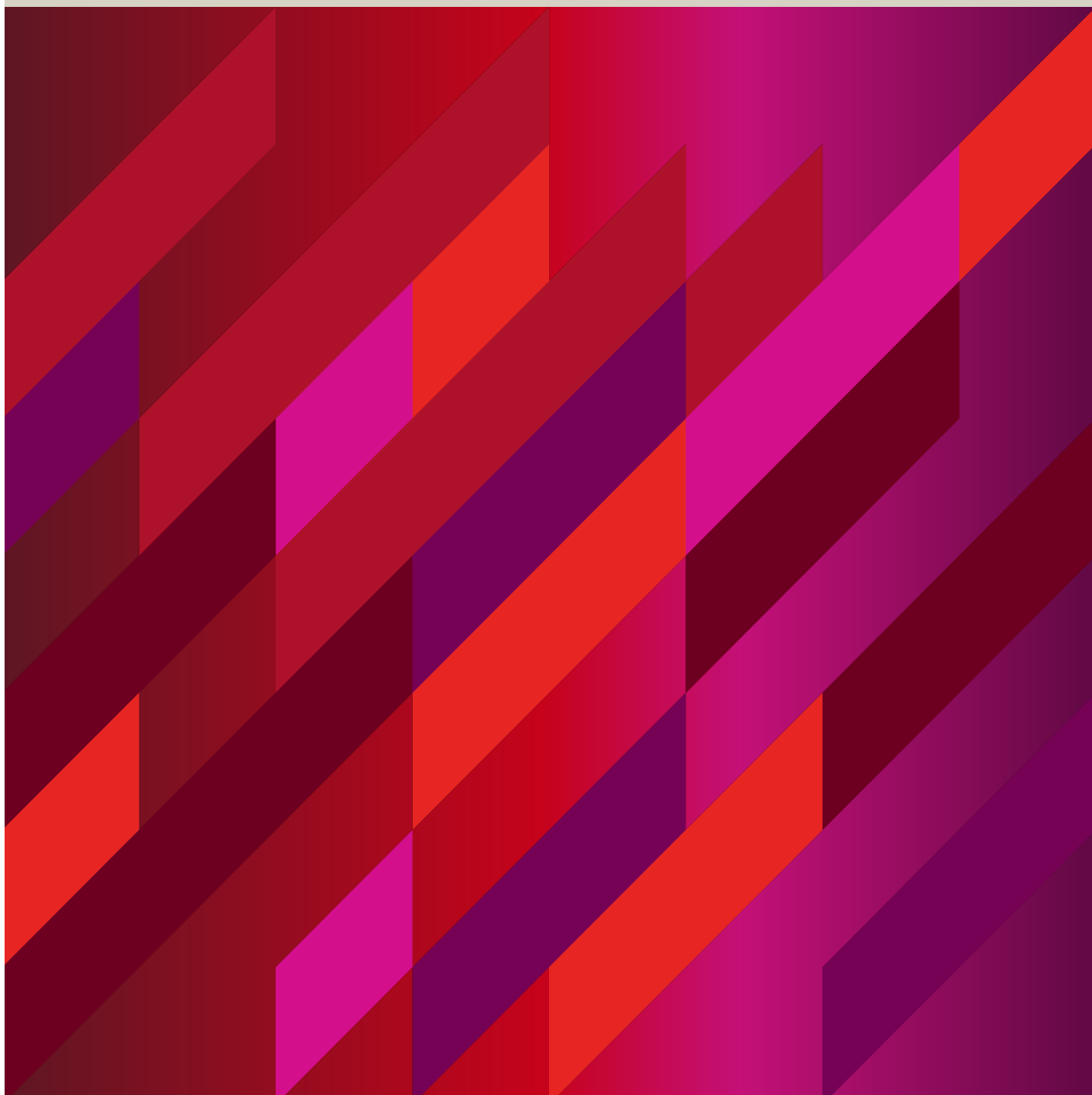


Success Story - International Rights Sales of Australian- Authored Books: Case Studies

October 2021

Jan Zwar and Airlie Lawson



This report was commissioned by the Australia Council for the Arts and the Copyright Agency.

Success Story - International Rights Sales of Australian-Authored Books: Case Studies

ISBN 978 1 741384826

Published by Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, 2109, Australia

Tel: +61 2 9850 9469

Email: paul.crosby@mq.edu.au

Further information is available in the main report that accompanies these case studies:
Success Story - International Rights Sales of Australian-Authored Books: Main Report.
ISBN 978 1 741384819.

Contents

Agents	4
Mary Cunnane.....	4
Tara Wynne, Caitlan Cooper-Trent, Curtis Brown Australia	14
Gaby Naher, Left Bank Literary	22
Publishers.....	29
Libby O'Donnell, HarperCollins Publishers Australia.....	29
Ivor Indyk, Giramondo Publishing	47
Katy McEwen, Pantera Press.....	57
Alexandra Yatomi-Clarke, Berbay Publishing	65
Author advocates	70
Olivia Lanchester, Australian Society of Authors, and Juliet Rogers	70
Authors.....	80
Genre fiction: Trudi Canavan	80
Narrative non-fiction: Jesse Fink	85
Internationally bestselling fiction: John Flanagan	90
Literary fiction: Melissa Lucashenko	95
Romance fiction: Kylie Scott.....	106
Historical fiction: Elisabeth Storrs.....	113
Creative illustrated work and the influence of the international audience: Shaun Tan .	121
Thematic	127
The impact of literary prizes on rights sales, by author and title: Richard Flanagan and Charlotte Wood.....	127
Publication grants: Australia Council for the Arts.....	135
The relationship between screen rights and international rights: Seph McKenna.....	140
Acknowledgements.....	147
References.....	148

Agents

Mary Cunnane



Mary Cunnane was vice president and senior editor at W.W. Norton & Company in New York, where she was employed until 1996. Her authors at W.W. Norton & Co included: Richard Dawkins, Steven Pinker, Kate Millett, Kenneth Branagh, Seamus Heaney, Frank Wilczek, Hilary Spurling, Kanan Makiya, Robin Morgan, Jane Brody, Denise Giardina, John Archibald Wheeler, Martin Stannard and J.P. Donleavy. And Australian writers Olga Masters, Tom Keneally, and Kaz Cooke. After moving to Australia in 1998 and working as a non-fiction publisher at Transworld, Cunnane established a literary agency in 1999 which operated until 2013. She co-founded the Australian Literary Agents' Association in 2003.

Mary Cunnane was the British Rights Manager for Norton for ten years and had also been involved with establishing Norton's London-based UK operation earlier on in her career, so she had spent a lot of time there.

I knew a lot of British publishers to whom I reached out when I set up as an agent.

Publishing is a business of relationships. Sometimes having drinks at 1 o'clock in the morning at a Frankfurt party is when the seeds of a deal—or future deals—are sown. In other words, it is knowing the tastes of particular editors, their personalities and that of the houses for which they work and also understanding how the wheels of international publishing turn. None of this can be taught in a classroom setting. Like a lot of learning in publishing, it comes from mentoring.

Cunnane's interest in Australian books developed gradually through relationships with Australians who were visiting or working in the New York publishing industry, or who were American advocates for Australian writing.

When I was working as a publisher in New York I didn't wake up one morning and think, let me sign up some Australian books. I don't think anyone I knew in the business said to themselves, I want to sign up Australian books.

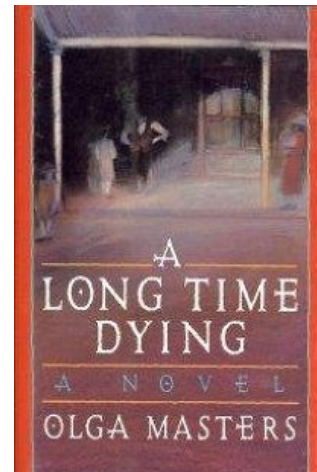
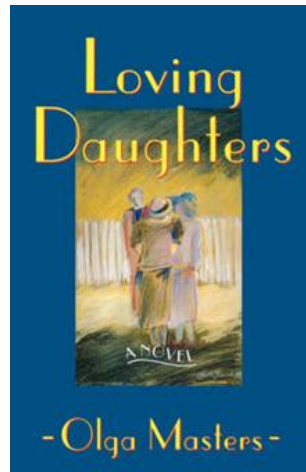
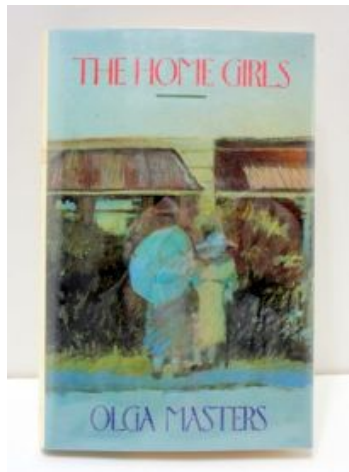
My involvement came about through relationships. In the mid 1980s the Australia Council used the services of The Goodman Agency, run by Irene and Arnold Goodman. As an acquisitions editor part of my job was to establish relationships with agents, often at lunch. The Goodmans represented several Australian publishers who wished to sell US rights to their books. At lunch, they told me this and began submitting manuscripts to me.

Cunnane wryly and unapologetically recounts the Australian-authored bestseller she turned down.

I can say that I declined *The Power of One* by Bryce Courtney. I thought it was not a very good book and besides which Norton was not publishing

much commercial fiction then anyway. We were not the right house for it. I also turned down Tim Winton's first novel. Declining books that go on elsewhere to success is part of every editor's professional experience—sometimes you regret those decisions, sometimes you don't.

But I did buy the rights to a number of books by Olga Masters who was published by UQP and that was through the Goodmans. Unfortunately, Olga Masters died shortly before we published the first. It got some very good reviews but it was very difficult to promote the work of a deceased author.



Cunneane is candid about the reputation of Australian books among US and UK publishers at the time.

There was a perception, and this is more on the part of British publishers (echoes of colonialism) that Australian books might be under-edited and not be as well put together as they could be. There was a tendency, it was felt, to get books out very quickly and thus they were sometimes not thought through as well as they might be. But that has certainly changed over the past two decades or more; the editorial standards in Australia have gone up considerably.

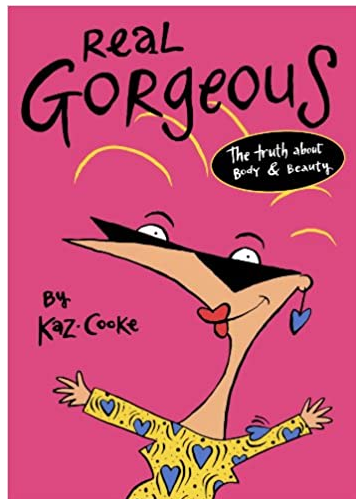
In the 1980s before and even after the introduction of the fax machine, "Communication was not easy, to many Americans, and even probably some now, Australia is the other side of the moon".

Cunneane discussed the dynamics of expanding her networks in New York in relation to Australian books.

The book itself has to work on its own terms, regardless of the author's nationality. So you sign up one Australian book and if it did well, you'd sign up some others, maybe because you had lunch with the Goodmans or you met Lyn Tranter [Australian literary agent], or you met one of the Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellows [the fellowships enable an Australian editor or publisher to research US publishing practices]. I looked after three Fellows when I was at Norton over the years. Rosie Fitzgibbon was one, a very important publisher at the University of Queensland Press. She spent three months in New York, mostly at Norton, and she put me on to Olga Masters, although I bought the rights to her books through the Goodman Agency.

In the mid to late 1980s, Rosie tried to sell me—and I don't mean in a bad way but in a good way—Manning Clark's *A History of Australia*, and hoped that Norton would take it on. We published a lot of history at Norton but the market for *A History of Australia* in the United States in the 1980s was pretty small. I couldn't see any way to do it, to make it work in a commercial sense, and so that is another book that I had to decline.

One of Cunnane's early Australian acquisitions was Kaz Cooke's *Real Gorgeous*. Cunnane attended the 1994 International Feminist Book Fair, which was held in Melbourne. "I picked up that book there and I thought it was fantastic. When I got back to New York I persuaded my colleagues at an editorial meeting to sign it up."



At last, here is a book that tells you how to be friends with your body. *Real Gorgeous* is a big, funny, reassuring read about fashion fibs and diet myths—and the truth about, among other things, push-ups, push-up bras, and the great cellulite scam. It is meticulously researched and sensible, but it avoids impenetrable theory and instead embraces the fun of clothes, makeup, and life in general.

Packed with jokes, Cooke's own cartoons, and practical ways to find real self-esteem and avoid freak-outs and rip-offs, *Real Gorgeous* is easy to read, relevant, and an indispensable boost for women aged 11 to 111.

[Source: Publisher site]

The book performed well commercially but one of the challenges was publicity. Cunnane recalls that the Australia Council then had a program to support publicity and marketing for Australian books.

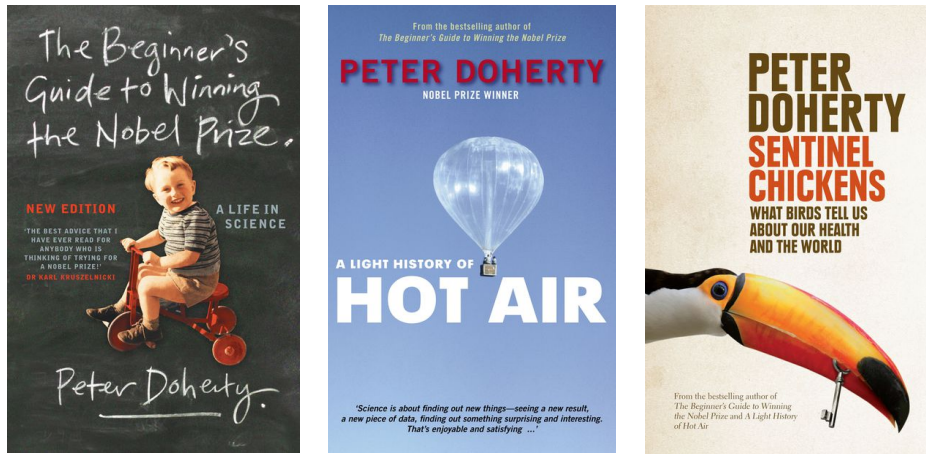
Filling out the application form was like doing my income tax—incredibly complicated and time-consuming. In the end we either didn't get any money or the timing was wrong. The support was needed, the money when the book was published but the next funding round was later on so we missed out as I recall. You need the author available to do publicity but back then and even now, the cost of getting an author to the United States is often prohibitive and that is an issue for promoting Australian books over there.

Cunnane moved to Australia and founded her literary agency in 1999. She started with a focus on non-fiction.

I knew there had been quite a lot of success in selling the rights to Australian fiction: e.g. Peter Carey, Shirley Hazzard, Patrick White, Tom Keneally but not much had been sold internationally that I could see in non-fiction. Although I published some fiction at Norton, I did more non-fiction, books for general readers which often, though not exclusively, came out of the universities. I thought there must be such potential authors here. Where were the Richard Dawkins and the Steven J. Goulds (both Norton authors) of Australia? And historians who could write for a global audience.

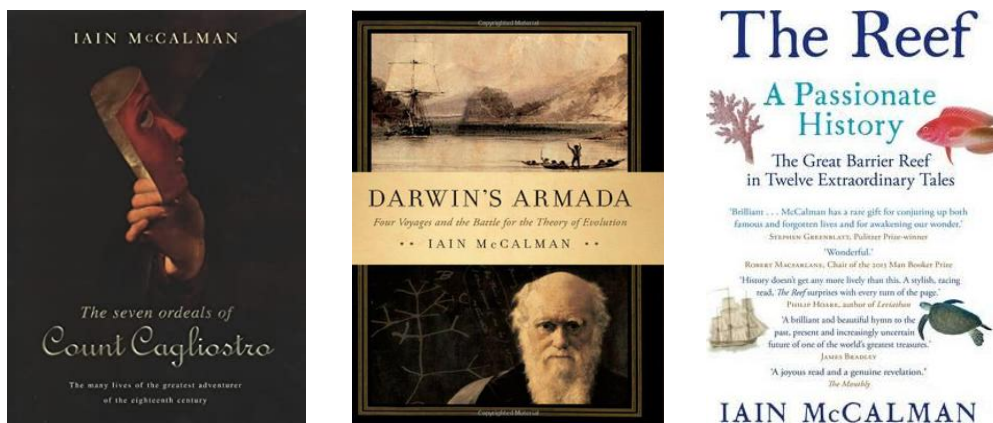
That is how I built up my list of authors. For example, I wrote to Peter Doherty soon after starting the agency and asked whether he had considered

writing a book. As it turned out, he had. The first was *A Beginner's Guide to Winning the Nobel Prize* (MUP) which I sold, along with several others eventually, to publishers not only in the United States but also in translation in a number of countries. If the writer is a Nobel Laureate means it doesn't matter whether they are Australian or from the moon, or from Italy: they are what they are.



Another of Cunnane's successes was with Iain McCalman, "a very distinguished historian" at the Australian National University (ANU) when she first met him.

I heard Iain present at a conference in Canberra at the National Library of Australia. He is a wonderfully engaging speaker for a general audience. I introduced myself afterward and said, "Have you ever thought about writing a book for the general public?" He said, "As a matter of fact, I've always wanted to." And we were off.

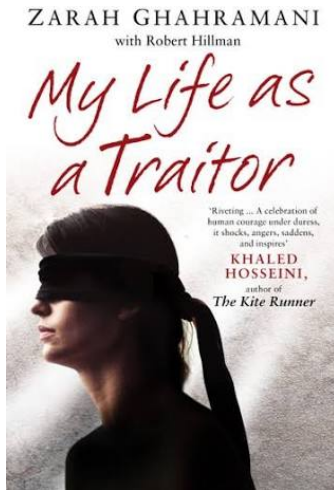


I sold his first trade book, *The Seven Ordeals of Count Cagliostro*, through one of my very good US co-agents, in New York Peter McGuigan, then at Sanford Greenburger Associates. That was one of the biggest deals in terms of Australian dollars (which was then at ca .52 US cents) that I ever notched up. The rights sold quickly and for a very good sum because Iain had written a fantastic book.

The strongest strings in my literary agent cc bow in selling international rights—was that I had been an acquisitions editor myself, I had a strong

interest in non-fiction and, of course, I'd come from publishing in New York.

Another "tremendously successful" Australian book was *My Life as a Traitor*.



It was part youthful zeal and part teen crush that led Zarah Ghahramani to join a student protest movement. But dabbling in student politics was to lead to disaster when one day she was bundled into a car and taken to Tehran's most notorious prison: Evin. Far from her comfortable middle-class home, Zarah had to find refuge from her ruthless interrogators in a windowless concrete cell. Day after day she was humiliated and viciously beaten until all she wanted was simply to die, her spirit broken. In *My Life as a Traitor*, Zarah tells the story of her horrifying ordeal and her eventual release, and describes the ways it changed the naïve nineteen-year-old she once was into a woman of courage and determination.

[Source: Publisher site]

My Life as a Traitor was not an academic book but rather an account by a woman named Zarah Ghahramani, who was Iranian, of her experience at the hands of the authorities in her country. Zarah had met one of my authors, Robert Hillman, a novelist, who helped her gain refugee status in Australia in 2005-2006. Zarah had an amazing story to tell and Robert decided to assist her in achieving publication. The harrowing narrative is Zarah's but was made compelling by Robert, who is an extraordinary writer. That book probably sold to publishers in 20 countries. I think we sold more foreign rights on that book than almost any other I represented as an agent. It was, as I said, compelling and I had another very good co-agent in New York, Kathleen Andersson whom I had known when I was at Norton in the 1980s when we were both editors there Kathleen went on to become an agent, and a successful one. She really went to town, selling American rights on my behalf; from that followed all kinds of translation rights sales by my European representative, the Intercontinental Literary Agency in London.

A key task for an agent in Australia—actually anywhere—is to establish an international network of co-agents, who each have in-depth knowledge of their territories and markets.

A very important element in selling rights successfully is having good co-agents in New York, London and in other territories. It is very difficult to keep on top of which editors are at what imprints in what houses and who has moved where and who's doing which kind of book in a variety of countries.

It's important therefore that you have an exceptionally good co-agent in each territory who is thought of highly, who has good contacts, and with whom you can work closely. It used to be that you would try to find a co-agent in the US and UK who would take on your whole list, but that's very difficult to do. Most co-agents in English-language territories like to work on a project-by-project basis.

Cunneane recounted a disappointing outcome following the rights sale of a highly regarded Australian literary novel to the US shortly after the global financial crisis.

I'm very, very proud of having been the agent for this author, but the timing for selling the international rights to this book was the year or two after the global financial collapse. The whole publishing industry worldwide contracted and at the same time it was reeling from the arrival of ebooks, which virtually everyone thought were going to be the end of print. It made selling foreign rights for the next several years very difficult.

It is a great novel and has won many awards in Australia. It was handled on my behalf by highly regarded coagents in the US and UK; they both completely understood its quality and loved it, but it was declined by a number of publishers in New York and London until finally it was signed up by a noted British firm in New York. It went on to some good reviews, but simply didn't receive the attention that it should have. This was in some measure the fact that the editor who signed it simply failed—for whatever reason; perhaps distraction due to the GFC—to publish it with what I felt was the enthusiasm and passion needed to put it across in a big way.

I think people will be reading that novel in 50 and 100 years. There are not many books I've dealt with I can say that about. If it had been published five years before the GFC or five years after, I'm sure it would have had a different international life.

Cunnane discussed the dynamics of selling translation rights through a specialist agency which has industry networks in and knowledge of markets in foreign language territories.

I was introduced to ILA (Intercontinental Literary Agency), which is based in London, by a colleague in New York. I went to London to meet the principals and to present my list, and they took me on. ILA handled translation rights in many territories and they represented the rights on my books to European countries with the exception of Germany and Italy where I had separate agents. And of course I also had co-agents in Japan, Korea, and China.

While it is possible—though not easy—to sell US and UK rights directly from Australia, even a relatively big agency will find it hard to keep track across Europe of who are all of the editors in Italy or Germany for example and indeed who are all the agents that you should be in touch with in Poland, or China for that matter?

When you attend the rights fairs at Frankfurt and London, you are seeing editors from countries throughout the world and you are also having meetings with your co-agents. It's vital to meet people in person as much as you possibly can, to vibe and joke with them, swap industry gossip, ask about how their 25th wedding anniversary went and how their kids are. Those kinds of inter-personal exchanges, often leading to genuine friendships, are very important.

Cunnane prepared for book fairs months in advance.

To prepare properly you send your contacts—that is, those people with whom you are meeting—your rights catalogue, i.e. the list of books you are presenting, at least a month in advance of the book fair.

A key element in successfully selling international rights is intense preparation: getting all of your new material together, putting the best possible list together with all of the information that you need—a really

good description of the book that doesn't go on for two pages, the author's bio, the name of the Australian publisher if there is any at that point, the number of pages, whether there are any illustrations, the sales history for any previous books by the author. All that is vital.

Cunnane observes that in the publishing industry, appointments at trade fairs (called 'slots') are likened to speed dating.

You have a slot for 30 minute appointments. When the agents or editors come to sit down at your table (or you at theirs) they have already read your rights catalogue if you are lucky. The good ones will say, "I'm interested in this book, tell me more about that one." "What can you tell me about this?" "Nope, this isn't for me but it could be for so and so who works down the hall from me, I'll let her know." Probably 60-70 percent of the time they will have done their homework and at least gone through your list once. Then you have a more in-depth discussion of the projects that interest them.

You start at 9am (or earlier at breakfast) and often go right through until late at night. You also might have a drink with them or lunch or dinner, so there are lunch dates and dates for drinks and dates for breakfast. All of these appointments are made weeks and months in advance. But I always tried to leave one or two slots open each day—the serendipity factor—to meet with someone whom I might have just been introduced to the evening before at a party.

And then there are the parties and receptions, which are fun but also where business might be discussed. People who are not in the industry think all this is somehow glamorous. Let me tell you, you have never worked so hard. It's not breaking rocks with a sledgehammer, but it is a non-stop effort for three or four days. Intense, exciting, stimulating and, ideally, very productive.

Cunnane discussed her timing for taking books to market.

When I was acquiring books at Norton, Australian publishers would sometimes submit to me the finished book. That is really too late in the process. Submitting to international publishers has to happen at either the proposal or full manuscript stage. Everyone in the industry wants to know as early as possible about exciting new projects well in advance. I've sold non-fiction from a good proposal and three sample chapters, especially if the book is on a timely or "hot" topic I would generally not wait until there was a final, polished manuscript. Instead I would alert my co-agents early on and they would ask when is the manuscript available? I might reply "In three months it will be available, but I can send you the proposal now."

Sometimes, especially for a non-fiction book but also for fiction, the English or American publisher might want to have some editorial input. If I've already sold the book to an Australian publisher, the lead editor is Australian but an American editor might say, I think the last chapter needs a little work.

That input is usually channelled through the lead publisher. The Australian author is able to consider those suggestions but, as with any editorial input, they are free to accept or decline. (I did this myself at Norton where I acquired quite a few books from UK publishers. Sometimes I would offer editorial comments and suggestions and send them to whoever the British editor was. The author would take them into account and accept some or not.)

In 2010 a volcano in Iceland, Eyjafjallajökull, erupted and plane flights over London were disrupted for six days in April. Cunnane and many others in the book industry could not travel to the London Book Fair. With restrictions on international travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cunnane reflects on the impact on her business in 2010.

I had Skype talks with all of my co-agents and we tried to do it as much as we could via email. I did sell some rights ultimately and it was probably not a catastrophe to lose one rights fair, but to lose two or three with COVID-19.... The London Book Fair has already been cancelled, and to possibly lose that and Bologna and Frankfurt in one year is going to have a big effect on rights sales, I think. [In May it was announced that the 2020 Frankfurt book fair would go ahead, however the level of industry participation remains unclear.]

I would not want to be going to Frankfurt this year: thousands and thousands of people together in one place—believe me, you cannot socially distance with that many people. (There’s always been the well-known phenomenon of “Frankfurt flu” or “Frankfurt bronchitis.” I had more than one dose over the years.) The whole point of the Frankfurt Book Fair is social interaction, which is the opposite of distancing. Book Expo, 2020 which is a big American convention for book sellers, has been cancelled and there is a rights component there too. Selling international rights during the pandemic is going to be tough, though of course Zoom and other such software is a boon.

Trade publishing is partly the serendipity of how things happen and largely of building relationships: you meet someone and click with them and you are interested in what they do and what they publish and whom they represent. And vice versa.

Cunnane summarises the benefits of overseas rights sales to Australian authors as “wider readership, recognition and income”. In her experience, most authors are realistic about their prospects.

Most writers whom I dealt with were pretty understanding of the realities. It was my job as an agent to educate them about those realities and say I think I can sell this overseas. Or, I think the chances of overseas sales are not great. Most of them trusted me, and occasionally some were thrilled when I exceeded expectations. A few were disappointed when more deals did not happen. Authors are right to want to be published overseas if their books indeed have potential in other markets. It’s a big ask to entrust that potential for their book, their professional fate, into the hands of others.

Cunnane was involved in founding the Australian Literary Agents Association. “I think it has been invaluable, especially for some of the recently established agents who were newer to the industry.” Since moving to Australia she has observed an increase in the skills and expertise of Australian rights sellers.

Australian publishers have come a long way. Before I started the agency I worked for a year (1998-1999) as non-fiction publisher for Transworld which eventually became part of Random House. Nerrilee Weir was just starting there as the rights person; she was relatively young and, I think she would even say it herself, didn’t know an awful lot at that point. Twenty years later, she is among the leading international rights directors in Australia and very good indeed at what she does.

Cunnane believes there is more openness in the US industry to Australian books now. She attributes this in part to the commercial and critical success of Australian books overseas and to programs which fund delegations of international publishers and agents to Australia, and vice versa.

Many international publishing industry figures have come—since 1998—to Australia through the Visiting International Publishers (VIPs) program. Recently the Australia Council has also sent some Australian agents and publishers overseas, but to meet publishers and agents in their offices in New York and London. (This is in addition to the funding they have made available to agents—I was one—and publishers to attend overseas rights fairs.) That is very important. It might not instantly pay off in immediate deals, but there is no substitute for meeting the people to whom you are trying to sell.

When she worked in New York Cunnane was impressed by the effectiveness of initiatives by the Canadian and French consulates in promoting their countries' books and authors. She believes similar initiatives could increase business opportunities for Australian publishers over time and strengthen cultural diplomacy.

In the late 1980s or early '90s the Canadian consulate put on a daylong event in New York to inform American publishers and editors about Canadian writing and publishing. Margaret Atwood and Robertson Davies, among noted authors were present, and read from their work. There was a lunch and were panel discussions. You might think that because Canada is so close, American editors spend a lot of time thinking about or immersed in Canadian literature; quite the opposite. But we came away with a much better idea of how the publishing industry worked in Canada and who the leading writers were. I don't think I ever signed up a Canadian writer, but I am sure others who attended did.

Cunnane also noted that the Consulate General of France in New York was particularly effective, with a dedicated team of four people promoting French books and authors. Having been exposed to the effects of these initiatives in New York, she has thought for years about the potential to promote Australian culture through its books and authors on a more sustained basis.

If there was a regular event—maybe bi-annually run by the consulate in New York, which brought over some Australian authors for a really attractive all-day publishing conference and invited US acquisitions editors and editorial directors to meet some of the leading Australian writers and thinkers, it could have a real impact as a potent form of “soft diplomacy”. It would be getting across to the American publishing industry that there is not only a fantastic amount of literary talent here, but also that there are leading thinkers, philosophers, scientists, Nobel laureates, historians who are doing very important work and who are more than capable of writing for a global audience.

Cunnane is certain there is potential to increase the presence of Australian-authored books in the US market, even though the publishing industry globally is facing an uncertain period due to COVID-19.

Probably still to some Americans in the industry, Australia is the other side of the moon. That's ironic, because in the last 10 or 15 years, much good publishing has been done or by American publishers of authors from South Asia, Vietnam, Korea, China, South Asia, Africa and the Middle East. And

yet in some perversely, Australia sometimes is still considered even more “exotic” in a way than they are.

Cunnane attributes the increasing diversity of books published in the US—although there is still a long way to go—to the changing nature of the American market.

The American public itself is not as white as it once was. Demographically whites are going to be in the minority in the United States, within the next 25 years. It is a more diverse population, there is a bigger interest in reading stories from the work of people from other parts of the world. That began probably in the 1990s with some publishers starting, for example, a Spanish language imprint. (This interview was conducted before the Black Lives Matter movement, which of course has put intense pressure on publishers in the US and the UK to diversify their staff as well as the books they publish.)

The key to continuing Australia’s rights sales success and increasing overseas sales as part of a longer-term strategy beyond the effects of COVID-19, is to strengthen the networks of Australian agents and publishers further with their counterparts overseas.

Australia can't be operating like a remote satellite; it needs to be a part of the major ecology of publishing around the world. The more of those contacts that are kept up the better.

Tara Wynne, Caitlan Cooper-Trent, Curtis Brown Australia

Curtis Brown Australia was established in 1967 as a wholly owned affiliate of Curtis Brown in the UK to represent Australian, New Zealand and Pacific writers worldwide and to look after the interests of overseas clients in this territory. In 1999, Curtis Brown acquired Hickson Associates and in 2003 concluded a management buy-out to become independent in Australia. The agency maintains close links to Curtis Brown's London office and affiliated agencies in New York.

Tara Wynne, Agent

Tara Wynne joined Curtis Brown UK in 1998. She moved to Curtis Brown Australia as a Literary Agent in January 2002. She represents a broad range of writers from commercial (romance, thrillers, crime, fantasy) to literary fiction and non-fiction (travel, memoir, history, self-help) to young adult and children's fiction. She is also President of the Australian Literary Agents' Association.



Caitlan Cooper-Trent, Agents' Assistant



Caitlan joined Curtis Brown in early 2016 with a background in law. She has completed a Masters of English at Sydney University. Caitlan is Rights Agent and Assistant to Tara Wynne and Pippa Masson.

In Curtis Brown Australia's experience, the majority of Australian author's sales will be in the ANZ (Australia New Zealand) territories. Tara Wynne explains, "Realistically, getting a great deal for an author in their home market is the best you could possibly hope for when you take a client on and overseas rights are, as Fiona Inglis (Managing Director) says, icing on the cake." Interestingly, this metaphor of 'icing' is used by other agents and publishers: clearly, for most Australian authors the ANZ market is the most significant. However, Wynne believes that overseas publication opportunities for Australian authors have increased over the past ten years.

Wynne recalls that in the late 1990s, early 2000s, “it was tough to sell Australian titles elsewhere in the world.” It was difficult to sell rights to Australian books to the UK because UK publishers have historically acquired Australia and New Zealand rights as part of the UK’s distribution territory.¹

English publishers always expect to acquire the rights to publish into Australia and New Zealand when they buy UK rights to an Australian book. It affects their bottom line because if they don’t have ANZ rights they see it as a loss of potentially 5-10,000 copies in sales. This is both a contemporary commercial consideration and an historical legacy because Australia was perceived as a distribution territory and an export territory for their UK operation.

In practice this meant historically there was a reluctance on the part of UK publishers to buy UK rights to Australian books without the ANZ rights. Further, institutional arrangements between UK and Australian affiliates also affected the prospects for Australian titles in the UK. Wynne worked for Curtis Brown UK prior to emigrating to Australia. She outlined the earlier arrangement between the Curtis Brown UK and Australian office and the subsequent improvement for the representation of Australian books:

When I was working at Curtis Brown UK we would receive titles from Curtis Brown Australia. At that time we had an exclusive relationship with each other. Anything that was sent from Australia had to be looked at by an agent in the UK and they had to try and sell it even if they knew it was never going to sell. Now we (Curtis Brown Australia) have a non-exclusive relationship with Curtis Brown UK. It now works on a book-by-book, agent-by-agent basis. That is far more successful because they are only selling a book that they feel passionately about, which filters down to the publishers when the UK agent is trying to sell it to them.²

Curtis Brown Australia’s experience since the 1990s has proved that Australian authors can work internationally—not all, but those that do can be very successful commercially. This has opened the door, probably in the last ten years, to the UK industry. UK publishers are more amenable to Australian authors and titles because they have seen Australian books achieve commercial success in the US market and in their own.

Such changes have occurred for a number of reasons. In addition to digital communication and logistics, Wynne referred to key Australian-authored books which gave Curtis Brown momentum in international rights sales. Wynne and Cooper-Trent note that books with international stories and settings can attract more interest from overseas rights buyers, for example, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* and *Cilka’s Journey* by Heather Morris. However, sometimes a breakthrough title set in Australia can increase overseas interest in other books set in Australia. Wynne explains:

¹ The publication of Australian-authored books since the colonial period has been the subject of considerable scholarly work. While all scholars acknowledge the significant role of British publishers, scholars such as Katherine Bode have used new digital tools and methodologies to examine the nature of domestic book publishing in relation to the UK publishing industry. See: Bode (2009, 2012 and 2017).

² Mary Cunnane also refers to the shift to book-by-book agreements with co-agents in her case study, which in her view has also increased the effectiveness of overseas representation of Australian-authored books.

In recent years we have seen a bit of an Australian crime wave. We had a lot of manuscript submissions inspired by the success of *The Dry*, by Jane Harper and also more interest overseas in the Australian market and what it could deliver. Australia was having a ‘Scandi moment’ as it were

Representing an international best-selling author also gives an agent increased standing when pitching books by other Australian authors. Wynne’s experience is that “when you’ve had a breakthrough with one author it makes it easier to get people’s attention”. This suggests that Australia’s recent momentum of rights sales success is not only a collection of individual sales deals, but that international success paves the way for opportunities for other Australian authors to be published overseas too.

However, Wynne is careful to place the overseas interest in Australian-authored books in a broader commercial context. “UK agents and publishers are most likely to invest in an Australian author if the book’s overarching themes feel universal and they think they can sell a lot of copies”.

The nature of the overseas market for literary titles can be different. In Australia the market for literary titles is generally small (with high profile exceptions such as Miles Franklin and Stella prize winners, and high profile authors who have a ‘cross-over’ following.³) Similarly, it is not always easy for highly-regarded and widely-read Australian literary fiction authors to be published overseas. Literary publishers in overseas markets are carefully managing the economics of publishing literary authors from their own country. An important factor in an Australian literary author being published overseas is often the advocacy and support of an individual in a key role who has high regard for the author and their work. An author needs a publisher in each territory that believes in them, that will publish them no matter what.

Markets move in cycles. Sometimes a book or series comes to market at a favourable time and on other occasions the markets have shifted elsewhere, which is not necessarily a reflection on the merits of an individual title being pitched by an agent. Wynne:

Everything goes in cycles. Historical fiction was very popular in Germany and Russia as well as into the UK and the US. Looking at the bestseller lists earlier this year with Hilary Mantel being number one it’s hard to imagine that historical fiction has gone through a bit of a downturn in popularity because readers have moved towards things like Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine by Gail Honeyman (a Scottish author) books with more contemporary settings. It has been more difficult to sell historical fiction lately than it was a few years ago, but I feel as though we are coming back around as people read and love something like the Mantel books, they will hopefully start looking for something else in that vein. It might open the door yet again for historical fiction.

The romance market has seen a move to more authors Indie publishing (self-publishing).⁴ Wynne:

³ For an introduction to discussion of the economics of literary publishing in Australia see: Davis (2008), Bode (2010), Stinson (2016) and the case study below on Giramondo Publishing.

⁴ As noted in the report’s discussion of self-publishing, many self-published authors use the term “Indie publishing” to refer to self-publishing and that is the definition of Indie publishing in this report. In studies of book publishers Indie publishing can refer to independent publishing, but the term is not used in that context in this research.

The romance market is a thing unto itself. Some best-selling romance authors have become digital only and self-published.⁵ Romance readers tend to read voraciously and devour the text, but the books haven't been selling in such high numbers in print. The popularity of Australian rural romance was significant for several years but that has peaked and subsided and many readers have moved on to other trends in romance. Only a few have weathered the storm.

Wynne observed changes in other genres including science-fiction and fantasy.

The sci-fi and fantasy genres have stratified a bit more. Hard sci-fi and fantasy is its own genre with its own agents, its own readers, its own formats. Then we have what would you call upmarket or accessible sci-fi or fantasy—which you would call by another name because it would be read by people other than fantasy readers, so you would probably characterise it as a “near-future thriller” rather than sci-fi when pitching it to rights buyers.

Cooper-Trent agreed that the description of the genre of a book is tailored to invoke an intended readership that will appeal to agents and publishers. When they create a thumbnail sketch of the genre of a book, they are seeking to evoke the intended readership for a prospective rights buyer and to give a sense of how a book could be marketed. “It’s a moveable feast, you present it differently.” Cooper-Trent notes that often a popular fiction book will have a romantic element to the plot but this would not be foregrounded in pitches to prospective rights buyers if the agents wish to position the book for a broader audience than the romance market.

Wynne and Cooper-Trent discussed the success of books by Australian authors whose work has literary qualities, has serious ethical concerns and is accessible to general readers. The popularity of these books was examined in *The New Literary Middlebrow Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-First Century*, by Beth Driscoll (2014).⁶ Agents have short-hand terms for the market for literary middlebrow books, including “book club” or “upmarket commercial”. Cooper-Trent has noticed at international book fairs that the quality of writing is high in the women’s fiction by all the authors represented by Curtis Brown Australia.

A lot that our women’s fiction titles were more on the upmarket/literary side. Perhaps as a nation our authors have had to stand out because as a market we previously haven’t had such prominence in the mainstream.

Of course, this comment needs to be considered in a broader context: Curtis Brown Australia is selective about taking on clients. The standard of the writing is extremely high with acknowledged literary qualities by reviewers, and there is also a large commercial readership.

It is difficult to know how this highly visible and significant development in Australian authorship has come about. For example, it is unclear whether there has been a shift in the types of fiction written by Australian authors (and it is beyond the scope of this study). Cooper-Trent observes that: “The Australian canon has shifted and changed.”

In Wynne’s view, over the past 20 years Australia has become culturally more aligned

⁵ See the case study in this report on Kylie Scott.

⁶ See also: Carter (2016).

to the US than the UK and the US is now the most significant overseas market for many Australian books. Cooper-Trent reflected on the shift in focus. “Selling into the UK market offers kudos and a lot of authors are determined to reverse any lingering ‘cultural cringe’ on the part of the UK through success there, but the main shift has been to the US because of the sheer size of the market.”

Wynne and Cooper-Trent discussed the strategies they use to pitch different types of books. Wynne:

There isn’t a one size fits all approach. It can depend on so many different factors. In commercial fiction, particularly genre fiction including psychological suspense and thriller, at the moment there have been a large number of manuscript submissions internationally but it is what the market has been demanding. If we find a manuscript that we feel is strong enough to have international scope, we will go out very confidently to other agents. One would probably submit a work like this simultaneously in all English Language territories. If an agent makes a simultaneous submission for a fiction title that agent would be expecting to hold an auction for the rights.

Wynne explained their strategy for pitching adult non-fiction books.

Non-fiction is slightly trickier, because every market has its experts in a particular field including memoir, journalism, and science. They all have their own individuals who already may have a profile there. We all have our own non-fiction memoirs of TV or radio personalities; they rarely transcend except in the case of international figures. In terms of non-fiction books that respond to current climates, every territory, we’ve been told, has their own Trump commentator who’s written a book, or their own climate scientist who’s written a book, and cult personalities in Australia are quite hard to sell rights for overseas if they are not known in those markets. A non-fiction book has to be about a type of broad knowledge that everyone can benefit from. That is a pretty tall order.

Wynne and Cooper-Trent explained that with literary fiction, they would probably wait until they had a polished manuscript before trying to sell it into any other territory. Because children’s books are more of “a commercial space, if we think a manuscript has real potential to travel we would share it with a couple of agents we feel would be best for it, and we would send it out simultaneously and hope for an auction.”

Foreign rights markets (i.e., non-English language markets) have so much knowledge embedded in them that “it is almost impossible to get across it as an outsider” according to Wynne. Curtis Brown Australia use Curtis Brown UK’s Translation Rights Department to sell foreign language rights. Cooper-Trent explained:

Our translation rights team has a primary sub-agent (their preferred sub-agent) in each translation region, be that Europe or Japan or south-east Asia, who will have individual relationships with publishers. They are constantly submitting and securing deals for a broad range of titles.

There aren’t really key markets for translation rights to Australian books, as the type of book and the type of translation territory that suits that book vary enormously.

Cooper-Trent observed that interest from overseas markets “goes in cycles depending on what is happening with each individual economy”.

We tend to sell less translation rights to overseas territories when their economy is in downturn or ill-health than when their economy and the luxury item market is thriving (books are considered an affordable luxury item).

In some cases the readership for an author's work may be larger overseas than in Australia because the genres in which they write are more popular elsewhere, such as Young Adult (YA) and middle grade children's books, which are particularly popular in the US market. Some books win awards in Australia and overseas, and they are commercially successful in Australia. However there is a much larger following for fantasy and science fiction in the USA, both in terms of the larger market size and the higher proportion of readers for those genres.⁷

Cooper-Trent also explained that "Some countries adopt an author as their own" due to the influence of critics or other influential figures. She gave the example of Kenneth Cook, the author of *Wake in Fright*, who is an estate author (deceased). He has a following in France among literary readers "not in terms of quantity, but in terms of continued support and admiration for this author whose books have largely been overlooked until more recently in Australia", even though *Wake in Fright* was adapted for a TV series in 2017. Another Australian author, Katherine Scholes, has novels set predominantly in Africa, where she grew up, and has a particularly strong following in Germany and France.

Wynne and Cooper-Trent observed that the manuscripts Australian authors submit to the agency are influenced by popular trends. Wynne:

Our submissions tend to be very bestseller-list driven. When I first arrived in Australia many submissions were trying to repeat the success of the Harry Potter books. Some authors are working in this tradition very successfully and there are children who love those books, but there is also a move towards the more contemporary and real in the junior and YA markets. When *The Hunger Games* and *Twilight* were popular, we received a lot of submissions inspired by those books. We went through a period when psychological suspense or thriller genres were popular and there was strong overseas interest in those titles globally. Currently we are receiving a lot of near future dystopian books. Given the international success of *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine*, overseas rights buyers are now interested in that style of book.

Building professional networks in person is a key part of an agent's role. Wynne explained:

There is nothing like meeting someone, getting to know them, having a general conversation, feeling like you have a proper relationship with someone. I think we are all more receptive to receiving communication in any form from someone that we already know as opposed to cold calling; you don't know who this person is or anything about them—do you trust them? With regard to the international rights trips that Caitlan is now doing, and that I have done in the past, they are less about the immediate works we are pitching, sometimes, than about building on existing relationships or forging new ones. You build a trust with those people and when you come back to Australia you can email them and they will remember you. If you

⁷ See also the case study on Elisabeth Storrs for a discussion of the overall and proportionally larger market for historical fiction in the USA.

share a taste in some types of books, if you send them a book that they really like and perhaps that they buy the rights, it can open the door to selling them future works. That is true of selling rights to publishers in Australia. You tend to fall into a pattern with one person because you have the same taste.

Cooper-Trent explained that that research is critical to success in rights sales.

For us that can involve industry news resources like *Publishers Marketplace*, *Books + Publishing*, *Publisher's Lunch*, Bookscan etc which we use to stay informed about who bought books, who sold books, news updates and figures. The other resource is conversations with colleagues working in other territories and reading current titles. The principle of being informed about the market is the same for both Australian publishing and overseas markets, though the sources might change.

Wynne and Cooper-Trent also use their international networks to keep across developments in the industry and changing markets. Wynne explains:

We have several relationships with key agencies and publishers. We have a relationship with Curtis Brown (UK) as well as other agencies. I came from a different agency before I joined Curtis Brown, and even when I was at Curtis Brown in the UK a lot of those agents moved on to different agencies. I keep in touch with them and work with them as well.

Wynne and Cooper-Trent characterised the dynamics as “a back and forth between both offline and online relationship building, but at the core relationships are key to success in rights sales”.

Wynne and Cooper-Trent believe agents and publishers in the Australian industry support each other to achieve international success. Wynne: “Emotionally we are all very mutually supportive. We are sharing information more, but that is up to each organisation.” Cooper-Trent:

We share quite a lot of information, and we share assets where possible. This means information as well as resources between both publishers and agencies. Increasingly we understand that it's going to benefit everyone.

In Wynne's experience government support for the industry is superior in Australia to the UK. The training opportunities offered through Copyright Agency fellowships “to work within the publishing industries in New York and to glean lots of knowledge and experience has been really useful”, Australia Council funding which goes to small publishers has been strategically important, and the Visiting International Publishers program (VIPs) has expanded Australian agents' and publishers' networks and led to international deals.

Wynne believes the VIPs program is effective because, “The visiting international publishers are invited because they have already shown an interest in our marketplace.”

They already support one or two Australian authors so bringing them over here is great because they are open-minded to our market and it has led to other deals. We have several close relationships that came out of the VIPs program. These relationships now extend to other Australian agents and publishers, and that has come out of VIPs. That has happened with some of the other agents who have come over too.

Wynne and Cooper-Trent do not know what the impact of COVID-19 will be on the book industry, but Wynne recalled the impact of the global financial crisis.

During the GFC, consumers were counting every penny. We have to hope that unlike the GFC, people see the value in the written word, especially when they have exhausted everything on Stan and Netflix and they come back to books. That is what we are hoping, but the bricks and mortar stores are suffering because whenever there is an economic downturn sales of books are affected.

A recent positive development internationally is “more interest and support for Indigenous peoples and diverse authors” according to Wynne.

An interest in First Nations’ voices, own voices and diverse voices is on the rise in the publishing industry in the US. That has happened in the UK as well. With imprints like Penguin in the UK starting up specifically Black writers imprints, it might open the door to find homes for some authors’ work, something that we haven’t really been able to do before.

Cooper-Trent summarised the effects of the success of Australian-authored books in the publishing industry overseas.

People don’t necessarily come knocking on our door saying, ‘please sell us Australian books’. Rather, we have had feedback from international rights buyers that Australia has a diverse, interesting creative community. We have hard-working representatives in the arts who remind people through their work that Australia has a lot to offer. It opens the door for us to push hard.

Gaby Naher, Left Bank Literary

Gaby Naher is a literary agent with over 30 years' experience in the book industry. Her clients include Stella-prize-winning Heather Rose, and *New York Times* #1 bestseller™, Candice Fox. Prior to establishing her own literary agency, The Naher Agency, in May 2008, Gaby worked as a literary agent, publicist and bookseller in Sydney, London and New York. Last year Naher teamed with Grace Heifetz, ex Curtis Brown, to form Left Bank Literary, a Sydney based literary agency. Gaby is the author of four books and has a Doctorate of Creative Arts. She has just completed a three-year term as President of the Australian Literary Agents' Association.



Gaby Naher's first job in book publishing was at Chatto & Windus in London in 1989. The publishing director was Carmen Callil, "the Australian firebrand, one of the three founders of Virago". (Virago Books is an international publisher of books by women, founded in 1973; now an imprint of Hachette UK.) Naher recalls that "While Carmen was proudly Australian, she didn't have many Australians on her list at Chatto & Windus."

To my recollection David Malouf was the only Australian published by Chatto at that time; he was published out of the UK and distributed into Australia. That was 'the good old days' when Australians were typically published out of the UK. The book jackets were designed for British tastes and, what's more, in Australia the authors didn't get paid home royalties. A home royalty is usually 10 percent of recommended retail price, whereas the export royalty is typically 10 percent of net receipts, which is quite a bit lower.

The growth of the Australian industry's rights sales capability required the development of literary agents and in house rights sales specialists in Australia with international experience and expertise. It also, importantly, required Australian authors to have the confidence to assign the management of their international rights sales to Australians.

My second job in publishing was at Hodder & Stoughton, also in London, in 1990. Tom Keneally was published there, and the Keneally books I worked on were originated in the UK. From Hodder I went on to Serpent's Tail, where we published Drusilla Modjeska's memoir *Poppy*, that had been originated here in Australia.

Over time, Australian authors were persuaded by Australian publishers and agents to license ANZ rights to Australian publishers. Thereafter agents and publishers would try and license the English language rights beyond Australia. A number of Australian authors still had a British agent in the 1990s, as is still the case, but they started to insist on separate Australian publishers.

In 1993 Naher took up a role with Jill Hickson, a literary agent based in Sydney.

I was trained by Jill Hickson who was herself very much self-taught. Jill took on Bryce Courtenay as a client and was the agent for *The Power of One*, a major international bestseller. Tom Keneally had come to Jill for Australian representation, while retaining his British and US agents.

Naher also did a stint in New York in 1994 for Serpent's Tail. At the time there were few Australians being published in the US.

In 2008 Naher founded her own literary agency in Sydney.

A lot of the best right sellers have had background either in book publicity or book selling; that ability to pitch a book is fundamental to rights selling. I had worked in publicity and I was very fortunate to be taught by Jill Hickson.

The US is the most significant market for Naher's clients. "Obviously books can sell there in big volumes. I've been to New York a number of times on right-selling trips and I always find it exciting. It's the ultimate buzz. The way the US editors and publishers talk about making 'big books' is fascinating.

In contrast, the UK market is a lot tougher for Australian authors.

There's little revenue coming to Australian writers from British deals. The margins are much smaller in British publishing, discounts on retail cover prices demanded by the supermarkets are staggering and British publishers maintain that they need to have Commonwealth rights to make their costings work. We're told that Australia and New Zealand is 25 percent of British publishers' markets, so withholding ANZ rights when selling Australian authors in to the UK is not popular with the Brits.

The other significant market for Australian writers after the US is Germany.

Naher estimates that "as few as 10 percent" of Australian authors have a genuine chance of international rights sales for their books. "It's really hard."

We put all our clients' books on the agency's rights lists for international sales, but it's our job to know which books have a chance of breaking into other territories.

It's more common than not for US agents to read our clients' manuscripts and say, "I really like this, but I just don't think I can sell it in this market." While the US publishers, for example, might admire the work on submission it's not unusual for them to tell us they won't be able to find a readership for work, meaning they can't attract enough attention to it in the marketplace to bring sufficient readers to the work.

With regard to books that have a chance of international rights sales, "There's no X factor, it's rather a sense that a story from this foreign place might have a generality, an international generality." Robyn Cadwallader's debut, *The Anchoress*, is an example of such a work.

It was set in the 12th century in England, a story of a young girl who chose to be walled in the side of a church in perpetuity rather than get married. I sold ANZ rights here in Australia and then my sub-agent sold British rights to Faber & Faber and US rights to Farrar Strauss Giroux. There was also a French sale. It can be a little frustrating that it's easier to sell these international-feeling books by Australian writers.

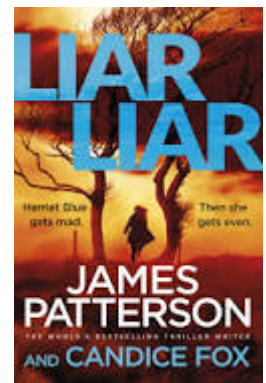
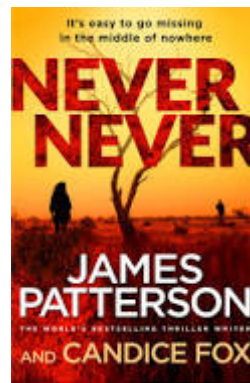
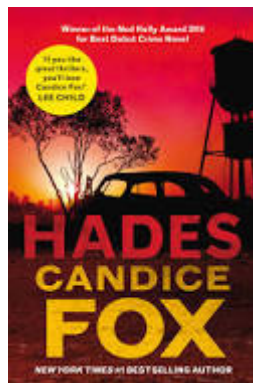
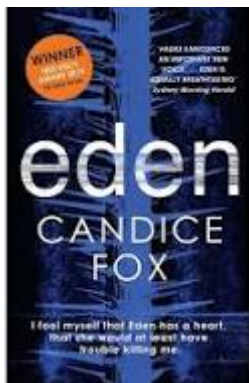


Set in the twelfth century, *The Anchoress* tells the story of Sarah, only seventeen when she chooses to become an anchoress, a holy woman shut away in a small cell, measuring seven paces by nine, at the side of the village church.

Fleeing the grief of losing a much-loved sister in childbirth and the pressure to marry, she decides to renounce the world, with all its dangers, desires and temptations, and to commit herself to a life of prayer and service to God. But as she slowly begins to understand, even the thick, unforgiving walls of her cell cannot keep the outside world away, and it is soon clear that Sarah's body and soul are still in great danger ...

[Source: Publisher site]

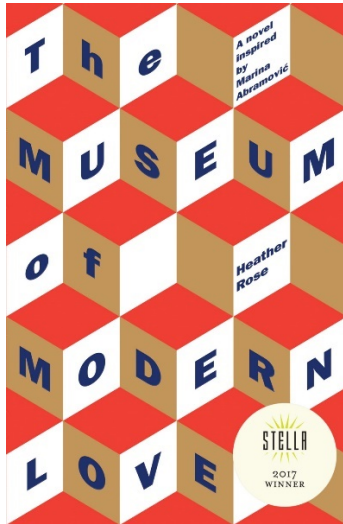
Candice Fox “has also sold around the world and continues to sell. Candice has seven stand-alone books, she’s published four books with James Patterson and just delivered a fifth.”



I was able to get Candice a US agent, Lisa Gallagher, right at the beginning of Candice’s career it made all the difference. I was introduced to Lisa by a book scout who came out here on the Visiting International Publishers (VIPs) program. That’s how these VIP programmes can work so well. You strike a rapport with a visiting publisher, agent or scout, and even if you don’t end up doing business with them direct, there is always the opportunity for a fantastic introduction to one of their colleagues.

Winning an Australian award makes a difference to a book’s prospects, in particular the Miles Franklin and Stella awards. “These days US agents and publishers particularly pay attention to the Stella.”

After Heather Rose won the Stella prize for *The Museum of Modern Love* we were able to get her a US and a British sale. Despite the fact that *Museum* is an international book, set in New York, we hadn’t managed to sell it internationally before it won the Stella. And this is another example of a sale that came about through the VIPs. A German publisher who met Heather in Australia handed the novel to an editor at Algonquin Press while at the Frankfurt Book Fair and told her she must publish it. She did.



Arky Levin is a film composer in New York separated from his wife, who has asked him to keep one devastating promise. One day he finds his way to The Atrium at MOMA and sees Marina Abramovic in *The Artist is Present*. The performance continues for seventy-five days and, as it unfolds, so does Arky. As he watches and meets other people drawn to the exhibit, he slowly starts to understand what might be missing in his life and what he must do.

This dazzlingly original novel asks beguiling questions about the nature of art, life and love and finds a way to answer them.

[Source: Publisher site]

Naher talks about how hard it is for Australian books to travel.

Unfortunately I think it has to do with parochialism, particularly in the US. Look at a writer like Cormac McCarthy who has been well-published all around the world; although he always uses regional vernacular you don't have Australian readers saying "He's too American", we just respond to the magnificent writing. The perennial rejection we face is "It's too Australian".

Left Bank Literary keeps up with international developments through industry newsletters and Naher and her partner, Grace Heifetz's networks.

We have a subscription to the US trade newsletter, *Publisher's Lunch*. Every day it announces new deals: fiction, non-fiction across a range of categories and this is a key source of information about which publishers are buying, and what. We don't subscribe to the British trade news, which is indicative of the fact that the British industry is worth a lot less to us.

Naher has changed her strategic approach to international travel and book fairs.

When I started my own agency I made a commitment to myself that I would travel each year to one of the key book fairs, to London or Frankfurt. The trips are hugely time-consuming involving weeks of compiling your rights guides and arranging your schedule beforehand, and then weeks of follow-up afterwards.

I did that for a couple of years and then I revised my plan because it was so extraordinarily hard—as an independent Australian agent—to make an impact at the fairs. I changed tack and decided that I would travel to New York and meet editors and agents in their office as often as I could and have subsequently made a number of annual selling trips to New York.

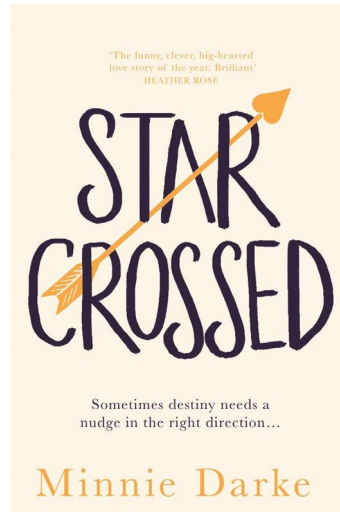
The focus on New York worked better because I found that if I was able to get a US agent to take on one of my clients' books and they were able to sell it in the US it was much easier to sell it elsewhere.

Left Bank Literary uses a translation agent based in London, the Marsh Agency.

They work with publishers particularly closely in Europe, and elsewhere in the world as well. We try to get them excited about a new book and bring them on board very early. Of particular note is Danielle Wood's novel, *Star-Crossed*, published under the name *Minnie Dark*. Danielle Wood won the Vogel Prize for

The Alphabet of Light and Dark in 2002 and she published a number of highly acclaimed literary books. I think of her as Australia's Angela Carter because of the way she plays with fairy tales.

Danielle conceived this brilliant romantic comedy, *Star-Crossed*, and I was able to get New York agent, Dan Lazar behind it. He and I both did significant deals for the book in our territories. Very early in that process the Marsh Agency also got behind it and subsequently sold it in 22 territories.



Rights sales for audio books have become significant.

Audio books are a much bigger force in our industry certainly than they were five years ago. A lot of the energy that surrounded ebooks has now moved to the audio book. eBooks were a boon for commercial writers but their sales plateaued and have started to drop. It seemed like a novelty for people to have all these books on one device, but anecdotally readers find print books much more enjoyable and satisfying. There is still a place for the ebook, but separately the audio book market has grown dramatically. A number of publishers are now producing their own audio books, such as Penguin Random House, and others work in partnership with the Australian players, Bolinda or Wave Sound.

Sales of film and television rights occupy a lot of agents' time.

I won't say it's easy to get a work of fiction optioned for film/TV. Probably for every 20 enquiries you have for the one book, there might be one option agreement done. Then only a small percentage of those option deals result in a production. One of my authors has had an option for five years with an Australian TV company. It was extended beyond its original term for another two years, and after all this time they have finally exercised the agreement to go into production. I could have licensed film/tv rights in this particular book many times over since the original option but even with that level of industry interest it is very hard for the producer to line up the finance required to go into production.

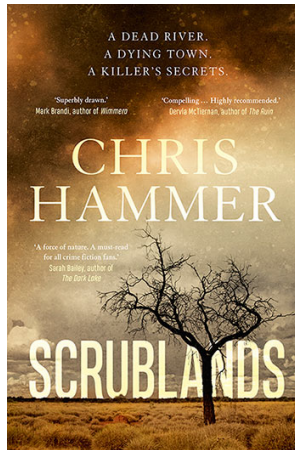
The benefits to authors of international rights sales include recognition and income.

I think rights sales get authors a different sort of recognition here in this market. It is always a good publicity story. Journalists are very interested in Australian authors' international success.

The financial significance of foreign rights sales cannot be underplayed. Suppose it takes the author three years to write a book before it's sold in Australia. Going on

to sell international rights is a game-changer, one book can be sold in multiple territories. With the exception of the US, advances, foreign advances are not necessarily bigger than the Australian advance.

It may also raise the profile of authors as contenders for overseas prizes, which increases the sales of their books further. “Chris Hammer won a Dagger award last year [from the Crime Writers Association of the United Kingdom].”



Set in a fictional Riverina town at the height of a devastating drought, *Scrublands* is one of the most powerful, compelling and original crime novels to be written in Australia.

Winner of the 2019 Crime Writers' Association Dagger New Blood Award for Best First Crime Novel.

[Source: Publisher site]

Naher has been the agent representative on the Visiting International Publishers (VIPs) committee in the last three or four years.

The programme is an invaluable way to make connections with editors and agents from all over the world. It can take years before you finally sell something to one of the visiting publishers, but the connection is nonetheless very important. It's all about finding a rapport and continuing a conversation with the agent or publisher about books.

Naher says there's genuine collegiality in the Australian publishing industry.

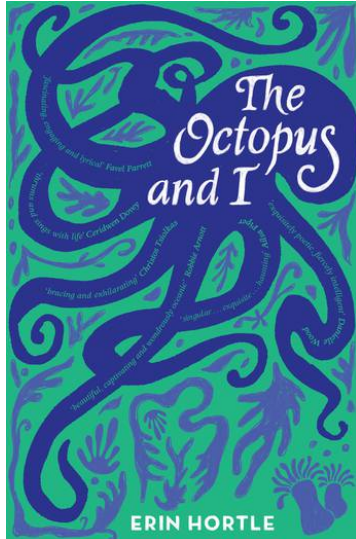
I hope it is strengthening. The rights selling trips are fantastic for that; it puts a bunch of people out in the world together who at home are quite competitive. It is fantastic to be able to share resources. I was fortunate enough to participate in two Australia Council rights selling delegations to New York in 2018 and 2019.

The Australian Literary Agents' Association provides a valuable collaborative environment for agents. There are things to learn all the time. I've recently partnered with Grace Heifetz from Curtis Brown. Grace worked there for 18 years. Between us we have a huge amount of experience, yet we still act as sounding boards for each other when we're negotiating any new deal or contract with a publisher.

Naher has been reflecting on the likely impact of COVID-19 on the Australian industry. She is especially concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on authors who have books scheduled for release.

Authors with new books coming out are in situations where all their events have been cancelled. Visiting book shops, meeting book sellers, launches, readings, festival appearances; all those things have been off the table during COVID. It goes to that issue of discoverability; how are readers going to know about new books, how are those new books going to break through all the other noise on social media?

I have a Tasmanian author, for example, whose first novel is being published, Erin Hortle's *The Octopus and I*. The book has extraordinary advance praise from other Australian writers. It's a beautiful edition. It was poised to make a big splash (pun aside), but all Erin's bookshop events have been cancelled, all her introductions to booksellers in Hobart and Melbourne have been cancelled. There's no longer the ability for readers to walk into book shops and pick up this beautiful book they haven't seen before and go, "Oh, isn't this exquisite?"



A stunning debut novel set on the Tasmanian coast that lays bare the wild, beating heart at the intersection of human and animal, love and loss, and fear and hope.

Lucy and Jem live on the Tasman Peninsula near Eaglehawk Neck, where Lucy is recovering from major surgery.

As she tries to navigate her new body through the world, she develops a deep fascination with the local octopuses, and in doing so finds herself drawn towards the friendship of an old woman and her son. As the story unfolds, the octopuses come to shape Lucy's body and her sense of self in ways even she can't quite understand.

[Source: Publisher site]

Some books will have their release postponed, "but by then there will be new books competing for space."

Ultimately, the stakes are about Australia's books and the culture that is built around books and writing.

We, the agents, are working for the authors. The more we can earn for our clients, the writers, the more time they have to write better books.

Publishers

Libby O'Donnell, HarperCollins Publishers Australia



Libby O'Donnell is Head of International Rights and International Business Development at HarperCollins Australia, where she has headed up the Rights Department since 2012. Prior to that she represented children's and educational publishers at the Australian Publishers Association, including international representation of the Australian industry at major international book fairs. She has also worked in the publishing industry in Japan, where she lived for almost three years after her undergraduate degree, and in bookselling. Postgraduate studies between 2009 and 2012 led her to undertake research tours in Japan and India, studying transnational Australian children's literature in the region. She is the 2011 recipient of the Pixie O'Harris Award for her contribution to Australian children's literature, was a founding member of the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation Board, and the 'Hello from Australia: Children's Book Illustration Exhibition' initiative at Bologna Book Fair.

Libby O'Donnell worked in bookselling during her undergraduate and post graduate university studies (including at New Edition and Ariel in Paddington, and Pentimento in Balmain and Newtown).

As an avid reader, who came from a big family of readers, I was lucky enough to find my dream job when looking for part time work while studying (although not completely by chance, I harassed my local independent bookstore, New Edition, because I loved the range of books it gave me access to, and the ideas, and exposure to local and international literature and writers). At New Edition I was privileged to work with poets Robert Gray, and Jamie Grant, who taught me so much. It was fantastic grounding for working in publishing, for understanding what people love and what people look for, what we have access to here in Australia and what we don't, and it gave me the opportunity to enrich my knowledge of literature. When working in publishing, it also helps to have a foundation knowledge of the bookselling side of the business, because so many parts of publishing can be compartmentalised, and you don't necessarily easily see how it all works. Then, later, working in publishing in Japan, and then for the Australian Publishers Association all of those things together meant that I was able to build a good sense of the business of publishing and how the whole industry works, not just individual areas. In Japan I dabbled in writing and copyediting, and worked for a while helping a Japanese translator with the translation of Australian YA author, John

Marsden's, work. These things together set me on the path that led to a career in publishing, and intellectual property rights management.

O'Donnell is one of Australia's most experienced rights sellers.

The best way to think of a rights management role is to see it as a position that combines many aspects of various roles in the book publishing process—from publishing and editorial, to high level client relationships (editors, agents, scouts, and other licensees), to author engagement and liaison, to sales, and complex legal and contract negotiation, and everything in between. People often make the mistake of thinking of the role as being exclusively a sales role, and that it's simply sending information about a book to a potential purchaser. But you're probably not going to get many successes that way. Rather we are building relationships with a shared vision for publishing the author's work over the long term. We make that connection with a publisher, we keep that connection, and in the best scenarios we continue to help build that author's profile and readership in that overseas market. It often involves talking to the author about changes to the cover or text in that overseas market, talking to the author about what they might do in terms of PR and marketing for their books. Sometimes it involves organising an author tour with a publisher overseas.

Relationships and industry knowledge are key.

Keeping the relationships going, knowing an editor's list and what they're interested in and potentially looking for, for example, is key. Understanding the nuances and trends in a particular territory, including your own, and keeping on top of award winning and bestselling titles, authors, and trends across the many territories is part of that too. Keeping the conversation going, so that your contacts know about what's happening in your market, and what exciting projects you have coming up, and of course fostering and managing these relationships with literary scouts and co-agents is part of that too. It makes all the difference when you know you have an author who can break through, or a book that speaks to a particular market or trend.

When O'Donnell joined HarperCollins Australia in 2012, the rights sales data dated back to sales activity from about 2000. There had been quite a lot of turnover in the rights management role prior to this.

O'Donnell's brief was to build from the successes which had taken place.

The first thing I did when I started in the role was to conduct an audit of all of the licensing data from 2008 to 2012 to make sure it was all clean. I had a fantastic person come on board as an assistant, and then she later became a rights and contracts associate. She had come from the insurance industry, and she was a fantastic administrator. We made sure everything in there was correct, we filled in the gaps, and then we had a baseline to work from. I could see, this is where we were in that year; what can we do the next year, and so on. So from that point, I could clearly work out what deals we were making and the associated revenue, what income the author was receiving, and had a clearer sense of what had worked for HarperCollins. We've continued that work of refining the data and database since then, and this is always a work in progress.

Databases are particularly important.

When you're trying to reach as many people as possible overseas, you need to have good contracts, title, and contact databases. Having a database in the background where

all of the detail can be managed, while someone like me is driving the relationship side is, I think, the key to successful rights sales.

O'Donnell explained the size of her team at HarperCollins.

If we're talking about my team and my responsibility, until recently it's been me and our rights and contracts associate, who also works half of the week with our contracts manager. We've recently increased resourcing in the Rights area, and we're now a team of three, with our rights associate recently taking on a full-time role in the department. As a team, we work directly with many other divisions and departments across the company, including Publishing, Contracts and Legal, Finance, Publishing Operations including Design, and Sales.

One of O'Donnell's first tasks was to learn about the list.

For anyone starting in a new company in a rights role, there's a massive learning curve to familiarise yourself with a company's list. Often there's a large backlist, including an immediate backlist, and then you have coming through the pipeline all of the new titles as well. You can spend quite a bit of time familiarising yourself with authors and the list.

In my case the range included our HarperCollins adult and children's imprints, the ABC Books adult and children's lists, and of course now it also includes our Harlequin titles. I spent the first year just familiarising myself. I could see there was a lot of opportunity with various books, including really strong HarperCollins non-fiction titles, and also our brilliant children's list. We'd done well in genre fiction in terms of rights sales in the past, but increasingly over the past 9 years, our amazing fiction publishers have acquired so many award-winning and bestselling literary and commercial fiction titles, and it's in this area that we have seen some of our strongest rights opportunities in recent years. I'm fortunate to be working with the best in the business at HarperCollins, my publishing colleagues across all divisions are second to none, and we collaborate with the very best authors and creators in Australia and New Zealand. It's a winning combination, and it's based on this strength that we are able to build a successful publishing program locally, which then translates to increasing success overseas.

Starting from that base of knowing the authors, titles and lists well, my strategy has been to focus on a range of tasks: trying to prioritise some titles, so that we could have some real successes, while still representing all of our titles. From our perspective if we hold the rights, it's very important to represent those rights. So it's always been about trying to manage that whole, while finding ways to make those titles that are going to have the potential for very strong success overseas get pushed to the fore. I would say there is still a constant tweaking and changing to make that work well, and to keep creating as many opportunities as possible. For example, with titles that have strong international appeal we run significant campaigns around the book fair periods, which includes targeted submissions for each individual title/author across a 6 to 8 week period leading up to the fairs, with substantial representation at the fairs themselves, including in multimedia displays as part of the global HarperCollins stand, and representation at meetings with editors, agents, scouts and other licensees. All of our titles are represented in our rights guides, which are shared with contacts via our substantial licensing contacts database, and in regular meetings, and via submissions—we put out a new rights guide twice a year, in preparation for the London and Bologna Book Fairs and then for the Frankfurt Book Fair.

O'Donnell's experience is that success in rights sales is built on professional contacts.

It's all about the contacts. It's all about maintaining the contacts and building those contacts, and it's all about the relationship and the conversation. My best advice is to set up your systems in the background to support you to have those conversations. Have the background data handled and supported, so that you can get up there and have conversations daily, and be talking to people about the books, and projects for those books, whether it be publication in another territory, or in translation, or as an adaptation such as in film or television, stage performance, or audio.

The timing for taking manuscripts to market for rights sales varies.

We put all of our books into our rights guides, and that's the point at which we start talking about them. We have manuscripts at different points of development so we have a process for that. Let's say for Frankfurt 2020, we would have titles in the new release guide that were up until about June 2021. So the 2020 guide will include everything that's new that we haven't had in the 2019 catalogue. We will have final manuscripts or shareable material for some new books, and for others we won't. We talk to people about what we have that they can read immediately, and what we have coming up. If they are interested in something coming up that we don't have shareable material for yet, we keep a record and send it on to them when we have it. We transition most titles over to our backlist catalogues after two book fair periods. These backlist guides are essential for telling the bigger picture about an author, and we receive just as much interest in titles from these guides as we do with the new release guides.

In recent times O'Donnell has seen increasing success with the children's list and some literary fiction titles in recent years.



In children's publishing, we've started to see some real success with Matt Stanton overseas. We've been publishing Matt's books locally since 2015, and we're over one million copies sold of his titles locally now, which is incredible in such a short period of time. Those numbers definitely help when reaching out to editors. But I knew fairly early on that Matt was going to be the type of author that we could really promote and build overseas. The overseas success started with the series Matt wrote and illustrated with his partner, Beck Stanton, called the *Books that Drive Kids Crazy*. It's a picture book series and we worked extensively on that, from about six months prior to when the first book was published. Over the course of a year, we signed a six figure deal in the US for the first three picture books, which is incredible, because picture books can be quite tricky to sell. The second book in that series went on to become a finalist in the picture book category of the prestigious CBC Children's and Teen Choice book awards in the US, which is an amazing achievement for Matt and Beck. We've continued to increase Matt's publishing overseas, and that's growing all the time.

We generally work directly with publishers and editors in the North American and UK markets. I have used co-agents several times but in most cases I do this only if there is some urgency and I think they can reach more people more quickly for a specific title. I'm very particular about when I do this, and in my experience it can at times remove too much of a direct connection with the creative team for the book (the author, and our publishing team), who know the book, the author, our plans and successes locally, and the passion behind the book and author, so well. I don't use co-agents in the English language territories if I am running a campaign for a title. My strategy for the *Books that Drive Kids Crazy* was to reach out to all my contacts and tell them about the first book, and keep on building that story around the book and the author, by staying in touch with those contacts, and keeping the conversation about the book and author going. From my perspective, it's rare, if not impossible, for a book to be licensed on the first email you send out to people, because people have so much to look at, and like every publisher here locally, they are curating their list. An editor may love a book or an author's work, but that doesn't mean they and their colleagues are ready or willing to publish it, unfortunately.

It's all about building that story. The things that work best for me—are combining my own knowledge and interest in the book and author, great advance publication reader endorsements, or reviews, but also endorsements from the publisher (in HarperCollins Australia) who is the initial driving force of any acquisition and has worked directly with the author from the very beginning. Having the right combination of those things is the best entree into a conversation for me, and having one of our publishers tell me what they love about the book in their own words speaks volumes to another editor. I can put together a good package that grabs people's attention, and starts the conversation, but I then have to build on that by coming back with more information, more points of interest (endorsements, reviews, awards listings, sales) to continue the conversation. It's very easy for a title to slip to the bottom of an editor's reading pile, even if they love it, because there is always something else waiting to be read.

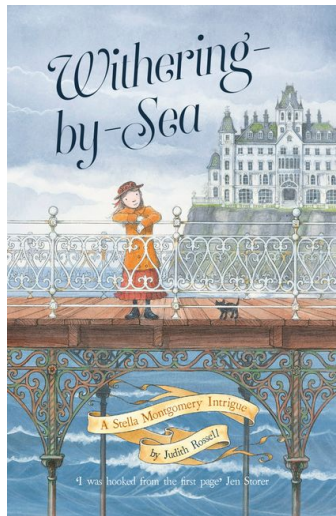


High on a cliff above the gloomy coastal town of Withering-by-Sea stands the Hotel Majestic. Inside the walls of the damp, dull hotel, eleven-year-old orphan Stella Montgomery leads a miserable life with her three dreadful Aunts.

But one night, Stella sees something she shouldn't have ... Something that will set in motion an adventure more terrifying and more wonderful than she could ever have hoped for ...

Winner -- 2015 Indie Awards, Book of the Year: Children's & YA; Winner -- 2015 Australian Book Industry Awards, Book of the Year: Older Children; Winner -- 2015 Davitt Awards; Honour Book -- 2015 Children's Book Council of Australia Awards; Shortlisted -- 2015 Prime Minister's Literary Awards; Shortlisted -- 2014 Aurealis Awards; Shortlisted -- 2017 Australian Book Design Awards.

[Source: Publisher site]



We've done very well with Judith Rossell's three book *Stella Montgomery* series. We didn't have the international rights in that series initially. Judith had an American agent who had those rights, who retired not long after the first book was published. And so the rights came to us. It is a perfect package of books to be out in the international market. They are beautifully written stories and well considered books, beautifully packaged, highly regarded, with fantastic reviews, and of course highly awarded. It's a middle-grade series and there are always publishers out there looking for great middle-grade. They've been published in the US, and licensed in German, Japanese, Russian, Korean, Spanish, Catalan, and Basque, to date, with more territories to come, I'm sure.

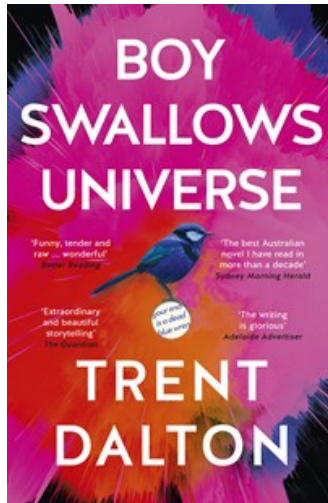
In 2014 HarperCollins acquired the Harlequin company, which also publishes Mills and Boon.

We're still in the very beginning stages of working on HQN rights sales, but we are starting to see some successes, most recently with Tea Cooper's titles in North America, which are being published by my colleagues at HarperCollins Focus under the HarperMuse imprint. Harlequin lists are substantial and very diverse. In Rights, we don't work on Mills and Boon (or 'series' titles as we call them). We focus on the HQ and Mira imprints (and also the Escape digital first list via our Harper360 distribution program). In rights we work on the HQ list which focuses on quality fiction and non-fiction, and our Mira and Escape lists which encompass the very best of genre fiction. One key focus for the next year is to develop our genre fiction contact relationships and database, for specialised genre fiction submissions. As with the rest of our imprints, HQ titles with strong international appeal are also included in campaigns.

O'Donnell discusses some high profile successes in literary fiction.

It's been a privilege to work on some of our very best literary fiction over the years. I would say as a general observation, Australian literary fiction is often skewed to our market and our readerships, not surprisingly. Our literary fiction can be very different to say, American literary fiction, which traditionally tended to be in the form of the "big saga", the big story. Australian literary fiction is distinctive, and we've started to see more of it being picked up on a larger scale. In recent years it's been interesting to see

various titles bridge that gap between the distinctive and different styles of literary fiction across the English language territories. These have often been titles that either fall into the literary saga category, or which capture the attention of editors looking for distinctive voices and writing in the growing Uplit and Upmarket fiction categories (terms we use in the industry). Some of my successes in literary fiction rights sales have been in those crossover areas, including books by Trent Dalton and Meg Mason.



Boy Swallows Universe - Brisbane, 1983: A lost father, a mute brother, a mum in jail, a heroin dealer for a stepfather and a notorious crim for a babysitter. It's not as if Eli's life isn't complicated enough already.

He's just trying to follow his heart, learning what it takes to be a good man, but life just keeps throwing obstacles in the way - not least of which is Tytus Broz, legendary Brisbane drug dealer.

But Eli's life is about to get a whole lot more serious. He's about to fall in love. And, oh yeah, he has to break into Boggo Road Gaol on Christmas Day, to save his mum.

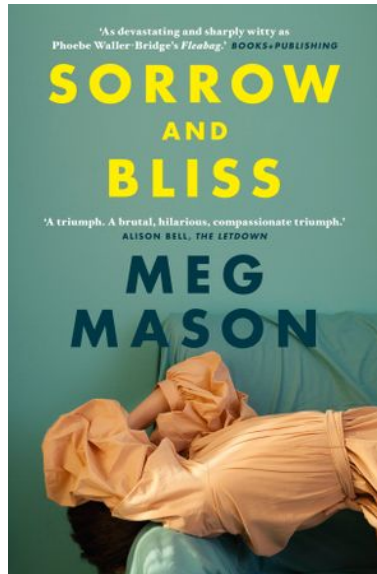
[Source: Publisher site]

We have done phenomenally well with Trent Dalton, with both *Boy Swallows Universe* and also now increasingly with *All Our Shimmering Skies*. *Boy Swallows Universe* was a huge success internationally, in terms of the number of territories sold and also with a substantial deal for film and television, and a stage adaptation. *All Our Shimmering Skies* has also been acquired for television.

Boy Swallows Universe was selected for the HarperCollins global publication program. The global publication program started about three years ago. The idea is to be able to leverage the relationship and the communication between each HarperCollins entity globally to lift a book and market it as well as possible and that's the benefit to the author. There are potential benefits for the authors financially as well. We had previously been doing that with some of the bigger international authors, like Karin Slaughter.

In this case, *Boy Swallows Universe* was the first literary Australian book—and one of the first literary fiction titles—to be picked up by a large number of the HarperCollins entities. It is a very Australian story, so it's remarkable in a way that it has been embraced so widely overseas. I would say that the reason is the story—Trent is very good at telling a big all-encompassing story that people relate to universally, in such a beautiful way—he's a master storyteller, a listener with a keen interest in people, and a wordsmith by trade, and those things made for the most compelling literary fiction. Apart from that people are curious about Australia, and the combination of those things is what overseas publishers found so compelling.

O'Donnell was able to do one of her biggest rights sales deals at the 2020 Frankfurt book fair for *Sorrow and Bliss*.



Spiky, sharp, intriguingly dark and tender, full of pathos, fury and wit, *Sorrow and Bliss* by Meg Mason is a dazzling, distinctive novel from a boldly talented writer. For fans of Sally Rooney, Taffy Brodesser-Akner and *Fleabag*.

This novel is about a woman called Martha. She knows there is something wrong with her but she doesn't know what it is. Her husband Patrick thinks she is fine. He says everyone has something, the thing is just to keep going.

Martha told Patrick before they got married that she didn't want to have children. He said he didn't mind either way because he has loved her since he was fourteen and making her happy is all that matters, although he does not seem able to do it.

By the time Martha finds out what is wrong, it doesn't really matter anymore. It is too late to get the only thing she has ever wanted. Or maybe it will turn out that you can stop loving someone and start again from nothing - if you can find something else to want.

[Source: Publisher site]

Sorrow and Bliss by Meg Mason has been phenomenal and it will continue to grow. We're up to around 29 publishing territories for this brilliant book, and we sold film and television rights in a highly competitive auction. It is another example of what we call Upmarket fiction, which falls into a crossover area—literary fiction that can work well in the commercial fiction market. The scale of the opportunity for rights sales can be different than you might see with some of the other more locally specific literary fiction.

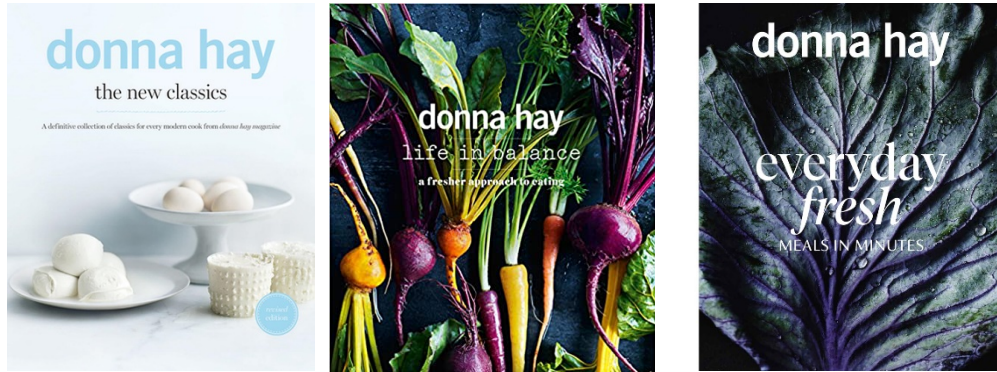
O'Donnell also emphasised her commitment to literary fiction that doesn't fall into the rare crossover category.

We have many amazing literary fiction titles that may not go on to huge success overseas, but there often are publishers out there who are looking for them. We always work on those titles for that reason, because while they may not be an example of one of those global titles, they are titles that can do quite well in different territories. We're always working on those books as well. Sometimes it's quite hard to see where that opportunity lies because it can be that there is a brilliant book, a beautifully written book, but there are competing titles in the market at the time, so you can't actually get the interest that you want for the author.

So it's never a matter of being able to go, okay, this book is going to do phenomenally well overseas. You can generally get a sense that a book has "legs" for the overseas market but you won't know how big that interest can be until you're out there in the market with it, hearing what people are saying or noticing that people are resonating with certain aspects of that book.

O'Donnell discussed her experiences in non-fiction publishing.

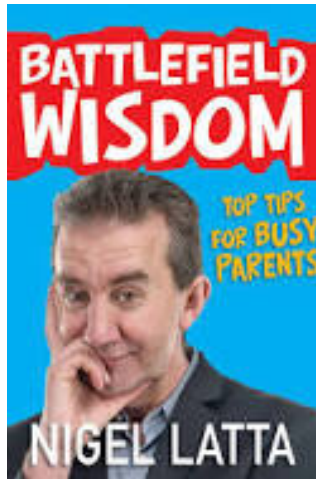
Non-fiction in my experience is a varied area and when you're selling non-fiction, you're selling it to so many different types of publishers. You can meet with a non-fiction publisher who specialises in cooking for instance, or design books. Then you could meet with a non-fiction publisher who publishes general trade non-fiction. Of all of the lists, that's the list that you have to curate most, because you need to know who you're going out to. There are specialist war publishers, publishers who specialise in narrative non-fiction, for instance. It's the area where you need to have the broadest contacts and broadest knowledge of publishing.



Donna Hay has been very successful in overseas markets for many years. She is published by both specialist cookbook publishers and trade publishers. Germany and Netherlands are big markets for her books. We have her titles in the Harper360 program now in English language territories.

We do very well with our practical non-fiction in lots of different territories, including parenting books and anything to do with self-help. Steven Biddulph has sold phenomenally well with his titles. *The Secret of Happy Children* was originally published in 1984, and a German publisher has been publishing it since close to then. The book has sold over three-quarters of a million copies in Germany. We have the rights for his first three books (including *More Secrets of Happy Children*). We then published *Raising Girls*, *Raising Boys* and my colleagues at HarperCollins UK acquired the world rights. They handled the international rights for his latest book. His books do very well in the UK and are published in 31 languages.

Sometimes a book can take off in one particular market. It will do well in other markets but one market becomes a stand out. You can't necessarily take the size of one market as a guide to what will happen in another market.

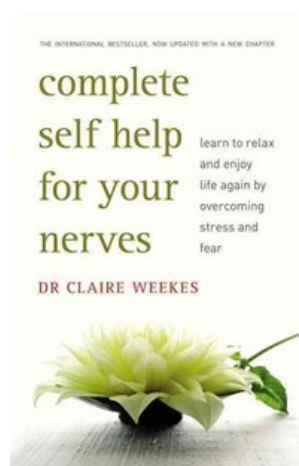


Somehow, somewhere, parenting has become far too complicated and serious. Battlefield Wisdom is the perfect antidote. Somehow, somewhere, parenting has become far too complicated and serious. BATTLEFIELD WISDOM is the perfect antidote. As a gift for newbie parents, or a soothing balm for the bumps and bruises of the seasoned veteran, this handy little pocket-sized book is for all those who've been worn down by the dreary, politically correct, guilt-inducing Dr Fudgebuffers telling us all what a rotten job we're doing. Bestselling author and clinical psychologist Nigel Latta takes you on an entertaining, irreverent, and utterly unapologetic ride through the realities of parenting in this brave new child-centred world.

[Source: Publisher site]

We've also done very well with Nigel Latta's parenting books. Nigel Latta is a New Zealand author. We also represent New Zealand authors and we work extensively on the rights of New Zealand titles.

The feedback I get from translation territories is that the publishers relate to the style of parenting in Australia and New Zealand in comparison to guides from other large markets. It fascinates me because I don't know what the differences are but there is definitely overseas interest. They are great books: written by fantastic and knowledgeable authors. Nigel and Steve are educational specialists and perhaps it's that these particular authors are more able to translate their work to books more effectively.



[An] Essential guide for everything you need to know to keep relaxed through every day life. Repackage of the phenomenally successful guide to dealing with nervous illness -- Self Help for Your Nerves. This guide offers the most comprehensive insight and advice into coping with nervous stress. Sufferers of nervous illness regard Self Help for Your Nerves as their bible -- many believe that if they had found it earlier they would have been saved years of unnecessary suffering.

[Source: Publisher site]

Dr Claire Weekes's books about mental health have recently been revived as well. She was originally published in 1990 and was quite progressive and influential for her time. She is deceased. Her books are quite old now, but they still sell well in Australia and also very well overseas. When we have books that stand the test of time publishers can respond by packaging them into new editions. The US publisher recently released a new edition, and that has started the process of us negotiating a whole new lot of licences in different territories.

There are also examples of conversations with rights buyers that can happen over a longer period of time, for example the area of publishing around military history, or publishing around niche topics, like boating. You can have conversations happening with publishers in different territories over a number of years, and all of a sudden you might find some success with one of those titles.

O'Donnell is pragmatic about the practicalities of selling to the UK.

Historically, the UK market has included the ANZ market, and the ANZ market is a very strong market. When UK publishers express reservations to the prospect of buying UK rights without the ANZ territories I think it's a mechanistic response, rather than a personal response. People have their own budgets and costings in the background, and when they are looking at a costing that doesn't include Canada or ANZ, potentially, that's a substantial amount of income that they would have received previously. So they have to convince their sales and marketing and other colleagues in the company that a UK acquisition is viable. It's all about whether they can make a case for the book in their company without the ANZ market.

There is a sort of immediate fortification there, where people's immediate response to a book is, well, if they can't have the Australian market then I'm not interested. But if you can break through with the right book, there can be quite a lot of interest despite those obstacles. I have just held a very competitive five-way auction in the UK for *Sorrow and Bliss*, by Meg Mason. That book is set in the UK, and it is a very strong market for Meg because she has lived and worked there.

O'Donnell discussed the types of books she is able to pitch successfully. "Definitely a book that I love, and that other people love. If you connect with it yourself it's a big plus." Another key factor is preparing the timing of a campaign.

Not every book is going to get a campaign, but they will get promotion out there. But being able to drive a campaign can make a massive difference to a book that is potentially going to be a very big book.

If you have an exceptionally strong book, the best thing you can do for it is run a campaign so that everyone focuses on it at the same time, to draw out the best offers and the best opportunity for that book and that author. It's about the book landing in the right hands. It's not just about comparing the offers for advance and the royalty. The pitch from overseas publishers includes the marketing campaign planned for that territory and also what speaks to them about that book. That is also very important for the author, because they want to stay with a publisher. For example, I set up meetings for Meg Mason with all of the five publishers in the UK and the film and television producers, and their responses to the book were a key consideration.

From my experience the best successes happen when the whole team is behind a campaign locally, and then I can leverage that internationally. The timing for that is important for me. It works best if I can get the book early enough and also get enough advanced reader responses early enough, because generally it takes quite a while to get the right sorts of deals.

So it's all about getting a campaign right, getting the timing right and driving it towards what you want on the back of what the local publishing team have set up. My best results have been with that process.

I think we are better set up to do that now. It's not that we were blind as a company to international opportunities previously. A publisher needs to publish for the local market first. It really can't work any other way. Now, we are getting better at taking what we are doing locally and finding the best opportunities overseas. Brian Murray (HarperCollins CEO) has a global vision for the company, and it's been on the back of that vision that we've established the very successful HarperCollins Global Publishing Program, and the Harper360 distribution program.

O'Donnell works with sub-agents on translation rights.

We have sub-agents in a lot of territories, and we work closely with them. We also have the global publishing program, where we reach out to our sister companies. I work directly with some territories where we don't have an agent, via publishing contacts that we've built up over the years. Over time I've added in agents for more territories.

O'Donnell described what she looks for in a sub-agent.

Someone that you can work really well with, because obviously it's a very close relationship. Someone who, for me, can manage a big list, because not everyone can do that. I have to work out initially whether that agent can manage both our adult and our children's list. Sometimes, I've separated those lists in some markets because I think it's just too big. I may want to work with an agent, but I think they're not set up or it's going to cause a problem for them if I give them too big a list to work on. We could go directly (to publishers), but it's so important to have someone who is hearing everything about all the books for that territory rather than just your books, and knows their market well. The sub-agents bring market-specific knowledge, particularly when there's a language difference. Also, if you didn't use co-agents, if you dealt directly from Australia, you would need to have more people working in your rights team managing those relationships, for example, with 50 publishers internationally. We couldn't resource that locally. I meet with translation publishers all the time but the agent representing you in that foreign language territory is a key role.

Book scouts also play an essential role.

The book scouts are amazing. Having a relationship with the scouts is key to success in rights. If they love a book as much as you do, and I work really hard on enthusing them, if they love it too, they have quite a lot of influence.

There are lots of book scouts and they all work with different clients. I will pick and choose as well. If I think a book is great for a certain publisher, and I know that they will love it, then I will reach out to their scout, because their scout is quite influential for that publisher.

O'Donnell reflects on what success means in her role and for the authors she represents.

For both of us, it's the excitement of being published overseas, and the fact that you can get this book in the hands of another publisher who loves it just as much as you do, and then takes it out to readers in their territories. For me, that happens on a daily basis. We pick up a book locally because we love that book and we badly want to publish it, and so I would say success is the deal where you get that book into the hands of someone overseas who loves it as much as you do, and they want to run with it and try and get it to their readers and make it a success. I would say that every single publisher who picks up a book intends to do that. That would be my first measure of success.

There are so many different types of success. Financially, you can make a big difference to an author's life by getting a book out there and making a huge success with the rights. That is quite hard to do. It doesn't happen very often. A very small number of authors are in the situation where you can substantially change their lives by doing that. But that is important for me, because it is hard to be a writer and hard to live on what you make from writing in one territory like Australia. So this means something to me; to be able to try and help authors in that way.

Another form of success would be that we aim to increase our rights sales and our rights revenue every year, across the board for all of our titles.

O'Donnell discusses the expectations of authors.

I think generally authors don't understand rights sales. They have an idea of rights from having talked to other people and read industry coverage. Mostly they don't know what to expect, and they are hopeful, like you would be. Sometimes, those expectations are merited and sometimes they are not because some books have more of a market overseas than others. Every book can potentially have some readers overseas but not every book can have a market overseas that makes it viable to publish.

Some authors express their expectations to me, some don't, and so you don't know sometimes what their expectation is. I deal directly with a lot of authors, so my approach is to explain what we do and how we go about it, and to try to keep them realistic about the opportunities while being open to the possibilities.

We don't have a process for conveying all of our overseas feedback. I only convey it if asked or if the publishers (in HarperCollins Australia) ask. The reason is because of the volume of information you get back from publishers overseas. Also that information may sometimes not mean anything. It may just mean that that person has a stock standard paragraph that they send back to something they want to decline, that doesn't sound too offensive. It may or may not mean anything about that book. I never pass verbatim comments back to authors unless there's a reason to do that, because I'm on the receiving end of those emails all the time, every day those flow back in. But if you have maybe ten responses saying the same thing, that's useful information. I will always pass that on to the publishers, and they may pass that on to the agents or the author. In some cases this feedback can be useful in considering what changes might work for that market, and when I'm talking to people about the book I can pre-empt that issue and say, perhaps this is a way of dealing with it.

Sometimes, overseas rights buyers will refer to competing titles in their market, and so they can't see a niche for a book for that reason. It may be there's something with a book that means it's going to be harder to get this into a market. They may comment that it's too Australian focused. In the case of non-fiction, if the author is based in Australia it is quite hard for an overseas publisher, particularly in the US and the UK—I wouldn't say so much in translation territories—to promote the book. In lots of cases they would prefer to work with a non-fiction author in their market, because they are there to promote it and often they already have a profile.

O'Donnell has recently experienced overseas interest in books by authors from more diverse backgrounds than previously.

Overseas editors and publishers are asking for different perspectives, stories from different cultural backgrounds that they may not have in their own territories. We have had some amazing books, memoirs in particular, that are beautifully written, which have had wonderful responses here and also from the people reading them overseas, but my

overseas contacts may already have people who have a similar story to tell in their own country. So they tend to want stories that they don't have access to in their own country. It might be a book written by an Indigenous Australian author. I've had people asking recently, do you have any voices from the Asia-Pacific region, people writing fiction, in particular.

O'Donnell has experienced an increase in rights sales over the past ten years until 2018 (the timeframe of this study).

I've been in the job for a while now. I think that helps. Rights is very much an area where it is all about contacts. It is all about being able to understand your own lists, understand other people's lists, know what's happening internationally with publishing. You can only get that knowledge over a longer period of time. But also, opportunities have increased, I think. Technology has helped with that, and is increasingly helping. That question of databases is a key one for me. Having one platform where you can do everything you need to, where all the information is contained in the one place, is the ideal, and you can communicate from that to do the other important work of rights, which involves the contacts and the conversations. My dream is to have a database with everything in the one spot, where you can manage everything. If it is hard for us to do, it is almost impossible for publishers who don't have as much resourcing because it is very time consuming. Keeping the data clean and keeping it up-to-date takes a lot of managing.

Book fairs are a critical place for establishing new professional relationships.

Book fairs are a big part of rights sales. Now we as an industry know how hard it is without them nearly two years on from the start of the pandemic. Having meetings online is a stopgap. We do it because we have to make it work but it's not a replacement for book fair because you can have a situation where you haven't been in touch with that person for the last six months, but you pick up immediately when you have a face-to-face meeting, and that keeps that relationship going. Also, you can fit so much more into a book fair. I can fit in over 100 meetings at the Frankfurt Book Fair during six to seven days. Online we have to spread that out over a long period of time and over different timezones with all the complexities and difficulties that come with that, it's exhausting.

O'Donnell compared her experiences of traditional book fairs with participating in the 2020 Frankfurt book fair by digital communication only.

Book fairs are fantastic for creating structure around a rights year. It is all happening in the one area, with lots of networking and opportunities to see people outside those meetings. You can cover a lot of ground in a half hour meeting face to face and you can't do the same online.

O'Donnell discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rights sales.

There are markets where I know that we may not get deals this year that we might have got deals for in the past, because of the effects of the pandemic. In some of those markets it is only the top tier titles that are being picked up; books that might rise above other considerations, in that the publisher desperately needs it now or there's a competitor who wants it. China would be one of those markets, and some of the European markets were badly affected with extensive bookstore closures. Despite these obstacles, we made our rights budget last year because as some opportunities closed off, others opened up. Where there were markets that were affected, we shifted our focus to

the markets that weren't affected. The English language markets rebounded quickly and we had some strong titles with international appeal. Because we already have those relationships in place we can do that.

Most overseas publishers delayed publication of their own books because of disruptions in the marketplace. Which means that if they are picking up new titles, they're looking at publishing them further in the future. In some cases, publishers are thinking that they can treat overseas titles as secondary to their local market. I think we will find there have been effects from this period across the board in different territories.

O'Donnell has experienced an increase in sales of film and television rights in recent years, which is driven by television.

There is so much television being made, and so many more people are watching series. It was probably two or three years ago that the film and television industry realised that they should be tapping into stories that are already out there and already structured. Those relationships started to increase a few years ago, and probably in good timing for what is happening now, which is there is a lot of interest in books to television, and there's a lot of opportunity for the right books. Our deals with film and television have been much more substantial in the last couple of years than there were previously.

HarperCollins Australia has invested in this area. We understand the structures of the deals around television, which are quite different to film. There is a lot of interest in the right type of material that translates to television, and knowing what that material is, and also having the right connections into that industry are important.

If we have a campaign running and we have the film and TV rights, that is the best scenario for us because you can leverage the interest in getting the best offers from publishers and for television rights.

O'Donnell is dealing with the US and UK film and TV industry as well as the Australian industry,

My biggest deals have been with a combined group of people from here, the US and the UK to elevate the entire offer in a highly competitive bid for those rights. We had a lot of competition for *Boy Swallows Universe*, so it made sense for those bidders for the television rights to join together. In the end there were about six groups bidding at that auction. It's a totally different industry to publishing, it works very differently. But because we have had some big deals that have given us some insight into how that world works, that industry works, and more contacts as well. Those big successes are usually in combination with the success of the book as well. Those deals can happen without the success of the book, but to drive the interest to a strong deal, one that you have more say over or insight into, you have to have the whole publishing side happening as well. You can have a great book, but unless you can get it out there and get some competition for that book, then you are selling just to one person who loves the book.

O'Donnell praises support from the Australia Council and the Copyright Agency in contributing to the Australian book industry's success in rights sales.

The combined support for the industry from the Australia Council and Copyright Agency has played a big role in the Australian industry's success overseas. That has made a big difference to the way that we present ourselves to the world as a group. The market investigation support from the Australia Council is a big factor. We have had great successes from some of those market investigations, but also in terms of

increasing the numbers of contacts that we have; understanding the markets better and knowing what the challenges in those markets might be, that you can't see from a distance, that you need to look at yourself, so going to the bookstores, understanding more closely how the publishing industry works over there.

The more coordinated, bringing together of Australian publishers with international publishers in overseas forums like the Frankfurt book fair is very important as well. On the back of VIPs we've had some great gatherings at some of those book fairs, and also VIPs has been incredible, a huge success for us in Australia, and such a great program. It shows that if you keep doing what you plan to do, over time that makes a massive difference.

O'Donnell has been on industry delegations to New York, Taiwan, and China.

The most recent delegation was to New York in 2019 and that was very valuable. If you are in a book fair meeting, you have half an hour with a contact that you made, have already known for a while, and you are trying to both find out what is happening for their list and tell them about your amazing books. It is not a huge amount of time to obtain broad information, you get bits and pieces. I've been to the USA before but the market investigation delegations give you that a package of hearing from each company about what is working for them or what is not working for them in their territory and their list, the challenges in their industry, and having the opportunity to meet face-to-face with people who may not be your contact in that company. It was helpful in so many different ways. Just the number of meetings that we had. You have much more opportunity to have time to understand a particular company and what's going on for them. It's fantastic.

O'Donnell believes that the Australian industry is becoming more knowledgeable about international rights sales, and there is more of a focus across the industry than previously.

Every person who has been working in rights for the last 10 to 15 years has understood the challenges involved in taking books that are published in this market and finding other publishers overseas or make them a success overseas. You have to understand so many areas of publishing to be able to do that, and you have to understand the global perspective as well. The more people understand the challenges for getting our books out into the global markets the better

It has probably only been in the last few years that people in the Australian industry more broadly have started seeing more of the nuance of what it takes to actually make that happen. Previously we were focused on our books here in Australia, and we have to be to make it a success in this market. So we publish a book. Everyone focuses on the book, and our focus is to make it work here as a company. Historically, it has been the rights department that is trying to do that everywhere else. That is a substantial task. Any rights manager or rights director will be managing upwards of 15 to 22 agents in different territories, focusing on our books in those varied markets. To keep that global focus takes quite a bit of work. I think that all of the publishing company more broadly is starting to become more in tune with what it takes to do that successfully. I can see it changing naturally over the next few years, as the industry becomes even more globalised, as companies start to see more of the opportunity that exists outside our own territories.

As part of her broader role in international business development O'Donnell was also involved in setting up HarperAudio.

That's been a massive challenge for me. We now have quite a very successful program called HarperAudio, which sees us publishing with an audio partner for a substantial number of books per year. For me the biggest challenge is everything coming in at the same time and managing the whole portfolio. From my perspective literary fiction, children's books, non-fiction, popular science, memoir—really any book that lends to being read out loud—can do well as long as the delivery mechanism is there. Having said that it's very expensive to produce so that has to be taken into account.

O'Donnell praises the contribution of government support and stresses its ongoing role in the expansion of rights sales.

Government support has played a big role, working in tandem with individual publishing companies, which are creating their own opportunities as well. The support we have had from the Australia Council is very important, and whenever there have been any situations where that has been reduced, it has been quite difficult. It is all about the long-term in rights and licensing. So if you remove some support, it has a compounding impact.

It is all about continuity of support. The VIPs program is the perfect example. That has created a substantial number of international contacts over a period, and there are a substantial number of successes out of that individual program. It is all about keeping that support there, not taking it away, and continually looking for opportunities, where we can grow those markets. There is only so much you can do as an individual company to do that. As an industry you can make a lot more impact, alongside what you are doing individually in a company.

O'Donnell believes that the Australian industry has become more experienced and more collegial in developing international rights sales.

The larger Australian publishers, including the independents, have had some representation at fairs for a while, but there is now more of a consistent focus from the companies themselves. We have become more savvy globally. We realise there are markets out there that we can tap into.

That has changed quite a lot since I've been at HarperCollins as well. We used to be quite tied up and busy with our own work and it was quite hard to find the time to come together and promote Australian literature, or to come together and share as much knowledge as we do now. We do a lot more of that now, in terms of what we can do as an Australian industry, to promote Australian books and authors. I think we are a lot better at it than we used to be.

This is what's at the heart of publishing—an author writes a book, and a publisher loves that book. You have to love a book to be able to publish it well. When we have a deal come through, a great result for a particular title or a book, it is always fantastic. It is great for the author, and it is great for us. Authors are always incredibly excited about having their book published for readers in another territory.

It's one of the joys of working in rights, you get to be on the receiving end of people's love for those books, or a book that you may love yourself and it comes back in waves, particularly when it's a very successful book. I have been in the situation where when we are at the height of a campaign, and you have waves of that enthusiasm coming at you, with all of these amazing responses where people have connected strongly to a book. You can have that happening with lots of territories at the same time, with

individual editors falling in love with a book, whether for the same or different reasons, and expressing that. Passing that feedback on to the author and the publishing team is just fantastic, that's what the job is all about. That's the fun part!

Ivor Indyk, Giramondo Publishing



The Giramondo Publishing Company is an independent, Australian, university-based literary publisher of award-winning poetry, fiction and non-fiction, renowned for the quality of its writing, editing and book design.



Ivor Indyk is founding editor and publisher of HEAT magazine and the award-winning Giramondo book imprint, and Whitlam Professor in the Writing and Society Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney.

Important Australian authors published by him at Giramondo include Alexis Wright (recipient of the Miles Franklin Literary Award), Brian Castro, Gerald Murnane, Nicholas Jose, Judith Beveridge, Jennifer Maiden, Robert Gray, Gig Ryan, Beverley Farmer and Antigone Kefala; and amongst younger writers Lisa Gorton, Alice Melike Ülgezer, Tom Cho, Vanessa Berry, Luke Beesley and Kate Middleton. He has a particular interest in the development and publication of writers from the Western Sydney region, most recently Fiona Wright, Felicity Castagna, Luke Carman and Mohammed Ahmad.

A critic, essayist and reviewer, he has written a monograph on David Malouf for Oxford University Press, and essays on many aspects of Australian literature, art, architecture and publishing.

On 4 September 2019 Ivor Indyk, founder and publisher of Giramondo, delivered the Boissabouvier Oration at the Melbourne Writers Festival. Indyk characterised his field of literary publishing as at 'the far edge of trade publishing, or as a barely visible enclave within it, its titles scarcely known to the general reader, and bought by few, its existence dependent on what is more like a subsistence economy'. Giramondo's books are frequently shortlisted for and winners of prestigious awards including the Prime Minister's and Premiers' literary awards. Over time, authors published by Giramondo have achieved important critical acclaim, are invited to participate in prestigious international literary festivals and have their work set on education curricula in Australia and overseas. However, the books are published with 'a belief in posterity' and the numbers they sell on publication are modest: in the hundreds for poetry, essay collections and literary translation, and in low thousands for memoirs, biographies and fiction.

From Giramondo's inception in 2002 Indyk actively promoted opportunities for international engagement by its authors including introducing their work to overseas critics, publishers and literary scholars. Not all of Giramondo's authors are published internationally, however Indyk has developed literary networks in the US, UK, Europe,

China and South America through a combination of academic, diplomatic and niche commercial literary publishing circuits.

Giramondo is based at Western Sydney University. Its origins go back to the publication of *HEAT* literary magazine, which Indyk co-founded in 1996. *HEAT* was conceived as an international literary magazine and its cosmopolitan outlook, and that of the Giramondo imprint, were influenced by Indyk's own migrant background. 'It was always in my mind that I had to have an international orientation. I was determined to see Australian writing in the context of overseas writing.' International and Australian authors were published in *HEAT*, and through this Indyk built up a network of overseas contacts which he was able to draw upon when he started publishing books in 2002. The name Giramondo was deliberately chosen, because it is Italian for 'globetrotter' or 'world traveller'.

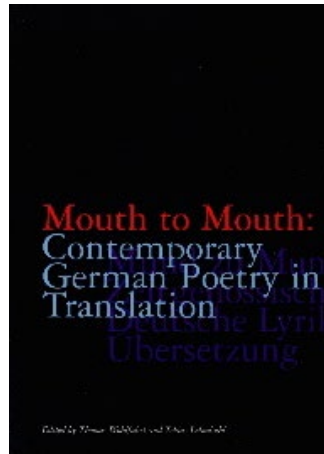
Indyk defines success in international rights sales for Giramondo in the same way he defines success in the Australian market. 'It's in terms of reputation. It's not success measured in commercial terms. Our success is in terms of our contribution to Australian literature.'

A key aspect of Giramondo's success in international rights sales relates to Indyk's role as an academic.

In 2003 the Australia Council asked me to curate a poetry exchange and translation workshop with a literary organisation in Berlin, the *Literaturwerkstatt*, which specialises in poetry. This initiative was supported by DFAT, the Australia Council and UNESCO. I took ten Australian poets to Berlin and they were matched with ten German poets. I was chosen partly because I was a Professor of Australian Literature and partly because I had developed a reputation as a poetry publisher through *HEAT* magazine, and the first books that Giramondo published from 2002, which were poetry books.

Oddly enough, although we don't sell much in the way of poetry rights, poetry has an international aspect, almost as part of its character. Australian poets have hardly any readership in Australia, but they have always had very strong international links, through the internet, in poetry exchanges and discussions.

The result of that collaboration was published by Giramondo in 2003, an anthology in English called *Mouth to Mouth*. The German language version was published by Dumont Verlag. Subsequently, a full collection of poems by Australian poet, Emma Lew, was published in German by the poet with whom she had been matched. Two other poets to be published overseas, by Bloodaxe in the UK, were Jennifer Maiden and Gig Ryan. Another early rights sales success was novelist Mireille Juchau, whose novel *Burning In* was taken up by French publisher Mercure de France.



Giramondo has developed a collaborative publishing program with Chinese publishers and authors through the overlap between Indyk's scholarly and publishing roles. Ivor developed these relationships in China with the support of Nicholas Jose, an award-winning author, editor and now Adjunct Professor at the University of Adelaide. Jose was Cultural Attaché at the Australian Consulate in Beijing from 1986 to 1990. He has been an important figure in promoting exchanges with Chinese artists and writers and has an international reputation for his scholarship on Chinese literature. Early on, Brian Castro's *Shanghai Dancing* was translated into Chinese in a translation project sponsored by the Australian Consulate in Shanghai.



Giramondo's participation in building up literary networks in China was based on a conceptual commitment on Ivor's part to the idea of China/Australia literary relations and, more broadly, Australia/Asian relations. 'One of the books I published very early on was the novel *Death Fugue* by Chinese author Sheng Keyi, an allegory based on the 1989 suppression of protests in Tiananmen Square. It can't be published in China. For years now Giramondo has had the only edition in English.'

Giramondo participated in a translation workshop for Australian and Chinese literary authors in [2009/2010] which was sponsored by the Chinese government, the Arts Council of England, and Penguin China. In 2011 the Chinese-Australian Writers Association approached Indyk and Jose to hold a symposium in Sydney.

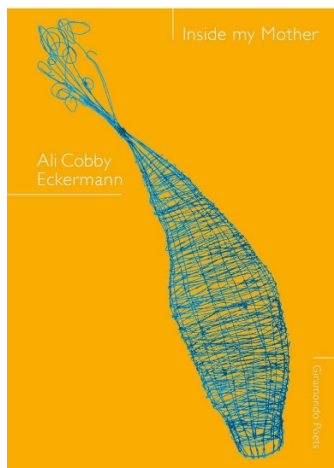
They brought out half a dozen writers, we put up another half a dozen and the interchange between them took place in a symposium at the Teachers Federation Hall in Surry Hills. Their delegation included Mo Yan, who was to become a Nobel prize winner. That was followed by Australia-China writers' symposia in Beijing, in Sydney at Western Sydney University, in Guangzhou, and a fifth one in Melbourne. J.M. Coetzee was a participant in

the second symposium in Beijing, in which Mo Yan was also involved, so we had two Nobel prize-winners in discussion there.

These events were sponsored by the Australian/China Institute, the Australia Council, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Western Sydney University, and a private benefactor to Western Sydney University who provided funding to publish two Chinese novels in English translation in Australia.

These exchanges, and a more recent ‘Southern Latitudes’ initiative, focussed on writers from the Southern Hemisphere, are all undertaken with long-term perspectives in view.

An important consideration for me is the temporality of literature. All the books I publish have long fuses, so to speak. Very often they don’t get taken up immediately. It may be two or three years, or even six years, before something happens, for example they are adopted onto a high school syllabus. That has happened to Alexis Wright only recently in the last couple of years, and similarly with Ali Cobby Eckermann, whose poetry book *Inside My Mother* has gone onto high school syllabuses. Once that happens, of course, then you have a guaranteed kind of income from them and they do sell well, not hugely, but well. You have to play it for the long term, especially in the case of translation deals where it may take three or four or more years after the original was published.



Ali Cobby Eckermann’s first collections of poetry *little bit long time* and *Kami* (2010) both quickly sold out their first print runs.

Her verse novel *His Father’s Eyes* was published by OUP in 2011. Her second verse novel *Ruby Moonlight* won the inaugural kuril dhagun National Manuscript Editing Award and the 2013 NSW Premier’s Literary Award for Poetry and Book of the Year Award.

In 2017, Ali won the Windham-Campbell prize, worth AUD\$215,000.

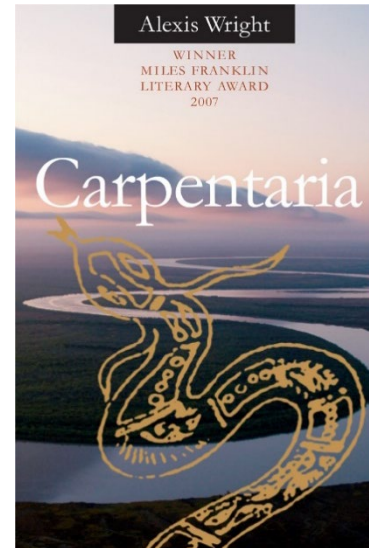
[Source: Publisher site]

Winning the Miles Franklin Literary Award for *Carpentaria* was a turning point for international interest in Alexis Wright’s work.

Alexis Wright is one of Australia's finest Aboriginal writers. *Carpentaria* is her second novel, an epic set in the Gulf country of north-western Queensland, from where her people come. The novel's portrait of life in the precariously settled coastal town of Desperance centres on the powerful Phantom family, leader of the Westend Pricklebush people, and its battles with old Joseph Midnight's renegade Eastend mob on the one hand, and the white officials of Uptown and the neighbouring Gurfurrit mine on the other.

Wright's storytelling is operatic and surreal: a blend of myth and scripture, farce and politics. The novel teems with extraordinary characters – Elias Smith the outcast saviour, the religious zealot Mozzie Fishman, the murderous mayor Stan Bruiser, the moth-ridden Captain Nicoli Finn, the activist and prodigal son Will Phantom, and above all, the queen of the rubbish-dump Angel Day and her sea-faring husband Normal Phantom, the fish-embalming king of time – figures that stride like giants across this storm-swept world.

[Source: Publisher site]

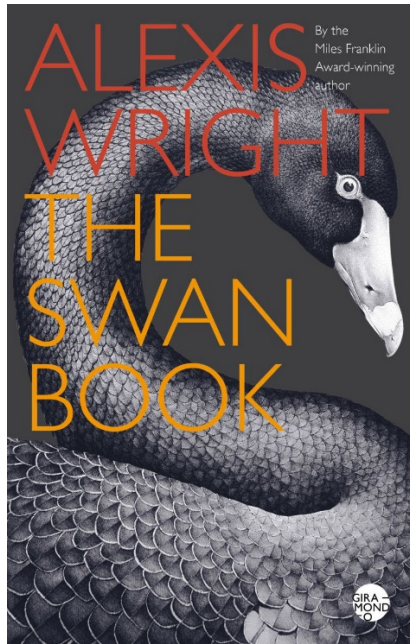


From the time that *Carpentaria* won the Miles Franklin Award in 2007, Alexis Wright instantly became of interest to overseas publishers. We sold the rights to the UK, to the US, to China, to Italy, Poland, France.

Indyk noted that the deals were not necessarily driven by commercial considerations.

I was approached by a publisher, at the UK company Constable. The publisher, Andreas Campomar, was from Uruguay, and one of Alexis Wright's main influences was Eduardo Galeano. She was also influenced by other South American writers because there is a strand of magic realism in *Carpentaria*. Campomar understood the book in a way that other publishers didn't and he bought it. I sold the European rights to Constable and they sold it on to Italy, France, and Poland.

I had a lot of trouble finding a publisher for the book in the US because the US doesn't really have the respect for Indigenous writers that we now have, certainly not for their own, and, therefore, hardly anybody else's. We shopped it around quite a lot and eventually an imprint of Simon & Schuster, Atria, bought it. But that was only because there was an Australian publisher there, Judith Curr, who had an interest in Australian writing, certainly Aboriginal writing. It wasn't primarily commercial considerations, it was more cultural and sentimental reasons, and it's always been tough for them, they haven't sold a huge number of copies. When Judith Curr left Atria a couple of years ago, the book fell into disuse; they weren't selling it, they weren't promoting it, they weren't doing anything for it, and they had put what I thought was a racist cover on the paperback edition. I objected and eventually they gave us the rights back. I am now holding those US rights and looking to sell the rights to *Carpentaria* on the back of Alexis Wright's new novel.



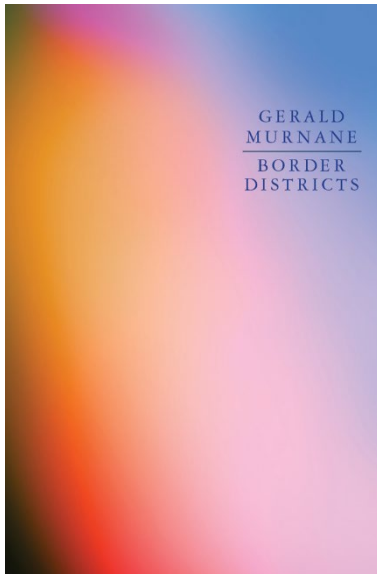
The *Swan Book* is set in the future, with Aboriginal peoples still living under the Intervention in the north, in an environment fundamentally altered by climate change. It follows the life of a mute young woman called Oblivia, the victim of gang-rape by petrol-sniffing youths, from the displaced community where she lives in a hulk, in a swamp filled with rusting boats, and thousands of black swans, to her marriage to Warren Finch, the first Aboriginal president of Australia, and her elevation to the position of First Lady, confined to a tower in a flooded and lawless southern city. *The Swan Book* has all the qualities which made Wright's previous novel, *Carpentaria*, a prize-winning best-seller. It offers an intimate awareness of the realities facing Aboriginal people; the energy and humour in her writing finds hope in the bleakest situations; and the remarkable combination of storytelling elements, drawn from myth and legend and fairy tale, has Oblivia Ethylene in the company of amazing characters like Auntie Bella Donna of the Champions, the Harbour Master, Big Red and the Mechanic, a talking monkey called Rigoletto, three genies with doctorates, and throughout, the guiding presence of swans.

[Source: Publisher site]

The UK rights for Wright's most recent novel, *The Swan Book* were sold, again to Andreas Campomar in the UK, who this time was representing the publisher Little Brown. Constable had been bought by Little Brown, which is part of the Hachette Group. Indyk noted that there was a different atmosphere dealing with a multi-national with the expectations of profit and marketability. Campomar was not in a position to pay a significant sum for the rights ('much less than he'd paid for *Carpentaria*') and Indyk commented that although there has been renewed critical interest in *The Swan Book* because of its themes of global warming and climate change, this has not been accompanied by interest from foreign language publishers as yet.

In the Boisbouvier Oration, Indyk observed that literary writing can seem less accessible to general readers... 'literary writing is in fact characterised by the texture of its language and imagery, by implication and resonance, by its strangeness and resistance to expectation'.

Over time 'what may seem initially to be abrasive and discomfiting' can eventually influence mainstream writing and reading, but in the short term Australian literature's international prospects is championed by influential Australian literature academics overseas. 'They are not necessarily Australian themselves, but they are the ones who are carrying the flag.' For example, Alexis Wright's work is promoted through organisations such as the European Australian Studies Association (EASA), which is an association of the Teachers of Australian Literature in Europe. Her work is set on their university courses, and she is invited to their conferences. Many of Giramondo's authors are invited to key international literary festivals.



Conceived as Gerald Murnane's last work of fiction, *Border Districts* was written after the author moved from Melbourne to a small town on the western edge of the Wimmera plains, near the border with South Australia. The narrator of this fiction has made a similar move, from a capital city to a remote town in the border country, where he intends to spend the last years of his life. It is a time for exploring the enduring elements of his experience, as these exist in his mind, not as an integral landscape now, but as image-fragments; so that there is an urgency in his attempts to gather them together. Often it is the way the light falls that makes the image memorable. At the end of the work, Murnane quotes the poet Shelley, 'Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,/ Stains the white radiance of Eternity'. But if *Border Districts* suggests the border land between life and death, it also refers to the narrator's discovery of someone else who might share his world, though she enters it from another direction, across the distance which separates them as human beings.

[Source: Publisher site]

Indyk named Gerald Murnane as another Giramondo author whose reputation and international appeal has grown over time.

The *New York Times Magazine* declared in March 2018, on the publication of *Border Districts* in America, 'A strong case could be made for Murnane as the greatest living English-language writer most people have never heard of.' I was amused by this claim, as we have many writers that most people have never heard of—some of the best, the most challenging in fact. But because the *New York Times* said it, people sat up, and took notice. (Boisbouvier Oration)

Although early on Indyk sold international rights to 'one or two' of Gerald Murnane's books, little interest followed until an editor, Jeremy Davies, who was a supporter of Murnane's work, published two of Murnane's books at Dalkey Archives in the US. Dalkey is a very small press and these went relatively unnoticed, until Davies moved to Farrar, Straus Giroux, which Indyk described as 'one of the great American literary presses'.

Two of Murnane's books, *Border Districts* and a collection of his short fiction, were published there in early 2018. The publicity was incredible. Murnane got huge interest overseas and there were foreign rights people approaching us from all over the place. However many of the inquiries didn't result in deals because they felt they couldn't sell enough copies. They tended to go for his shortest and best known book, *The Plains*, which Text had published in Australia. They had great expectations and where their sales of *The Plains* didn't come up to expectation, they were slow to consider the later titles held by Giramondo.

Here again, we face the same kind of difficulties that we face with overtly literary texts that aren't necessarily going to be commercial successes, but we did sell rights to five of Murnane's titles to Stefan Tobler, the publisher

at & Other Stories—a great literary press in the UK. He's been doing well with them. Some of Murnane's books have been published in Italy, but in other cases the experience was rather like fishing, the fish were nibbling but they weren't biting. We got lots of nibbles from the Czech Republic, Turkey, Greece, from Sweden, Holland, Spain. Some of them signed a contract, but they still haven't published the books. It is very difficult, to have the interest, but not the commitment.

Giramondo's rights sales strategy has shifted to focus on small literary presses, including Transit, New Directions, Two Lines and Restless in the US; & Other Stories and Fitzcarraldo in the UK; Adriana Hidalgo in Argentina, Minuscula in Spain, Archipel in China.

The relationships rest on a shared commitment to literature rather than commercial interests. We are all idealists and we are all interested in what writing can do. We can do it quite cheaply, with funding and sponsorships. There is always the possibility that one of the writers will become well-known. It doesn't happen often, but it does happen from time to time.

Traditionally the foreign rights sales have been between the big presses. It is only recently in the last few years that we have an active small press scene. I have been to the Frankfurt book fair three times and my opposite numbers in the US and the UK go as well. We share literary interests and we share a similar kind of economy which is different from the multi-national economy, where we are all subsidised and we depend on low sales and high reputations. It is a natural alliance and sometimes we trade without money changing hands. They may take one of our titles and we take one of theirs and whatever money we spend on theirs they spend on ours. No money actually changes hands or we do it quite cheaply, for \$1,000-\$2,000, with the translation thrown in, in order to establish a relationship. It is based on future expectations rather than present ones. Translations have played an increasingly important role in that economy of foreign rights trading between small press publishers because the translations, for the most part, are subsidised. The publisher will apply for a grant from the country of origin of the book, and so they can survive on quite low sales. If they get world rights for the translations, as they often do, they are able to sell them on.

I would repeat that it is not the sales only that are important for us, it is establishing relationships with our counterparts overseas.

Indyk estimated the cost for a translation of a 30,000-40,000 words novella from South America as about AUD\$6,000. Giramondo is able to obtain most of that money back from the government agency in the country of origin that sponsors translations. In this way the biggest cost, translation, is covered. Print costs, for a novella at least, are not as substantial. He noted that it was difficult to gain a sense of the books' reception in translation.

When you publish overseas you give the book to the overseas publisher and you are never sure how good the translation is. You don't know exactly what the sales figures are. You are lucky if you get a royalty statement. In any case, the royalty they pay is so low, six or seven percent sometimes, that you are never going to pay out the advance. It's quixotic in a way. You do it, you sign the contract, they publish the book and you hardly hear any more about it.

Indyk described himself as a conceptual publisher rather than a commercial publisher, 'that is, certain concepts govern what I publish'. Giramondo has developed a publishing list in southern hemisphere writing, with books published from South America, Indonesia and New Zealand. 'I have a real interest in southern hemisphere writing. I feel, since the concept is a strong one, that eventually the books will do well, but it will take a long time.' Titles published by Giramondo in its Southern Latitudes series include Argentinian author Mariana Dimópulos's novella *All My Goodbyes* (which was sold to Transit in the US), Chilean author Bruno Lloret's novella *Nancy* (which is to be published in the US by Two Lines Press), the collection by New Zealand essayist Ashleigh Young, *Can You Tolerate This*, and the poetry collection by Indonesian poet Norman Erikson Pasaribu, *Sergius Seeks Bacchus* (which has been published by Tilted Axis in the UK).

Indyk's relationships with South American authors and publishers were developed through a seminar on Australian literature hosted by John Coetzee in Argentina. Once again, academic circuits played a key role.

J.M. Coetzee had an initiative with the University of San Martin in Buenos Aires. Each year he would take a couple of Australian writers or, in my case, a writer and a critic. We held a series of six seminars exploring a common ground for southern hemisphere literature. While I was there I was invited to the Buenos Aires Book Fair. That is where I met Adriana Hidalgo, two of whose books I have since published. She invited me to be a part of a stand at the Frankfurt Book Fair which had five other participants from Europe and the US. I was able to introduce the Chinese publisher with which I had been associated, Peng Lun from Archipel Press. It is exciting to be associated with these publishers, and of course we have the opportunity to publish each others' books. I am thrilled to be part of this. The stand is not even in the English language hall, it is in the foreign languages hall.'

Ivor's aim is that all Giramondo's authors should have the opportunity to be considered for international rights sales. 'Not all of Giramondo's authors are going to be published overseas, but the fact that we are representing them and trying is very important.' Those whose books have been sold overseas include Evelyn Juers' *House of Exile*, Suneeta Peres da Costa's *Saudade*, Mohammed Ahmad's *The Tribe*, Felicity Castagna's *No More Boats*, Brian Castro's *The Bath Fugues*, Tom Cho's *Look Who's Morphing* and David Walker's *Not Dark Yet*.

Indyk observed that although Giramondo's books win a lot of prizes the publisher doesn't receive any of this money, which is awarded to the authors. In his experience most literary prizes don't increase book sales. 'Although I think about how to turn reputation into something more commercial all the time, it is not an issue I can solve.' However, the reputation is valuable to the university which hosts Giramondo, and Indyk's professorial role which includes his publishing activity is a recognition of this. The books are also recognised as research activity in the university's submissions to the Australian Research Council's Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA).

In the Boisbouvier Oration Indyk characterised his publishing program as dedicated to acts of imagination built on a literary ethic. In the longer term this provides opportunities for Giramondo's authors to potentially influence the direction of Australian and international literary canons. In the shorter term it is an endeavour

inspired by passion and idealism supported by Australian and non-Australian advocates of Giramondo's publishing program in influential roles in publishing, academia and diplomacy. 'Publishing opportunities overseas can be very hard to carry through. There is a lot of talk, a lot of people checking each other out, but our collaborations will eventually bring good consequences.'

Katy McEwen, Pantera Press



Pantera Press is a young and enthusiastic Australian book publisher, created to champion writing culture and literacy in Australia with a clear community and cultural purpose. We discover and nurture talented Australian writers who are great storytellers, publish books *that matter*, and fund charities and not-for-profits that encourage reading and work to close the literacy gap in Australia. From our Australian origins we are now also publishing international titles that fit our mission to spark imagination, conversation and change. On top of this we have a quirky illustrated imprint, *Lost the Plot*.

Pantera Press was established by the Green family, with their first books published in 2010. The Greens had spent two years developing a business plan prior to the launch of the new press and international rights sales were a part of their strategy early on. They attended the Frankfurt book fair two or three times after launching Pantera, however in 2014 they approached Katy McEwen, who then worked for Allen & Unwin, to take on a new part time role as rights manager. For McEwen, "It was the right job at the right time for me, which was great".

First there were discussions about expectations of McEwen's role.

I hadn't read the books when I first went and talked to them, and didn't know their standard or how suited they were to international markets. "I might not be able to sell anything." Ali Green, the CEO said, "That's okay. Give it a go for a year and see what happens."



McEwen spent the first few months reading the 15-20 books on Pantera's list. The first books she identified as having rights sales potential were the Rowland Sinclair historical crime series by Sulari Gentill, set in Australia and overseas in the 1930s.

They had great critical acclaim, they were well written, they were good reads, and they also had won awards. Those things are key when you're pitching, especially when you're pitching from an unknown company that doesn't have any history or background in this area yet.



McEwen was aware of the success of the Phryne Fisher series by Kerry Greenwood, published by Allen & Unwin. "I thought, if I can't make it work with those (Rowland Sinclair books) then I'm in trouble". Interestingly, there were some "strong crime books" on Pantera's list but Australian crime wasn't "a thing" internationally then, and McEwen was less optimistic about their prospects.

McEwen had worked mainly in children's books at Allen & Unwin and on a small number of adult non-fiction titles. As such, although she had networks with some agents she didn't so much bring the necessary international connections to her new role as a knowledge of the process of rights sales from children's books.

A key factor was Pantera's willingness to invest in support of their rights sales strategy, including producing materials and attending books fairs. "This was what I thought were the right things to do, and that made everything a hundred times easier".

In 2014 McEwen went to the London book fair in April and the Frankfurt book fair in October.

My criteria was to firstly establish a translation agent network that I could work with. I met not only agents that I had previously dealt with at Allen & Unwin, but three or four agents from every region that I thought was important to try and establish relationships with for Pantera. We ended up with seven or eight agents by the end of that year. They're all agents that we're still working with. I also tried to meet as many scouts and publishers as I could to make connections. Some publishers I already knew, and I just approached them directly, and some came through people reaching out to come and meet with me.

McEwen also learned from trial and error. At the London fair Pantera had a table in the agents' centre (an area at a book fair where the agents have their own tables), which happened to be in a poor location that year with no passing foot traffic. Her schedule of slots (appointments with agents and publishers) was probably about half full. She spent a lot of time "walking around, seeing what people published, figuring out who we should be talking to and making those connections".

By Frankfurt I had enough nouse and connections to almost fill my schedule, although I suspect the meetings were not as strong as they are now. The first couple of years at book fairs largely involved the publishers and agents telling me what they were doing and what types of books they'd had success with, and so I was gathering information for when we might have a book that would work for them in their markets. The challenge early was finding the right people to meet with for the books that we had.

Building personal relationships is critical.

It's not just having the half hour meeting. It's often a drink or a dinner where you meet people and make those connections. For example, the German agents have a dinner each year in Frankfurt with all the international clients who are handled by the company. That has led to connections with their other clients, including US publishers. Also meeting all the other staff in that agency face-to-face, not just the people I deal with directly for rights, but the person who does the contracts or the person who is asking for the files, makes a huge difference to those relationships.

Finding the right people involved extensive research prior to attending a book fair. McEwen recommended that Pantera subscribe to *Publishers Marketplace* to find out about potential US publishers for their titles. The translation agents were able to cover smaller territories which McEwen would never have been able to research personally. Pantera also invested in marketing collateral: books, gifts, point of sale marketing.

We put our catalogue on flat credit card sized USBs so we weren't carting paper around. Everybody thought they were great, so we've been using those for a few years. Things like that that made it clear we were a professional company that was innovative and had something to offer.

McEwen's initial list included "some paranormal crime books that we didn't ever sell. A couple of quirky black comedy books, which we didn't sell, as well as the crime and thrillers. An eclectic range." However, McEwen had an early success. "We sold the Rowland Sinclair series to the States, seven books in the series."

I knew of Poisoned Pen Press⁸. I had never met any of the people who worked there, but I arranged a meeting before I went. Robert Rosenwald, the President, met with me and his wife, Barbara Peters, was the main editor of the company. She had heard of Sulari's books. He said, "My wife tells me I have to have these." We had a discussion and they ended up buying them. It was a good series of books, with great reviews, and great awards; it fit perfectly with their list and it was the right timing. It was very lucky to sell seven books in a series. It was pretty exciting, and has turned into a great relationship. Poisoned Pen have very good sales into library markets and large print, and the books sell consistently. They have also continued the relationship and bought the next three books in the series since.

⁸ See: www.poisonedpenpress.com.

McEwen added that at that initial meeting, “Poisoned Pen Press also bought another crime book from us that didn’t sell as well as they thought.”

Pantera’s success in rights sales built slowly over time as the company grew, gained profile, and achieved sales success in Australia. As Pantera expanded its list—it now publishes 24 titles per year—McEwen has more to work with.

Over time, Pantera’s acquisitions strategy has changed, now also acquiring more commercial and literary books from agents to build on their founding strategy of acquiring rights from unpublished Australian authors. McEwen has found this newer range of titles easier to sell overseas. Assessing what is of interest to overseas markets involves understanding whether that country’s domestic market and other sources are satisfying demand. McEwen gave the example of Young Adult (YA) books.

YA has always been hard. We had a series of YA books on my list originally, based on Greek myth and legend. There’s a lot of books like that written in various languages, so there’s not such a demand for something to be translated from English. Also there was a conflict between the topic and the age for which they’re written so people found them a bit difficult to place. We’ve published more contemporary YA books since but they’ve been Australian-based, with Australian locations, landscapes and gender issues.

I’ll have meetings with various publishers of this genre and as I pitch something they will tell me what sort of YA fiction is selling—and this is a genre that definitely goes through phases. What has sold really well in the past may not keep selling as the market moves onto other genres that are in vogue.

McEwen’s main market focus is now the United States.

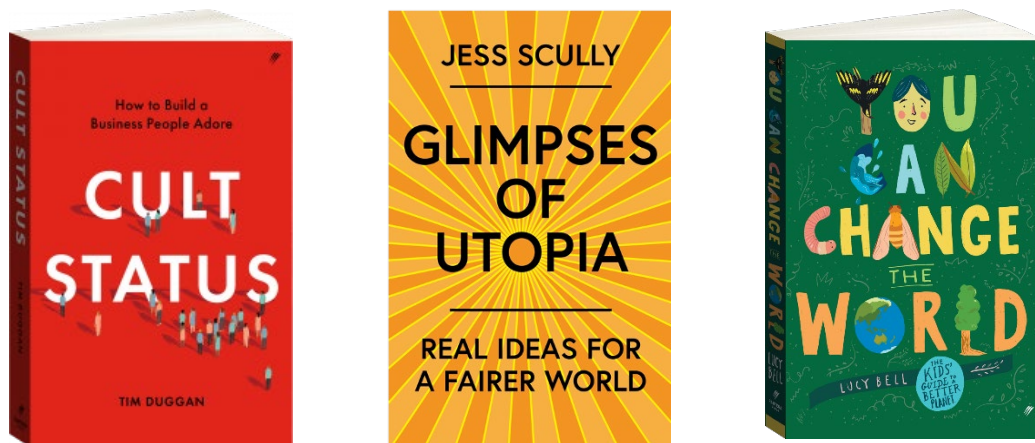
One of our key criteria is to try and make more connections in the US. That’s quite difficult to do without turning up and meeting people. The easiest way would be through an Australia Council delegation. (The Australia Council have run two successful delegations to the US in 2018 and 2019.) I want to meet publishers who are looking to build their lists and who don’t necessarily go to Frankfurt because they’re not senior enough, but who are exactly the people that we should be connecting with now.

Having something structured by the Australia Council, with meetings in all of the key publishing companies, understanding exactly all of their imprints, who’s doing what and capitalising on those opportunities, would be our key next move.

McEwen identified being part of the wider Australian publishing community at international events as a key opportunity to build momentum. Pantera has participated in Australian industry stands at international book fairs, in the Visiting International Publishers (VIPs) program and trade delegations organised by the Australia Council to Beijing and Taipei. Through the delegations to Beijing and Taipei, McEwen learned that Pantera’s lists at that time were not right for those markets, which were weighted more to non-fiction and self-help titles. “We didn’t have the right books, but it was a fantastic exercise in figuring that out. Beijing is definitely one that would stay on our list in the longer-term if our list becomes better suited to that market.”

In July 2019 Lex Hirst joined Pantera Press in the newly created role of Publisher, and she is expanding the list, and including some interesting non-fiction titles. McEwen commented, “They’re current, up-to-date issues books that are internationally based. I think they’ll be easier to sell.”

For example, *Cult Status* is by Tim Duggan, a media entrepreneur who has a number of businesses. He has interviewed young business leaders from around the world and teased out things that they have in common in order to make a business achieve cult status today. Another book is *Glimpses of Utopia* by Jess Scully, the Deputy Lord Mayor of Sydney, who started the Vivid Festival of Ideas. This book is about how things might seem pretty disheartening at the moment, but all around the world there are people who are redesigning the systems that organise our lives, such as transport and city planning. There are glimpses of these utopias all around the world, working towards creating a fair and just society for all. We’ve also published a beautiful children’s non-fiction title, *You Can Change the World: The kids’ guide to a better planet* by Lucy Bell, that’s sold in a number of territories.



McEwen times her pitches differently, depending on the type of book.

With non-fiction titles we tend to send them out earlier. I’ll create an early proposal with a chapter outline and a sample chapter. We’ll pitch it at a fair, or I’ll send it out to agents and to the US publishers to establish interest.

If we have a complete draft of a fiction book that the publisher and I feel is good enough, I’ll send it out. But our preference is to wait for an edited manuscript because that makes life easier for people who are trying to buy—and it gives us the best chance of selling it, as a more polished product.

Kids’ non-fiction and illustrated books are a little more difficult. There’s no point in sending a manuscript out until you have a concept of the layout, although we don’t have to have the whole book.

McEwen is also involved in Pantera’s editorial discussions about whether to acquire a new title. She partly attributes this to Pantera being a collegial, small, family-run business.

Usually Pantera prefers to acquire world rights but “that’s not always possible when we are taking on books from agents”.

Sales of audio rights is a notable area of growth.

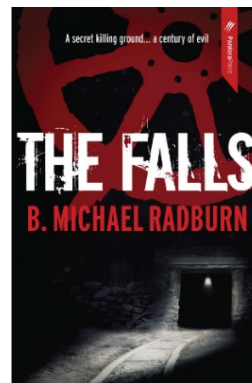
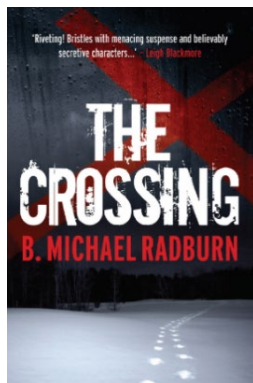
There is quite strong competition between the main players at the moment. Audible is buying less locally, but Bolinda and Wavesound are often competing and pushing advances up. If I am trying to pitch a book in the US, a US publisher may well want the North American audio rights, then I may pitch ANZ rights separately. Bolinda and Wavesound prefer to have world rights, but may well offer only for ANZ.

McEwen characterises the key benefits of rights sales to authors as money and exposure. She is careful to manage the expectations of authors.

We never promise anything to authors in terms of what we're going to sell internationally. All we can say is we will do our utmost. I tell them exactly what I'll do. I meet with them and send them a document when we sign them on explaining my job, and how I approach it. I explain our agent network, and how I connect with international publishers as well as local contacts for audio and film, but they understand that nothing is guaranteed. It's not a direct reflection on the quality of the book if the rights don't sell. It's often about us staying present in the market and being in the right place at the right time. I am happy to send an author a report of all the people I've pitched their book to and the comments I receive, which often are very positive, but sometimes the market is not quite right for that particular title.

Markets can also change. Australian crime fiction has recently attracted overseas interest.

Earlier on it was definitely not seen as an advantage to have an Australian crime fiction setting. But at the moment there have been some key international successes and there is more interest. At the 2018 Visiting International Publishers delegation to Australia I was talking to Bénédicte Lombardo, Editorial Director at Editions du Seuil. She was specifically looking for crime books set in Australia. We had a book on our list from before I started at Pantera called *The Crossing*, set in Tasmania, by B. Michael Radburn. I pitched that to her and she loved it, which was fabulous. It has been published in France, and she has just bought the second book featuring the same main character. It has had the most amazing reviews in France, so obviously Bénédicte picked something that she knew worked in her territory. She's fairly confident she'll buy more further on, which is great.



McEwen describes Pantera's success with international rights sales as a "slow burn approach".

We have more books on the list, a better diversity of books, we have developed much better relationships with book scouts and agents over the years. The books that we are publishing now are definitely better received. Turning up year after year and building better connections with people has helped; they are more likely to look at titles that you are selling if they know they have seen you before and if you are committed. That has been significant in building trust in our list. The connections we have built through attendance at VIPs is the other factor in our growth. That gives us another 10 or 12 people each year that we can build a personal relationship with. If you have met them here in Sydney, then you automatically have things to talk about and when you email them you have a more personal relationship rather than starting from scratch.

McEwen described the benefits to Pantera from the Visiting International Publishers (VIPs) program.

It's fantastic. We have made sales through it, which we wouldn't have made otherwise. We have made connections through it with people I see every year. Even if those connections haven't resulted in a sale yet the goodwill that comes from that program is enormous. I'm thinking of a Dutch publisher that I meet, who I've never sold anything to, but I see her now with her book scout at international fairs and that scout then also knows our list. She may provide a couple of introductions each time we meet.

For the last three years Pantera have used Austrade's Export Market Development Grants to claim back expenses involved in attending international book fairs. "It is a bit of work but it is definitely worth the effort to recoup some of our expenses."

McEwen has made use of developments in technology. At McEwen's recommendation, Pantera agreed to invest in a professional rights management system. Pantera has also invested in an Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) system.

I can regulate EDMs to my agents and scouts. As soon as I have updates on content, publication date, endorsements, awards or other overseas sales, I can easily send that to people efficiently; they can download links to manuscripts or sales material. I'm not sending things to people who don't necessarily want them; they can make their own choices about what they download and use in their own markets.

She is enormously appreciative of the backing by Pantera. "I know people—even at the big publishers, who bring in vastly more income in terms of rights than I do, who struggle to get funding to go to rights fair. That just makes me very lucky."

In McEwen's view, having a dedicated rights sales role was a key advantage in her success.

Overseas publishers and agents know you are going to be responsive in terms of requests and that it's going to be a priority, rather than something that you're doing on the edge of doing your other editorial work or whatever else you're doing. That was important for us.

Income from rights sales for Pantera have increased steadily over the last few years, and books have been sold into many markets, including the US, UK, France, Germany and

Spain. This is expected to continue with the growth of the company and the broadening range of titles on offer, and McEwen thinks that this is a testament to the investment that Pantera has put into prioritising rights as an essential part of the business.

McEwen has been thinking about how success can be measured in her role. It is something she has discussed with Ali Green.

One way we can measure success is by aiming to increase my rights income by a set percentage each year, which I have achieved so far. But much depends on the books on your list, and you can never guarantee sales. It is not necessarily for a lack of trying, or the professionalism with which you try and sell the books. It might be that people aren't buying or they have got their own book in that field or it's not working for that market. All you can do is to say you are doing your best to present the book to get it into the hands of as many of the right people as possible, at any time.

Alexandra Yatomi-Clarke, Berbay Publishing



Berbay is an award-winning independent children's publishing company based in Melbourne Australia that has established a reputation locally and internationally for producing high quality, original and enriching children's books.

Berbay's books contain stories with universal appeal and an eye for playfulness. We publish inventive books that have depth, stories that are imaginative, poignant and humorous. Stories that provoke thoughtfulness. Our books are characterised by illustrations and design that are as beautiful and stunning as they are unique. In 2017 Berbay Publishing was recognised for its editorial choices and won BOP for Best Children's Publisher of the Year (Oceania) in Bologna.

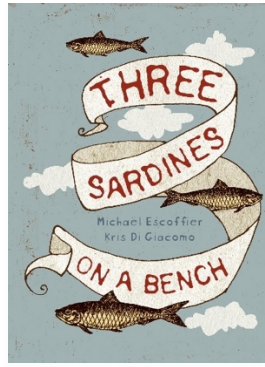
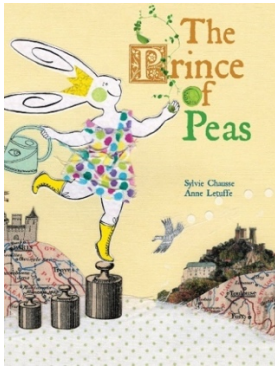
Berbay was inspired by a family holiday to Europe.

It was a trip to Europe with my young family in 2008 and seeing the creative and imaginative books children were reading in places such as France and Finland that was the catalyst for me to start Berbay Publishing. The ability to marry my love of the visual arts and literature has been a dream come true.

Prior to founding Berbay, Yatomi-Clarke had worked at many of the major publishing houses in Australia including Reed Books, Cengage, Macmillan and Oxford University Press. She has also worked overseas at other publishing houses including Conrad Books and Conde Nast Magazines in London.

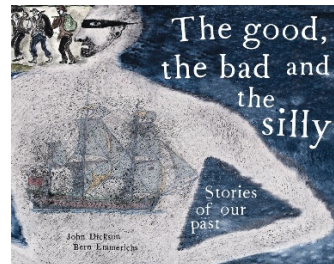
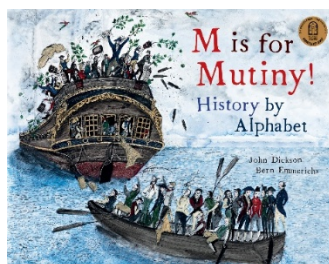
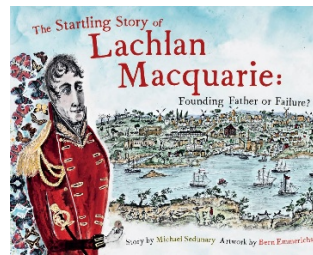
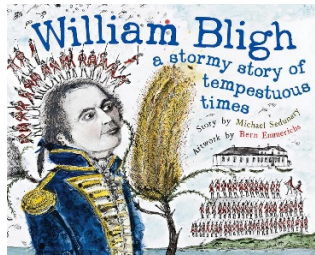
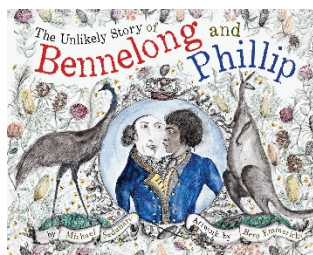
I grew up with a love of books. As a child, every house my parents owned had a dedicated library room, wall to wall full of the most extraordinary books. After completing my Arts degree, majoring in literature and cinema studies, I started my publishing career and worked for a variety of educational and trade publishers in Melbourne and overseas. I then moved out of publishing and worked for communication and marketing companies for eight years. With a deep appreciation of the arts and literature, it was my life-long ambition dream to create my own publishing house, focussing on children's books. The enormous range of creativity in children's books is the perfect fit for me.

Berbay started off in 2009 very small, publishing two or three translated titles a year for about the first three or four years. The first three books were translated French picture books *The Prince of Peas*, *Three Sardines on a Bench* and *Three Little Culottes*.



After several years of building up a small list of translated titles, Yatomi-Clarke expanded to nonfiction picture books on early European Australian history.

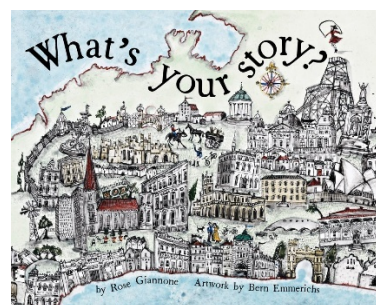
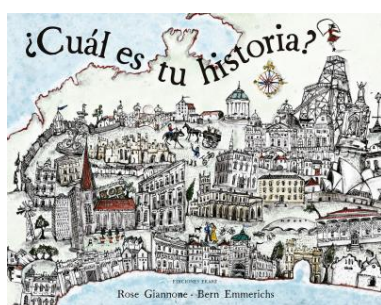
This series was developed by the fact that I felt Australian children, particularly primary school children, knew comparatively little about European Settlement compared, say, to the history of Gallipoli. These important first settlement stories have been largely lost to our younger generation and bringing these stories back to life for a new audience has been an interesting experience and a pleasure to work on.



Part of the success of this series was the extraordinary artwork by highly celebrated ceramic artist, Bern Emmerichs. We used different authors to write each book, but Bern was the lynchpin to the series. She has such a unique visual voice. Each painting is detailed and illustrative providing a historical narrative to be discovered.



The series has been highly successful and critically acclaimed. It has received two Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) and Western Australia Book Readers' Award shortlistings, three CBCA notables and is now used widely in most schools as part of the curriculum.



Spanish edition of *What's Your Story?*

In 2012, Yatomi-Clarke started investigating rights sales opportunities by going to the Bologna Children's Book Fair.

The Bologna Book Fair is the number one dedicated children's book fair in the world. There are maybe 1,500 stalls and 25,000-30,000 people from around the world who attend Bologna book fair every year for four days in late March or early April. It's the equivalent to the Frankfurt book fair but for children's books."

In 2017, Berbay won Children's Publisher of the Year.



It's a wonderful honour just to have been nominated let alone to win such a prestigious award and on a world stage too. To be recognised for the quality and editorial choices Berbay publishes is immensely satisfying and has created many significant opportunities.

The Visiting International Publishers (VIPs) program is an important calendar event organised by the Australia Council. The VIPs program strengthens relationships between Australian publishers and agents and their international counterparts, showcases Australia's literary talent, and promotes the sale of rights to Australian titles in international markets.

The program supports a delegation of international publishers, scouts and literary agents to travel to Australia to participate in an intensive week-long schedule of business meetings, networking events, industry forums, bookstore visits, writers' festival events, and panel discussions with Australian publishers and agents. It provides them with the opportunity to immerse themselves in Australia's unique literary culture, share insights into global publishing trends, and expand opportunities for Australian authors overseas.

Attending the Australia Council VIPs is an important yearly calendar event for most Australian publishers, and Berbay has been attending every year since 2011. It is key to meeting with international editors, publishers, agents and scouts and presenting your list of books. Business is all about relationships and connections. Some of the connections we've built through the VIP program have now lasted for years and supported our international growth.



In 2019 Yatomi-Clarke went on a delegation organised by the Australia Council to New York.

The New York publishing program organised by the Australia Council was superb. It created opportunities and introductions to large publishing companies that can sometimes be hard to access from Australia. Many of the meetings were great opportunities to learn and understand more about the North American children's market. They also became great networking opportunities to meet key staff at publishing houses and understand the nuances of their lists and markets. In many of the meetings we had opportunities to pitch our list of books directly to editors, publishers, foreign rights managers and agents. They were receptive to the Berbay list and helped us know that we are truly curating a list with international appeal, which was always my hope when I started Berbay. Stories connect people, and that's what we hope our books will always do.

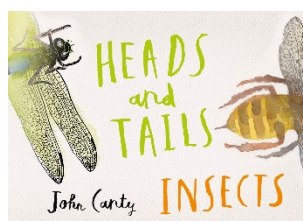
Meeting fellow Australian publishers and agents was also helpful. They gave insights into their experiences of the North American market and helpful information for furthering networking opportunities.

In November 2018 and 2019 Yatomi-Clarke was part of a delegation to the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair.

There are many exciting opportunities for licencing in China and the Asia Pacific region and attending the CCBF and participating in the Australian publishing delegation to Shanghai helped Berbay access this growing and important market.

The appetite on the part of the Chinese, especially for illustrated picture books, is huge and being part of the Australia Council delegation to Shanghai helped Berbay with new relationships and opportunities with agents, editors, scouts and publishers. It takes time to develop relationships and for the knowledge required to fully understand this complex market.

We were incredibly honoured that John Canty's *Heads and Tails: Insects* book was one of only five titles selected for the prestigious Chen Bochui International Children's Literature Award for Best International Picture Book, and the only book in the group written in English. The judging panel included celebrated children's literature expert Leonard Marcus.



In 2019 Berbay's income from international licensing had successfully grown to the point when it was 40 percent of revenue.

In the last two years, we have had in excess of 20 international deals. This year, we hoped would be a bumper year. Our meetings planned for the Bologna book fair in May 2020 were very strong before it was cancelled due to COVID-19. We were incredibly disappointed not to attend.

The impact of the pandemic has been devastating on domestic and international sales. Rights acquisition has stalled. When that international trade does rebuild is another question. I hope it rebuilds, but I think it will be a few years before we build industry confidence.

Our focus is making sure that we have the strongest possible titles ready to share, as the industry recovers. We cannot control the market or the virus, but we can ensure that the books we produce offer readers something special and different that inspires them to keep returning to our list. Our 2021 list will be our largest list by far, but it's still as highly-curated as ever, with a focus on satisfying and responding to the natural curiosity that children have.

Author advocates

Olivia Lanchester, Australian Society of Authors, and Juliet Rogers

Olivia Lanchester, CEO, Australia Society of Authors



Olivia Lanchester

Olivia Lanchester has worked as a senior intellectual property lawyer in private practice and as a freelance editor. Prior to becoming CEO of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA), she ran the ASA's Contract Assessment Service and has reviewed hundreds of publishing contracts during her time with the ASA. She is passionate about informing ASA members on their rights and optimising the contractual position of writers and illustrators. Olivia is deeply interested in copyright reform and has written submissions and coordinated the ASA's advocacy on copyright, unfair contracts and digital lending rights. She is also the Company Secretary.

Juliet Rogers

Juliet Rogers was the CEO of the Australian Society of Authors from 2016-2019. She has had a long career in publishing, including Managing Director of Random House (NZ and Australia) and CEO of Murdoch Books. Juliet has run her own small publishing and consultancy business, The Wild Colonial Company. She has chaired Booksellers New Zealand, the then joint industry association for booksellers and publishers, as well as the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, has been President of the Australian Publishers Association and Vice-Chair of the Australian Copyright Council.



(Rogers' views in this case study are personal and are not provided in any other official capacity.)

Juliet Rogers gained knowledge of international rights sales through a career as a publisher, and then as CEO of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA).

When I was Managing Director at Random House (first New Zealand, then Australia), international rights were part of that role from the point of view of attending book fairs and selling rights as an international publisher. However, it was interesting because there was a bit of a feeling at international fairs when I pitched ANZ books, why isn't your own company supporting you? There was no corporate mechanism for rights from ANZ to be acquired by the parent company.

Then I was the CEO at Murdoch Books for ten years, which was very active in selling rights and a lot of co-editions. It wasn't a big company. We had an

international rights director, and she made overseas trips in between book fairs. I did two and sometimes three international trips a year, primarily to the UK, US and Europe.

Rogers learned the business of rights sales “on the job”.

In my role as MD at Random House New Zealand, I started to learn through going to book fairs, getting to know the international Random House companies and some of the UK agents who were more actively selling rights into Europe. But the rights sales of New Zealand books in those early days were pretty small. A lot of my focus was on acquiring overseas agencies, which means securing agreements to represent international publishers’ lists for sales and marketing in New Zealand. That wasn’t a rights’ selling business, it was a sales and marketing arrangement for overseas titles.

More of the real rights selling developed when I worked for Random House Australia. When we took our first tentative steps with Nerrilee Weir in the rights sales role that was a big deal. It was a real commitment to make in those days. And then at Murdoch, we owned a company in the UK, Murdoch Books UK, and their team sold the rights to the Australian books throughout Europe. In the early days, Murdoch Books UK had three rights salespeople and that was their full-time job. Primarily they focussed on European territories and then we developed the American business.

So my knowledge came about literally sitting on book fair stands, starting to read contracts, starting to negotiate deals. I would be researching for months beforehand in preparation, getting the catalogues of every international book fair, who is going, who is there, what sort of books do they publish? Subscribing to newsletters like *Publishers Lunch* and *Publishers Weekly*, looking up their bestseller list, what is selling, what are people looking for, what are they talking about?

Rogers’ experience also included a salutary lesson about dealing with overseas buyers.

In the early 2000s, the early period of my time at Murdoch Books, Ludwig Konemann (a German publisher) was the king of illustrated rights in Europe. He would buy the rights to Murdoch illustrated books for every European territory. Konemann’s first print run could be up to as many as a couple of million. Everybody got wildly excited about Ludwig and the money came pouring in—until he got into terrible trouble because 20+ million copies of those books were still sitting in warehouses and weren’t going anywhere. He went spectacularly bust, taking a lot of publishers and printers with him.

We had to then start to build relationships with individual publishers in each territory. We didn’t use agents, we negotiated directly. Trying to crack the American market probably took us four book fairs.

We were trying to sell directly to Barnes & Noble and Borders, into their promotional areas. They had special areas of their shops dedicated to the sale of books at very advantageous retail prices and they would buy large volumes of titles they chose to stock. We were thinking, we are getting this so wrong and they are not taking any notice. Then one day the Borders reps walked onto the stand and they placed a very large order. They bought right through the list, but it was mainly illustrated food titles. It was an exciting day! We were just starting to look at Asia when I left Murdoch Books, and that has become a more important market since then.

Olivia Lanchester's knowledge of international rights sales has developed from advising authors through a contract assessment service provided by the ASA. The advice includes which rights authors should licence to their publisher, depending on their publisher's experience in selling internationally.

It has been interesting from a legal perspective seeing how publishing carves up rights, and how publishers as licensees of copyright then sub-licence those rights. The extent to which the licensee has so much power has been quite eye-opening. I am not sure there are many other industries where the licensee would be in such a powerful position to control the copyright of the licensor.

Lanchester believes this position comes about because of the nature of international rights sales.

International rights sales are based on a network of contacts and relationships. It is hard for an author to access overseas publishers or overseas agents. As an author you are completely reliant on your publisher's network. They are your bridge to market, not just in Australia, but overseas. That is demonstrated by how difficult it is for a self-published author to take their book and sell it at international book fairs. How do you afford that, negotiate that? It is very difficult.

In the 1990s Rogers did not perceive much overseas industry interest in licensing the rights to Australian books.

I'm going back 30 years. Dare I say it, the snobbery of UK publishers particularly, was that they knew everything and books from the colonies couldn't possibly compare. That was less of an issue with individual publishers who got excited if they found a wonderful book. But it wasn't a generally hugely encouraged activity for UK publishers because they had budgets to adhere to and so they would support their own authors in preference. In illustrated publishing it was probably a bit different because the perception in the UK and US was that Australia was much more groundbreaking than a lot of other publishers. Australian illustrated books were desirable and a real selling point. The photography was seen as being much fresher and the design more interesting.

Interest started to build across all genres, however, and over probably the last ten years that growth of Australian authors being desirable and interesting really started to ramp up, and you start to get international successes like Jane Harper, and the momentum starts to build.

Rogers believes the increased interest overseas in Australian-authored books is due to a number of reasons.

Australian publishers have taken rights sales more seriously and committed more resources to it. They have started to appoint people in rights sales roles rather than it being, if you have some time, try and find some overseas opportunities. Publishers have learnt a lot more about how long it takes to develop rights sales, that it doesn't happen overnight. Success does breed success so when you get some notable titles that start to work, that increases interest. Rights sales can start to snowball, and as the world has become more global, it is easier to position your books internationally.

However, Lanchester and Rogers agree that only a small proportion of Australian authors could hope to gain international rights sales for their books. Rogers explains:

First of all, it is only going to be those Australian authors who are with sufficiently resourced publishers to represent them. Second, it is only going to be those Australian authors whose books are appropriate for overseas markets. Even anecdotally, some of the comments that authors make to the ASA are that if their book doesn't do very well in Australia, then their publisher is—perhaps reasonably—less motivated to pitch it overseas. It is a fiercely competitive market so even authors who have a measure of Australian success don't always feel confident that their publishers are championing them overseas.

Despite the challenges, the benefits to Australian authors when their work is licensed internationally are significant. Lanchester:

Revenue and reputation are the main benefits. Australia is a small market. Even if you have a relatively successful book, it's so rare to earn a fortune as a writer! We know that most writers earn low incomes, so it is about increasing their income by accessing larger markets—and increasing their bargaining power. Authors become a more attractive proposition for their publisher if they can not only sell in Australia but in other markets. Building profile is another benefit.

Rogers points to the role of social media.

Now with social media and that global market you can build a global reputation. You have a real chance of building an international profile in a way you didn't have before. It can mean a lot of revenue.

There are also a number of ways that international rights sales can have negative consequences for Australian authors. Lanchester:

Occasionally, it can be difficult for authors to be paid. If you are chasing an overseas agent for example, or an overseas publisher, you have a less direct relationship and fewer avenues of redress if things go badly wrong. There are some markets where attitudes to copyright are different to Australia so there might not be the same respect for copyright laws.

Probably the more common complaint that the ASA hears is Australian authors signing with international agents, or assigning their international rights to publishers who then don't do anything with those rights or who don't have the experience or who don't have the contacts. For that Australian author, their rights are locked up and they go nowhere. A lot of Australian authors, particularly early in their career, might not know to interrogate a publisher's or an agent's experience. That is where rights sales can stall—bearing in mind that the international rights marketplace is very crowded and that it is not possible for everyone to achieve international rights sales. But at least if you are with a publisher who has the contacts, you have a chance.

Rogers comments, “In my view, some small, inexperienced Australian publishers who are selling rights may need greater assistance to carry out due diligence about the overseas publishers and agents they are dealing with. The publishers get excited that they have an international deal and they don't do the due diligence or they don't know what the contract should cover.”

Another negative situation for authors is if their advance for an international rights sale doesn't sell out (the number of books sold in a territory does not earn back the advance paid to the author). Rogers:

Unfortunately, you can damage an author's career. Most publishers won't demand the advance back, but unearned advances are very unhelpful in getting your next book placed.

The ASA has been considering the impact of COVID-19 on authors. Lanchester:

It is a big question. My frustration is that at this stage we don't have a lot of data about the direct impact from an author perspective. We know that there was a decline in book sales due to reduced trading from bookshops and closures of bookshops. There has been some deferring of titles by publishers. We have heard anecdotally that international rights sales are down. That makes sense because many of the international book fairs either have been cancelled or if they did go ahead, they went ahead in a very different format.

There have also been many cancellations of other promotional opportunities like writers' festivals, for instance. So from an author perspective, COVID is going to be damaging but the impact, apart from the immediate loss of income from school, library and festival appearances, is a long-term impact that is yet to be measured or felt by authors.

Most authors are anxious about their royalty payment due at the end of September because that is the first royalty payment which will reveal exactly the decline in book sales and the supply disruption particularly through late March, April, May. We are hopeful that the impact won't be as bad as initially feared due to the relatively swift resumption of normal trading. We'll know more once we've surveyed our members in early October.

The impact is going to be layered, though. There is the decline in income from authors' appearances, then there is going to be a decline in royalties for some authors, and then there is going to be the general slowdown that comes from uncertainty in the industry internationally. There is going to be an international rights sales slowdown. There will be a rolling effect which probably will take a few years to recover from.

Rogers also observes that "uncertainty breeds a reduced appetite for risk".

That is a concern for authors doing something different. Publishers will resort to the tried and true, which they have a tendency to do anyway. It is understandable, but that will be a problem.

When I think of the GFC, the impact on exchange rates will be an issue. It will affect how financially viable some of the sales are, particularly co-editions when the exchange rates become problematic.

Shipping becomes an issue because it is slow to move the stock around. For example, you try to send some stock overseas but on the tracking number you can see it sitting at the wharf for two weeks because no planes are flying. All those aspects will make it quite difficult for authors for some time. It will need a concerted effort across the industry, to overcome some of these problems.

Lanchester agrees.

We are nervously waiting to see whether some small publishers don't survive this crisis. The outlook for bookstores is more positive given that we weren't in lockdown for as long as we feared. That is reassuring because if we lost many independent bookshops across Australia, that would be

crushing. Booksellers are wonderful champions of Australian books, Australian authors.

If you are an author, you are last to be paid in the supply chain, so you are vulnerable to anyone in the supply chain falling over. We suspect that small publishers with cash flow problems will be late paying authors. If publishers go into liquidation, authors are very unlikely to be paid at all. That vulnerability is a real concern from an author's perspective.

Lanchester believes one way in which Australian authors can better understand the territorial carving up of their copyright is to enter into clear contracts. The ASA has prepared template contracts between agents or publishers and authors:

We noticed through the ASA's contract assessment service that there was wide variation in literary agent's agreements with authors. The contracts tend to be short; they're not expansive. They also tend to be broad. Agents are generally appointed exclusively and worldwide. As an author, once you sign up to an agent, you do so for the world and the scope of representation was, in my view, often inadequately defined in the contract.

The ASA would receive, not all the time but semi-regularly, enquiries from authors who were uncertain about the parameters of their agent's representation and also what happens once they terminated the agency agreement. That has, as a generalisation, been poorly described in the agreements.

Through our collaboration with the Australian Literary Agents' Association we drafted a template agreement which we thought was fair and had some very constructive discussions with the ALAA about that. They provide a link to our template from their website. I respect that their members, the agents, are free to come up with their own agreement, but it would be the ASA's hope that if an agent was unsure where to begin with their agency agreement or wanted to review it, that our template would be a useful resource.

The ASA also developed a template agreement for the Small Press Network several years ago and some small publishers have adopted that template as their standard contract.

Given Lanchester's knowledge of contracts, she adds:

The other advice I would give to authors is to be careful and mindful of their revenue shares for international rights sales. Make sure that in the event there is a sub-licence done, that the revenue share back to the author is reasonable. That is one thing that some authors don't give much thought to or perhaps feel is not up for negotiation.

In addition to the contract advisory service provided by the ASA, Lanchester is also available to give guest lectures on contracts for editing and publishing courses at universities in Australia.

While Lanchester and Rogers have heard anecdotally of increased interest overseas in books by more authors from more diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous authors, they believe that strategies to increase these opportunities must address the diversity of the Australian book industry itself. Rogers:

We have to start much earlier, as there is a diversity problem in the publishing industry. There are not a lot of editors and acquiring publishers who are from diverse (non-Anglo) backgrounds. It starts with a commitment to giving potential candidates from diverse backgrounds a real chance to develop their skills and their confidence, because there are just as many talented children in every area of society, they just don't have the same access to opportunities in the industry. We need to have programs, mentorships, apprenticeships and initiatives where we are serious about recognising that at the moment, the multicultural society that Australia is so proud of, is not reflected in our publishing.

Rogers also draws attention to the economic cost of pursuing a career as a book author.

To have the time to sit and write is a luxury. If you take into account socioeconomic factors as well, it is not surprising that the ASA's membership is predominately comprised of women over 45 years, because their children are off their hands and for the first time they have the time and probably some resources to take the time to write. Very few of them are earning their main income from their writing. If you are a young working parent with two or three little ones, and a partner who is possibly in a precarious financial position, when are you going to get the time to sit down and say, I want to write?

So there are some socio-economic reasons but it needs an industry-wide response. It requires offering people new opportunities and it is one of the areas where I would love to have made more progress when I was at the ASA.

Rogers adds, "Further, we need to make a commitment at the earliest stages to encourage Indigenous writers. During childhood they need the opportunity to be encouraged in their creative writing, given feedback, and to realise they could be an author." She draws attention to the work of the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, which is the Australian publishing industry charity.

The ILF was founded by Suzy Wilson, a former teacher and education consultant who owns Riverbend Books. We are a not-for-profit charity which respects the unique place of Australia's first people and draws on the expertise of the Australian book industry. Our programs focus on instilling a love of reading from a young age.

From the Indigenous Literacy Foundation website⁹:

 	 	 
Book Supply	Book Buzz	Community Literacy Projects
Gifts engaging, new, culturally appropriate books to communities that need them. We have supplied over 440,000 books to over 400 communities, 40% by Indigenous authors and illustrators.	Promotes early literacy and familiarity with books in children under five with a dedicated story-time session. Carers are supported to share books with their children in home languages and in English.	Produces and publishes books by Indigenous people for Indigenous people. These books are important because they represent culture, community life and language.

⁹ See: www.indigenousliteracyfoundation.org.au.

Rogers also believes that all authors, including Indigenous authors, must be encouraged to remain focused on the quality of their work. “I don’t think that we serve any author well by rushing into a publication too early. Some of those new voices need time to develop and in fairness an author’s first work may not be up to the standard required to attract international deals. The authors could develop into wonderful prose writers and need to be given the time and help to do so.”

The ASA is working to increase the diversity of its executive and membership. Lanchester:

The ASA has worked to diversify its board. In terms of the membership base, there is still a job to be done. The ASA over time has changed its culture so that it’s become a broad church. We welcome all writers and illustrators, both aspiring and published.

We are looking at how we can run professional development workshops that are more inclusive and that appeal to more diverse writers. And we will continue to work on the culture of openness and inclusivity.

In May 2020, as part of the ASA’s submission to the COVID-19 Select Committee about possible government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, amongst a number of initiatives, the ASA has proposed a parliamentary enquiry into the future and sustainability of Australian literature. Lanchester:

There has been no high level vision for a long time. The level of income for authors is so low and it doesn’t seem to be going anywhere. We are at risk of losing talented authors because they simply cannot afford to continue careers as writers.

We’ve been talking about international rights sales today but Australian government policy makers first have to support local publishing before it can be presented to the world. Funding for literature from the Australia Council has decreased more than 40 percent since 2000. The ASA would like to see an increase in funding from government, particularly with the discretion for strategic investment in literature, so that there is the ability to take a fresh look at where the needs are. We would like to see an increase in the number of direct writer’s and illustrator’s grants.

Also, there is a need for resources for industry training in pitching, contract negotiation, training for small publishers who might not already have that expertise.

It is good that there is funding available for publishers to attend international book fairs. These should have criteria so that you are sending publishers who are skilled and prepared, who can do a good job and can represent Australian authors effectively.

Rogers adds, “When things get difficult in your domestic market it is also a resource issue. If a publisher is in trouble domestically and their sales are struggling that makes it even harder to make a commitment and employ somebody to look after international rights. It’s a tough thing to do if you are in a measure of economic pain.”

Rogers believes that government funding could also support mentoring, which has been so effective informally in building Australian rights sales capability. While the majority of publishers adhere to professional practices, she believes that if the industry

associations were better resourced, the APA and SPN could vet their members' practices more closely and provide training and capacity building. "The barriers to entry have been lowered by the technological advances which have transformed the book industry. It is easy for people to start publishing now, but there is enormous scope for training."

It is a small point, but teach publishers how to pitch at international book fairs. You have half hour appointments at Frankfurt, the bell literally rings each 30 minutes. Telling at length about the plot for your wonderful novel is the surest way to secure a No. It starts with choosing the right book, choosing the right recipient through extensive research beforehand and telling them why it is different. Why this book? Be able to encapsulate what it is about literally in less than a minute. You are going to have less than five minutes on a title. Also, a lot of people forget to listen. They forget to ask questions. What are you looking for? What interests you? What is working for you? Having agility is important. You work out what you are going to show someone, but if they suddenly say, I'm into knitting books, well, as it happens, you know, here is one that I prepared earlier. A good salesperson will be able to think quickly on their feet.

Rogers has been asked to provide access to her international networks and she is protective.

It is a delicate balancing act because those contacts and knowledge are hard won over years. There is a very understandable reluctance to say, here is my contacts book and go for it. There are protocols and you can't risk some newbie walking in and not understand how to look after that relationship.

Rogers would also like to see wider adoption of standard rights sales records systems by agents and publishers. Further, while there is sharing of information informally between Australian agents and publishers about market developments on a collegial basis, she and Lanchester believe that with better industry-wide data, the Australian industry and policy-makers could build on the recent success. "We need to understand more about what books are working overseas, where the opportunities are and where the growth areas are."

Lanchester wonders whether better data may also be connected to developments in digital communication due to COVID-19.

I don't think it's meaningful at all now, but an area which might grow is in rights sales via digital platforms. This year with COVID-19, we have seen a lot of book fairs pivot to a digital book fair. That goes against everything that we know about publishing being based on personal relationships and contacts. It is hard to imagine that the same sort of deals can be done over email or via looking at digital catalogues. But we may see more growth in that area, and I think there will be more platforms developed that provide connection between overseas publishers and authors. So agents, publishers and authors could be mindful of watching to see if there might be opportunities to get around the fact that you don't have long-standing relationships in place. The ASA produces a digital International Marketplace Catalogue showcasing our members' titles, for those who hold international rights to their work, and we are hoping that the Catalogue will attract more attention this year in the vacuum left by cancelled in-person book fairs.

Lastly, Rogers would like to see the Australian government follow the successful practice of Canada and New Zealand by funding Australia to be a host nation at

Frankfurt or one of the big international book fairs. “Our presence at book fairs is hugely important. I think Australia’s presence has been lacklustre for a lot of that time, because they really haven’t had the government support that some countries have had like Canada and New Zealand.”

New Zealand for a while got very strong support. They were the featured nation at the London Book Fair in 2012. They had an impressive stand that played to the strength of clean, green New Zealand. They punched above their weight in terms of profile and results. Canada had a bit of a heyday with people like Ann-Marie MacDonald and some of their big authors, including Margaret Atwood. They were starting to make their presence felt. Australia’s stand on the whole unfortunately, has been unexciting, due to limited funding.

You need a sustained, coherent plan. You have to showcase both the authoritative authors, the David Maloufs, along with exciting new voices. To be a host country really does highlight your industry internationally and showcase a lot of your work and your authors, but you do need serious government support to do it.

Then you have to have publishers who are able to keep going to the fairs and keep that momentum rolling. It needs a proper strategic approach for Australia to maximise some of the truly wonderful publishing that is done here.

International rights sales success requires investment from government and industry over a long period of time. Rogers understands why members of the Australian industry can get discouraged.

It takes a lot of time and effort and money to build those networks and days spent sitting at a Book Fair, getting rejection after rejection, can be soul destroying. But it’s still the very best way to learn. This industry is generous in the way in which they share knowledge and if you show that you’re prepared to listen, international publishers will fall over themselves to help, until that heady day arrives, when that “no” becomes a “yes”. I promise that the sense of achievement and elation that you will feel that day, will make the wait worthwhile.

Lanchester agrees:

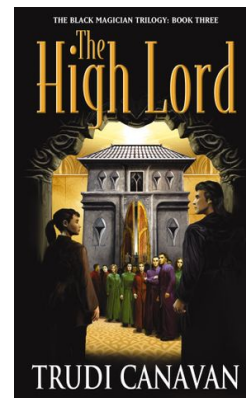
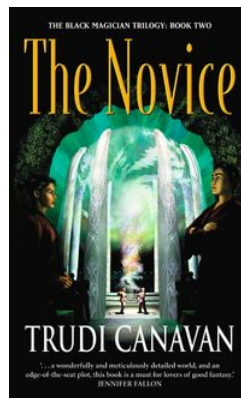
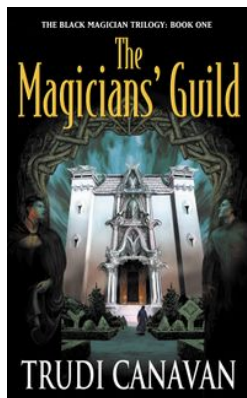
Readers shop globally now. This means our creators are competing globally but also means there is increased potential for Australian writers to access larger markets and take our stories, our voices and our culture to the world.

Authors

Genre fiction: Trudi Canavan

A recent study of Australian novels and the international market reported that between 2004-2008 international rights sales increased exponentially, and that these sales were led by Australian genre authors: the majority of which were women writing fantasy novels (Lawson, 2019a, p. 137).

One of the most successful of these authors is Trudi Canavan whose first book, *The Magician's Guild* (Book 1 of The Black Magician trilogy) was published in 2001 by HarperCollins Australia. In 2009, after the success of the trilogy, British publisher Little, Brown, part of the multinational group Hachette, paid a seven figure advance for the world English rights to the sequel and prequel.¹⁰



The timing of this deal coincided with the beginning of an ongoing shift in production trends by those major trade publishers in Australia who had published fantasy. According to *AustLit* records, HarperCollins, for example, showed an increase in production of novels categorised as fantasy between 2000-2010, followed by an ongoing steep decline for the following ten years.¹¹ For some multinational publishers, fantasy novels too, rather than being acquired for the Australian market alone, were increasingly acquired in “group buys” with sister companies in the US and UK, and the novels published on what became global imprints (such as Orbit, the Hachette imprint that publishes Canavan’s novels). This shift, which resulted in fewer rights being sold internationally for fantasy from Australia, can be seen to be reflected in overall rights sales figures for the first fifteen years of the twenty-first century (see, for example, Lawson, 2019a, p. 137). Yet internationally rights for Australian authors continued to be sold—and fantasy remains in demand, locally and globally, as do Canavan’s novels.

In an interview conducted via email in May, 2020, Trudi Canavan and her long-time agent Fran Bryson discuss the question of world English language rights, and reveal how fantasy as

¹⁰ This is a widely reported figure and also appears on the author’s website www.trudicanavan.com.

¹¹ AustLit, n.d. Extracted 15 December, 2020.

a genre does not work like commercial or literary fiction but instead, appeals more in certain markets.¹²



About Trudi Canavan

Since the Australian publication of *The Magician's Guild* (2001), Melbourne-based author Trudi Canavan's novels have won Australian and international prizes, and her awards include: an Aurealis Award for Best Fantasy Novel (*The Magician's Apprentice*, 2009); a German Phantastika Award for best international novel (*The Magician's Guild*, 2007); and a Ditmar Award for Best Novel (*Thief's Magic*, 2015). Her novels have also been bestsellers, both in the genre category—the Black Magician trilogy was 'rated by Nielsen BookScan as the most successful debut fantasy series of the previous 10 years' (trudicanavan.com)—and more widely: the hardback edition of *The Traitor Queen* (Book 3 of the Traitor Spy trilogy, 2011) reached #1 position on the UK's *Sunday*

Times bestseller list in 2011. As of May, 2020, Canavan has had 14 books published across four series and her work has been translated into 17 languages. The rights, too, have been sold in 17 international territories: Brazil, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.¹³

The difference between international rights sales—and individual market success

The range of markets into which Canavan's novels have been sold strongly reflects the type of fantasy she writes: epic and drawing on European medieval history. However, success has varied between markets. This reflects both the gap between production preferences (publisher choice) and consumption (reader preferences), but as Canavan points out, it is also a question of competition—but not from other people's books.

Bryson explained that Canavan's work has been most popular in Germany, the UK, Poland and France. When asked why this might be, Canavan had several explanations. "Language, economies of scale and competition factors are the two most obvious restrictions on my books' reach," she suggested. "In some non-English speaking countries English is still widely spoken, so readers can buy the English versions. That means there is less demand for a local language edition to support a local translation publishing industry."

In fact, in some European countries where English is widely spoken, there is also competition between the export divisions of British and American publishers and the rights departments (for a discussion of this in relation to the Scandinavian markets, see Craighill, 2015). The situation, Canavan points out, is different in the English language markets.

¹² While Fran Bryson continues to represent Canavan who she first began to work with in 1996, she no longer works with other authors, and is an acclaimed non-fiction writer herself.

¹³ Author website edition information was combined with data from *AustLit* and the unpublished database *ALLDB* to build a longitudinal global publishing picture of Trudi Canavan's novels.

In the USA there is a huge readership, but it is a wealthy nation supporting a big publishing industry, so a huge number of books are being published and it is hard for any new book to gain attention. Where my books were most successful in English—the UK—it was partly because one of the big book chains mistakenly ordered more copies than intended and promoted it heavily in order to move the stock, making it stand out among the crowd.

This comment illustrates the role of external structural factors, including arbitrary events, in a novel's success—as well as the value of promotion and the importance of visibility.

There are also, Canavan believes, “cultural forces at work”. She has noticed “that fantasy books from different regions have a different flavour, but it is very hard to pin down what the difference is, and if it is true across the board.” (As she points out, she can't read everything.) There is another reason it might be difficult to pin down. Anecdotal accounts from rights managers in Australia suggest that in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Australasian fantasy—the work produced by Australian as well as New Zealand authors, some of whom had work sold by Australian rights managers—had its own flavour, as international publishers sought it out. Yet the books themselves drew from different traditions, both the Western European tradition of epic fantasy, but also an Eastern tradition. However, as the rights sales to Canavan's own books suggest, the traditions might have influenced *where* these books sold internationally but not the fact that they *did* sell.

What external factors influence international rights sales for fantasy novels?

As the previous section suggests, domestic copy sales can be influenced by external factors. It has also been argued that external factors influence international rights sales. Specifically, it has been suggested that works categorised as commercial and literary fiction are more likely to be influenced by sales and prizes, whereas rights sales for genre fiction have a different profile and are more likely to be influenced by other factors, such as international publishing networks (see, for example, Lawson, 2019a, pp. 241-300). More generally, US and UK deals are seen as critical influences on translation sales by scholars and within the industry.

When asked what factors contributed to Canavan's early success—and whether these changed over time (that is, after she'd won international prizes, had a seven-figure deal and #1 listing on the *Sunday Times* bestseller chart, in hardback)—Bryson responded:

No doubt US & UK deals help. I encountered more resistance to foreign publishers/agents considering rights until the UK & US rights were bought. Foreign publishers seem to want someone else to take what they might perceive as a risk first. Seven figure deals do help generate interest of course, although quite a few translation rights had been sold for the first trilogy (i.e. before the bigger deal).¹⁴

All publishers watch best-seller lists which help them approach the rights-holder when they decide they're interested in a book. I don't know which translation sales handled by Little, Brown [LB] were as the result of an approach by foreign publishers or LB approaching foreign publishers.¹⁵

At the time of The Black Magician trilogy, I think I remember several (even many) of the translation territories had only one publisher who published fantasy

¹⁴ These include Danish, Dutch, Italian, Indonesian, Serbian, Russian and Turkish.

¹⁵ Little, Brown UK is now an Hachette company and published the book under the Orbit imprint.

(or they claimed not to have a fantasy market at all). This appears to have changed over the last two decades.

Canavan believes that the Australian success played a part in her early international deals. As she says, “It built from there—the more markets my books were sold in the more interest there was.” (Indeed, anecdotally, rights professionals believe there are tipping points when it comes to rights deals: ten territories being one; twenty another.) Canavan too, like Bryson, doesn’t believe there was a direct relationship between the seven-figure deal and more deals, but adds she can’t be sure of this.

I think that was about the time more of the agenting work was going through the UK and my general impression was that, though good, it was never as effective as Fran! But it may simply be that we already had as many territories as we were going to get.



Publishing models: local versus global—and the closing gap

When Little, Brown UK acquired the publishing rights to the prequel and sequel to The Black Magician trilogy, the deal was for world rights, all languages; this meant the translation deals were done from London by the rights team at Little, Brown UK—and continue to be—but also that her work was published globally in the English language under a single imprint: Orbit. Previously, Canavan’s novels were published by separate publishers in Australia (Voyager), the US (Eos), and the UK (Orbit). What the deal meant was that she no longer had an Australian publisher, as such: she became as it were, an international author. Reflecting on what this means, in terms of the way Canavan is positioned by publishers globally, Bryson sees advantages:

I think one advantage of a united publishing front is that there was (and probably still is) a perception that ANZ rights are part of UK or World English rights and by not getting ANZ rights the UK company was somehow hard done by. It took extra work on the original Orbit publisher’s part to convince his bosses that success was possible without ANZ. Indeed, a number of other publishers I approached made it pretty clear they didn’t want to consider a deal that didn’t include ANZ (something I imagine they regret now).¹⁶

Publishers, too, encourage their houses in different territories to team together. That can be both advantageous and not. One disadvantage is that not each English

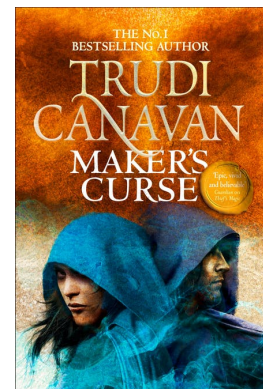
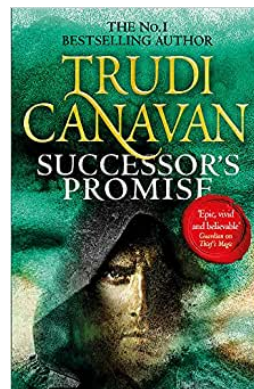
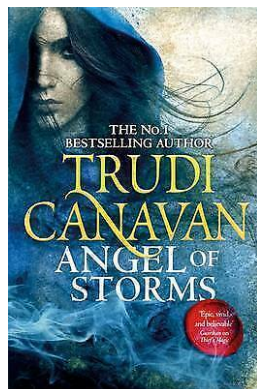
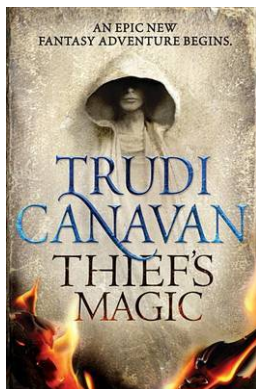
¹⁶ This issue of British publishers and ANZ rights has long been a contentious one and remains so, not just for fantasy. Most recently, it was discussed in relation to proposed changes to territorial copyright arrangements. In 2008, Scribe publisher Henry Rosenbloom went so far as to describe the tension as a “undeclared guerrilla war” between British and Australian publishers over territory (Rosenbloom, 2008, p. 177).

language territory is the same but with a WE [World English Language] deal, there seems to be a tendency to treat each territory as the same.

As Bryson points out, “Orbit did have a ‘local’ publisher for some of Trudi’s books.” Noting how this, “was advantageous (face-to-face was easier and publicity took on more of a local flavour). But London,” she concludes, “has always seemed very accessible to us.”

As an author, Canavan has a slightly different perspective. “The first difference I encountered was in editing practises,” she comments. “I was astonished to find Orbit UK was still working on printed manuscripts. I certainly felt like we Australians were ahead of the technical curve. I think we have to be in order to overcome the restrictions of distance.” When asked about national identity, she suggests that, “Probably because of those restrictions, I’ve never felt anything but an Australian author.” Revealingly, she adds,

[coming from Australia], is definitely a part of my identity that overseas media comment on, but as something interesting and never a disadvantage. And now, with COVID-19 forcing people to use video conferencing, it is as though publishers have suddenly realised it is not that hard to get an Australian author involved in international publicity. I’m being invited to participate in video interviews, online conventions and vlogs.

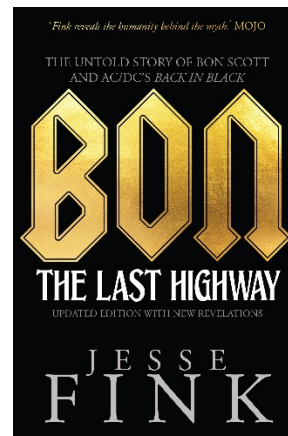
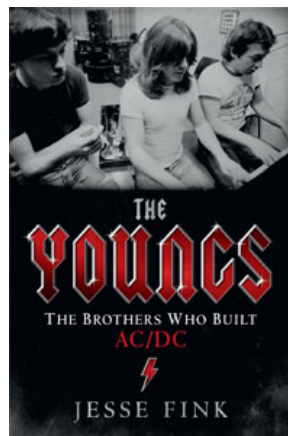


Narrative non-fiction: Jesse Fink

Anecdotally, rights professionals suggest that non-fiction tends to fall into two categories: books that do well domestically and books that sell internationally (and might, or might not, do well domestically). Whereas for fiction, the author name and copy sales are said to be influential for non-fiction the deciding factor is said to be subject matter—and brand recognition. This effect is illustrated by a comparison between two recent music autobiographies and biographies: two memoirs by Jimmy Barnes, best known as the hard-living front man of the iconic Australian band Cold Chisel, the other, two biographies of the equally iconic band AC/DC.

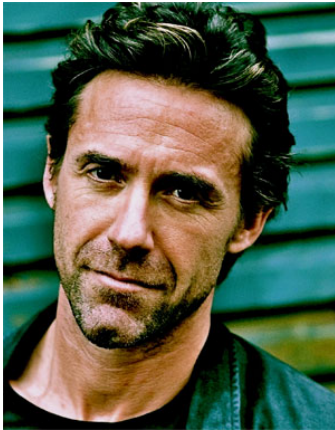
Jimmy Barnes' *Working Class Man* (HarperCollins 2017) and its sequel, *Working Class Boy* (HarperCollins 2018), both topped the bestseller charts in Australia, and were awarded, respectively, Biography of the Year 2017 and 2018 at the Australian Book Industry Awards. Between them they have sold over 400,000 copies.¹⁷ The international rights, however, did not sell: it would appear that the brand recognition was considered too overwhelmingly domestic for international publishers (which is not to say readers: the book was put on global distribution). This is not the story of the two recent biographies about AC/DC, one of Australia's biggest bands and one of the country's most successful cultural exports.

The Youngs: The brothers who built AC/DC (2013) and *Bon: The Last Highway* (2017) were both published by Penguin Random House.



Nerrilee Weir, Senior Rights Manager at Penguin Random House, who has worked on the international rights for these books, and Jesse Fink, the author, were interviewed for the project about the process of selling the international rights. The accounts they gave demonstrate the role global brand recognition can play in influencing deals, as well as how success in rights is not a given but can benefit from—like success in music—hard work. Their accounts also reveal an unusual rights story: what can happen when author and publisher work together.

¹⁷ See: <https://www.harpercollins.com.au/9781460752142/working-class-man-the-no-1-bestseller>.



About Jesse Fink

Jesse Fink the author of *Bon: The Last Highway*, *The Youngs: The Brothers Who Built AC/DC* and two other books, *Laid Bare: One Man's Story of Sex, Love and Other Disorders* and *15 Days in June: How Australia Became a Football Nation*. His most recent book is *Pure Narco*, written with Luis Navia.

What was distinctive about the international rights trajectory of The Youngs and Bon?

AC/DC has sold an estimated 200 million albums worldwide, this ensures there would be international interest in books on the band.¹⁸ Yet as Weir explains, selling non-fiction can be difficult.¹⁹ While non-fiction “could be a new book on a previously unheard of topic, I’ve yet to read that book”. It is more likely to be “a new take on an old topic”: this was the case with the two books about AC/DC by Jesse Fink, both published in Australia by Penguin Random House. The first, *The Youngs: the Brothers Who Built AC/DC* (Random House 2013), focuses on eleven of the band’s best known songs and asks what has made them endure; the second, *Bon: The Last Highway* (Random House 2018), is a biography of the band’s legendary front man that draws on new material to separate the man from the myth. Weir has been responsible for selling the rights to both books worldwide, with *The Youngs* topping the national bestseller charts in Denmark in 2015, and reaching number 1 in ten different Amazon music categories, and *Bon* appearing on ‘Books of the Year’ lists in the UK, France and Sweden. Rights, too, continue to sell, with the most recent sale for *The Youngs* secured in 2019 (Spanish-language rights)—six years after its first publication.

What is different about the rights story of these two books is the way the deals happened. In most instances, Weir explains, the rights team will be entirely responsible for finding international publishers and securing deals. For *The Youngs* and *Bon*, the author played a critical role at every stage, one that Fink—a former publishing professional himself—says involved a huge amount of research and persistence.²⁰

What was Penguin Random House’s strategy?

As with all rights projects Weir works on, the process started with formulating a strategy. For *The Youngs*, the first step was finding out what else was already on the market about the subject. It turned out that in Australia alone there were already seven books: all had sold internationally. Having established that there was substantial competition, the next task was to identify what kind of biography *The Youngs* was going to be, asking: “Is the book promising to reveal blockbuster secrets or is it about the writing? With *The Youngs*,” she says, and was subsequently proved right, “it was both.”

That the writing and the content could be promoted, offered particular advantages when it came to securing international deals. As Weir says of the writing, Fink’s ‘take no prisoners’

¹⁸ Additional information about the AC/DC books is sourced from the Penguin Random House promotional material and author Jesse Fink.

¹⁹ The interview with Nerrilee Weir was conducted by Airlie Lawson by phone and email in April, 2020.

²⁰ Jesse Fink was interviewed by email by Airlie Lawson, also in April, 2020.

style is “perfect for the readership”. She characterises this as broad, both “blokes in the garage drinking beer but also 40-something women who, on the weekend, still pull out their AC/DC t-shirts and want to rock”. Ultimately, she says, what makes the style so right for the subject is that “just like the music of AC/DC it takes us by the heart and doesn’t let go”. This, combined with new material, a fresh take, as well as attitude, made her sure the book would, potentially, appeal to multiple publishers, although as music is a complicated area to publish in, selling the rights was also going to be complicated and it was going to take work.

What Weir didn’t expect was that she—and her team—were not the only ones who were going to do this work:

When we first started thinking about our strategy we were not aware of how proactive the author was so our strategy was very much informed by his activities as we worked together. Jesse would send us breakdowns of AC/DC market reach by territory as well as links to the official fan clubs in each territory, Facebook pages, and lists of publishing houses in each territory that published in each area: this is one of the most unusual [rights] situations I’ve ever been in.

Ultimately, the way they worked together was that Jesse would send his research and Penguin Random House would, as Weir describes it, “do our due diligence”. In rights terms, this means following up and also to do their best to ensure the publishers have a good reputation: that is, they are reliable, suitable, and likely to keep their contractual obligations. (This is one reason many publishers and agents engage representatives—sub-agents for publishers, co-agents for agents—in international territories: they are more likely to be aware of publisher profiles and reputations.)

Were there any barriers that needed to be overcome in the rights sales process?

What Weir did encounter, to her surprise, was that unlike other high profile Australian subjects, there seemed to be a lack of awareness about AC/DC *being* Australian—or existing at all. When informed about the book and the author, one sub-agent asked, “Why is an Australian author writing this book?” Weir explained to the sub-agent that AC/DC was Australia’s biggest band. She was given a blank look and had to clarify: AC/DC was an *Australian* band. She encountered a similar response when giving a seminar at the 2018 Taiwan Rights Workshop called ‘How to Pitch Non-Fiction’. She used *The Youngs* as an example. When asked to raise their hand if they knew that AC/DC was an Australian band, only three or four attendees raised their hands and this was in a room of around 30 Taiwanese publishers, all there to learn how to pitch books internationally. Additionally, Weir discovered that many individual editors she was pitching to didn’t know much about the band. She was able to use Fink’s detailed and targeted research to provide the evidence of just how big this band were—in that editor’s particular market.

Weir also contrasts the experience of selling *The Youngs* with that of selling two other books about Australian musicians, both with international standing. Olivia Newton-John’s *Don’t Stop Believin’* (2018) became a *New York Times* bestseller and was also extremely successful in the UK and Germany. However, Newton-John’s book was, Weir explains, “personality led, even as musical memoir”. As it fell into the ‘overcoming adversity’ category as well as the music category, it appealed to a different and wider market, so she could also approach trade publishers who didn’t have music lists. In contrast, *Grant and I* (2017), Robert Forster’s memoir of Indie band *The Go-Betweens*, involved finding out which individual editors were fans. This targeted approach led to the UK, German and Italian deals, and success. The book was, for example, named by British magazines *Mojo* and *Uncut* as their 2017 Book of the

Year. Ultimately, though, what made the difference with *The Youngs* and *Bon*, was the author's deep knowledge of both the publishing and the music industries, combined with determination, time and energy, which he used to help Penguin Random House sell the rights.

How does the author feel about the international rights sales—the process and the result?

When asked about his expectations for the rights sales for *The Youngs*, Jesse Fink's response is measured. 'Overall, I'm thrilled that *The Youngs* was published in 16 territories including Australia,' he says, but he remains puzzled—and frustrated—about several things, including the territories into which the book and its follow up, *Bon*, have yet to be sold. To Fink, it doesn't seem to make sense. *Bon*, he reveals, hasn't yet sold in Spain, despite the size of the band's following there.²¹ Nor has it yet sold in Denmark where *The Youngs* was, as he points out, "a number-one national bestseller for two months running".²²

Fink also feels that a focus on large territories can lead to a neglect of the smaller ones, and has advice on the subject, based on his experience:

In my opinion, with books like *The Youngs* and *Bon* there are so many opportunities internationally yet too many go begging because of failure to initiate relationships out of the usual big markets: Germany, USA, UK, etc. Contact a Serbian or Croatian publisher. Who publishes rock books in Thailand, South Korea or Indonesia? Find out and message them. If they don't answer your email, try again and keep following up until they do. Eventually persistence pays off and suddenly you have a dozen small deals in countries around the world. It all adds up.

Fink is suggesting that the usual method of selling international rights—focus on the large territories, and the smaller will follow—is not always appropriate, particularly for non-fiction. For books on popular music, what is more important is the size of the band's following in a territory (brand recognition): not where the book has sold previously. Moreover, his comment underlines the way in which even small deals matter financially to authors in a way they may not to Australian publishers, as rights income is such a small part of most publishers' overall revenue.²³

Rights as a collaborative process

The awareness that every deal counts explains why Fink is so proactive, and his particular attitude. As he explains: "Ultimately I see foreign rights as a collaborative process between author and agent/publisher and it's an important income stream." This approach means his perception of the publisher/agent role in the rights process is different to many authors. "I can use whatever contacts I already have or new contacts I make to direct international interest to them and it's up to Penguin [Penguin Random House] to negotiate a good deal on my behalf."

If he finds the contacts however, he also suggests it would be fair that this should be reflected in a reduction of commission: instead of 20 or 25 percent, it should be 10. Essentially, what Fink reveals is an author who puts just as much into promoting rights sales as into promoting copy sales:

²¹ Weir has an explanation. She suggests the Spanish publisher's strategy is to release *The Youngs* first and, if it does well, to then acquire *Bon*. (That is, they are taking a cautious approach.)

²² Weir is similarly baffled by this.

²³ For a discussion of this issue see, for example, Lawson (2019a, pp. 45-46).

I spent years contacting people on LinkedIn about *The Youngs*. Hundreds of emails and messages to publishers all around the world, most of whom had not heard of the book. I hit them up, one by one, asking if they'd heard of my work. I did the grunt work.

In addition to finding international publishers, Fink has also paid attention to the financial and production side of the business. He points out just how difficult it has been to get royalty statements from international publishers, citing one who took five years to report—and that was only after chasing. Based on his own experience, he warns, “it’s great to get a rights deal but authors should know what they’re in for: a ton of headaches chasing money.”

He also gives an example of another edition which was published with a spelling error on the cover. It was an error that would not have happened if the cover had been submitted to him for approval. Weir points out that while cover approval is included in international contracts, in reality, it can be difficult to regulate. Yet Fink is right. If Fink—or, indeed, Weir—had seen the cover prior to printing of the book, both would have spotted the error (an obvious one) in time for it to be corrected. Further, Fink notes that while the book was eventually reprinted with the mistake corrected (and printed copies supposedly recalled), that it proved difficult to have the jpeg of the cover with the error on it removed from Amazon and other online retail sites; the process required repeated emails to the foreign publisher demanding action be taken. Fink also believes that sub-agents should take more responsibility for these matters, and they should communicate directly with authors in the lead-up to publication of a licenced foreign edition to ensure covers adhere to contractual undertakings.

Were there any barriers to rights sales, as an Australian non-fiction author?

Being identified as Australian is a disadvantage for a narrative non-fiction author in Fink’s opinion, and he refers to himself as British-Australian. His assessment of the situation is blunt. “If I were American I’m sure there would have been more deals. It seems to mean more to have had a by-line in American *Rolling Stone* than it does to have written a good book.” In addition, he points out, “the reality is an American deal is the Wonka Golden Ticket. Once you get an American deal, other deals flow from that.” (Anecdotal evidence—informal discussions with rights professionals and publishers—suggests this view is also widely held within the international industry.) Yet when Fink engaged a major New York agent for *Bon*—a decision that was about his career, rather than Penguin Random House’s performance selling rights for *The Youngs*—the experience wasn’t, as he puts it, “positive”. The result was that the rights to *Bon* were returned to him, and he worked to secure international rights deals with Weir at Penguin Random House once again.

Questioning the need for a literary agent at all, Fink asks, “In the age of the internet, email and WhatsApp why do we need these gatekeepers?” For an energetic, informed, industry-savvy and highly connected author like Fink, who works in an area where research on his markets is possible, this is a valid question. However, as Weir points out, Fink is a very unusual case; it’s reasonable to suggest that AC/DC is too, although examining some aspects of the process of selling international rights to *The Youngs* and *Bon* does illustrate the way in which brand power alone is not sufficient to sell a book, or rather, rights do not sell themselves.

Internationally bestselling fiction: John Flanagan

Little large scale research has been conducted into the relationship between international rights sales and success in those markets where the rights have been sold: that is, copy sales. One example of an Australian work—a series—that has succeeded internationally in both rights and copy sales is John Flanagan’s middle grade series, *Ranger’s Apprentice*, launched in 2004.

On reading the first book, Michael Green, of the Penguin Group US imprint Philomel, recalled in an interview, ‘It made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. I knew in my gut that I was reading something special’ (Lodge, 2011). He bought the North American rights. By 2008, *Publishers Weekly* was reporting the film rights to *Rangers Apprentice* had ‘just been optioned by United Artists Films, with Oscar-winner Paul Haggis slated to direct’ (Bickers, 2008). That same year, the Australian Publishers Association’s International Success of the Year Award had gone to *Erik’s Ransom*, Book 7 in the series; this book was also awarded the APA Book of the Year for Older Children. Fast forward to 2016. Now it is the *New York Times* that is discussing the film adaptation, with a headline declaring that the production was to be ‘financed by Chinese firm’ (Barnes, 2016). That is to say, the series was by then, a global, cross-cultural success.

Nerrilee Weir, Senior Rights Manager, at Penguin Random House, the publisher of *Ranger’s Apprentice* in Australia and New Zealand, describes the series’ remarkable international journey: the way it happened, where it has ‘travelled’, and how publishers and readers have responded. Ultimately, it is a trajectory which demonstrates the difficulty of predicting just what will happen to a book once it leaves national shores.

About John Flanagan



John Flanagan’s *Ranger’s Apprentice* and *Brotherband* adventure series have sold more than fifteen million copies worldwide. His books are available in more than one hundred countries, are regularly on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and have had multiple award shortlistings and wins in Australia and overseas. John, a former television and advertising writer, lives with his wife in a Sydney beachside suburb.

About the Ranger's Apprentice series



The *New York Times* and Australian mega-bestselling series about Will and his friends from Castle Redmont starts here!

Will is small for his age, but agile and energetic. All his life, he has dreamed of becoming a great knight like the father he never knew, so he is devastated when he is rejected as an apprentice to Castle Redmont's Battleschool. Instead he is apprenticed to Halt, the mysterious Ranger whose uncanny ability to move unseen is thought to be the result of black magic. Reluctantly, Will learns to use a Ranger's secret weapons: a bow and arrow, a mottled cloak and a stubborn little pony. It may not be the sword and battlehorse he longs for, but when Will and Halt set out on a desperate mission to prevent the assassination of the King, Will finds that a Ranger's weapons are not so useless after all . . .

[Source: Publisher site]

The series' British publisher Yearling describes the series online as: 'Perfect for fans of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, T.H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*, Christopher Paolini's *Eragon* series and Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series'.

The first Ranger's Apprentice novel, *The Ruins of Gorlan*, was published in 2004 by Random House Children's Books in Australia. The series originally consisted of 12 tales of 'action, suspense and light humour, all woven into a marvellous medieval adventure' (Morgan, et al., 2013, p. 36). Currently, there are 14 (including the 'Royal Ranger' sequels). The total worldwide book sales are now estimated to be over 15,000,000 copies, with 2,000,000 copies sold in Australia and New Zealand.²⁴

Nominated and shortlisted for multiple institutional and children's choice awards, works in the series have won three—the aforementioned APA awards, and the COOL Children's Choice Awards, also in 2008, both for *The Ruins of Gorlan*, the first book in the series. Rights have also been sold widely—in 21 territories: Brazil (Editora Fundamento Educacional), Czech Republic (Egmont), (Glydendal Forlag), France (Hachette Livre), Germany (Verlagsgruppe Random House), Hungary (Könyvmolykepző Kiadó), Iran (Ofoq Publishers), Lithuania (Niekro Rimto Publishing House), Macedonia (Kultura Publishing House), Netherlands (Gottmer Uitgevers Groep), Norway (Front Forlag), Poland (Wydawnictwo Jaguar), Russia (Ripol Classic), Spain (Editorial Hydra), Sweden (B. Wahlströms), Taiwan (Core Culture Co.), Thailand (Classact Publishing), Turkey (Beyaz Balina Yayın Sanat), United States (Penguin), United Kingdom (Random House Children's Books), and Vietnam (Le Chi Culture and Communications).

How did Random House secure the 21 international rights deals?

Random House were not responsible for all of these deals, Weir explains. The rights to this series were split between publisher and agent: Random House Australia (as it was) were granted translation rights while the Australian agent, Rachel Skinner of Rick Raftos Management, retained the rest of world English language rights. She worked with a British

²⁴ The worldwide figures were in promotional material; the domestic figures were confirmed in an email to the research team on 1 July, 2020.

co-agent, Philippa Milnes-Smith of Lucas Alexander Whitely (now The Soho Agency) who licensed the UK rights to Random House Children's Books UK. For the North American market, Skinner engaged another co-agent, Catherine Drayton, of Arthur Pine & Associates (now Inkwell), an Australian based in New York, and a guest of the Australia Council's 2003 Visiting International Publishers program. Drayton sold the North American rights at auction to (then) Penguin Group USA for a six figure advance; it was published, as previously mentioned, on the Philomel imprint. In 2005, the first print run for 'The Ranger's Apprentice Book 1' as it was described—in fact, *The Ruins of Gorlan*—was reported to be 100,000 copies (*Publishers Weekly*, 2005). According to Weir, the series has now sold over 7,000,000 copies in North America.

The American sales figures hide the other story of this book's international success: the translation markets where 6,000,000 copies have sold. An auction for North American rights is an event which can influence multiple translation sales, as happened with Hannah Kent's *Burial Rites*, for example (Deahl, 2012): this was not the case for the Ranger's Apprentice series. When asked about the speed of the translation rights deals, Weir is definite: 'It was a slow burn.' Moreover, she explains, the series had an unusual start. Rather than being sold to in Germany or France first, the most likely territories,

we published *Ruins of Gorlan* (Book 1) in 2004, and secured the first translation deal in 2005 to Editora Fundamento in Brazil! The publisher was in Sydney and asked for the ONE title he should consider. Apparently I was so enthusiastic about Ranger's Apprentice, he believed for years that I was dating the author. Fundamento acquired books 1 and 2 that year; as did Germany. In 2006, we secured French, Danish, Swedish and Dutch rights. The series was a strong success in all six territories from the beginning (with Germany being not-so-strong; a trend that still continues). In 2007, we sold the Czech language rights; and in 2008, Polish. So, yes, a slow burn! Taiwan and Turkey were next in 2008 and 2009 respectively. In all of these markets, the publishers have acquired every title in the main and spin-off series and continue to have strong home sales.

It is worth noting that Editora Fundamento were not, at this time, an established publisher, and the Managing Director, Mauro Halfeld, did not follow the common method of acquiring international rights. At that time, he did not employ a literary scout to discover titles on his behalf, a popular practice in Brazil now, nor did he compete with other Brazilian publishers for the big American books.²⁵ Instead, he followed the bestseller lists of smaller English language markets, such as Australia, and developed personal relationships with rights professionals in the more commercial houses.²⁶

In which territories did the Ranger's Apprentice series do particularly well?

The success of the series internationally continued to follow an unusual pattern, not in terms of rights sales, but market success. Portuguese rights in Portugal and Italian rights were sold to the first two books but neither publisher continued to publish past these two initial titles. "Ironically, they were one of the only markets not to use either the UK or US covers," Weir says, "and at first we thought they simply had the 'wrong' covers. But the Czech publisher, Egmont, loved the Italian covers and licensed those. When Egmont published Book 3

²⁵ Information about scouting use is drawn from the ALLDB and based on soon-to-be published research by Airlie Lawson on the global use of scouts.

²⁶ At the time, the author of this case study was working in rights for HarperCollins Publishers Australia and Halfeld explained his strategy.

onwards, they commissioned the Italian designer directly to continue designing the covers.” The series has been a tremendous sales success in this market.

The Chinese market remains a mystery with the series still not having been published there. “We’ve secured two deals with two different publishers in China but neither contract has moved to publication,” Weir explains. Her theory is that one barrier may be that they perceive the series to be fantasy not, as it is, historical “medieval adventure”. Given the Chinese film investment in the Ranger’s Apprentice series, however, the simpler answer might just be the sheer complexity of the Chinese publishing market. Publishers feel that fantasy and adventure are not popular for their young readers, and the government itself is more inclined to support different types of books for this age range.

When it comes to copy sales, along with its aforementioned North American success, the series has also been tremendously popular in Poland and the Netherlands, but less so in the neighbouring European markets, Germany, as Weir mentioned, and France. Weir, again, has a theory about this, relating it to technology. “The late 2000s were still new for fan websites,” she points out, “but there were Dutch and Polish websites springing up, then Facebook pages, then Wikipedia pages (e.g. www.nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Grijze_Jager).” The result is that the Netherlands and Poland have seen the highest sales in the translation markets. Indeed, Dutch sales are almost in step with the Australian sales.

Copy sales—and rights sales—along with prizes and reviews, are often used to measure a book’s success. Success can also be seen in other ways that are not so easily measurable. In the case of Ranger’s Apprentice, for example, in the Netherlands, what began eleven years ago as ‘Ranger’s Apprentice Day’ is now ‘Ranger’s Apprentice Weekend’.²⁷ While in Poland, Weir recalls,

the Polish publisher who still tears up when we meet and talk (again!) about John’s visit to Poland. She’d never seen such love for an author from his fans; they were lining up for hours in the shopping centres.

The most current and topical—at the time of the interview—example relates to the sale of Persian language rights to an Iranian publisher; a comparatively rare event for authors, due to the small publishing industry and complexity of securing a rights deal.²⁸ The deal followed a meeting Weir had at the Bologna Book Fair with a publisher who ‘provided references from US and other publishers that they’d worked with—and it’s been fantastic.’ The deal model was flat fees, where the publisher doesn’t report royalties but instead pays in advance, based on an agreed print run, which can be done over the period of the license (in this case, five years). The agreement continues to be renewed, Weir confirms, and she provides a very recent example of the success of the series in Iran:

At this particular time, it was also amazing to receive an email from the Iranian publisher asking for a “video message” from John Flanagan for his fans in this market while we’re all struggling with the COVID-19 virus.

What does the story of the international success of the Ranger’s Apprentice reveal?

²⁷ For more details of the weekend, see the video ‘ON TOUR with John Flanagan to Ranger’s Apprentice Weekend’ which documents the 2015 event (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVzxiiGau_M)

²⁸ For a discussion of contemporary publishing in the Arabic world during the period for the study, see, for example, Rashad (2013). See, also, the findings of this report for an alternate view.

When considering the global success of this series it is important to put it in its wider context. As Weir points out, in 2004, middle grade fiction wasn't 'quite the juggernaut it is now'. In other words, the global market wasn't saturated with similar books but publishers were looking for new works in the category. The timing was perfect and, sixteen years after the first of the books was published, the series continues to sell exceptionally well. Tracing the sales of international rights to this series also illustrates the way in which it is difficult to predict where a work will succeed, or when—and, perhaps most particularly, for how long. Certainly, the continuing success of the series illustrates a particular characteristic of children's publishing: timeless books, such as those set in historical periods, that appeal to children are able to attract new readers annually.

Literary fiction: Melissa Lucashenko



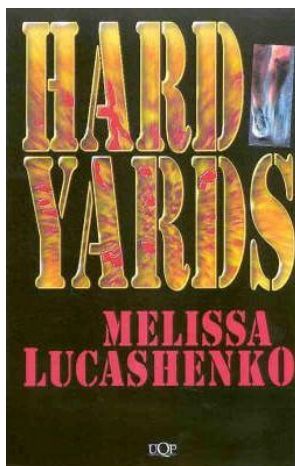
Melissa Lucashenko is an acclaimed Aboriginal writer of Goorie and European heritage. Since 1997 Melissa has been widely published as an award-winning novelist, essayist and short story writer. Her recent work has appeared in *The Moth: Fifty True Stories*, *Meanjin*, *Griffith Review*, and *The Saturday Paper*.

In 2019 her novel, *Too Much Lip*, was awarded the Miles Franklin award.

Lucashenko's career as a novelist extends back over twenty years, through a long association with the University of Queensland Press.

Steam Pigs, University of Queensland Press (1997)
Killing Darcy, University of Queensland Press (1998) (YA novel)
Hard Yards, University of Queensland Press (1999)
Too Flash, IAD Press (2002) (YA novel)
Uptown Girl, University of Queensland Press (2002)
Mullumbimby, University of Queensland Press (2013)
Too Much Lip, University of Queensland Press (2018)

The rights to her third novel, *Hard Yards*, a Young Adult title which was published in Australia in 1999, were sold to the German market by UQP and the book was translated into German.



Roo Glover has two highly desirable talents - he can fight, and he can run like the clappers. In the inner city's harsh code there are losers and survivors, and Roo's a survivor. He's made it through adoption, through juvenile detention, through poverty. He's an athlete in training, aching towards the dream of Olympic qualification. He's even coping with being white in the turbulent Aboriginal family of his girlfriend. But when cousin Stanley dies in custody, and Roo finds his father the same week, trouble starts to catch up with him.

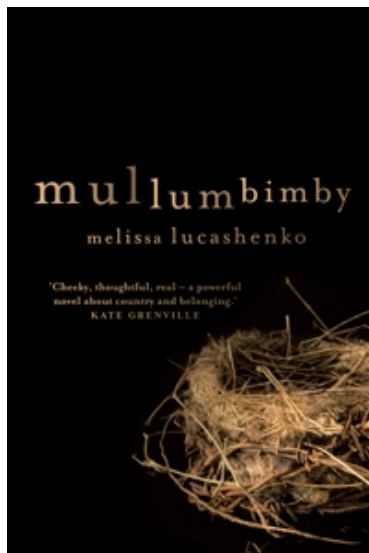
[Source: Publisher site]

Lucashenko was pleased about the international deal at the time but also recalled the following feedback.

I was pleased about it, except then someone on the German end said something like, “We now realise that this is a book about class more than it’s an Aboriginal book.” I thought, that’s wrong and kind of offensive, but it didn’t really affect me because I didn’t really have anything to do with either the process or the outcome. I was sent a couple of copies in German at one point, and that was about it.

Over the following years Lucashenko wrote and published two further novels in the 2000s, and from the early 2000s she also developed a reputation as an award-winning essayist, in particular through work published in the *Griffith Review*. (Her non-fiction writing subsequently won her a 2013 Walkley Award and a 2014 George Munster Award for Independent Journalism.)

Mullumbimby was published in 2013.



When Jo Breen uses her divorce settlement to buy a neglected property in the Byron Bay hinterland, she is hoping for a tree change, and a blossoming connection to the land of her Aboriginal ancestors. What she discovers instead is sharp dissent from her teenage daughter, trouble brewing from unimpressed white neighbours and a looming Native Title war between the local Bundjalung families. When Jo unexpectedly finds love on one side of the Native Title divide she quickly learns that living on country is only part of the recipe for the Good Life.

Told with humour and a sharp satirical eye, *Mullumbimby* is a modern novel set against an ancient land.

[Source: Publisher site]

Mullumbimby was a critical and commercial success. Lucashenko was interviewed by Caroline Baum in 2013 and spoke about the role of humour in her work:

Aboriginal humour is the humour not just of the underdog but of the outer dog. And when you’ve got very little to lose you are free to laugh, you are free to poke fun. There’s a larrikinism in Aboriginal life that I didn’t want to damp down, that I wanted to savour. There’s a joie de vivre almost in being the outsider and being able to have a big belly laugh.

I think part of the dehumanising process around Aboriginal identity in Australia has been this idea that to the mainstream we are nothing more than angry, two dimensional figures and of course that’s not reality at all. We have emotional lives as rich if not richer than anyone else. I just wanted to say, because you’re poor and black doesn’t mean that you don’t fall in love, it doesn’t mean that you don’t love your kids and struggle with loving your kids. It doesn’t mean that you don’t have mates who are hugely important in your life. I think for poor people mateship is more important than for people who have money to fall back on.

Lucashenko's writing was described in a 2020 feature article by Maggie Nolan in *The Australian* as "funny and gritty". In the earlier interview with Baum, Lucashenko spoke about a key influence.

One of the Kombumerri aunties taught me this a long time ago, Aunty Mary Graham. She said, you know white people came to Australia and all these things happened, the theft of land, the rapes, the murders, the taking of children. She said, but that's not the worst thing that happened, you know.

I went, really?

She said, the worst thing that happened is that white people brought a convict mentality that taught us that life is about struggle and survival. She said, "Life isn't about survival. Life is about joy," and that was a real lesson to me.

Mullumbimby was followed by *Too Much Lip* in 2018.

I write to what my passion is. I interviewed Alice Walker in Sydney in 2015, and when I did that I went back and read her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, which is the story of intergenerational trauma in a black share cropping family. I thought, right, she's done that, I can do something like this in Australia. I want to write about trauma and violence, so that's how *Too Much Lip* began.

From Lucashenko's website²⁹:

My most recent novel, *Too Much Lip*, is a foray into the harder edges of Aboriginal life in country NSW. It's a book about class, but set away from the urban centres, a kind of a hillbilly gothic. The book was inspired by the black and queer women I know who've done jail time, or who've only barely escaped that fate by the skin of their teeth. Who are these people when they're not locked up, not demonised, not chucked away and locked away by society? I wanted to write about the grassroots mob who are constantly living on the edge of things: the law, racist violence, various kinds of family implosions. I really strongly wanted to pen a high-energy antidote to the deathly depression which it's easy for us to slide into in this racist, heterosexist country. You know I've knocked around a lot with women (and men, including my brothers) who've done jail time, and I wanted to portray those women's defiance. Their give-no-fucks spirit. In the two years I spent writing *Too Much Lip*, the image I kept in mind was of the protagonist, Kerry, giving the middle finger to everyone and everything as she rides her Harley off into the sunset. It's a very gritty novel, and violent, but I like to think it's pretty damn funny too. Kind of Beverley Hillbillies meets Once Were Warriors. No doubt some readers will find it shocking, but then I'm not writing to make people feel warm and comfortable. I'd be a helluva lot richer if I was!

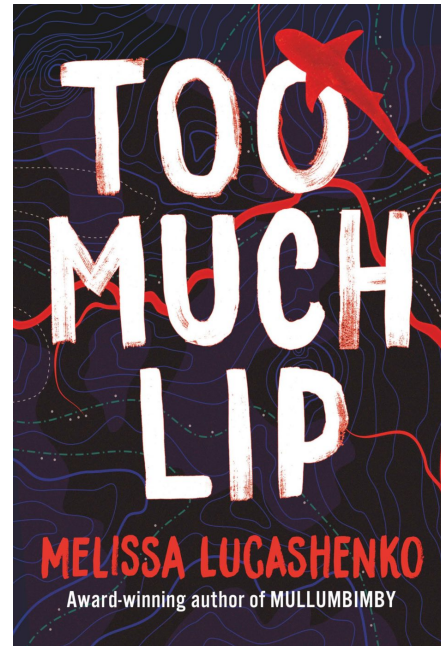
²⁹ See: www.melissa-lucashenko.com.

Too much lip, her old problem from way back. And the older she got, the harder it seemed to get to swallow her opinions. The avalanche of bullshit in the world would drown her if she let it; the least she could do was raise her voice in anger.

Wise-cracking Kerry Salter has spent a lifetime avoiding two things – her hometown and prison. But now her Pop is dying and she's an inch away from the lockup, so she heads south on a stolen Harley.

Kerry plans to spend twenty-four hours, tops, over the border. She quickly discovers, though, that Bundjalung country has a funny way of grabbing on to people. Old family wounds open as the Salters fight to stop the development of their beloved river. And the unexpected arrival on the scene of a good-looking dugai fella intent on loving her up only adds more trouble – but then trouble is Kerry's middle name.

Gritty and darkly hilarious, *Too Much Lip* offers redemption and forgiveness where none seems possible.



[Source: Publisher site]

Lucashenko aims to write books that are accessible. “With *Too Much Lip* I wanted to write a book that someone with a year 12 education could read—and it could win the Miles Franklin award.” Lucashenko’s work is also critically noted for using language in new ways. “As always with Lucashenko, an Aboriginal vernacular and the occasional use of Bundjalung give her narrative a distinctive voice that is unlike anything in contemporary Australian fiction” (Nolan, 2020).

After the publication of *Too Much Lip* in 2018 there was interest in film rights and Lucashenko decided to get herself an agent. “When a film company, Cenozoic Pictures, got interested, that’s when I thought films were where the big money is; I’d better get an agent, so I don’t get ripped off.”

My relationship with UQP has always been the same; it’s not warm and close. I don’t see anyone socially from UQP, and I don’t ring them up for long, heart-to-hearts but it’s a relationship that’s worked for me over the years.

Then I realised that I wasn’t getting as much for my books as I should be. I think the books have gotten good support, particularly in the last few years. It was just the amount that I was accepting as a normal advance for a novel. Inga Simpson and I were at a Stella event and she said to me, you should be getting such-and-such amount as an advance. I took that on board and made sure I got more for *Too Much Lip*, as an advance. That’s about when I started looking seriously for an agent.

It had crossed my mind a lot. I had often thought about it over the years, but my main fear was that I would end up doing more work. I felt like I was already doing as much work as I could do properly, because I work quite slowly. I was talking to someone with an agent who said, no, that’s not what an agent does, it’s not their experience of having an agent, so I was a bit more open to it after I spoke to another author.

Lucashenko decided to go with Alex Adsett, Alex Adsett Publishing Services, as her agent.

I asked around, and a few people said Alex was good. I had met her at an industry forum about six or 12 months previous to me deciding to look for an agent. I remembered her being this upbeat, lively person that didn't give me the shits. I thought, I didn't mind your energy, so I got in touch. She was happy to take me on board and I didn't mind her, so we just went from there. So it's through word-of-mouth and a little bit of personal contact. Alex helped negotiate the film sales.

Cenozoic Pictures is an Australian company, co-founded by Veronica Gleeson, Luke Walker and Suzanne Walker.

Cenozoic Pictures is a new-ish mob in Melbourne. I did know the one of the co-founders vaguely. Veronica worked for Screen New South Wales when it was still the NSW Film and TV Office. I'd been doing script reports for them for 20-odd years, and early on in the piece she was one of the people I was dealing with there. She got in touch with UQP. Because I didn't know anything about film or about the company, because it was new, I got Alex involved to look over the contracts.

These negotiations took place before *Too Much Lip* won the Miles Franklin award and before the response from Aboriginal readers to the book was clear. Lucashenko deliberately took risks with *Too Much Lip*.

I've said on record that it was a frightening book to write. I think white people think that I mean I was worried about what white readers would think, and other than trying to make a good, readable story and an interesting narrative—on the political level I don't care what white readers think at all. But certainly the reception by Aboriginal leaders I care about.

At the time of the book's release,

It was exciting but it was a bit daunting, because I didn't have the confidence in how *Too Much Lip* was going to be received. This was before the Miles, and it was before the Aboriginal community had a chance to assess the book properly.

Now it's been out, it must be getting on for two years, and if anyone was going to try and tear me down over the book, hopefully, touch wood, it would have happened by now. It has been incredibly positive. I don't know how many Aboriginal women say that it felt like they were reading about their family and they could totally identify, they loved it, it was like sitting in their lounge room. One reader told me that they sobbed on a plane while they were reading it, and another older woman on the Gold Coast said that she'd never laughed so much in her life. It was a great response, and if any of the blokes have hated it, they've kept that to themselves, or not told me anyway.

Also, Rachel Perkins put out the first series of *Mystery Road* (ABC TV) at the same time the book came out, which is also looking at sexual abuse in the community. It was a great bloody relief to me, because I didn't feel like it was just me then. So it was an exciting time but it was also very daunting.

When Lucashenko started out as a writer, like many other book authors she had little knowledge of the economic realities of earning a living.

Like most people, I came into the industry knowing absolutely nothing, probably imagining that I'd make a lot of money, which is laughable really. The only thing I cared about was that my work was actually published as a book. To me, that would have been my idea of success. I didn't have any idea about awards. My first

book, *Steam Pigs*, won the Dobbie Literary Award and it was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. I had no idea what any of that meant. I thought, that's good, this is what happens when you write a book, not realising these were a big deal. It washed over my head, but I still, basically, pay very little attention to awards usually.

The awards and nominations for Lucashenko's novels are listed below:

1997	Nomination: <i>Steam Pigs</i>	Commonwealth Writers' Prize
1997	Shortlist <i>Steam Pigs</i>	New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards
1998	Nomination: <i>Killing Darcy</i>	Aurealis Award for best young adult novel
1998	Longlist: <i>Killing Darcy</i>	James Tiptree Jr Award
1998	Winner: <i>Killing Darcy</i>	Aurora Prize of the Royal Blind Society
1998	Winner: <i>Steam Pigs</i>	Dobbie Literary Award
1999	Shortlist: <i>Hard Yards</i>	New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards
2001	Nomination: <i>Hard Yards</i>	Courier-Mail Book of the Year
2013	Winner: <i>Mullumbimby</i>	Queensland Literary Awards: Deloitte Fiction Book Award
2014	Longlist: <i>Mullumbimby</i>	Miles Franklin Award
2014	Longlist: <i>Mullumbimby</i>	Stella Prize
2014	Shortlist: <i>Mullumbimby</i>	Nita B Kibble Literary Award
2014	Winner: <i>Mullumbimby</i>	Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Indigenous Writing
2015	Longlist: <i>Mullumbimby</i>	International Dublin Literary Award
2019	Longlist: <i>Too Much Lip</i>	Australian Book Industry Awards
2019	Shortlist: <i>Too Much Lip</i>	New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards
2019	Shortlist: <i>Too Much Lip</i>	Queensland Literary Awards: The University of Queensland Fiction Book Award
2019	Shortlist: <i>Too Much Lip</i>	Stella Prize
2019	Shortlist: <i>Too Much Lip</i>	Prime Minister's Literary Award
2019	Winner: <i>Too Much Lip</i>	Queensland Literary Awards: Queensland Premier's Award for a work of State Significance
2019	Winner: <i>Too Much Lip</i>	Miles Franklin Award
2020	Longlist: <i>Too Much Lip</i>	International Dublin Literary Award

Despite the critical success, for most of her career as an author Lucashenko did not earn enough income from advances and sales to make a living.

Money was never my motivation. I was wanting to put an Aboriginal experience out there in the public view, so my motivation wasn't money and has almost never been money. I suppose my view would have adjusted itself pretty rapidly once I realised that you sell your first novel for 1,500 bucks or whatever. It very rapidly became obvious that I wasn't going to be able to support myself by writing. I worked it out once recently, and for the first 20 years, I made almost exactly the same as I would have on the dole.

Lucashenko worked in a range of jobs to support herself.

My first three books I found really easy to write; they just came without, it was effort, but it didn't feel strenuous or over the top. I was married at the time and my husband supported my writing to a large extent then.

After my divorce I worked as a support worker for women exiting prison. I did that a couple of times in the last decade; once for 18 months and I think the second stint was about 12 months, and I was an Uber driver.

I cared for my mother for nine months too, so I was on the carer's pension for nine months when *Mullumbimby* came out in 2013. That year I think I made \$24,000.

When I wrote *Mullumbimby*, I remember saying to John Hunter, the publisher running UQP at the time, "If this book doesn't win a major prize, I'm going to give up and stop, because I can't do it financially." I didn't have a husband to subsidise me anymore. I had to support myself and I wasn't supporting myself by writing; it just wasn't worth it. Then *Mullumbimby* won the Queensland Fiction prize and the Victorian Indigenous prize, so I kept going.

The prize money was critical to Lucashenko continuing her work as a writer.

I rang Madonna Duffy (Publishing Director, UQP) and said, "I think there's been a mistake with my royalties," because I'd got—it was \$5,000 or something in royalties. I thought they'd made a mistake. What's that, three pay packets if you've got any sort of decent public service job, so you wouldn't do it for the money, really.

A fellowship enabled Lucashenko to keep writing.

I was just about ready to turn to bank robbery when I got the Copyright Agency 2016 Author Fellowship. No robbing banks for me! I've said elsewhere in an interview I could then put the aircon on in my car anytime I wanted. What a luxury.

But since then things have looked up a lot. In the last few years, I've obviously made more money.

Too Much Lip is being published in the US and the UK and there is interest from a Chinese publishing house in a Chinese translation, "all through UQP and the way they pursue international rights".

HarperVia bought the international rights to *Too Much Lip*. HarperVia is an imprint of HarperCollins, described on its website as: "an imprint dedicated to publishing extraordinary international voices, offering readers the chance to encounter other lives and other points of view via the language of the imagination."

Judith Curr [President & Publisher of the HarperOne Group], said it was on her radar. She is an Australian who has been in New York for a long time. She'd started talking to UQP or been interested before it won the Miles.

Kate McCormack, Contracts & Rights Manager, UQP, negotiated the deal with HarperVia.

I asked Alex what she thought of the process. She said, "Leave it to Kate McCormack at UQP, because they're good; they know their stuff," I know UQP brought Kate on specifically to do international rights, because that's her background and her expertise.

Judith Curr had just signed Tara June Winch (Wiradjuri author of *The Yield*) and Tyson Yunkaporta (from the Apalech Clan in far north Queensland, who wrote *Sand Talk*). I don't think she was particularly knowledgeable about Aboriginal writing but she could recognise books that were going to sell I guess, and the Aboriginal content that was going to be of interest overseas. The contract might have already been signed and she wanted to meet me. I think UQP flew me down to Sydney about Christmastime 2019.

Lucashenko is contacted by aspiring Aboriginal writers asking for advice.

I try and give them a sense of the industry, that there is a market for good writing. I encourage them that their voice is important. I talk to them about audience, especially a lot of older people who want to write memoirs and life stories. I have to try and break it to them gently that there's very little market there, but if they can write it as a novel then they might end up getting published more easily. I think 80 or 90 percent of mentoring is encouragement; people want to be believed in and want to be able to believe in themselves.

Lucashenko believes that opportunities for Aboriginal writers to be published have improved in the Australian industry. On her website she refers to the change over time in her aspirations as a writer.

Like most young writers, I started off fuelled by egotism and neurosis as much as by innate creativity. But when I began writing seriously there was still a glaring hole in Australian literature. There were very few Aboriginal fiction writers being published. People like Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Auntie Ruby Langford Ginibi, Uncle Sam Watson, Auntie Maureen Watson, Lisa Bellear and some others had blazed the trail, but you could still count the interested publishers on one hand. In the pre-native title era, to write Aboriginal fiction felt a lot like screaming out to mainstream Australia and the world "Over here! We exist! We exist!". That's not the case anymore. There are scores of First Nations writers who are putting out diverse work now. These days the impulse is simply about writing the best work I can. Maybe that's why I write more slowly...the political element is still strong though.

Lucashenko reflects on the changes.

I think there are more structural opportunities these days. When I started writing, there was the David Unaipon Award for Aboriginal writers and that was pretty much it that I'm aware of.

The David Unaipon Award website provides the following background:

The David Unaipon Award ... has launched the careers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers such as Ellen Van Neerven, Doris Pilkington Garimara, Tara June Winch and Samuel Wagan Watson. The annual award, the first of its kind, was established in 1988 by University of Queensland Press (UQP) and honours Ngarrindjeri author David Unaipon, one of the earliest published Indigenous writers.

Presented as part of the Queensland Literary Awards, the State Library of Queensland proudly manages the awards in collaboration with sponsors, industry partners and the writing community, and the prize includes \$15,000 prize money plus manuscript development and publication with UQP. It is open to all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander unpublished writers.

However, Lucashenko believes that the increase in opportunity for Aboriginal writers requires that they maintain a focus on the quality of their books.

You can't lift up a book or a magazine these days without finding some kind of a competition or a scholarship or an opportunity, which is a mixed blessing. I do worry a bit about keeping a focus on the quality of the work, because our books are selling so well.

I've said online to an Aboriginal writer's group that I'm part of, take your time, make your work count and don't be pressured into putting work out quickly or in a rush because publishers want to grab the next chance to publish anything that's decent by an Aboriginal writer. It has changed a lot. I won the Miles and Tara June Winch has got a pretty good shot at the Miles this year. She's just picked up the New South Wales fiction prize, Tony Birch's *The White Girl* won the 2020 Indigenous Writers' Prize (NSW Premier's Literary Awards), Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu* has won multiple awards.

It's a very, very different landscape to 1996 when I was sitting in a room on my own in Canberra and pumping out *Steam Pigs* and having no idea if anyone would be interested or not.

Lucashenko offers some suggestions about why opportunities have improved but she avoids any possible detailed explanations.

I'm guessing that the Australia Council has had a bit to do with it. I've never taken a huge interest in the mechanics of publishing, and for the first 20-odd years I've thought, I'll write the book and it's their job to do everything after the book's written, and left it up to them.

Now that I've been a peer assessor for the Australia Council for 10 years, I get some of the nuts and bolts stuff, but I still don't really take an interest in it, so the change could be a combination of Australia, in general, having more interest in things Aboriginal plus there's a resurgence in Aboriginal art forms as Aboriginal people get more access to mainstream resources, like secondary and tertiary education, and not everyone living in the kind of grinding poverty with the kind of structural barriers that were there 30-odd years ago.

Something has changed; whether it involves readers being more open and interested or the quality of our literary fiction is improving, I don't know.

I think the readership is evolving. I'm writing for a dual audience. I'm not writing mainly for Aboriginal readers, because there's probably only 10,000 Aboriginal people in Australia who read, and they're not all going to buy my books. I'd be broke really quickly, so I've always got my mainstream audience in mind, but I have to first consider the impact on Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal readers.

The change could be a bit of both, and the publishers being more willing to look at our work and to put it out there.

Lucashenko recommends ways the Australian industry can better engage with Aboriginal writers.

Sue Abbey, who was behind the introduction of the David Unaipon Award in 1988, was decades ahead of all the other publishing houses. Because Sue's an American, she could see from the outside that there was this resource in Australia of Aboriginal knowledge and Aboriginal culture, and so they set up the David

Unaipon Award. Then Sue helped set up the black&write! award at the State Library of Queensland, which is now training Aboriginal editors, and has been for a few years.

What the State Library has done with black&write! has been excellent.

The black&write! website provides the following information:

black&write! is a national project with a dual focus on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander writing and editing. It is the first project of its kind in Australia.

The black&write! Writing Fellowships are offered annually to two Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander writers. The fellowships include a prize of \$10,000, editorial development and the opportunity to publish with Hachette Australia.

Lucashenko emphasises:

That kind of thing is very valuable, very, very important, and the Copyright Agency has put money into that as well. I think New South Wales is hoping to set something up similar.

Publishers need to employ more Aboriginal editors. They are starting to gradually incorporate some Aboriginal editing, or First Nations editing expertise, and UQP's got Anita Heiss on the board now. They need to open up the bloody gates a bit and let blackfellas make some decisions if they want to be serious about engaging with Aboriginal writers.

Lucashenko also notes the importance of Aboriginal representation on peer review systems for funding. "It's pretty rare that I'm the only Aboriginal peer on a group, so keeping that representation up or increasing it is good."

While it has taken Lucashenko twenty years to reach a point where her work is bringing financial rewards, each new book will likely take several years to write and she lives modestly to support her writing.

I say on my website that if I was writing to make people feel warm and comfortable, I'd be a lot wealthier than I am now.

If I hadn't come out of my divorce with enough money to buy a very cheap house, the cheapest house in South East Queensland, which is what I did, and lived in Logan City for six years, my writing wouldn't have supported me, and probably still wouldn't support me.

If I wanted to write as much journalism as fiction, then I might be able to scrape a living and pay rent, but I own a cheap house, so that underpins all my writing. I live very modestly so that the prizes are much more important—prizes and grants are what keep me going, and most of the writers I know, going.

Royalties are a side benefit, and in my case now, it's international rights. I write slowly and I'll probably take three, maybe four years to write my next book, which I'm part-way through already.

The book I'm currently working on is a novel set in colonial Brisbane. I've been wanting to write this for 20-odd years, and the time hasn't been right until now. The reason I want to write about that is because my family's been in and around Brisbane for a long time. It is a fascinating era with really interesting colonial stories.

I'd rather drive an Uber than work to a publisher's schedule instead of my own schedule. I hate the idea of putting out poor quality work or mediocre work, so I'll do anything rather than do that.

If you're going to write something and put your name on it, you may as well make it a thing of beauty, rather than just writing for the sake of writing. I can't see the point. I'm sort of stubborn and I take the time that things need.

Romance fiction: Kylie Scott



Kylie Scott is a *New York Times* bestselling author whose third book, *Lick*, became the basis of a four book deal with St. Martin's Press (Macmillan US). In 2017 Scott was advised to consider indie publishing (self-publishing) her next book, a YA title. By then many established romance authors had moved to indie publishing and Kylie retained her New York agent, Amy Tannenbaum, to manage the publishing program. Kylie's readership has always been international, with a large proportion of her readership in the US, followed by Australia, Germany and twelve other territories.

In 2012 Kylie Scott submitted her first book *Flesh* to Momentum, a digital imprint established by Pan Macmillan Australia as an independent imprint to fast-track learning about ebook publishing (Momentum operated from 2012 to 2016.) Scott had started taking writing seriously in 2008-9, penning several book manuscripts from 2009-2012, attending writing courses and taking part in a writers' group. She used professional manuscript assessors and a paid mentor to develop her craft. She entered several writing competitions, with the manuscript for *Flesh* winning a US competition.

Scott describes *Flesh* as a zombie apocalypse romance set around the Brisbane area. She was a long-time fan of both romance books and zombie apocalypse movies (ala George A. Romero), and putting them together seemed intriguing. The publisher of Momentum, Joel Naoum, recounted his reaction to:

an erotic romance set in dystopian Brisbane between a young woman and the two men who had stepped up to protect her in a world that had lost most of its conventional standards. It was pretty far off the reservation in terms of what I was used to in the world of traditional publishing. But it was compelling—Kylie's voice was light, engaging, funny and authentic. And somehow, in the way it overlapped genres, all of which were having a bit of a moment in the sun, it was exactly what I'd been looking for.



Flesh was followed by *Skin*. The books were modestly successful, with their sales each earning Scott several thousand dollars a year. Although a third book in the series was discussed with Naoum, Scott was thinking about a new project.

I wanted a break from the *Flesh* world. I suggested to Joel that I write a rock star romance. I grew up video-taping MTV when it was on at some stupid hour at night with Richard Wilkins and I played a bit of guitar. I've always been fascinated with the rock and roll theme and read various biographies and autobiographies.

Naoum was enthusiastic. Momentum had been monitoring positive reader responses online to the *Flesh* series, including support from a US book blogger called Maryse who was so influential she was known as "the kingmaker". Scott's first title in the new series, *Lick*, was set in the US. It opens in Las Vegas.

Waking up in Vegas was never meant to be like this.

Evelyn Thomas's plans for celebrating her twenty-first birthday in Las Vegas were big. Huge. But she sure as hell never meant to wake up on the bathroom floor with a hangover to rival the black plague, a very attractive half-naked tattooed man, and a diamond on her finger large enough to scare King Kong. Now if she could just remember how it all happened.

One thing is for certain, being married to rock and roll's favourite son is sure to be a wild ride.

Lick sold 70,000 copies in the first month for Momentum. Over a period of days, Kylie was able to watch in real time the book sale figures surge into Amazon's top 100 ranking of titles sold worldwide. Naoum referred Scott's book 'upstairs' to the head office at Pan Macmillan Australia. Scott recalls,

Lick hit at a good time. The rock star romances that were out there were leaning a bit more towards the erotic romance side but there was a lot of interest in that sub-genre. The years spent honing my craft combined with my life-long interest in the music scene were put to good use. *Lick* went big and Joel said Momentum were talking about me upstairs at Macmillan. I said, I would definitely want a contract that involved the American market. So the Australian arm of Macmillan talked to the UK branch of Macmillan and also St Martin's Press, their arm in America. All three got together to offer me the deal that I eventually signed for that series, which I believe was the first of its type.

Scott made contact with a New York-based agent, Amy Tannenbaum, who works at the Jane Rotrosen Agency in New York.

Amy was representing a friend of mine and my friend mentioned me to her. I reached out, "Would you be interested in representing me?" She replied, "Australia's not my field but you're doing great. Best of luck". I said, "Actually I'm trying to focus on the American market as well as the Australian market because of how the books sales are skewed." Many of the sales were American. We've been together since then, just before the Stage Dive contract was signed.

Lick, the first book in the Stage Dive series, became a *New York Times* bestseller. Scott attributes part of its success to timing.

There was a gap in the market for rock star romance. Everyone was ready for rock star stories but there hadn't been many of them at that stage. Reader interest was

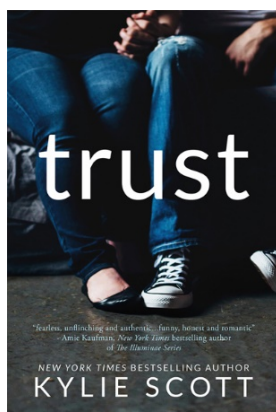
proof to a lot of publishers that it was worth putting money behind publicity for this series. Series tend to sell better in romance and that is what publishers are often after in foreign markets. Readers like to settle into a world with a bunch of characters and get to know them and spend time there because they are such voracious readers. It is like visiting old friends.



Tannenbaum sold rights to the Stage Dive series through a foreign rights division in the agency to Czech, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese (Brazil), Slovenian, Spanish, and Turkish markets.

After about four years of spending lunchbreaks and weekends working on writing, *Lick*'s success moved Scott's earnings into a bracket that was more than comparable to ordinary full time work, allowing Scott to focus fully on her writing and career. Scott published two successful series, Stage Dive and Dive Bar (the latter series set in the bar tending scene) using this traditional model of publishing and rights sales.

Her next book, *Trust*, was a stand-alone young adult book with a lead character who was 17-18 years old. In 2017 Scott offered the manuscript to St Martin's Press. "They said, that's not really what we're after from you. Why don't you Indie publish it?"



After being held hostage during a robbery at the local convenience store, seventeen year old Edie finds her attitude about life shattered. Unwilling to put up with the snobbery and bullying at her private school, she enrolls at the local public high school, crossing paths with John. The boy who risked his life to save hers. While Edie's beginning to run wild, however, John's just starting to settle down. After years of partying and dealing drugs with his older brother, he's going straight—getting to class on time, and thinking about the future.

An unlikely bond grows between the two as John keeps Edie out of trouble and helps her broaden her horizons. But when he helps her out with another first—losing her virginity—their friendship gets complicated. Meanwhile, Edie and John are pulled back into the dangerous world they narrowly escaped. They were lucky to survive the first time, but this time they have more to lose—each other.

[Source: Publisher site]

Scott already had a positive perception of Indie publishing (self-publishing). By then Indie publishing was well-established among romance authors. “The Indie boom was happening with authors like Colleen Hoover, Jamie Maguire, Kristen Ashley and others who just went crazy big. “

Indie had opened up what was available to romance readers. All of a sudden there were no gatekeepers. The stories could be a little bit edgier and a little bit different and the age groups could be a little bit different, like, senior high school romances and college romances. New stories were suddenly wide open for people to read about. There were all these different stories readers could get their hands on. Dark romances in particular were doing well. Even before the release of *50 Shades of Grey* there'd been a high demand for stories set in the BDSM community. Where traditional publishers were often more conservative in what they accepted, Indie publishing and small online publishers were more experimental in their choices of subject.

Scott had no hesitation and her agent was handling self-publishing for other clients. “That’s what Indie publishing looks like for me, doing it through my agent. It was easier.”

I work better with a team. I wanted to concentrate on the writing and publicity, maintaining the social media and I was happy working with my agent, Amy. My agent handles a lot of the work with document files, organising formatters, copy editors and proof-readers. Also it kept things open for in the future if I want to look at different options of going back into traditional publishing. It also kept the income stream clean. All of my income can come through the agency in America and that kept the situation simple for me with organising tax forms etc.

Scott observed that romance authors who have gone Indie have done so because their income is then higher compared to publishing with a traditional publisher. In her case, the Stage Dive and Dive Bar series have sold in higher numbers than her Indie books but the returns from her Indie books are higher than if she had published traditionally. “I could earn more money going Indie.”

I miss out on print sales in Walmart and Target and retail outlets like that but on the whole, Indie is great. It can be great working as a traditional author and having your editor and access to a PR team, having people encouraging you and behind you, but they’re a lot slower than we can be with Indie. Also I’m completely in control of what happens in my books, with the covers and every aspect. I like that. There were a couple of times when we had butted heads about covers and things like that. When the publishers original choices of models didn’t match the story. So it was nice to have complete control from the beginning and brand myself and my stories how I chose. Both traditional and Indie publishing have their pluses and negatives.

Now, if readers search online for a Kylie Scott book they can buy it in ebook or print format online. “You can still access print books, you just have to order them. They’re generally not in a shop when it comes to Indie books. Getting romances into shops in the first place has been difficult anyway.”

The majority of Scott’s sales are in ebook format and audio sales are also on the rise.

Audio has quite a following these days. If you’re not putting out the audio of the book at around the same time readers ask, when is that coming, who’s the narrator? Audiobook publishers have really developed their audience in the last few years.

We're doing the latest audiobook with Audible. I have a narrator who did *Lick* and that actually did big things for her career as well. She's narrated every book of mine since, apart from one that was written from a male perspective. We have a good working relationship and if I used a different narrator readers would be asking, what is going on? Whereas some authors move around a bit.

Scott works with mentors and editors to craft and polish her manuscripts. "I move around a little, which I find is helpful for learning things, because each editor can teach you different things." She worked with Louise Cusack as a mentor for her first two books. Her agent has worked as an editor. She worked with editors at Pan Macmillan and now engages an editor for each of her Indie books. Scott's husband, Dr Hugh Breakey, is an ethical philosopher and has a background in arts and the stage. He has given her feedback on her writing (usually just as a beta reader—rather than in terms of ethical plot-points and themes) throughout her career, plus Scott has other colleagues she calls on. "I believe in working to bring the quality of your writing up, to keep learning. There's always something you can do a bit better in the next book."

Scott advocates professional editing, proofreading and copy-editing if Indie authors can afford it. "I know it is expensive but the quality of your product is a huge statement about who you are as an author and where you are going in your future."

Romance has a strong online community and Scott is active on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. A lot of reader online discussion takes place on Goodreads and Twitter. She has an author page on Facebook with a private readers' group with about 7000 people. "I have an assistant who helps me and has chats and re-reads what's happening in the group to keep people involved. We do giveaways there and on Instagram and occasionally on Twitter." Scott is involved with the Australian Romance Readers Association and Natasha is a Book Junkie.

Most of Scott's books are set in the US.

With *Lick*, I got a bit of pushback about moving my setting from Australia to America but you can't wake up married in Australia, there's a one month waiting period so the story couldn't have happened here. In response to criticisms I'd say, she can't stay drunk for the whole month. You can only do waking up married in Vegas in America. Also the rock and roll scene over there was bigger and I could use all the iconic settings.

I wrote another book set in Australia after I Indie published called *It seemed like a good idea at the time* and I enjoyed that. It's set in Caloundra and the north coast of Queensland. But American settings tend to sell a bit better. Since the larger part of my audience is from America, I pay attention to that. But if I feel like writing a book set in Australia I do it. That's the glory of being Indie. It's all up to me.



Returning home for her father's wedding was never going to be easy for Adele. If being sent away at eighteen hadn't been bad enough, the mess she left behind when she made a pass at her dad's business partner sure was.

Fifteen years older than her, Pete had been her crush for as long as she could remember. But she'd misread the situation—confusing friendliness for undying love. Awkward. Add her father to the misunderstanding, and Pete was left with a broken nose and a business on the edge of ruin. The man had to be just as glad as everyone else when she left town. Seven years later, things are different. Adele is no longer a kid, but a fully grown adult more than capable of getting through the wedding and being polite.

But all it takes is seeing him again to bring back those old feelings. Sometimes first loves are the truest.

[Source: Publisher site]

Despite the agility of Indie publishing, Scott does not advocate following market trends.

I don't believe in writing for the fashions. We were fortunate with *Lick* and the rock star books, in that I'd always been a mad rock and roll fan and the book hit at the right time, but I don't think that writing to fashions works as a business plan. You'd be jumping around a lot and also, even at the fastest rate you're going to be a month, a couple of months behind the curve of what's happening by the time that you get your book out there. Indie publishing can change so quickly and reader interest can shift. It's more about putting out a story that you're passionate about, that you've worked on and made the best that you can.

Scott is reflective about the period ahead for romance authors given the COVID-19 pandemic.

The market is tough for everyone these days. It's flooded, there's so much, so many choices out there and most authors' earnings are down a little. Various fashions come in, various sub-genres go big, but it's tough in the industry and I have no idea how the coronavirus is going to impact things. I think people are going to have less spending money, they're going to be more cautious.

A lot of romance authors are putting books out for free to help people who are self-isolating, to give them something to read which is great. But some authors are nervous about that as well because a few years back there were a lot of writers publishing at 99 cents an ebook. That got a proportion of readers used to paying very little for your product which made it harder for everyone to make a living. On the other hand, it can work as a great publicity tool.

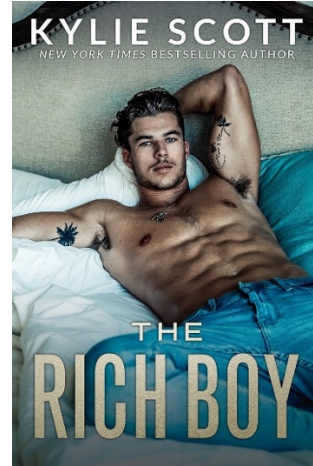
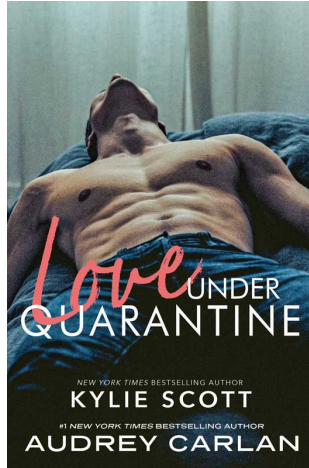
Scott speculated about whether readers would turn to libraries or Kindle Unlimited to save money. "There are some fantastic authors in Kindle Unlimited making good money. But just try to find your own path and what works for you."

Scott believes that romance genres make an important contribution in giving readers hope, something particularly relevant during the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

You can go on all sorts of dark and wonderful journeys knowing that at the end you're going to be delivered okay. Your hero or heroine is not going to be killed, you are not going to be emotionally destroyed. I remember when my daughter got

Romance fiction: Kylie Scott

into reading, she was throwing a book against at the wall at the ending in tears, “I’m never going to read again.” My husband asked, “What happened? “They killed the heroine.” It took a few months until she would pick another book up. Romance can be a balm for troubled times. I hope the industry will continue to be on the up and up and there are great new writers being discovered each day.



Historical fiction: Elisabeth Storrs

Storrs' website describes her as follows:

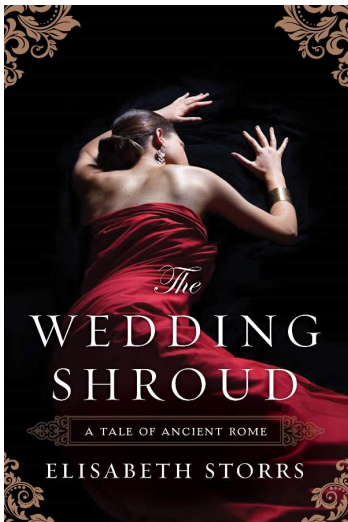
Elisabeth Storrs has long had a passion for the history, myths and legends of the ancient world.

She is an Australian author and graduated from the University of Sydney in Arts Law, having studied Classics. Her curiosity piqued by an Etruscan sarcophagus depicting a couple embracing for eternity, she discovered the little known story of the struggle between Etruscan Veii and Republican Rome and the inspiration to write the 'A Tale of Ancient Rome' Saga.

Elisabeth lives with her husband and two sons in Sydney and over the years has worked as a solicitor, corporate lawyer and corporate governance consultant. She is the former Deputy Chair of Writing NSW and the founder of the Historical Novel Society Australasia.



Elisabeth Storrs' first novel was *The Wedding Shroud*, published in 2010.



In 406 BC, to seal a tenuous truce, the young Roman Caecilia is wedded to Vel Mastarna, an Etruscan nobleman from Veii. Leaving her militaristic homeland, Caecilia is determined to remain true to Roman virtues while living among the sinful Etruscans. But, despite her best intentions, she is seduced by a culture that offers women education, independence, sexual freedom, and an empowering religion.

[Source: Publisher site]

Storrs' agent, Gaby Naher, sold the Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) rights to Pier 9, an imprint of Murdoch Books, as the first in a two book contract.

I was a novice. I had no idea how rights worked. I really had no expectations. I was on a learning curve and Gaby was the one that made me aware there were different territorial rights. Digital rights were new in the industry and Gaby was very canny. She said, this is new, only give it to them for a year. So the digital rights were licensed to Pier 9 only for a year.

One aspect of licensing rights strategy is deciding whether to license the world rights to a book or to break them up into different territories.

Gaby thought it would be better to licence the ANZ rights so she could then sell the book onwards to a wider audience. That, I think, was very good advice at the time and she'd had situations where that worked well. However, what we discovered in the process is when she went out to US and UK sub-agents, they wanted world rights. Hiving off the ANZ rights made it difficult to sell piecemeal at that stage, internationally.

Further, plans for Storrs' next novel with Pier 9, a sequel called *The Golden Dice*, were affected by changes in Murdoch Books' strategy.

Pier 9 was having problems as a fiction imprint. I understand it continued as a nonfiction imprint, but they didn't want to proceed with *The Golden Dice*. Then Allen & Unwin acquired Murdoch Books and I had to choose whether to assign the paperback rights to Allen & Unwin.

Storrs found herself in a situation where rights to her first book hadn't sold to other territories, Pier 9 had not been actively marketing the book in the digital market, and she was concerned that due to the changes with the Pier 9 imprint *The Wedding Shroud* would "fall between the two stools" of Murdoch Books and Allen & Unwin.

This was around 2012, a period known anecdotally as the "Indie gold rush". Storrs started researching self-publishing. She parted ways amicably with Gaby Naher ("we still correspond"). With both paperback and digital rights of *The Wedding Shroud* returned to her, she self-published it and *The Golden Dice*.

You can hire professional editors on the same level as your traditional publisher, provided you're prepared to put that investment in, which is absolutely necessary—you've must ensure it is a good quality book in order to maintain readership. For *The Golden Dice*, I paid the same editor that Pier 9 had retained to edit my first book. I typeset my own paperbacks, so I learned a lot of skills to do that. I paid a formatter to make sure there were no problems with the formats for the digital books.

Storrs also paid for an American editor, a contractor, to "Americanise" her two books. The spelling and grammar were changed, along with vocabulary unfamiliar to American readers.

Over the next two years Storrs built up readerships online.

There is a complete science to how to market as an Indie. It's quite complicated to explain all the facets of the strategy but basically you buy slots on marketing e-newsletters that circulate to thousands of subscribers seeking a bargain. You offer a free download of your book for a limited time. These downloads could potentially bump your book high on the 'free' bestseller list on Amazon. In turn, Amazon equated the number of free downloads to a proportionate number of sales. That meant the book could rise high in the Amazon 'popularity' lists and stay visible there for 30 days when the book became available again as a paid ebook. That's how *The Wedding Shroud* rose to number 10 on the historical fiction list. I then started receiving heaps of reviews and ongoing sales.

Based on her growing profile online, in 2014 Storrs was approached by Lake Union Publishing, an imprint of Amazon, to publish her books on its platform. Lake Union's website reads, "Lake Union Publishing offers absorbing works of contemporary and historical fiction for voracious readers."

It took three years for my books to gain enough reviews and sales to attract Lake Union's attention and for me to be offered a contract. As Lake Union was starting up, their strategy at that time was to mine successful Indie writers. I became aware they did this with quite a few authors like me who'd had books out for a while. Now they don't do this anymore, because they've built up their own stable of authors. It was just a good point in time for me.

Storrs approached other authors who had taken up contracts with Lake Union for advice.

These were various Canadian, British and American authors who'd gone with Lake Union. I had Skype calls with them, and they were very happy with the deal. I also asked the Alliance of Independent Authors, a very large organisation set up in the UK that provides advice to Indies. You can get them to look at contracts superficially, obviously not in depth. They thought the contract was viable.

Storrs signed a deal with Lake Union Publishing for the re-release of the first two books, which came out in 2015, and a contract to write the third, *Call to Juno*, which was published in 2016. Storrs was paid advances for digital, print on demand, audio and translation rights for all three books. Storrs was also offered higher royalties from ebook sales than in her deal with Pier 9. However, neither publisher could offer the 70 percent cut she had made from each ebook sale as an Indie.



The benefit to Storrs was in Lake Union's access to Amazon readerships and their marketing expertise. The majority of Storrs' readership is in the US and most of her sales are in ebook format.

The limitation with the Amazon Publishing imprints is that you won't get the books into bricks and mortar bookstores other than Amazon's own outlets. But Amazon understand the digital market and their marketing support is amazing. They utilise Kindle Daily or Monthly Deals as featured on the Amazon website. If your book is featured as a Daily Deal you can make substantial money. Readers can drill down through categories to find bargains in historical fiction. Amazon reduce the cover price to \$1.99. That brings in the readership and the volume will make up for the fact the book is not full price. The book will also be bumped up in the bestseller lists in a similar manner to the Indie 'freebie' strategy. Amazon also understands the

value of the “long tail”. If a reader enjoys the first book then “I might buy the second and third book now.” Every three months Amazon feature *The Wedding Shroud* as a special deal. One time they offered it to people who owned Kindle Fires, and that promotion pushed sales into the top 100 overall in the Amazon store.

When Amazon promotes one of my books in the US it is featured in an e-newsletter and gets advertised to millions of subscribers. Every now and then they do a UK and ANZ promotion, but I never do as well. ANZ is such a small market compared to the US.

For Storrs the promotion by Amazon in the USA market has been extremely successful, although she did note that:

Amazon are now pushing the Amazon Prime subscription service which means books placed in that program don’t receive royalties for the period they are featured—however, Lake Union pay the equivalent of an advance to compensate for this which I have found to be generous. More successful authors, though, may not make as much income as they do from sales during the featured period which can be a drawback for them.

Storrs is fascinated by the longevity that this online marketing expertise has given to sales of her books.

A book like mine builds slowly and the traditional publishing model is harsh on midlist authors, it’s hard on books like mine. Now, I’m still selling books every day. It’s because I’ve been able to take a long-term view. People will buy that first book and if they like it then they’ll go on to the other two in the series. However there is a drop off with trilogies. I’m still selling books every day for the other two books, but I don’t sell the same numbers as *The Wedding Shroud*.

I was very lucky, as far as I’m concerned; Lake Union is an Amazon imprint, so a lot of people think I’ve made a deal with the devil. But I can’t complain. I’m consistently selling books.

Lake Union provide detailed reports to Storrs listing sales in all territories such as US, UK, Canada, Australia, Germany, Italy, India, Mexico and Japan. The statements also separate out print, digital and audio sales. This is a huge difference to the minimalist royalty statements she received from her Australian publisher. She can also get a sense of the interest in her work from Goodreads.

My Goodreads dashboard shows there are over 9000 people in total who have added my books, and about 4000 noted as having one or more of my books on their ‘To Read’ list. Of these 1000 are ‘currently reading’ at present. There have been over 3000 ratings posted across the 3 books and over 300 written reviews. I don’t know whether all these figures translate to sales but it’s an indication of the appeal of *The Wedding Shroud* which was first published in 2010. If I was with a traditional publisher there is no way that 10 years after I’d written a mid-list book I would still be selling books every day. Or receiving ratings on Goodreads. It’s staggering to me.

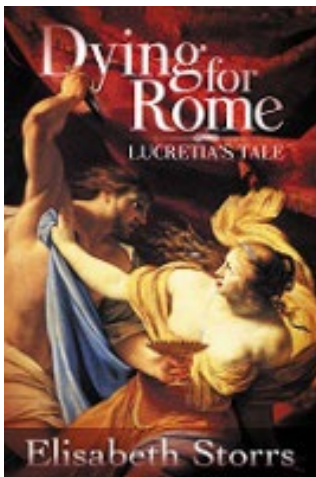
Lake Union has not taken up the translation rights to the books, and they did not initiate audio books—perhaps because the books are quite long. However, in 2015 Storrs was approached by a specialist audio book company about the audio rights. After Storrs contacted Lake Union about the offer, “they immediately made an audio book for me”. The audiobook of *The Wedding Shroud*, which was 17 hours long, was released in

December 2015 by Audible (which is owned by Amazon) followed by the other two books in the series. The audiobooks sell steadily, in smaller numbers than the ebooks, and provide another income stream.

Storrs engages with her readers mainly on Facebook. She also has an e-newsletter with about 3,000 subscribers. She has a blog which focuses on inspirational sources and posts “interviews, reviews, and guest posts from historical novelists”. She observes that, “It is becoming more difficult for Indies to get marketing space.”

Now you need to pay more to market on key promotional sites. Both Amazon and BookBub want you to pay to advertise through them. The fact that I’m with Lake Union means I don’t have to set up a marketing budget on that level but I do set a budget for running my newsletter through Mailerlite and occasionally running giveaways through sites like Booksweeps. It’s important to maintain contact with your readership while writing your next novel. This advice applies to any author no matter how they are published. But being an Indie requires you to run a business—return on investment has to be measured.

As part of her marketing strategy, Storrs has published an 80 page short story which is offered free to readers who subscribe to her e-newsletter.



Elisabeth Storrs retells the historic story of the tragic girl whose death inspired the men of Rome to rise up against a tyrant king and establish the Roman Republic. Was she a victim or a champion? A pawn in political schemes or the catalyst for rebellion?

In this vivid short story, Lucretia’s character is explored to reveal a tender portrait of a young girl misused by men who transforms into a woman with a passion for justice.

[Source: Publisher site]

In 2015 Storrs co-founded the Historical Novel Society Australasia.

I was a member of the Historical Novel Society in the UK and the US. I built up relationships with their reviews editor and their founder. I also wrote articles for the Historical Novel Review. HNS holds annual conferences in the UK one year, the US the next. I thought, there’s a gap in Australia and New Zealand. We don’t have those types of conferences and we don’t have a community. We set up a Facebook group and then established a not-for-profit corporation to run conferences on a biennial basis, which liaises with the UK as a parent foundation. We are now the third arm of the international group. HNSA has gone from strength to strength. We have now held 3 biennial conferences featuring over 100 historical novelists.



In 2019, we introduced a full day of workshops and manuscript assessments to the existing 3 streams. There are over 1700 people in our Facebook group consisting of writers, readers and industry professionals. The group provides an online discussion forum to share writing and reading tips as well as reviews. The conferences provide an opportunity for historical fiction fans to meet in person and build their support networks. There is a great sense of community. I'm very proud of what we've achieved. And now HNSA has introduced the \$30,000 ARA Historical Novel Prize to recognise the genre in its own right.

Despite Storrs' success as a 'hybrid', most of the members prefer to (or aspire to) traditional publishing. "I find that people love the holy grail of being published by a traditional publisher."

Storrs is also an active member of The Historical Fiction Authors Cooperative (HFAC). Their website says: HFAC is an international group of authors who first teamed up in 2010 to offer readers a selection of high-quality historical fiction ebooks (via Historical Fiction eBooks). HFAC membership is by invitation only, allowing us to assure the quality of the books we feature on this site.

The group has a private forum which includes internationally-successful historical novelists, including some who may not have a high profile in Australia. Elisabeth gave the example of *New York Times* bestselling US author Olivia Hawker, who has published about 20 books, including with Lake Union. "Some people have published traditionally or are very successful Indies or moved between the two like me. Every second day, I'll be chatting with someone in America or Canada, that's social as well. I get a lot of support from the US authors, very generous."

Storrs is also one of The History Girls, a closed group of predominately UK authors who blog on historical research on a regular basis. The site has received millions of hits over the years. “It was a great honour to be invited to join the ranks of The History Girls alongside the likes of Elizabeth Chadwick and Lesley Downer.”

Storrs observes trends in historical fiction, sometimes with wry amusement.

World War II is extremely popular. It used to be the Tudor period. I called it Tudorophilia; it was all the rage. There was a little spurt of French Revolution last year. Parallel narratives are also gaining popularity where a narrative is interwoven between two or three different historical periods.

Her next novel is set in World War II.

This is a bottom drawer novel. I wrote it a long time ago and I had always wanted to revisit it. I’m writing from a German character’s perspective set in Berlin in World War II. Historical sources have always been very Western-focused with historical novelists concentrating on Allied campaigns based on those records. Until recently there hasn’t been as many German memoirs or other sources coming to light. There has been historical fiction written from the German Jewish perspective, but not so much from the everyday German viewpoint. A huge stigma needs to be navigated which is a massive challenge. Some examples are Kate Forsyth’s *The Beast’s Garden*, Olivia Hawker’s *The Ragged Edge of Night*, Leah Kaminsky’s *The Hollow Bones*, Anthony Doer’s *All the Light We Cannot See*, and *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris.

I’ve been reading memoirs of women who lived in Berlin throughout the war. I also read academic journal articles and textbooks. There are some German academics writing in English and I have made a link with a German historian, Susanne Grunwald. I’ve also been lucky to have a friend translate German academic articles for me. It’s not a massive trend in historical fiction, but I have noticed more interest in the German side of things, and even the Russian side. My next book after this will be from a Russian woman’s journey travelling with the Trophy Art Brigades into Berlin.

Storrs will look for a US agent for her next book if she can’t sell her book to Lake Union. “I have to admit it’s harder to be an Indie now. I have to think carefully about what to do. My readership is in the States rather than Australia. My newsletter subscribers are predominantly American. Ironically, it’s been difficult to cut through to an Australian audience despite my work with the HNSA. I mainly have an overseas profile via the international HNS community and the History Girls blog. If I have a saleable book I’m going to have to try and get an overseas deal, because that’s where my readership is.”

In late 2019 Storrs was approached by a small, New York-based publisher who invited her to send her next manuscript.

The publisher was looking for Australian authors, not necessarily Australian content. I received an email out of the blue from her. It’s a small imprint, a traditional publisher, more literary kind of fiction. That was interesting. Sometimes some of these small press publishers don’t offer advances, but they handle all of the distribution. I haven’t looked into it, because I haven’t finished my book.

Historical fiction: Elisabeth Storrs

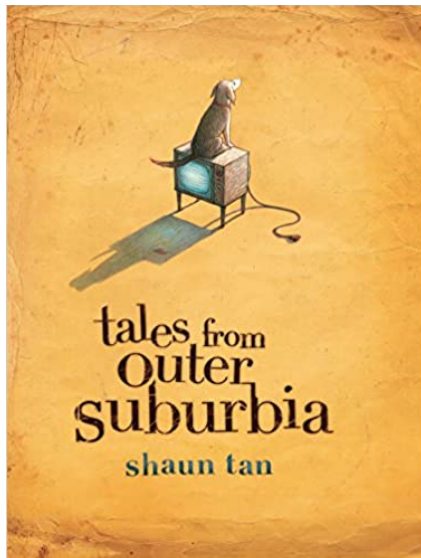
Storrs is passionate about what she's learned about earning an income from a largely overseas-based readership, through a publishing model which sustains her writing for the long term. She writes about her inspirations on her website.

I love learning. I love researching. I love writing. Historical fiction is my passion.

Creative illustrated work and the influence of the international audience: Shaun Tan

Just over ten years ago, *The New York Times Book Review*'s critic Hugo Lindgren began a review of the North American edition of Shaun Tan's collection of illustrated short stories, *Tales of Outer Suburbia* (Arthur A. Levine Books, 2009) by referring to the Australian's 'genius'. Lindgren concluded with:

Tan's work overflows with human warmth and childlike wonder. But it also makes a perfect adult bedtime story, a little something to shake loose your imagination from the moors of reality right before your own dreams kick in. (Lindgren, 2009)



Do you remember the water buffalo at the end of our street?

Or the deep-sea diver we found near the underpass?

Do you know why dogs bark in the middle of the night?

Shaun Tan, creator of *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* and *The Red Tree*, reveals the quiet mysteries of everyday life: homemade pets, dangerous weddings, stranded sea mammals, tiny exchange students and secret rooms filled with darkness and delight.

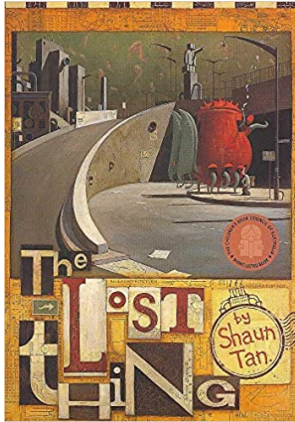
[Source: Publisher site]

As Lindgren's *The New York Times* review suggests, Tan's work appeals to, and is created for, a wide readership. More than that, his literary output is diverse, as *AustLit* demonstrates, categorising it as: art work, autobiography, children's fiction, column, criticism, drama, essay, film/TV, graphic novel, interview, musical theatre, novel, picture book, poetry, prose, short story. Furthermore, *AustLit* lists the content of these works under ten different genres: adventure, children's, crime, fantasy, horror, humour, romance, science fiction, thriller, young adult (AustLit, n.d.).

As well as being critically acclaimed Tan's work has been awarded over twenty prizes both in Australia, most recently, the 2019 Children's Book Council of Australia, Picture Book of the Year for *Cicada* (2018), as well as internationally.³⁰ The most significant of his international prizes are Britain's Kate Greenaway Medal, which he was awarded in June, 2020 for *Tales of the Inner City* (2019), and the \$600,000 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, which he won in 2011, and is given for a body of work. The Astrid Lindgren awards committee described him as 'a masterly visual storyteller' who had 'reinvented the picture book by creating visually spectacular pictorial narratives with a constant human presence' In

³⁰ His other international honours include the Ditmar Award for 2001 World Fantasy Award as Best Artist, the *Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis*, Best Picture Book 2009 for the German edition of *Tales from Outer Suburbia* (Carlsen Verlag 2008), 2008 Angoulême International Comics Festival Prize for Best Comic Book for the French edition of *The Arrival* (Les Éditions Dargaud 2007). Visit www.shauntan.net for information.

that same year, the adaption of *The Lost Thing*, based on Tan's picture book of the same name, won an Academy Award for Best Short Animated Film. Produced by Passion Pictures, Shaun was worked on the project as 'director, writer, designer and artist'.³¹



A boy discovers a bizarre-looking creature while out collecting bottle-tops at a beach. Having guessed that it is lost, he tries to find out who owns it or where it belongs, but the problem is met with indifference by everyone else, who barely notices its presence. Each is unhelpful in their own way; strangers, friends, parents are all unwilling to entertain this uninvited interruption to day-to-day life. In spite of his better judgement, the boy feels sorry for this hapless creature, and attempts to find out where it belongs.

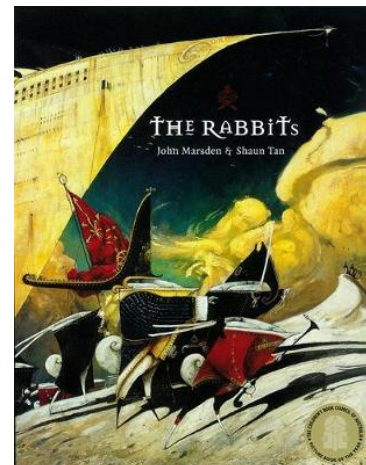
[Source: Publisher site]

Along with animation, Tan's work has also been adapted for the stage; the picture book *The Rabbits* (written by John Marsden) was transformed into an opera. A co-production between Barking Gecko Theatre Company and Opera Australia, with a score by respected Australian pop musician Kate Miller-Heidke, it won four Helpmann Awards.

A rich and haunting allegory for all ages, all cultures.

'The rabbits came many grandparents ago.
They built houses, made roads, had children.
They cut down trees.
A whole continent of rabbits...'

The Rabbits offers a rich and immensely valuable perspective on the effect of man on his environment. Visually loaded and told with a passion for truth and understanding, *The Rabbits* aims to promote cultural awareness and a sense of caring for the natural world.



[Source: Publisher site]

Research conducted for this project shows that between 1997-2008, Tan's picture books have been translated into at least 22 languages other than English: Arabic, Chinese (complex and simplified scripts), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese (in Brazil and Portugal), Russian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish. Additionally, his work has been published in at least 29 countries by 56 publishers.³²

While Tan has given many interviews, written essays and given speeches about creative processes, inspiration and technique—see his website www.shauntan.net for some of these—

³¹ See: www.shauntan.net/lost-thing-film.

³² Tan is the sole creator of all but four.

he has not previously discussed his experience as an internationally published visual storyteller. In this interview, conducted by email in April, 2020, he describes how his success has been gradual, and why in recent years he decided to handle his international rights himself, a decision, it turns out, that was as much about art, and an increasing engagement with his international audience, as about commerce. He also reveals that the factors that have influenced his success are as much about content, as acclaim.

The rationale behind retaining international rights

The way Tan's work has been sold internationally has varied in an unusual way for the creator of picture books. The world rights (all languages) to illustrated works are often handled by publishers. On the one hand, selling the rights can offset high production costs of books. On the other, printing on behalf of international publishers offers a way to reduce unit costs, due to the increased size of print runs. At the start of his career, Tan followed the traditional approach and did grant international rights to his publishers but more recently—in conjunction with Sophie Byrne of Passion Pictures—he has been handling these rights. Asked about the rationale behind this change in approach, Tan's explanation reveals the way in which the type of books he creates was central to his decision; it also demonstrates that when it comes to rights deals, a difference between what a publisher might want and what an author might want.

Airlie Lawson: *You've granted your Australian publishers ANZ rights to your recent books, rather than world rights, as previously: What was the rationale behind the change in approach—and how have you found working directly with publishers in multiple and often very different territories, economically and culturally?*

Shaun Tan: It's happened incrementally over a decade or so. Largely as a result of travelling OS, getting to know editors and other publishing staff first hand, and forming direct relationships with them. It then began to make more sense, both creatively and economically, to deal with them directly, particularly as each has a slightly different approach to book design in particular, and I wanted to have more control over that. Including which publisher takes which title.

I think one of the first territories I separated was North America, as I had a good direct relationship with Arthur Levine [who has an eponymous imprint at Scholastic USA], then I think the UK, Germany and from there increasing relationships and creative control in different territories. (If I don't know a territory, I will generally leave it to an Australian publisher to be the primary manager.) I've also had no real issues negotiating on my own behalf, while also respecting the work done by foreign agents.

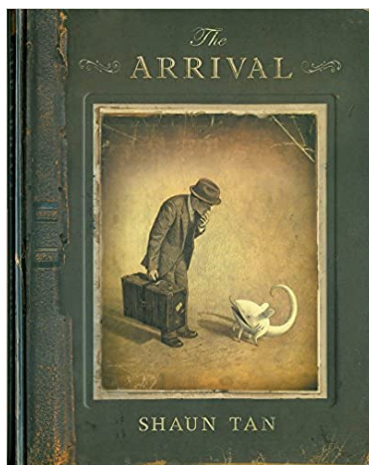
Sophie [Byrne, of Passion Pictures] began to work as an agent on my behalf, around 2007 or thereabouts, and is very adept at handling foreign contracts and especially subsidiary rights like film, TV, theatre and merchandising. The latter are particularly important, when I noticed that publishers were inclined to favour lucrative but possibly creatively compromised offers from larger studios. Sophie had worked very closely with me in the past and has the advantage of understanding my creative direction and interest (which tends to favour artistic freedom) probably more than other agents. As I work with different Australian publishers, I also needed to have a manager who has access to all information about all of my work, without the divisions that exists between publishers.

External influences: the role of prizes, sales and critical acclaim

Many factors external to the ‘content’ of a work itself have been associated with increasing—or initialising rights sales. These factors include other rights sales, ‘conduits’ such as agents and scouts, translation grants, reviews, work count (translating an English novel into German means increasing the page length by about a third, for example), author profile. The most commonly cited are prizes, sales and acclaim yet, as in other areas, in rights it has been demonstrated that often correlation is not causation (see, for example, Lawson 2019a, pp. 241-300).

AL: Your books have won many prestigious prizes, been critically acclaimed, and sold extremely well, locally and internationally: these external factors are often associated with international rights sales. What external factors have you noticed have particularly impacted on your international rights sales (such as recognition, category, format, length)?

ST: I think *The Arrival* was a critical title, not so much due to awards, but its immediate appeal to US and European publishers. There could be several reasons for that. One was that you could show the work in progress at a fair like Bologna (which I did in person) and each nationality could read its wordless text, and understand immediately its thematic relevance—each country having its own ongoing immigration crisis. It also came at a time when interest in graphic novels ramped up.



Haunting, original and told entirely through exquisitely imagined black, white and sepia pictures, *The Arrival* is the story of one man's encounter with life in a strange new world. It's a timeless, universal story that will resonate with anyone, anywhere who has struggled to start again in a place that is different to the one they have always known.

Much loved around the world, *The Arrival* has also won numerous awards including the CBCA Book of the Year and 'Best Album' at the Angoulême Festival in France.

[Source: Publisher site]

Up until that point (in 2006), I don't think I'd had many internationally released titles, and often by small independents only. I never quite understood why, especially in English speaking territories, but probably because my work is hard to categorise. The US (and Arthur Levine) is an interesting case, publishers having been quite aware of my successful Australian titles since about 2000, but did not feel my books would suit the US market, maybe because they don't fit so well with children's lists. Once I was offered a publishing deal if I agreed to modify content slightly, e.g. making the meaning of the story more child-accessible in some way, but I disagreed with this. However, with *The Arrival*, the reaction was strong, immediate and highly supportive, and marketed as YA / adult graphic novel; it was also seen (unintentionally) as a novel about New York City. In France and other European countries it was recognised as an adult comic (rather than children's) and did very well. This led to retrospective interest in my other

titles I think, and understanding them more as YA than children's books. The follow up [to *The Arrival*] of *Tales from Outer Suburbia* maybe confirmed this—longer text clearly not for younger children.

As far as major awards like the Oscar [the Academy Award for The Lost Thing] and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2011, I can't say that these actually made a big difference in the international publishing scene. Possibly, I just don't think so. I feel it was *The Arrival* that cracked it open, perhaps by 'explaining' that my work is not really in the category of conventional children's picture books. It also crossed a number of categories, including appearing in comics stores for the first time, and that opened my work up to a lot of adult readers. I actually think a majority of my readers are adults rather than children, particularly between the ages of 15 and 30 with artistic interests, just looking at the few book signing events I do. Of course, many of them are just aged children! It happens if you've been at it for long enough.

International responses: the importance of style and content

Some rights sellers, and scholars, maintain that above all, the quality of the content of a book is what influences a deal (Lawson 2019a, pp. 27-29), but content—and tastes—differ from country to country (see, for example, Wilson, 2013, p. 81), which has an influence on where books sell.

*AL: One of the most noticeable aspects of your illustrated books—those categorised as children's books, young adult novels and even art books—is not just a sensibility but an enigmatic quality, visually, and in terms of the way you approach narrative: you seem to suggest a story. You've also discussed being influenced by non-Western storytelling techniques (i.e. manga in *The Arrival*) and mixed darker themes with (often) a surreal humour. How do you think your particular approach to style and content have affected the international response to your books?*

ST: The above [comments in the previous section] answers that a little. The shorter answer is that I don't really know. For a while I was travelling to conferences and festivals internationally a fair bit, and I learnt a great deal about the scene in different countries, but even then that knowledge has always been quite limited. I did notice cultural variations that could mean my books made more 'sense' in some countries more than others. For example, I felt that Latin American readers seemed especially interested in my work, which could be that it intersects with magic realism and other literary and graphic traditions there. In turn I've been influenced by this, with *The Singing Bones* quite influenced by two trips to Mexico City. The Mexican government distributed 50,000 copies of *The Rabbits* free to school libraries: it's a story that clicks both thematically and stylistically with Mexican history and visual culture. That all said, the Spanish publisher that originally supported my work (and continues to do so) is a small family-run independent in Madrid. Another example is *The Arrival* in France: that just took off because it was nothing unusual for a French BD [*band dessinée*, that is, comics or graphic novels] reader, in format and content. Where Australians were confused by its categorisation, the French were not at all.

At the moment, interest in my work has increased in Japan, which makes sense to me given the style of my surrealism, and certain Japanese influences, although this is very new. I would put it down to individual editors actually. There were a few people just really excited about my work in Japan and have been actively

promoting it with publications and a large touring retrospective, currently running across a number of cities.

I suppose this is true of all publishing, including here in Australia. It was the enthusiasm of a few individuals—editors, other illustrators and writers—that jump-started by career, which was otherwise very slow to find an audience. The vast majority of publishers were not interested in my folio when I began working as a freelance writer and illustrator in 1996: to be honest, I not sure I would have been either in their position. It was very unclear to all of us how it fit into the publishing landscape. But I did know from my work for SF magazines and general observation of international comics, film, animation, fine art and literature that there was a huge interest in this style of visual storytelling.

The other quick thing to say is that I do make an effort to keep my stories universally accessible, both in style and content. I try not to follow illustrative fashions (although I did a bit when younger) and also remove culturally specific references. More deeply, I think this has come out of trying to create general fiction within children's publishing, or rather realising that you can do both if you try to access fundamental story themes and structures through surrealism—that we all have the same kinds of dreams and feelings, that we all live in a basically strange world. *The Red Tree* is a good example. In trying to keep something open to both adults and children, from any background or educational level, I've also made books that have cross-cultural appeal. Both internationally and across different subcultures: fine arts, comics, animation, etc. It's nice to see that the boundaries have blurred between these subcultures, which has probably been of great benefit for my own books in finding readership outside of strictly children's literature circles.

Final words: the importance of an appreciative audience—and creative independence

ST: Of course, this is all just guessing. By nature I don't follow so much reception of my work, and often surprised by the breadth of its appeal, on the rare occasions I do interact with readers and publishers. Regardless of whether I got published, found a readership or not, I'd still likely be doing the same kind of work, so I consider myself very lucky that it actually reaches so many people and pays the bills. But some part of that has been maintaining creative control and management once there was strong interest, and remaining creatively independent.

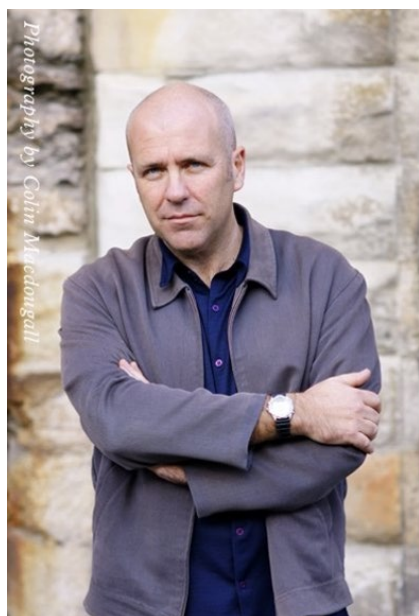
Thematic

The impact of literary prizes on rights sales, by author and title: Richard Flanagan and Charlotte Wood

In Australia, there are many literary prizes, but the Miles Franklin, the Stella Prize and the Prime Minister's Award are reputed to be the only ones that can be seen to increase book sales significantly (see, for example, Stinson, 2019). Many in the industry also believe that winning a literary prize will not just increase but lead to international rights sales. There has been little empirical research to test this belief. However, one recent study of Australian novels which showed an association between prizes and rights sales, subsequently demonstrated (using deal announcement dates), that often the rights were sold before the book's publication so the prize win could not have influenced the deals. Even accounting for this disparity, rights sales of novels categorised as literary in this same study were shown to be more likely to have been influenced by an award than those categorised as either genre or commercial (Lawson, 2019a, pp. 255-260).

But how might this influence work? When asked about his experience, award-winning author Richard Flanagan suggested that the influence of national prizes on rights sales is highly limited. In his experience national prizes had little bearing on breaking out internationally. Rather it was the opposite: his Australian prizes nearly all followed on from his international success. Charlotte Wood, when asked about her experiences with the international sales of her multi-award-winning novel *The Natural Way of Things* (2015), also described prizes as playing a limited role. Yet in interviews carried out for this project, both authors revealed there are specific ways that prizes do influence rights sales.³³

Richard Flanagan, award-winning author



Richard Flanagan is one of Australia's best-known, best-selling and acclaimed authors. He has published 14 books including the novels *Death of a River Guide* (1994), *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1997), *Gould's Book of Fish* (2001), *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006), *Wanting* (2008), *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (2013), *First Person* (2017), and *The Living Sea Of Waking Dreams* (2020). Cumulatively, his books have sold millions of copies and been awarded 17 national and international literary prizes, including the Australian Literary Society's Gold Medal and Commonwealth Writers' Prize (*Gould's Book of Fish*, in 2002) and, in 2014, the Australian Prime Minister's Literary Prize (Fiction) and the Man Booker Prize for *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. His novels have also received eleven Australia Council translation grants between 2002-2010: the international rights have been licensed in 42 territories.

What role did literary prizes play in Richard Flanagan's international success?

³³ Both Richard Flanagan and Charlotte Wood were initially interviewed by Airlie Lawson in April 2020 by phone; follow conversations were conducted by email.

Flanagan believes, “prizes need writers but writers don’t need prizes.” Long before Australian publishers, scholars and journalists began to question their growing number, cost and selection criteria (see, for example, Wyndham, 2016; Stinson, 2016), Flanagan (2012) argued that the “elevation and proliferation of literary prizes have obscured the slow erosion of our own literary culture—indeed, they have arisen with it—and disguise the near complete lack of support by our society of literary culture in general”.

Flanagan says he “is not against prizes, but against taking them too seriously”. While acknowledging that they “allow books to come into the conversation” and winners “into the front of bookshops”, he notes book prizes are “often a barometer of bourgeois bad taste” and their choices often quickly forgotten by readers. This focus leads to a situation in which, as he puts it, “prize winners become as Easter Island statues while the culture dies of famine below”. Nor, in Flanagan’s experience, do national prizes influence international rights sales. He points out that many international publishers who have acquired Miles Franklin-winning novels have been ‘burned’ and don’t rush to buy another. That is to say, the novels have not performed in terms of either sales or critical favour. He points out that the situation is little different for winners of national prizes in other countries—Canada’s Giller Prize or Germany’s *Deutscher Buchpreis* to name but two.

Despite having won or been shortlisted for national (and state) literary prizes for most of his novels, Flanagan’s own international success has not, he makes clear, been prize-driven. Instead, like his early domestic success, it has been reader-led. Initially, he explains, he was not accepted by the Australian literary establishment—there was little critical attention—but was “embraced by readers”. The first edition of his debut, *Death of a River Guide*, for instance, sold 30,000 copies.³⁴ His first American deal, too, did not occur as a result of a formal submission, or publisher request: it was a reader recommendation. The American publisher, Morgan Entrekin of Grove Atlantic (then Grove Press), was in Melbourne. While there, he met a woman who was reading Flanagan’s second novel, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*. Her enthusiasm induced Entrekin to read it. Subsequently, he offered for, and acquired, the North American rights.

In contrast to the initial low key reception of his debut novel in Australia, Flanagan’s American debut received critical acclaim and his second novel to be published in the USA, *Gould’s Book of Fish*—largely damned in Australia, Flanagan recalls—was the subject of a glowing front-page feature review in *The New York Times*. In Flanagan’s experience, while success in publishing “waxes and wanes” what counts internationally is building up a record of critical acclaim over several books in major countries such as France, Italy, Japan, Britain and Germany, and particularly an author’s “standing in America”. A glowing review in *The New York Times* is, therefore, far more valuable than an Australian literary prize in securing international rights.

What about the Man Booker Prize win: did that influence international rights sales?

³⁴ *Death of a River Guide* was also awarded the National Book Award and South Australian and Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards but these do not reflect the level of critical reception and media attention on publication.

The Booker Prize (the Man Booker, at the time of Flanagan's win) is, according to the prize website, "Awarded annually to the best novel of the year written in English and published in the UK or Ireland". It has long been seen as a prize associated with commerce (Todd, 1996) as well as significantly increased book sales (Squires, 2007). Anecdotally, rights professionals—not only those in the UK—say it is the prize with the most influence in the international market.

Flanagan said the Booker is inarguably a major boon for any writer. But, as he points out, after the publication of *Gould's Book of Fish* (2002), he already had nearly thirty international publishers. That is, he had already experienced an extremely high level of international literary recognition. To put this in context, while thirty publishers is a high number today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century it was an extremely high number. As American literary scholar David Damrosch (2003, p. 523) wrote at the time, "for the first time in history, authors of highly successful works can hope to have them translated into twenty or thirty languages within a few years of publication". *Gould's Book of Fish* was therefore, in global terms, a highly successful work.



Being awarded the Booker Prize therefore did not introduce Flanagan—and his work—to the international literary market. But the Booker did give his agents bargaining power. It also gave loyal publishers and editors who believed in his work bargaining power within their own houses. One outcome of the Global Economic Crisis of 2007, Flanagan says, was that a number of his international publishers were subjected to severe "belt-tightening" with "less profitable writers getting the axe". *Wanting*, his book before his Booker prize winner, while critically acclaimed had failed commercially and in a climate of retrenchment Flanagan lost major publishers.

The Booker win altered perceptions of the commercial value of his work and so enabled publishers who had long been loyal—such as his long-term Norwegian publishing house, Cappelen Damm, which had published Flanagan's previous novels but dropped him—to once again acquire his work. Equally, it allowed Flanagan to move from weaker, less committed publishers to stronger more committed houses. Flanagan says the standing associated with the Booker needs though to be "exercised with wisdom", seeing it as it is a two-edged sword that can damage as well as enhance a writer's position.

The temptation is for authors—and agents—to chase offers based solely on financial considerations and accept overly large advances that are not recoupable, leading to the books subsequently being seen to have failed commercially.

It can also mean writers understandably going to houses for short term gain at the expense of long term nurturing and building of a reputation at better houses making smaller offers. Given how difficult it is for authors to make money through publishing (see, for example, Zwar, 2017), this is not surprising. Flanagan himself has spoken publicly about the difficulty of earning a living as an author (see, for example, Flood, 2013); he is also aware of the importance, and value, of having good publishers, both domestically, and internationally that are with you, he says, “for the long haul”.

If not prizes, what factors do matter when it comes to international rights?

Flanagan believes that what matters most is building a solid record of critical acclaim and with it a following of readers in every country. “What is obvious is too easily overlooked,” he says. “These things are all finally about writing books that people wish to read.”

Flanagan is guided in his decisions about publishing by his literary agent, believing that agents have a key role to play when it comes to success or failure of authors’ books globally. As he puts it, “you need someone in that world [the international publishing world]” and whereas “bad agents will just chase the dollar, a good agent builds you”. For the last twelve years, he’s been represented by Andrew Wylie of The Wylie Agency, which has offices in New York and London. Andrew Wylie is one of the world’s leading literary agents, with “a reputation for ruthlessness” (Gordon, 2013), but also as a shrewd and sophisticated businessman (Lambert, 2010). Wylie also has a global approach to publishing: in terms of representation (Anderson, 2017) and rights (Critchley, 2016). Flanagan says Wylie is “deeply respectful of writing and writers”. Significantly, Wylie also has “respect for those publishers who seek to build writers over many years by staying with them through thick and thin, ensuring their books reach an audience and that readership grows”. The approach is strategic as well as long term, collaborative rather than simply commercial. “He thinks writers should get properly paid,” says Flanagan, “but he takes a nuanced, measured, long term view in achieving that.”

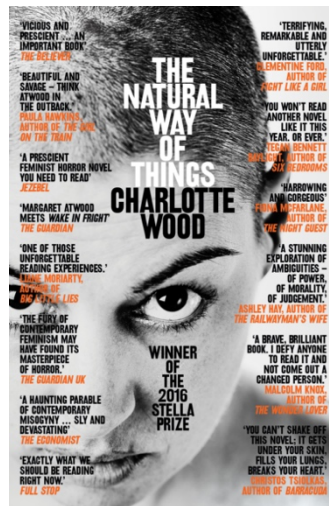
For Flanagan, it is evident that readers and international critical success—and not prizes—are what matters, both locally and globally. “You cannot underestimate,” he says,

the power of friendship, the role of passion, belief and good will of those readers within publishing around the world who believe in your work. I have been lucky to have an extraordinarily gifted publisher here in Australia for twenty-five years in Nikki Christer whose advice, at critical moments, has been invaluable in making often difficult international decisions. And then to have met many wonderful people—publishers, agents, journalists, booksellers, readers—around the world who have championed my writing.

These intangibles, far, far more than any prize, are what ensure a writer is read in many countries. And perhaps at the end of it what matters above all is the quality of the work itself: no prize can rescue a bad book from oblivion where, more often than not, so many end up.

The Natural Way of Things by Charlotte Wood: award-winning novel

The rights journey of Charlotte Wood's *The Natural Way of Things* (2015) is also about readers.



On its Australian publication, the novel was widely reviewed and critically acclaimed. It has received seven short-listings (including for the 2016 Miles Franklin Literary Award), two long-listings (including for the prestigious International Dublin Literary Award, 2017) and won seven awards: in 2016, the Stella Prize; the Book of the Year Award, as well as Fiction Book of the Year, Indie Book Awards; the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Fiction (shared with *The Life of Houses* by Lisa Gorton); and, the Reader's Choice Award in the literary fiction category, the Australian Book Industry Awards (ABIA). Most recently, in 2019, *The Natural Way of Things* was chosen as the University of Canberra's Book of the Year. It has also been optioned for film.

The Natural Way of Things is also the first of the author's six novels to have been sold internationally. Along with being published in Australia (Allen & Unwin 2016), rights were sold in the UK (twice: Allen & Unwin UK; followed by Weidenfeld & Nicholson); North America (Europa Editions), France (Editions du Marquise; and pocketbook rights, Le Livre de Poche), Germany (Arctis Verlag), Spain (Editorial Lumen), The Netherlands (Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers), and Poland (Wydawnictwo Kobiiece Łukasz Kierus). There was also a Turkish deal (Yurt Kitap).

Wood's earlier works were also critically acclaimed, as well as short-listed and long-listed for literary prizes, and although Wood was often assumed to be a prize-winning author—and, she says, sometimes even introduced as one when speaking publicly—*The Natural Way of Things* is her first prize-winning novel. As all the international deals for the novel were made after the book's publication, on the surface it might seem that it is the literary prizes that made the difference.

What were the factors that contributed to the North American rights sale?

Wood suggests that the literary prize wins for *The Natural Way of Things* did not directly lead to the novel's international deals. She recounts the story of the North American rights sale to illustrate.

As well as being important strategically (as Flanagan points out) and for sales, in theory the North American market is the easiest to sell rights into for Australians: it is English language, culturally similar, and American publishers do not expect to acquire Australian territorial rights.³⁵ In addition to being one of the three markets most likely to acquire rights to Australian novels—the other two being the UK and Germany—a recent study has also shown the North American market is also one of the first three likely to make an offer (Lawson, 2019a, pp. 280-298).³⁶ This was not the case for *The Natural Way of Things*. The first offer was for translation rights from a Turkish publisher (that is, it was not from a North American, British, German, or even a Western European publisher). In fact, Wood says, the North American deal only occurred because her “indefatigable American agent, Pamela Malpas”—working in conjunction with Wood's long-time Australian agent, Jenny Darling—was convinced that she could sell the book based on its content, rather than the external validation associated with prizes. The acquiring publisher, the boutique literary press, Europa Editions, made their offer before the novel had been awarded any prizes: but the book was passed over by other publishers first.

This situation suggests that both Malpas and the acquiring editor at Europa were both committed readers and also placed literary value over, potentially, commerce value. Yet in the first six months, the North American edition did sell well despite, Wood points out, “very little budget for marketing”. The sales, she suggests, can be attributed to, largely, three reviews. Each, significantly, was aimed at a different audience: radio, pop culture-feminist and bookseller. One was a review on American Radio Station NPR's ‘Fresh Air’ program by the critic John Powers. As their website explains: “Each week, nearly 5 million people listen to the show's intimate conversations broadcast on more than 624 NPR stations across the country, as well as in Europe on the World Radio Network. In 2015, *Fresh Air* was the No. 1 most downloaded podcast on iTunes.”³⁷ He described the novel as “a short, gripping book [that] begins as an allegory of thuggish misogyny then evolves into a far stranger and more challenging feminist parable” (Powers, 2016). The headline of the review on *The Muse*, a segment of the popular online site *Jezebel* (the shout-line of which is ‘the supposedly feminist website’), read “*The Natural Way of Things* is a prescient feminist horror novel you need to read” (Edwards, 2016). *Kirkus Reviews*—a publication which would have encouraged booksellers and libraries to stock copies—declared: “An absorbing plot, lyrical prose, and discomfiting imagery make Wood's novel decidedly gripping” (Kirkus Reviews, 2016). None of these reviews mentions the work's Australian acclaim or any of the prize wins—although the American edition did have the Stella Prize mentioned on the front cover. Instead, the focus is on the writing, the story, and its social currency: the

³⁵ Unlike those British publishers who contest that as Australia (and New Zealand, and related dependencies), are part of the Commonwealth, they should continue to be part of their distribution territory. It is a contentious issue that has been widely discussed.

³⁶ The other two markets are, again, the UK and Germany.

³⁷ See: www.why.org/programs/fresh-air.

reason Malpas was so determined to find the novel a North American home, Europa to acquire it—and it would seem, American readers ultimately bought it.

Were deals in other territories influenced by the prize wins for the novel?

The covers of the international editions, and the promotional copy on their respective publisher webpages, can be seen to have this same focus on writing and story, with the exception of the second British edition.

The first British edition, published by Allen & Unwin UK, received favourable reviews Wood says, but achieved modest sales: the rights were reverted and resold. The second British edition, published on Hachette Group company Orion's prestigious Weidenfeld & Nicolson imprint, did pay attention to the Stella Prize win. It is listed on the book's webpage in bold—ahead of the Prime Minister's Prize, and the list of six other awards—but, Wood explains, *The Natural Way of Things* was acquired as part of a two-book deal for her subsequent novel, *The Weekend* (2019).

The translated edition promotional material focused on the story and, despite the acquisition timing, as with the English language market sales, and Turkish deal, Wood strongly believes that the book's prize wins did not influence the other international sales for *The Natural Way of Things*. Its appeal rested largely on the story itself and the way it was told. "I'd finally learned how to craft a story and control a narrative," she says. It wasn't just that, however, it was also—as many of the novel's reviewers suggest in different ways—the book's "force and power". Wood believes this was perhaps one of the things to set it apart from other Australian novels published around the same time, and certainly her own previous works.³⁸

Wood also suggests that there was another element that played a role: "Setting it in the outback probably helped it internationally." To put this statement in context, she recounts a story about meeting a British agent a decade earlier, around the time her novel *The Submerged Cathedral* (2004) was published in Australia. The agent, she makes clear, was "perfectly nice, but basically said, 'Look we don't want this book—but why don't you write something really *Australian*? Then we might be interested.'" Wood responded with, "I have written something that's Australian." The agent, however, wanted something "*more Australian*" and suggesting as an example, the work of (bestselling, Miles-Franklin-winning author) Tim Winton.

What role have international prizes played in the work's international success?

Wood is suspicious about the relationship between a work's value and the awarding of a literary prize, pointing out that prizes are "not a measure of literary merit" and that "many of the best books that Australia has produced have not been on *any* short-lists or long-lists". She also (like many) comments that in Australia, few literary prizes really matter. Yet *The Natural Way of Things* has been short-listed for the Miles Franklin; was a co-winner of the Prime Minister's Prize for Fiction; and winner of The Stella Prize, a prize significant because of its mission, its prize money (\$50,000), its emphasis on promotion—and use of social media.

³⁸ It might also be said that this aspect sets *The Natural Way of Things* apart from many other books, Australian or not.

While The Stella Prize does not restrict the theme of entries (unlike the Miles Franklin), nor the genre—it can be non-fiction or fiction—as with the UK’s Orange Prize, only work by women writers is eligible. As the 2017 adoption of the hashtag #MeToo demonstrates, contemporary discussion of feminist issues rapidly crosses cultural, national and linguistic borders, and the Stella is part of that global discussion. Referencing an experience with *The Natural Way of Things*, Wood reveals that when she was in Canada for a writers’ festival, a mother and daughter bookselling team in Toronto particularly wanted to meet her—because of the Stella Prize win. “It was really interesting to me,” she says, “that booksellers in Toronto had their antenna up about the Stella Prize.”

The awareness of the Stella Prize—and Wood’s win, and indeed the cult-like status of *The Natural Way of Things*—did not appear to extend to the publisher at the prestigious Penguin Random House US imprint Riverhead, who acquired Wood’s next novel, *The Weekend*, Wood explains. Instead, Sarah McGrath who bought the novel, did so prior to its Australian publication (and therefore prior to prizes and reviews) and without reading Wood’s earlier works, and it was acquired for her list as “a summer read”. Subsequently, *The Weekend* was categorised as women’s fiction/literary fiction. Indeed, it was widely seen as women’s fiction, albeit, as US author Christina Dalcher put it in her endorsement of the UK edition, “A masterpiece of women’s fiction”. It was McGrath’s younger assistant who was aware of *The Natural Way of Things* as a very different kind of women’s fiction, and not, perhaps, “a summer read”. *The Weekend* has also gone on to win a literary prize (Literary Fiction Book of the Year, 2020, ABIA Awards), to win critical acclaim—including *The Australian*’s literary critic Stephen Romei’s (2019) pre-publication five “wow” review—and, according to Wood, to sell more quickly and with more publisher interest than *The Natural Way of Things*. (She points out that publishers in the UK, for example, competed for the rights.) Moreover, she says, *The Weekend* was sold to different publishing houses and for higher advances than *The Natural Way of Things*.

The difference between the international reception between these two acclaimed novels by the same author reveals a rights journey in which Australian prizes do not appear to directly influence rights sales. Instead, for these critically acclaimed prize-winning books, the selling point remains the quality of the writing itself—to both publishers as well as readers.

Prizes and rights sales: an indirect influence?

Ultimately, Richard Flanagan and Charlotte Wood’s experiences suggest a more tenuous relationship between literary prizes and international rights sales than industry accounts propose. Yet both their experiences, if not the authors themselves, do suggest there is a relationship. Specifically, these experiences suggest the value of an award for the negotiating power it can provide—and the attention it can generate. While empirical studies have shown a correlation between award-winning Australian novels and international rights sales (see, for example, Lawson, 2019a, pp. 242-260), each of these examples suggest this may not stem from the award itself but instead the primary reason books are submitted for, short-listed, or win, literary awards: the content, that is, the subject and the writing.

Publication grants: Australia Council for the Arts



Australian Government



For six years during the period of this study (2008-2014), the main international publication grants program in Australia was administered by the Australia Council for the Arts: it was known as the Translation Grants Fund, as translations were its focus. This case study describes the selection criteria, gives an overview of the grants awarded during that time, and discusses with Wenona Byrne, Head of Literature, Sector Development, the Australia Council for the Arts, how the model for the program was revised from 2015, and why recently, it has been revised again and relaunched.

Many governments around the world provide support for the production and promotion of their national literatures internationally, to facilitate cultural exchange. One of the most effective methods is direct financial grant programs that contribute funds for the publication of works in different languages and by publishers in different countries. In Germany, for example, the Goethe Institut has long been involved in administering this form of grant, and at the time of writing, the website of Cultural Services section of the French Embassy in the United States' Book Department lists three separate grants available to those seeking to translate French literature into English.³⁹ These publication grants are also important for authors in English-language speaking countries, particularly smaller countries: this includes Australia.

In Australia, government supported funding has been associated with the growth of book translations in Italy, for example (Wilson, 2013, p. 82). A recent study of Australian adult novels published between 2000-2015 also suggested that while overall these grants played a minor role in enabling most novels to “travel”—just three percent (Lawson, 2019a, p. 263)—they nevertheless played an important role in enabling the wider global promotion of significant and diverse works of Australian literature—and, through that, Australian culture. Yet it is more than that. As Alexis Wright (2017) explained on the ten year anniversary of the publication of her Miles Franklin award-winning novel *Carpentaria*, “The translation of literature is an incredible thing because it helps to break down the barriers of language and distance, and creates communication, instead of silence.”

Why do the grants focus on translation rather than just publication?

Translating a work of literature—no matter what type—is more expensive than reprinting it in the original language. Some of the additional costs involved include: the typeset files that cannot be re-used meaning the work has to be reset (even for picture books, where there might be text changes only, there is an additional cost); the cost of translating (not only do translators receive a fee, they often also receive a percentage of royalties); and, after translation, the work needs to be copy-edited. Additionally,

³⁹ See: www.frenchculture.org/grants-and-programs/books-and-ideas/2769-publishing-grants-prizes.

certain languages are less “economical” with words than others: a German translation of an English language novel, for instance, might be up to a third longer than the original, so the production cost of each book is increased. When it comes to promotion, there are also issues that potentially limit the profitability of the work. The author may not speak the language into which the work has been translated so therefore is unable to promote the work as effectively as an author who is fluent. The book’s publicity is therefore limited unless the work is already a bestseller or major prize-winner. For works categorised as genre or commercial, which can be marketed on subject and category this limitation may not be a key consideration: for works that are seen to be literary, this can reduce their economic viability. Moreover, for some literary categories, economic viability is not a consideration (poetry, for example).

How did the Australia Council’s Translation Grant Fund operate between 2008-2014?

During most of the period under review, the Australia Council for the Arts translation grant fund operated under the same model. Karen Le Roy of the Australia Council explains the model used until the end of 2014.⁴⁰

Prior to a restructure of Australia Council grant programs in 2015, translation grants from the Literature Board supported the publication of literary works by or about living Australian writers in ‘eligible’ genres, or issues of magazines devoted to Australian creative writing (published as foreign editions either in English, in translation, or bilingual editions).

Eligible genres were defined as fiction, literary non-fiction (creative or narrative work: autobiography/memoir, biography, essays, histories, literary criticism or analytical prose), children’s and YA literature, poetry, writing for performance (theatre, radio), digital/new media writing that displays a significant literary component, graphic novels, and illustrated picture books.

Costs were primarily directed to writers’ and translators’ fees and/or publication costs, although some promotional costs could be included.

At least 500 copies of each title must have been printed.

The selection criteria for the program was based on:

Literary merit including writers and translators involved and potential to expand the readership of Australian literature nationally and/or internationally;

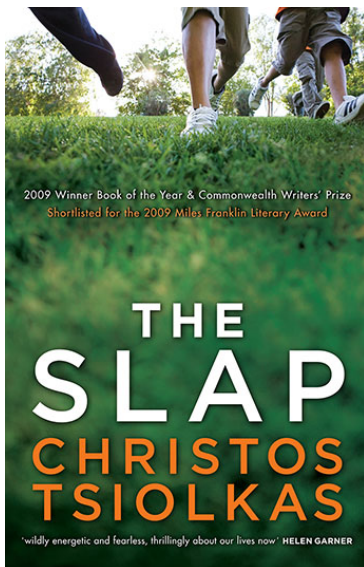
Evidence of the organisation’s thorough planning and ability to carry out the proposal to a high standard.

Additionally, rather than being awarded to the Australian publisher, grants were awarded to the international publisher—which had to hold the appropriate translation and territorial rights. Finally, while the focus was on translation, all international publishers were eligible to apply, including English language publishers.

What were the grants awarded as part of the program?

⁴⁰ Reprinted from a 2016 letter to Airlie Lawson which accompanied the data set for 2000-2014 provided for use in the *Conditions of Access* project.

Examination of the grant data set between the years of 2008-2014 (the beginning of the period of this study to the end of the previous funding model) reveals just over \$640,000 was awarded.⁴¹ This consists of 120 grants to 92 international publishers for 100 literary projects involving 73 individual authors (including two editors; excluding projects involving multiple authors). Grants can be seen to be awarded for projects in 30 languages across 38 countries. The lowest amount was awarded to an individual publisher is \$1100, the highest is \$30,000 (for the publication of the Braziller Series of Australian Poets in the United States). The average amount is \$5000.⁴² Of the individual projects that are awarded grants, the most awarded to any one project is six (to the journal *Antipodes*), with the most awarded book, Christos Tsiolkas' *The Slap*; most projects receive just one grant (84 percent).



To smack or not to smack is the question that reverberates through the interconnected lives dissected in Christos Tsiolkas' award-winning novel.

At a suburban barbecue, a man slaps a child who is not his own. It is a single act, but the slap reverberates through the lives of everyone who witnesses it.

Told through the eyes of eight of those present at the barbecue, this acclaimed bestseller is an unflinching interrogation of the life of the modern family. Poignant and provocative, *The Slap* makes us question the nature of commitment and happiness, compromise and truth. Whose side are you on?

[Source: Publisher site]

Most authors receive just one as well but the proportion is different: just over half (58 percent). A quarter of authors receive two.

Works in ten categories are awarded grants: fiction, poetry, children's literature (under 12 years, young adult literature (over 12 years), Indigenous literature, multi-genre (two or more genres), non-fiction, 'writing in languages other than English', and fiction. Of the ten categories of works specified and awarded grants, by far the largest number are awarded to works of adult fiction. Grants to adult fiction constitute over half (57 percent) of all grants in the data set and nearly all are for works that might be considered "literary", where "literary" is understood to apply to works that are critically acclaimed, have won literary prizes or are by authors who have previously won literary prizes.⁴³ Less commercial categories are also strongly supported with 16 percent of the

⁴¹ This study draws on data provided by the Australia Council to the *Conditions of Access* project, for which it was cleaned and analysed; where one publisher was awarded funds for two books in a single grant, each grant was listed separately.

⁴² To put these figures in context, while translation costs vary, anecdotal accounts from rights professionals estimate the cost of translating a 300 page commercial novel into German to be between \$10,000—\$15,000.

⁴³ One includes Kate Morton's *The Forgotten Garden* which received a grant to enable a Taiwanese publisher to publish an edition in the Chinese language (complex characters): Morton had not received a

grants awarded to poetry. The most commercial categories receive less attention: children's and young adult (13 percent), and non-fiction (2 percent). Five percent of grants are for literature written by Indigenous authors.

Individual grants in the set are awarded to a wide variety of works including: Nam Le's acclaimed short story collection, *The Boat* (Finnish); Helen Garner's award-winning novel, *The Spare Room* (Norwegian); bestselling author Garth Nix's YA fantasy *Sabriel* (Lithuanian); award-winning, acclaimed illustrated short story collection *Tales from Outer Suburbia* by Shaun Tan (Latvian); the picture book, *The ABC of Australian Animals* by Bronwyn Bancroft (Arabic); and the collected works of award-winning poet Les Murray (Albanian).

Finally, the grants are also used to assist works to be published in the English language in India, Canada, the US and the UK. Indeed, when the grants are broken down by individual project (the raw data focuses on publishers), English language publishers receive more grants over the period than publishers in any other language. Projects supported include acclaimed Indigenous author Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book* (Little, Brown UK) and acclaimed novelist Gerald Murnane's *Barley Batch* (Dalkey Archive Press, USA). The magazine *Verse* was awarded a grant to publish a special Australian issue (USA).

The geographic map in Figure 1 describes the global distribution of the grants by country of awarded publisher, demonstrating the wide international reach of the program.

Figure 1: Grants by country of publisher (positioned by national capital city)



Note: Country count: Albania (1); Austria (1); Belgium (2); Brazil (3); Canada (3); Chile (1); China (3); Czech Republic (1); Egypt (1); Ethiopia (1); Finland (3); France (13); Germany (8); Greece (3); Hungary (4); India (2); Israel (1); Italy (5); Latvia (1); Lithuania (1); Macedonia (1); Netherlands (8); Norway (1);

literary award but her bestselling debut, *The Shifting Fog*, had won the Australian Book Industry Awards, General Fiction Book of the Year in 2007.

Poland (5); Portugal (5); Qatar (1); Romania (1); Russia (3); Serbia (3); Slovenia (8); Spain (12); Sweden (4); Switzerland (1); Taiwan (2); Ukraine (4) United Kingdom (5); United States (10); Vietnam (1).

What was the benefit of the program under its earlier model—and where next?

Overall, the publication grants enabled the translation (or publication) of a small number of literary projects and facilitated entry into markets that might otherwise be difficult to access for cultural or commercial reasons, as well as enabling critically acclaimed Australian literature with limited commercial appeal to be translated. That is, these grants have ensured that culturally important works—regardless of their market appeal or the author’s profile—reached an international audience through print publication. In this way, the program has played a strategic role in enabling cultural exchange and presenting a diverse portrait of Australia and its writing.

In 2015, following a program review, a new funding model was introduced and translation funding was no longer an individual category of grants, the Australia Council’s Head of Literature, Sector Development, Wenona Byrne explains. Under this new model, translation funding continued to be available for individuals, organisations and groups, but translation projects were competing in the same round as all other Australian organisations: literary journals, festivals, writing organisations.⁴⁴ Under this model, these projects can be for translation of Australian works, or the translation of international works by Australian translators. Byrne also describes the multiple other ways in which the Australia Council has sought to facilitate the export of Australian literature—and support cultural exchange—alongside administering the translation grants program. These include the long-running Visiting International Publishers program (which enables global networking and introduces publishers to the Australian market); and various outbound market programs for agents and publishers or rights managers (such as market investigation trips to Korea, China, Taiwan and New York); and individual grants to enable publishers and agents who represent quality literature to undertake market development trips and attend book fairs independently. As such, the Australia Council recognises the benefit of relationship-building and market knowledge as well as direct subsidies.

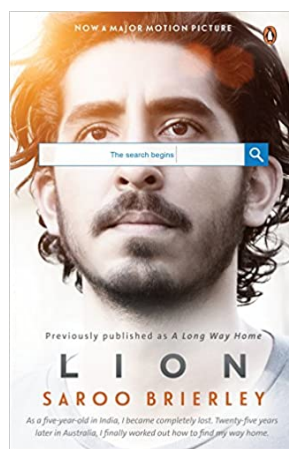
Byrne, however, acknowledges that the new grants model has had an unexpected consequence: only one translation grant was awarded between 2015-2019. A former rights executive herself, Byrne is aware of how valuable the program has been. Following another internal review in July 2020 a new version of the program was launched. Individual translation project grants that can be applied for without competing with other areas of funding for the publishing ecosystem.⁴⁵ Byrne noted that, “In the recent round in November 2020, 22 translations were supported.” Consequently, she expects there will be an increase in successful applications which will result in more international rights being sold for important Australian literature that otherwise might find it difficult to travel.

⁴⁴ International publishers fell into the Arts Projects for Organisations category.

⁴⁵ See: www.australiacouncil.gov.au/funding/funding-index/translation-fund-for-literature.

The relationship between screen rights and international rights: Seph McKenna

The book publishing and screen industries have long worked together, with adaptations from books proving popular sources of material for films and television programs. In Australia, the number of these adaptations has been increasing. In the last ten years many of the most popular, moving and confronting films and television programs in Australia have been based on books. Yet the two industries are very different: the cost of projects, the time involved, the size of production teams, and the complexity of contractual agreements. For publishers and literary agents who spend the majority of their time selling international rights, the process of selling screen rights can be challenging, frustrating and time-consuming. It involves different networks, a different type of pitching and, often, different books.

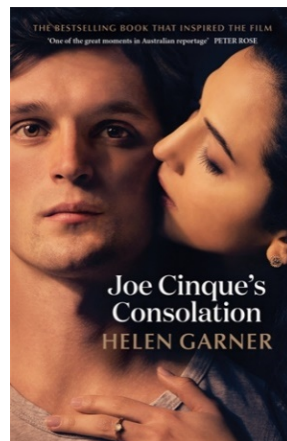


So what has changed in recent years? How have Australian industry professionals crossed the cultural divide and made contact? What factors might influence someone from the screen industry (a film or television producer, for example) to acquire a book and adapt it for the screen? After providing some background on adaptation, this case study explores these questions, introducing one Australian inter-industry networking program (Books at MIFF) and asking screen industry expert Seph McKenna about his experience.

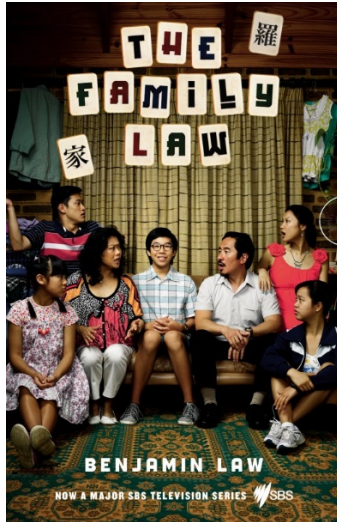
Background: putting book to screen adaptation in context

Like the publishing industry, over the last ten years, the film and television industry has experienced considerable disruption, much of it relating to technology. The use of subscription models such as Netflix and Stan has increased, as has the growth of user generated content, freely available on YouTube. Ways of watching have also altered: screens have grown (at home) and shrunk (in hand); binge-watching, downloading, on demand viewing are all standard viewing approaches. This has coincided with the increased demand for material that can be adapted from books. By 2016, the Chair of the International Film Festival Claire Dobbin claimed, in relation to Australian producers, that “around 50 percent” of their “slates are taken up with adaptation projects, an increase from previous decades when there was a focus on original work rather than adaptations” (Poole, 2016).

Novels are often the most high profile dramatic adaptations, with even Screen Australia's website's feature adaptation page titled 'Modern Fiction in Film'. Yet projects are sourced from a range of different categories and recent Australian examples include: memoirs such as Timothy Conigrave's *Holding the Man* (published in 1995; film released 2015), and *A Long Way Home* (published in 2013; film released as *Lion* in 2016); crime novels, for example Kerry Greenwood's Phryne Fisher books, of which there are twenty in all with the first, *Cocaine Blues*, published in 1989 (the television series was released as *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* 2012-2015); true crime such as Helen Garner's *Joe Cinque's Consolation* (published in 2004; film released in 2016); bestselling contemporary literary fiction such as Christos Tsiolkas' *The Slap* (published in 2008; television series released 2011); and backlist literary fiction (*The Dressmaker* 2000; film released in 2015); and of course children's books, including classics such as Dorothy Wall's *Blinky Bill* (originally published in 1933; adapted multiple times, most recently in 2016 and released on Netflix as *The Wild Adventures of Blinky Bill*).



Adaptations of books can benefit all parties involved but also have their drawbacks. For producers, adaptations of books make economic sense as suggested by the subtitle of *Mitigating Risk* (Hancock, 2010), a report published by the Australian Film, Television and Radio School: *The case for more adaptations in the Australian film industry*. For publishers, agents and authors, the publicity associated with an adaptation can: a, increase copy sales—the film tie-in edition of Rosalie Ham's *The Dressmaker*, for example, sold 130,000 copies (Jefferies, 2016, p. 4), propelling the novel to the bestseller list fifteen years after first publication; b, increase international rights sales, *The Dressmaker* adaptation led to rights sales in 12 territories (Lawson, 2019b); c, lead to additional forms of employment, such as scriptwriting, with Benjamin Law engaged as head script writer for the television adaptation of his memoir *The Family Law* (Poole 2016).



Now a major SBS television series!

Meet the Law family – eccentric, endearing and hard to resist. Your guide: Benjamin, the third of five children and a born humourist. Join him as he tries to answer some puzzling questions: Why won't his Chinese dad wear made-in-China underpants? Why was most of his extended family deported in the 1980s? Will his childhood dreams of *Home and Away* stardom come to nothing? What are his chances of finding love?

Hilarious and moving, *The Family Law* is a linked series of tales from a beloved Australian writer.

[Source: Publisher site]

Yet as advantageous as adaptations of books can be, they can also have downsides. There are those projects that do not eventuate.⁴⁶ There are legal disputes, with one of the most high profile in recent years involving HarperCollins, The Tolkien Trust and New Line Cinema and adaptations of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, which Warner Bros. (then) President & COO described as 'among the most successful films ever created' (Warner Brothers, 2009). Authors and/or readers might be disappointed by the production. For those in the publishing industry, film and television rights, the problem can be the process itself: is very different to licensing foreign rights.

While international rights can be estimated in annual budgets and, to a degree, anticipated, film or television deals are harder to predict and, compared to international rights, securing a deal is a long, drawn-out process. Once a book has been identified as suitable for screen adaptation, that is only the beginning.⁴⁷ Following that, the producer will seek to take out an option, generally a percentage of an agreed purchase price. An option for film or television rights is designed to give the producer time to develop the project (that is, draft a screenplay, put together a production team, find appropriate locations and actors and secure funding). In Australia, it can be modest, with one study estimating between \$500 and \$3000 per year (Hancock, 2010, p. 12). This option might be renewed, more than once. If the producer wishes to develop the film or television program, the next step is to exercise the option by paying the purchase fee (or a part thereof), and begin production. If all goes well, the adaptation, will at some point, move into post-production. During this time, the producer will confirm the distribution schedules and a promotional campaign, ahead of release—at which point the publisher may choose to publish a tie-in edition. This, in a nutshell, is the process—and it can take years.⁴⁸ This means it can be a high risk endeavour in terms of investment and potential returns for publishers.

⁴⁶ This can be for many reasons, some of which are documented graphically in veteran Australian director Bruce Beresford's *Josh Harnett Definitely Wants to Do This* (2007).

⁴⁷ There are other types of screen adaptations but this case study is focusing only on television and film.

⁴⁸ For scholarly in-depth studies of book-to-screen adaptation see, for example, Simone Murray's *The Adaptation Industry* (2012); and, also, *The Journal of Screen Studies*.

Networking: Books at MIFF

Prior to a work being optioned, it has to be discovered: this is the second problem for publishers. While producers often discover works serendipitously, or internationally through film scouts (there are few in Australia), they also acquire them through meetings with publishers and agents—where the publisher or agent discusses the book and proposes the reasons why it would work on screen.

In recent years, these meetings have become more organised. Just as publishers go to book fairs to network with international publishers, in Australia, they attend Books at MIFF. A key factor in the increase in adaptation of Australian books in recent years is the program Books at MIFF, introduced to the Melbourne International Film Festival program in 2007—and indeed, Books at MIFF was established to bring the publishing and film and television industries in closer contact. Based on a similar program at the Berlinale organised in conjunction with the Frankfurt Book Fair, the first ‘Books at MIFF’ promotion listed it as follows:

37South2008 also includes 37 South’s Books at MIFF (BaM), a one-day event (on 24 July 2008) promoting links and business between publishers, literary agents, film financiers and producers to foster book-to-film adaptations, which comprises:

- a case-study panel discussion on recent adaptations
- public pitching by publishers / literary agents of up to 10 books they want to see made into films
- Up to seven scheduled one-to-one meetings for publishers/ agents with film producers & financiers
- Networking events (MIFF, n.d.)

An additional Sydney event was also added in 2014, after participants suggested that an annual meeting wasn’t enough. By 2017, Fremantle CEO Jane Fraser, reporting on that year’s event said that 33 publishing industry professionals attended and 130 from the film and television industry (*Books+Publishing*, 2017). That is, there was significant interest from both publishing industry professionals and those from the screen industry. Some participants from the publishing industry also reported selling film rights to contacts made six years before at the event—that is, the program has been a success.

Pitching: What makes a good film pitch?

Seph McKenna, former CEO, ScreenWest, has been a regular attendee of Books at MIFF. While Head of Production, Roadshow Australia, he was involved in one of the most successful Australian films of recent years: *Red Dog*, an adaptation of a short story by Louis de Bernières. He answered a series of questions put to him by research team member, Airlie Lawson, about pitching and what producers look for in the form of evidence of an existing audience: readers who might become viewers.

Red Dog is a West Australian, a lovable friendly red kelpie who found widespread fame as a result of his habit of travelling all over Western Australia, hitching rides over thousands of miles, settling in places for months at a time and adopting new families before heading off again to the next destination and another family - sometimes returning to say hello years later. While visiting Australia, Louis de Bernieres heard the legend of Red Dog and decided to do some research on this extraordinary story. After travelling to Western Australia and meeting countless people who'd known and loved Red Dog, Louis decided to spread Red Dog's fame a little further. The result is an utterly charming tale of an amazing dog with places to go and people to see. It will delight readers and animal lovers of all ages.

[Source: Publisher site]



Airlie Lawson (AL): In the early years, of Books at MIFF, publishers were required to stand on the stage alone and pitch—as at the Berlinale—but this was changed, after it became clear that publishers seemed to be speaking a different pitching language to producers, and subsequently publishers and producers pitched together.⁴⁹ As a Books at MIFF attendee, and someone who listened to many of these pitches, you’ve said that one person stood out, Michael Heyward, from Text Publishing. Not only was he “good for a publisher” you’ve said he is one of the best project pitchers you’d heard across industry. Why is this? How does his approach differ from other people’s? Or more specifically, what about it appeals to film/television producers?

Seph McKenna (SMcK): Michael Heyward pitched Helen Garner’s *The Spare Room* effectively by imagining marquee cast in the principle roles of the two women. I think he told us to imagine Meryl Streep and Helen Mirren picking up their Oscars for their performance.

So Michael Heyward effectively laid out a vision or model of international recognition and resulting prestige from pairing the work of a noted author to a recognised celebrity. That gave producers a concrete roadmap to success to pursue if they optioned the book.

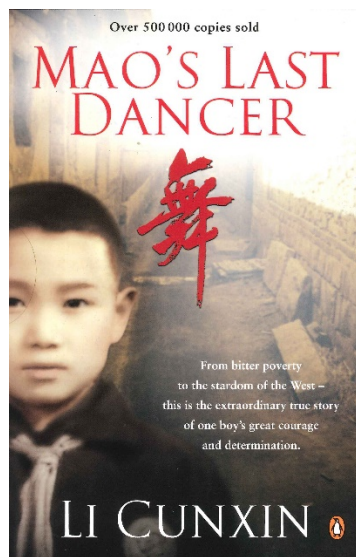
Of course, I don’t believe anyone did option the book (this is going on ten years ago now) and that is likely because the material itself didn’t lend itself to visual/cinematic exploration, plus good luck attaching Meryl Streep to a, relative for her, low budget project. Her fee alone could easily be more than the entire cost of the movie.

Influences: What external factors lead producers to adapt books?

⁴⁹ Lawson has pitched a project at the Berlinale while Head of Content Development at HarperCollins UK and pitched a project jointly with McKenna, while working as a Publishing Consultant for Hachette Australia. Much of this interview is informed by discussions with him about the two industries over time.

AL: Text Publishing are also highly successful at selling international rights (Productivity Commission, 2016, p. 693). Do international rights sales—that is, “standalone” evidence of success—influence Australian producers looking to adapt projects and so option the rights or do they need to be accompanied by evidence of international success, such as international copy sales or prizes? Or is the primary acquisition driver domestic sales and prizes—or something else?

SMcK: In my experience if we heard the international rights to a local book had been sold it would perk our interest but not be determinative. For instance, I met with and tried to get Roadshow to pick up the rights to *The Rosie Project* before it had become an international bestseller but at the point we heard the international rights had been sold for a fair whack.⁵⁰ We didn't buy but Sony Classics did. I believe in the more competitive US market international rights sales would be taken more seriously than they are here because of greater competition to snap up stories with potential before the next guy does, whereas in Australia we generally are moved by local sale numbers as opposed to [international] rights. For *Mao's Last Dancer* for instance, the book had massive sale numbers and we were confident that would translate into box office...which it did!⁵¹ (Mao's did approx. A\$16-17 million at the box office). It's worth noting that the book didn't have nearly such strong sales in other territories despite being released in other places and the movie also did not perform in other territories.



From bitter poverty to the stardom of the West – this is the extraordinary true story of one boy's great courage and determination.

The phenomenal international bestseller *Before you can fly, you have to be free.*

In a small, desperately poor village in north-east China, a young peasant boy sits at his rickety old school desk, more interested in the birds outside than in Chairman Mao's Red Book and the grand words it contains. But that day, some strange men come to his school – Madame Mao's cultural delegates. They are looking for young peasants to mould into faithful guards of Chairman Mao's great vision for China.

[Source: Publisher site]

The international market: do rights sales influence adaptations (and vice versa)?

⁵⁰ The international rights had also been sold widely: prior to publication alone 28 deals were announced publicly in the trade magazine *Books+Publishing*.

⁵¹ This memoir by Chinese-Australian dancer Li Cunxin was first published Penguin Australia (2003). The adaptation was released in 2009. In an email to Airlie Lawson, Nerrilee Weir from Penguin Random House confirmed that rights were sold in 20 territories.

AL: Finally, in your experience, or the experience of those you've worked with, what is the relationship between international rights sales and international distribution deals for film/television adaptations? Do rights sales make international distribution for Australian productions more likely? Does distribution make rights sales for associated books more likely?

SMcK: I don't know if domestic distribution makes international rights sales more likely for a book. I would think it may help sell the book internationally as a data point if a local movie is being made from a local book as validation for the story—but I can't think of an example.

I certainly believe if you have an international rights sale for a local story and you are pitching that story to [for example] Netflix it would help. Take *Lion* for instance. Although the movie rights were snapped up internationally before the book came out, I believe the rights to the book were sold beforehand.⁵²

Any data point that helps convince buyers/acquisition execs/commissioners that they can find an audience helps, and international rights sales are a good data point. The strongest data point, however, is going to be (no surprise) sales numbers.

Screen rights and international publishing rights: an under-researched relationship

Ultimately, while screen productions do take more resources than books—particularly film and television—the financial benefits can be considerable: to both the publishing and screen industries. In terms of the relationship between rights and the international market, while it can be tenuous, it can also be significant. While there is a lack of empirical information—suggesting this particular area would benefit from more empirical research—it is clear that the right projects can increase the visibility of books globally, and in this way, not just individual works but the visibility of Australian literature.

⁵² This was based on the memoir by Saboo Brierley, first published as *A Long Way Home*, #1 New York Times Bestseller™ before the film came out, and sold in 20 territories.

Acknowledgements

This project was supported by funding from the Australia Council of the Arts and the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

Thank you to all the rights sellers, literary agents and publishers who pioneered the selling of international rights and made this success story possible.

Special thanks to Wenona Byrne, Nicola Evans and Nerrilee Weir for their valuable advice, support and encouragement in completing this research. We are also grateful to Annabel Barker, Anne Beilby, Christen Cornell, Jacinta di Mase, Karen Le Roy, Rebecca Mostyn, Gaby Naher, Libby O'Donnell, Chris Pope and Lyn Tranter for their important contributions and discussions throughout this project.

The authors wish to sincerely thank those who participated in the rights sales survey. We appreciate your dedication and commitment to the project in the most challenging of circumstances. Thanks also to those who contributed to the project's case studies: Trudi Canavan, Caitlan Cooper-Trent, Mary Cunnane, Jesse Fink, Richard Flanagan, Ivor Indyk, Olivia Lanchester, Melissa Lucashenko, Katy McEwen, Seph McKenna, Juliet Rogers, Kylie Scott, Elisabeth Storrs, Shaun Tan, Charlotte Wood, Tara Wynne and Alexandra Yatomi-Clarke.

Thanks to the Australian Literary Agents' Association, Australian Publishers Association, Australian Society of Authors, Books Illustrated and the Small Press Network for their support and advice.

Thanks to participants at the Small Press Network Independent Publishing Conference (2018-2020), Australian Publishers Association's BookUp Conference (2020) and the Australia Council for the Arts' 'Reaching Out: Australian Books in International Markets' event (2021) for helpful comments and suggestions. Thanks also to the attendees of project information events (held in Sydney, Melbourne and online in 2019) for their help in shaping this project at its early stages.

Thank you to Professor Katherine Bode (Australian National University), Professor David Carter (University of Queensland), Professor Mark Davis (University of Melbourne) and Professor David Throsby (Macquarie University) for providing academic feedback on this project. Thanks also to Craig Munro for his helpful discussions.

All book covers reproduced have been sourced from the respective publisher site.

References

- Anderson, P. (2017). *Andrew Wylie's internationalist imperative: 'A profound moral question'*. Retrieved from Publishing Perspectives: <https://publishingperspectives.com/2017/06/andrew-wylie-and-the-internationalist-imperative-a-profound-moral-question>
- AustLit. (n.d.). *About AustLit*. Retrieved October 31, 2019, from AustLit: <https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/5961889>
- Barnes, B. (2016). *Ranger's Apprentice' to be adapted as film, financed by Chinese firm*. Retrieved from The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/30/business/media/rangers-apprentice-to-be-adapted-as-film-financed-by-chinese-firm>
- Bickers, J. (2008). *Q & A with John Flanagan. Children's bookshelf*. Retrieved from Publishers Weekly: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/authors/interviews/article/7199-q-a-with-john-flanagan>
- Bode, K. (2009). From British domination to multinational conglomeration? A revised history of Australian novel publishing, 1950-2007. In K. Bode, & R. Dixon, *Resourceful Reading: The New Empiricism, eResearch and Australian Literary Culture*. Sydney University Press.
- Bode, K. (2010). Publishing and Australian literature: Crisis, decline or transformation? *Cultural Studies Review*, 16(2), 24-48.
- Bode, K. (2012). "Sidelines" and trade lines: Publishing the Australian novel, 1860—1899. *Book History*, 15, 93-122.
- Bode, K. (2017). Book history in Australia since 1950. In C. Howells, P. Sharrad, & G. Turcotte, *Oxford History of the Novel in English: The Novel in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the South Pacific since 1950*. Oxford University Press.
- Books+Publishing. (2017). *Book-to-screen adaptations pitched at 2017 Books at MIFF*. Retrieved from <https://www.booksandpublishing.com.au/articles/2017/08/16/94510/book-to-screen-adaptations-pitched-at-2017-books-at-miff>
- Carter, D. (2016). Middlebrow book culture. In L. Hanquinet, & M. Savage, *Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Art and Culture*. Routledge.
- Craighill, S. (2015). The problem of English language export fiction in Europe. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 31, 91-101.
- Critchley, A. (2016). *Andrew Wylie's global approach to agenting*. Retrieved from Publishing Perspectives: <https://publishingperspectives.com/2016/12/andrew-wylie-literary-agent-latin-america>
- Damrosch, D. (2003). World literature, national contexts. *Modern Philology*, 100(4), 512-531.
- Davis, M. (2008). Literature, small publishers and the market in culture. *Overland*(190), 4-11.
- Deahl, R. (2012). *Little, Brown pays seven figures for debut novel by Aussie author*. Retrieved from Publishers Weekly: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/international/international-deals/article/52>
- Driscoll, B. (2014). *The New Literary Middlebrow: Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-first Century*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Edwards, S. (2016). *The Natural Way of Things is a prescient feminist horror*. Retrieved from Jezebel: <https://themuse.jezebel.com/the-natural-way-of-things-is-a-prescient-feminist-horro-1789516318>
- Flanagan, R. (2012). *A loss for words*. Retrieved from The Sydney Morning Herald: <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/a-loss-for-words-20120615-20exa>
- Flood, A. (2013). *Booker win saves Richard Flanagan from life down the mines*. Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/23/booker-win-saves-richard-flanagan-from-life-down-the-mines>
- Gordon, K. (2013). *Sympathy for the jackal: Making peace with publishing's most infamous agent*. Retrieved from The Atlantic: <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/02/sympathy-for-the-jackal-making-peace-with-publishings-most-infamous-agent>
- Hancock, M. (2010). *Mitigating Risk*. Occasional Paper #2. Australian Film Television and Radio School.
- Jefferies, B. (2016). *The market down under*. Think Australian 2016.
- Kirkus Reviews. (2016). *The Natural Way of Things*. Retrieved from <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/charlotte-wood/the-natural-way-of-things>
- Lambert, C. (2010). *Fifteen percent of immortality*. Retrieved from Harvard Magazine: <https://harvardmagazine.com/2010/07/fifteen-percent-of-immortality>
- Lawson, A. (2019a). *Conditions of access: Mapping the value of Australian literature in the 21st century global marketplace*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Australian National University. Retrieved from: https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/185191/1/Lawson_Conditions%20of%20Access_PhD_Thesis_Final.pdf
- Lawson, A. (2019b). *Australian novels, international rights—what's the story? Part three*. Retrieved from Books+Publishing: <https://www.booksandpublishing.com.au/articles/2019/10/09/140556/australian-novels-international-rights-whats-the-story-part-three>
- Lindren, H. (2009). *Everyday weirdness' children's books*. Retrieved from The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/08/books/review/Lindgren-t>
- Lodge, S. (2011). *John Flanagan adds to Ranger's Apprentice and launches new series*. Retrieved from Publishers Weekly: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-book-news/article/49075-john-flanagan-adds-to-ranger-s-apprentice-and-launches-new-series>
- MIFF. (n.d.). *37 Degrees South Market: 2008 program*. Retrieved from https://miffindustry.com/2008_program
- Morgan, A., Allen, N., Smith, J., Steinberger, K., Merrin, R., Poustie, C., . . . Linning, L. (2013). Independent readers [Book review]. *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, 28(5), 34-38.
- Murray, S. (2012). *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation*. Routledge.
- Nolan, M. (2020). *Stories that enrich our imagination*. Retrieved from The Weekend Australian: <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/the-deal-magazine/indigenous-writers-help-all-australians-to-understand-their-past-and-imagine-their-future/news-story/be0ae75fc7258974f457be3c7061aeac>

- Poole, M. (2016). *Books at MIFF 2016 – fostering the slow growth of adaptations*. Retrieved from www.markpoole.com.au: <http://www.markpoole.com.au/2016/11/books-at-miff-2016-fostering-the-slow-growth-of-adaptations>
- Powers, J. (2016). *Dystopian novel challenges misogyny as The Natural Way of Things*. Book review, *Fresh Air*. Retrieved from National Public Radio: <https://www.npr.org/2016/07/26/487485581/dystopian-novel-challenges-misogyny-as-the-natural-way-of-things>
- Productivity Commission. (2016). *Inquiry into Intellectual Property Arrangements: Transcript of Proceedings*. Retrieved from <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/intellectual-property/public-hearings/intellectual-property-transcripts.pdf>
- Publishers Weekly. (2005). *Big numbers for kid's books*. Retrieved from <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20050221/24849-big-numbers-for-kids-books>
- Rashad, A. (2013). Exploring licensing translation rights in the Arab world. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 383-390.
- Romei, S. (2019). *A pair of ragged claws*. Retrieved from The Australian: <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/literary-editor-stephen-romei-is-accident-gives-pause-for-reflection/news-story/96c189589c17debd8261b2b402e2b9f6>
- Rosenbloom, H. (2008). Territorial rights and wrongs. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 24, 175-177.
- Squires, C. (2007). Book marketing and the Booker Prize. In N. Matthews, & N. Moody, *Judging a Book by its Cover*. Ashgate.
- Stinson, E. (2016). Small publishers and the emerging network of Australian literary prosumption. *Australian Humanities Review*(59).
- Stinson, E. (2019). *And the winner isn't: On the inherent stupidity of literary prizes*. Retrieved from Overland: <https://overland.org.au/2019/08/and-the-winner-isnt-on-the-inherent-stupidity-of-literary-prizes>
- Todd, R. (1996). *Consuming Fictions*. Bloomsbury.
- Warner Brothers. (2009). *The Tolkien Trust, New Line Cinema and HarperCollins settle "Lord Of The Rings" lawsuit*. Retrieved from [https://www.warnerbros.com/news/press-releases/tolkien-trust-new-line-cinema-and-harpercollins-settle-"lord-rings"-lawsuit](https://www.warnerbros.com/news/press-releases/tolkien-trust-new-line-cinema-and-harpercollins-settle-)
- Wilson, R. (2013). Terra Australis incognita even now? The reception of contemporary Australian literature in Italian translation. In B. Magner, & B. Nelson, *Perspectives on Literature and Translation*. Routledge.
- Wright, A. (2017). *Reading Australia: The big book about small town Australia that travelled the world*. Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2017/sep/08/the-big-book-about-small-town-australia-that-travelled-the-world>
- Wyndham, S. (2016). *The hidden costs that threaten Australian literary awards*. Retrieved from The Sydney Morning Herald: <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/the-hidden-costs-that-threaten-australian-literary-awards-20161202-gt32wc>
- Zwar, J. (2017). More opportunities for staying published, but less income. In A. Mannion, M. Weber, & K. Day, *Publishing Means Business: Australian Perspectives*. Monash University Publishing.

