Locating Lives:

The Inaugural Conference for the IABA Asia-Pacific Chapter

1 - 3 December 2015
182 Victoria Square, Flinders in the City
Flinders University
Adelaide, South Australia

Flinders University
IABA
Inaugural Conference of the International Auto/Biography Association – Asia-Pacific Chapter

Locating Lives

Flinders University
1-3 December, 2015
Table of Contents

Locating Lives 1

General Information 3

Schedule of Events 5

Session Details 9

Speaker Biographies 39
Locating Lives

Inaugural Conference of the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA) Asia-Pacific Chapter
1-3 December 2015

Convenors

Associate Professor Kate Douglas
Flinders University

Dr Kylie Cardell
Flinders University

About Locating Lives

IABA Asia-Pacific emerges from the central disciplinary association for auto/biography scholars—The International Auto/Biography Association (IABA). IABA was founded in 1999 as a multidisciplinary network that aims to deepen the cross-cultural understanding of self, identity and experience, and to carry on global dialogues about life writing/narrative. IABA Asia-Pacific aims to foster new region-specific conversations and to encourage regional participation in the global IABA conference. Our goal is to develop scholarly networks between life narrative scholars and practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region that support the circulation and publication of high-quality life narrative theory, practice, and pedagogy.

The focus of our inaugural conference is “Locating Lives in the Asia-Pacific-Australian Region.” Our theme, broadly envisaged, seeks to explore the ways in which people in this region may represent, create, translate, mediate, interpret, record or research lives (theirs and the lives of others) for an intimate or wider public or publics. Are there distinct features of life narrative in Australia and the Asia-Pacific, and what are the common forms and preoccupations? What are the research interests of life narrative scholars in this region?
Thanks and Acknowledgements

This conference would not be possible without the help of the following people and organisations:

The International Auto/Biography Association
Flinders University
Flinders Institute for Research in the Humanities
The School of Humanities and Creative Arts
The Flinders University Life Narrative Research Group
The Ian Potter Foundation
The IABA SNS Network
*Life Writing* Journal

Joy Tennant
Kerry Ludwig
Elizabeth Weeks
Associate Professor Craig Taylor
Professor Diana Glenn
Tully Barnett
Pamela Graham
Emma Maguire

& our conference volunteers: Simone Corletto, Natalia Sanjuán Bornay, Mel Pryor, Shannon Sandford, Jay Trimboli, and Amanda Williams.

With much gratitude,
Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas
General Information

Registration: Registration will begin at 8.30am on Tuesday, December 1 on Level 10 of Flinders Victoria Square (182 Victoria Square). The registration desk will be attended between 8.30am – 9.30am as well as during lunch, morning tea and afternoon tea breaks from Tuesday, December 1 to Wednesday, December 2.

Social Media: During the conference you can share your comments, images, and thoughts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter by using the hashtag #IABA2015. The conference organisers welcome live-tweeting during sessions and look forward to engaging with you on social media throughout the conference! Connect on the IABA Asia-Pacific Facebook page.

WIFI: Internet access is available during the conference. Enable WIFI on your device and from the list of networks choose the network labelled “Flinders_Vic_Square.” The (case sensitive) password is Fl1nd3rs

Postgraduate Workshop: The workshop will be held at Flinders University Bedford Park Campus (Sturt Road, Bedford Park). A free charter bus will transport speakers and attendees from the city to Flinders University campus and back. The bus will leave from Flinders Victoria Square at 12.15pm, and return after the session concludes. More details on page 10.

Welcome Reception—Monday, November 31: All conference participants are invited to attend the welcome reception from 6.30–10pm on Monday, November 31 at The SA Writers Centre (2nd Floor, 187 Rundle Street). The welcome will feature readings from creative writers. We are also excited to have several recent publications to launch at this event. Drinks and cocktail food will be provided. More details on page 11.
Migration Museum Visit—Tuesday, December 1: Conference participants are welcome to attend a special after-hours session at The Migration Museum (82 Kintore Ave) from 5.45pm–7pm on Tuesday, December 1. The museum is opening its doors exclusively to Locating Lives participants during this session, which will begin with a welcome talk and introduction to the Museum by Mandy Paul, Senior Curator, Exhibitions, Collections and Research. Attendees are then welcome to explore the space at your leisure until 7pm.

Conference Dinner—Wednesday, December 2: For those who have registered and paid for the conference dinner, it will be held at award-winning contemporary Chinese restaurant Concubine (132 Gouger Street) at 7pm. The restaurant is a 10-minute walk from Flinders Victoria Square. Two drink tickets per registrant will be available at registration along with your nametag if you have registered and paid for the dinner: drink tickets can be exchanged for alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages at the Conference Dinner. Attendants also have the option to purchase drinks.

Brighton to Glenelg Beach Walk—Thursday, December 3: All are welcome to participate in a post-conference beach walk after the final session on Thursday, December 3. A free charter bus will transport participants to Brighton Beach, departing Flinders Victoria Square at 5.15pm. The walk from Brighton to Glenelg takes a little over an hour and traverses flat terrain. Participants are then free to either find a dinner location along Jetty Road or the Holdfast Shores Marina in Glenelg, or ride the iconic Glenelg-Adelaide tram back to Victoria Square (a tram leaves every 20 minutes until 11.30pm, tram fare is $5.20 payable on board tram by card or coins only).
Schedule of Events

Monday, November 31

1.00 – 4.00 pm  Postgraduate Workshop with Dr Kylie Cardell, Associate Professor Kate Douglas, Professor Craig Howes, Dr Sonja Vivienne, and Professor Gillian Whitlock

Noel Stockdale Room
Flinders University – Bedford Park Campus

6.30 – 10.00 pm  Welcome Event: Creative Readings

SA Writers’ Centre
(2nd floor, 187 Rundle St, Adelaide)
Tuesday, December 1

8.30 – 9.30  Registration desk open: Foyer – Level 10

9.00 – 9.30  **Official welcome to IABA Asia-Pacific**

Room 10.2  
*Welcome to Country by Uncle Frank Wanganeen—Kaurna Elder; Professor Diana Glenn – Dean of the School of Humanities and Creative Arts, Flinders University; Associate Professor Craig Taylor – Director of the Flinders Institute for Research in the Humanities*

9.30 – 10.30  **Session 1 – Room 10.2**
Keynote: Professor Gillian Whitlock
“Salvage”

10.30 – 11.00  Morning Tea

11.00 – 12.30  **Session 2**
Panel A: Digital Lives/Curation
Panel B: Regional Legacies
Panel C: Methodologies

12.30 – 1.30  Lunch

1.30 – 3.00  **Session 3**
Panel A: Genre Crossings
Panel B: Postmemory
Panel C: Space, Place, Narrative

3.00 – 3.30  Afternoon Tea

3.30 – 5.00  **Session 4**
Panel A: Relocating Lives
Panel B: Experimental Methodologies
Panel C: Biographical Subjects

5.45 – 7.00pm  Migration Museum Visit
Wednesday, December 2

8.30 – 9.30  Registration desk open: Foyer – Level 10

9.30 – 10.30  **Session 1**
Keynote: Benjamin Law
“The Family Law: From Big Family to Small Screen”

10.30 – 11.00  Morning Tea

11.00 – 12.30  **Session 2**
Panel A: Process
Panel B: Identities
Panel C: Australian Lives

12.30 – 1.30  Lunch

1.30 – 3.00  **Session 3**
Panel A: Relational Lives
Panel B: Memory/Postmemory
Panel C: Narratives, Aftereffects of War

3.00 – 3.30  Afternoon Tea
*Austlit “Trauma Texts” Launch and Demonstration—Room 10.2*

3.30 – 5.00  **Session 4**
Plenary: Unsettle

7.00pm  Conference Dinner—*Concupine*
Thursday, December 3

8.30 – 9.30  Registration desk open: Foyer – Level 10

9.30 – 10.30  **Session 1**
Keynote: Professor Craig Howes
“Pacifying Asia, Orientating the Pacific: What Work Can a Life Writing Region Do?”

10.30 – 11.00  Morning Tea and  
**Conference Group Photo**

11.00 – 12.30  **Session 2**
Panel A: Trauma, Testimony
Panel B: Visual Representations
Panel C: Creative Methodologies

12.30 – 1.30  Lunch

*IABA Asia-Pacific Business Meeting*
(12.45 – 1.30)

1.30 – 3.00  **Session 3**
Panel A: An Archive of Feeling
Panel B: Recovering Lives
Panel C: Australian Stories

3.00 – 3.30  Afternoon Tea

3.30 – 5.00  **Session 4**
Plenary: Conclusion/Respondent Session

5.15pm  Brighton to Glenelg beach walk
Detailed Schedule of Sessions

Monday, November 30  1.00 – 4.00pm
Postgraduate and ECR Workshop  Noel Stockdale Room

With Dr Kylie Cardell, Associate Professor Kate Douglas, Professor Craig Howes, Dr Sonia Vivienne and Professor Gillian Whitlock.

This session is intended as a dedicated space to foster and support postgraduate students and early career researchers working in Auto/Biography Studies.

The session will allow each participant to introduce themselves to the group. We will hear from each of the guest speakers and open up for an extended informal Q and A session. The session will conclude with afternoon tea.

Please note: This session will be held at the Flinders University Bedford Park Campus (Sturt Road, Bedford Park). A free charter bus will transport speakers and attendees from the city to Flinders University campus and back. The bus will leave from Flinders Victoria Square at 12.15pm, and return after the session concludes.
Monday, November 30
6.30 – 10.00pm
Welcome Event: Creative Readings

The conference welcome event will be held at The SA Writers’ Centre (2nd floor, 187 Rundle St, Adelaide) – all conference participants are warmly invited to attend.

Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas, the conference convenors, will welcome guests before we are treated to several creative readings. Readers include: Nicole Crowe, Ian Dixon, Sharyn Kaesehagan, Victor Marsh, Threasa Meads, Jo Parnell, Melanie Pryor, and Heather Taylor Johnson.

Several exciting publications will also be launched at this event including Sonja Vivienne’s *Digital Identity and Everyday Activism*, Kylie Cardell’s *Dear World: Contemporary Uses of the Diary*, Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas’s (eds) *Telling Tales: Autobiographies of Childhood and Youth*, and special issues of *Biography* and *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*.

The night will include drinks and cocktail food.
Salvage.

Recently, at the launch of a book commissioned by the Academy of the Humanities that advocates for the power of the humanities in Australia now, the historian Tom Griffiths focusses on the pervasiveness of life story in humanities research. The humanities are so important, he argues, ‘so integrated with our public and personal lives – with the very substance and art of living – that it is possible to take them for granted and to overlook their power. Humanities scholarship so seamlessly underpins everything we do that it can be hard, sometimes, to detect its revolutionary influence.’\(^1\) Griffiths goes on to argue that politicians, policy analysts, scientist and bureaucrats misjudge the difficulty of telling true stories well, and they underestimate the effectiveness of storytelling and life stories in changing people’s minds and behaviour. Life narrative percolates throughout the humanities disciplines: history, anthropology, literature, creative writing, culture and media studies, classics and philosophy, though this pervasiveness is frequently unobserved and underestimated. As a relatively new interdiscipline that emerged late last century, life narrative moves across both the humanities and the social sciences supported by a scholarly infrastructure of associations, journals, guides, monographs and edited collections.

What happens when this infrastructure begins to think regionally? What new energies and ways of critical thinking emerge? Other regional formations, IABA Americas and IABA Europe, inherit continental imaginaries as the focus of their regional locations. Asia Pacific, on the other hand, is oceanic: a mass of islands and archipelagos. These incubate life narratives that migrate on unpredictable routes, salvage forgotten histories, and mobilise new ways of thinking and feeling about the integration of public and personal lives that Griffiths describes. This paper will begin in the maritime museum, and remain immersed in oceanic thinking to launch this new regional project.

---


This paper combines Judith Butler’s theory of performativity with aspects of affect theory to explore the constructed spaces between authors and viewers of migrant digital stories created at the Australian Centre for Moving Image (ACMI). The discursive structure of these stories is implicated in Australia’s dominant script of whiteness, typically necessitating a dichotomous understanding of good and bad feeling, comfort and discomfort, ethnic and non-ethnic. However, due to the precariousness of both ethnic performativity and affective economies, small blips can surface in otherwise typical looking digital migrant narratives. Cumulatively, these blips reveal aspects of everyday multicultural life that are usually obscured, and represent moments of political potential for the migrant subject.

Sonja Vivienne, “Curating Fluid Identity Across Social Media.”

This paper focuses upon the everyday use of social media by trans* youth in Adelaide. Trans* is an umbrella term increasingly used to encompass self-defined transgender, transsexual, agender, non-binary, gender-fluid and gender-queer identities. The articulations of self, both digital and incarnate, of trans* teenagers are highly patrolled, and trans* social media plays with privacy and publicness by default. Building on the possibilities manifest in other more explicitly personal-as-political genres this paper explores the potential of social media as everyday activism and considers the risks and rewards inherent in creative social media that is produced in facilitated workshop practice and distributed online.


The digitization of books by Google is complicated by the many figures crowding the text and the act. In addition to the author/s of the work in question, there may be scattered throughout the text traces of others who have left physical marks of their reading upon the page. But the Google Books reader does not leave a trace. This paper considers the implications of Google Books on the life writing it digitizes and on the notion of the library/archive with the interplay of voices in the digitization not only of a polished and published family history but also of the voices added to the text in less formal ways. As a case study, I consider Memoir of the Farrar Family (1847) was published in 1847 by Timothy Farrar (1788-1874).

“Dalit,” a term derived from the Sanskrit root verb dal means ‘to crack or split’. This was the term the oppressed castes, who were outside the varna/ caste structure of the Hindu social system, chose to name themselves during the vibrant mass movements of the late sixties and seventies. Dalit literary writing in twentieth century India witnessed an upsurge as a consequence of the anti-caste Dalit movement fanning India in the early part of the twentieth century. My paper analyses how collective activism and consciousness has affected Dalit women’s subjectivity, and I argue that Aaydan/The Weave of My Life projects a contemplative individual consciousness and contests dominant cultural models of identity grounded in the conception of experiential politics.

Ashma Sharma, “Diaspora Poetics in the Life Writing of Santendra Nandan and Brij V. Lal.”

I examine the life writing texts of two Indo Fijian writers, Brij V. Lal and Satendra Nandan, descendants of the old 19th century indentured diaspora, for their engagement with their community’s colonial history and its complex, often tragic consequences for the present. They attempt to do so by recuperating a past often neglected in those contemporary postcolonial theorisations of the diaspora which celebrate the triumphal ascendancy of the globalised new. Their life-writing is informed by an ethical orientation and commitment to truth wherein memory becomes both a historical burden and an imaginative and intellectual resource.


Despite the existence of a sizable body of creative work examining European imperialism throughout the world, there is a dearth of literature examining the effect and legacy of imperialism in contemporary Vanuatu. This paper will investigate how creative practice as research, specifically a memoir of my childhood in Vanuatu, can respond to the ethical and postcolonial questions posed by the representation of ni-Vanuatu people. By undertaking postcolonial criticism of existing literature, such as Isles of Illusion by Englishman Fletcher (1928) and Blackstone by ni-Vanuatu Feminist and politician, Molisa (1983), the range of representations and contrasts within the texts become evident.
Daniel Juckes, “Rootless and Melancholy in Life Writing Practice.”

This paper will examine the effects of rootlessness in life writing from an Anglo-Australian context. It will draw on examples from my own creative practice—a family memoir written from Australia about people in and from the United Kingdom. My creative practice is informed by objects existing both in their original context, and taken from that primary context. In the paper I will use the work of W.G. Sebald, among other writers, to illustrate some of the ideas which inspire my creative work. My research is informed by the melancholy of distance and nostalgia for that-which-is-out-of-reach.

Katrin Den Elzen, “The Creative Practice of Memoir in the Context of a Higher Degree by Research in Australia.”

This paper examines non-fiction creative practice in Australia by discussing the creative writing Higher Degree by Research (HDR). To this end it will draw on my experiences of writing a grief memoir in the context of a completed Masters degree and a PhD in progress.

I will present a brief history of the creative practice degree in Australia and address the relationship between the creative writing component and the exegesis. Furthermore, this paper will investigate ethical concerns that have arising in my autobiographical writing and how I navigate that terrain.


This essay presents an auto critical reflection of my four-year PhD journey foregrounding the role of locality and transnational identity in the processes and methods of my work on national memory from abroad. The paper analyses the ways in which spatial locatedness might have influenced my research approach and discusses the kind of hindrances and allowances enabled by the distance from the located memory. Since my study of poetic rendering on screen intersects with my own story, my paper also reflects on how the personal and the familial connect with the national from an international location.
Anne Brewster, “The Intersection between Life Writing and Fiction in Aboriginal Literatures.”

Much of the ‘first wave’ of life writing by indigenous authors from 1980s onwards described the impact of child on Aboriginal individuals, families and communities. Although many of the following generation of writers were not removed from their families, they have continued to exhibit a strong interest in family history and life writing. However, the genre is changing with the new generational context and textual hybridisation proliferates as writers explore the nexus between life writing, fiction and the essay. This paper explores the continuing intersections and life writing and fiction in Australian Aboriginal writing with reference to the work of Doris Pilkington Garimara.

Michela Borzaga, “‘Peering into the Epistolary: The ‘Letterness’ of Coetzee’s Fiction, the Stamps and Seals of His Life Writing.”

Coetzee’s writing shows a clear fascination with the epistolary genre. Letters feature prominently not only in his fiction but also in his more (auto)biographical work. The aim of this paper is to tease out the various functions that this protean genre has played in Coetzee’s writing. This paper will investigate the various and contradictory versions of the self that emanate from this clearly ventriloquist and profoundly dialogical genre as well as the power of the letter to voice pain and affect, to probe the texture of human relationships, questions of sincerity and authenticity, loneliness and reciprocity, the ars epistolaria to greet gifts and bemoan losses.

Melanie Pryor, “Travelling with My Body: On Self and Place.”

This paper discusses the connection between place and self in the creative component of my PhD, a work of travel writing and memoir for which I undertook a research trip to Scotland’s remote and wild landscapes earlier this year. I discuss the methodology I developed while travelling that draws on notions of place, home, travel and the relationship between the physical body and the wild place, and how this approach directed the mode of self-examination and autobiographical representation in my work.
Zoe Thomas, “Lullabies from an Antipodean Sea; Nostalgia and the Aesthetics of Place in Childhood Narrative.”

In any narrative form, the sense of place is important – vitally so for the autobiographical writer as they approach the landscapes of childhood. When we write about our youth, we map distant terrains – each sentence another footfall along the autogeographical trek. Often the things we do remember are fragile or eroded. So how do we locate points of access for that deeper cache of memory and experience, from which we can draw and fortify pathways for life stories? With a focus on Australian tales of childhood by the sea, this paper will investigate nostalgia as a mood/mode for creative production in autobiography.


Representation of migrants’ lives in literature and film is usually preoccupied with autobiographical memory and the processes of self-discovery. In the case of life writing of European migrants to Australia, utopian paradigm is prominent in the way distant places were mythologized in the European imagination. This paper examines two narratives focused on the confrontation of dreams and reality at the time of the post-war mass migration scheme in Australia: the film Silver City (1984) by an Australian director of Polish-Italian descent, Sophia Turkiewicz, and the book Lost Time: An Australian Novel (1978) by Wladyslaw Romanowski, a Polish DP who arrived to Australia in 1949.

Ash Barnwell, “Rattling Skeletons: Family History and Cultural Memory in Australia.”

Family history research is a very popular pastime, however, despite its public profile, sociological inquiry into the importance of genealogical practices has been minimal, especially in Australia. As part of a larger project to address this omission, my paper locates genealogy research as a narrative practice and form of memory-work that has the potential to both challenge and rationalise cultural histories. Using theories of memory and biographical accounts, I will explore how changing social and generational ideas about national identity influence family historians’ narrative selections.
Tuesday, December 1
Session 3 – Panel C: Space, Place, Narrative
Chair: Shimi Doley

Martin Potter and Jonathon Louth, “Saving the White Building:
Storytelling and the Production of Space.”

In the heart of Phnom Penh, a decaying apartment complex known as The White Building is home to a complex community of over three thousand people including artists, musicians, activists and everyday city dwellers. This paper explores the role of recent media and art projects to document the lives of the Building’s inhabitants as means of resistance and to enable critical reflexivity among participants. Dominant discursive acts of the more powerful are challenged through the expression of the ‘lived’ and the elevation of everyday life. Ultimately, the very perception of the space and sense of place is transformed through these interactions.

Ian Dixon, “Dangerous Reflections: Self-analysis, Trauma and Imperialism in Loving the Amazon.”

With my directorial employment terminated by a major commercial television network in 2001, I entered into a privately managed nervous breakdown... and began to write. My novel Loving the Amazon amalgamates the autobiographical and fictive. The story begins in Adelaide, but traverses the entire country and into Asia-Pacific and European nations, involving a gender-bending orgy on a houseboat on the Murray River, professional engagement in Thailand, and sexual impropriety in Split, Croatia, where my protagonist confronts his repressed sexual trauma in earnest. This exegetic paper illuminates the relationship between fact and phantasm, cinema and literature, and asks: could the autobiographical novel represent greater scope for cultural inquiry than purely fictional narrative?

Christopher Hogarth, ‘‘Pity the Poor Children...Like Me?’ African Child War Experience as an Affective Strategy in an African-Australian Novel.”

The gruesome, horrifying situation surrounding the recruitment, experience and after-effects upon survivors of child soldiery in Africa have been increasingly represented in literature over the last two decades. Using prominent Francophone African writer Ahmadou Kourouma’s modern “classic” as a point of comparison, I focus on a new literary sensation from Australia, Majok Tulba’s Under the Darkening Sky (2012). Coming in the wake of other works by debutting authors using a horror-filled “Africa” as a backdrop, Tulba’s work represents a strengthening current in African literature, of which I provide an analysis along with an investigation of implications for the production and reception of African literature globally, and specifically in the Asia-Pacific Australian region.
Jenny Coleman, “Relocating Lives in the ‘Britain of the South’ Through the Public Writings of Nineteenth Century New Zealand Women.”

During the nineteenth century the prominent depiction of New Zealand was as an ‘ideal society’. Arcadian visions of a land of natural abundance and opportunity pervaded many different forms of writing ranging from emigrant advice literature, tourist accounts and travel diaries, memoirs from former settlers, scientific and ethnographic works, the writings of retired colonial officials as well as personal correspondence. This paper focuses on contrasting accounts by two emigrant women who wrote letters for a public audience in England about the reality of relocating their lives from England to New Zealand in the 1850s and 1870s.

Astrid Rasch, “Coming Home? Australian Autobiographical Homecomings at Empire’s End.”

This paper examines the recurrent trope in twentieth century Australian autobiography of the travel to the ‘Mother Country’. Through a study of autobiographies written from a post-imperial perspective about a pro-imperial era, the paper seeks to understand the retrospective role of journeys to Britain. It is contended that the changed relationship between Britain and Australia which occurred between the moment of travel and the moment of writing affects how the journeys are represented. Autobiographers recall feeling alienated and unrecognised as Greater Britons and describe the search for new attachments. Thus, the sojourn in Britain is recalled as a turning point in terms of identity and belonging.


‘Night Courting’ was a custom in Norway in the mid-nineteenth century, enabling young Norwegians to find a suitable marriage partner, while bending the strict constraints usually imposed by the country’s religious beliefs. Night Courting offered a way for parents to monitor their daughters’ suitors, but often it occurred when the young people were in the summer houses and parents were not present. This creative paper will explore how the tradition of Night Courting was acceptable in Norwegian culture in the mid-nineteenth century and how a female migrant might take this tradition to America with ‘pure’ intentions and end up with a less than desirable husband because of cultural differences and family pressure to marry.
Lara Bardsley, “Narratives of the Extraordinary: Reflections From a Film-Based Transpersonal Researcher.”

The extraordinary exists within the stories of everyday human experience. There are stories that define our identity, stories from our ancestors, culture and lived-experience. There are mythic narratives of our psyche, which drive us, often unconsciously. There are also the stories of the transcendent told by those whose lives have been touched by it. This presentation will discuss some of the insights of a creative research project that utilizes a methodology receptive to the narratives of both researcher and participants. The presentation will include a short film; discuss the emergent themes and the transformative impact of the project.

Threasa Meads, “Computer Games are the Future of Creative Non-Fiction.”

In the wake of Gamergate, a culture war has erupted over all aspects of the game industry, its diversifying technologies, and its culture. By way of contribution to this discourse, this paper highlights how the democratisation of game development, through free game development tools such as Twine, has opened up a new space for life narrative. I examine the discourse around this burgeoning field of artistic expression. This paper will put forward that in the twenty-first century, we stand to witness (and take part in creating) a nonfiction game revolution.

Bambi Ward, “Rakhel in Search of Self.”

‘Rakhel in search of self’ is the provisional title of a memoir I am writing about my spiritual journey as part of a PhD in creative writing. The main theme of the memoir involves reclaiming the Jewish identity I was denied as a result of my family’s experiences during the Holocaust.

This paper summarises some of my spiritual journey and discusses some helpful strategies that gave me the courage to ‘come out’ and live authentically.
Tuesday, December 1  
**Session 4 – Panel C: Biographical Subjects**  
Chair: Victor Marsh


*In Whose Lives are They Anyway? The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre* (2010), *Dennis Bingham describes the developmental stages the biopic has gone through since the classical studio era (1927 – 1960). The BOSUD--‘biopic of someone undeserving’—according to Bingham, is a sub-genre almost exclusively populated by male figures. This is remarkable given how many contemporary biopics about women employ traits of the BOSUD, including parody, pastiche and other postmodern tools. However female BOSUDs do reach different audiences and employ distinct modes of address than those mentioned by Bingham. This paper will show how female BOSUDs qualify in interesting ways the category as set out by Bingham, including the means to, and meaning of fame.

Kathryn Keeble, “Scientists from Central Casting: Mark Oliphant as ‘Mad Scientist’ in the Boulting Brothers’ *Seven Days to Noon* (1950).”

*The hot war had ended in a nuclear blast and the Cold war was beginning. In the early postwar years American cinema contributed to the shaping of history surrounding the Manhattan Project and its scientists. Although not as prolific as Hollywood, British filmmakers also attempted to produce films that addressed Cold War nuclear fears. The first British film to address the fear of rogue scientists armed with nuclear weapons was John and Roy Boulting’s 1950 thriller, Seven Days to Noon. The protagonist, Professor Willingdon, bears an uncanny resemblance to a real scientist, the Australian physicist Sir Mark Oliphant.*

Patrick Mullins, “The Utility of the Biography of the Contemporary Political Figure in Australia.”

*This paper examines a form of biography that is regularly critically maligned: that of the contemporary political figure. Frequently described as banal, mediocre and often superficial, the biography of the contemporary political figure is nonetheless a recurrent feature of the Australian electoral cycle, particularly in the lead-up to federal elections. This paper argues that the biography of the contemporary political figure is significantly affected by the agendas of the multiple stakeholders involved in production, but it also presents both dangers and opportunities to those stakeholders. Furthermore, this form mediates between the demands, opportunities and limitations of day-to-day journalism, and those of the more distant, ‘magisterial’ biography.*
Benjamin Law

*The Family Law: From Big Family to Small Screen.*

Benjamin Law’s memoir *The Family Law* is a collection of personal essays that explore Law’s experiences growing up in a small town on the Sunshine Coast, and the complex dynamics of his family. *The Family Law* has recently been adapted for television, and in this keynote presentation Law talks about this process.
This panel discusses the theoretical and methodological issues in the process of researching, interpreting, and recording the lives of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Kānaka Maoli (Hawaiians). The papers in this panel consider lifewriting based on research in Hawaiian language archives. In spite of the relatively low number of scholars able to read native language archives, the amount of critical work using those as primary source material is increasing. The twentieth century saw the decline and near death of many native languages, including Hawaiian, the result of which was the separation of several generations from the knowledge and appreciation of the intellect, wisdom, and written literature of their recent ancestors. The explosion of interest in the language has now provided the conditions possible for us to recapture the thought world of those ancestors. Using our current projects, each scholar on this panel will consider the special processes and techniques we have each developed to conduct the research, as well as the significant problems of comprehension, transliteration, and translation that inevitably arise. We also consider the challenges of writing clearly in English, knowing that our audiences include many who do not know Hawaiian, and many who are not academics, because the knowledge we bring forth is important not just to the academy but to our communities as well. Marie Alohalani Brown’s paper focuses on the early to mid nineteenth-century statesman, biographer, and memoirist John Papa ʻĪʻī; kuʻualoha hoʻomanawanui’s subject is the late nineteenth-century author, Moke (Moses) Manu; and Noenoe Silva’s paper considers the writer, editor, and attorney, Joseph Mokuohai Poepoe.

Imagine two families, one American, the other Australian, meeting in the diplomatic circles of Canberra in the sixties. Both couples divorce, and then "swap" partners, their daughters remaining with their respective mothers. In this beautifully wrought study of national and personal identities, Jane Alison's The Sisters Antipodes (2009) maps her relationships across two families and three continents, in which fathers, sisters and countries intersect like the legs of a tripod. I shall argue that belonging and estrangement, manifest through a negotiated and ongoing reconciliation of relationships, are fundamental elements in the construction of self-identity.

Victor Marsh, “‘Carrying Coals to Newcastle’: Life Writing and Identity, Beyond the Anglo Paradigms.”

I will discuss how life-writing praxis may contest and reconfigure the ideological and ontological assumptions embedded in official 'Western' representations of mind, meaning, and identity. I will focus the discussion through an analysis of the life and writings of the expatriate British writer, Christopher Isherwood, and draw parallels with my own memoir, "The Boy in the Yellow Dress".

Fang Xia, “New Men? Same Men? Reading Chinese Intellectuals’ English Language Life Writings in the West (1980s-1990s).”

A large number of English-language life writings pertaining to communist China written by diasporic Chinese emerged in the last two decades of the twentieth century in Western countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. The Chinese intellectuals who experienced the ‘thought reform’ during the era of Mao Zedong contribute to this collection. For example, Ningkun Wu’s A Single Tear (1993) is such a text. This paper argues that these texts are the products of searching or re/gaining self-knowledge in the diasporic context.
Wednesday, December 2 11.00am – 12.30pm
Session 2 – Panel C: Australian Lives Room 10.3
Chair: Lynn Garlick

Rachel Robertson, “Dislocation and Disruption: The Lyric Essay in Australian Life Writing.”
This paper argues that the lyric essay, with its fragmentary form and associative, allusive unfolding, is particularly well able to represent life disruptions and dislocations. The lyric essay’s non-linear narrative and poetic compression facilitate an approach to life writing in which meaning is developed through gaps, silences and juxtapositions. I explore these aspects through a discussion of lyric essays by Australian writers Gillian Mears and Lucy Dougan.

Steve Evans, “You Can’t Go Home: Poetry and Childhood.”
If the axiom ‘write what you know’ needs any more advertising, the evidence is in writers’ instinctive practice of producing texts that draw explicitly on their personal experience. I examine writing poetry about one’s upbringing, with an accent on people and places. I look at Bonetown, a book of my own work containing a number of poems about growing up in South Australian country towns. I also draw on work by others, with a continuing focus on those two axes: the child and his or her environment. This work encompasses the magnetic attraction of the younger self as an idea, and the site of the poem as a stage for manipulating that image.

Natalie Edwards, “‘En Australie, je parle une langue minoritaire’: Australia Viewed from within Catherine Rey’s Une Femme en Marche.”
In the autobiographical novel Une Femme en Marche [Stepping Out] (2007), French writer Catherine Rey recounts her journey to and her subsequent life in Australia. In this paper, I focus on two distinct but overlapping elements in Rey’s self-reflexive writing. First, I analyse the ways in which she uses her relocation as a vehicle to explore her career as a writer. Then I turn to Rey’s specific experience of language, examining the ways in which she uses the French language to express her experiences as a writer in an Anglophone country. I argue that Rey’s autobiography represents her home as a literary construction that she refashions through a different space, a different culture and a different language.
Amy T Matthews, “Meeting the Shark: Turning Family Stories into Magic Realistic Fiction.”

Two Steps on the Water is a magic realist novel, inspired by my ex-husband’s family stories. Family stories tend to acquire a mythic quality and this effect is heightened when they are not your family stories, but someone else’s. This paper will discuss how I appropriated their story, weaving a novel from fragments of their oft-told tales, in an attempt to mythologise a contemporary Australian landscape that is often read as ‘banal.’ This is part of a larger project, which is concerned with Australian fiction and its fascination with realism, and how as a writer I might render Australian landscapes fantastic.

Lynn Garlick, “Australian Motherhood Memoir as Personal, Political and Creative Narrative.”

Perhaps there are more challenges facing writers of motherhood memoir than any other genre. Not only must motherhood memoir rise above expectations of terrible writing, as evidenced by Judith Newman’s 2012 New York Times review of Anne Enright’s memoir, “No subject offers a greater opportunity for terrible writing than motherhood”. In their writing on motherhood memoir, Podnieks and O’Reilly (2010) call on writers to “speak truthfully and authentically about their experiences of motherhood” in order to not just challenge but change “patriarchal motherhood”. They describe motherhood memoir as political, personal and creative narrative. This paper will examine contemporary Australian texts using this framework.

Nicole Matthews and Naomi Sunderland, “Learning to Listen: Digital Storytelling in Australian Dementia Care Education.”

This paper will consider the challenges of using digital life stories in education. With its promise of improving digital literacy and reflective practice, many teachers have asked school children and, to a lesser extent, university students, to generate their own digital stories. There is much less work, however, on way students might listen to and learn from other peoples’ multimedia life narratives. The paper is grounded in interviews with trainers at SA & NT Dementia Training Study Centre, about their innovative use of a digital storytelling collection to train aged care workers and medical and allied health professionals in person-centred dementia care.
Szikdoma Haragos, “‘Was He in a Camp?’ The Incarceration of Memory in Herta Muller’s *The Appointment* (1997)

*Herta Muller’s 1997 novel The Appointment follows the anonymous female narrator on a never-ending tram ride through an obscure city in Nicolae Ceausescu’s communist Romania. The multilayered, dialogic quality of remembering and of the memories that punctuate the narrator’s ride reflect, beyond the personal dimensions, the traumatic history of this Eastern European country. Given the manipulation and falsification of the past by the official ideology in communist Romania, Muller’s novel turns into what the Turkish critic Seyhan Azade referred to as a “memory bank” or memory archive that “allows the silences of history to come to word” (4) and “redresses the ruptures in history and collective memory” (13).*

Patrick Allington, “The Present and the Past, the ‘Here’ and the ‘Over There’: In the Shadow of the Pol Pot Period in Alice Pung’s Memoirs

*This paper considers the way that Australian writer Alice Pung writes about the legacy of Cambodia’s brutal Pol Pot period (1975-79) in her two books about herself and her family. This paper addresses the different ways that Pung addresses the Khmer Rouge years in the two books. Pung’s books connect the present to the past, reminding readers that the Khmer Rouge legacy endures. In connecting ‘over there’ (Cambodia) to ‘here’ (Footscray, Melbourne), the books subtly emphasise that the Cambodian wars of the second half of the twentieth century were regional and international as well as local. This paper will include an original interview with Alice Pung.*

Adam Quinlivan, “Modern Australian Literary Mystifications

*We have a disproportionately high amount of fraudulent authors in Australia. This paper considers to what extent ‘Australianism’ is connected to literary dishonesty. Australia is geographically huge, and the contrasts between rural vs urban living are similarly large. When a city-dweller from Sydney reads of a sheep station worker, the landscapes and lives within are foreign. Does this domestic way of thinking inform questionable authors about the kind of story that may attract Australian readers and, ultimately, convince them? Do the ‘Australian’ traditions of relaxed behaviour and larrikinism come into play? Ultimately, what does it mean for Australia to be a world leader in duplicitous memoirs?*
Megumi Kato, “Testimony of War: Memoirs and Fiction of the Pacific War.”
This paper examines first-hand memoirs and novels by Australian ex-soldiers and prisoners-of-war of the Pacific War and compares them with recent novels written 70 years on. By looking at their portrayal of the ‘enemy Japanese’ as well as the ways they depict and justify the nature of war, this paper tries to understand how literature can be interpreted as a testimony of war. It also looks at possible ethics aspects associated with writing about the atrocity of war in memoirs and fiction, and whether the passage of time has affected the way war is described, and if so, how.

Novelynn Rubsamen, “Erecting and Dismantling the Female Floodwall: U.S. Military Occupation in Postwar Japan.”
Sexual slavery and prostitution have a long history in Japan, and scholars have closely examined the histories of, and distinctions between, such often-conflated terms as comfort women, karayuki-san, panpan prostitute, and even war bride. With particular attention to class structures, I claim that the relationships between Japanese women and American servicemen are part of a shifting response by the Japanese government, the U.S. military, and the women themselves that resulted in coercing or forcing lower class girls and women into sexual slavery. Further, the national effort to accommodate the U.S. military and its individual servicemen arises from a warrior mentality, shared by Japanese and Americans alike.

Betty O’Neill, “I Can’t Call Australia Home: An Unsettled Immigrant’s Story Discovered in the Archives.”
This paper discusses the reconstruction of my absent Polish father’s life through discoveries made in an inherited family archive in Poland, the archives of Auschwitz, Gusen, the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust in London and other sources. This diversity of overseas material, typical for scholars in this part of the world researching immigrant family stories, has provided the fragments to make meaning of a life and the difficulties of post-war immigration to Australia. These acts of constructing and remembering are taking place within a broader narrative of war, fractured families, displacement, exile and emigration, issues currently facing our region.
Kate Douglas, “The Unsettling Case of Malala Yousafzai.”

There is much to say (and indeed has been said) about the extraordinary achievements of Malala Yousafzai. Assed Baig’s Huffington Post piece “Malala Yousafzai and the White Saviour Complex” provides a prompt for considering the complex and contested terrain Malala has and continues to tread. Her cultural displacement brings a plethora of question marks and also assumptions for those who ‘read’ her. It’s fair to say that Malala lives and breathes life narrative now: many people know about her life because of the significant threat to it, but also because of her now very public persona: as activist, public speaker, memoirist, and documentary subject.

But it was her original blog that set the path. In this brief discussion paper I want to pose some questions about the blog as a radical life narrative text of girlhood/youth that came to unsettle ideas about education and gender.

Pamela Graham, “‘Plain of Feature, and Certainly Overweight…’

#MyOzObituary: Tweeting Back to the Memorial Politics of the Obituary in the Digital Age.”

In this paper I consider a significant and enduring form of biographical representation: the obituary. How are English-language obituaries evolving in the digital era, and how do online spaces challenge the traditionally exclusive nature of the form? Via an examination of The Australian newspaper’s controversial obituary of bestselling author, Colleen McCulloch, I suggest how the online sphere provides unique opportunities for individuals to ‘write back’ to the memorial politics of this pervasive commemorative genre.

Anna Poletti, “Unsettling the Story.”

In her 2014 essay for the Griffith Review, ‘This Narrated Life’, Maria Tumarkin—author of three books of literary non-fiction—questions the cultural hegemony of ‘storytelling’, asserting that it “does not in itself or by itself take us closer to the truths of our lives with anything like the inevitability that gets ascribed to it these days.” How might Tumarkin’s questioning of the importance of narrative to understandings of being human encourage new thinking in the study of autobiography? In this short paper I will introduce Andy Warhol’s artwork Time
Capsules as a case study that poses a unique and exciting challenge to the hegemonic status of narrative to conceptualizations of autobiography.

Daniella Trimboli, “Toxic Bodies and Muslim Zombies: (Re)storying Refugees in Australian-Based Comic Art Zines”

Much research has been carried out on the discursive dehumanisation of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia. This discourse has an affective dimension that, in Sara Ahmed’s terms, ‘sticks’, impressing upon refugees and asylum seekers at a corporeal level. Written and visual depictions of self and Other in comic zines such as Where Do I Belong? by Silent Army, Villawood: Notes from a Detention Centre by Safdar Ahmed, and The Refugee Art Project’s zine collection clearly demonstrate the ways in which the body becomes implicated in narratives about asylum. But, the comic art zine medium allows for ‘something else’ to be revealed in these auto-biographical accounts. In particular, the medium allows the toxicity of refugee discourse to be redeployed elsewhere, sometimes to its extreme ends, but always to an unsettled space where the refugee body can resist and reassemble.

Thanks to the IABA SNS (Student and New Scholar) Network for sponsoring the Unsettle roundtable.

This session is part of the “Unsettle” series of roundtables organised by the SNS and follows fruitful discussions at the Europe and Americas conferences earlier this year. The SNS organisers drew on postcolonial scholars’ use of the concept “unsettle” as a way to challenge non-indigenous people, including scholars, to name and transform the settler-colonisers within their professional and personal practices. They have taken the term more broadly as a theme for a series of discussions held across each of the IABA chapters, and intended the concept as a productive departure point for troubling notions of location and identity as well as expanding possibilities for building new professional and personal relations within the field of life writing.

Look out for publications arising from this series of discussions soon.

You can find out more about the SNS at: http://iabasns.dudaone.com/
Professor Craig Howes
University of Hawai‘i

*Pacifying Asia, Orientating the Pacific: What Work Can a Life Writing Region Do?*

In 2008, Philippe Lejeune asked the non-rhetorical question "Is the I international?" This talk asks what effect thinking about regions can have on our understanding of what links lifewriting practices, and what may necessarily keep them apart. As the third designated area for the International Auto/Biography Association, preceded by Europe and the Americas, IABA Asia Pacific faces some especially difficult challenges in engaging productively with the largest, most populated, and most geographically, culturally, and historically diverse region so inscribed. After outlining these challenges, I will offer some suggestions about focus, possible directions, and responsibilities.
Elisabeth Hanscombe, “Human Suffering, Abuse and Failures of Witness in the Asia/Pacific/Australian Region.”

This paper explores the degree to which the acknowledgement of injury and injustice through collective storytelling in an authentic and ‘embodied’ way becomes a means of testifying and enabling others to bear witness. It requires the development of what Jessica Benjamin describes as a ‘third position’, one that gets beyond the binary of doer/done to, towards an acknowledgement of the importance of witnesses who recognise the degree to which we are all implicated, especially in our own localities. We share the risks and can also acknowledge being ‘part of the web in which the other is caught.’ In so doing, we cease to be what Benjamin describes as ‘failed’ witnesses.

Quinn Eades, “Writing and Reading Trauma: Refusing to Heal the Wound.”

This paper is an exploration of the writing of wounds in autobiographical and epistolary writing (both my own, and Fanny Burney’s letter to her sister regarding a mastectomy that was performed without anaesthetic), and will challenge the idea that trauma is at the limit of language and therefore, cannot be written. I will posit that mobilising a poetics of the abject is the means through which we can challenge the limits of language, of what can be written, and suggest that the way into these narratives has always been (and will continue to be) through the deployment of the figurative.


In recent times, the construction and operation of violence, both material and ideological, and the resultant proliferation of victims and their life narratives, both oral and written, all over the world in general and the Third World in particular have raised serious inter/national concern. At its center what remains is the ethics of recognition and intervention—a collective act of resistance to all forms of violence. This paper attempts to take up the recent emergence of South Asian subaltern women’s testimonial life narratives to map the affective dimension of victims’ life testimonies in transforming ‘their’ as well as ‘our’ lives.

The paper deals with my work of reading the "difficult lives" of female domestic workers in the city of Kolkata, India. The institution of domestic servitude in the city of Kolkata has always been fed by "floating" labourers from the impoverished hinterlands. These women use the urban public transport network to travel for work. The study is based in the southern part of the city and explores how these women domestic workers negotiate the urban space. The personal interviews and photographs give a peek into the difficulties of their lives and attempt to collect recommendations from the grassroots. Considering that safety of women in public spaces—especially of those who have to travel the cityscapes for work and are dependent on the ‘public’ transport network—is a major issue in urban India, such a study becomes crucial.
Evelyn Chew and Alex Mitchell, “Life Storytelling as Interactive Documentary in Southeast Asia: A Survey of the Field.”

**Paper will be presented via Skype**

Interactive documentary is a non-fictional storytelling form which sometimes involves life stories, delivered through digital interactive technology. Its interactive form differentiates it from its on-screen counterparts, the biopic and the documentary film. As life storytelling, the interactive documentary engages the interactor using multiple sensory channels and in a variety of different ways. In this paper, we survey existing life story interactive documentaries about or made in Southeast Asia. We then draw out some common themes and treatments of the life subject, and discuss how the image of the life is constructed. What cultural values are performed, and are they culturally specific? We discuss the potential cultural value this medium in Southeast Asia as a way of exploring and cementing the cultural identity of communities.


This paper discusses the ethnographic and oral history study of three generations of women in one family and what photographs they display as a semi-public gallery in their homes. The research explores the basis of family narratives, nostalgia, myths and its oral history, based on interviews with the grandmother, daughter and granddaughter. The participants took me on a photo-memory tour of their home and discussed the photographs on display. Although family photographs and their allied stories sit outside of the traditional and official historian’s view of the world, this does not make the analysis of these histories any less legitimate – just different.

Janet Scarfe, “ANZAC Girls: Who Were They?”

World War 1 centenaries have generated interest in Australia’s ‘ANZAC Girls’ but little is known about them before they enlisted. Pre-war lives of the army nurses connected with East Melbourne professionally or personally proved varied and unexpected. They were daughters of doctors, parliamentarians, graziers and businessmen, but also of struggling farmers and hard up widows. One was a teenage eloper, another an orphan raised in a Welsh workhouse. This presentation examines two aspects of their background: their mothers (business women, women widowed with young children); and family enlistment patterns (did the nurses lead or follow their brothers to the front?). The research brings the ANZAC Girls from nursing history into social history.
Session 2 – Panel C: Creative Methodologies  
Room 10.3  
Chair: Donna Lee Brien

Jessica Kirkness, “Writing Deafness: Creative Nonfiction and Stories of Lived Experience.”

This paper considers the potential of creative nonfiction writing to locate and represent the experiences of deaf lives. As a grandchild of two deaf adults, my lived experience and interaction with deafness significantly informs this work. Through creative practice research, this project aims to experiment with and produce literary work that captures the complexities and nuances of interactions across the ‘hearing line’ – the invisible boundary between the deaf and the hearing’ (Krentz 2007, 2) - as well as exploring through ethnographic research the lived, embodied experiences of being d/Deaf (for my grandparents and others), within a hearing world.


In the world of adoption, many stories are told ranging from those fresh with the excitement of discovery, to those weary with recounting. The slippage between memory and reality can transform nonfiction into fiction, thereby bedevilling ideas about truth and reliability. Such bedevilling occurs at both the telling stage of the story as well as at the writing stage, regardless of who holds the pen. Fact and fiction can also intersect when people tell their stories, only to find that the ensuing written-down story is no longer theirs, but has become that of the author.

Rachel Spencer, “Finding Colour in a Black and White Transcript.”

Court rooms are places of high drama and intense emotion. The words spoken by witnesses, lawyers, judges and juries change lives. However, the only record of what is said in the course of an Australian criminal trial is the court transcript. Rachel Spencer has been decoding the transcript of the Emily Perry trial that took place in the Supreme Court of South Australia in 1981. She is converting a 4000 page transcript into a page-turning creative work about the trial of Emily Perry, who was initially convicted and imprisoned for the attempted murder of her husband by arsenic poisoning, but later freed after a High Court appeal. Rachel will discuss the difficulties she has encountered in crafting a meaningful narrative out of the transcript.
Donna Lee Brien, “Surveying the Death Memoir in Australasia.”

While most memoirs of death and dying could be broadly classified as illness memoirs, there are a small, but visible, number of popular first-person autobiographical book-length memoirs that focus on the work of the undertaker currently in circulation, as well as a series of other texts that could be classified under the umbrella of ‘death memoir’ yet are not about dying from an illness. Surveying the development of these texts as a sub-genre of memoir, their themes, tropes and prominent metaphors, as well as their modes of writing, publication and public reception, can contribute to our understanding of both this interesting and revealing auto/biographical practice, and practices of writing and publishing memoir more generally in the Australasian region.


Online memorials first appeared in the late 1990s through websites created and hosted by families and friends starting their own pages. Having grown quickly in popularity, they are now increasingly associated with contemporary bereaving, commemorating and memorialising practices, and integrated into everyday social interactions via social media. Drawing upon several kinds of digital memorialisation, this paper considers the influence of these new forms – that create a perpetual ‘here and now’ for the dead – on the way people experience and communicate grief, and the implications, more broadly, for life writing and trauma theory.


Just as the body eludes us in our time of chaos, language eludes us in our time of written reflection. It is what Virginia Woolf calls a ‘poverty of language’ and for a patient who prides herself on her talent for language, writing about chronic illness can not only be frustrating, but counter-productive to her health. In this paper I will explore why poets should persist in illness narratives for reasons of self-communion but also for reasons of communion with others. At the crux of this paper is the belief that poetry is a superior form of pathology.

---


Australia is often regarded as lacking a strong tradition of nature writing, and women, in particular, are often seen as being absent from this genre. Female Australian nature writers such as Edith Coleman have contributed significantly to education, conservation, popularisation as well as the natural sciences. Despite contemporaneous renown, female nature writers in Australia of the 1930-50s do not seem to be well-recognised in the Australian literary canon today. This paper will discuss the lives, role and legacy of Australia’s women nature writers from this period within a biographical context and explore the reasons that their contributions have been overlooked.

Denis Cryle, “Charles Todd as Information Manager: (Re)Writing the Biography of an Exceptional Civil Servant.”

This paper will address a neglected aspect of Charles Todd’s career as one of South Australia’s longest serving civil servants, notably his capacity to generate and control information surrounding his innovative projects and multiple portfolios. This paper, focusing on his mid career years and the overland telegraph line, examines the strategies which he adopted in promoting this epic achievement through report writing and in the colonial press.

James Vicars, “Telling Lives to True Histories: Fiction as Biographical Space.”

Employing modes of fiction to portray individual lives is neither a recent or uncommon approach by Australian writers. A brief survey of some of these explorations shows that they can function by supporting nonfiction accounts, by expanding or reconfiguring established stories, ‘recovering’ lost individual lives or imagining significant historical figures. While there are well-rehearsed objections, these works typically pay careful attention to the historical record and it may be that forms using fiction provide a valuable space into which lives – new, recovered or reborn – can emerge to engage with Australian culture, identity and history.
Jo Parnell, “The Forgotten Australians: Interpreting and Documenting the Lives of Others’ for an Intimate or Wider Public.”

Children’s Homes were first built in Australia in the 1800s as a way of dealing with the large numbers of Anglo-Australian children who were the fall-out of the Gold-rushes. A century later, WWII again left many families unable to cope. There were at least 500,000 Anglo-Australian children in out-of-home-care in mid-twentieth century Australia. One way in which a writer can interpret and document lives (her own, and those of others,) for an intimate or wider public, is in literary docu-memoir.

Sharyn Kaeshagan, “A South Australian Journey: Locating Lives in Knitting Literature (Knit Lit).”

My creative writing PhD journey “The Autobiographical Impulse in Contemporary Knitting Literature (Knit Lit)” is set in South Australia, with research in Norway, England, Scotland/Shetland Islands and Ireland/Aran Islands, and is expressed as a memoir, exegesis and related knitted artefacts. My research suggests that knitting and knitting literature share a symbiotic relationship which attempts to resolve specific anxieties, needs and aspirations of knitters and the knitting community. Ann Hood, Kyoko Mori, Stephanie Pearl-McPhee, Ann Bartlett and many others write about their experiences with knitting: life, death, grief, lessons learned, sheep, lost loves, grannies, itchy presents, and always when they learned to knit and who taught them.

Nicole Crowe, “Funny Strange or Funny Ha Ha?: Defamiliarisation and Humour in the Autobiographies of Clive James and Benjamin Law.”

Contemporary scholars of life writing and humour within Australian literary studies have discussed the psychological and sociological functions of humour, particularly its role in moderating stress and trauma, reinforcing social bonds, and dismantling class barriers. My paper addresses the defamiliarisation of the familiar in autobiographical humour writing, with special attention to technique. Through humour theory I will examine the way James and Law employ techniques of structure, incongruity, word play and sentence construction to create strangeness and humour without compromising truth.
Thursday, December 3 3.30 – 5.00pm

Session 4 – Plenary
Chair: Kate Douglas

Conclusion and Respondent Session

Professor Craig Howes,
Professor Donna Lee Brien
Dr Anna Poletti
Professor Gillian Whitlock
Speakers

Lillian Allen has a Masters in Creative Writing, Adelaide University and is currently completing a PhD in Creative Writing at Flinders University.

Patrick Allington is a Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at Flinders University, as well as a writer, critic and editor.

[http://www.paularthur.com/](http://www.paularthur.com/) @pwlarthur

Lara (Larisa) Bardsley is a PhD candidate at La Trobe University. Having completed her Masters in Psychology 20 years ago, she has pursued her interest in narratives of transformation through training in Creative Arts, Jungian and Transpersonal psychology, Buddhism, meditation and mindfulness practices. She is a professional artist, practicing psychologist and a registered supervisor of clinicians. More information can be found on her website:  

Dr Tully Barnett is a Research Fellow in the School of Humanities at Flinders University working on an ARC Linkage project Laboratory Adelaide: the Value of Culture. Her research includes social reading and technologies of literary and cultural production. She has published in *Biography, Prose Studies*, and *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media and Technology*.

Ashley Barnwell is the Ashworth Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Melbourne. Her research is about the politics of truth-telling and sharing stories in public life. She has published articles on life writing, identity, and representational ethics, and is currently working on a project about family historiographies.
Somdatta Bhattacharya is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, BITS Pilani, India. She has a PhD from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. She is the author of a volume of poems and several academic papers. Her research interests are rooted in urban studies, theories of space, and gender and subaltern studies.

Natalia Sanjuán Bornay is Lecturer in the Student Learning Centre at Flinders University. Her diverse research interests include Foreign Language Teaching, Strategic Learning, Spanish Cinema and Cultural Memory. She has recently completed her PhD thesis exploring issues of memory, gender and identity in women-authored films which reconstruct Spain’s contested past.

Michela Borzaga studied English and Italian literature at the universities of Salzburg, Belfast, and Stellenbosch. She is working as a lecturer and research assistant in the English department at the University of Vienna. She has co-edited *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in South Africa: Interviews* (Rodopi, 2009) and *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in South Africa: Essays* (Rodopi, 2012).

Jack Bowers teaches in the College of Asia and the Pacific at The Australian National University. He has published a number of papers on transnational and familial belongings. In 2016, his book on contemporary Australian autobiography, *Strangers at Home*, will be published by Cambria Press as part of its Australian Literature Series.


Donna Lee Brien is Professor, Creative Industries at Central Queensland University, Australia; Special Issues Editor, TEXT: *Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*; Past President, Australasian Association of Writing Programs, and Convenor of the inaugural Australasian Death Studies Network conference (Noosa, October 2015).
Marie Alohalani Brown (Kanaka Hawai‘i) is an Assistant Professor (Hawaiian and Polynesian Religions) in the Religion Department at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Her first book, Facing the Spears of Change: The Life and Legacy of John Kaneiakama Papa ʻĪʻī, is forthcoming from the University of Hawai‘i Press, 2016.

Dr Kylie Cardell is Senior Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at Flinders University, South Australia. She is the author of Dear World: Contemporary Uses of the Diary (2014) and, with Kate Douglas, editor of Telling Tales: Autobiographies of Childhood and Youth (2015).

Evelyn Chew is a third-year PhD candidate in the Department of Communications and New Media in the National University of Singapore. She holds a B.A. in English Literature. Her primary research interest is in life storytelling across different media, particularly interactive media. More specifically, she investigates the transmission of subjective experience in non-fiction, interactive life stories.

Danielle Clode is an established non-fiction writer and senior research fellow producing a collaborative biography/anthology of the nature writer, Edith Coleman, with creative writing and science students at Flinders.

Jenny Coleman is a feminist historian published in the areas of the history of feminism, women writers and historical biography. Her biography of criminal confidence artist Amy Bock was published in 2010 and biography of educationalist, journalist and social reformer Mary Ann Colclough is due for publication in 2016.

Nicole Crowe is a PhD candidate in creative writing in the College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Education at James Cook University. In 2012 she was a recipient of a highly coveted Varuna Publishers’ Fellowship. Her current project examines the confluence between humour, family memoir, and regional writing in the tropics; she is writing a memoir about growing up on Magnetic Island.
Denis Cryle is an Emeritus Professor at Central Queensland University in media and communication studies. He has written extensively on colonial Australia, including on biography, journalism and the newspaper press. He is currently writing a biography of Charles Todd.

Ian Dixon lectures in screenwriting and semiotics at SAE Institute, Melbourne. He spent over twenty years as an actor, and has directed television. In 2013 he delivered the plenary speech at the CEA conference in USA and was invited to form an affiliate organisation in Australia. His films have been distributed and won awards internationally.

Katrin Den Elzen lives in Perth and is a creative writing doctoral candidate at Curtin University. She is writing a grief memoir and her exegesis examines how the authors of young widow memoirs explore grief and identity in the text. She has published in TEXT and creative work overseas.

Shimi Moni Doley is an Asst. Professor in the Dept. of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. My areas of interest are American Literature, African American Women’s Life Writing, Gender Studies, Poetry, Fiction and Translation. Currently I am pursuing my Ph.D. in African American Women’s Life Writing under the supervision of Prof. Anisur Rahman, Dept. of English, Jamia Millia Islamia.

Kate Douglas is an Associate Professor in the School of Humanities and Creative Arts at Flinders University. She is the author of Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma and Memory (Rutgers, 2010) and the co-author (with Anna Poletti) of the forthcoming Life Narratives and Youth Culture: Representation, Agency and Participation (Palgrave 2016). She is the co-editor (with Kylie Cardell) of Trauma Tales: Auto/biographies of Childhood and Youth (Routledge 2014) and (with Gillian Whitlock) Trauma Texts (Routledge, 2009).

Dr Quinn Eades (formerly writing as Karina Quinn) is a researcher, writer, and award-winning poet whose work lies at the nexus of feminist and queer theories of the body, autobiography, and philosophy. Eades is published nationally and internationally, and is the author of all the beginnings: a queer autobiography of the body, published by Tantanoola.

Julia Erhart is an internationally recognised scholar in feminist media studies with numerous publications appearing in journals such as Screen, Camera Obscura, Continuum, and Screening the Past. She is a Fulbright Fellowship recipient. Her major research interests are non-fiction and oppositional media and representations of the historical past. Her her manuscript, *Gendering History On-Screen*, is under contract to be delivered to IB Tauris in October 2015.

Steve Evans teaches at Flinders University in the Department of English, Creative Writing & Australian Studies. His writing prizes include the Queensland Premier’s Poetry Award and a Barbara Hanrahan Fellowship. He has read at various festivals and other venues in Australia and internationally, where he has also been a writer in residence several times. Steve has published 12 books.

Lynn Garlick is a doctoral candidate at the Writing and Society Research Centre, Western Sydney University. A chapter of Lynn’s soon to be completed memoir will be published in *Griffith Review* in January. Lynn was most recently the founding editor of *spoonful* magazine and has extensive experience as a social worker, writer and educator.

Pamela Graham is a PhD candidate in the School of Humanities at Flinders University, where she is a member of the Life Narrative Research Group. Her interdisciplinary doctoral research explores contemporary forms of “new biography” in print, film, comics and online, and her work has appeared in *Prose Studies, Biography* and *LiNQ* journals.
Elisabeth Hanscombe, PhD is a psychologist and writer who has published a number of short stories and essays in the areas of autobiography, psychoanalysis, testimony, trauma and creative non-fiction. She is an adjunct research associate at the Swinburne Institute for Social Research and blogs at http://www.sixthinline.com/.

Szidonia Haragos, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of English at Zayed University, United Arab Emirates. Her interests lie in postcommunist life-writing and autobiography, and her most recent article, “‘It Isn’t Their Language in Which I Speak Their Stories’ - Language, Memory and ‘Unforgetting’ in Susan Rubin Suleiman’s Budapest Diary: In Search of the Motherbook (1996) and Anca Vlasopolos’s No Return Address: A Memoir of Displacement (2000),” is forthcoming in a/b, Auto/Biography Studies.

Christopher Hogarth is a Lecturer of French, in the School of Communication, International Studies and Languages, at the University of South Australia.

kuʻualoha hoʻomanawanui is an Associate Professor of Hawaiian Literature in the English Department, University of Hawai`i-Manoa, where she teaches a graduate course in Native Hawaiian Non-fiction. Her first book, Voices of Fire: Reweaving the Literary Lei of Pele and Hiʻiaka, was published by the University of Minnesota Press in 2014.

Craig Howes is Professor of English and the Director of the Center for Biographical Research at the University of Hawai`i at Mānoa. A co-editor of Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly since 1994, he is also the Manager of the IABA-L listserv, and has written and edited many publications on life writing.

Daniel Juckes is a creative writer and PhD candidate from Curtin University, Western Australia. His work has been published in Sitelines and Grok, his reviews online for Westerly and in the Australian Book Review. His research interests include Object Theory, family memoir, and nostalgia.
**Sharyn Kaesehagen** is a final year creative writing doctoral candidate at Flinders University. Her academic journey began as a mature age student after a career in community development mainly involving indigenous communities and organisations. In a second career strand, she has studied the fibre arts at tertiary level and has worked and exhibited as a knitted textile designer.

**Megumi Kato** is a professor at Meisei University in Tokyo where she teaches English and cultural studies. Her publications include *Narrating the Other: Australian Literary Perceptions of Japan* (Monash University, Press, 2008). Its Japanese version was published in Tokyo in 2013.

**Kathryn Keeble** is a writer and PhD candidate at Deakin University currently undertaking research for a new biographical work on Australian physicist Sir Mark Oliphant. Kathryn has had academic papers published in various journals including *Double Dialogues* and *antiThesis*. She is also a theatre reviewer for the *Melbourne Observer*.

**Grace Kirk** is studying a research based Masters of Fine Arts in the Creative Writing discipline at the Queensland University of Technology. Her research interests lie in understanding the postcolonial nature of life in Vanuatu, where she spent much of her childhood living.

**Jessica Kirkness** is a first year PhD student in the department of ‘Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies’ at Macquarie University, Sydney. Her interdisciplinary research straddles the margins of Disability Studies, Deaf Studies, and emerging discourses around creative nonfiction and ethnographic research. Her current research is focused on the nexus of deafness, literature and music.

**Jonathon Louth** is a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Adelaide and Associate of the Indo-Pacific Research Governance Centre. Previously, a senior lecturer in international politics at the University of Chester in the United Kingdom. His research focuses on intersections between international relations theory, international political economy, and the philosophy of social science.
Emma Maguire is a PhD candidate at Flinders University. Her thesis *Automedial Girlhoods: Reading Girls’ Autobiographical Practice in Digital Contexts* is under examination. Her research interests include gender, digital media, sexualities, and life narrative. She has published in *Biography, Prose Studies, Media/Culture Journal,* and *JASAL.* [emmamaguire.wordpress.com](http://emmamaguire.wordpress.com)

Victor Marsh's PhD dissertation was titled: "The Journey of the Queer 'I': Spirituality and Subjectivity in Life Narratives by Gay Men." Previously he worked in television in Sydney, Melbourne and Los Angeles, and taught certain meditation practices on behalf of his guru in a number of countries.

Amy T. Matthews is an award-winning novelist, a Lecturer in Creative Writing at Flinders University, and a member of the JM Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice. She is the author of *End of the Night Girl* (Wakefield Press 2011) and *Navigating the Kingdom of Night* (University of Adelaide Press 2013).

Nicole Matthews teaches media and cultural studies at Macquarie University in Sydney. She has published around autobiographical media on screen and online, popular genres of film, television and print, inclusive higher education, disability and Deaf studies. Her books include *Comic Politics* (2000) and *Judging a Book by its Cover* (2007).

Threasa Meads has just completed her Creative Writing PhD at Flinders University. Her work has been shortlisted for The Australian/Vogel’s Literary Award. Her writing in various genres has been published in several places. US publication of her liminal autobiographies *Nobody* and *Mothsong* are forthcoming through Double Life Press.

Alex Mitchell teaches interactive media design in the Department of Communications and New Media at the National University of Singapore. Alex's current research investigates various aspects of computer-based art and entertainment, focusing in particular on interactive stories in digital and non-digital interactive storytelling systems.

Patrick Mullins is a sessional staffer at the University of Canberra, from where he holds his PhD. He lectures and tutors in writing and literary studies, and is the Donald Horne Creative and Cultural Fellow for 2015.
Betty O’Neill is a Doctor of Creative Arts student at the University of Technology, Sydney writing a hybrid memoir-biography-history. She has recently presented papers at the Estonian Family History: Facilitating Intergenerational and Intercultural Exchange and Sydney University Judging the Past international conferences. She has taught Adult Education for twenty-five years at UTS.

Wendy Otero is completing Honours in creative writing at Flinders University on Australian women nature writers (1930-50).

Jo Parnell holds a PhD in English and Writing from the University of Newcastle, Australia, where she is a Conjoint Research Fellow to the Faculty of Education and the Arts, School of Humanities and Social Science. Jo is a literary critic and critical analyst, essayist, memoirist, literary docu-memoirist, creative nonfiction writer, and is published nationally and internationally.

Anna Poletti is a Senior Lecturer at Monash. With Kate Douglas, she is co-author of Life Narratives and Youth Culture: Representation, Agency and Participation (Palgrave, 2016). She co-edited Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online (Wisconsin UP, 2014) with Julie Rak. Anna has articles on autobiography and mediation forthcoming in GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, and Andy Warhol / Ai Weiwei (National Gallery of Victoria / Yale UP).

Martin Potter is director and producer of transmedia projects including Big Stories, Small Towns (Community Champion, SXSW), Stereopublic: Crowdsourcing the Quiet (TED City2.0 prize), Island Connect (ChildFund Sri Lanka and US-Aid) and the White Building program in Phnom Penh (whitebuilding.org). 2012 Asialink Dunlop Fellow. 2015 Vice-Chancellor’s Prize for Doctoral Thesis Excellence, Flinders University.

Jajati Keshari Pradhan is a Doctoral Fellow at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kharagpur, India. His current area of research is Postcolonial violence and South Asian subaltern women’s testimonial life writing. He has presented papers at 25th ASNEL conference, Potsdam, Germany and Resistance conference, University of Oldenburg, Germany.
Melanie Pryor is a PhD candidate in Creative Writing working in memoir and travel-writing. Her fiction recently received second place in Overland’s 2015 Story Wine Prize, and her personal essays and prose poetry have been published in Lip magazine and various short story anthologies. Melanie teaches English Literature at Flinders University.

Adam Quinlivan is a PhD Candidate in English Literature at Flinders University. Having established that reading and writing are possibly the only things he is good at, he now must apply that knowledge into his academic career. His field of study includes literary hoaxes, mystifications and frauds in auto/biography and, as a result of searching for the next controversy, he now doesn’t believe anyone.

Astrid Rasch is a PhD fellow in English at the University of Copenhagen with the research project Embers of Empire. She has taught courses on contemporary Australia, on the metropolitan repercussions of decolonisation and on postcolonial studies. She will be editing a special issue of Life Writing on ‘Life Writing After Empire’, forthcoming summer 2016.

Dr Rachel Robertson is Senior Lecturer at Curtin University, WA. She is author of the memoir Reaching One Thousand (Black Inc, 2012), editor of Purple Prose (Fremantle Press, 2015), and reflections editor of Life Writing. Her academic interests include life writing, Australian literature, critical disability studies and motherhood studies.

Novelynn Rubsamen is a third year PhD student at the University of Hawai`i, Department of English. Her research areas include life writing, postcolonial theory, and literatures of Hawai`i. She has presented at the National Conference on College Composition and Communication, Oceanic Popular Culture Association, and Hawai`i’s Center for Pacific Islands Studies.

Dr Janet Scarfe has researched nurses as part of the East Melbourne Historical Society’s World War 1 project. Her biographical essay on each nurse is available at emhs.org.au. She is an adjunct research associate at Monash, and also has an interest in World War 2 nurses and women in the ordained ministry.
Ashma Sharma is a PhD student at the ANU and my research area is Postcolonial Studies and Life Writing. I am currently on study leave from Hindu College, Delhi University where I teach undergraduate courses in English Literature.

Noenoe K. Silva (Kanaka Hawai‘i) serves as professor of Hawaiian and Indigenous politics and is cooperating faculty in Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language, both at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. She is the author of Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism.

Janice Simpson is a PhD candidate in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT, Melbourne. Her creative practice research is focused on adoptees’ connections to place. She is exploring fictocriticism and where that might lead in her creation of stories about place, memory and identity.

Rachel Spencer researches and writes about the links between law, literature and popular culture. In particular, Rachel is interested in how media representations of lawyers (both real and fictional) affect access to justice. Her PhD will examine works of the 'true crime' genre and will re-narrate the Emily Perry case from the various narratives that have come into existence by journalists, lawyers and judges.

Naomi Sunderland is Senior Lecturer, School of Human Services and Social Work, Griffith University. Naomi’s publications include work on bioethics, service learning, health and music.

David Sweet has research interests in oral history constructed from family photography and the narratives, myths and nostalgia that these photographic collections generate. David’s PhD thesis is currently under examination. He has served in two police services (SA; Papua New Guinea) a firefighter and then a career in public relations and advertising. Since 1997, David has lectured in a variety of communication-based subjects at Edith Cowan University (WA) and from 2006 at the University of South Australia.
Heather Taylor Johnson’s fourth book of poetry will be published by Five Islands Press in 2016. She is the Poetry Editor for the academic journal *Transnational Literature* and is currently editing *Fractured Selves: Poetry of Chronic Illness and Pain*. *Pursuing Love and Death* is her debut novel.

Zoe Thomas is a PhD candidate at La Trobe University – her memoir, *Origami Heart*, sits in partnership with her critical work on nostalgia, memory and writing practice. She has published short works of memoir and is the creative/non-fiction editor for the interdisciplinary journal *Writing from Below*.

Daniella Trimboli is a jointly-awarded Ph.D. candidate at the University of Melbourne and the University of British Columbia. Her dissertation analyses the intersection of everyday multiculturalism and digital storytelling from a cultural studies perspective. Daniella currently works for the Research Unit in Public Cultures and is an assistant editor of the *Journal of Intercultural Studies*.

Dr James Vicars has conducted extended research in the areas of biography and fictional biography, recently completing an account of the life of Australia’s first woman pilot, Millicent Bryant. He is an Adjunct Lecturer in the School of Arts at the University of New England.

Sonja Vivienne is a Lecturer in Digital Media at Flinders University of South Australia. Her research focuses on mediated self-representation, online activism and storytelling among networked publics. She has a background in media production, working with marginalised communities towards social change.

Bambi Ward is a current PhD student in creative writing with Central Queensland University. Her creative work is a memoir of her spiritual journey. Bambi is based in Melbourne. She has a background in general practice, medical education and oral history.
Gillian Whitlock is ARC Professorial Research Fellow in the School of Communication and Arts at the University of Queensland, where her current research focuses on asylum seekers, life narratives, and human rights. She is the author and editor of several books and essay collections in the fields of life writing and postcolonial studies, including *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions* (Oxford UP, 2015) and *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (U of Chicago, 2007). With G. Thomas Couser, she edited *(Post)Human Lives*, a Special Issue of *Biography* (35.1, Winter 2012), which was named best Special Issue of the year by the Council of Editors of Learned Journals.

Kasia Williams, PhD, is a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for European Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, where she has been working on Eastern European diasporic literatures in Australia. Her main research interests include literary anthropology, migration, utopian and diasporic literature, and Renaissance studies.

Fang Xia is a PhD candidate in School of Humanities, University of Tasmania. Her research project is about English-language life-writings written by Chinese diaspora and published in the West in last two decades of the twentieth century.