

# *Carpentaria*: Reading with the Dirt Of Blurbs and Front Pages

ROGER OSBORNE AND GILLIAN WHITLOCK  
University of Queensland

## Graphics

Enter 'Carpentaria' into *Yasiv.com* and the screen is populated with an ever-expanding constellation of books. This is one way of imagining transits of Alexis Wright's novel offshore. These are associations, and sometimes seemingly random affiliations driven by the purchases of Amazon customers. There is no quantitative information about book sales here, we cannot derive any historical or conceptual insights or information about curricula or courses that produce these associations. This digital tool launches *Carpentaria* into a vast network of books that resists orderly associations of canons, traditions, and fields.

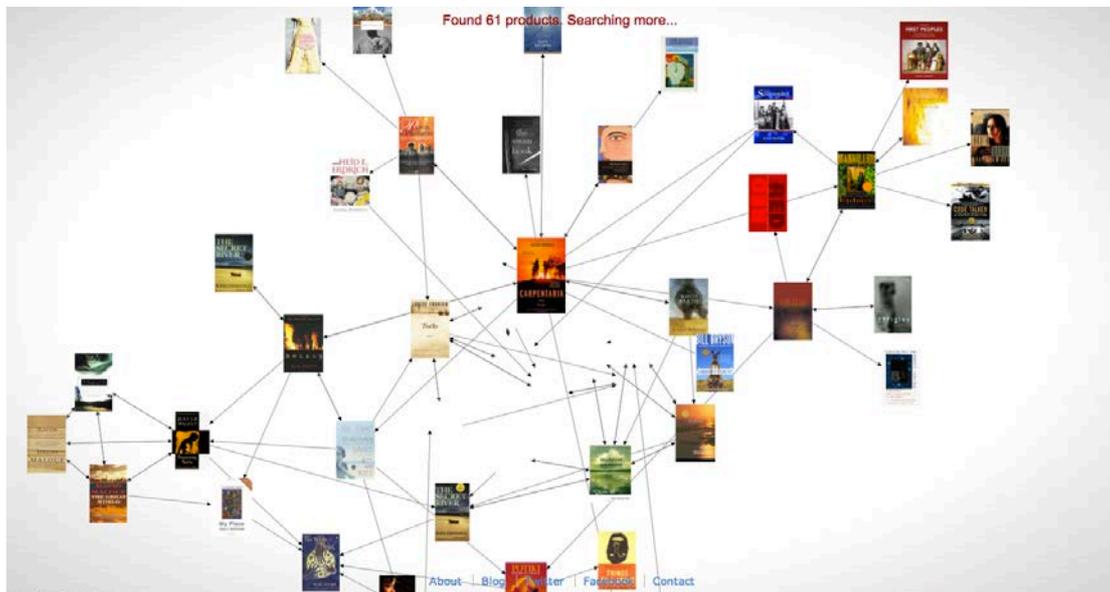
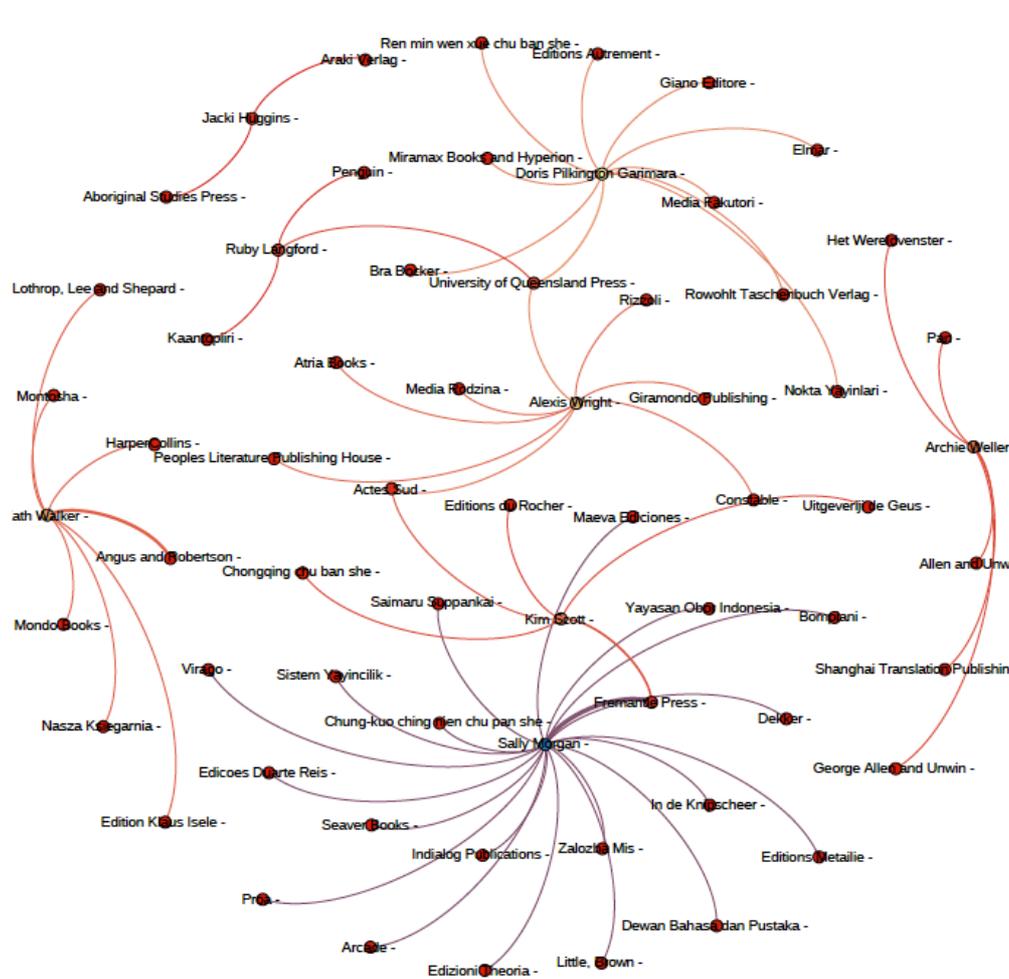


Fig. 1 Yasiv graphic: *Carpentaria* in the US market of Amazon.com, May 2015.

This *Yasiv.com* graphic of the US market launches *Carpentaria* into a constellation of 155 texts, with the distinctive American edition at the centre. In immediate proximity we see Wright's other fictions, *Plains of Promise* and *The Swan Book*, but so too is Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* and a node of South Pacific writing: *The Bone People*, *Come Over Here and We Will Eat You All: A New Zealand Story*, *Potiki*, *Tales of the Tikongs*, among others. Through *Skins* (a compilation of contemporary Indigenous writing) and *Red on Red* (on reading Native American literature) *Carpentaria* is networked into native American writing in the US Amazon market: *Talking Leaves*, anthologies of native American testimonies and short stories, and the Canadian Indigenous novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. These associations within what we might configure as a transnational Indigenous literary network are accentuated in the graphic generated by Amazon's Canadian market. In this *Yasiv.com* graphic *Carpentaria* is affiliated with fictions by Tomson Highway and Thomas King, as well as *Traplines*, *One Good Story That One* and *The Rez Sisters*. This Canadian network indicates a strong field of Indigenous writing that hosts *Carpentaria*, however this dissipates in the graphic generated

from the British market. Here *Carpentaria* is relatively isolated, with few connections to proximate texts. There is an Australian node nearby, where fictions by Christos Tsiolkas and Tim Winton predominate and, via the Routledge *Literature and Globalisation Reader* (which does not feature Wright’s work), weak links to postcolonial writers, Amitav Ghosh and Chimamanda Adiche. Finally, the particularly strong interest in Wright’s fiction in France drives the graphic of the French market generated by *Yasiv.com* to incorporate 200 books in proximity to *Carpentaria* although, intriguingly, there is ‘no image available’ of the book itself at the centre of this field—in all other markets it is the American edition, with its distinctive ochre livery, that is marketed. What we see here in the French graphic is a strong field of Australian literature, both historical and contemporary, popular fiction (*Burial Rights*) and a node of Booker contenders and prizewinners: *The Luminaries*. *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, as well as Adiche’s *Americanah*. Books on English language nearby are a reminder that here *Carpentaria* is read in translation. To date (the Black Words database records) there are four translations of *Carpentaria*: French, Italian, Polish and Chinese.

The *Yasiv.com* graphic is contingent on the vicissitudes of the market, but it presents the movement of *Carpentaria* with a dynamism that is compelling and suggestive of various nodes driven by consumer choice. Other graphics of Australian Indigenous literature on the move ‘outside country’ are less volatile, for example this image generated from the Black Words database tracks a series of Indigenous texts on the move through translation and overseas editions:



**Fig 2: Indigenous Australian writers and their publishers 1980–2012**  
 Source: Black Words database

This graphic indicates the dominance of Sally Morgan's *My Place* in translations of Australian Indigenous literature, which we have discussed elsewhere (Whitlock 2013, 2015) and it indicates the strong interest in Indigenous life narrative more generally, in the translations of Ruby Langford, Jackie Huggins and Doris Pilkington Garimara, for example. However if we transpose a chronological framework here we see there is a recent shift to Indigenous fiction, and Wright's work figures prominently, with translations of her writing into French (Actes Sud 2009) and Italian (Rizzoli 2008), Polish (Media Rodzina 2009) and Chinese (People's Literature Publishing House 2012). This graphic also indicates the publishers that specialise in publication and translation of Australian Indigenous writing offshore, principally Actes Sud in France. We have discussed the transits of *Benang* elsewhere (Whitlock & Osborne 2013) but what is evident here is that translations of Indigenous fiction, by Kim Scott and Alexis Wright, Philip McLaren, Anita Heiss, Melissa Lucashenko and Archie Weller, have superseded exports of Indigenous life writing. A change in ideoscapes has occurred, from scenes of witness associated with testimonial life narrative late last century to engagements with fictional prose, both the novel and the short story, this century. Alexis Wright spent three years travelling to promote *Carpentaria* internationally, speaking at literary and academic events in China, India, Britain, Italy, France and Ireland, with not enough time to accept invitations from Germany, Norway, Tahiti, the United States of America, Canada, Sweden, Iceland, and Japan. In August 2013, Wright recalled that her international audience 'wanted to know about Aboriginal culture and people. ... *Carpentaria* did its journey around the world and pulled me with it and I had to tag along until I couldn't take it any more.'<sup>1</sup>

*Yasiv.com* and the Black Words database enable graphics that track publication and translation offshore, but how is *Carpentaria* read outside country? A gap between evidence of distribution and consumption is perplexing. Atria published the book as a hardback in the United States in 2009, following that with a paperback issue in 2010. To date no reviews have been found, indicating that *Carpentaria* attracted little to no interest in the mainstream press in the USA, but it can be shown how widely the book was distributed in library networks (Fig. 3) by drawing on the holdings data of worldcat.org. More than six hundred libraries bought and hold at least one copy of the American edition of Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*, providing a unique view of the extent of the novel's distribution in the United States of America.



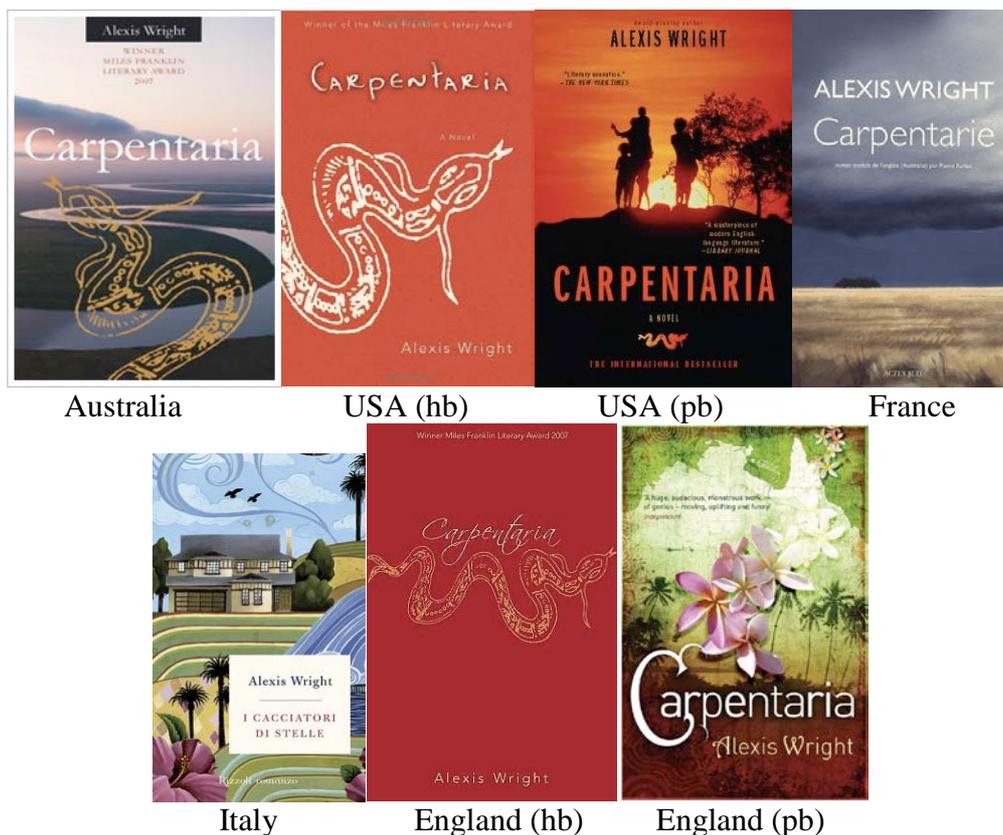
Figure 3: Distribution of *Carpentaria* in libraries in the USA, worldcat.org.

The sales potential and quality of *Carpentaria* had been tested and proven in the Australian book market when publisher Ivor Indyk started to look for overseas opportunities. Faced with the challenges associated with promoting an Australian literary title that had been rejected by most of Australia's mainstream publishers, Indyk drew on personal and professional networks to get the book noticed.<sup>2</sup> Indyk's persistence, and connections, resulted in a *New York Times* essay written by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Jane Perlez. Perlez was born in London, but grew up in Australia, graduating from the University of Sydney in the 1960s before embarking on an international career in journalism. Published on 18 November 2007, her essay described the novel, its contribution to Australian literature, the prizes it had won, and parenthetically stated, 'The book does not yet have an American publisher.'<sup>3</sup> With some more persuasion, the literary agent Gloria Loomis took on the book and eventually attracted the interest of Judith Curr, the Australian-born publisher at Atria Publishing Group (an imprint of Simon and Schuster).<sup>4</sup>

Trans-national networks also played a part in the production of an English edition, and subsequent translations. On the suggestion of Giramondo's Australian distributor, Indyk approached Constable in London, striking it lucky with the commissioning editor, Andreas Campomar, a distant relation of Uruguayan novelist, Eduardo Galeano, one of Alexis Wright's influences. Constable published the English edition of *Carpentaria* in 2008, and, having bought the European rights from Giramondo, on-sold to Italy (2008), Spain and Poland (2009). Actes Sud translated and published *Carpenterie* in 2009, building on Wright's reputation in France, which had been established with *Plains of Promise*. Pierre Furlan's French translation of *Carpentaria* was financially assisted by a \$5000 grant from the Australia Council, and drew on the well-established professional relationship between Alexis Wright and the Actes Sud editor and translator, Marc Gouvenain.<sup>5</sup> Actes Sud published *Carpenterie* in the Antipodes series, which is devoted to translating and promoting literature from the Pacific region. In this series, Alexis Wright shares space with Australian authors such as Kim Scott, Peter Carey, Evie Wyld, Fiona Capp and Andrew McGahan, New Zealand authors such as Alan Duff, Rod Jones and Jane Mander, and Samoan writers such as Sia Figiel. Established networks were also critical in producing the Chinese translation. Building on his earlier experience translating a host of Australian novels, including Kim Scott's *Benang*, Li Yao translated *Carpentaria* into Chinese, and this translation was published in Beijing in 2012. These connections, Li Yao recalls, began with exchanges of Henry Lawson's stories at Inner Mongolia University in 1980, and were nurtured by ongoing Australian cultural diplomacy (*Crossings* 8).

## Jackets

As *Carpentaria* travels, its livery assumes changing images and colours, which are thresholds of interpretation generating new reading publics offshore. In *Biography of a Book* Paul Eggert emphasises the importance of a criticism that reads the production and consumption of the whole text, snout to tail as it were, including jackets and blurbs. These are markers of 'repeated, varied and adapted production-events' (Eggert 311) and, in the case of *Carpentaria*, these transformations of the material book realise and adapt the book variously.



**Figure 4: *Carpentaria*, peritexts.**

The contract between author and publisher, and the sub-contracts with book designers, printers and binders, ultimately produce a large number of objects that move through well-established distribution routes to finally settle in the hands of readers. Many aspects of book design act as ‘thresholds of interpretation,’ but book covers are a significant component of a publisher’s peritext, potentially influencing the reader’s response to the text contained within.<sup>6</sup> As Elizabeth Webby has shown, some well-known, prize-winning Australian novels have been presented to readers across the world in very different packaging,<sup>7</sup> and Oliver Haag has demonstrated that German and Dutch book covers range across ‘classical,’ ‘political,’ and ‘neutral’ representations of the content they are promoting. While it is impossible to describe responses to the cover designs in Fig. 4 without a survey of readers like that done by Haag, the books can be analysed by the way they address specific national audiences.

The first Australian edition was designed by Harry Williamson; it overlays an ‘image reproduced from the skin of Indigenous activist and Wright’s countryman Murrandoo Yanner: this is his tattoo.’<sup>8</sup> The image of the ‘ancestral serpent’ mimics the photograph of the river over which it is laid, and becomes the central image of the opening pages of the novel, directing the reader’s attention to the setting, characters and situations with traditional modes of storytelling and affirmation of country. Later issues include ‘Winner Miles Franklin Literary Award 2007’ below the author’s name, signifying an additional symbolic value attributed by an institution within Australia’s literary culture that converges with the cultural value of signs associated with the author, her friends and family, and her country. For readers of the Australian edition of *Carpentaria*, this is the threshold of interpretation that shapes engagements with Alexis Wright’s text. It is a brilliant and organic creation, skin more than cover, with the serpent indelibly suturing this Indigenous country and its people together. This, its first cover, is a visual representation of what Jeanine Leane calls a process of writing Country back to nation, the Indigenous transformation of Australian literary landscapes that

plays out in the famous first words of the *Carpentaria*: ‘A NATION CHANTS, *BUT WE KNOW YOUR STORY ALREADY*’ and the command to ‘picture’ the ‘ancestral serpent, a creature larger than storm clouds, came down from the stars, laden with its own creative enormity.’<sup>(1)</sup> This work of ‘picturing the serpent’ begins there, in peritexts of the first edition that place Indigenous sovereignty and epistemology at this threshold of interpretation. Often unobserved amongst these peritexts is another epigraph, the poem by Seamus Heaney:

The first words got polluted  
 Like river water in the morning  
 Flowing with the dirt  
 Of blurbs and front pages.  
 My only drink is meaning from the deep brain,  
 What the birds and the grass and the stones drink.  
 Let everything flow  
 Up to the four elements,  
 Up to water and earth and fire and air.

Seamus Heaney, ‘*The First Words*’

Heaney’s ‘first words’ speak to the apocalyptic origins of this novel in Waanyi country and its elemental grammar of earth, water, fire and air. This suggests synergies between *Carpentaria* and other literatures, and in particular other apocalyptic origin stories. Alexis Wright began to write fiction for herself and others because she could not find in Australian literature the words that best described the conditions under which Indigenous Australians were living. She read widely in other national literatures, studying the work of the Maori writer Keri Hulme, South American writers such as Fuentes and Marquez, the Uruguyan writer Eduardo Galeano, the poetry of Chile’s Pablo Neruda and Mexico’s Octavio Paz, Salman Rushdie’s fiction, Irish writers, African writers, Elie Wiesel’s writing on the Holocaust, and the work of a large group of African American writers such as Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker. In her reading, she was looking to see ‘how other people survived horror,’ but, more specifically, she was ‘interested in people with ancient ties with their land, Indigenous peoples of other countries, people who had been colonized, people who had suffered at the hands of other people.’<sup>9</sup> Heaney’s poem is folded into ‘the dirt’ of peritexts here as part of a vast and apocalyptic assemblage of words and images that affirm the origins of *Carpentaria* in the inheritance of Indigenous country and an expansive archive of world literature, which it incorporates intertextually.

As Jeanine Leane has remarked, Wright’s fiction refuses discourses of recognition and intelligibility grounded in empathic recognition, those affective conduits that carry Indigenous testimonial offshore to powerful effect.<sup>10</sup> *Carpentaria* spectacularly reinvents the novel as an active and engaged fictionalising of country as a site of Indigenous memory, as a statement of Indigenous rights and sovereignty, and as a literature of protest and resistance to the ongoing violence and exploitation in Indigenous communities and on Indigenous land. This fictionalising draws deeply on traditions of literatures in English, both historical and contemporary, but it draws these influences into country. Equally, and as Philip Mead suggests, this is a fictionalising that adopts techniques of visual and verbal media to create its sensory repertoire, it is as attentive to artists such as William Kentridge and Gordon Bennett as Heaney and Marquez.<sup>11</sup>

However that 'skin' of the iconic first edition does not always travel with *Carpentaria*, and different jackets indicate that the book as an object is positioned and marketed very differently outside country, beyond the nation. As the book moves offshore and into transnational literary space the cover art responds by creating different thresholds of interpretation. These bring into view both the transits of *Carpentaria* as a worldly book and the 'worlding' of the novel, which is to say the ways it is commodified and becomes an object in a market (Spivak).<sup>12</sup> The prominence given to the image of the serpent in the design of other editions is a good indicator of a publisher's perception of where *Carpentaria* would find a place in the market. Suggestions of this projected market position are further indicated by the way the book, as an object, was designed to address booksellers and readers in the public space of bookshops and online retail portals such as Amazon. For example, the first American edition in hardcover includes a dustjacket dominated by a reproduction of the serpent image superimposed over a background colour that appears to mimic the red soils of central Australia. On the front, the title and the name of the author are joined by the declaration, 'Winner of the Miles Franklin Literary Award,' asserting the symbolic value of the contents. This is complemented on the backcover by a selection of 'Praise for *Carpentaria*,' comprising review excerpts from England, India and Australia, and the testimony of another Simon and Schuster author, the prominent African American author, Walter Mosley:

Wild and filled with strange beauty and hardship, *Carpentaria* celebrates the mythic and the pedestrian of Aboriginal life in Australia's heart. Inventive and epic, the novel reveals the complex connections between land and human, public and private life, class and destiny, faith and modernism. Alexis Wright weaves a magical tale with characters that will live on long after the last page is turned.

The subsequent paperback issue includes the same reviews and testimonials on the back cover, but the image of the serpent is significantly reduced in size<sup>13</sup> and a stock photograph from the work of Englishwoman, Penny Tweedie, dominates the cover design.<sup>14</sup> Tweedie's photographs of the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land are widely admired and have played an important role in the acknowledgement of Yolngu culture, but it this is far removed from the Waanyi country that serves as Alexis Wright's setting for *Carpentaria*. The reduction of the image of the rainbow serpent, which has a particular relevance to country and the Waanyi people, is indicative of the change in address from the Giramondo edition: the specifics of Aboriginal representation in a book's design outside of Australia are of much less concern to the publisher more interested in catching the eye of a bookseller or reader with a striking image and superlatives such as 'Literary sensation,' and 'A masterpiece of modern English-language literature.'

The change in address is more pronounced in the English paperback edition of *Carpentaria*. The hardback edition, published in the northern Spring of 2008, attracted overwhelmingly positive reviews, but achieved disappointing sales, prompting Constable to test the paperback market with a more extravagant presentation. The English paperback edition acknowledges that the London-based Blacksheep Company based their cover design on the original layout by Harry Williamson, but that's where the similarities end. Bordered by dot painting, including a small image of a serpent nestled in the bottom left corner, the cover image is dominated by a central cluster of frangipanis that cascades over a beach lined with tall palm trees. This floral emblem sits below an image of Australia's northern coastline that has 'Gulf of Carpentaria' clearly marked and two serpentine rivers sketched in to approximate the setting of the novel. Published on 28 May 2009, Constable must have been preparing the paperback edition for the northern summer. Blurbs extracted from reviews of the hardback in

the *Guardian*, *Independent*, and *The Times* were included on the paperback's back cover, stressing the literary qualities of the novel, and an unreferenced statement from Thomas Keneally that declared the novel 'An Australian masterwork.' Constable added to these in promotional material for the paperback edition, including an unlikely review from the long-lived women's magazine, *The Lady*, that described *Carpentaria* as 'A Truly breathtaking epic . . . a sure-fire beachbuster.'<sup>15</sup> In the English publisher's eyes, *Carpentaria* had transformed and now addressed a new or an extended audience, but there is no evidence to hand that suggests whether the strategy was successful or not.

The European translations also exhibit a visual appeal that is quite different to the Australian edition. Constable was responsible for the handling of European translation rights, and the livery of the Polish and Italian translations indicate the influence of the English edition. The Polish translation, published in 2009 by Media Rodzina, uses the same cover design as the English edition, and Rizzoli's Italian translation addressed its readers with what appears to be a mixture of pastoral and tropical images, dominated by a substantial two-story house. The title, *I Cacciatori Di Stelle (The Hunter of Stars)* further distances the book from the presentation of the Australian edition by directing attention away from place to an action.<sup>16</sup> The Actes Sud translation, *Carpentarie*, offers a more abstract image of storm clouds looming over a plain, empty except for a small stand of trees in the middle distance. The effects of book design on readers can only be guessed at, but comparison of the various English language editions and the translations suggests how the publishers and designers worked together to lure readers towards the content contained inside the covers. Related paratexts encountered on publisher's websites and other promotional material draws attention to Alexis Wright's background and her reputation as a writer and an activist,<sup>17</sup> but none provide the strong personal connections between author, publisher and book designer as seen in Giramondo's first Australian edition.

The most recent translation, Li Yao's Chinese translation of *Carpentaria*, returns to the elements of the Australian book design, differing only in a slight re-positioning of Murrando Yanner's serpent tattoo on the front cover. Ironically, perhaps, it was the English edition of *Carpentaria* that was reviewed in China's *Modern Weekly* after Alexis Wright's appearance at Australian Writer's Week on 9 March 2010 where she discussed *Carpentaria*.<sup>18</sup> The Chinese translation of *Carpentaria* was launched at the same event two years later, marking the completion of a project that had begun when Australian writer Nicholas Jose first recommended the novel to Li Yao. By that time, Li Yao had already translated more than a dozen Australian novels, including Kim Scott's *Benang*, first published in China in 2003. With a print run of less than two thousand copies, the Chinese translation was never going to have a significant impact on mainstream Chinese culture, but for some of the more literary-minded segments of the population *Carpentaria* achieved a significant profile.

The publisher's attempt to raise the profile of *Carpentaria* is evident in the endorsements that were printed on the back cover. A quote from Nobel Laureate Mo Yan indicated Alexis Wright's Chinese ancestry and praised the quality of the writing: 'Surely, what is more admirable is the superb literary skills the author manifests, and I, as a writer, am seriously impressed.'<sup>19</sup> This was accompanied by another endorsement taken from a short essay by Zhang Wei, a member of the Chinese Writers Association and winner of the Mao Dun Literature Prize, one of China's most prestigious literary awards. Also included in the Chinese edition is an Author's Note that approves Li Yao's translation, discusses the difficulty of writing the novel, and acknowledges the honour of being translated into Chinese: 'This moment is both extremely special and significant—as if enabling me to see the footprints of

my great grandfather who left China for Australia at the end of the nineteenth century.’<sup>20</sup> The author’s personal connection with China merged with the translator’s devotion to translating and understanding Australian literature to become a strong friendship.<sup>21</sup> Li Yao has publicly expressed his interest in Australian literature and culture because of Chinese connections with Australian history and has drawn inspiration from the work of Chinese-Australian artist Zhou Xiaoping who has collaborated with Aboriginal artists on various projects. This is seen most evocatively in the exhibition *Trepang: China & The Story of Macassan-Aboriginal Trade*.<sup>22</sup> In translating *Carpentaria* into Chinese, Li Yao drew on his long experience as a translator of Australian literature, his personal experiences with Aboriginal people, and the emotional impact of images such as those produced by Zhou Xiaoping to best communicate the cultural and spiritual aspects of Alexis Wright’s words to Chinese readers. Just as the American, British and European editions of *Carpentaria* addressed readers according to the ideas of publishers, editors and promoters, the Chinese edition stands as a testament to those who had some stake in the continued and widening circulation of Alexis Wright’s fiction. This book travels well, Li Yao suggests, as Indigenous Australian literature speaks to tensions between the Han and Indigenous peoples in China that can be articulated only through indirection.<sup>23</sup>

We began this article drawing on the digital images generated by *Yasiv.com*, that chart the movements of *Carpentaria* offshore into US, Canadian, British, French and Chinese markets (among others) to indicate the often elusive proximities of texts in the global marketplace negotiated by this travelling book. We have focussed on peritexts here, on the physical transformations of *Carpentaria*, and the different thresholds of interpretation presented for different markets and reading publics. As a further sign of the enduring commitment to promoting *Carpentaria*, Wright’s publisher Giromondo will publish a collection of scholarly essays later this year devoted to transnational readings of *Carpentaria* entitled *Indigenous Transnationalism: Alexis Wright’s ‘Carpentaria’* edited by Lynda Ng.

Our reading of the biography of the book indicates some signs of an Indigenous transnationalism in the marketplace. For example, the node of South Pacific literature that sets up a field of proximate texts in the US market, and the proximity of *Carpentaria* to Indigenous fictions in the Canadian market of Amazon books. The Actes Sud Antipodes series in France drew Indigenous texts together to create a literature of the Pacific in translation. However a new narrative for understanding the biographics of Indigenous texts has now emerged in Australian literary studies. This is evident in a recent issue of JASAL where a celebration of the Black Words database, an essential tool for our work that tracks Australian Indigenous texts in transit, coincides with articles that address the importance of ‘country’ as a keyword in literary criticism now. As Jeanine Leane argues in that issue, tracking Indigenous literature begins well before it moves offshore, as soon as it moves outside country, in fact, and into the national literature and its criticism, that can be inclined to chant ‘*BUT WE KNOW YOUR STORY ALREADY.*’

‘Tracking’: a difficult word, shadowed by the history of pursuit and dispossession in settler history, and appropriated by Jeanine Leane to consider the agency of Indigenous literature as it moves outside country. By reading *with* the dirt of the blurbs and front pages of *Carpentaria* as it moves outside country, we see that icons of Indigeneity attached to the book are mutable and, in some editions, dispensable. The skin of this book, its first cover, is tattooed with an eloquent image of Indigenous country that is shed as the book relocates to the USA, and to Europe. However, as we have argued here, in the peritexts of the first Australian edition of *Carpentaria* this powerful vision of country is bound up with Seamus Heaney’s poem, a binding that signals intertextuality in the genealogy of this book, and the archive

of world literature that, as Alexis Wright indicates in her own remarks, is embedded in *Carpentaria*. There is nothing parochial about the imaginative geography of country. *Carpentaria* is bound up in country and in world literature, together.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Emily Zhou for translations from the Chinese edition, and to Phillip Mead, Li Yao and Ivor Indyk for interviews on the topic of *Carpentaria* and its transnational history. Our work on transits of Indigenous literature is enabled by the Black Words database. Thanks to Lynda Ng, Nicholas Birns, Estelle Castro, Russell West-Pavlov, Lars Jensen for generously sharing forthcoming chapters from *Transnational Indigeneity* and to Diana Brydon.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 'Interview: Alexis Wright' with Jane Sullivan, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 August 2013, pp. 26–27.

<sup>2</sup> Email correspondence with Ivor Indyk, 17 November 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Perlez, Jane, 'Aboriginal Lit,' *New York Times*, 18 November 2007.

<sup>4</sup> From Ivor Indyk's email: 'Then Jane Perlez, an Australian journalist friend of my brother who worked for the New York Times, and whom I knew and gave a copy to, wrote it up in the NYT. Her agent, Gloria Loomis, who was also the agent for my brother's memoirs, took the book on, and got the interest of Judith Curr, the Australian publisher at Atria, a sub imprint of Simon and Schuster, who was trying her hand at developing an international list. Alexis got a good advance, but it was the wrong imprint, and the book sank without a trace, not having scored a single print review. Americans aren't all that interested in their own native peoples, and they have no time for ours. We only got as far as we did through Australian connections.'

<sup>5</sup> Marc Gouvenain was born in Paris and studied natural sciences and letters, eventually working with researchers in Australian entomology. He has translated novels into French since the 1960s, and worked as a freelance collection manager for Actes Sud, overseeing a number of series, including *Antipodes*.

<sup>6</sup> Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Webby, Elizabeth. 'Books and Covers: Reflections on Some Recent Australian Novels.' *Sydney Studies in English* 29, (2003). 79–86.

<sup>8</sup> Ravenscroft, Alison. 'Dreaming of Others: *Carpentaria* and its Critics,' *Cultural Studies Review* 16.2, (2010). 212.

<sup>9</sup> Wright, Alexis. 'The Politics of Writing,' *Southerly* 62.2, (2002). 11–12.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Hughes et.al.,

<sup>11</sup> Mead, Phillip. 'The Geopolitical Underground. Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*, Mining and the Sacred.' In *Decolonizing the Landscape. Indigenous Cultures in Australia*. Ed Beate Neumeier and Kay Schaffer. Amsterdam: Rodopi 2014. 185–205.

<sup>12</sup> Spivak, Gayatri A Critique of Postcolonial Reason, 211–12.

<sup>13</sup> The jacket acknowledges the provenance of the serpent image: 'Rainbow Serpent Tattoo reproduced with the kind permission of Murrando Yanner.' For an academic account of the Rainbow Serpent in Waanyi culture, see: [http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/23005/52608\\_1.pdf?sequence](http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/23005/52608_1.pdf?sequence)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/photo/australia-arnhem-land-dippirringur-high-res-stock-photography/297379-001> Penny Tweedie (1940–2011) is well-known for several collections of photographs: *This My Country: A View of Arnhem Land* (1985); *Aboriginal Australians: Spirit of Arnhem Land* (1998); and *Indigenous Australia: Standing Strong* (2001). Many of the images from these collections are available from Getty Images.

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.constablerobinson.com/?section=books&book=carpentaria\\_9781845299484\\_paperback&tab=press](http://www.constablerobinson.com/?section=books&book=carpentaria_9781845299484_paperback&tab=press) Accessed 8 December 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Promotion and commentary in the Italian media appear to make strong comparisons with Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, see Rizzoli's page on *I Cacciatori Di Stelle*

[http://rizzoli.rcslibri.corriere.it/libro/2382\\_i\\_cacciatori\\_di\\_stelle\\_wright.html](http://rizzoli.rcslibri.corriere.it/libro/2382_i_cacciatori_di_stelle_wright.html); and Actes Sud's page on *Carpentarie* <http://www.actes-sud.fr/catalogue/litterature-etrangere/carpentarie> Accessed 13 December 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Alexis Wright appeared in conversation with Sandra Thibodeaux, director of the Northern Territory's literary festival, Wordstorm: [http://www.china.embassy.gov.au/bjng/aww\\_program.html](http://www.china.embassy.gov.au/bjng/aww_program.html) The review was published on 27 March, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Translation by Emily Zhou.

<sup>20</sup> Translation by Emily Zhou.

<sup>21</sup> See Alexis Wright's address on the occasion of the launch of the Chinese translation:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSe29IxdElk&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.trepangexhibition.com/discover/> Li Yao's description of this association is from chinawriter.com.cn. <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/bk/2012-03-19/60856.html>

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Li Yao and Philip Mead, 2014.

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