Central Queensland University, Australia

Donna Lee Brien

‘First the misery, then the trauma’: the Australian trauma memoir

Abstract:

This article focuses on the trauma memoir as an identifiable type of creative writing. It begins by tracing its popularity, especially in the 1990s, in the process recognising what can be proposed as key works internationally, many of which—but not all—are American, as well as how these texts were received by critics and readers, in order to place the Australian trauma memoir in this broader context. The so-called ‘misery memoir’ is also discussed. As little investigation has focused on the Australian trauma memoir as a form of memoir, this article will profile some (mostly recent) examples of Australian trauma memoir in order to begin to investigate what these texts contribute to our understanding of the trauma memoir as a form of creative writing. This recognises debates over the literary and social value of memoirs.

Biographical note:

Professor Donna Lee Brien, BEd (Deakin), GCHE (UNSW), MA (Prelim) (USyd), MA (UTS), PhD (QUT), is Professor of Creative Industries at Central Queensland University, Australia. Past President of national peak body, the Australasian Association of Writing Programs, Donna is author of over 20 books and exhibition catalogues and over 200 refereed journal articles and book chapters. Her biography *John Power 1881–1943* is the standard work on this expatriate Australian, and she is the co-author of the bestselling trade self-help *Girls Guide* series for Allen & Unwin. Donna is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of a number of national and international journals and she is co-editor of *Offshoot: Contemporary Lifewriting Methodologies and Practice in Australasia* with Dr Quinn Eades (forthcoming 2017, UWA Publishing).

Keywords:

Creative writing – Memoir – Trauma memoir – Misery memoir – Memoir, Australian

> What int'rest springs from barb'rous deeds? / What joy from misery? (William Hogarth 1751)

Introduction: historically defining the trauma memoir

In the 1990s, published book-length memoirs were so popular with readers that this form of personal life writing was widely reported to be the most commonly read type of American non-fiction writing. It was also, unsurprisingly controversially, deemed by some prominent critics and publishers to have supplanted the novel in readers' preferences (see, for example, Yardley 1995). Since then, various commentators have described the market for, and interest in, such memoirs as an explosive 'boom' (Yagoda 2009, Rak 2013), while others have simultaneously greeted any dip in sales as evidence that reader interest in memoirs was a bubble which had burst (see, for instance, UK press around a dip in sales in 2008, for instance, Page and Neill 2008). While it is difficult to obtain comprehensive figures for what is often considered commercial-in-confidence information, recent Neilsen Bookscan American sales figures reported in *Publishers Weekly* show increases in adult non-fiction in both these years, with a 12 percent increase in the autobiography/biography/memoir category in 2014 from the year before (Milliot 2015) and another, albeit smaller, increase in 2016 (Segura 2017). Despite ongoing criticism of the literary, cultural, social and personal value of memoirs, the assessment of the form as more popular with many readers than fiction has endured (see, for example, Adams 2006, Donadio 2008, Genzlinger 2011). While this is arguable and not the topic of this article, what is interesting is how this discussion brought to the forefront the somewhat paradoxical fact that although readers often claim they read memoirs because the genre relates real life experience in an authentic and truthful manner (Minzesheimer 1997: D1), many bestselling memoirs were repeatedly reported to be popular precisely because they 'read like fiction' (Lannon 1998).

I personally observed evidence of this growing popularity and visibility in both the world of letters on a number of visits to the USA in the 1990s and by following discussions and debates over the reasons for this popularity, and discussions about, often, the literary shortcomings of the form in a number of high profile American periodicals including *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker* and *USA Today*. Many of these followed book reviewer Ben Minzesheimer's assertion that the phrase 'a memoir' became 'publishing's favored subtitle' (1997: D1), prompting at least some authors to work the same material into a memoir instead of a novel. During that decade, I—as many others—also observed bookshops devoting considerable shelf space and promotional energy to memoirs, an increasing number of colleges beginning to teach memoir writing as a component of creative writing courses, and publishers paying record amounts for the manuscripts of first-person narrated memoirs.

A prominent but unexplored illustration of publishers' interest in memoir at the end of the twentieth century (Rak 2013) can be found in the bidding war over great-grandmother Jessie Lee Brown Foveaux's memoir in early 1997. With major publishers including Random House and Simon and Schuster vying for the

manuscript, Foveaux was able to sign her first book contract with Warner Books for more than US$1 million (Zacharek 1997: G6) and the volume was optioned to Hallmark for a television miniseries (Publishers Weekly 1997). She was then aged in her late nineties, 98 years of age being widely reported in the press. This memoir opens with romantic stories of a happy childhood, but Foveaux's tone changes when she finds adulthood marked by hardship and struggle. After her beloved fiancé is killed in the first world war, she married and had six children in seven years and, after her husband became an alcoholic, divorced him. As a single mother, she took up a series of unskilled jobs, from selling makeup door-to-door to working in a grocery store and a laundry. Defending this seemingly mundane subject matter, editor Clair Zion underlined the 'emotionally powerful story' of a writer she styled as an 'everyday heroine' (qtd. in Minzesheimer 1997: D1), and much of the media surrounding this sale underscored the writer's willingness to share the gritty unhappiness of her otherwise unremarkable life with readers. Reviews of the book were not, however, overwhelmingly positive. Prominent trade review *Publishers Weekly*, for instance, although noting that the work was 'imbued with Foveaux's rectitude and integrity' added baldly that 'there are many boring pages' (Publishers Weekly 1997). This comment was directed to the final section of the memoir which comprises Foveaux's no-nonsense advice to younger readers, which hardly makes for compelling reading and encouraged reviewers to question the publisher's decision not to edit the text. Regardless, the book became a bestseller, ran to some 12 reprints from 1997 to 1999, and was translated into Spanish.

This publishing success—despite the shortcomings of the text itself—is an example of how popular such texts of unhappy lives, inevitably ultimately transcended, were with readers at this time. Included among them were tales of terrible trauma, especially during childhood, and these became such a visible component of memoir publishing that they comprise the entirety of genre for many commentators. Some critics, indeed, trace the popularity of the personal memoir to Dave Pelzer's tale of horrific childhood neglect and abuse, *A Child Called 'It'* (1995) and others to Mary Karr's memoir of her dysfunctional childhood and rape, *The Liar's Club* (1995). There are, however, earlier notable examples including Helen Forrester's *Twopence to Cross the Mersey* (1974), the first in what would become a bestselling four-part serial memoir charting her life in povery-stricken Liverpool from her childhood in the 1930s through to early adulthood in the Second World War. The other books in this series are *Liverpool Miss* (1979), *By the Waters of Liverpool* (1981) and *Lime Street at Two* (1985) and the four are still in print. In *Twopence to Cross the Mersey*, one of the most moving hardships Forrester relates is being taken out of school by her neglectful parents at age 11, in order to look after her six younger siblings and perform other domestic duties. Finally allowed to resume her education and attend night school when she was aged 14, she went on to write the first of her 12 popular novels in 1959. In spite of this and other successes, Forrester understood the arc of her life story in terms of this early deprivation for, in her later years, she is quoted as stating that she regarded her greatest achievement as that of having 'survived the misery of my girlhood' (qtd. in Thorpe 2017). Despite the wonderfully clear eyed poignancy of these texts, and the important role they have played in the rising popularity of the trauma/misery memoir, Forrester and her memoirs have received almost no notice in this regard except that it

was noted in her obituaries when she died (see, for example, The Telegraph 2011). I have found one thesis which engages with these memoirs as literary works (Huish 1987) and Forrester's memoir writing is mentioned in Janet Montefiore's study of 1930s writers, but only rates half a sentence (1996: 33). More commonly, however, Forrester's memoirs are used as evidence in studies as diverse as that of women's history (Bornat 1977, Chinn 1988, Nicholson 2011), working class housewifery and family life (Bourke 1994, Faire 1998), children's literature (Donohue 2007), Liverpool (Belchem 2000, Lane 1997), buttons (Knight 2016) and the 1930s as a topic of popular culture (Baxendale and Pawling 1996). This suggests both that Forrester's work is known and the tales of life these memoirs tell are well regarded but, perhaps due to the surge of publication and critical interest in memoir in the 1990s and its focus on American texts, they have slipped from academic purview.[1]

The bestselling sales status of later memoirs of unhappy childhoods is certainly well known in relation to such texts as Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992), a chronicle of physical and emotional abuse set in the American south, Susanna Kaysen's *Girl, Interrupted* (1993) about being institutionalised with bipolar disorder, and Lucy Grealy's *Autobiography of a Face* (1994) about growing up with facial disfigurement. David Kirkpatrick characterised much of the negative critical response to these works when he described Kaysen's account of her two years in a mental hospital as an 'autopathography' (2001: C8), blending the descriptor 'autobiography' with Joyce Carol Oates' term 'pathography' which she used to describe biographies that 'dwell on the sordid excesses of their subjects' (qtd. in Atlas 1996: 25)[2] – but reprising a term which had been theorised earlier by G. Thomas Couser (1997). Others noted a shared tone of mawkish self-pitying, what Frédéric Regard characterises as a 'maudlin aspect', in these memoirs (2013: 116). Life writing theorist John Paul Eakin has been more moderate in reminding critics that adults' recall of themselves as children awakening to the power of story (and storytelling) had long been a key theme of autobiographical writing (1999: 118), however, it was certainly notable that—childhood focused or not—what so many of these memoirs had in common, and readers responded positively to, was the narrative retelling of trauma suffered by the memoirist.[3]

Conjunction of trauma, misery and memoir

By the end of the 1990s, trauma and misery were frequently being linked in discussions of the memoir. In 2001, for instance, Leigh Gilmore stated that in the past decade the 'age of memoir and the age of trauma ... coincided' (2001a: 16), identifying that—to that point—the 'defining subject [of the memoir boom] has been trauma' (2001b: 128). In 2007, Harry Ritchie similarly describes 'the regulation story arc of the misery-and-trauma memoir', a little cynically detailing how the trajectory these texts commonly follow includes publishing success, recounting a 'long decline and fall ... first the misery, then the trauma, then both together as things go from bad to worse to much worse before the rescue and the book contract' (2007). Roger Luckhurst, however, additionally identifies what could be read as an incomplete 'rescue' in Ritchie's terms, proposing that some trauma memoirs lack any re-

integration of a sense of narrator's self after the misery and trauma. Instead, such narratives are presented as 'circling around a shattering event, from which self-knowledge arrives late, if at all' (2008: 118–19). Tim Adams has written about these memoirs as 'a mix of abasement and aggrandizement ... horror stories' (2006), questioning why 'Nothing apparently captivates us more than the revelation of other people's – and especially other children's – pain' (2006). Pointing to the prevalence of child abuse memoirs in the new century, a 2007 *Guardian* newspaper article commented on the prevalence of 'volume after volume of leering drunk abusers and their fearful victims' (Addley 2007). Danuta Kean has described the whole endeavour of memoir publishing as a 'ghoulish' industry (2007).

From such descriptions emerged definitions of the trauma or misery memoir as 'autobiographical accounts concerned with representing and memorializing traumatic memory and experience' (Tranter 2015: 115). Virginia Bates describes these narratives as comprising three interrelated parts: 'the author; her traumatic memories; and the traumatic event' (2012: 62), while others add a triumphal, redemptive ending (Smith and Watson 1996: 6) or purposefully resist this (see, Robertson 2012). In all these, and various other, discussions, misery and trauma are linked as a subject of the personal memoir to the extent that the twenty-first century can be characterised as the age of trauma:

> If every age has its symptoms, ours appears to be the age of trauma. Naming a wide spectrum of responses to psychic and physical events often with little in common beyond the label, trauma has become a portmanteau that covers a multitude of disparate injuries. (Miller and Tougaw 2002: 1-2)

The recognition of Trauma Studies as an area of investigation and research and the production of influential texts on articulating trauma as healing have reinforced this linkage of memoir and trauma. Volumes such as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's edited collection *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) and Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) have made mainstream the concept that in order to heal, those who have undergone trauma should not only narrate their trauma, but also need that narration heard or otherwise recognised. This idea of narrating trauma as a healing process provides a powerful motivation for writing such memoirs, and provides a foil to the numerous charges of authors being primarily motivated by fame and fortune. Here it is, of course, cognate to mention investigations into the consequences when misery memorists are caught exaggerating or lying in terms of the content of their work or their own identities (Brien 2002, 2006, Miller 2012), however the focus herein is on ostensibly authentic narratives of misery and trauma and their reception.

In *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (1999), Suzette Henke argues that the women writers she discusses in this volume utilised literature—both its creative potential and the processes of its writing—as a means of self-healing after traumatic experiences had left them damaged. The acts of writing Henke describes are, in this way, capable of 'reconstructing the beleaguered subject' (1999: 144). In the introduction to one of the first anthologies to define the memoir of trauma as a sub-genre of life writing, Laurie Stone labels these memoirs as 'post-

therapeutic', as these memoirists are engaging in a form of writing whose very point is to 'go about the risky business of telling their own secrets … in voices that are unflinching, unerring, and filled with revelation' (1998: 260). While admitting her own consciousness of the narrative pitfalls contained in this kind of self-revelation, Stone nevertheless remains respectful of those writers who are able to 'retrieve themselves through language, lofting out of the murk of closeted secrets with the ordering instrument of candor' (1998: xvi). Sue Joseph suggests an extended range of motives for writing such life stories. Alongside this idea of seeking a means to facilitate healing, there is also 'to expose; to indict; to rebalance an injustice; as a community service; to help other victims; [and] to empower' (2011).

While this centrality of trauma to the production of much contemporary popular memoir is thus widely noted and discussed, just why readers consume these memoirs in such high numbers has been another prominent and recurring subject, and not one without its own forms of doubt and questioning. Willa McDonald, for instance, notes readers are looking for both pleasure and enlightenment, reading these memoirs to both 'escape ... [and] to better understand ourselves and the world we live in ... to find out how other people manage life' (2007: 148). Jill Ker Conway agrees with the second part of this, suggesting readers use memoirs to gain insight into others' experiences, as 'windows on the worlds the writers inhabit' (1999: vii). Nancy K. Miller goes further, finding the act of reading such memoirs, despite their individual differences, provides readers with a means of collectively recognising and memorialising events or shared trauma, 'a relational act that creates identifications ... [despite] a broad spectrum of so called personal experience' (2000: 423). This tallies with Nancy Miller and Jason Tougaw who see the popularity of reading and writing the trauma memoir as community building – in Joseph's reading 'not so much as one of wide scale narcissism but in terms of community … allowing for the discussion of formerly taboo subjects' (2013).

Kean, on the other hand, echoes earlier criticisms of these readers as voyeuristic, stating that they monstrously revel in 'every molestation, every forced depravity and every betrayal', to the point where she characterises these memoirs as 'the pornography of misery' (2007). Carol Sarler similarly describes memoir readers as 'wallowing in the muck' (2008) and Adams agrees, believing that readers can become 'addicted to other people's agony' (2006). Kean, moreover, argues that any claims of benefits gained by reading such volumes are misguided and little more than 'wishful thinking'. This is due to these memoirs

> presenting sordid detail after sordid detail so that it is imprinted in the mind of readers [which] is not healthy for anyone. It may plant a seed in the minds of some unsavoury readers ... For victims exposed to the prying eye of the public, it may make them more vulnerable, not less, and on some deep emotional level, it risks making us all an accessory to their abuse. (2007)

Kean believes, indeed, that these memoirs are so dangerous that they should not be published. Conversely, Veronica Bhandar suggests readers negotiate a more sophisticated relationship with such texts that prevents them from being harmed by such narratives, describing this as the 'critical distancing that allows readers of trauma

memoir to engage with the work without becoming subsumed in the narrative, or appropriating the trauma for themselves' (2013: 17).

Australian trauma memoirs

It has been debated by critics whether such autobiographical practice is largely symptomatic of a particularly American sense of individualism. Memoirist Patricia Hampl, for instance, saw what she described as the memoir 'craze' of the 1990s as an especially American phenomenon, reflecting an 'enchantment with the first person' and obsession with individuality which she identified as national traits (qtd. in Gale 1998: E1). Others writing at this time found the memoirs then popular reflective of an American trend for the self-obsessed to undertake their therapy in public (Moore 1997: 44), an exercise which a number of critics saw as 'exhibitionistic' (Buckley 1999: 45) or 'pathological' narcissism (Hooks 1999: 76, see also Gass 1994). In 2006, Michiko Kakutani summarised this view, in her statement that the previous decade and a half of memoir publication had produced

> a handful of genuinely moving accounts of people struggling with illness and personal disaster but many more ridiculously exhibitionistic monologues that like to use the word 'survivor' (a word once reserved for individuals who had lived through wars or famines or the Holocaust) to describe people coping with weight problems or bad credit.

Some less critical of the memoir still saw it as an American form. Stone, for example, reads the contemporary memoir in terms of its intersection with what she characterises as an American culture of confession and recovery (1998). Still others saw it as American in its egalitarian narration of the lives of ordinary people, and truly democratic because everyone has a story to tell (see, for instance, Atlas 1996: 25). Yet, despite this focus on an identifiably American narrative, Ben Yagoda moves outwards to the United Kingdom in recognising the popularity of the form in Britain. He suggests that almost all British memoirs can be classified into two categories of which the most prominent is the misery/trauma memoir, which he describes as 'an account, usually by a noncelebrity, of childhood abuse or otherwise painful or difficult circumstances' (Yagoda 2009: 2).[4]

While a number of Australian scholars and critics have engaged with overseas examples, little of this discussion in the 1990s or first decade of the 2000s focused on investigating Australian trauma memoir (for an excpetion see, Dalziell 1999) although there has been more interest in recent years, especially around Stolen Generation trauma narratives and other Indigenous Australian life stories (see, for example, Seran 2015, Whitlock 2015, Brewster 2016). Sue Joseph has also investigated supervising such writing in a university setting (2011, 2013, Joseph and Latona 2017). To add to this work, the remainder of this article will explore some examples of the Australian trauma memoir in order to investigate what these texts contribute to our understanding of the trauma memoir as a form of creative writing production.[5]

Memoirs of traumatic Australian childhoods

The Australian memoirs that have the most in common with the bestselling international examples from America and Britain discussed above are those memoirs which present narratives focusing on, or describing the effects of growing up in dysfunctional and/or abusive family situations or otherwise suffering a traumatic childhood. A series of prominent—and well received by readers—examples of this type of 'misery' memoir have recently been published.

Comic Rosie Waterland's *The Anti-Cool Girl* (2015) describes a truly appalling childhood. In this memoir, Waterland's narrative depicts how, as the child of addicts, she grew up in a housing commission estate where dangerous drug dealers and sex work, overdoses and suicide attempts were a part of her daily life. She is neglected by both her parents and, after her father dies, was not served well by her foster carers. She also describes being bullied at high school, and then, when she was suicidal, her commitment to an institution. This horrific story is narrated with a calm directness that is, in turn, both deeply affecting as well as reminiscent of Augusten Burrough's *Running with Scissors* (2002). Reviews of this book focused on Waterland's bravery in relating her story, implying that the acts of remembering and rendering into text the events from a traumatic past are courageous (Schwab 2006). This takes into account circulating theories that retraumatisation can arise from recalling, and writing about, traumatic experience (Baker 2009).

Columnist and writer Richard Glover's *Flesh Wounds* (2015) is another recently published memoir of family dysfunction leading to trauma, in this case, however, an example of a narrative which recounts how the memoirist confronts that trauma at a significantly later date. In this, Glover follows the narrative trajectory of many international memoirs in choosing to decide to find more out about his family history when he is middle aged. *Flesh Wounds* opens with the story of Glover's unusual conception – not only taking place in Papua New Guinea, but rather murky as he is unsure whether this was via artificial insemination or a one-time encounter between his mother and father. His mother was, he relates, a narcissistic fabulist who lied to him about her upbringing (posh and lonely; instead it was working class in an extended family), and his parents' neglect left the young boy vulnerable to sexual predators. An interview in which he stated that his mother was so 'disconnected, self-interested, otherwise engaged' (Glover 2016) that he used to describe himself as 'self-raising, like flour' (qtd. in Gilling 2015), is the key to the sadness which lies at the core of his memoir. The cover endorsements come from prominent international memoirists—Burroughs and Jeanette Winterson—and this volume was positively reviewed (see, for example, Sheridan 2015), including a fascinating review in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in which Mandy Sayer describes how she found that Glover's 'talent has swelled as a consequence of trauma' (2015).[7] This suggestion, that Glover discovering and recounting his trauma had made him a better writer, is actually in line with some research into music excellence, which suggests that the resilience gained from overcoming trauma can feed into talent development. In relation to musical prodigies, for instance, a recent report evidences 'that overcoming early life challenge is a precursor to high level achievement' (MacNamara, Collins and Holmes 2016: 344). This is quite a different slant on this topic to the more usual approach of using

the arts as a way of building resilience in those who have suffered trauma (Shand 2014).

In another example of recent Australian trauma memoir, *Working Class Boy: A Memoir of Running Away* (2016), *Cold Chisel* frontman Jimmy Barnes tells the story of his childhood in Scotland and, after emigration, in Australia. He argues that the trauma he suffered due to his violent alcoholic father triggered his infamous risk taking behavior as a musician. The book opens with a clear statement that Barnes is, through this narrative, finally taking account of this trauma and the effect it has had on his life:

> Time and trauma have taken what I was born with and what I have experienced and brewed it up into what you see before you now ... I spent most of my life running from my childhood and now it seems like my time to face it. This is the story of my lifetime running away. (1)

Proving the enduring sales power of the celebrity trauma/misery memoir, Barnes' book went straight to the top of the Neilsen BookScan bestseller list in Australia and HarperCollins revealed that sales figures were much higher than expected: '16,266 for its first week – the sort of number that you would expect of a top 10 bestseller in Christmas week' (Wyndham 2016). Barnes also promoted the book with the energy he brought to his performances, with three events a day in the first weeks where he signed thousands of copies, and multiple television appearances. Throughout November and December 2016, he also presented the 'Jimmy Barnes Working Class Boy: An Evening of Stories and Songs' show, which toured nationally. His first 'spoken word' tour promised fans that Barnes would be drawing from the book: 'telling his life story ... sharing stories from his troubled childhood and delinquent adolescence ... providing a real insight into the events that shaped Jimmy's life and his music' (Sydney Opera House 2016). *Working Class Boy* had sold 30,000 copies by the end of the second week, prompting his publishers to increase the print run to 75,000. Three weeks after release, it was noted that the book had outsold Bruce Springsteen's well-reviewed autobiography *Born to Run* (2016) that had been released a week after Barnes' volume (Wyndham 2016). Not unexpectedly, *Working Class Boy* attracted celebrity endorsements alongside reviews. Echoing responses to Waterland's and Glover's memoirs, actor Sam Neill offered that the book was 'truly harrowing, and yet often tender and funny ... it is also a story of resilience and bravery' (HarperCollins 2016). Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996) remains the benchmark for such narratives, with actor Magda Szubanski describing Barnes' book as '*Angela's Ashes* meets *Trainspotting*' adding clarification on the extent of the trauma suffered: '[but] more brutal. A deep, guttural howl of a book' (HarperCollins 2016). The book's release was also covered in newspapers' general news pages, these stories without exception focusing on Barnes' violent upbringing and the misery he suffered as a result (Overington 2016).

Kristina Olsson's *Boy, Lost* (2013) also describes trauma, but is written in what could be characterised as a more literary manner. *Boy, Lost* narrates the trauma suffered by an entire family after the author's mother had her eighteen-month-old baby son stolen out of her arms by her estranged, violent husband as she boarded a train in 1950.

Mother and son were only reunited almost forty years later. The author, fathered by her mother's second husband, did not know the reasons for her mother's sadness and the pervasive sense of emptiness in their home during those decades, as this was kept secret, but she still felt the grief, shame and guilt of that traumatic loss and believed it shaped the family. This memoir, therefore, Olsson writes, is a story of secrets that could have died with her mother:

> the story my mother never told, not to us, the children who would grow up around it in the way that skin grows over a scratch … the flesh and bones of her life were buried with her in autumn-damp soil. What she left was a fine, opaque pattern like the ones she pinned over fabric to make our clothes, a movable outline that refused to be fixed. (2–3)

It is, indeed, a narrative imbued with the effects of this secret trauma. As Olsson describes:

> This is what we didn't understand, not then: that the past had gripped and confounded her, stalked her dreams. That every day of her life after her son was taken, she would sift through the memory of it, every terrible second. Turning each in her hand, looking for ways she might have changed them. (3)

In her study of contemporary women's memoir, Janet Mason Ellerby notes that secrets and secrecy around trauma are core to many compelling memoirs, positing that memoirs are themselves a form of secret sharing between a writer and reader (2001). In *Boy, Lost*, this focus resulted in a nuanced and highly successful narrative that was very well received by critics (see, Nieuwenhuizen 2013, Grunseit 2014, Hogan 2014, Wyndham 2014), won many important literary awards[6] and, despite describing much sorrow and despair, was not described as a misery memoir. This is in line with a series of prominent Australian memoirs which, although recounting considerable trauma and misery, were received and reviewed as literary works. Memoirs that could fit into this description are Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987), Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* (1996), Raimond Gaita's *Romulus My Father* (1998), Peter Rose's *Rose Boy*s (2001) and Deng Adut and Ben Mckelvey's *Songs of a War Boy* (2016). These memoirs have also attracted considerable attention from literary scholars.

In contrast, politician Rob Oakeshott's *The Independent Member for Lyne: A Memoir* (2014) was described by political journalist Troy Bramston as a 'misery memoir' (2014) soon after it was released. This volume, however, differed from the books above in that it focused on his life as an adult. Unusual among the plethora of Australian political memoirs published in 2014, the abundance of which was noted by various commentators (see, Morley 2014, Adler 2015, Messer 2015), Bramston used this term to describe a narrative that details how its author was 'disillusioned with politics … [and] physically and mentally a mess' (2016). Publisher Louise Adler has written that Australian political memoirs

> have usually been penned in defeat or retirement … picking at scabs … The reader who imagines the memoir will be objective, fair or even accurate is naïve. The political memoir is unabashedly myopic, subjective and reflexively partisan. (2015)

In Oakeshott's case, however, the person he most harshly judges is himself, including a detailed assessment of his own inadequacies and failings. The text is pervaded by his bitter disappointment with the political system of which he played a key part, when he was one of three politicians needed to help one of the two major parties form government after the 2010 Federal election, becoming in the process the pivot point on which the balance of power rested. Adler notes that political memoirists 'struggle with the tension between the intimate and personal account their publishers want and their own preoccupation with legacy building' (2015), but Oakeshott's memoir follows more closely the characteristics of the highly personal focus of the misery memoir.

Even as early as the night of the election, Oakeshott reports that he was cognisant of the potential for trauma. He remarks: 'Campaigns are an adrenaline rush, but they have collateral damage … they are selfish exercises and are terrible for partners and families' (2014: 13). He uses language common to trauma memoirists, describing the tight election result as 'an emotional roller coaster' (13) and describing similar physical symptoms to those who have suffered violence or abuse. On the morning after the election, driving to an interview, he finds himself 'too tired to talk work … we have to stop several times as the three of us are too exhausted to drive' (17). Then, clearly depressed, he dismisses the interview itself as 'a waste of time' (17). He does not leave it there, however, continuing to elaborate, 'we had just wasted six hours of our lives' (17). It is only the first day of the new political term, yet all is world weariness and pessimistic negativity. The next day, he is interviewed in the rain and spends the day in wet clothes. The next, flying to Canberra in a borrowed suit, he feels intellectually bullied in the political negotiations, and senses his sense of self disintegrating: 'choosing to do something, at the expense of being someone' (24). During the following negotiations, Oakeshott is out of his depth, finding 'the management of expectations and perceptions of others ... horrendously complex' (41). From this point, nothing continues to recount a mixture of personal and political misery. There is no triumph and, by the end of this memoir, readers are left with the embodiment of the image of the unsmiling, tired-looking man on the front cover who is sitting slightly hunched as if fearful of what the dark clouds massing above might rain down on him.

Conclusion

The Australian memoirs profiled here can be seen to share many of the features of the widely-disparaged American and British misery memoir. However, while not all these and other such texts are, or intend to be, the globally-relevant narratives of social justice and injustice that scholars such as Gillian Whitlock and Kate Douglas examine and discuss, they are nevertheless 'social documents' (Conway 1999: vii), because they convey narratives of both inner life and external events and raise important issues such as domestic violence and dysfunctional family dynamics for both private contemplation and public discussion. Although often criticised as formulaic, many readers, moreover, appreciate how many of these narratives provide detailed examples of the power of the individual human spirit to meet and overcome adversity. In this

way, such Australian memoirs can demonstrate how both writers and readers can engage with what Cathy Caruth describes as 'the notion of trauma' as a means of understanding what happened in the past (1991: 182). These memoirs, therefore, also reveal that the narrative contemplation of the self does not have to be self-indulgent or narcissistic on the part of writers, or voyeuristic and prurient on the part of readers.

Endnotes

1. I greatly appreciated the input of the anonymous reviewer who reminded me about Forrester's memoir series.
2. Works which followed these included Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* (1998) and Augusten Burroughs' *Running with Scissors* (2002) about his extraordinary childhood.
3. Not all bestselling memoirs have been narratives of trauma and the misery suffered as a result. Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie* (1997), where the writer rediscovers a past university professor in the last months of the older man's life and pens a series of essays around the wisdom he shares with the author on a series of weekly visits, has reportedly sold an astounding 14 million copies (Rak 2013: 9).
4. Yagoda's second category is 'the life story of a mid-level radio disk jockey, television presenter, athlete, or comedian, or their WAGs' [wives and girlfriends] (2009: 9).
5. While this discussion uses both historical and contemporary examples, it is not attempting to be comprehensive or even representative.
6. Mandy Sayer has written her own trauma memoir – *The Poet's Wife* (2014).
7. *Boy, Lost* won: the 2014 Kibble Literary Award; 2014 NSW Premier's Literary Awards, Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-fiction; 2014 Queensland Literary Awards, Non-fiction Award; and, 2014 Western Australia Premier's Book, Non-fiction Award. It was also shortlisted: for the 2013 Australian Human Rights Commission Literature Award; 2013 Queensland Literary Awards, *Courier-Mail* People's Choice for Queensland Book of the Year; 2014 Stella Prize; and, 2014 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, Non-fiction Award.

Works cited

Adams, Tim 2006 'Feel the pain' *The Observer* 29 January, at https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/jan/29/biography.features (accessed 11 October 2016)

Addley, Esther 2007 'So bad it's good' *The Guardian* 15 June, 4

Adler, Louise 2015 'Political memoirs' *Meanjin* 74 (3), at http://mupublishing.tumblr.com/post/127448927933/louise-adler-on-political-memoirs (accessed 11 October 2016)

Adut, Deng and Ben Mckelvey 2016 *Songs of a War Boy* Sydney: Hachette Australia

Albom, Mitch 1999 *Tuesdays with Morrie* New York: Doubleday

Allison, Dorothy 1992 *Bastard Out of Carolina* New York: Dutton

Atlas, James 1996 'Confessing for voyeurs: The age of the literary memoir is now' *New York Times Magazine* 12 May, section 6, 25

Baker, Sara 2009 'Tell it slant: History, memory, and imagination in the healing writing workshop' *Traumatology* 15(4), 15–23

Barnes, Jimmy 2016 *Working Class Boy: A Memoir of Running Away* Sydney: Harper Collins

Bates, Virginia 2012 '"Misery loves company": Sexual trauma**,** psychoanalysis and the market for misery' *Journal of Medical Humanities* 33 (2), 61–81

Baxendale, John and Chris Pawling 1996 *Narrating the Thirties: A Decade in the Making: 1930 to the Present* Houndsmills: Macmillan

Belchem, John 2000 *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

Bhandar, Veronica Maria Delphine 2013 'Sounding through silence: Inter-generational voicings in memoir, Memory, and Postmodernity' MA thesis, Victoria, BC, Canada: University of Victoria

Bornat, Joanna 1977 'Women's history and oral history: An outline bibliography' *Oral History* 5 (2), 124–35

Bourke, Joanna 1994 'Housewifery in working-class England 1860–1914' *Past & Present* 143, 167–97

Bramston, Troy 2014 'Misery memoir shows folly of snubbing voters' *The Australian* 2 June, at http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/misery-memoir-shows-folly-of-snubbing-voters/story-fnbcok0h-1226939093660 (accessed 11 October 2016)

Bramston, Troy 2016 'Federal election 2016: Has money lured Oakeshott back to politics?' *The Australian* 14 June, at http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/troy-bramston/federal-election-2016-has-money-lured-oakeshott-back-to-politics/news-story/ee8712ba2abbb5c90de2c352d44857f3 (accessed 11 October 2016)

Brewster, Anne 2016 *Reading Aboriginal Women's Life Stories* Sydney: Sydney University Press, Sydney

Brien, Donna Lee 2002 'Being honest about lying: Defining the limits of auto/biographical lying' *TEXT: Journal of the Australian Association of Writing Programs* 6 (1), at http://www.textjournal.com.au/april02/brien.htm (accessed 20 April 2017)

Brien, Donna Lee 2006 'The power of truth: Literary scandals and creative nonfiction' in Tess Brady and Nigel Krauth (eds) *Creative Writing: Theory Beyond Practice* Brisbane: Post-Pressed, 55–63

Buckley, Christopher 1999 'Down! Set! Tut! Tut!: Hiking toward Bethlehem' *The Washington Monthly* 31 (3), 44–6

Burroughs, Augusten 2002 *Running with Scissors* New York: St. Martin's

Caruth, Cathy 1991 'Unclaimed experience: Trauma and the possibility of history' *Yale French Studies* 79, 181–92

Chinn, Carl 1988 *They Worked All Their Lives: Women of the Urban Poor in England, 1880–1939* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press

Conway, Jill Ker 1999 'Introduction', in *In Her Own Words: Women's Memoirs from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States* New York: Vintage Books/Random House, vii–xi

Couser, G Thomas 1997 *Recovering Bodies: Illness, Disability and Life-Writing* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press

Dalziell, Rosamund 1999 *Shameful Autobiographies: Shame in Contemporary Australian AuobiAutobiographies and Culture*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press

Donadio, Rachel 2008 'Stranger than truthiness' *New York Times*, 4 March, at http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/03/04/stranger-than-truthiness/?_r=0 (accessed 15 October 2016)

Donohue, K 2007 'Tumbled backwards into the children's market': An interview with Helen Forrester' *Canadian Children's Literature / Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse*, at http://ccl-lcj.ca/index.php/ccl-lcj/article/view/4665 (accessed 24 April)

Douglas, Kate 2015 ‘Ethical dialogues: youth, memoir and trauma’ *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 30 (2), 271–88

Eakin, Paul John 1999 *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press

Ellerby, Janet Mason 2001 *Intimate Reading: The Contemporary Women’s Memoir* Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press

Faire, Lucy 1998 ‘Making home: working-class perceptions of space, time and material culture in family life, 1900–1955’ PhD thesis, Leicester: University of Leicester

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub (eds) 1992 *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* New York and London: Routledge

Forrester, Helen 1974 *Twopence to Cross the Mersey* London: Jonathan Cape

Forrester, Helen 1979 *Liverpool Miss* London: The Bodley Head

Forrester, Helen 1981 *By the Waters of Liverpool* London: The Bodley Head

Forrester, Helen 1985 *Lime Street at Two* London: The Bodley Head

Foveaux, Jessie Lee Brown 1997 *Any Given Day: The Life and Times of Jessie Lee Brown Foveaux* New York: Warner

Gaita, Raimond 1998 *Romulus My Father* Melbourne: Text Publishing

Gale, Elaine 1998 ‘My life as a book: You don’t have to be famous anymore to write a bestseller about your own experiences’ *Minneapolis Star Tribune* 25 January, E1

Gass, William 1994 ‘The art of self: Autobiography in an age of narcissism’ *Harper’s Magazine* May, 43–52

Genzlinger, Neil 2011 ‘The problem with memoirs’ *The New York Times*, 28 January, at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/30/books/review/Genzlinger-t.html?pagewanted=all (accessed 15 October 2016)

Gilling, Tom 2015 ‘Richard Glover’s *Flesh Wounds* asks who’s got the weirdest parents?’ *The Australian* 29 August, at http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/richard-glovers-flesh-wounds-asks-whos-got-the-weirdest-parents/news-story/95cb7d3f132cc24673cb69f4460924b6 (accessed 9 October 2016)

Gilmore, Leigh 2001a *The limits of autobiography: trauma and testimony* Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press

Gilmore, Leigh 2001b ‘Limit-cases: Trauma, self-representation, and the jurisdictions of identity’ *Biography* 24 (1), 128–39

Glover, Richard 2015 *Flesh Wounds* Sydney: ABC Books/Harper Collins

Glover, Richard 2016 ‘Writer’s picks: Richard Glover’s top ten memoirs about dysfunctional families’ *Better Reading*, at http://www.betterreading.com.au/book_list/writers-picksrichard-glovers-top-ten-memoirs-about-dysfunctional-families (accessed 11 October 2016)

Grealy, Lucy 1994 *Autobiography of a Face* Boston: Houghton Mifflin

Grunseit, Paula 2014 ‘Kristina Ollson *Boy, Lost: A Family Memoir* [reviewed]’ *Newtown Review of Books* 10 February, at http://newtownreviewofbooks.com.au/2014/02/10/kristina-olsson-boy-lost-family-memoir-reviewed-paula-grunseit (accessed 11 October 2016)

HarperCollins 2016 *Working Class Boy* by Jimmy Barnes, at https://www.harpercollins.com/9781460707005/working-class-boy (accessed 16 October 2016)

Henke, Suzette 1999 *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women’s Life-Writing* New York: St. Martin’s

Herman, Judith 1992 *Trauma and Recovery* New York: Basic Books

Hogan, Sandra 2014 'Kristina Olsson: lost and found' *The Saturday Paper* 6 September, at https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/2014/09/06/kristina-olsson-lost-and-found/1409925600 (accessed 19 October 2016)

Hogarth, William 1751 *The Four Stages of Cruelty* [engravings, series]

Hooks, Bell 1999 *Remembered Rapture: The Writer at Work* New York: Henry Holt

Hornbacher, Marya 1998 *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* New York: Harper Collins

Huish, Mabel Rose 1987 'Some aspects of the nature and content of autobiography, with particular reference to the 20th century autobiography of childhood', MPhil thesis, Hendon: Middlesex Polytechnic, at http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/13459 (accessed 21 April 2017)

Joseph, Sue 2011 'Supervising life-writing of trauma in a tertiary setting' *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses* 15 (2), at http://textjournal.com.au/oct11/joseph.htm (accessed 11 October 2016)

Joseph, Sue 2013 'The Lonely Girl: Investigating the scholarly nexus of trauma life-writing and process in tertiary institutions' *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses* 17 (1), at http://www.textjournal.com.au/april13/joseph.htm (accessed 11 October 2016)

Joseph, Sue and Freya Latona 2017 'Guiding life writers: The supervision of creative doctoral work interrogating personal trauma' *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* 14 (1), 23–35

Kakutani, Michiko 2006 'Bending the truth in a million little ways' *New York Times* 17 January, at http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/17/books/17kaku.html (accessed 8 October 2016)

Karr, Mary 1995 *The Liars' Club: A Memoir* New York: Viking

Kaysen, Susanna 1993 *Girl, Interrupted* New York: Turtle Bay

Kean, Danuta 2007 'The pornography of misery memoirs' *Daily Mail* (Australia) 10 October, at http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-486478/The-pornography-misery-memoirs.html (accessed 11 October 2016)

Kirkpatrick, David D 2001 'Setting new frontiers in the autobiography' *New York Times* 9 July, C8

Knight, Lynn 2016 *The Button Box: Lifting the Lid on Women's Lives* London: Chatto & Windus

Lane, Tony 1997 *Liverpool: City of the Sea* 2nd rev. ed. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

Lannon, Linnea 1998 'So many memoirs: A miserable childhood' *Detroit Free Press* 7 October, at http://www.freep.com (accessed 13 February 2014)

Luckhurst, Roger 2008 *The Trauma Question* Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge

MacNamara, Áine, Dave Collins and Patricia Holmes 2016 'Musical prodigies: does talent need trauma?' in Gary E McPherson (ed) *Musical Prodigies: Interpretations from Psychology, Education, Musicology, and Ethnomusicology* Oxford: Oxford UP, 338–57

McCourt, Frank 1996 *Angela's Ashes* New York: Scribner

McDonald, Willa 2007 'Examining our own lives' in Susie Eisenhuth and Willa McDonald (eds) *The Writer's Reader: Understanding Journalism and Non-Fiction* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 148–72

Messer, Jane 2015 'Australia is awash with political memoir, but only some will survive the flood' *The Conversation* 9 September, at http://theconversation.com/australia-is-awash-with-political-memoir-but-only-some-will-survive-the-flood-46386 (accessed 11 October 2016)

Miller, Alyson 2012 'The pornography of trauma: Faking identity in "misery memoirs"' *LiNQ* 39, 90–103

Miller, Nancy K 2000 'But enough about me, what do you think of my memoir?' *Yale Journal of Criticism* 13 (2), 421–36

Miller, Nancy K and Jason Tougaw (eds) 2002 *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community* Chicago: University of Illinois Press

Milliot, Jim 2015 'The hottest (and coldest) book categories of 2014' *Publishers Weekly* 23 January, at http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/65387-the-hot-and-cold-categories-of-2014.html (accessed 23 April 2017)

Minzesheimer, Bob 1997 'Mad for memoirs' *USA Today* 16 April, D1

Montefiore, Janet 1996 *Men and Women Writers of the 1930s: The Dangerous Flood of History* London and New York: Routledge

Moore, Suzanne 1997 'How was it for me?: *The Kiss*: A secret life' *New Statesman* 15 August, 44–5

Morgan, Sally 1988 *My Place* London: Virago

Morley, Rachel 2014 'Political memoirs' *Sydney Review of Books* 15 August, at http://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/wir-15-august-2014 (accessed 11 October 2016)

Nicholson, Virginia 2011 *Millions Like Us: Women's Lives in the Second World War* London: Penguin Books

Nieuwenhuizen, Agnes 2013 'A mother's grief for a lost childhood' *The Australian* 13 April, at http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/a-mothers-grief-for-a-lost-childhood/story-fn9n8gph-1226618470013 (accessed 11 October 2016)

Oakeshott, Rob 2014 *The Independent Member for Lyne: A memoir* Sydney: Allen & Unwin

Olsson, Kristina 2013 *Boy, Lost* St Lucia: University of Queensland Press

Overington, Caroline 2016 'Working-class boy Jimmy Barnes bares his soul in memoir' *The Australian* 24 November, at http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/workingclass-boy-jimmy-barnes-bares-his-soul-in-memoir/news-story/b8453a36508ab50cd426afbe433f40c7 (accessed 15 October 2016)

Page, Benedicte and Graeme Neill 2008 'Gloom envelops the misery memoir market' *The Bookseller*, 23 May, 5

Pelzer, Dave 1995 *A Child Called "It"* Deerfield Beach FL: Health Communication

Pilkington, Doris 1996 *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* St Lucia: University Queensland Press

Publishers Weekly 1997 '*Any Given Day: The Life and Times of Jessie Lee Brown Foveaux* [review]', *Publishers Weekly* 11 March, at http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-446-52343-1 (accessed 11 October 2016)

Rak, Julie 2013 *Boom!: Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market* Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press

Regard, Frédéric 2013 'Purloining the image of trauma: Photography, testimony and self articulation in Peter Roche's *Unloved*' in Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega (eds) *Trauma and Romance in Contemporary British Literature* New York and London: Routledge, 107–23

Ritchie, Harry 2007 'Out of the woods and into the trees' *The Daily Mail* 29 May, at http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/books/article-458512/Out-woods-trees.html#ixzz4N7He5Khn (accessed 12 October 2016)

Robertson, Rachel 2012 'Against redemption: The dilemma of memoir' *Axon: Creative Explorations* 1, 2: 1–8

Rose, Peter 2001 *Rose Boys* Sydney: Allen & Unwin

Sarler, Carol 2008 'I'll tell you what's Ugly ... this shameful appetite for misery porn' *Daily Mail*, 20 November, at http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1087604/Ill-tell-whats-Ugly--- shameful-appetite-misery-porn.html (accessed 20 July 2012)

Sayer, Mandy 2014 *The Poet's Wife* Sydney: Allen & Unwin

Sayer, Mandy 2015 'Flesh Wounds review: How Richard Glover overcame his family history' *The Sydney Morning Herald* 19 September, at http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/flesh-wounds-review-how-richard-glover-overcame-his-family-history-20150910-gjjaz4.html (accessed 15 October 2016)

Schwab, G 2006 'Writing against memory and forgetting' *Literature and Medicine* 25, 95–121

Segura, Jonathan 2017 'Print book sales rose again in 2016' *Publishers Weekly* 6 January, at http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/72450-print-book-sales-rose-again-in-2016.html (accessed 23 April 2017)

Seran, Justine 2015 'Australian Aboriginal memoir and memory: a stolen generations trauma narrative' *Humanities* 4 (4), 661–75

Shand, Meagan 2014 'Understanding and building resilience with art: A socio-ecological approach' Masters thesis, Perth: Edith Cowan University

Sheridan, Greg 2015 'Richard Glover's memoir *Flesh Wounds* a wonderful read' *The Australian*, at http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/richard-glovers-memoir-flesh-wounds-a-wonderful-read/news-story/ed9df44ef41393e1922cab001be3940e (accessed 15 October 2016)

Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson (eds) 1996 *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press

Springsteen, Bruce 2016 *Born to Run* New York: Simon & Schuster

Stone, Laurie (ed) 1998 *Close to the Bone: Memoirs of Hurt, Rage, and Desire* New York: Grove Press

Sydney Opera House 2016 'Jimmy Barnes: Working class boy: an evening of stories and songs', *The Sydney Opera House*, at http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/whatson/jimmy_barnes_2016.aspx (accessed 15 October 2016)

Telegraph, The 2011 'Obituary: Helen Forrester' *The Telegraph* 30 November, at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/8926732/Helen-Forrester.html (accessed 22 April 2017)

Thorpe, Vanessa 2017 'How true love led Helen Forrester to leave Mersey for Indian exile' *The Guardian* 8 January, at https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jan/08/helen-forrester-twopence-to-cross-the-mersey-biography-robert-bhatia (accessed 22 April 2017)

Tranter, Rhys 2015 '"Without solution of continuity": Beckett's *That Time* and trauma memoir' *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* 27 (1), 115–30

Waterland, Rosie 2015 *The Anti-Cool Girl* Sydney: 4th Estate/Harper Collins

Whitlock, Gillian 2015 *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Wyndham, Susan 2014 'Kristina Olsson wins Kibble Literary Award for *Boy, Lost*' *The Sydney Morning Herald* 23 July, at http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/kristina-olsson-wins-kibble-literary-award-for-boy-lost-20140723-zvxxl.html (accessed 19 October 2016)

Wyndham, Susan 2016 '*Working Class Boy* by Jimmy Barnes outsells *Born to Run* by Bruce Springsteen' *The Sydney Morning Herald* 7 October, at http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/working-class-boy-by-jimmy-barnes-outsells-born-to-run-by-bruce-springsteen-20161004-grus80.html (accessed 6 October 2016)

Yagoda, Ben 2009 *Memoir: A History* New York: Riverhead

Yardley, Jonathan 1995 '*The Liars' Club*: *A Memoir* [review]' *The Washington Post* 18 June, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/09/AR2009110901993.html (accessed 15 October 2016)

Zacharek, Stephanie 1997 'The memoir lapses of American publishers' *Newsday* 13 April, G6

Acknowledgements

A sincere thank you to the anonymous reviewers of this text for their generous and useful suggestions that assisted me to refine and improve this article.