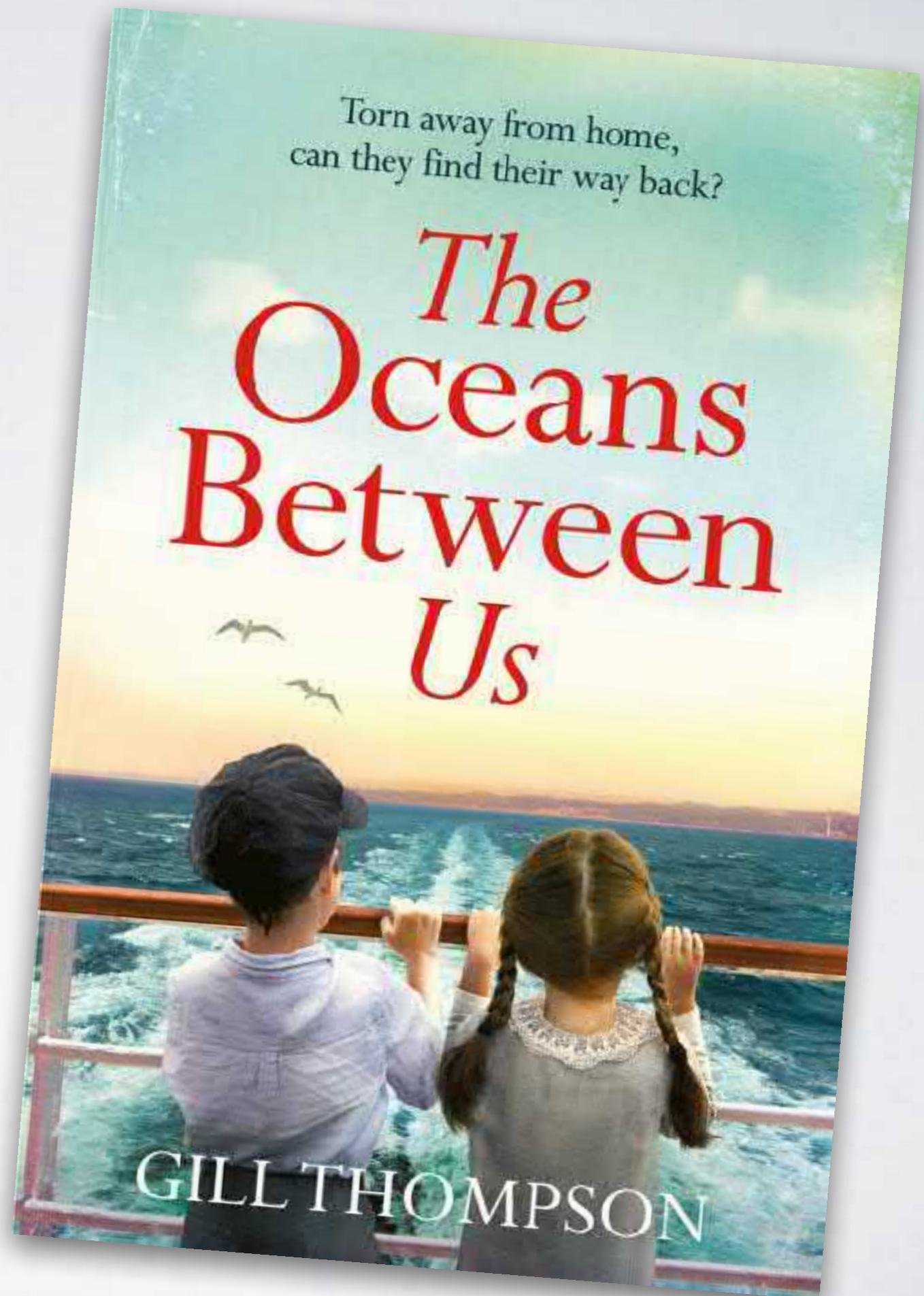


# Welcome

Publishing your  
first novel

Gill Thompson





**Child migrants on their way to Australia.**



**Child migrants aboard the Asturius**



**British child migrants arriving at Fremantle,  
Western Australia, September 1947**



**British child migrants arriving at Fremantle,  
Western Australia, September 1947**



**British child migrants at work in  
Western Australia, September 1947**



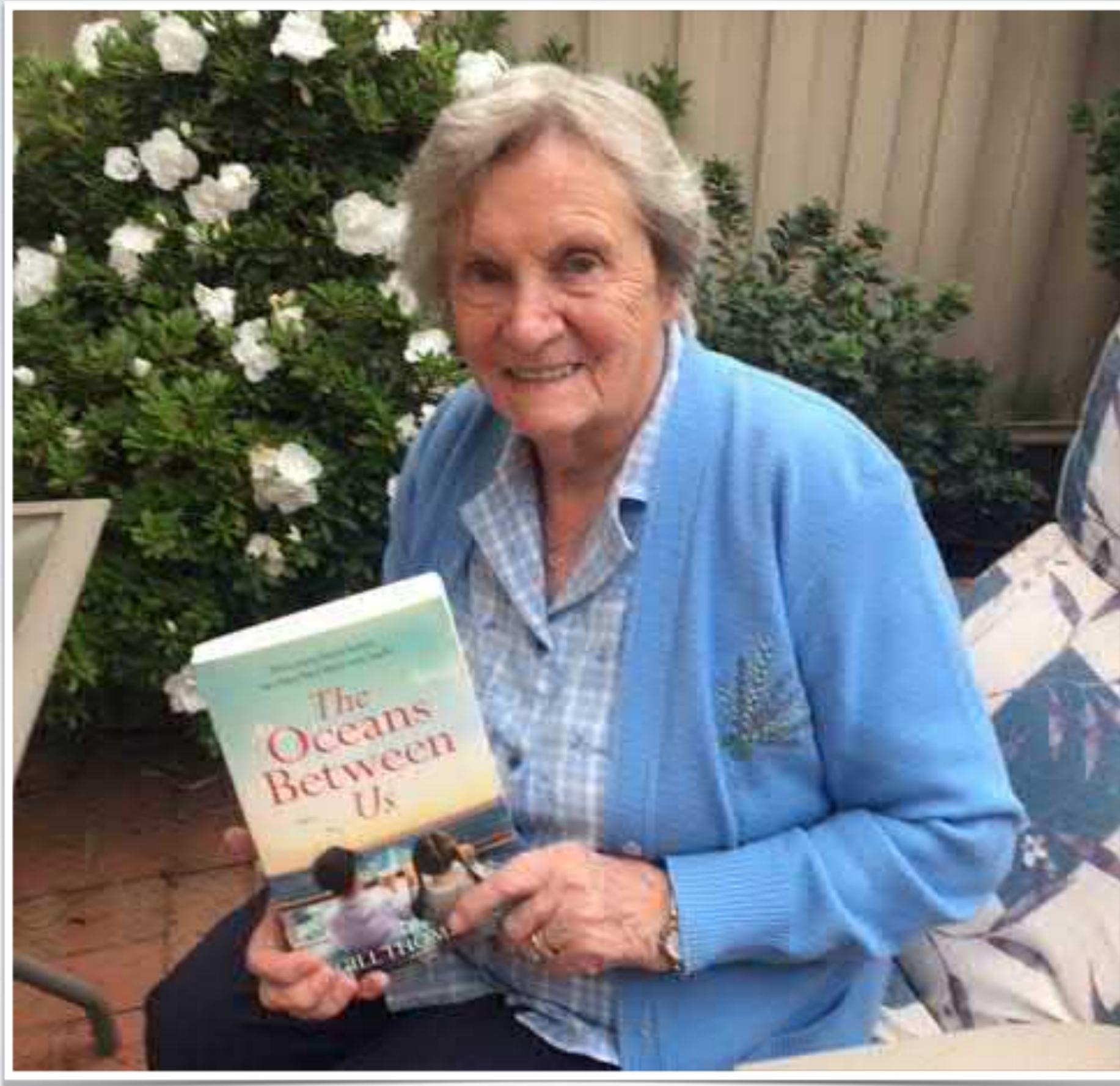
**Jack**



**Joan Thorpe**



**Joan Thorpe today aged 92 with great grandchildren.**





**Seamless research**

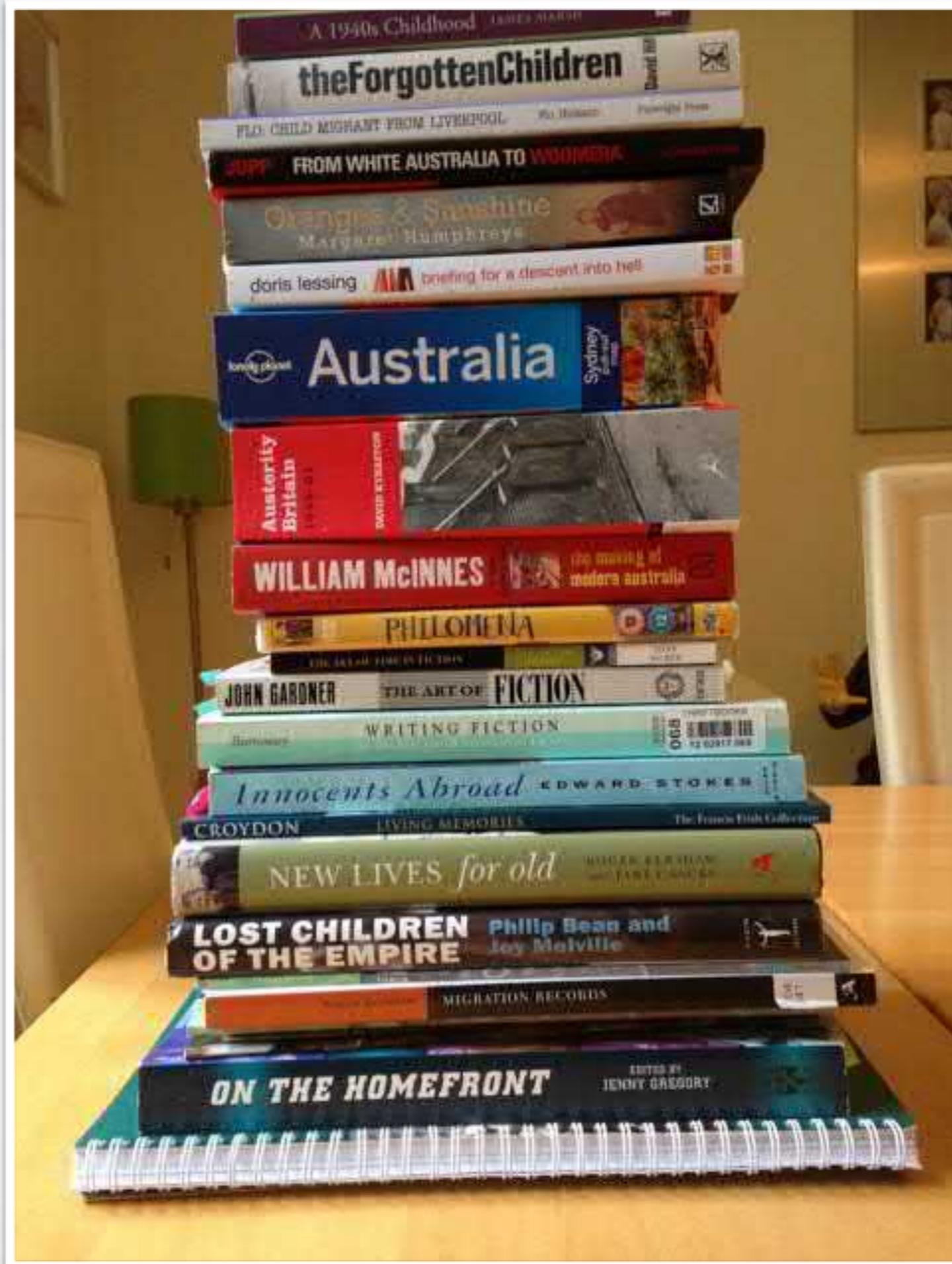


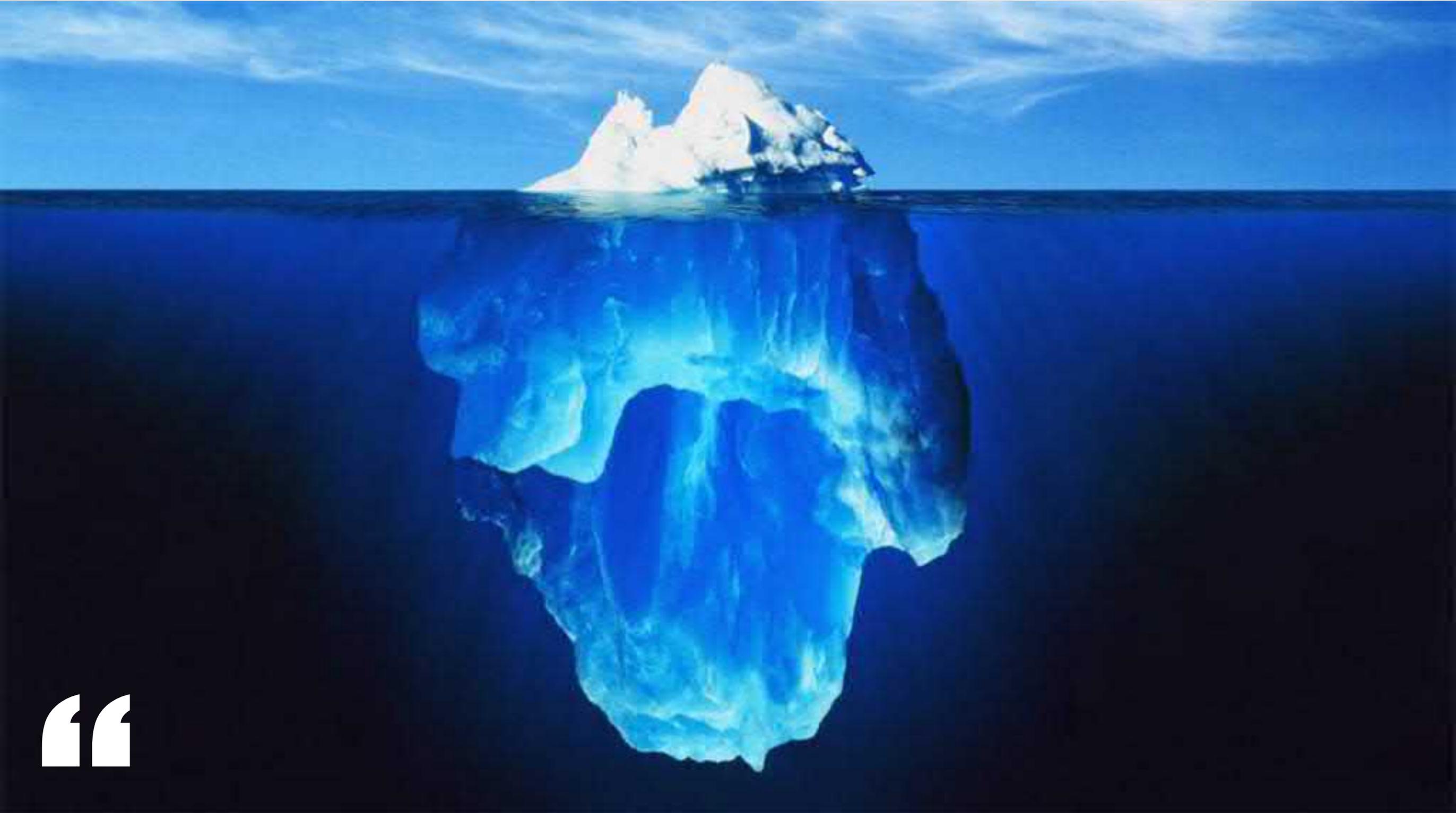
“

A man will turn over half a library to make one book.

Dr Johnson

”





“

You should know more than what you put on the page.

The reader can sense that.’

Susan Orlean

”

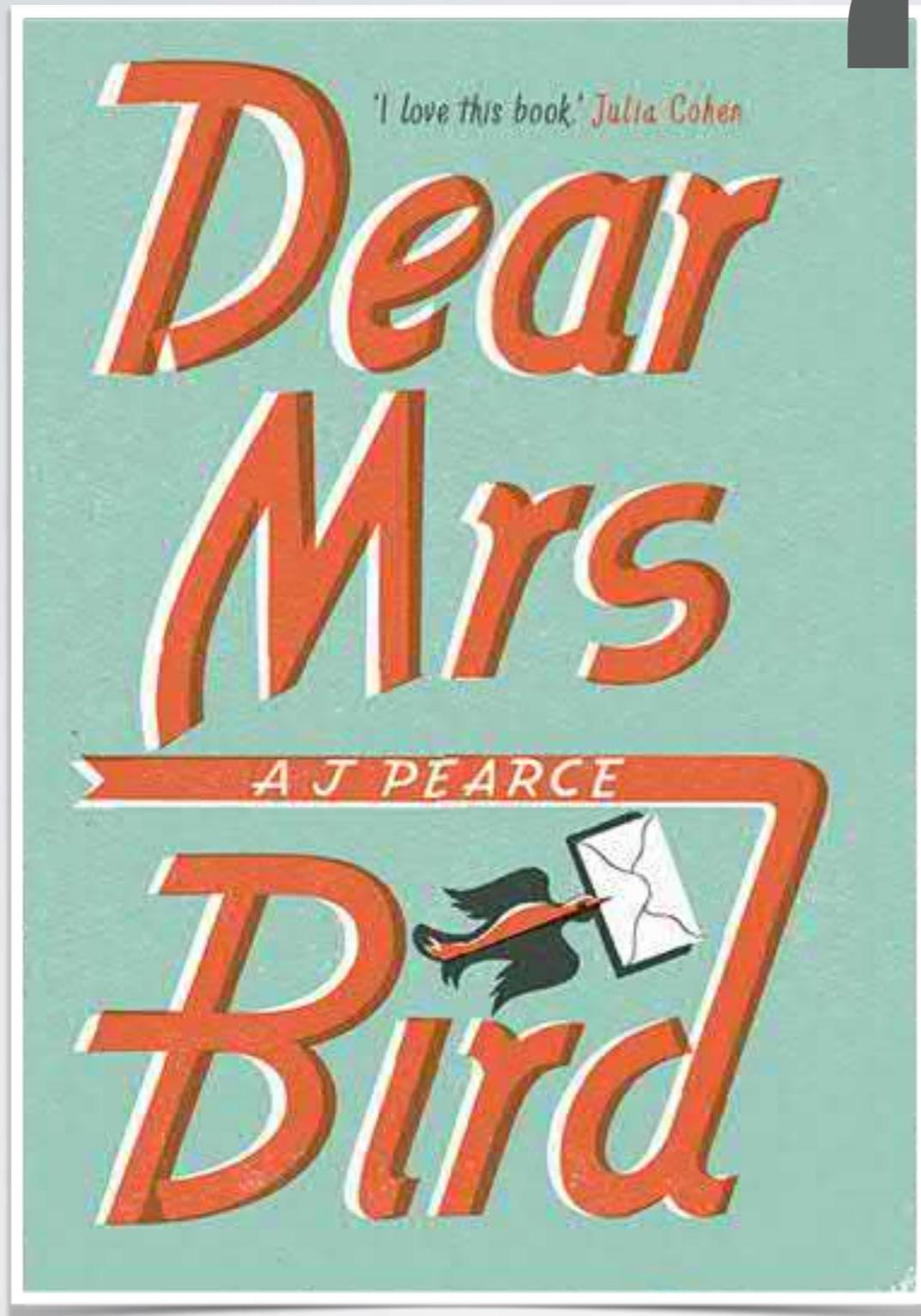


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**A reader likes to feel that the writer is quite in command of his material and has strength to spare.**

Patricia Highsmith

”



“

My response to writing about *Dear Mrs Bird* for Mother's Day was easy. I just couldn't imagine the novel without the heroine Emmeline Lake's mother, both on and off the page.

Knowing about her mum – and her grandmother – was central to writing the book. It's the same for all the main characters. Understanding their families really well, even though most of them don't appear in the book, helps me define why the characters are who they are.

”



“

**Close the book and then dream it.**  
Hilary Mantel

”



“

**Tell all the truth but tell it slant.**

Emily Dickinson

”

“

Jim ran his hands through Sally's beautiful red hair. He wondered if it had been coloured using l'Oreal Nice and spicy, a mid red tone, bound to attract admiration by enhancing your own shades whilst still looking natural. He leant towards her and she parted her lips. Was that Max Factor's Romantic kisses he asked himself. As he bent to kiss her a warm fragrance overpowered his senses: Chanel number 5, he thought to himself, created in 1921, because Coco Chanel had wanted a fragrance that smelled like a woman!

”

“

A scent, just like the complexities of a strong woman, that would be seen as a whole and not the sum of its parts. Jim knew Chanel number 5 was a composition of notes where one cannot easily distinguish its individual ingredients, instead smelling a bouquet of intricate and elaborate notes that intermingle like a mosaic of scent.

But instead of her warm lips he encountered a stinging slap to the face as Sally flounced off. ‘What did I do wrong?’ he asked himself.

”



**A Booker Prize winner on research:**

“

At first you are a stranger in your chosen era. But a time comes when you can walk around in a room and touch the objects. When you not only know what your characters wore, but you can feel their clothes on your back: that rasp of homespun wool: that whisper of linen and weight of brocade: the way your riding coat settles when you mount your horse: the sway and chink of the items at your girdle or belt, the scissors and keys and rosary beads. You listen: what sound do your feet make, on this floor of beaten earth? Or on these terracotta tiles? How do your boots feel as you pull your feet out of the mud? How old are your boots? What colour is the mud? When you can answer these questions, you are ready to begin.

”

“

She crouched down and reached inside the Coolgardie. The meat was at the back, two tiny chops wrapped in news-paper. They'd shrivel away to nothing in the pan. At least she'd managed to get a few old potatoes at the greengrocer's. She'd have to cut the green out, but a pile of mash would fill the plate up a bit. And there should be a bit of gravy browning left from when she'd stained her legs that morning. She unhooked her apron from the back of the door and tied it over her grey blouse and tweed skirt. Then she took the knife out of the drawer and started peeling.

”



“

**A rule of thumb – if in doubt,  
look for the first hand account.**  
Annemarie Neary

”

*Interview commenced 10.00am (7pm in Victoria) and ended 10.35.am (7.35pm Victoria) GT= GillThompson. JT= Joan Thorpe.*

**GT:** Where did you grow up?

**JT:** Cheltenham. It was relatively safe there during the war. The German planes were mainly heading for Bristol so we didn't really get bombed much.

**GT:** When did you go to Nazareth House in Hammersmith?

**JT:** I was there for the last year of the war (1945). By then the spitfires were pretty good at warding off the attacks. There weren't many bombs dropped in built up areas. We still had to listen out for the doodlebugs though.

**GT:** What was it like at Nazareth House?

**JT:** There were no boys there only girls, babies and old people. I had to look after 60 babies on the top floor. We didn't have any fire drills or anything like that. No one seemed concerned about health and safety. The nuns were very strict. Many of them were Irish. They weren't trained to look after children and some of the children were traumatised by living there. The church paid for the home - the nuns used to go out begging because the government didn't help - so it is difficult to understand why the government wanted the children to emigrate - they weren't a burden on the government. The only time the government intervened was to give the children free milk, orange juice and cod liver oil.

**GT:** What was the food like?

**JT:** Before the war. There wasn't much meat. Lots of soup. Porridge - no milk on it. Golden syrup. Bread and dripping. Sausages at Christmas! Milk pudding (rice pudding?) When the Americans came during the war their lives changed - they brought good food.

**GT:** How did you get to hear about Australia?

**JT:** Well my brothers had gone out ten years before so I wanted to see them again. We didn't really know anything about Australia though. Our knowledge of the world was very limited. There were some adverts (possibly in the railway stations) promising us 'Plenty of Food and Sunshine' in Australia. They were advertising for migrants in other countries too - Canada and South Africa. But I was keen to go to Australia. My sister (18 at the time) and I jumped at the opportunity. Our parents were divorced and our family had been split up. We were keen to see our brothers again who had been sent out ten years earlier.

**GT:** How did you get down to Southampton?

**JT:** By bus I think.

**GT:** Where did the children come from?

**JT:** Ireland, Cardiff, possibly Aberdeen or Glasgow. Groups of children. There were 50 girls and 100 boys. Aged 5 and 6 to 12 and 15. The children came down the day before and stayed the night at Nazareth house. Joan and her sister had their own groups to look after. Joan was in charge of the nursery.

**GT:** What was it like on the bus?

**JT:** It was a good time. The children had plenty of freedom. The crew were very good and played games with them. That gave the nannies a break, as they had to clean the cabins and sort out the

# Joan Thorpe

Dear Gillian,

We have read the excerpts from your new book with great interest - can't wait to read the rest of it. We can't see ~~anything which~~ is not authentic - the couple would have met with a great deal of prejudice because of their ~~colour~~.

I am not at all familiar with ~~Washington~~, but here are a few random thoughts about central ~~Croydon which~~ you may be able to use somewhere.

There were three department stores - Grants, a family owned store, rather staid and a slight cut above the others. ~~Alders~~ was more up to date and good ~~quality~~. ~~Kannada~~ was not exactly down market but stocked more reasonably priced stuff. They all sold clothes, ~~furniture~~, carpets ~~etc~~. Grants had a restaurant, where one could have afternoon tea. They were grouped round the North End / George Street junction.

There were also Marks & Spencer's and Woolworth's (nearer West Croydon station) and I expect British Home Stores but I am not sure about that.

There was a vegetable market in Surrey Street, ~~which~~ operated every day where reasonably priced vegetables could be bought and round the corner in Church Street a grocer called Sanders. They had a row of cube-shaped tins with glass lids in front of the counter from which they sold loose biscuits, and also broken biscuits, very cheaply.

The almshouses were, and still are, on the corner of North End and George Street.

The town hall and main library were in ~~Katherine~~ Street.

There were train services to London from East Croydon and West Croydon, and until 1952 trams (nothing to do with the present modern Croydon ~~Tramlink~~) to Westminster and the Embankment.

Cinemas were popular. There was the Savoy (an ABC cinema) at Broad Green (a mile or so north of Croydon), the Odeon near to West Croydon station and the Davis in High Street (which is a continuation of North End). There were sometimes concerts at the Davis. There was also the State cinema at Thornton Heath Road on the main road from Croydon to ~~Norbury~~ and ~~Streatham~~. We think it was 9d or 1/3d to go in the cinema.

At ~~Parley~~ were the Orchid Ballroom and an ~~ice skating~~ rink, both of which were very popular.

If you wanted a free afternoon out there were lovely walks in the Surrey Hills.

The main hospitals were Croydon General and Mayday.

The biggest pub was the ~~Croydon~~ ~~then~~ but towards South Croydon but moved during the redevelopment of Croydon.

Good luck with the writing, and love and best wishes to you all  
Pauline

Pauline Montgomery

National Children's orphanage - Southdowns, Alresford. Methodist. Sister Olive.

No black children allowed to go to Australia

Stopped at Malta - 2-300 children taken on and put in hold

1967 referendum whether Aborigines should be classed as people. Not allowed to vote, drink or move around.

Clothes - orphanage grey

Social Darwinism

Bombs bullets and leather - potatoes, peas and meat.

Exams Medical on arrival - man held stopwatch by his ear and asked him to say when he could hear it ticking (held it further and further away.) Kept saying he could as didn't want to be sent back for poor health - nearly sent back for lying!

Medical - height, weight, eye/hearing. No TB.

Made pipes out of old cigarette butts and empty acorn shells - smoking in hay loft - nearly set it on fire!

Aborigines

Made the first 'guided missiles' - boomerangs!

Simple culture

Dream time - their way of talking about the past

No bows and arrows. No metal. Woomera. Lanaias

Little education - books. Libraries

'Social darwinism' - survival of the fittest.

Sent to Alverstoke, Gosport before on boat.

SS Asturias - never stopped at anywhere that wasn't British - Gibraltar, Malta Aiden

Ceylon, Suez, Colombo.

~~Boa~~ - prisoner of Merry England.

# Michael Tubbs

14 Hinchwood Road  
Leatherbyre-Thames  
Middlesex  
TW16 6HY  
Tel 01992 727300  
4. 11. 2012.

Dear Gillian,

I enjoyed reading the first chapter of your book.

I noticed one error. Scrim mentioned on page 3, is not brown paper tape, but a coarse woven material my Mum used to use for cleaning windows. Also on page 3 the shed dug deep in the garden would probably have been an Anderson shelter, most houses were issued with one.

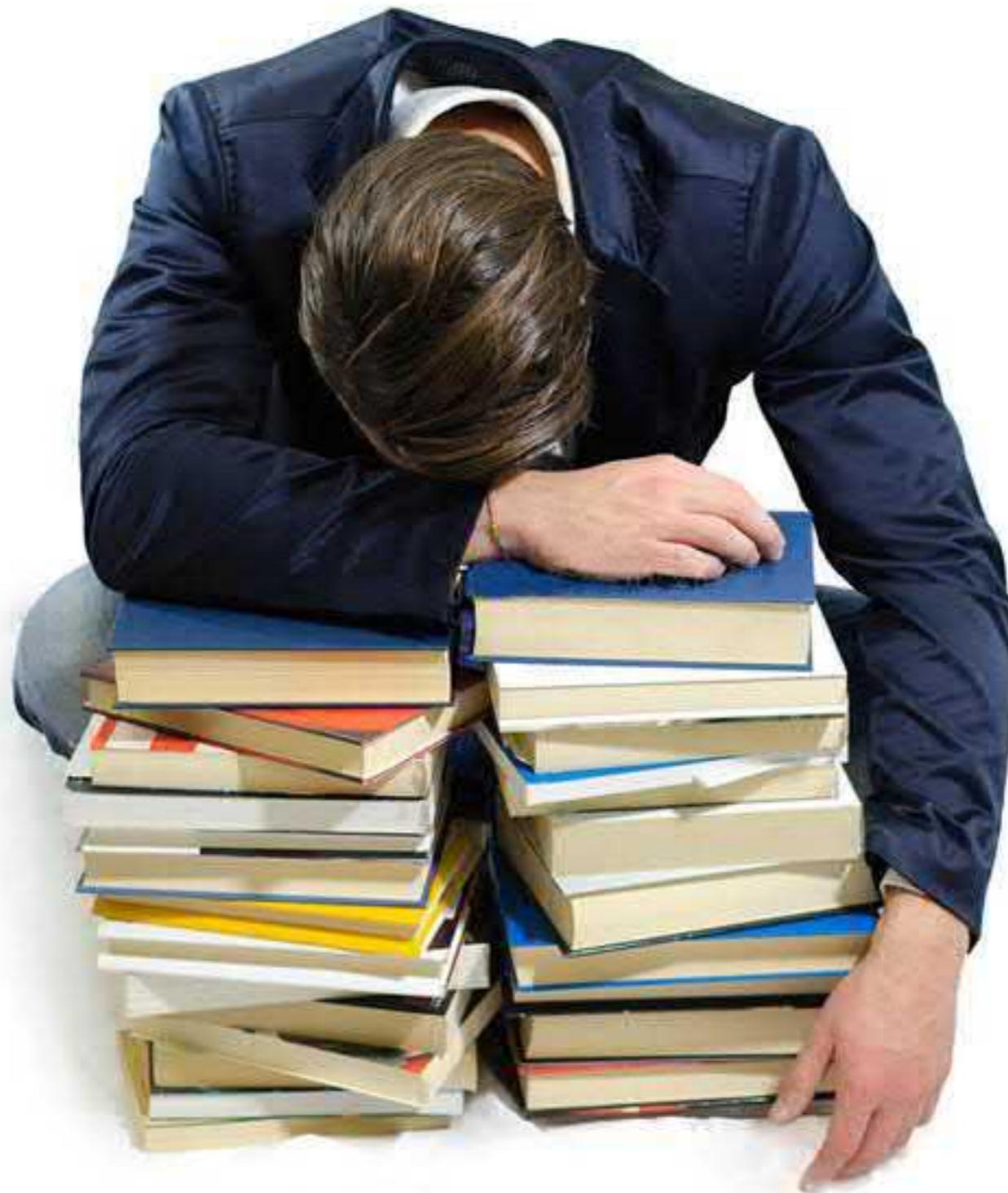
My own memory of an air raid at the washing of the Seven, the steady drone of approaching enemy aircraft, the search lights scanning the skies, and the noise of the Gun Batteries on Mitcham Common opening fire.

I do hope this will be useful.  
Looking forward to our next meeting.

With love

Betty.

**Betty Tredinnick**



**When have you done enough?**



Dr Casaubon (*Middlemarch*)  
**The key to all mythologies.**



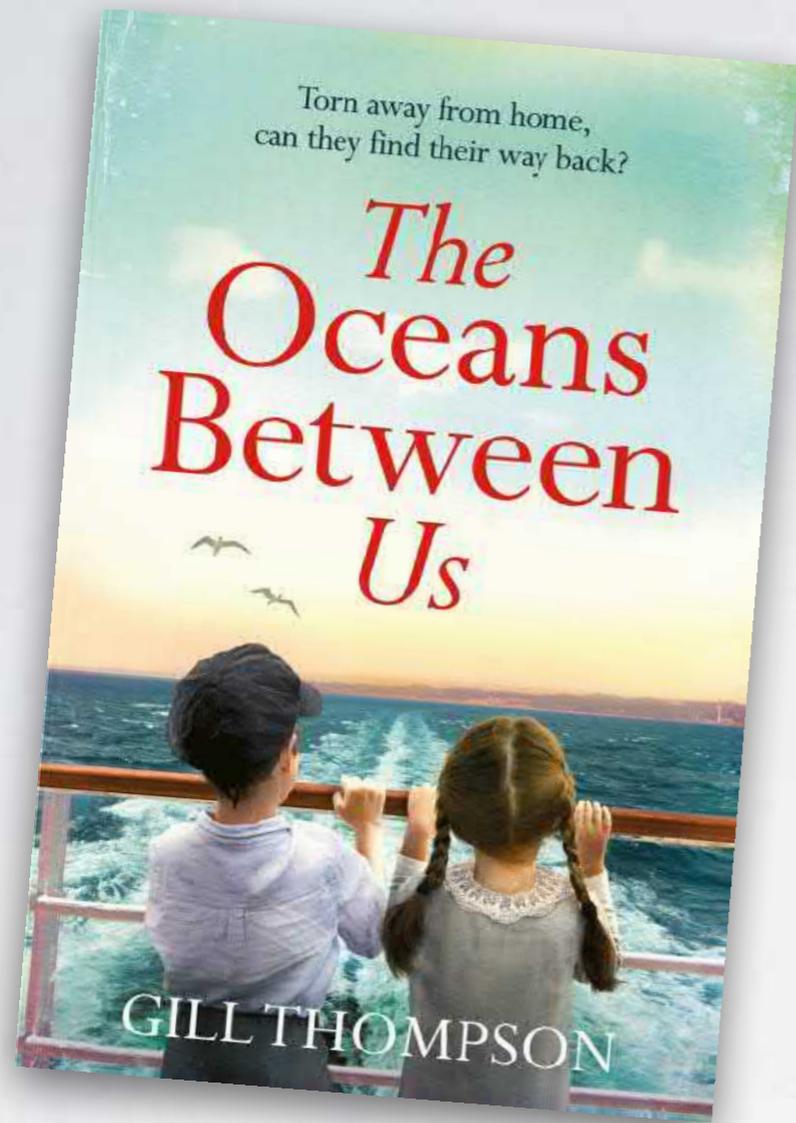
**Stanisława Przybyszewska**

“

What went wrong? Stasia worked and worked to get the truth, but she didn't find a way of serving the truth through narrative. She was crippled by perfectionism. She lost the distance that enabled her to judge her work, and she didn't have that pragmatic streak that says that compromise is not always dishonor. Detail matters. But there are other things that matter more: pace, grip, shape. An unperformable play or a half-finished novel is no use except as a stepping stone to a genuine communication.

”





**Thank you**

Gill Thompson

