

## ***JASAL* 22.2 Introduction**

Welcome to issue 2 of *JASAL* for 2022. What a year it has been! For ASAL one of the highlights of 2022 was of course the annual conference. This year's conference was held in July in Hobart at the University of Tasmania. The title was Coming to Terms, 30 Years On: The Mabo Legacy in Australian Writing. Presenters from around the country and beyond gathered in person and online to consider how the Mabo decision of 1992 has impacted Australian writers and writing in manifold ways. We look forward to showcasing a selection of these papers in our forthcoming conference issue in late 2023.

As we approached the final day of the ASAL conference in July and published issue 22.1, a tragic turn of events saw the postponement of the last day's programming. In the months that followed, however, the conference organisers launched a series of ASAL online seminars to allow the program to be completed. The series reached its full expression with Jim Everett-*purulia meenamatta's* keynote address in October. At the conference's closing, we invited expressions of interest for papers presented in the 2022 conference. We are excited to have received a large number of high-quality submissions that we look forward to developing for publication in the forthcoming conference issue.

In the previous issue, we announced that we have been working on several changes to the journal. In particular, we are keen to promote three new strands in the journal—Writing Australian Literature, Teaching Australian Literature, and Worlding Australian Literature. We are thrilled to announce that Claire Jones has recently joined the *JASAL* editorial team as the section editor for the Teaching Australian Literature strand. Claire's work on the executive of AATE (The Association of Australian Teachers of English) and her trailblazing research on the secondary-tertiary nexus as well as other aspects of Australian literature in the classroom will help *JASAL* attain our goal of developing an important strand of scholarship relating to teaching and learning Australian literature.

We are equally excited to welcome Jessica White as section editor for Writing Australian Literature. Jessica will help curate a journal section dedicated to publishing exegetical essays, non-traditional research outputs, and original creative work. Along with *JASAL's* new series of Writer Fellowships, funded by the Copyright Agency; this inclusion of creative writing and its scholarship in *JASAL* will help us achieve ASAL's goal of strengthening connections between writers, readers, students, and scholars of Australian literature.

Together with a third section editor for Worlding Australian Literature to be announced early next year, this pool of talent brings to the journal an expanded network that can help us take steps toward realising our vision. Just after we published issue 22.1, our new book review editors Cheryl Taylor and Lianda Burrows also came on board, and the reviews in this issue of the journal are the first they have stewarded to publication. These talented and dedicated individuals are helping us build a strong sense of team capacity in the journal. We are truly grateful for their presence and feel hopeful about the future of *JASAL*.

From July onward this year, thanks to an ensemble of peer reviewers and our copyeditor Angela Rockel, we have been busy assembling a small but mighty December issue. Several of the essays in this issue were first presented as papers for the ASAL-sponsored program of the Texts and Their Limits: Australian Triennial Literary Studies Convention held in July 2021. Ann Vickery's Barry Andrews Address offered valuable and timely insights into Australian writers' under-recognised efforts to bring attention and understanding to the widely experienced yet little-discussed challenges of dementia and caregiving. Her keynote finds its way into this issue as "Dementia, Ageism, and the Limits of Critique in Thea Astley's Satire."

Vickery points out that a literary treatment of dementia made its first appearance in Australian letters in Henry Handel Richardson's *Ultima Thule* (1929). Yet despite its significance, dementia has been underrepresented in Australian literature. Astley's *Coda* (1994), Vickery argues, is a corrective to this gap in representation, taking as its subject the way dementia tests understandings of personhood and social norms. For Vickery, *Coda* explores the challenges and losses experienced by older women with dementia and the gendered expectations surrounding ageing and caregiving. At the same time, Vickery argues, the book exposes the limits of representation around sensitive issues that defy social scripts and cultural expectations.

Joseph Cummins's "Listening to the Imagined Sound of Contemporary Australian Literature" also appeared as a presentation at the 2021 Convention, as the ASAL Early Career Keynote address. This essay builds on work introduced in Cummins's monograph *The "Imagined Sound" of Australian Literature and Music* (Anthem, 2019). While the acoustic properties of writing are more often associated with poetry than prose, here Cummins helpfully introduces listening as a tool of literary analysis for a series of contemporary Australian novels by Alexis Wright, Christos Tsiolkas, and Alex Miller that each use, as Cummins points out, different forms of sonic description. Together these authors amplify three different ways that sound can work in prose to reconfigure notions of nationalism and reimagine the different songs that comprise the nation. Cummins's readings show how three works by Wright, Tsiolkas, and Miller—*Carpentaria* (2006), *Barracuda* (2013), and *Max* (2020)—each, in their own way, refashion not only the soundscape of the nation but also that of the novel form.

Samuel Cox's article "I'll Show You Love in a Handful of Dust: The Material Poetics of *Voss*" is the prizewinning postgraduate essay emerging from the 2021 Convention. Cox brings a fresh and innovative critical eye to reading one of the most iconic works in the Australian literary canon. While engaging with the critical corpus that has grown around White's novel, Cox's analysis draws up contemporary insights from the environmental humanities "to explore the shifting ground of *Voss*'s material poetics, and open questions on how literature and the text can reframe and materialise new sources of intimacy with the physical realm."

Leigh Dale and Harper Boon's article (first presented at Texts and Their Limits in 2021), reads Inez Baranay's 2019 novel *Turn Left at Venus*—an intensively metafictional work—in terms of an analysis of the dynamics of reading and writing that affect literary value. Dale and Harper note that Baranay's central concern appears to be the process of reputation-making for Australian writers, particularly those on the margins of gender, sexuality, culture and language. In Dale and Boon's reading, the ways that Baranay's playful text, by valorising fluidity, uncertainty, randomness, and contestation, undermines—or at the very least troubles—simplistic notions of literary value as monument-making.

Our final article, Sarah Galletly's "Serial Representations of First Nations Peoples and Settler Belonging in *The Queenslander*" turns to another kind of literary field entirely—that of the ephemeral periodical press. This article examines serial representations of First Nations peoples in colonial periodical fiction to explore settler anxieties around colonisation and the fragile nature of settler belonging. In particular, it draws on notions of seriality to consider the way structures of repetition are encoded within serial writing and reading, resulting in the cementation of meaning.

The reviews in this issue bring you a sample of some of the most exciting work in Australian literature and its scholarship that has emerged over the last few seasons. Under the able direction of ASAL Postgraduate Representative Lianda Burrows and ASAL Vet Cheryl Taylor, our reviews editors bring you five new reviews in this issue. Three of the showcased works shed new light on the lives and works of some of our most significant Australian authors. Brenda Walker provides an excellent contextualised review of Nathan Hobby's *The Red Witch*:

*A Biography of Katharine Susannah Prichard*—a work that Walker praises for its breadth of scholarship and commitment to its subject, and its promise to shed new light on the life of Prichard. In Roger Osborne’s *The Life of Such Is Life: A Cultural History of an Australian Classic*, Julian Croft finds a work of scholarship true to its title: a work that delves deeply into the rich life and evolution of one of Australian writing’s most celebrated texts. And Sarah Galletly reviews Meg Brayshaw’s *Sydney and Its Waterway in Australian Literary Modernism*, which focuses on the way the interwar novels of Christina Stead, Dymphna Cusack, Eleanor Dark, Kylie Tennant, and M. Barnard Eldershaw explore the myths and realities of Sydney’s waterways and the relationships its denizens have with them.

Richard Carr reviews Daozhi Xu’s *Indigenous Cultural Capital: Postcolonial Narratives in Australian Children’s Literature*, a work that provides a comprehensive history of Australian children’s literature dealing with themes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life in this country, and in doing so traces the rise of First Nations cultural capital and its potentially transformative effects on young Australian readers. Finally, Caylee Tierney considers Michelle Cahill’s novel, *Daisy and Woolf*. Cahill’s work takes the marginal character of Daisy Simmons from *Mrs Dalloway* and imagines this character’s life through the eyes of a contemporary “fictional author,” Mina. In doing so, the work “ruminates on writing and publishing, sexuality, gender, motherhood, technology, the passage of time and mental health”—concerns that resonate with the themes explored by Woolf.

We hope you enjoy the issue!

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