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Tess Brady***The Australian/Vogel Literary Award - a preliminary investigation into three myths***

The author wishes to acknowledge the research assistance of Ali Alizedeh and Dr Anita Smith in preparation of this work.

The Australian/Vogel Literary Award, administered by the Australian publishers, Allen and Unwin, is a privately sponsored major Australian literary award for young writers. It has been operating for over 20 years and in that time has, I will argue, greatly enhanced the literary community of Australia. The preliminary results of the study illustrate the importance of such awards in the development of Australia's literary cultural industry and further indicate the pressing need for the collation of data associated with literary awards and government grants and assistance.

The Australian Vogel award - an overview

The award, with a prize money of \$20,000 (before royalties) and a guarantee of publication, is for an unpublished manuscript of more than 30,000 words by an Australian writer who is at the time of entry, not more than 35 years old. The prize is popularly seen as an award for a new novelists of adult literary fiction, but this is not the case. The manuscript can be a work of fiction for adults or children; or a work of nonfiction such as a biography or history; or a work of verse. Further, and this is often forgotten, the writer need not be a novice and can have a previous publishing history. All that is required is that the entry manuscript has not been previously published. Strictly speaking it is possible for one writer to win the award more than once, although this has not happened in its history. The conditions of age of the writer and the length of the manuscript are rigorously maintained by the awards administration.

The award first developed in 1979 when Niels Stevns approached a member of the cultural establishment, Peter Ward. Stevns was a specialist bread manufacturer and immigrant from Denmark who wanted to give something back to his adopted country; specifically he wanted to sponsor a literary award. Peter Ward was at the time literary editor of *The Australian* and as luck would have it, was negotiating with the publisher, Patrick Gallagher of Allen and Unwin over a book proposal of his own. Patrick Gallagher was also at the time contemplating moving his publishing house into fiction, an area they had not published in previously. The coincidence of all these factors resulted in a three way partnership between Stevns, of Vogel Bread, Ward representing *The Australian* and Gallagher of Allen and Unwin.

In 1980 *The Australian/Vogel Literary Award* for an unpublished manuscript by a young Australian writer was first advertised. The award began with prize money of

\$10,000, an age limit of 30 and a guarantee of publication. The age cut-off point was raised to 35 in 1982 and the prize money has gradually increased. In 1992 it was \$15,000 and currently it stands at \$20,000 - this figure is before royalties.

In the initial award 169 entries were received, most came in towards the end of the submission time, June 30th. Interviews with staff revealed that this rush of entries at the end caused a nervousness in the award's administration but it has now become an expected characteristic of the award. The average age of the writers was 28 and 20% of entries were by women. Of the manuscripts 7 were considered worthy of publication.

For the first award three judges were appointed, all of them coming from the literary establishment, a tradition that has survived over the years of the award. These were rotated so that each year a new judge would replace one of the older judges. The initial judges were Barbara Jefferis, Barrett Reid and Nancy Keesing. In 1997 the number of judges increased to four as the workload increased and the judging system developed. While the judges are free to read any entry manuscript they choose, traditionally, the number of entries are divided by the number of judges with each judge reducing their pile to those that require a closer read. These are sent to the other judges. This reduced number forms the long shortlist.

The long shortlist is a list created in the judging process but not usually made public. The list contains the names of manuscripts to be read more carefully. Getting onto the long shortlist is important for a young writer as often those works are isolated out by Allen and Unwin and sent to readers for publication appraisal. This publication appraisal is parallel to, and not part of, the judging process. It explains how a manuscript not in the publicised shortlist might still be published by Allen and Unwin. It also allows Allen and Unwin to use the award as a catchment system for finding new and exciting young writers even if they do not, for whatever reasons, make it to the publicized shortlist. Further, and more recently, writers on the long shortlist have been invited to a workshop of their manuscripts at the University of Canberra. This was set up by Ron Miller, the then director of Writing Studies at the university.

The judges are left alone to conduct their task and given only administrative support from the award administrators. The arm's length approach has been rigorously maintained throughout the history of the award and no evidence of tampering with judging decisions could be found in any of the archives investigated, public or private.

There is a public misconception about the processes of judging literary merit, with many believing there exist some set of criteria which the judges simply apply, much like a check list. A series of letters in *The Australian* from September to October 1995, in the wake of the announcement of that year's winning entry, illustrate this lack of understanding of the process and argued the merits of publishing such a check list. Peter Gyngell's letter sums up many others when he writes:

[It] would be doing us a great service if they were to publish the criteria for literary excellence that they applied, and the ways in which they considered that the winning entry met those criteria. Such a document must exist already, so this request will involve the judges in no additional effort. (Peter Gyngell, 1995)

Few judges publicly record their process. In the professional journal *The Australian Book Review* Nigel Kauth wrote of the dual concerns of winning and judging the award. In his article he reveals his dislike of the word 'whilst' and while he uses this as an example for asking of young writers that they engage with more contemporary language, those in search of a check list no doubt found a word to place in their 'avoid' column (Krauth 1995). In 1996 in another professional journal, *The Australian Author*, the journal of the Australian Society of Authors, ran a feature where Ann-Marie Moodie investigated literary judging panels. Notably in this article Tom Shapcott

revealed how the three judges in the 1979 Canada-Australian Literary Award were so deadlocked that a compromise was chosen. That this compromise turned out to be the great novelist Michael Ondaatje must have proved a relief for all (Moodie 1996). It is not uncommon for judges to be so deadlocked and to find a solution in awarding a prize to everyone's second choice.

Significantly these articles were both contained within professional journals and not readily in the public eye. Certainly any young writer who was up-to-date with issues regarding writing in Australia would have been aware of the journals and possibly their content. But the novice writer, and those searching for the judging panel's list of criteria, would more than likely not have heard of such publications, let alone be able to make use of their content.

The initial winning entry was Paul Radley's *Jack Rivers and Me*. Sixteen years later, in 1996, it was revealed that the winning manuscript was written by Paul's uncle Jack Radley. But at the time, while the young man Paul seemed an unlikely author, the true nature of the fraud was unknown. Shortlisted in this inaugural year were Archie Weller whose *The Day of the Dog* was published by Allen and Unwin, and Cylyde Jones; Ronald Allen; Suzanne Falkiner and Kerry O'Rourke. O'Rourke's writing was at the time deemed too experimental to publish as an extract in *The Australian*, the custom for shortlisted entries, and as a result his name has fallen off the collective memory and is rarely included in the list of the 1980 inaugural winning and honoured authors. Even Barbara Jefferis in a letter to *The Australian Book Review* in 1996, listed the other shortlisted entries but omitted O'Rourke (Jefferis 1996). Given the long term effects of the censorship, perhaps it is a relief to know that this was the only time *The Australian* excercised such censorship and in all subsequent years extracts of all the shortlisted entries have been published.

The collective memory worked in another way. When it was revealed in 1996 that Paul Radley had not written his winning entry members of the literary establishment, including Geoffry Dutton and David Malouf, publicly pushed for the initial award to be given to Archie Weller for his subsequently published novel *The Day of the Dog* on the grounds that he was the runner-up. Malouf is quoted as saying: "Archie was the runner-up. He is quite certainly, at least in moral terms, the winner" (Carbines 1996) and Dutton writes "Surely, it is eminently reasonable, and would reflect credit on all concerned, if Archie Weller were now officially able to join the ranks of the winners?" (Dutton 1996). However as Patrick Gallagher and the only surviving judge at the time, Barbara Jefferis, pointed out, there was originally no second, simply a winner and 5 shortlisted authors. The award stood.

However, and perhaps it is not surprising, in the Allen and Unwin collection *Mixed Grain*, (Allen and Unwin 2000) - published to commemorate twenty years of the award - they re-printed extracts from winners and some shortlisted authors, but the 1980 inaugural entry only contains an extract from Archie Weller's *The Day of the Dog*. Perhaps, emotionally at least, he has become the de facto inaugural winner.

Since 1980 the three-way partnership between the institutions of Vogel Bread, *The Australian* and Allen and Unwin has continued to conduct the prize each year. It has been awarded for all but one year, 1985, when the judges declined to make the award on the grounds that the standard of submissions was not high enough. Conditions have varied, judges have changed in a regular manner, controversy has raged, the relationship between the three partners has been stretched and taxed, Niels Stevns has died and his son Alan has generously continued his father's sponsorship. *The Australian* has been represented by a succession of Literary Editors, some more supportive than others and each bringing their own agendas to the award. Other interests including newspapers and publishing houses both here and overseas, have tried to buy into the award, but have not been successful. In spite of all this, or perhaps because of it, the award has grown in strength and reputation and now is unquestionably the most

prestigious manuscript award for a young writer in Australia. Other manuscript awards have developed and folded, some with prize money equal to, or bettering *The Australian/Vogel*, but no other manuscript award has been able to topple this one from its prestigious position. Most young writing students covet it and many submit manuscripts to it. Geoffrey Dutton echoes popular opinion when he emphatically states "The Vogel award is perhaps the most respected and genuinely prestigious of all Australian literary prizes" (Dutton 1996).

In addition the award is the most significant literary award in Australia that is totally privately sponsored and run. Some might argue its freedom from the necessary constraints of government or bureaucratic arts funding bodies have allowed the award enough flexible space to survive the various issues it has had to face over its lifetime. At a time when private sponsorship in the arts is being encouraged and sought, *The Australian/Vogel* could provide a useful model for private sponsorship of the arts in general and writing in particular. But a study of the administrative model is outside the scope of this paper and remains for others to investigate. However, it should be noted that such investigation is timely.

The award's history is scattered with controversy, complacency, congratulations and criticism. Its relationship with the newspaper *The Australian* has in itself sparked popular debate, fueled by rival newspapers, and generally centered around the worthiness or merit of particular judges' decisions. There has been criticism, again usually voiced in rival newspapers at the time of the prize's announcements, that the award has no significant long term cultural effect and cries of 'one-book wonders' are levied against the past winners.

Two public scandals have been associated with the award, both breaking in 1996. The first, mentioned above, was that Paul Radley did not write his winning manuscript but that it was written by his older uncle Jack. The second also concerns identity but is more complex and is the subject of much discussion elsewhere. A young woman calling herself Helen Demidenko and passing herself off as Ukrainian wrote a strongly anti-Semitic fictional work, *The Hand that Signed the Paper*, claiming it was based on the life and story of her relative. She won *The Australian/Vogel* award in 1993 and later for the same work, the Miles Franklin Award. In 1996 it was revealed that she was an English-born Australian called Helen Darville with no Ukrainian family connections. There were also claims that sections of the novel were plagiarised. Perhaps because her work had been so highly praised and she had become the darling of sections of the literary establishment, the revelations regarding her ruse were deeply felt and resulted in much public discussion and several publications on aspects of the scandal.

No doubt other smaller scandals have taken place but have been kept out of the public eye and few of us would be surprised by the revelation of minor misdemeanors: after all, the award is for young writers who might not always prioritise the finer points of the award's conditions. One such example came to light from reading the archives. Mandy Sayer won the award in 1989 but at the time was living in the US, married to a US citizen and, as residency was a condition of the award, had to be coached into saying that she was a resident of Australia and was only in the US temporarily "studying". It was probably simply a matter of spin but the correspondence carried a certain urgency.

The official record of the award, *Mixed Grain* (2000) - edited and published by Allen and Unwin - was, not surprisingly, sanitised. As mentioned earlier, the inaugural winner, Paul/Jack Radley was removed although interestingly mention was made of the text *Jack Rivers and Me* in Gallagher's introduction. His short passage is worth quoting:

[The Vogel] was too good an opportunity to resist, and to have two such fine novels as *Jack Rivers and Me* and *The Day of the Dog* to start our fiction list was not only a guarantee of the continuing success

of the award but a strong nudge to Allen & Unwin that there was great Australian fiction out there and we should be publishing it. The fact that occasional authors might not be all they seemed was part of the learning experience... (Allen and Unwin 2000: v)

Gallagher's generosity of spirit, here and elsewhere, could well be one of the main factors in the award being able to ride out the various controversies.

Developing the Publication Index (PI)

For whatever reasons, no independent study of this major award took place until my team began this research. The bulk of the material written on or about the awards comes from newspaper articles and reviews. Quite frequently these reports are inaccurate, names are left off, misspelt, information about the writers confused or inaccurate or slanted to reflect the overriding literary mood of the time.

Allen and Unwin graciously made available their records associated with the award and its administration and judging. They also made personnel available to discuss particular issues and to share memories and recollections.

In order to make sense of the material to hand the study needed a yardstick, a way of measuring output of individual writers that could be discussed and in some way tabled. It is too easy for a study of a literary award to become hijacked by values, literary fashion, excellence and the like, and while I acknowledge that such debate is important elsewhere it was not my intention here to engage with it. One of the advantages of looking at the award in terms of its contribution to the development of a literary cultural industry is that such an approach, even in a small way, sidesteps the question of quality. This careful sidestepping dance was enhanced by positioning the literary cultural industry as made up of a series of parts - writers, editors, book designers, publishers, libraries, festivals, reviews, booksellers, parts of the education sector, writer and writing organizations, government literary agencies, and the like. An engagement with these parts can be discussed outside of the debate over literary excellence or literary merit, which is useful here.

What was needed then was a tool for measuring output and engagement with aspects of the industry. To this end I developed the Publication Index (PI) which makes use of the Australian National Library holdings as a way of indicating the publishing activity of a writer. By law in Australia any book, monograph, or pamphlet published with an ISBN number must be lodged with the National Library. There will always be some error here, some publications that for any number of reasons were not lodged, but one can reasonably assume that the holdings of the collection are close to complete. In addition, this information is available on-line. Our figures were taken in June 2000.

While the figure is useful and easily obtainable, some caution needs to be kept in mind. The figure makes no comparison as to the nature of the publication or its merit. A pamphlet and a book rate the same in this figure. There is no distinction made between fiction and nonfiction. Further it does not include publications outside of Australia except in the case of translations of an Australian publication into another language, which are included. Consequently an author with a New York publisher, for example, whose works are published in the States but not here, would not be listed. Conversely an author published in Australia and translated into German would have both the German and Australian publication listed. Some authors also have listed against their name a folder of newspaper cuttings relating to them and their work. Importantly, the figure does not indicate literary or other merit of the work. Further, it also does not capture those writers who in their development left prose or verse and moved into film, song, multimedia, radio or the like. The figure then simply indicates if the author has produced published print works in Australia.

In order to include an indicator of literary merit, as judged by the time, and to be able to separate the literary author from the popularist or professional writer, we need to add data concerning grants made to the writer by the variously named Literature Board/Fund of the Australia Council. Such information is difficult to obtain and further work is needed here, particularly in collating data from the Australia Council. Surprisingly, when government bodies are putting pressure on the arts dollar, it is at the moment extremely difficult and costly to determine if any particular funding philosophy has proved beneficial in the long term development of artistic culture. The Australia Council does not have data relating to the awarding of past grants in any form but its printed annual report. This and other information needs to be collated and checked. A further study might take this as one of its key concerns.

Scope of the study

The Australian/Vogel Literary Award announces a shortlist and then a winner or dual winners. In some years the judges have also announced an additional "highly commended list". Those who have judged manuscript prizes will sympathise with Shapcott's situation as mentioned above, when he and his fellow judges sought a compromise candidate from a deadlocked judging panel. At times everyone's second choice might win simply because of the need for a consensus among judges. To be shortlisted then is a significant achievement and those writers were included in the study. Interestingly, in many cases, shortlisted writers overtook the winner in their publishing output.

Further, often a writer can turn the publicity associated with being named even in the highly commended section of the prize into valuable promotional publicity. The naming itself, if employed by the writer, as shown below, can carry significant boosts to their career in terms of access to publishers and the like. For that reason, if a highly commended list was published for any year of the award those writers were also included in the study.

In short, the study addresses those writers whom the prize saw fit to publicise. The study does not include those on the long shortlist as this is a private list employed by the judges, and Allen and Unwin.

The tables below do not include those writers who were honoured in the award but who do not have a PI score. Some of these may have moved into other forms of writing such as film or television scripts, and as such would not be collected in this score. Writers who have moved into other forms would be detected via interview but such an undertaking would require extensive further research and would need to be the focus of an additional study.

Preliminary Findings: Dispelling three myths

The findings of the study were various and below I will apply them to dispelling three commonly held beliefs about *The Australian/Vogel*:

- that it is a one-book wonder prize;
- that in order to get the benefits of the prize the writer needs to be the winner;
- that the winners can come from any background and are not necessarily coming from the university sector.

Myth 1. The Vogel is a short lived wonder prize. With few exceptions winners do not go on to write other books and are rarely heard of again.

The key problem with this criticism is that the critic is more often than not focused on the novel and is looking for publications in that form to validate the award. Such critics have forgotten that the award is not just for novel manuscripts although that is the dominant form both submitted and winning. It is perhaps useful here to keep to the forefront of our attention that the award is for a young writer who is still in their developmental stage and who might well develop in a number of ways. In addition it is not uncommon to see experimental writing, with all the different meaning that it has had over the years, finding its way onto the honoured list. But by its very nature experimental writing does not often translate in maturity into novel form. If the critics of the award look only to the publication of novels they might, in some cases, be disappointed. The PI figure collects, as discussed above, a wide range of forms.

Using the Publication Index, Table 1 ranks PI score for each writer.

Table 1 - PI figure per author

Year	Place	Name	PI
1981	W (J)	Winton, Tim	78
1987	SL	Greenwood, Kerry	36
1983/84	SL/W	Grenville, Kate	31
1983	SL	Wheatley, Nadia	31
1983	SL	Jose, Nicholas	27
1986	SL	Coulthard-Clarke, Chris	25
1982	W (J)	Castro, Brian	20
1982	SL	Johns, Llewellyn	20
1994	SL	Cormick, Craig	19
1982	W (J)	Krauth, Nigel	16
1984	SL	Armanno, Venero	12
1984	SL	Barbalet, Margaret	12
1984	SL	Brophy, Kevin	12
1993	HC	Bradley, James	12
1980/1	SL	Falkiner, Suzanne	11
1987	SL	Davison, Liam	11
1980	SL	Weller, Archie	10
1988/89	SL/W	Sayer, Mandy	10
1989	SL	Baker, Candida	10
1988/89/90	SL	Stephens, Michael	9
1993	HC	Parry, Glyn	9
1990	W	Mears, Gillian	8
1991	SL	Owen, David	8
1991	W	McGahan, Andrew	7
1993	HC	McHugh, Evan	7
1980	W	Radley, Paul/Jack	6
1990	SL	Jach, Antoni	6
1993	HC	Lazaroo, Simone	6
1994	HC	Bennett, Tegan	6
1986	SL	Meehan, Maurilia	6

1987	W	Sakkas, Jim	5
1992	SL	Simons, Margaret	5
1995	HC	Simons, Margaret L (not Margaret Simons)	0
1982	HC	Maniaty, Tony	4
1992	SL	McGregor, Fiona	4
1993	W	Demidenko/Darville, Helen	4
1996	W	Cohen, Bernard	4
1981	W(J)	Matthews, Chris	3
1988	W	Flood, Tom	3
1992	W	Epanomitis, Fotini	3
1994	W	Williams, Darren	3
1995	W	King, Richard	3
1983	W	Sallis, Eva	3
1983	W	Summerville, Jenny	2
1983	SL	Webb, John	2
1989	SL	Harper, Graeme	2
1991	HC	Farmer, David	2
1991	SL	Harper, Graeme	2
1993	SL	Lorenzo, Olga Maria	2
1993	SL	Rubinstein, Matt	2
1995	SL	MacColl, Mary-Rose	2
1995	SL	Trevor, Penelope	2
1997	SL	Ives, Rowena	2
1998	W	Kremmer, Jennifer	2
1984	SL	McLeod, Keith	1
1986	W	Walton, Robin	1
1990	SL	Hosking, Janine	1
1993	SL	Verney, Jay	1
1994	SL	Fox, Judith	1
1994	HC	McGowan, Tony	1
1994	HC	Yaxley, Richard	1
1995	HC	Burke, Moira	1
1995	HC	Croggan, Alison	1
1995	HC	Merrifield, Lissa	1
1995	SL	Ricks, James	1
1998	SL	Ballint, Christine	1
1998	SL	Luke, Stephani	1
1999	W	Teo, Hsu-Ming	1

The table illustrates that of the 127 winner, shortlisted and highly commended authors in the 20 year period, well over half, 74, have holdings in the Australian National Library, which means that they went on to publish. 38 of those have more than 5 listings. Furthermore, 22 of the writers have holdings of 10 or more publications which, independent of form and content, must be seen as a significant publishing output.

Table 2 - Summary PI per author

Total number of writers	Total number with 1 or more PI	Total number with 5 or more PI	Total number with 10 or more PI
127	74	38	22

If we see that a holding of 10 or more publications in the Australian National Library constitutes a significant contribution to the publishing industry, and I see no reasons to doubt this, then an equivalent of more than one author per year of the award has made a significant contribution to the publishing culture of this country. Under these conditions *The Australian/Vogel Literary Award* has fulfilled its promise of generating new Australian writers and the notion of a one-book wonder is seriously in doubt.

The one-book wonder notion perhaps comes from a highlighting of various recent winners and an impatience for writers to produce another work quickly. It might also come from the perfectly acceptable fact that the progression is not even. Like wine, the crop of each year is not the same - why this is the case who can say? Such questions do not interest me, I prefer to accept the variance of change and to view the award's outcomes over time rather than in a year by year benchmarking exercise.

With this in mind, and for the curious, it is interesting to look at the same chart from the year of winning the Vogel point of view. It is interesting to note in Table 3 that it is not always the case that the longer it has been from winning, the greater number of publications. However, it would be dangerous to speculate exactly when and where a writer might produce their next work. As we all know writers work in different ways, some producing a great number of works, others producing a handful in a lifetime. The works hold their own merit. Table 3 also includes the age of the writer for those who wish to speculate on other factors. Multiple submissions and results are shown as 1988/89 etc.

Table 3 - Year of award, date of birth and PI score

Year	Place	Name	Year of Birth	PI
1980	W	Radley, Paul/Jack	1962	6
1980	SL	Weller, Archie	1957	10
1980/81	SL	Falkiner, Suzanne	1952	11
1981	W (J)	Winton, Tim	1960	78
1981	W (J)	Matthews, Chris	1952	3
1982	W (J)	Castro, Brian	1950	20
1982	W (J)	Krauth, Nigel	1949	16
1982	HC	Lansdown, Andrew	1949	8
1982	HC	Maniaty, Tony	1949	4
1982	SL	Johns, Llewellyn	?	20

1983	SL	Webb, John	1954	2
1983	SL	Jose, Nicholas	1952	27
1983	SL	Wheatley, Nadia	1949	31
1983	W	Summerville, Jenny	?	2
1983/84	SL/W	Grenville, Kate	1950	31
1984	SL	Armanno, Venero	1959	12
1984	SL	Barbalet, Margaret	1949	12
1984	SL	Brophy, Kevin	1949	12
1984	SL	McLeod, Keith	1949	1
1986	W	Walton, Robin	1953	1
1986	SL	Coulthard-Clarke, Chris	1951	25
1986	SL	Meehan, Maurilia	1951	5
1987	SL	Davison, Liam	1957	11
1987	SL	Greenwood, Kerry	1954	36
1987	W	Sakkas, Jim	1953	5
1988	W	Flood, Tom	1955	3
1988/89	SL/W	Sayer, Mandy	1963	10
1988/89/90	SL	Stephens, Michael	1955	9
1989	SL	Baker, Candida	1955	10
1989/91	SL	Harper, Graem	1959	2
1990	W	Mears, Gillian	1964	8
1990	SL	Hosking, Janine	1961	1
1990	SL	Jach, Antoni	1956	6
1991	W	McGahan, Andrew	1966	7
1991	SL	Owen, David	1956	8
1991	HC	Farmer, David	1956	2
1992	W	Epanomitis, Fotini	1969	3
1992	SL	McGregor, Fiona	1965	4
1992	SL	Simons, Margaret	1960	5
1993	SL	Rubinstein, Matt	1974	2
1993	W	Demidenko/Darville, Helen	1971	4
1993	HC	Bradley, James	1967	12
1993	HC	McHugh, Evan	1961	7
1993	HC	Lazaroo, Simone	1961	6
1993	HC	Parry, Glyn	1959	9
1993	SL	Lorenzo, Olga Maria	1959	2
1993	SL	Verney, Jay	1958	1
1994	SL	Bennett, Tegan	1969	6
1994	HC	McGowan, Tony	1968	1
1994	W	Williams, Darren	1967	3
1994	HC	Yaxley, Richard	1962	1
1994	SL	Cormick, Craig	1961	19
1994	SL	Fox, Judith	1959	1

1995	SL	Ricks, James	1975	1
1995	W	King, Richard	1968	3
1995	HC	Merrifield, Lisa	1967	1
1995	SL	MacColl, Mary-Rose	1961	2
1995	HC	Simons, Margaret L.	1960	5
1995	SL	Trevor, Penelope	1960	2
1995	HC	Burke, Moira	?	1
1995	HC	Croggan, Alison	?	1
1996	W	Cohen, Bernard	1962	4
1997	SL	Ives, Rowena	1966	2
1997	W	Sallis, Eva	1964	3
1998	SL	Ballint, Christine	1975	1
1998	SL	Luke, Stephanie	1966	1
1998	W	Kremmer, Jennifer	1965	2
1999	W	Teo, Hsu-Ming	1970	1

The table below takes these figures and in summary form divides them on gender and on place in the award. Surprising results manifest themselves. In the table when a writer has been listed in more than one category, that is they might have been shortlisted one year and won in another, the higher category was taken.

Table 4 - Summary by Gender

	Total PI for Women	Total PI for Men	Total PI for Men and Women
Winners	64 for 9 writers	149 for 12 writers	213 for 21 writers
Shortlisted	101 for 21 writers	176 for 19 writers	277 for 40 writers
Highly Commended	6 for 1 writer	27 for 4 writers	33 for 5 writers
Total	171 for 31 writers	352 for 35 writers	

This is an interesting table which begs for more information. While the total number of male and female writers is about the same - 31 women and 35 men - the output is significantly different. The publishing output for male writers is almost twice that of female writers. The average output for women writers in this study is 5.52 publications per writer while the equivalent figure for men is 10.06 publications per writer. What is happening here? The gender division at the point of the award is more or less in balance but as soon as these young writers are placed in the world of the publishing industry the male gender almost doubles the female publishing output. This discrepancy calls out for a careful examination but would need to be the subject of another study.

However, independent of this gender division, what these figures show is that the overall output of the young writers honoured in the award is significant and when viewed as a whole, rather than as individuals, the award has produced prolific writers contributing via publication to our cultural capital.

Myth 2 - You need to win the Vogel in order for your career as a writer to benefit from the prize, it is no good just being shortlisted.

In order to look in a preliminary way at this commonly held belief, I compared the PI to any history of grants from the Australia Council Literature Board/Fund. Including the history from the Australia Council and elsewhere is useful as so few applicants are awarded these grants. While the percentage of grant applicants who are successful varies from year to year and from type of grant to type of grant, the success rate for gaining a grant can be as low as 3% of applicants. Gaining one of the grants then, can be seen as a significant nod from the literary establishment to the young writer.

Frank Moorhouse is interesting here. When discussing the early stages of the career of a literary author, he writes of an invitation by the community to young artists to present their work (Moorhouse 83). This invitation, he points out, can come in several forms but the grant system is one of them, and in it, he claims, the society invites the young person to enter the company of literary authors. He is worth quoting in length here.

The first 'invitation' comes in many ways. There is no defined career path for the novitiate imaginative writer. Most young artists do not think much about how they will live, what the economics of their art is. This is not only a romantic attitude, it is also a faith that good work will be responded to and rewarded somehow. This is the implicit social promise behind the first invitation. In this sense the statement, 'no one asked you to be a writer', is wrong. As you go along as a young writer of serious imaginative work you are invited and encouraged, or not, and you do ultimately become a 'writer'. You are asked.... I think that the sophisticated public acknowledges this obligation and it is expressed now through patronage and prizes and the putting in place of economic mechanisms.... In our society, the fellowships, and patronage generally, make this peculiar tribal gift relationship into something which is visible, negotiated and functional. (Moorhouse 84)

If we take Moorhouse's notion of the invitation, then the combination of being honoured in the award and supported in the form of a grant from the Australia Council would be a strong indicator of being invited to join, or at least try out for, the role of literary author.

This combining of the two measurements then might illustrate both the publishing output of the writer and the literary merit as determined by the literary bureaucracy of the time. Putting one against the other might for example help to determine a writer who has published a great number of study guides for schools, as against a writer who has published one or two novels of significant literary merit. It thus helps to fill out the picture of how the various writers have been contributing to the cultural environment and the development of their careers. In a prize such as *The Australian/Vogel*, because it is judged on cultural merit, we might expect to find a high proportion of literary writers. But at the same time we could equally expect to find some popularist or professional writers amongst the list as the cultural merit of the award is not always strictly literary, sometimes the criteria employed by the judging might be biased towards fine examples of experimental writing, in-your-face writing, or writing representative of youth culture. It is worth remembering that, for example, Christopher Matthews' *Al Jazza* (1981) was a political thriller and he continued his writing career producing a top-selling self-help book, while Jenny Summerville's *Shields of Trell* (1983) was a children's book and she continued her artistic career as a sculptor.

More work is needed here to be able to obtain a full history of possible grants to award winners and shortlisted writers. The Australia Council records are not available

electronically and to arrive at this indicator we needed to sift through the annual reports pulling out names. The nature of the task and the fact that we didn't have the resources to cross check our work means that this is only a preliminary indicator. Further, other grants and assistance from other boards of the Australia Council, State literature funds, or publicity from newspaper and journal articles about the writer, or the interest and retaining of literary agents and publicists is not included. Nor are other prizes and awards included here. This information would be available from interviews with the writers but the study, at this stage, did not have the resources to undertake such interviews. Such studies are overdue and of importance to our discipline if we are to be able to understand the significance and the role such awards play in our cultural development.

For this study what is recorded below are some of the grants. It is a case of knowing that at least these were given to the writers, but accepting that other grants and awards may well have been given as well. What we are looking at here is a minimum situation.

Table 5 - Australia Council Grants to writers honoured by Vogel

Year	Place	Name	Year of Birth	Minimum, post award Australia Council grant	PI
1980	W	Radley, Paul/Jack	1962	82-83	6
1980	SL	O'Rourke, Kerry	?	81	0
1980	SL	Weller, Archie	1957	91-92	10
1980/81	SL	Falkiner, Suzanne	1952		11
1981	W (J)	Winton, Tim	1960	86-87	78
1981	W (J)	Matthews, Chris	1952		3
1982	W (J)	Castro, Brian	1950	96-98	20
1982	W (J)	Krauth, Nigel	1949	86-87	16
1982	HC	Lansdown, Andrew	1949	86-87	8
1982	HC	Maniaty, Tony	1949		4
1982	SL	Johns, Llewellyn	?		20
1983	SL	Webb, John	1954	92-93	2
1983	SL	Jose, Nicholas	1952	96, 98	27
1983	SL	Wheatley, Nadia	1949	95, 99	31
1983	W	Summerville, Jenny	?		2
1983/84	SL/W	Grenville, Kate	1950	86-87	31
1984	SL	Armanno, Venero	1959		12
1984	SL	Barbalet, Margaret	1949		12
1984	SL	Brophy, Kevin	1949	86-87	12
1984	SL	McLeod, Keith	1949		1
1986	W	Walton, Robin	1953	97-88	1
1986	SL	Coulthard-Clarke, Chris	1951		25
1986	SL	Meehan, Maurilia	1951		5
1987	SL	Davison, Liam	1957	90-91, 91-92	11

1987	SL	Greenwood, Kerry	1954		36
1987	W	Sakkas, Jim	1953		5
1988	W	Flood, Tom	1955	89-90	3
1988	SL	Rogers, Patrick	?	97-98	0
1988/89	SL/W	Sayer, Mandy	1963	95-96	10
1988/89/90	SL	Stephens, Michael	1955		9
1989	SL	Baker, Candida	1955		10
1989/91	SL	Harper, Graem	1959	89-90	2
1990	W	Mears, Gillian	1964	96, 98	8
1990	SL	Hosking, Janine	1961		1
1990	SL	Jach, Antoni	1956	99-00	6
1991	W	McGahan, Andrew	1966	91-92	7
1991	SL	Owen, David	1956	92-93	8
1991	HC	Farmer, David	1956		2
1992	W	Epanomitis, Fotini	1969	93-94	3
1992	SL	McGregor, Fiona	1965		4
1992	SL	Simons, Margaret	1960		5
1993	SL	Rubinstein, Matt	1974	94-95	2
1993	W	Demidenko/Darville, Helen	1971	94-95	4
1993	HC	Bradley, James	1967		12
1993	HC	McHugh, Evan	1961		7
1993	HC	Lazaroo, Simone	1961		6
1993	HC	Parry, Glyn	1959		9
1993	SL	Lorenzo, Olga Maria	1959	96-97	2
1993	SL	Verney, Jay	1958	93-94	1
1994	SL	Bennett, Tegan	1969	95-96	6
1994	HC	McGowan, Tony	1968	95-96	1
1994	W	Williams, Darren	1967	97-98	3
1994	HC	Yaxley, Richard	1962		1
1994	SL	Cormick, Craig	1961	97-98	19
1994	SL	Whish-Wilson, David	1966	98-99	0
1994	SL	Fox, Judith	1959	95-96	1
1995	SL	Ricks, James	1975		1
1995	W	King, Richard	1968	96-97	3
1995	HC	Merrifield, Lisa	1967		1
1995	SL	MacColl, Mary-Rose	1961		2
1995	HC	Simons, Margaret L.	1960		5
1995	SL	Trevor, Penelope	1960		2
1995	HC	Burke, Moira	?		1
1995	HC	Croggan, Alison	?		1
1996	W	Cohen, Bernard	1962	97-98	4
1997	SL	Clare-Smith, Jennifer	1970	99-00	0

1997	SL	Ives, Rowena	1966		2
1997	W	Sallis, Eva	1964		3
1998	SL	Ballint, Christine	1975	99-00	1
1998	SL	Luke, Stephanie	1966		1
1998	W	Kremmer, Jennifer	1965	99-00	2
1999	W	Teo, Hsu-Ming	1970		1

For the 127 names we found 42 grants: 14 to winners, 28 to shortlisted and 2 to highly commended. I am quite sure that these figures are incomplete and can only act as a barometer to a much bigger picture. In addition, we do not know here how many winners and place holders actually applied for grants and were unsuccessful, and how many didn't consider, for any number of reasons, applying to the Literature Board/Fund for financial assistance.

When comparing publication history with grant history it is worth remembering that the winners, by virtue of their winning, are guaranteed publication of the winning manuscript. This in turn arms them, as it were, with a publication, notice, reviews and other publicity all of which is usable in applying for grants.

The guarantee of publication can, however, sometimes be a poison chalice. Sophie Cunningham of Allen and Unwin, in a recent interview spoke of a recipient who, being aware that publication was guaranteed, resisted the editing process. That in turn generated poor reviews and poor sales, which, coupled with the memory of a difficult editorial experience, generated a reticence to continue publishing and accepting the author's new, unedited work (Cunningham 2002). Winning a manuscript prize with guaranteed publication then might also call for some mentoring if the young author is to use the win as a stepping stone in his or her writing career.

These figures are further clouded by the fact that many writers put in multiple submissions to the award, submitting a new manuscript year after year. In looking at the archives housed at Allen and Unwin, time and time again I would come across familiar writers' names on the list of entries. I am not at liberty to divulge details here, but I noted with great interest an anecdote of a Queensland based writer who regularly boasts of his multiple entries to the award. The records surprisingly do not support his claim. But the writer's telling of this anecdote indicates that it is seen as praiseworthy, and part of the business of a young writer.

Table 6 indicates multiple submissions when the submissions have received official recognition.

Table 6 - Multi Submissions Honoured

Year	Place	Name	Year of Birth	PI
1992	SL	Charleson, Libya	1961	0
1994	HC	Charleson, Libya	1961	0
1980	SL	Falkiner, Suzanne	1952	11
1981	SL	Falkiner, Suzanne	1952	11
1983	SL	Grenville, Kate	1950	31
1984	SL	Grenville, Kate	1950	31
1989	SL	Harper, Graeme	1959	2
1991	SL	Harper, Graeme	1959	2

1998	SL	Juchan, Mireille	1969	0
1999	SL	Juchan, Mireille	1969	0
1988	SL	Ozborne, Kevin	1961	0
1989	SL	Ozborne, Kevin	1961	0
1982	SL	Pointon, Susan	1950	0
1983	SL	Pointon, Susan	1950	0
1984	SL	Pointon, Susan	1950	0
1988	SL	Sayer, Mandy	1963	10
1989	W	Sayer, Mandy	1963	10
1988	SL	Stephens, Michael	1955	9
1989	SL	Stephens, Michael	1955	9
1990	SL	Stephens, Michael	1955	9

Some writers, year after year, are shortlisted or highly commended with different novels. In many cases it is not a re-write of the same novel with a new title but a completely new work. This amazing output - yearly novels of high enough standard to be honoured in the award - is often not translated into publication or other assistance such as grants. One suggestion to explain this is that the young writer is unaware of the workings of the publication and literary industry. They do not know, for example, that it may not be the plot which is at fault but some other aspect of their writing. They do not know, for example, that they would be looked on favorably if they applied for assistance from literary establishments such as the Australia Council Literature Board/Fund.

A few names stand out here - Mireille Juchau is a published short story writer whose first novel appeared in 2001 with UQP. Libya Charleson, Susan Pointon, and Kevin Ozborne, are more difficult to trace. It would be interesting to do so and to discuss with them the effect the multiple shortlisting had on their writing and their careers.

Myth 3 - You don't need a tertiary education to pick up The Australian/Vogel.

For some time the belief has been propagated that a typical winner of such awards as *The Australian/Vogel* is a drop-out kid out there in mum-and-dad land writing away, if not in the garret, then at least in the back shed. Such a native genius is skilled more by the school of hard knocks than any hallowed cloisters of the academy.

There is something very egalitarian, even ocker about this belief. Barry Oakley writes about Demidenko/Darville's win (before she was disgraced and still maintained the identity of Demidenko):

The novel's success provides a sobering thought for the editor of *The Australian* book pages. The section ended up under a bowl of dog food one day in Brisbane and that is where Demidenko's brother happened to notice the entry form for *The Australian/Vogel* Literary Award.

There were three days to go before the closing date. Demidenko wrote the last five pages of the novel she had spent 18 months on very quickly and sent it off on the last day. (Oakley 1993: 3)

Are we really to believe that Demidenko/Darville had no knowledge of the Vogel award? That she was a young Brisbane girl in the suburbs writing in total ignorance of the sophistication of the literary industry? Oakley made much of her ethnic background

but no mention was made of Demidenko/Darville's study at Queensland University, her degree or her association with the university which, subsequent to her win, led her to begin a higher degree in writing.

Perhaps Barry Oakley has an agenda to generate the myth of the naive genius, but again when he writes on the 1995 Australian Vogel winner Richard King, his article directs our focus towards the rebellious genius who survives rather than profits from his education. Oakley writes:

King, who is tall but not sweaty and puffy fat, grew up in the other Melbourne suburb of Blackburn, didn't enjoy his schooling at Camberwell Grammar ('too much emphasis on science and sport') or his course in politics and philosophy at Monash University. When I asked which of these disciplines he preferred, he replied that he disliked each of them equally. (Oakley 1995: 1)

Apart from this belief in a kind of primitive genius, there is another almost conflicting assumption around the kind of writer who might win such awards. It is the belief that somehow it is a class thing, somehow it's all to do with being-in-the-know, a mate, a member of a club or family. This belief was given an outing when Tom Flood won *The Australian/Vogel* in 1988 and later in 1990 when the same book won the Miles Franklin award. Much was made of his literary parents. Berwyn Lewis writes:

A member of a leading Australian literary family Flood's genealogy is thick with a cluster of literary branches, both creative, academic and discursive....

Recently when Hewett read her son's work in its initial form of 'a very long short story' entitled 'Lie of The Land, a murder mystery', Flood's instinct to run with his writing was set in motion.

'She is a narrative fiend. She likes answers and said, "Write the sequel. I want to know what happens." I wrote a book which didn't tell what happened,' says Flood with the perverse chuckle of a rebellious son getting away with something. (Lewis 11)

In her 1989 column in *The Australian Weekend Magazine* Elizabeth Swanson turns her notes into nothing short of a social column. In one note she commented on Tom's winning of the Vogel, his half-sister Kate Lilley's achievements in England and a quick reference to what mum, Dorothy, was currently cooking in her study. I have yet to come across any newspaper article on Flood as winner of the Vogel or Miles Franklin awards which does not mention his family. No other Vogel winner has had to share their notices with other family gossip.

But all of this needs to be given yet another context. The public perception of who might win the award became infected by who should win such a prize. In 1996 the Australian literary awards community - its judges, publishers, reviewers, administrators and the like - took a jolt which is, I suggest, still echoing in the rooms where judging panels meet.

The Helen Demidenko/Darville exposition had just taken place when Paul Radley, the shy boy who at 19 was the first winner of *The Australian/Vogel* award, publicly revealed that his uncle Jack had written the winning entry and the subsequent titles published under Paul's name. For 16 years Paul and his uncle had lived with this secret.

Was it another Paul Radley that Barry Oakley was looking for when he interviewed Helen Demidenko/Darville and Richard King? Radley's story reads like a fairy tale for those adhering to the primitive genius line. Paul had left school at 16 and at the time of winning was only 19. He admitted to only having read two books in his life, *The Pearl* and *The Old Man and the Sea* and was described by his sister as "a slow leaner" (Andrew Byrne A18). Tom Shapcott recalled his earlier meeting with Paul Radley.

"Paul was a tall and slightly awkward young man, very inarticulate, and during the meeting Uncle Jack did all of the speaking. When I met Paul he was just a young yobbo..." (Andrew Byrne A18).

A month later Geoffrey Dutton reflected on Paul Radley's award-winning title *Jack Rivers and Me*:

Now that we know that Paul Radley didn't write the book, it was interesting to re-read my review in *The Bulletin* (5 Oct 1981) ... I wrote: 'There is plenty that is convincing in *Jack Rivers and Me*, but it is a very odd book in technique and style. After a while it reads like a confidence trick, and leaves one uneasy.' Ed Campion recently recalled to me that he and I had had lunch with Patricia Rolfe (literary editor of *The Bulletin*) the day after my review appeared, and that I had said the Vogel judges had been Ern Malleyed. (Dutton 7)

The romantic idea that *The Australian/Vogel* could be won by a kid who'd dropped out of school and learnt to write on the construction site or the dole queue had taken a serious battering. It is not surprising that by 1996, post the Demidenko/Darville and Paul/Jack Radley affairs, the preference in winners for the award, whether held by the judges or the whole literary community, sat squarely on the shoulders of the writer whose literary tradition, if not their actual cultural history, was well known. Could the academy provided this pedigree?

But the relationship between university writing departments and publishing houses had not always been friendly. Publishers displayed a shyness towards the university book with its experimental and postmodern writing. In an interview with Annette Barlow, an administrator of the award, she recalled a reticence for university books - all theory and no plot - but suggested that this was no longer the case (Barlow 2000). More recently the university sector has made friends with *The Australian/Vogel* administration notably with the University of Canberra under the directorship of Ron Miller holding a workshop for the shortlisted and the "long shortlisted" writers.

Whether it is because the university writing departments are changing, the publishing houses changing or the often subconscious need for judges to ensure the pedigree of their recipients, the level of education of those honoured in the award is rising. The table below suggests that not only is tertiary education a significant helping hand in securing publication via *The Australian/Vogel*, as time goes by, the level of education and the importance of writing courses is increasing.

Table 7 - Education of Winning Writers

Year	Place	Name	Year of Birth	Education	Grant	PI
1980	W	Radley, Paul/Jack	1962	Incomplete HS	82-83	6
1981	W (J)	Matthews, Chris	1952			3
1981	W (J)	Winton, Tim	1960	BA Studied CW	86-87	78
1982	W (J)	Castro, Brian	1950	BA MA	96, 98	20
1982	W (J)	Krauth, Nigel	1949	BA (UNSW) MA (ANU) PhD (Qld)	86-87	16

1983	W	Summerville, Jenny		Secretary course		2
1984	W	Grenville, Kate	1950	Post Grad		31
1986	W	Walton, Robin	1953	BA Hons, MA (Syd)	87-88	1
1987	W	Sakkas, Jim	1953	BA Monash, Dip Ed La Trobe		5
1988	W	Flood, Tom	1955	Incomplete BA	89-90	3
1989	W	Sayer, Mandy	1963	Indiana Uni, CW		10
1990	W	Mears, Gillian	1964	BA (Communication)Writing major	96,98	8
1991	W	McGahan, Andrew	1966	Incomplete uni.	91-92	7
1992	W	Epanomitis, Fotini	1969	BA Hons (Curtin) MA Lit Curtin	93-94	3
1993	W	Demidenko/Darville, Helen	1971	BA Hons MA writing (incomplete) (QLD)	94-95	4
1994	W	Williams, Darren	1967	Incomplete uni	97-98	3
1995	W	King, Richard	1968	BA (Monash)		3
1996	W	Cohen, Bernard	1962	BAcom UTS, MA in Writing	97-98	4
1997	W	Sallis, Eva	1964	Eng Lit (Adel) PhD		3
1998	W	Kremmer, Jennifer	1965	MA Writing (Syd)	99-00	2
1999	W	Teo, Hsu-Ming	1970	PhD		1
2000	W	Gray, Stephen	1966	LLB		0

Of the 21 winners (excluding Paul Radley because he did not write the entry) only one winner claims no post-school training. All but two began university, and of those all but three completed a degree. There are seven with Masters Degrees, three with PhDs and six make claim that they studied creative writing in the course of their education.

Table 8 relates this to the shortlisted and highly commended writers.

Table 8 - Summary of education and honoured writers

Place	No tertiary education	Not completed university	Other tertiary education	Completed university
Winners (21)	1	3	1	15
Shortlisted (80)		1		30
HC (37)			1	7

(Note, it is much more difficult to find out about the tertiary education of the shortlisted and highly commended as they tend not to be interviewed and written up in

newspapers. The writers recorded above felt it relevant to indicate their education in biographical sketches they provided on their entry and elsewhere.)

From the evidence we have it can be seen that a tertiary education assists rather than hinders a young writer's chances in such an award and all that the award carries with it in terms of their longer writing career. In the current award environment the question often asked of the winners is not so much did they study at university but rather which one did they come from?

Conclusions

Many myths surround *The Australian/Vogel Literary Award*. But the preliminary figures do not support the three mentioned above.

The creation of the publication index PI indicates that over the period of 20 years the output of the honoured writers is high with 22 writers having an output of ten or more publications. The data reveals a significant difference in male and female writer output which might well be the focus of another study.

The second myth addressed refers to the career path that winning as opposed to being shortlisted in such an award might have. The data indicates that if the shortlisted author is active and diligent then they can turn their shortlisting around to a positive career aid. Certainly publications and Australia Council grants can come their way and in Frank Moorhouse's terms they have been invited to join the community of literary writers.

The third myth refers to the education of the young writers. Data strongly indicate that a tertiary education does not hinder the young writer but rather greatly increases their chances in such career fast-track awards as *The Australian/Vogel*. This is good news for those of us teaching writing in the tertiary sector. It is also good news for those involved in the award and a validation of their work and sponsorship.

However, this is a preliminary study and further work needs to take place before we can gain a complete picture of how such awards shape and develop our literary cultural history. In particular, in an environment where private rather than public support for the arts is being encouraged, a study of *The Australian/Vogel Literary Award*, its administration and its long term effects, is vital for our cultural development. The preliminary study suggests the award is a significant positive factor in the careers of young writers. Hopefully future studies will support this claim. Such work is timely.

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TEXT

Vol 6 No 2 October 2002

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/school/art/text/>

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