Panel Sessions

Thursday 10.30–11.45 am

The Voice of Diversity in the 21st Century Essay: Postmodernism versus Political Purpose
Deborah Jackson Toffa
Barrie Jean Borich, Stephanie Elizondo Griest, Alice Pung
Storey Hall Auditorium

Given that diverse Native American voices are needed in the modern essay, who can speak for historically oppressed tribes when diversity between regions is vast and cries of appropriation are the norm? Can a middle-class, educated Native American writer be considered a representative of the voiceless minority once she has transcended the limitations faced in her childhood? How does she retain her authenticity as an indigenous woman if her thematic content is lacking in the familiar tropes and stereotypes? Most importantly: how does the writer who is motivated by social justice causes employ craft in order to accomplish an original voice and emotive scenes in constrast to didactic message building? Are the political issues a gift or a burden? How can such concerns be transformed into art?

“This burden of explanation is why people who are moving between cultures find that their luggage gets heavier and heavier. Their familiar objects are fossilising. What was taken for granted in one culture becomes incomprehensible in another, and it becomes the immigrant’s responsibility to build up and excavate those layers of impossible translation.”
–Laura U. Marks in Fetishes and Fossils

Picturing The Essay
Kathryn Millard
David Carlin, Ross Gibson, Leila Philip
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

If essaying is an activity staging “theatre(s) of the brain”, as David Shields has called it, then what are we going to see when we attend this “theatre”? How are images essayed? And how can essays be pictured, not only in the imagination of the reader, but through the use of photographs, videos, drawings and diagrams? This panel brings together writers whose entanglements with the writerly essay variously embrace the image, and proceed alongside sustained explorations/infatuations with “picturing” (and sometimes also essaying) for the screen, gallery installations and performance. As photography and film become more and more a means of capturing ideas and impressions on the run, as the pen and camera merge in mobile devices, there are more possibilities for essays that combine images and text. Essays that work with the gaps and interpretative space between words and pictures; cine-essays, photo-texts, assemblages, videos embedded in books, remixes. Kathryn Millard will present her manifesto A Screewriter’s Reality Hunger (with thanks to David Shields). Ross Gibson will consider his own engagement with the cinematic essay, David Carlin will explore threads of connections between picturing and essaying and Leila Philip will discuss the process of working with an artist to put a book of text and image together.

Diaspora: Centring The Margins
Mary Anne Mohanraj
Jen Webb, Xu Xi, Lawrence Ypil
The Green Brain

This panel will consider issues raised by diaspora/expatriate writers working with material from their home countries, who are separated from that country by distance, time, and the tides of cultural shift. We’ll address the responsibilities of the diaspora writer—the ways in which we work towards respecting the home culture, while at the same time both interrogating its images of itself, and staying true to the integrity of our own self-constructions. We’ll explore centering the outsider’s perspective, the work of the persistent outsider, and queerness as a form of migration from one world/set of traditions to a new world (of possibly greater perceived freedom). If time allows, we may also address issues of language and assimilation in writing, issues of explanation/exotification/minstrelsy, and questions of agenda and stakeholding within a community.

Marrying Big Ideas with Personal Narrative
Peter Bishop
Leah Kaminsky, Lee Kofman, Anne Manne
The Wheeler Centre

Creative nonfiction authors exploring big ideas often insert themselves into their work—to ignite their writing with personal urgency and create a conversation with the reader. Some writers position themselves as the heroes, others become readers’ guides or fellow explorers, and some hover ghostlike at the background. At the same time, memoirists are increasingly breaking away from the confines of their life stories, using those as springboards to enquire into historical events and universal issues, such as illness, marriage, home. Yet do ideas and personal narratives always enhance each other, or can they get in each other’s way? And how do you find the balance between the “personal” and “political”? Panellists will consider these, and other related questions, and share their writing methods. Leah Kaminsky will discuss her use of Self in her book about the Yiddish poet and essayist Melech Ravitch. Lee Kofman will share her experiences of taking on the arguably last sexual taboo of the 21st century, non-monogamy, through using her own story and research. Anne Manne will discuss how she uses stories, including memoir, as an entry point and illuminating frame for muscular argument.

Stranger Than Fiction: Walkley Longform Journalism
Russell Skelton
Celeste Geer, John Silvester
The Chamber

For 57 years the Walkley Awards have been Australia’s highest media accolade rewarding excellence in journalism. Celebrating the tradition of great Australian storytellers the Walkley Book Award and the Walkley Documentary Award were developed to recognise work that is grounded in the principles of journalism and sets out to support those writers and filmmakers who tackle journalistic issues in the burgeoning nonfiction realm and provide an important forum for discussion and debate. Join us for this panel featuring past winners and current 2012 Walkley finalists John Silvester—Finalist 2012 Walkley Awards–Commentary and analysis Celeste Geer—Finalist 2012 Walkley Awards–Documentary and Russell Skelton–Winner 2011 Walkley Book Award and Finalist 2012 Indigenous Affairs.
Thursday 12.45–2.00 pm

**Writ Large: On Living the Lives We’ve Made For The Page**
Barrie Jean Borich  
Mira Bartok, Cheryl Strayed, Ira Sukrungruang  
Storey Hall Auditorium

What are the confusions and consequences of sharing, revealing, and even performing ourselves on the page? Nonfiction writers know the narrating self is but a version of our actual selves. We purify some parts, intensify others, until we’re not entirely sure of our relationship to these monsters and beauty queens we’ve made. Are they fragmented portraits, wishful projections, or the most unvarnished versions of ourselves possible, more boldly intimate than we’ve dared to be in our regular lives?

Readers may feel they know us, may see themselves in our memories and questions and meanderings, may tell us we are heroes and role models and even instigators of personal and social change. Yet as literary artists we know how many parts of ourselves don’t make it to the last draft, simply because they don’t serve the text. Can these textual creatures we’ve created grow and change or have we written our actual lives too far into static characterization? How deeply are we welded to these bodies-of-language we’ve constructed? In this intimate repartee, four nonfiction writers take part in an unscripted and open-ended conversation about living in the space between our actual lives and our literary self-portraits.

**Landscapes: Broken, Extreme, Constructed**
Lynda Hawryluk  
Vanessa Berry, Rebecca Fish Ewan, Cameron Muir, Leslie Carol Roberts  
The Green Brain

How does one write about place? What mechanisms do writers engage in when trying, through the written word, to capture what Alexander Pope coined the *Genius of Place*? This panel of writers discusses ways they have discovered to understand the ecological, cultural, and formal layers of a given landscape, designed and wild, and how they render its spirit onto the page. Using their personal experiences with place writing—in the wilds of Antarctica, the solitude of the American West, the suburban streets of Sydney, or a sheep paddock at the edge of the Macquarie Marshes—these writers will share ways to write about place.

**Lyric Nonfiction: Memory, Image, Trauma**
Brandon Schrand  
Elizabeth Kadetsky, Threasa Meads, Leila Philip  
The Chamber

Through neuroscience, trauma theory, and the study of memory, we know that the mind “makes sense” of certain experiences in a manner different from everyday lived experience. A traumatic event might shock the consciousness and inscribe itself in the limbic, primitive structures of the brain. Nostalgia, grief, and just the process of lived time can affect the brain’s processes of remembering, changing a memory’s content or emotion. The filters and mediating structures that define and add linear structure to commonplace experience fall away. Three writers discuss why they have chosen to write in lyric modes: whether to find new ways of exploring image in prose or to express non-linear experience. Disjointed memory, the reconstruction of traumatic fragments, cyclical or repeated patterns of thinking and dreaming—these become the raw material from which content is constructed. Lyric nonfiction asks the reader to actively participate in the writing’s construction of meaning—considering, for instance, blank spaces between modular sections. The arrangement of bits of prose, found documents, or images suggests connections without spelling them out, and makes shifts in timeframe, voice and visual-spatial communication in a manner that can undercut reader expectation and add tension and suspense.

**Nonfiction, Narrative, and the Archive: Audio Visual Experiments**
Seth Keen  
Grayson Cook, Adrian Miles, Reuben Stanton  
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

What is the relationship of the audio-visual archive to narrative and nonfiction? Each panellist is actively involved in complex forms of digital practice that involve documentary content within new and emerging contexts, and so are dealing through their practice with novel problems in the fields of nonfiction, archival media, and documentary. This work will be of interest to practitioners and scholars in the areas of new media, digital archives, digital humanities and documentary. It combines recent theoretical developments with new technologies to critique and reconsider nonfiction in the light of contemporary audio visual practices that emphasise a creative engagement with form and material.
Thursday 2.15–3.30 pm

Sonic Writing: Radio Nonfiction
Ross Gibson
Kyra Brettle, Sherre DeLys, Siobhan McHugh, Jeff Porter
Storey Hall Auditorium

Radio nonfiction shares with literary journalism and documentary film the common goal of examining and constructing unfamilial worlds that have special relevance to a broader understanding of our collective selves. Radio nonfiction (particularly the radio documentary) is unique for asking us not to read or gaze at its subjects but rather to hear and listen to their divergent voices and unique soundscapes. As Susan Douglas has written, there is something very primal about listening that makes radio particularly compelling. This panel will discuss the emergence of the radio documentary as a noteworthy turn in the growth of contemporary nonfiction. In particular, we will focus on the way sound interacts with words and influences the meaning of a radio text in surprisingly powerful ways. As many sound makers will testify, spoken language is only part of the mix: the editing and layering of sounds, music, voices, and ambience more often than not will reshape the narrative dynamic of any documentary radio text. This panel is made up of four writers, film, and radio makers who will discuss the expressive nature of sound in relation to other media in the context of radio nonfiction.

The Possibilities for Political Narrative Nonfiction
Jeffrey Sparrow
Bonifacio Ilogan, Marilie Fernandez-Ilogan, Jacinda Woodhead
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

Poetry makes nothing happen, warned Auden. But what about narrative nonfiction? From Egon Kisch, John Reed, George Orwell, Norman Mailer, Joan Didion and Anna Louise-Strong right through to Barbara Ehrenreich, Chloe Hooper, Anna Funder and Rebecca Skloot, the form has a long and often neglected political lineage. Is it an inherently progressive genre? Does the Left do nonfiction differently from the Right and if so, how? This panel looks at the past, present and future of radical narrative nonfiction, as it negotiates between a corporatised publishing industry, a neoliberal academy and a depoliticised public sphere. Overland’s Jacinda Woodhead and Jeff Sparrow (Killing: Misadventures in Violence and Money Shot: A Journey into Porn and Censorship) join Filipina writer and academic Marilie Fernandez-Ilogan and Filipino playwright and screenwriter Bonifacio Ilogan to discuss the political possibilities that nonfiction offers in the twenty-first century.

Real and Ideal, Fakery and Lies
Michael Williams
Felicity Biggins, Maria DiBattista, Gina Perry
The Green Brain

In this panel session we will explore the intersection of the art of storytelling and the shaping of facts into a compelling nonfiction narrative. What happens when the boundaries between nonfiction and fiction are blurred? How can we trust the narrator of a nonfiction story when deception and illusion have been used to shape a more compelling narrative? What are our responsibilities to readers and how far can and should we go in blurring fact and fiction? Our panel will explore these ideas from a range of perspectives. Gina Perry will explore the unreliable narrator in scientific research, in particular how Stanley Milgram used deception and illusion not just in the conduct of his famous obedience research, but in his accounts of the experiments themselves. Maria DiBattista will consider the reader’s options when confronted with autobiographical works that make up facts or falsify events, but don’t tell us which ones. Felicity Biggins will take the perspective of a journalist, asking, with a special focus on the controversial nonfiction of Helen Garner, whether the use of literary techniques to tell factual stories has the potential to distort the “truth” of the matter and lead readers to misconceptions about what actually transpired?

True Crime
Shane Maloney
Hilary Bonney, Amy Butcher, Liz Porter, Ruth Walker
The Wheeler Centre

The best nonfiction surprises readers by developing material from unlikely sources. Crime writing often yields honest and thoughtful prose, bold in both subject and language, and provides a rigorous and thoughtful analysis of the moral, mental and social imbalances that lead to crime, as seen in the works of Truman Capote, Jo Ann Beard, and David Simon. These authors explore the situations that made an offense initially possible, but push further to examine the consequences—and alternative realities—inherent in incarceration. The act of writing about crime—from theft to murder—enables readers to enter an alternative and unfamiliar reality; writers of criminal nonfiction must also consider “fiction” techniques, as any re-creation of a factual event is, arguably, a “re-imagining.” So, then: how do we choose our topics? And how to make it engaging, as most “real” crimes are boring, banal. Panellists will explore these and other issues, discuss their own experiences and research techniques, and talk about safety, ethical issues and ways of navigating dense judicial material.

Nonfiction in the Rocky Mountain West: The Context
Mary Clearman Blew
Peter Chilson, Debbie Lee, Sean Prentiss
The Chamber

The Rocky Mountain West has a long and vibrant tradition of creative nonfiction, from the popular history of Joséph Kinsey Howard, the travel accounts of Isabella Bird, the as-told-to memoirs of Nannie Alderson and Teddy Blue Abbott, to the cowboy humor of Con Price and C.M. Russell and the reports of life among the Blackfoot Indians by James Willard Schultz. The wilderness experience, the love of place, the quest for an authentic life lived close to nature, the examination of the past and present in Native American life, and the place of women in a heavily masculinized domain have been the subjects of writers who include William Kittredge, Rick Bass, Ralph Beer, Gretel Ehrlich, Ivan Doig, Tom McGuane, James Welch, Linda Hogan, Terry Tempest Williams, and Janet Campbell Hale. By way of an introduction to the writing in the region, our panellists—Mary Clearman Blew, Peter Chilson, Debbie Lee, and Sean Prentiss—will each discuss their personal and literary heritage and read briefly from their own work.
Thursday 4.00–5.15 pm

**How Collaboration Changes Our Practice**
Steve Grimwade
Catina Bacote, Matthew Batt, Arnold Zable
Storey Hall Auditorium

They say writing is a lonely business but is it really? Don’t we seek out readers, editors, agents, Facebook friends, sometimes while in the middle of writing a sentence? What about designed collaboration? What happens to our art when we purposefully construct our sentences with someone specific in mind? This panel will discuss how collaboration changes our practice if the work that comes out is something more than an experiment and how collaboration permanently changes how we think about craft.

**Rethinking Memoir: Contemporary Approaches**
Michael Williams
Patricia Foster, Bret Lott, Brandon Schrand
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

Over the centuries, memoirists have housed the truth-seeking of memoir in the structure of narrative; we see precipitating events, crises and movement toward resolution. But with the interruption of narrative coherence inherent in the postmodern aesthetic, more writers are opting to jettison traditional narrative scaffolding, including chronological or linear movement, in favor of something more fragmented and malleable. Increasingly, we see memoirs filling found and experimental forms (think indices, works cited documents, a mason jar of notes, a five-act play); today’s memoirists are breaking the conventional narrative “container” of the genre in search of something new. But how does this push against the bounds of form influence the memoirist’s relationship with truth? Are deeper truths accessed? Are they masked? This panel will bring together authors that have each, and in their own ways, exploded the conventional narrative container of memoir. Each will discuss the motivations behind choosing the forms they did, including a discussion of the benefits the found forms presented, as well as the implications of such choices.

**Paths To Travel**
Stephanie Elizondo Griest
Adrian Danks, Brigid Magner, Sian Prior, Nigel Krauth
The Green Brain

This panel will delve into nonfiction travel writing in its various forms. Paths to Travel panelists work in the fields of travel writing, journalism, design, literary studies and cinema—and the panel will draw on their diverse research interests, including home movies, religious pilgrimage and tourism both “literary” and “commercial”. Writing about travel inevitably involves the interrogation of the self, whether this is actively foregrounded or left unexamined. The panel will consider how chosen texts engage with the complexities of subjectivity and the ways in which it may be thrown into relief through the experience of travel.

**Immersion Writing**
Kate Rossmanith
Peter Doyle, Robin Hemley, Natalia Rachel Singer
The Wheeler Centre

Much nonfiction involves relaying knowledge of a subject matter to a reader. Immersion writing understands the writer as knowing first-hand the subject of research; in this mode, writers immerse or embed themselves in a community, an experience or a place and write from a participatory viewpoint, as well as through observation. George Plimpton played professional football and wrote of what it’s like to be in that world; Peter Hessler chronicled his life as a Peace Corps volunteer in China. The understanding is that there is an experience or a practice or an object to be “known”; that practitioners of that practice, or owners of the object, or inhabitants of a place, “know” the thing; and that writers must immerse themselves in order to “know” the thing too.

This panel explores the process of getting to know a research subject. It considers that unique space between knowing an experience or an object and not-knowing it, when the writer/researcher dwells in a liminal in-between place. To what extent does all nonfiction research and writing necessitate approaching the thing in question? And what does this “approaching” involve?

**Life Writing and Hospitality**
Moya Costello
Barbara Brooks, Anne Cranney-Francis, Jim Hearn
The Chamber

This panel explores life writing and hospitality, defined as the interrelationship between host and guest. Our bodies host other beings, things, places and histories as guests—sometimes troublesome and uninvited. The panelists reflect upon writing about lived experiences of “hospitality”—specific bodies as hosts and their various guests. Barbara Brooks’ fictional memoir is about her fictionalised English grandfather, Monty, who stayed four years in the Northwest Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan. Monty is on the verandah linking India and Australia, in an in-between space, as colonial agent, migrant, and guest in his own life. Moya Costello considers hospitable co-writing, her family’s bodies as hosts of consumption, and their hosting drink and other drinking bodies. Anne Cranney-Francis explores Jack Lindsay’s self-reflexive autobiography about the embodied formation of the self through interrelationships as hospitality. Jim Hearn discusses transgression informing High Season, his recently published memoir of heroin and hospitality. As a chef, he understands hospitality as incorporating the strange/relationship between the body as host and addiction as troublesome guest.

**Swapshop Panel**
Lucinda Strahan
Concettina Insera, Georgia Janetzki, Lyndal Walker, Jessica Wilkinson
First Site Gallery

The Swapshop Laboratory is an investigation into “the literary-visual”: something that is both word and image, on the surface and deep, interior and exterior. In an exhibition, panel and workshop three visual artists and two writers experiment with words and images using the nonfiction tropes of portraiture and personal narrative, asking: What is writing? What is reading? What is more authentic, the word or the image? Or neither? Or both? The Swapshop Laboratory will present the group’s findings in this panel session, accompanying the exhibition in the First Site Gallery.
Site Specific: Strange Encounters with Place

Meg Mundell
Ross Gibson, Benjamin Law, Maria Tumarkin
Storey Hall Auditorium

Place is a central pillar of literature: all stories happen somewhere. While fiction authors can invent their settings from scratch, nonfiction authors face a more complex set of demands in representing the places they write about. To research a real place, neither dusty archives nor Google searches alone will cut the mustard: the nonfiction writer must also visit that place in person, soak up its atmosphere and lore. They need to tune in to site-specific details: smells, colours, landscape, energy, history. They need to talk to local people, and reconcile sometimes conflicting accounts. While this personal engagement with place can help writers strike narrative gold, it also raises practical, emotional and ethical challenges. How do they balance the duty to represent a place accurately with the need to tell a compelling story? When the facts are uncertain or disputed, how much invention or speculation is allowed? Where do they “place” themselves in their own tale? And how do they use site-based research to resolve these challenges? This panel will explore innovative ways of researching place: how do these experienced authors use immersive, sensory or experiential techniques to get to the heart of the places they write about?

The Creative Nonfiction Artefact in a Tertiary Setting: Teaching and Supervising

Jen Webb
John Dale, Sue Joseph, Douglas Robinson, Bonnie Sunstein, Sonya Voumard
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

How does one teach writing? This panel explores the pedagogy of writing, and especially of creative nonfiction writing, from several perspectives. One takes up the issue of how to accommodate both critical and creative modes in the writing class, and challenges some of the assumptions conventionally held about teaching practices. A second explores the issue of pedagogy in higher degrees in creative nonfiction, and how to bridge the space between research practice and professional practice. A further perspective addresses the “teachability” of writing, and offers a “nonfiction writer’s toolkit” for students and teachers of writing.

Exploding Science

Danielle Clode
Deborah Barrett, Elizabeth Finkel, Leah Kaminsky, Gina Perry
The Green Brain

“One peculiar aspect of...scientific discourse is that it appears to hide itself...to write science is commonly thought not to write at all, just simply to record the natural facts” (Bazerman, 1988, page 14). Yet those who write about science know it is much more than recording the facts. The best of science writing is creative, drawing on the techniques used in writing creative nonfiction in particular.

This panel session will explore the intersection of creative nonfiction and science writing. We will look specifically at the challenges creative nonfiction science writers face in remaining true to the facts while using an engaging style and voice and telling a compelling story. How do the use of literary techniques, attention to the aesthetics of dramatisation and engagement, and the desire to write a compelling narrative shape the scientific facts? Just how creative can the science writer be and still follow one of the guiding principles of writing creative nonfiction, that is, presenting “factually accurate prose about real people and events” (Gutkind). What are the responsibilities of the writer of creative nonfiction when it comes to telling and retelling the stories of science?

Your Stories, My Stories, Whose Stories?

Sian Prior
David Carlin, Lee Z Hunt, Ann-Mari Jordens, Arnold Zable
The Wheeler Centre

Some people get to tell and write stories. Other people tend to get stories written about them. How do we navigate, as nonfiction storytellers, when we want to tell stories entwined with the lives of others very different from ourselves, particularly those from communities who have found their own stories unlistened to and/or misrepresented? This panel discusses different these narratives; questions of voice, power, process and trust.

Arnold Zable will discuss the art of story in doing justice to the humanity of others. Ann-Mari Jordens will explore the literary, ethical and other challenges involved in transforming oral into literary sources, particularly relating to refugees. Lee Z Hunt will reflect upon how her long-term connection with Indigenous Australians has inspired her work of narrative nonfiction. David Carlin will talk about the “negotiated memoir” he is embarked upon writing in collaboration with Ethiopian/Australian circus performer, Sosina Wogayehu.
Panel Sessions

Friday 1.30–2.45 pm

James Agee
Bob Cowser
Robin Hemley, David Shields
Storey Hall Auditorium

Nearly 80 years ago in the summer of 1936, *Fortune* magazine sent writer James Agee and photographer Walker Evans to explore the daily lives of sharecroppers in rural Alabama. Their journey would ultimately yield *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* in 1941, an extraordinary collaborative documentary of a place and its people praised then for its “fusion of social conscience and artistic radicality.” And this radicality has kept the book on the minds of nonfiction writers ever since—eminent nonfiction writers Robin Hemley and David Shields each pay significant homage to Agee in their own recent work, Hemley discussing Agee’s reportage and negotiation of subjectivity in his forthcoming *How Literature Saved My Life*. Bob Cowser will moderate this discussion of the remarkable book, its author, its influence, and its place among other classic works of American nonfiction.

Politics, Journalism and Longform Nonfiction
Chris Hammer
Paul Daley, Christopher Merrill, Tony Wright
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

Four writers, who alternate between journalism and longform narrative, discuss the complications of the changing media environment, writing about war and the place of nonfiction books in the digital age. Christopher Merrill directs the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa and is the author of many books, including *Only the Nails Remain: Scenes from the Balkan Wars*. Tony Wright, Paul Daley and Chris Hammer have all worked for newspapers, including Melbourne’s *The Age*, and for magazines, including the now defunct *The Bulletin*. All three are still engaged in political journalism. As successful nonfiction authors, all are well placed to comment on the future of books in the shifting media landscape, from twitter and blogs to newspaper columns and traditional books. They will discuss their own perspectives on what the future holds, as well as how they approach different media and their different demands.

Nonfiction Poetry: Performing The Real
Jessica Wilkinson
The Green Brain

This panel will explore and discuss the potential of “nonfiction poetry” to address, represent and perform real world content. The four members of the panel will read and discuss their unique experiments with nonfiction poetry, from historical (auto) biographical work to programmatic experiments. During each performance, as well as through discussion amongst the panel members and with the audience, this panel aims to interrogate the poetic medium as a valuable means through which to access new performative, personal and philosophical dimensions in writing (about) the real world.
Friday 3.00–4.15 pm

Graphic Narratives for Nonfiction
Bernard Coleo
Mira Bartok, Miranda Burton, Elizabeth MacFarlane, Bruce Mutard
Storey Hall Auditorium

This panel aims to tease out whether the co-presence of the drawn image and word can convey the multiplicities and paradoxes of nonfiction in a more revealing and deeper way. As the reader negotiates the “friction” between reading words and reading images, deeper tensions also surface: between private and public information, between true events and their artistic representation, between the desire to inform and the desire to opine. What impact does the drawn line have when it reproduces a necessarily parsed reality through an artistic sensibility? Does it reveal more by bringing forward details stripped of context, or does it miss something? What impact does visual redundancy have on generating a sense of time and place? How important is the visual representations of sound, smell, taste and touch? Many types of graphic nonfiction will be examined: the instructional comics of Will Eisner and Scott McCloud; the first-person journalism of Joe Sacco and Guy Delisle; Larry Gonick’s histories; biographical comics like Marjane Satrapi’s Persepolis and Alison Bechdel’s Fun Home and Are You My Mother; Spiegelman’s Maus as a hybrid documentary/double biography; the plethora of Introducing X—comics; political comics from Justin Green and the Underground comix movement to Bruce Mutard and Sam Wallman.

Memoir, The Self and the “Face Blanket”
Xu Xi
Patrick Madden, Ira Sukrungruang, Amanda Webster
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

In Chinese, we speak of growing a thick enough skin to survive life’s exigencies, something we might call a “face blanket.” Four international nonfiction writers discuss this idea, exploring the excavation into the self to write memoir that unmask the innermost self, without surrendering the protective covering of the face blanket. To quote our Great Grandaddy Montagine: “In modeling this figure upon myself, I have had to fashion and compose myself so often to bring myself out, that the model itself has some extent grown firm and taken shape. Painting myself for others, I have painted myself out, that the model itself has to some extent grown firm.”

Alaska: Twenty-Four Hour Daylight, Round the Clock Dark
Peggy Shumaker
Jennifer Brice, Carolyn Kremers, Sara Loewen, Sherry Simpson, Joe Uslibelli
The Green Brain

In Alaska, nonfiction takes as many forms as the changing light. On this panel, you’ll hear from a marine biologist who writes lyrical essays about the questions science doesn’t let her ask. You’ll meet an explorer who wanted to title her last book of essays A Nuisance to Myself and Others, but her publisher refused. Survival in extremis is a big theme—whether that’s survival of people outdoors or survival of Native languages. Wild places, wild writers—from Barrow to the tip of the Aleutians, from the Arctic to Southeast, Alaska’s full of people crafting words shaped by this vast and unforgiving place.

Longform Nonfiction and Online Distribution
Steve Grimwade
Elmo Keep, John Proctor, Ronnie Scott, Sam Twyford-Moore
The Wheeler Centre

Launched in April 2010, Longform.org “posts new and classic nonfiction articles, curated from across the web, that are too long and too interesting to be read on a web browser”, suggesting instead that these articles be saved for other, mobile devices. Longform is just one of an emerging suite of similar services, including Longreads.com and Read It Later. New digital mastheads like the Atavist and ByLiner are dedicated to commissioning longform, stand-alone pieces of narrative nonfiction which fall somewhere in length between a long magazine feature and a novella. The digital sphere has opened up new possibilities in publishing—the rise of new magazines published on simple website formats, like Tumblir (LA Review of Books, The New Inquiry, The Believer), have created greater possibilities for the form and writers are willfully experimenting (see Teju Cole’s excursive essays on Twitter). In this panel four emerging practitioners of the nonfiction form explore the role that reading and writing online have influenced their own work, while engaging in a form of cultural activism, in which writers are found fighting for more space for longer works of nonfiction.

Making the Leap into Creative Nonfiction
Jane Sullivan
Judith Armstrong, Iola Mathews, Brian McFarlane
The Chamber

Three very different writers will discuss how they made the transition from journalism (Iola Mathews) and academia (Judith Armstrong and Brian McFarlane) into writing creative nonfiction, including memoir and biography. They will also discuss issues such as: How do you widen the parameters of nonfiction? How can you use the techniques of fiction in writing creative nonfiction? What are the pleasures as well as the difficulties of making the leap into new ways of writing? Jane Sullivan, novelist and literary columnist with The Age, will be a participating chair and chair the discussion threads together.
How do writers capture the “truth” in what they write? As more and more nonfiction writers engage in the literary devices common to fiction writing, historians continue to argue that historical narratives must remain strictly engaged with the facts of the writing. How accurately then might fiction capture the truth of a story, the emotional elements that offer insights into lives lived fictionally? This panel addresses all of these questions and more, attempting to build a bridge between truth and the imagined, asserting that sometimes fiction and nonfiction are necessarily different, and at other times its very difficult to tell them apart.

Five writers share their struggles with the truth and fiction. Each has written fiction and nonfiction, has adapted, translated and struggled with narrative form. Catherine Cole, Shane Maloney, Pip Newling, Caroline Van de Pol and Rúnar Vignisson will debate and discuss where they see the divide between truth and fiction.

Based On A True Story: Nonfiction Representations
Robert Macklin
Pauline Anastasiou, Craig Batty, Shane Hulbert, Broniek Kozka, Alec McAulay.
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre
This panel of still and moving image-makers will consider the ethical and moral considerations in those representations and a telling of truth that resonates within as “truthful”. As a documentary filmmaker the construction of truth is fraught. The dilemma lies in the expectation of the telling of an engaging story that must still remain loyal to the “truth”. This ethical imperative is precariously balanced because the construction of the story telling often involves a level of manipulation and carefully crafted representation in order to tell that story. “Constructed realities” belong to an interesting genre of photography. Sometimes in the form of the tableaux or as documentary style representations; they tell “a truth” of sorts, but they are often constructed from memory or out of a reality that has since been interpreted. Nonfiction, fiction, truth, memoir, have been confused in this story telling; how is the representation of a place, the recreation of an event, the recreation of a memory of an event, nonfiction? How much truth is in that re recreated image?

Creative Nonfiction in the Philippines
José Dalisay
Boni Ilagan, Lawrence Ypil
The Green Brain
There has been a notable upsurge of production, publishing, and readership in creative nonfiction in the Philippines in recent years, driven by a broad range of interests—among them, history and heritage, society and politics, sexuality, food, and travel. Three Filipino writers explore swaths of this terrain. Boni Ilagan looks back on several decades of maldevelopment—including a 20-year regime of martial law—and examines the nonfiction that has been written about that period by a variety of Filipinos-former activists, development workers, artists, human rights workers, ex-military officers and government officials. Lawrence Ypil tackles the subject of locality and insularity in regional nonfiction—an important element given the archipelagic and regionalized character of the Philippines—particularly in the works of Cebuano writers Resil Mojares and Simeon Dumdum, and his own. José Dalisay discusses the growing popularity of commissioned biographies and institutional histories in the Philippines, and the creative and ethical problems faced by the commissioned biographer, drawing on the many books he has written in the genre.

The Value of Food Writing Beyond the Culinary
Donna Lee Brien
jill Adams, Charmaine O’Brien, Gail Pittaway
The Chamber
Cookery books are not just practical manuals. They are important but relatively unexplored nonfiction texts, which alongside culinary education serve a range of other purposes. This includes social criticism and reform, propaganda, and attempts to popularise new ideas, attitudes and products. For nonfiction writers, cookbooks have provided a means of creating a professional profile and improving one’s status. An abundance of meaning, ideas and significant cultural insights are often embedded in, and around, the recipes that make up cookbooks— they can tell us what is shaping a society, how social roles are changing and what is driving that change, as well as the personal stories of the individuals who write these texts. While the field of culinary history has grown and scholars in many disciplines areas value cookbooks and other food writing as a primary sources for research (Wheaton 2010), writing as a discipline has been slow to recognise the significance and interest of this popular and influential genre of nonfiction writing. This panel will present a more mature understanding and appreciation of food writing that extends beyond recipes, and restaurant and product reviews, and map the development of, and connections across, Australasian food writing from the 19th to mid-20th centuries.
Saturday 10.00–11.15 am

The Role of Media in a Democracy
Matthew Ricketson
Margaret Simons, Andrew Fowler, Melissa Sweet
Storey Hall Auditorium

One of the paradoxes of the 24 hour, tweet now, think later media omniverse is that the more pronounced the emphasis on speed and shouting becomes, the more pronounced is the need—and a real thirst—for longform journalism. There is data that indicates that a growing number of people (admittedly not everyone) value the skills of a practitioner who will sift, sort and where necessary scythe through the thickets and make sense of events and issues in an accessible narrative form. Longform journalism has a longer history than is often thought, is more widely practiced than is recognised and produces some of the most vibrant writing available today. More practitioners and more readers are looking to it to fill a gap opening in the broad news media because of winnowing of newspapers, magazines and current affairs programs. Longform journalism is playing a vital role in the free flow of information, insight, ideas and imagination that is necessary in a democracy.

Writing Away: Nonfiction Residential Writers Retreats
Mary Delahunty
Peter Bishop, Judith Crispin, Lynda Hawryluk
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

Can’t escape the madding crowd of busy daily lives to immerse yourself in the deep creative process, grapple with a stalled idea or start a new work? This is the panel for you. Residential Writers’ Retreats are still exotic in Australia but in Europe, Asia and America they are a valuable part of the literary landscape with compelling evidence of value to writers and their craft. Mary Delahunty has set up a philanthropic writers retreat in Victoria and as National Director of Writing Australia has led the establishment of a nation-wide network of residential places for writers. She has just returned from La Muse international retreat in France. Judith Crispin has worked in Berlin and as Director of Canberra’s Manning Clark House leads the opportunities there. Lynda Hawryluk has been coordinating the Idiom 23 Writers’ Workshops on North Keppel Island since 2005 while Peter Bishop, is a former director of Varuna the Writers House. Explore with this panel why Writing Away is effective, where the retreats are in Australia and how can nonfiction writers get into them?

Out of Place
Judy Horacek
Robyn Archer, Kim Mahood, Margo Neale, Francesca Rendle-Short
The Green Brain

How does a place grow on you when you come from somewhere else as most Australians have since 1788? Do nervous, derisory jokes about place—bogan suburbs, dying industrial towns or regional centres, the nation’s capital—reflect the newcomer’s unease with place and belonging?

Apart from the Red Centre, the bush, the coastal fringe, Australia has other places, ones that dare not speak their name. Canberra—soon marking 100 years of being conjured from a design competition—is one of them. How should we think about places that occupy the heart and/or the mind, but often aren’t mentioned or written about? What are the links and spaces between an inland, designed city and the “real” cities hugging Australia’s fringe or the other places Australian writers have been drawn to over the years in their own country and over the seas? How do writers evoke a sense of place when there is unease with the place?

International Research and the Nonfiction Writer
David Carlin
Desmond Barry, Mieke Eerkens, Stephanie Elizondo Griest, Benjamin Law
The Chamber

Some of the most interesting and vibrant nonfiction writing emerges from the exploration of cultures and landscapes outside of the familiar. Consequently, many writers find themselves in remote parts of the world in their endeavor to share a unique story with their readers. From conducting interviews in remote communities to accessing data in foreign institutions, however, effecting research in other countries presents a different set of challenges than investigation on one’s own turf. This panel of international writers will draw on personal experience to highlight the many issues—both frustrating and delightful—involved in performing research in locales outside of a writer’s home country, and aims to inform other writers with tips and advice to minimize frustration. Panellists will discuss how to navigate bureaucracy and institutional red tape, travel challenges and opportunities, funding, safety issues, language and translation obstacles, maintaining cultural sensitivity while traveling abroad, accessing foreign archives, and more.
Saturday 1.45–3.00 pm

**Nonfiction Editors Roundtable**

Julianne Schultz  
Robin Hemley, Jeff Sparrow, Russell Valentino  
Storey Hall Auditorium

What is the role of the essay in the sometimes rarified world of the literary magazine? And what is the role of the literary magazine in the life and work of contemporary nonfiction writers? Are there certain types of essays that are better suited to literary journals? Should literary magazines strive to broaden their horizons, to have an effect on the larger culture not only restricted to striving to shepherd selections from their pages in the Best Australian Essay or Best American Essay anthologies? The Virginia Quarterly Review became famous for supporting a kind of literary journalism normally reserved for mainstream magazines. And lost a lot of money. Can an essay published on a magazine website cause the same kind of stir today that Mark Twain caused over a hundred years ago when his essay To the Person Sitting in Darkness, protesting the Philippine/American War, was published in a literary magazine, The North American Review (a journal still in existence)? The editors of several prominent literary journals discuss the role of the essay in their magazines, and the role of the essay on the culture at large, both politically and aesthetically.

**At Home in the World: Immigrants and Expats**

Stephanie Elizondo Griest  
Bob Cowser Jr., Mieke Eerkens, Sreedhevi Iyer, Liz Sinclair  
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

How do you write about “the Other” when you are one too? This panel brings together four writers who have lived in myriad nations besides their own— including Russia, China, Mexico, Indonesia, Australia, the Netherlands, and England—to discuss how being an immigrant or expat has enriched their nonfiction, allowing them to tell stories they otherwise would not have known and, paradoxically, to better write about their own cultural identities. They will also explore the myriad ethical dilemmas writers face when writing about “the Other.” How and when should we let people know that anything they say or do can and will end up in our manuscripts? What are the ramifications of putting everyone we meet in a literary petri dish? If we treat ourselves more harshly than anyone else in our critiques, will we be given some sort of moral pass—or is that one of the many lies we tell ourselves to allay our guilty consciences? Etcetera...

**Public Sphere Literary Criticism as Creative Nonfiction**

Emmett Stinson  
James Ley, Geordie Williamson, Melinda Harvey  
The Green Brain

This panel will discuss the contentious issue of public sphere literary criticism as a form of creative nonfiction. Criticism today suffers from “genre trouble”. Firstly, there is the academic/mainstream faultline: What the reviewer does in the broadsheets is thought to be distinct from what the academic does in a peer-reviewed journal—funding models depend on this difference. Secondly, there is the criticism/nonfiction faultline: There will be some people at this conference, we suspect, who won’t think of criticism as part of literary journalism.

These panellists will respond to the workaday issues around criticism that are apt to set teeth a-gnashing—i.e. practical questions about shrinking space, are our critics good enough, what purpose do they serve, what about the deleterious effects of the internet on serious criticism, and so forth—by offering some perspective on criticism’s genre trouble. In doing this, the panel will respond to themes such as genres and their boundaries and tensions, historical threads of influence, style and discourse from the long tradition of nonfiction, and the creative tensions between “art”, “facts” and “truth”.

**Writing About Crime in the Family**

Caroline van de Pol  
Marsha Berry, Garnett Cohen, Olivia Guntarik, Toni Nealie, Sydney Smith  
The Chamber

True crime writing has long held a fascination for writers, particularly journalists. With Truman Capote’s In Cold Blood, the form evolved into a literary art, and questions emerged regarding the ethics of the writer’s relationship with his subjects. Janet Malcolm’s book, The Journalist and the Murderer delved deeper into the issues. But when the crime takes place in the family of the writer, the questions and moral dilemmas in writing become more complex, involving shame, long-held family secrets and privacy, family myth-making, the writer’s relationships within the family, as well as the ways in which the crime affects the writer’s sense of identity. How does the writer deal with her own emotions and biases when shaping the story? How does she separate truth from lies when gathering information?

Panellists will discuss the challenges of writing about a range of crimes—metaphorical and actual—including an execution in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, an Indian herbalist grandfather charged with killing a child patient in 1920s New Zealand and Japanese atrocities committed against civilians in World War II Borneo. Panellists will also discuss more recent cases involving incest, a family suicide and a 2010 murder outside Detroit.
Saturday 3.15–4.30 pm

**From Obsession to Book: Nonfiction from the Publishers’ Perspective**
Russell Valentino  
Rose Michael, Nicola Redhouse, Rebecca Starford  
Storey Hall Auditorium

How do trade publishers see the genre of creative nonfiction? What gets their attention? What works and what doesn’t when it comes to a creative nonfiction book for a trade market? Where does the genre fit into the literary landscape, and how is it different from other kinds of nonfiction? Three literary editors who have worked closely with the genre offer some guidance on transforming your obsession into a book and, ultimately, getting it published.

**The Artist Writes**
Xenia Hanusiak  
Ali Alizadeh, Robyn Archer, Alison Croggon  
Storey Hall Lecture Theatre

The American composer and writer Ned Rorem once wrote “I am a composer who also writes, not a writer who also composes”. Rorem claimed his parallel lives did not connect. His concert halls applauded his music and his readers enjoyed his essays, interviews and books. The Artist Writes brings together four leading Australian polymaths who sing, perform and direct but who also write plays, novels, libretti, criticism and poems. This panel is an invitation to discuss multi-stranded lives and minds. How does one artistic pathway affect the other? Does a room of one’s own take on its own meaning? Creative nonfiction at its most potent: fusion or friction?

**Lies Damn Lies and Creative Nonfiction**
Christine Nagel
Hanifa Deen, Stephen Downes, Evelyn Juers  
The Green Brain

Where does the boundary between nonfiction and fiction lie? Is it a sharp demarcation or is it a blurry, nebulous grey zone?

This panel explores this peripheral world and how creative nonfiction writers stretch or shape the borders. Disguising nonfiction as fiction, and vice versa, and the moral standpoint of the author are topics ripe for debate. The hazards of writing creative nonfiction, the blurring of boundaries, and the creative tensions between art, facts and truth will be rigorously discussed. This panel will also look at trust, ethics and the art of the interview; the nonfiction writer as a forensic detective; harnessing subjectivity as a tool of narrative nonfiction; sorting myth from reality; and using satire in creative nonfiction. Fasten your seatbelts—it could be a bumpy ride!

**Exhibition Non: Artist Talk**
Martina Copley  
Francesca Rendle-Short, Hephzibah Rendle-Short, Laurene Vaughan, Jen Webb, Gosia Wlodarczak  
First Site Gallery

On it being neither one nor the other...

Non designates negative space, that which is not, or other than. An oscillation, this constitutive boundary (a fictional figment) confers an uncertain status.

With Non meaning itself becomes untethered. It comes in shades, stammers and new distances. And in aleatory encounters and new social imaginaries that in turn construct meaning.

Non is about the author as reader, artist as audience, body as world.

Join us for this Non Event Artist Talk.