminous words. It's about two lives forever changed by a chance encounter -- one offering hope, the other redemption. It's about when to persevere, and when to be merciful, as Sam learns when to let go, and when to hold on.

DAVID WHISH WILSON

David Whish-Wilson was born in Newcastle, New South Wales, but grew up in Singapore, Victoria and Western Australia. He left Australia aged 18 to live for a decade in Europe, Africa and Asia. His most recent novel, *Shore Leave*, is the fourth novel in the Frank Swann series.

He currently lives in Fremantle, Western Australia, with his partner and three children. David teaches creative writing at Curtin University.



***Shore Leave* - Fremantle Press**

It is Fremantle in 1989 and Frank Swann is at home, suffering from an undiagnosed and debilitating illness.

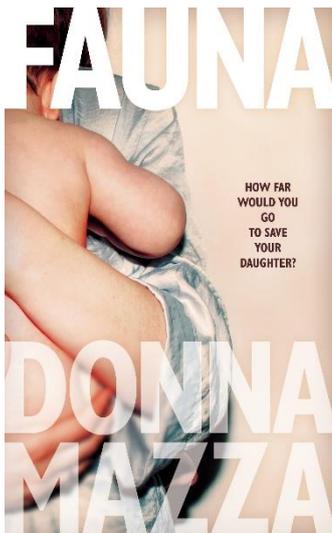
When Frank is called in to investigate an incident at a local brothel, it soon appears there is a link between the death of two women and the arrival of the US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Carl Vinson in the port city. *Shore Leave* is the fourth book in the Frank Swann series and also features Lee Southern, the main character from *True West*.

DONNA MAZZA

Donna Mazza is an award-winning author of poetry, short fiction and novels.

Her debut novel, *The Albanian* (2007), won the TAG Hungerford Award and she was the Mick Dark Flagship Fellow for Environmental Writing at Varuna, the National Writers House, for her short fiction.

Donna teaches literature and writing at Edith Cowan University and lives in a small country town in the South West with her family, including many chickens.



***Fauna* - Allen and Unwin**

Fauna is a compelling near-future literary novel, psychological thriller and family drama. How far would you go to save your daughter?

Set 17 years into a very recognisable future, *Fauna* is an astonishing psychological drama with an incredible twist: What if the child you are carrying is not entirely human?

Using DNA technology, scientists have started to reverse the extinction of creatures like the mammoth and the Tasmanian Tiger. The benefits of this radical approach could be far-reaching. But how far will they go?

Longing for another child, Stacey is recruited by LifeBLOOD®, a company that offers massive incentives for her to join an experimental genetics program. As part of the agreement, Stacey and her husband's embryo will be blended with edited cells. Just how edited, Stacey doesn't know. Nor does she have any idea how much her longed-for new daughter will change her life and that of her family. Or how hard she will have to fight to protect her.

Fauna is a transformative, lyrical and moving novel about love and motherhood, home and family-and what it means to be human.

ELLEN VAN NEERVEN

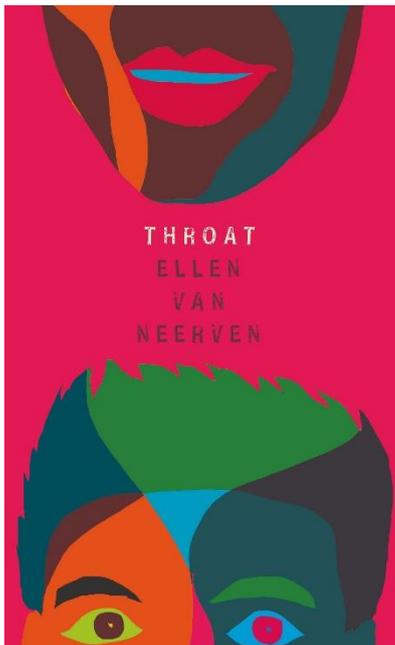
Ellen Van Neerven is an award-winning writer of Mununjali Yugambeh (South East Queensland) and Dutch heritage. They write fiction, poetry, plays and non-fiction. Ellen's first book, *Heat and Light*, was the recipient of the David Unaipon Award, the Dobbie Literary Award and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards Indigenous Writers Prize.

Ellen's second book, a collection of poetry, *Comfort Food*, was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards Kenneth Slessor Prize and highly commended for the 2016 Wesley Michel Wright Prize.

Throat is Ellen's second poetry collection.



Cr. Anna Jacobson



***Throat* - University of Queensland Press**

'Ellen van Neerven's ability to challenge and expand politics is thrilling, their flair for language exhilaratingly intimate.' - Nakkiah Lui

The second poetry collection and most powerful work yet from award-winning Mununjali Yugambeh author Ellen van Neerven.

Irreverent and courageous, *Throat* is a fierce cry that fights to be heard. Recipient of the inaugural Quentin Bryce Award (that recognises one book each year on UQP's list that promotes gender equality), *Throat* explores love, language and land, and shines a light on Australia's unreconciled past and precarious present, with humour and heart.

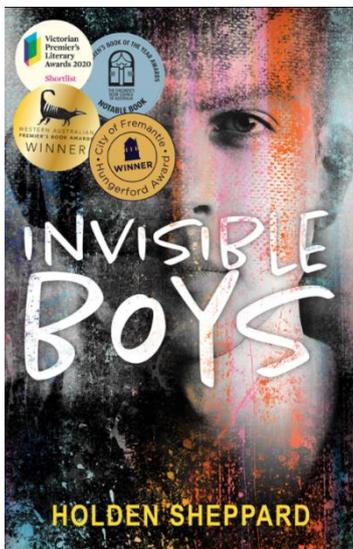
Wanting to write about the 'things stuck at the back of my throat', this collection is unsparing in its interrogation of colonial impulse and fiercely loyal to voicing truth and telling the stories that make us who we are.

HOLDEN SHEPPARD

His debut novel *Invisible Boys* was published in 2019 to both critical and commercial success. *Invisible Boys* has won multiple accolades including the 2019 West Australian Premier's Prize for an Emerging Writer, the 2018 City of Fremantle Hungerford Award and the 2019 Kathleen Mitchell Award.

In 2020, *Invisible Boys* was shortlisted for both the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and was named as a Notable Book by the Children's Book Council of Australia. The novel has been optioned for film and television by AACTA award-winning director Nick Verso (*Nowhere Boys, Itch, Boys in the Trees*) and producer Tania Chambers OAM (*Kill Me Three Times, A Few Less Men*).

After graduating with Honours from Edith Cowan University's Writing program, Holden won a prestigious grant from the Australia Council for the Arts in 2015. He currently serves as Deputy Chair of WritingWA, and as an ambassador for Lifeline WA. A lifelong misfit, Holden is a punk, a gym junkie, a player of both Aussie Rules football and Pokemon, and a bogan who learned to speak French. He lives in Perth with his husband.



Invisible Boys - Fremantle Press

Invisible Boys is Holden Sheppard's multi-award winning debut novel. A raw, confronting upper YA novel, it tackles homosexuality, masculinity, anger and suicide with a nuanced and unique perspective.

Set in regional Western Australia, the novel follows three sixteen-year-old boys in the throes of coming to terms with their homosexuality in a town where it is invisible – and so are they.

Invisible Boys depicts the complexities and trauma of rural gay identity with painful honesty, devastating consequence and, ultimately, hope.

JESSIE TU

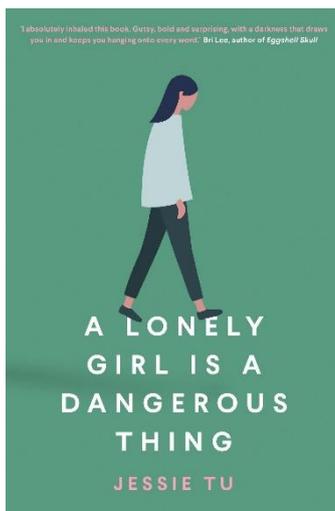
Tu trained as a classical violinist for more than 15 years. Failing to succeed as a professional musician, she taught music at Kambala, St Ignatius College, MLC Burwood, Kings School, Newington College.

She's taught at refugee camps in the Middle East, volunteered with AUSAID in The Solomon Islands, travelled to complete residencies in the US, and now works as a journalist at Women's Agenda.

She's won several poetry and writing awards, and her first book of poetry was released in 2018. *A Lonely Girl is a Dangerous Thing* is her first novel.



Cr. Sarah Wilson Photography



A Lonely Girl is a Dangerous Thing - Allen and Unwin

Growing up is always hard, but especially when so many think you're a washed-up has-been at twenty-two.

Jena Lin plays the violin. She was once a child prodigy and now uses sex to fill the void left by fame. She's struggling a little. Her professional life comprises rehearsals, concerts, auditions and relentless practice; her personal life is spent managing the demands of her strict family and creative friends, and hooking up. And then she meets Mark - much older and worldly-wise - who consumes her. But at what cost to her dreams?

When Jena is awarded an internship with the New York Philharmonic, she thinks the life she has dreamed of is about to begin. But when Trump is elected, New York changes irrevocably and Jena along with it. Is the dream over? As Jena's life takes on echoes of Frances Ha, her favourite film, crucial truths are gradually revealed to her.

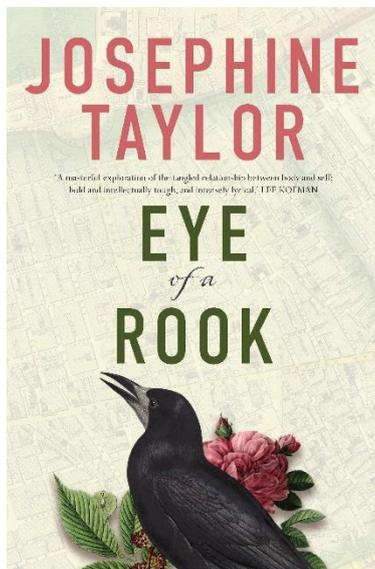
A Lonely Girl is a Dangerous Thing explores female desire and the consequences of wanting too much and never getting it. It is about the awkwardness and pain of being human in an increasingly dislocated world - and how, in spite of all this, we still try to become the person we want to be. This is a dazzling and original debut from a young writer with a fierce, intelligent and audacious voice.

JOSEPHINE TAYLOR

Josephine Taylor is a writer and freelance editor who lives on the coast north of Perth, Western Australia. She is Associate Editor at *Westerly* Magazine and an Adjunct Senior Lecturer in Writing at Edith Cowan University.

Josephine teaches, facilitates and judges in literary fiction and creative non-fiction.

Her personal essays and fiction have been anthologised, and published in journals including *Axon*, *M/C Journal*, *Outskirts*, *Southerly*, *TEXT* and *Westerly*. Her debut novel is *Eye of a Rook*.



Eye of a Rook - Fremantle Press

In 1860s London, Arthur sees his wife, Emily, suddenly struck down by a pain for which she can find no words, forced to endure harmful treatments and reliant on him for guidance.

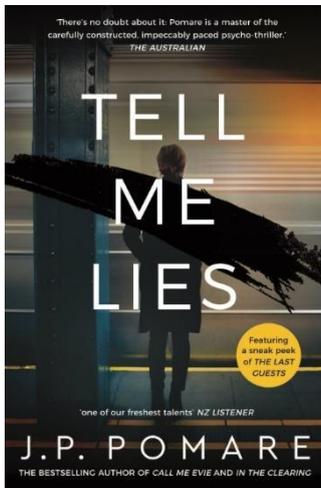
Meanwhile, in contemporary Perth, Alice, a writer, and her older husband, Duncan, find their marriage threatened as Alice investigates the history of hysteria, female sexuality and the treatment of the female body – her own and the bodies of those who came before.

J.P. POMARE

J.P. Pomare is an award-winning writer who has had work published in journals including *Meanjin*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *Takahe* and *Mascara Literary Review*. He has hosted the *On Writing* podcast since 2015 featuring bestselling authors from around the globe.

His first novel, *Call Me Evie*, was critically acclaimed and won the Ngaio Marsh Award for Best First Novel. *In The Clearing*, Pomare's second novel, was also a critically acclaimed bestseller.

He was born in New Zealand and resides in Melbourne with his wife.



***Tell Me Lies* - Hachette**

Psychologist Margot Scott has a picture-perfect life: a nice house in the suburbs, a husband, two children and a successful career.

On a warm spring morning Margot approaches one of her clients on a busy train platform. He is looking down at his phone, with his duffel bag in hand as the train approaches.

That's when she slams into his back and he falls in front of the train. Margot's clients all lie to her, but one lie cost her family and freedom. A fast-paced psychological thriller for fans of *The Silent Patient*.

JULIA GILLARD

Julia Gillard was sworn in as the 27th Prime Minister of Australia on 24 June 2010 and served until June 2013. Ms Gillard is the first woman to be Australia's Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister.

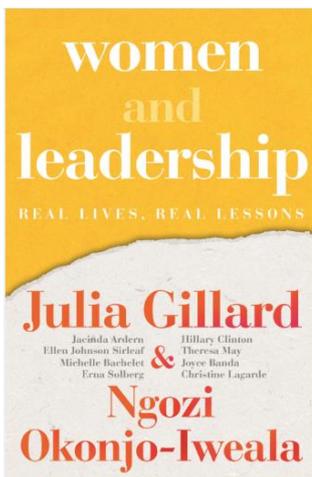
Ms Gillard delivered nation-changing policies including reforming Australian education at every level from early childhood to university education, creating an emissions trading scheme to combat climate change, improving health care, commencing the nation's first-ever national scheme to care for people with disabilities, addressing the gender pay gap for social and community sector workers and delivering an apology to those who had suffered through forced adoptions.



Cr. Peter Brew-Bevan

In October 2012, Ms Gillard received worldwide attention for her speech in Parliament on the treatment of women in professional and public life. She currently serves as the inaugural Chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at Kings College in London, which through research, practice and advocacy, is addressing women's under-representation in leadership. Ms Gillard is the Chair of Australian mental health body Beyond Blue; is Chair of global funding body for education in developing countries, the Global Partnership for Education; and is Patron of the Campaign for Female Education.

***Women and Leadership* - Penguin Random House**



An inspirational and practical book written by two high-achieving women, sharing the experience and advice of some of our most extraordinary women leaders, in their own words. As a result of their broad experience on the world stage in politics, economics and global not-for-profits, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Julia Gillard have some strong ideas about the impact of gender on the treatment of leaders.

Women and Leadership takes a consistent and comprehensive approach to teasing out what is different for women who lead. Almost every year new findings are published about the way people see women leaders compared with their male counterparts.

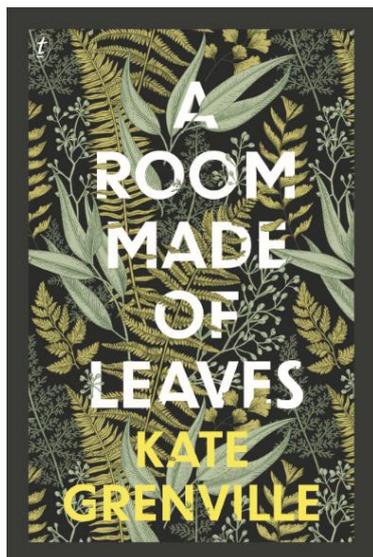
The authors have taken that academic work and tested it in the real world. The same set of interview questions were put to each leader in frank face-to-face interviews. Their responses were then used to examine each woman's journey in leadership and whether their lived experiences were in line with or different from what the research would predict. Featuring Jacinda Ardern, Hillary Clinton, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Theresa May, Michelle Bachelet, Joyce Banda, Erna Solberg, Christine Lagarde and more.

KATE GRENVILLE

Kate Grenville is one of Australia's most celebrated writers. Her international bestseller *The Secret River* was awarded local and overseas prizes, has been adapted for the stage and as an acclaimed television miniseries, and is now a much-loved classic.

Grenville's other books include *Sarah Thornhill*, *The Lieutenant*, *Dark Places*, *One Life: My Mother's Story*, *The Case Against Fragrance* and the Orange Prize winner *The Idea of Perfection*.

Her most recent book, *A Room Made of Leaves*, is her first novel in nearly a decade.



***A Room Made of Leaves* - Text Publishing**

What if Elizabeth Macarthur—wife of the notorious John Macarthur, wool baron in the earliest days of Sydney—had written a shockingly frank secret memoir? And what if novelist Kate Grenville had miraculously found and published it? That's the starting point for *A Room Made of Leaves*, a playful dance of possibilities between the real and the invented.

Marriage to a ruthless bully, the impulses of her heart, the search for power in a society that gave women none: this Elizabeth Macarthur manages her complicated life with spirit and passion, cunning and sly wit. Her memoir lets us hear what one of those seemingly demure women from history might really have thought.

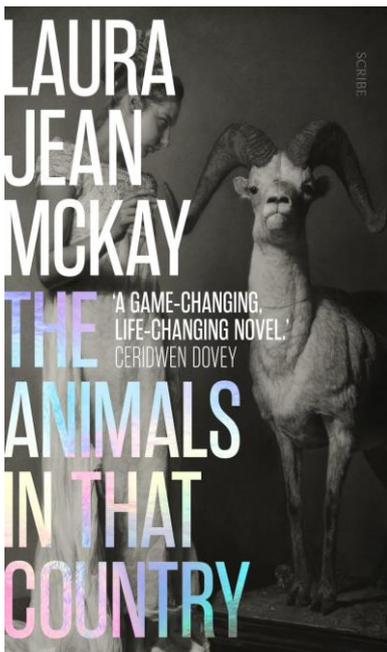
At the centre of *A Room Made of Leaves* is one of the most toxic issues of our own age: the seductive appeal of false stories. This book may be set in the past, but it's just as much about the present, where secrets and lies have the dangerous power to shape reality. Kate Grenville's return to the territory of *The Secret River* is historical fiction turned inside out, a stunning sleight of hand by one of our most original writers.

LAURA JEAN MCKAY

Laura Jean McKay is the author of *Holiday in Cambodia*, shortlisted for three national book awards in Australia.

Her work appears in *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *Best Australian Stories*, *The Saturday Paper*, and *The North American Review*. Laura is a lecturer in creative writing at Massey University, with a PhD from the University of Melbourne focusing on literary animal studies.

She is the 'animal expert' presenter on ABC Listen's Animal Sound Safari.



***The Animals in That Country* - Scribe Publications**

Out on the road, no one speaks, everything talks. Hard-drinking, foul-mouthed, and allergic to bullshit, Jean is not your usual grandma. She's never been good at getting on with other humans, apart from her beloved granddaughter, Kimberly. Instead, she surrounds herself with animals, working as a guide in an outback wildlife park. And although Jean talks to all her charges, she has a particular soft spot for a young dingo called Sue.

As disturbing news arrives of a pandemic sweeping the country, Jean realises this is no ordinary flu: its chief symptom is that its victims begin to understand the language of animals — first mammals, then birds and insects, too. As the flu progresses, the unstoppable voices become overwhelming, and many people begin to lose their minds, including Jean's infected son, Lee. When he takes off with Kimberly, heading south, Jean feels the pull to follow her kin.

Setting off on their trail, with Sue the dingo riding shotgun, they find themselves in a stark, strange world in which the animal apocalypse has only further isolated people from other species. Bold, exhilarating, and wholly original, *The Animals in That Country* asks what would happen, for better or worse, if we finally understood what animals were saying.

MAAZA MENGISTE

- *The Shadow King* is one of six books that have been shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize. This is the most diverse list ever announced.

Sisonke says:

The Shadow King looks back at a historical moment that has been understood from the perspective of the West and celebrated from the viewpoint of men, but has yet to be examined as an epic tale of women's solidarity and courage. It's an important meditation on what we think history is, and what happens when old facts are held up to the light.



Cr. Nina Subin

Maaza Mengiste is the author of *The Shadow King*, shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize, a LA Times Books Prize finalist, and a Best Book of 2019 by New York Times, NPR, Time, Elle, and other publications. *Beneath the Lion's Gaze*, her debut, was selected by the Guardian as one of the 10 best contemporary African books.



The Shadow King

A gripping novel set during Mussolini's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, *The Shadow King* takes us back to the first real conflict of World War II, casting light on the women soldiers who were left out of the historical record.

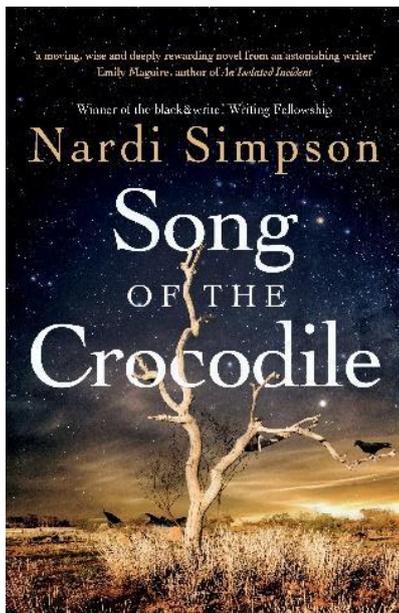
With the threat of Mussolini's army looming, recently orphaned Hirut struggles to adapt to her new life as a maid in Kidane and his wife Aster's household. Kidane, an officer in Emperor Haile Selassie's army, rushes to mobilize his strongest men before the Italians invade. His initial kindness to Hirut shifts into a flinty cruelty when she resists his advances, and Hirut finds herself tumbling into a new world of thefts and violations, of betrayals and overwhelming rage. Meanwhile, Mussolini's technologically advanced army prepares for an easy victory. Hundreds of thousands of Italians—Jewish photographer Ettore among them—march on Ethiopia seeking adventure. As the war begins in earnest, Hirut, Aster, and the other women long to do more than care for the wounded and bury the dead. When Emperor Haile Selassie goes into exile and Ethiopia quickly loses hope, it is Hirut who offers a plan to maintain morale. She helps disguise a gentle peasant as the emperor and soon becomes his guard, inspiring other women to take up arms against the Italians. But how could she have predicted her own personal war as a prisoner of one of Italy's most vicious officers, who will force her to pose before Ettore's camera?

NARDI SIMPSON

Nardi Simpson is a Yuwaalaraay writer, musician, composer and educator from north west New South Wales freshwater plains.

A founding member of Indigenous folk duo Stiff Gins, Nardi has been performing nationally and internationally for 20 years.

Her debut novel, *Song of the Crocodile* was a 2018 winner of a black&write! writing fellowship.



Song of the Crocodile - Hachette

Darnmoor is the home of the Billymil family, three generations who have lived in this 'gateway town'.

Race relations between Indigenous and settler families are fraught, though the rigid status quo is upheld through threats and soft power rather than the overt violence of yesteryear.

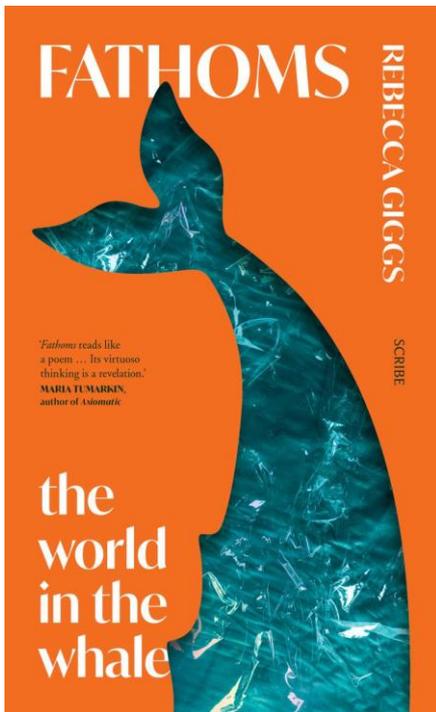
As progress marches forwards, Darnmoor and its surrounds undergo rapid social and environmental changes, but as some things change, some stay exactly the same. The Billymil family are watched (and sometimes visited) by ancestral spirits and spirits of the recently deceased, who look out for their descendants and attempt to help them on the right path.

When the town's secrets start to be uncovered the town will be rocked by a violent act that forever shatters a century of silence. Full of music, Yuwaalaraay language and exquisite description, *Song of the Crocodile* is a lament to choice and change, and the unyielding land that sustains us all, if only we could listen to it.

REBECCA GIGGS

Rebecca Giggs is a writer from Perth, Western Australia. Her work has been widely published, including in *Granta*, *Best Australian Science Writing*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *Griffith Review*.

Rebecca's nonfiction focuses on how people feel about, and feel for, animals in a time of technological change and ecological crisis. *Fathoms: the world in the whale* is her first book.



Fathoms: the world in the whale - Scribe Publications

When Rebecca Giggs encountered a humpback whale stranded on her local beach in Australia, she began to wonder how the lives of whales might shed light on the condition of our seas.

How do whales experience environmental change? Has our connection to these fabled animals been transformed by technology? What future awaits us, and them? And what does it mean to write about nature in the midst of an ecological crisis?

In *Fathoms: the world in the whale*, Giggs blends natural history, philosophy, and science to explore these questions with clarity and hope. In lively, inventive prose, she introduces us to whales so rare they have never been named; she tells us of the astonishing variety found in whale sounds, and of whale 'pop' songs that sweep across hemispheres.

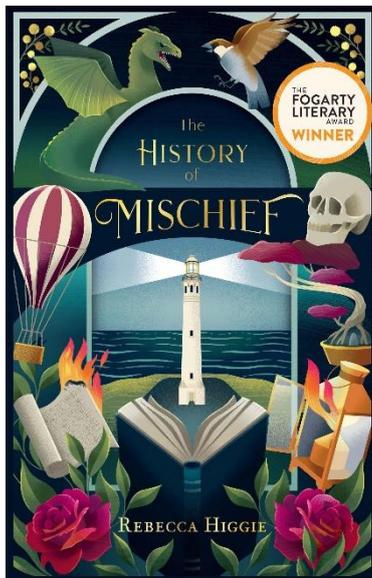
She takes us into the deeps to discover that one whale's death can spark a great flourishing of creatures. We travel to Japan to board whaling ships, examine the uncanny charisma of these magnificent mammals, and confront the plastic pollution now pervading their underwater environment.

In the spirit of Rachel Carson and John Berger, *Fathoms* is a work of profound insight and wonder. It marks the arrival of an essential new voice in narrative nonfiction and provides us with a powerful, surprising, and compelling view of some of the most urgent issues of our time.

REBECCA HIGGIE

Rebecca Higgie is a writer from Perth, Western Australia. Her whole life has been spent in the company of books, with careers in libraries and universities. Formerly an academic at Curtin University and Brunel University London, she has published research on satire and politics.

She has worked in the stacks of the State Library of Western Australia and fostered childhood literacy as the Library Officer at Guildford Primary, WA's oldest public school. Her novel, *The History of Mischief*, won the 2019 Fogarty Literary Award for an unpublished manuscript.



***The History of Mischief* - Fremantle Press**

Following the death of their parents, Jessie and her older sister Kay move to their grandmother's abandoned house. One night they discover *The History of Mischief* hidden beneath the floor: it is like no book they have ever seen.

From Ancient Greece to war-torn China, from the Ethiopian Empire to Victorian England, the pages reveal a world of mischief and mystery, adventure and adversity: stolen bones and fiery dragons, feisty philosophers and tempestuous tyrants, shape-shifting trees and scorched scrolls.

But not everything is as it seems, in the book or in her life, and Jessie is determined to find the truth. *The History of Mischief* has a history of its own. Unravelling its secrets might be the biggest mischief of all.

REBECCA PRINCE-RUIZ

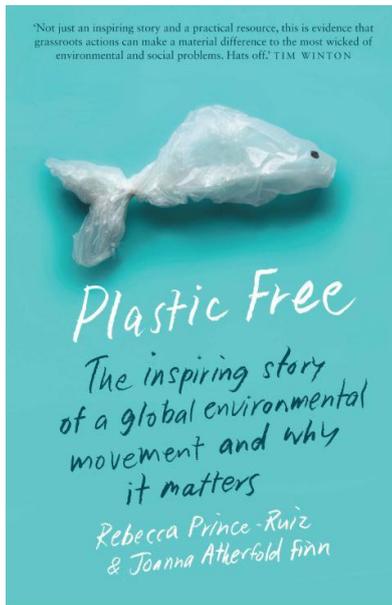
Rebecca Prince-Ruiz is the Executive Director of the Plastic Free Foundation, a not-for-profit with the vision of a world without plastic waste.

In 2011 Rebecca and a small team in local government in Western Australia created the Plastic Free July challenge which since grown to a global movement that has inspired an estimated 326 million participants in 177 countries to reduce single-use plastic.



Cr. Tres Artes Collective

She has more than 25 years' experience in the world of environmental and waste management, community engagement, and sustainability behaviour change. Rebecca has participated in plastic pollution research expeditions in Queensland, the Cocos Islands, and the North Atlantic Ocean, and explored innovative solutions to plastic waste worldwide during a Churchill Fellowship. Rebecca believes it's critical to stop the problem at the source and behaviour change can lead to a collective impact and influence systemic change.



***Plastic Free: The Inspiring Story of a Global Environmental Movement and Why It Matters* - NewSouth Publishing**

'I'm going plastic free next month, who wants to join me?'

When Rebecca Prince-Ruiz asked her colleagues this question in 2011, she had no idea that less than a decade later it would inspire a global movement of 250 million people in 177 countries to reduce their plastic use. *Plastic Free* tells the incredible story of how a simple community initiative grew into one of the world's most successful environmental movements. It also shares tips from people around the world who have taken on the Plastic Free July challenge to reduce their waste.

Plastic Free is a book about positive change and reminds us that small actions can make a huge impact, one step – and piece of plastic – at a time.

'Not just an inspiring story and a practical resource, this is evidence that grassroots actions by ordinary individuals and communities can make a material difference to the most wicked of environmental and social problems. Hats off.' — Tim Winton

RICHARD FIDLER

Richard Fidler is the author of the best-selling books *Ghost Empire* and *Saga Land*, a journey into the sagas of Iceland, co-written with Kári Gíslason, which was awarded the 2018 Indie Book Award for non-fiction.

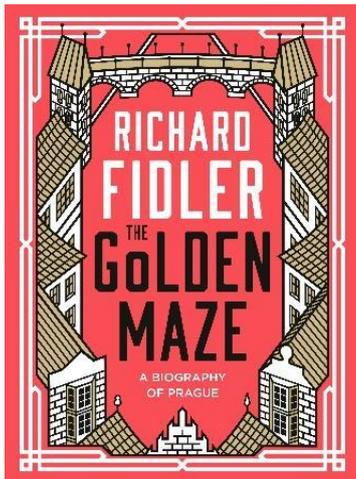
Richard is best known as the presenter of Conversations on ABC Radio. The program attracts a large listening audience around the nation and is the most popular podcast in Australia. In another life Richard was a member of Australian comedy trio The Doug Anthony Allstars (DAAS), which played to audiences all over the world.

His new book, *The Golden Maze*, is a biography of Prague, which was inspired by his experience of the city's 1989 Velvet Revolution.



Cr. Sally Flegg

The Golden Maze - Harper Collins



In 1989, Richard Fidler was living in London as part of the provocative Australian comedy trio The Doug Anthony All Stars when revolution broke out across Europe. Excited by this galvanising historic, human, moment, he travelled to Prague, where a decrepit police state was being overthrown by crowds of ecstatic citizens. His experience of the Velvet Revolution never let go of him.

Thirty years later Fidler returns to Prague to uncover its glorious and grotesque history: a jumble of gothic towers, baroque palaces and zig-zag lanes that has survived plagues, pogroms, Nazi terror and Soviet tanks. Founded in the ninth Century, Prague gave the world the golem, the robot, and the world's biggest statue of Stalin, a behemoth that killed almost everyone who touched it.

Fidler tells the story of the reclusive emperor who brought the world's most brilliant minds to Prague Castle to uncover the occult secrets of the universe. He explores the Black Palace, the wartime headquarters of the Nazi SS, and he meets victims of the communist secret police. Reaching back into Prague's mythic past, he finds the city's founder, the pagan priestess Libussa who prophesised: I see a city whose glory will touch the stars.

Following the story of Prague from its origins in medieval darkness to its uncertain present, Fidler does what he does so well - curates an absolutely engaging and compelling history of a place. You will learn things you never knew, with a tour guide who is erudite, inquisitive, and the best storyteller you could have as your companion.

DR ROBERT ISAACS

Dr Robert Allen Isaacs is an Aboriginal Elder from the Whadjuk- Bibilmum Wardandi Noongar language group. A member of the Stolen Generation, Robert was born at Edward Memorial Hospital in Subiaco, WA, and raised as a ward of the state under the Native Welfare Department. He grew up in institutions including St Josephs' Orphanage, Castledare Boys Home, and finally Clontarf Boys Town. Leaving at the age of 17 with nothing but the shirt on his back, Robert went to work at Aherns Department Store before joining the Army Reserves, and in 1973 he began his career with the Community and Child Health Services Department.

He went on to establish the first Aboriginal Medical Service and associated dental, rehabilitation and health care clinics; negotiated the first land use and mining royalties arrangement and led ground breaking housing initiatives.

Robert is an Order of Australia (AM) recipient on the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2016, NAIDOC 2016 Male Elder, West Australian of the Year 2015 and was Freeman to the City of Gosnells in 2015. He now continues his community work through board appointments, ambassadorships, his work as a Justice of the Peace, and speaking engagements.

***Two Cultures, One Story* by Dr Robert Isaacs**

Told with grace and strength, this memoir from respected Elder Dr Robert Isaacs follows his life as a ward of the state under the Native Welfare Department to the respected political leader he is today.



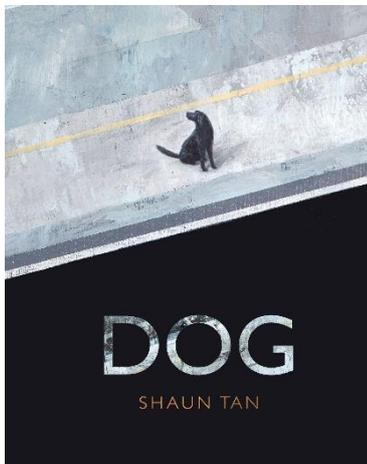
SHAUN TAN

Shaun Tan grew up in Perth and works as an artist, writer and film-maker in Melbourne. He is best known for illustrated books that deal with social and historical subjects through dream-like imagery, widely translated throughout the world and enjoyed by readers of all ages.

Shaun has also worked as a theatre designer, a film concept artist, and won an Academy Award for the short animated film *The Lost Thing*. In 2011 he received the prestigious Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in Sweden, in recognition of his services to literature for young people.



Cr. Mike Baker



***Dog* - Allen and Unwin**

Once we were strangers, legs bent the wrong way, rough voices falling to the wind ... But in our hearts we wanted more than this. In our hearts, we knew there was more.

'Shaun Tan's stories touch on wonder, fear, exploration and relationships. Questioning strangeness is a strong theme, a reminder that difference doesn't have to mean the same thing as fear.' *The Age*

SOPHIE MCNEILL

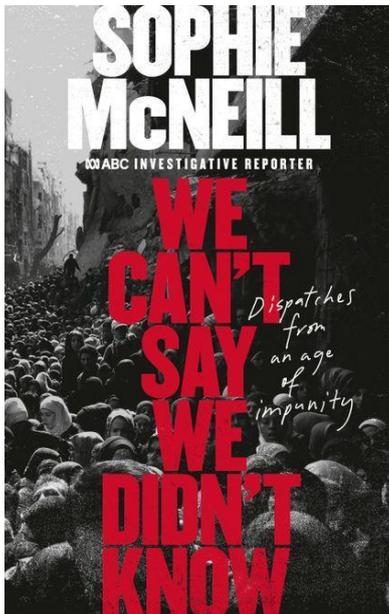
Sophie McNeill is an investigative reporter for Four Corners. A former foreign correspondent based in the Middle East for the ABC, she's worked across the region, including in countries such as Afghanistan, Israel, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Turkey and Gaza.

Sophie has twice been awarded Australian Young TV Journalist of the Year and in 2010 won a Walkley Award for her investigation into the killing of five children in Afghanistan by Australian Special Forces soldiers.

She was also nominated for a Walkley in 2015 for her coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis. Sophie previously worked as a reporter for the ABC's Foreign Correspondent and SBS's Dateline and is a former host of triple j's news and current affairs program Hack. *We Can't Say We Didn't Know* is her first book.



***We Can't Say We Didn't Know* - Harper Collins**



For more than 15 years, award-winning journalist Sophie McNeill has reported on some of the most war-ravaged and oppressive places on earth, including Syria, Gaza, Yemen, West Bank and Iraq. In *We Can't Say We Didn't Know*, Sophie tells the human stories of devastation and hope behind the headlines – of children, families and refugees, of valiant doctors, steadfast dissidents and Saudi women seeking asylum.

These innocent civilians bear the brunt of the lawlessness of the current age of impunity, where war crimes go unpunished and human rights are abused. Many risk everything they know to stand up for what they believe in and to be on the right side of history, and their courage is extraordinary and inspiring.

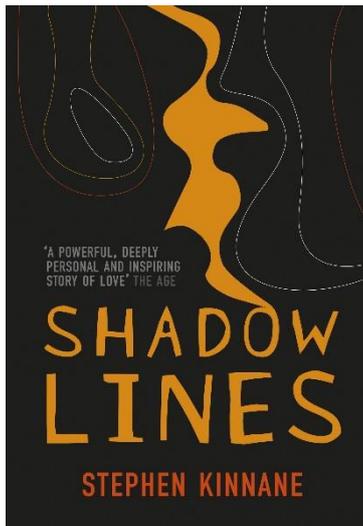
McNeill also examines what happens when evidence and facts become subjective and debatable, and how and why disinformation, impunity and hypocrisy now reign supreme. *We can't say we didn't know* – the question now is, what are you going to do about it?

STEVE KINNANE

Stephen Kinnane is a Marda Marda from Mirriwoong country in the East Kimberley.

He has been an active writer and researcher for more than 25 years as well as lecturing and working on sustainability, politics and history with a focus on regional and local community resilience, belonging and connections with place.

His interests are diverse, encompassing Aboriginal history, creative documentary (both visual and literary), regional sustainability and resource scarcity.



***Shadow Lines* - Fremantle Press**

Shadow Lines is the story of Jessie Argyle, born in the remote East Kimberley and taken from her Aboriginal family at the age of five, and Edward Smith, a young Englishman escaping the rigid structures of London, who fell in love and married.

Despite unrelenting surveillance and harassment, the Smith home was a centre for Aboriginal cultural and social life for over thirty years.

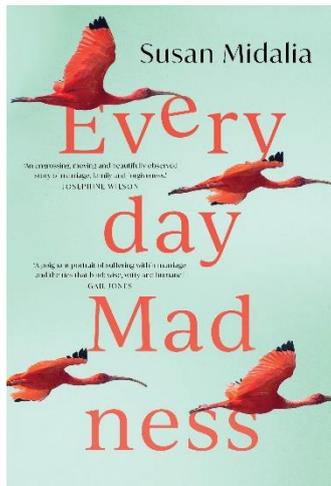
A powerful and lyrical work by a writer of vision and imagination.

SUSAN MIDALIA

Susan Midalia grew up in the Western Australian wheatbelt and has lived in Perth for most of her adult life.

She is the author of three collections of short stories, *A History of the Beanbag*, *An Unknown Sky* and *Feet to the Stars*.

Her collections have been shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards and twice for the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards. She retired from teaching in 2007 to become a full-time writer and freelance editor.



Everyday Madness - Fremantle Press

Life sucks when you are a vacuum cleaner salesman facing redundancy, and your wife of nearly forty years fills your days and nights with incessant chatter. But when Gloria suddenly and alarmingly stops talking, the silence is more than fifty-nine-year-old Bernard can bear.

In desperation, Bernard turns to his ex-daughter-in-law for help. Meg has issues of her own, and her bright and funny daughter Ella sometimes wonders if her mum is trying so hard to keep her safe it stops them both from spreading their wings.

Will Meg's suspicious nature thwart her chance encounter with the kindly but enigmatic Hal? And is there still hope for Bernard and Gloria on the other side of silence?

TRENT DALTON

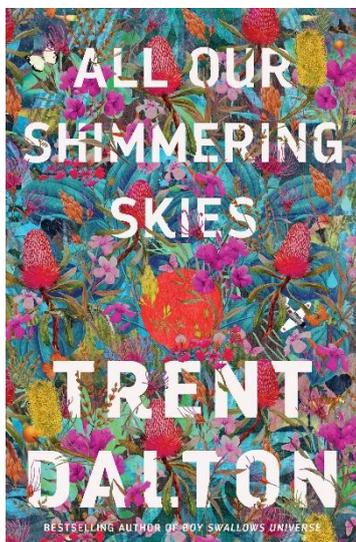
Trent Dalton is a staff writer for the *Weekend Australian Magazine* and a former assistant editor of *The Courier Mail*. He's a two-time winner of a Walkley Award for Excellence in Journalism, a four-time winner of a Kennedy Award for Excellence in NSW Journalism and a four-time winner of the national News Awards Features Journalist of the Year.

His number one bestselling debut novel, *Boy Swallows Universe*, broke records to become the fastest selling Australian debut novel ever. It is being published globally across 34 English language and translation territories and has won many major Australian literary prizes including the UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing at the 2019 NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the 2019 Indie Book of the Year, NSW Premier's Literary Award for New Writer and People's Choice, the Indie Book of the Year and a record-breaking four Australian Book Industry Awards.

Boy Swallows Universe is currently being adapted for the stage by Queensland Theatre Company and for the screen, with Joel Edgerton attached. Trent's new novel *All Our Shimmering Skies* was published in late 2020 and became an instant number one bestseller.



Cr. Russell Shakespeare



***All Our Shimmering Skies* - Harper Collins**

Darwin, 1942, and as Japanese bombs rain down, motherless Molly Hook, the gravedigger's daughter, is looking to the skies and running for her life.

Inside a duffel bag she carries a stone heart, alongside a map to lead her to Longcoat Bob, the deep-country sorcerer who she believes put a curse on her family.

By her side are the most unlikely travelling companions: Greta, a razor-tongued actress, and Yukio, a fallen Japanese fighter pilot. The treasure lies before them, but close behind them trails the dark. And above them, always, are the shimmering skies.

A story about gifts that fall from the sky, curses we dig from the earth and the secrets we bury inside ourselves, *All Our Shimmering Skies* is an odyssey of true love and grave danger, of darkness and light, of bones and blue skies. It is a love letter to Australia and an ode to the art of looking up - a buoyant, beautiful and magical novel, brimming with warmth, wit and wonder.

VICTORIA HANNAN

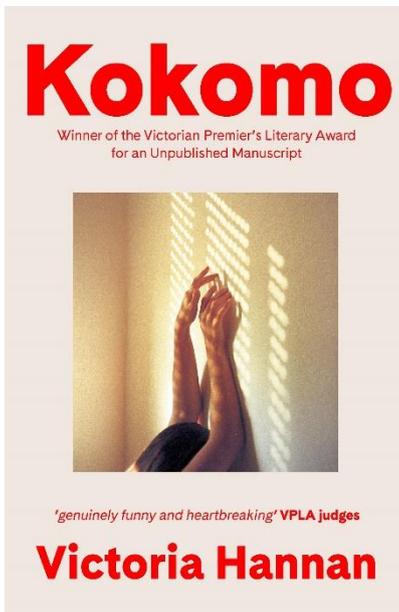
Victoria Hannan is a writer, photographer and creative director living in Melbourne.

Her writing has appeared on *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *3:AM Magazine* and in her monthly *TinyLetter* about swimming pools. *Kokomo*, her first novel, was written at artist-in-residence programs in Brazil, Tasmania and Iceland.

Kokomo was the 2019 winner of the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript.



Cr. Elize Strydom



Kokomo - Hachette

When Mina receives an urgent call from her best friend back in Melbourne, her world is turned upside down. Her reclusive mother, Elaine, has left the house for the first time in twelve years.

Mina drops everything to fly home, only to discover that Elaine will not talk about her sudden return to the world, nor why she's spent so much time hiding from it. Their reunion leaves Mina raking through pieces of their painful past in a bid to uncover the truth.

Both tender and fierce, heartbreaking and funny, *Kokomo* is a story about how secrets and love have the power to bring us together and tear us apart.

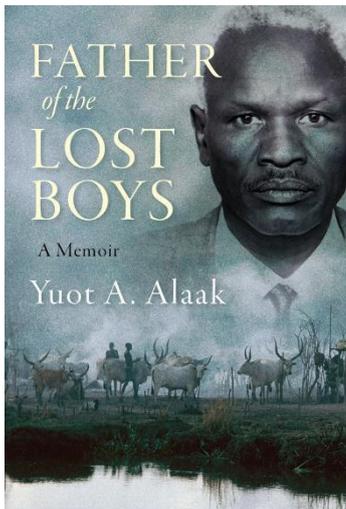
YUOT A ALAAK

Yuot A. Alaaq is an emerging Western Australian writer whose short story 'The lost girl of Pajomba' was anthologised by Margaret River Press in *Ways of Being Here*.

He was a panelist at the 2017 Perth Writers Festival and his memoir, *Father of the Lost Boys* was shortlisted for the 2018 City of Fremantle Hungerford Award and was published in 2020.

Yuot is a former child refugee from South Sudan and was part of the globally known 'Lost Boys of Sudan'.

He currently lives in Perth with his family where he works as a mining professional, having attained degrees in the geosciences and engineering. When not writing or mining, Yuot loves to relax with family and friends over a barbecue.



***Father of the Lost Boys* - Fremantle Press**

During the Second Sudanese Civil War, thousands of South Sudanese boys were displaced from their villages or orphaned in attacks from northern government troops. Many became refugees in Ethiopia.

There, in 1989, teacher and community leader Mecak Ajang Alaaq assumed care of the Lost Boys in a bid to protect them from becoming child soldiers. So began a four-year journey from Ethiopia to Sudan and on to the safety of a Kenyan refugee camp. Together they endured starvation, animal attacks and the horrors of landmines and aerial bombardment.

This eyewitness account by Mecak Ajang Alaaq's son, Yuot, is the extraordinary true story of a man who never ceased to believe that the pen is mightier than the gun.

A DAY OF IDEAS

Perth Concert Hall

13 February, 10-5pm

Across one special day we bring together storytellers, artists, Elders, scientists, musicians and philosophers to talk about the river, the city and the people who live in and around this place.

OPENING WORDS

Dr Richard Walley OAM is a Noongar musician, artist and leader who plays a central role in stewarding culture. He opens the session with words of wisdom about history, philosophy and the power of rivers.

RIVER'S MOUTH: DAA

When CY O'Connor set out to build the Fremantle Harbour, it was seen as an impossible task. By the time it had been built in 1903, it was seen as his greatest triumph. Questions remain about the social costs of this engineering feat on local Noongar communities. Join Viv Hansen, Richard Walley and others for a conversation about the history of the river and its mouth.

THE GUTS OF THE RIVER: KORBAL

Dr Noel Nannup, storyteller, cultural guide and mentor, takes the conversation further, wading into a discussion about the ecological richness of the river and the ways it has been changed by those who settled its shores.

UPRIVER: YIRANGINY

The river cuts through low and high-density areas, with the environment having a large impact on the health and wellbeing of our children. Colin Pettit, WA Commissioner for Children and Young People, deepens the discussion on the river, looking at the people who live along its edges and how they are faring.

THE RIVER: BILYA

The day ends with a conversation amongst women; those who serve as the umbilical cord and connect the water to community. Led by Nan Roma Winmar an inter-generational panel of leaders tells tales of water, life and regeneration.

KEY BIOS

Dr Richard Walley OAM

Dr Richard Walley OAM is a Noongar man and one of Australia's leading Aboriginal performers, musicians and writers. Richard is a working director of his family-owned business, Aboriginal Productions and Promotions, which delivers cultural awareness and learning programs and has been in operation for over 25 years.

Richard is a committed leader in the promotion of Noongar culture, and has extensive experience working alongside Australian and international organisations as a cultural consultant and presenter.

Richard lectures on Aboriginal culture at UWA and is a regular host and participant at significant public and cultural events in Perth and the South West. In 1978, Richard formed the Middar Aboriginal Theatre which has since taken Noongar culture to 32 countries. It is estimated more than 10 million people have experienced a live performance from Middar, contributing to the company's win of the 1988 Gold Swan Tourism Award. In 2015, Richard was named a State Living Treasure from the Western Australia Department of Culture and the Arts for his lifetime contribution to arts and culture.

Vivienne "Binyarn" Hansen

Vivienne is a Balladong Wadjuk yorga from the Bibbulmun Nation, or Noongar people, of the south-west of Western Australia. After a childhood of learning about traditional medicine, Vivienne undertook formal training at the Marr Mooditj Foundation and completed Certificate IV in Bush and Western Herbal Medicine. She was also the first Indigenous member of the National Herbalist Association of Australia, and presented at the 7th International Conference on Herbal Medicine in 2010.

Vivienne is passionate about Noongar language & culture and engages in select opportunities to share her knowledge.

Dr Roma 'Yibiyung' Winmar

Roma has worked significantly in Indigenous education and the arts where she is continuously working with promoting Noongar language and cultural activities and has translated many children's songs into Noongar. She has extensive language skills and is presently employed as a Noongar language teacher at Western Australia's Mooritj College, and as the Elder-in-Residence at Edith Cowan University.

She is also currently on the Board of Sister Kate's Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation (SKHKAC), and is a member of the Wirlomin Language and Stories Inc. Cultural Elders Reference Group. Roma was awarded the Barry Hayward Outstanding Achievement Aboriginal Individual Award, 2005. She has delivered sessions at conferences on language such as the Connecting with Aboriginal Languages Conference in 2007, in Hawaii; the World Indigenous Suicide Prevention conference in New Zealand in 2016; and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention conference/World Indigenous Suicide Prevention conference in Perth in 2018. Roma sat on the Department of Education's Curriculum Council in setting standards and educational expectations for Noongar language taught at secondary and TEE levels. Roma was the language and cultural consultant on the play Yibiyung written by her daughter Dallas Winmar. She has also worked as senior language editor for the Noongar Shakespeare Project. Roma, under the name of Yibiyung, has worked with the Carrolup School of artists as adults. Biographical cuttings on Yibiyung as an artist in her own right are housed in the National Library of Australia in Canberra as a contemporary

Noongar artist. She has a passion for passing on family histories to the next generation through research and storytelling.

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Belinda Sherry

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Perth Festival acknowledges the Noongar people who continue to practise their values, language, beliefs and knowledge on their kwobidak boodjar. They remain the spiritual and cultural birdiyangara of this place and we honour and respect their caretakers and custodians and the vital role Noongar people play for our community and our Festival to flourish.

Perth Festival

Founded in 1953 by The University of Western Australia, Perth Festival is the longest running international arts festival in Australia and Western Australia's premier cultural event. The Festival has developed a worldwide reputation for excellence in its international program, the presentation of new works and the highest quality artistic experiences for its audience. For 67 years, the Festival has welcomed to Perth some of the world's greatest living artists and now connects with hundreds of thousands of people each year. Iain Grandage is the Artistic Director 2020 – 23.