

## **Chapter Five: Editor as Attempted Co-Author**

When Bundjalung author Ruby Langford Ginibi's debut book, *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (1988) was published, her 'editor' was listed as the co-owner of copyright on the imprint page. Although scholars have noted the controversy around this publication, none has examined the archive and shared their findings. This chapter marks the first such intervention and describes some of the dangers that attend the editorial process when this invisible work is not understood or sufficiently theorised by the editor. Concluding in legal action and the complete deterioration of a personal relationship, the editorial misunderstandings at the heart of this publication are uncovered by this research. All the authors who have been the subject of a chapter up until this point, fall into the category I am calling standard cases; though wide-ranging manifestations of the editorial process, these interventions are towards the middle of a spectrum ranging from minimal to maximal intervention. In this chapter I turn to a case study that involves more editorial input but nevertheless does not cross into co-authorship by my reckoning. Although separated from the drafting and publication that took place nearly forty years ago for Langford Ginibi, the contemporary publishing industry continues to wrestle with the ethics of a workforce dominated by settler staff while releasing work from First Nations authors. In this chapter I share my findings from Langford Ginibi's extensive archive and discuss the dynamics of her relationship with Susan Hampton, the editor of her first book. I consider the archive both as a site of activism and a repository of evidence and examine the drafting process. Ultimately, I find that Hampton's experience as a creative writing teacher informed her editing practice and that, concurrently, Langford Ginibi's life experience positioned her as a pedagogue for her editor. My research leads to the conclusion that copyright should not have been shared.

To facilitate a reading of Ruby Langford Ginibi's publishing experience, I first outline her biography and contemporary responses to her work followed by the correctives that some

subsequent scholarly responses offered. Ruby Langford Ginibi was born on Box Ridge Mission, New South Wales, in 1934 and went on to become one of the most successful First Nations authors of her generation. She did well at school — so well the teachers thought she cheated (*Don't Take* 31) and was asked to take a teacher's scholarship but declined since it was offered by the Aborigines Protection Board since her father was dubious about the kind of debt she would owe the board in exchange (37). Her debut work, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, chronicles her life as she found love, had children and worked in a number of different jobs moving from the bush to the city, renting privately and living in government housing. The book was supported by grants from 'the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council and the Australian Bicentennial Authority's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program' (Langford Ginibi *Don't Take*, v), published in 1988 by Penguin and went into many printings. The book received relatively little critical attention but was awarded a Human Rights Award and was soon adopted onto high school and tertiary curricula. Over the course of her writing career, Langford Ginibi was published as author and co-author by Penguin, University of Queensland Press and Allen & Unwin. She was awarded an honorary doctorate from La Trobe University and, in 2021 a ferry was named in her honour. She wrote five books and co-wrote two more as well as lecturing at schools and universities. In addition to mentoring younger writers, Langford Ginibi's regular comment in interviews that she did not want editors 'gubbarising' her work — which I take her to mean flattening it to fit with settler norms — is often quoted by Anita Heiss and others when discussing their own working process ('Garret'). This study is the first comprehensive engagement with Ruby Langford Ginibi's archive by a literary studies scholar<sup>107</sup>, and it is my hope this is the first of many works responding to the extensive holdings of her work.

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<sup>107</sup> UTS School of Design academics Jacquie Lorber-Kasunic, Kate Sweetapple, Kristelle De Freitas have created a project concerned with visualising the editorial process, but this project is not concerned with content as my thesis is. <https://www.uts.edu.au/about/faculty-design-architecture-and-building/staff-showcase/surfacing-page-ruby-langford-ginibi-papers>

### **The Archive: A site of pedagogy and protest**

Over the course of two decades, Langford Ginibi built her archive at the State Library of New South Wales; it now spans over twelve metres and her attitude to the preservation of her work, evident in the comprehensiveness of this collection, has afforded me the opportunity to explore editorial processes in detail. While Anne Brewster comments that ‘Aboriginal people are granted access to the public sphere only because of white technologies — which induce confessions from a constituency the dominant group alone has the power to name — denies Aboriginal people agency in the production of their own texts’ (37), Langford Ginibi was picking up the tools of settler-colonial record-keeping and history-making and ensuring that the Australia that she and her family experienced is on the archival record. She explained in an interview that the purpose of the archive was to educate people (*In Conversation* 12) and I am grateful to have been taught by her in this way. This chapter represents one result of Langford Ginibi’s pedagogy. Just as Langford Ginibi used public lectures, her books and interviews to teach settler audiences about Aboriginal experience, so she used her archive to similar ends.

In his book *Return to Uluru*, Mark McKenna makes the observation that First Nations people seem to walk in and out of the archive — for instance being visible while incarcerated and invisible once they are free again (117). There may be continued visible presence of the kind that Narungga woman, poet and scholar Natalie Harkin has examined in her work, notably in *Archival Poetics* (2019) in which she uncovered domestic service and labour records relating to her grandmother and reworked the content to produce poetry. By reclaiming the information that has been recorded and preserved, Harkin’s work challenges existing perceptions — or ignorance — of First Nations experience. Given the lacunae and obfuscations as well as outright lies in settler archives when it comes to lives of First Nations people, it is important to recognise the unusual and significant presence of Ruby Langford Ginibi’s archive to Australian history. With her first contribution in 1992 and continued

additions until 2008, Langford Ginibi's archive records her long-running and highly influential literary output.

To access Langford Ginibi's archive, you visit the Mitchell Library in the Dixon wing of the State Library of NSW, and you pass through imposing bronze doors. As the State Library website recounts:

the central doors honour European explorers of Australia; the left side shows the navigators who explored Australia's coast and the right side, the explorers who travelled inland ... The reliefs on the bordering doors were originally planned to depict the various arts and sciences represented in the Library's collection, but the principal librarian William Ifould rejected the concept in favour of panels illustrating scenes from the lives of Australian Aboriginal people.

There is a kind of solemnity to the sandstone, and the doors themselves are weighty so that entering feels almost like going into a church. The images, however, are not sacred, and the lack of female 'explorers' and the unnamed First Nations people apparently exhibiting pre-colonial behaviours are alienating. I am not the first person to note the impact of walking through these doors; Kate Grenville has also commented on the effect of this juxtaposition and her desire to avoid representing First Nations people as 'surface decoration, as exotics, as exhibits out of a museum' (*Searching for the Secret River* 109). Whether she was successful is debated in responses to *The Secret River* (Leane 'Tracking'; Sullivan 'Making a fiction').

There has been, and continues to be, a fraught relationship between First Nations people, their stories and the archives held at institutions such as the National and State Archives and the National and State Libraries. Increasingly First Nations artists, writers and scholars are working to redress this including Jeanine Leane's current ARC project, 'Indigenous Storytelling and the Living Archive' that is creating a new, Indigenous-centred version of an

archive. This project takes ‘Storytelling as an Indigenous method of enquiry that intervenes in and challenges the way “archives” structure Indigenous histories and cultural heritage’.

What is significant for the purposes of this thesis is seeing the ways that the editorial process for Langford Ginibi’s books have been preserved thanks to the inclusion of various holographs and typescripts for her books and from these I trace the editorial process that has drawn so much criticism and unpick some of the ways in which Hampton and Langford Ginibi worked together. For instance, in a draft dated ‘1987’, there is a note at the top of the page, ‘All the cut and pasted bits are all mine in these two manuscripts. R. Langford.’<sup>108</sup> These manuscripts are comprised of hundreds of handwritten pages, telling the story of her life. Likely this note was Langford Ginibi making a record of her revisions for the purposes of claiming the work as her own and in this way using the archive for her own purposes — such a claim would prove necessary in copyright claims that arose post-publication as I will examine later in this chapter.

Just as Langford Ginibi gave public talks that echoed the descriptions of her life and experiences in a move to educate settler readers, so she used her archive as a pedagogical tool and another means of activism. One component of this is making visible the reality of First Nations incarceration and its effects not just on individuals but also on families and wider communities. By featuring correspondence from her children when they were imprisoned, both in her published work and in her archive, Langford Ginibi records and preserves the experiences of people who are otherwise rendered silent in government records.

Pinned to a page in a draft for *Don’t Take* is a note written by her son Steven from prison:

Dearest Mum and Family,

I remember life before,

When things to me meant so much more.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> MLMSS 5615/2/3 This correspondence also appears in the published book.

<sup>109</sup> MLMSS 5612/2/3

He goes on to list some of the things he misses in prison and at the end says, ‘I know I’m no master poet but I’m trying!’ Seeing this sort of missive from son to mother, written in tidy print with circles for the dots on the ‘i’s and exclamation points has a humanising effect — even more so than reading the version printed in the finished book in the same font as the text that surrounds it. Steven’s self-effacing comment about the quality of his poesy is not included in the book but it also shows his self-awareness and what it means to try to communicate from prison to the outside world.

This sort of interaction is very different from the ‘brutal surveillance’ that Harkin found in the archival record of her grandmother’s life (*Poetics* 4). For Harkin, the records showed a depersonalised account of her grandmother’s experience that erased her humanity. While there is clearly suffering in *Don’t Take* — in large part due to the separation from family in both letters from Steven and from Nobby — there is a kind of tenderness in these letters in the hand of these young men who are otherwise often represented as statistics rather than individuals. These pages offer an entirely different representation of First Nations experience from that in other parts of the library’s archive or in the histories of First Nations people in settler records. It is worth noting at this point that the publication of Langford Ginibi’s work, *Haunted by the Past* marked ‘the first time a NSW prisoner’s records have appeared in a book’ (Little Nyoongah 43). I note that, as with her ongoing contribution to her archive, her decision to include stories from carceral experiences of her kin was part of an ongoing campaign to fight against the injustice of disproportionate rates of First Nations incarceration — a ratio that persists to this day.<sup>110</sup>

In the same way that she is conscious of defending her work against the ‘gubbarising’ interventions of non-First Nations editors, Langford Ginibi’s decision to provide material to the State Library for an archive is a way of ensuring that her voice, her version and her family

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<sup>110</sup> <https://www.unaa.org.au/2021/03/18/australias-first-nations-incarceration-epidemic-origins-of-overrepresentation-and-a-path-forward/>

are on the public record and are available. Though this is different in kind from the type of work that Leane and others are currently engaged in, of creating a different kind of archive, within the strictures of a Western archive, Langford Ginibi maintains connections to family, allows me to follow her creative practice and preserves a record of her experiences of drafting, editing and undergoing the processes of book production. The archive includes extensive holographs in Langford Ginibi's hand, holographs in the hand of her editor, Hampton, as well as extensive correspondence, contracts and other ephemera related to the publishing of her many books. Of the archives I examined for this thesis, Langford Ginibi's is the richest.

### **Who Holds which Copyright: The contractual history of *Don't Take Your Love to Town***

For Ruby Langford Ginibi, the question of authorship is different from that I explored in the previous chapter on Sally Morgan. Rather than concern about her Aboriginality or critique of an overly invasive editorial presence, contemporary reviews tended to view the work as requiring more intervention to assimilate it with other books on the market at the time. In a sympathetic review, author Billy Marshall Stoneking reflects that 'If you pick up this book, you pick up a life. It is as simple and as difficult as that' and goes on to say:

In writing her autobiography, Langford was assisted by the poet Susan Hampton, who was sounding board and editor. In the opinion of this reviewer, collaborations between blacks and whites point the way towards a better understanding. The collaboration, in this case, has produced a mighty book. (10)

Stoneking praises Hampton for what he interpreted as the successful production of Langford Ginibi's memoir.

As Alison Ravenscroft has observed, from the first through subsequent editions of *Don't Take Your Live to Town* you can trace changes in recognition of Susan Hampton's contribution as editor:

... copyright is jointly owned by Ginibi and Hampton in the 1988 edition ... The copyright arrangement was legally challenged by Ginibi, who succeeded in regaining full copyright. In the following reprinting of the book, copyright is given as belonging to Ginibi only. In subsequent reprintings, Susan Hampton's biographical note was removed, and the acknowledgments that Ginibi makes to Hampton in the original edition are also gone. On the back cover of the most recent reprinting, the cover remains the same save for a black bar on the back cover which erases the first lines: 'Ruby Langford and Susan Hampton worked together for two years on this book'. ('Recasting' 196)

By the twelfth edition of the book, the version that I own, there is no reference to Hampton on the book at all. Ravenscroft makes the point that this kind of credit to an editor is unusual for settler authors. Taking the small sample from the case studies in this thesis, I can confirm that the mentions of editors almost always come from the authors themselves in their acknowledgments thereby controlling the degree of recognition they receive. When an editor appears on an imprint page — as with Sally Morgan's books — they are credited as 'editor' and not included on the copyright line. In reviews or scholarship, discussion of editing for settler authors is the exception, not the rule.

As Wuthathi and Meriam lawyer and author Terri Janke argues, the correct attribution of copyright has long been a failing in Australia (2021) and copyright has long been held by settler writers, anthropologists and others who have stolen ideas and stories from First Nations people. Langford Ginibi experienced this theft. For the first edition, copyright was shared between Langford Ginibi and Hampton. However, on realising that she did not own her story, as it appeared in the book, Langford Ginibi took action to reclaim copyright.<sup>111</sup> At the time *Don't Take* was published, it was not uncommon for First Nations authors to have shared

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<sup>111</sup> MLMSS 5615/10

copyright, or indeed for someone other than the author of the book to hold the copyright. The copyright for Shirley Coleen's *MumShirl* belongs to Bobbi Sykes though both women's names appear on the cover. According to the imprint page, the copyright for *Auntie Rita* is held by mother and daughter, Jackie and Rita Huggins. While, as I covered in the discussion of authorship in the Chapter One, editors often would have a claim to copyright under the law (Bentley and Biron), making that claim is a kind of taboo, especially in the case of non-First Nations authors.

Langford Ginibi had applied for funding from the Literature Board with the support of Billy Marshall Stoneking in 1986 and the process of creating a book was underway. The details of how Langford Ginibi met Susan Hampton are not in the archive but there is a letter to Hampton from Clare O'Brien, an editor at Penguin, thanking Hampton for sending a sample of what was called *Ruby's Reminiscences* saying, 'I'd be very interested in seeing more of the manuscript, particularly after you have done some work with her on it'.<sup>112</sup>

Langford Ginibi sent Hampton a letter on 22 May 1986 with thirty photocopied pages to 'see what I've been doing'.<sup>113</sup> When Langford Ginibi and Hampton signed a contract with Penguin, they split the royalties fifty-five–forty-five with a decision that Hampton should not receive an editorial fee since, unlike an advance against royalties, a fee would not be deducted from future earnings, and so with each royalty payment she would have been \$3500 ahead. The archive holds a note in Langford Ginibi's hand in which she totals up the payments for the book up to 11 August 1987:

Sue got \$17,000 from Lit board for her own book & to help me with mine. A photocopy of Grandfathers getting Don Bradman out for duck went with her application for funding. I got \$6,000 from Abo Arts Board & \$4,000 from Bicentenary which totals \$10,000 half of which went to Sue Hampton. Plus \$7,000

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<sup>112</sup> MLMSS 5615/10/18 February 1986

<sup>113</sup> MLMSS 5615/10

advance royalties from Penguin which makes all told for the book & Sues funding from Literature Board a total of \$34,500. Wow!<sup>114</sup>

In a letter requesting revisions to the original contract, Langford Ginibi's lawyer notes, 'It seems to my clients that there are some real difficulties with the contract' and continues:

Susan Hampton is not a party to the Agreement, but in Clause 27 there is a provision conferring a benefit upon her. For that benefit to be conferred in any way which has meaning, she would have to be a party to the Agreement so that, if necessary, she could enforce the promise made to her. There would also, as a consequence, need to be some recital saying what her role was. <sup>115</sup>

This led to a contract, signed in December 1987, between Hampton, Langford Ginibi and Penguin and which assigned forty-five per cent of royalties to Hampton but listed Langford Ginibi as the sole copyright holder. Subsequently, Hampton, Langford Ginibi and Penguin signed a 'supplementary deed' on 9 August 1988 that split copyright between Hampton and Langford Ginibi.

At the end of this contract is a clause written in by hand, '5a) Ruby shall be styled as the author and Susan as the editor'.<sup>116</sup> This expression, 'styled as', implies that a discrepancy between the way things are and the way they will be presented but nevertheless continued the original representation of their roles. Tracing through the documentary evidence, it seems that Langford Ginibi did have a lawyer look over the agreement on her behalf — the agreement was drafted by Hampton's lawyer — but she later said that she did not understand percentages or what she was signing over. To make matters worse, it seems that Hampton did not understand copyright either. In a handwritten note among the contracts, Hampton writes 'What is copyright? The right to copy the final text of the book, or use it as basis for film, or

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<sup>114</sup> MLMSS 5615/10

<sup>115</sup> *ibid*

<sup>116</sup> *ibid*

reproduce it in any way.’<sup>117</sup> This explanation misrepresents copyright — especially if Hampton were aiming to explain what copyright is to an author. When an author holds copyright, they can licence it to other parties who may reproduce it or dramatise it but fundamentally copyright is ownership of the text. As the Copyright Agency describes it, ‘Copyright is a form of intellectual property that protects the original expression of ideas. It enables creators to manage how their content is used.’ Their website, which of course did not exist when Langford Ginibi was writing, continues, ‘Certain forms of expression, such as text, images and music, are automatically covered by copyright under the Copyright Act.’<sup>118</sup> Hampton’s representation focuses on the implications of copyright — not its primary function.

None of the other subjects of this thesis had a relationship with an editor where they claimed a royalty, and in my fifteen years in the publishing industry I have never heard of such an arrangement. Some ghostwriters receive a share of royalties but often they are simply paid a flat fee. At a time when the Australia Council grants for Hampton to work on her own poetry projects were \$9900 in 1986 and \$6100 in 1987 and the weekly average salary for women was \$432<sup>119</sup>; had Hampton simply been doing editorial work, these fees would have been incredibly high. Perhaps she thought of her role as a co-writer. Indeed, as I know from their application to the Literature Board<sup>120</sup>, Hampton had not yet edited a book (though she would go on to do editorial work on other books including *Stravinsky’s Lunch* (1999) by Drusilla Modjeska (346) and *The Poison Principle* by Gail Bell (2001). Her primary claim of qualification was her teaching experience — which was extensive.

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<sup>117</sup> MLMSS 5615/13

<sup>118</sup> <https://www.copyright.com.au/about-copyright/>

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[https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/97332066147C91CECA2574FF00188AB2/\\$File/63020\\_FE B1989.pdf](https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/97332066147C91CECA2574FF00188AB2/$File/63020_FE B1989.pdf)

<sup>120</sup> MLMSS 5615

Before moving on, allow me to note that Langford Ginibi is not the only author in this study whose relationship to her copyright changed over the course of her career. Although she is the only author in this study who shared copyright, the copyright attribution for Ruth Park changed from her early work to her later publications. Before *Missus* (1983) the attribution was to ‘Ruth Park’ but from *Missus* onwards, the copyright is held by ‘Kemalde’ (the company was registered in 1983<sup>121</sup>). This is relevant for tax purposes and demonstrates a business sense and Park’s recognition of the commercial value of writerly products. In the absence of a knowledge of copyright law and tax law, it is possible for authors to enter into agreements without understanding the implications of their decisions. If publishers want to ensure good-faith arrangements with the authors they publish, discussions on these topics could significantly improve relationships.

It was only a year after the supplementary deed was signed that Langford Ginibi wrote a letter to Hampton, a draft of which is in the archive, saying she did not understand percentages since they were not taught at ‘Class 2F in Casino High School’ and ‘how can you own half of my life?’<sup>122</sup> Hampton replied towards the end of the month saying ‘I was amazed and hurt to find you still so angry’. She goes on to write, ‘The book is not actually going make a huge amount of money’. She speaks of the sense of loss at completing a project like the book, how it can call up previous losses and then writes, ‘I’m really shocked that you interpret your sense of loss as me “ripping you off”. It is the LAST thing a person with my politics would do.’<sup>123</sup> From here, the disagreement escalated.

The archive holds correspondence between Legal Aid who initially represented Langford Ginibi, Langford Ginibi’s other lawyers and Hampton’s lawyers as they resolved the dispute over copyright. In these letters Hampton claimed she was a co-writer and Langford Ginibi

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<sup>121</sup> [https://connectonline.asic.gov.au/RegistrySearch/faces/landing/SearchRegisters.jspx?\\_adf.ctrl-state=yca1733p3\\_4](https://connectonline.asic.gov.au/RegistrySearch/faces/landing/SearchRegisters.jspx?_adf.ctrl-state=yca1733p3_4)

<sup>122</sup> MLMSS5615/11/1 August 1989

<sup>123</sup> MLMSS 5615/11/22 September 1989

disputed it. Perhaps Hampton's claims were undermined by repeated stipulations, in contracts and otherwise, that she was the book's editor. Despite Hampton's claims on copyright, however, copyright was reverted to Langford Ginibi in 1991 and from then on, Penguin editions of the book have attributed the work to a sole copyright-holder.

Lynne Spender, an editor and a lawyer, reviewed Langford Ginibi's drafts in order to write a report on the editorial process for Langford Ginibi's lawyer. She reached the same conclusions that I have, namely Susan Hampton:

... has apparently begun with a draft manuscript, has supported, advised and worked with the author to make the story into an accessible, coherent whole. There is no indication that the 'voice' of the narrative is anyone other than Ruby and no indication that Ms Hampton has offered substantial material of her own to the text. This, however, is not to say that Ms Hampton's contribution was not important. Her support and encouragement indicate that she played a significant editorial role in the development of the book.<sup>124</sup>

Spender is careful to acknowledge over the course of her eight-page report that Hampton made a contribution but is equally explicit in her determination that copyright in the work belong with its author, Langford Ginibi.

The archive holds a letter from a lawyer who states she was engaged by the Arts Law Centre as a solicitor to represent Langford Ginibi's interests at the signing of the agreement shared copyright with Hampton.<sup>125</sup> This is a kind of due diligence to ensure there was a representative for each of the parties at the signing since Hampton's lawyers were responsible for drawing up the agreement. That said, Langford Ginibi's ongoing claim was that she did not fully understand what she was signing over. No final countersigned agreement is extant in the archive but in a copy of an unsigned contract it seems that the queries have been resolved

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<sup>124</sup> MLMSS 5615/12/26 October 1990

<sup>125</sup> MLMSS 5612/12/11 October 1990

after a period of nearly three years. There is no non-disclosure agreement in the collection, nor is there a clause in the agreement itself prohibiting either party from discussing the arrangement — it would appear the author and editor’s silence on the matter was a choice each of them made.

Notably, Langford Ginibi did not have a co-author on her next book or indeed for most of the books that she published in her lifetime. She collaborated with her adopted daughter Pam Johnson on *My Bundjalung People*. Had Langford Ginibi been incapable of completing books on her own, she would not have created the output she did for the rest of her writing career. A key conclusion I have reached from exploring many versions of the manuscript is that the means of production must have had an impact on Hampton’s perception of her role in the composition of *Don’t Take Your Love to Town*. Neither Langford Ginibi, nor Hampton could type at the time they were collaborating on the book. Langford Ginibi’s notes are legible (I would argue no less legible than those of Hampton’s) and so there was no need to rewrite the drafts for the sake of legibility for a typist. In the age of Microsoft Word and with the functionality of track changes, my instinct —based on experience — is that the kinds of edits that Hampton did would be immediately identifiable as editing as opposed to co-authorship. However, since she did quite literally rewrite long passages of the work, it may well have felt that she was operating in a role that differed from an editor. It is also worth reiterating at this point that Hampton was not an experienced editor at the time of the collaboration and perhaps her attitudes would have been different if she had other edits to compare. In his history of the typewriter, Martyn Lyons contends that in the twentieth century ‘The typewriter, whether rented, leased or bought outright, was the badge of the writer’s profession’ (19). That Hampton did not use a typewriter, given the work she was undertaking — and given she could have bought one with just a small amount of her overall fee for the project — is surprising and points to unprofessionalism on her part in this process.

## **The Writing and Editing Process: Comparing holographs in the hands of author and editor**

In this section I describe some of the archival holdings that demonstrate both Langford Ginibi's drafting and Hampton's interventions. This work shows that while Hampton made a copyright claim on Langford Ginibi's work, the original draft offers sufficient evidence for sole authorship. There are several instances of rewriting in the drafts, from a paragraph to a page to a chapter. The longer rewritings that are in the archives occur in the later chapters of the book. This could be for a few reasons: perhaps because they were not drafted in longer sections as some of the earlier parts of the book were, or perhaps Langford Ginibi and Hampton were at a different place in their author/editor relationship. Whatever the reason, the questions that I will address here are, to what extent were Hampton's reworkings of the text in the interests of the book and to what extent did they conform to or surpass the standard editor's role in book production. Since the drafts were sometimes in different boxes, it was a laborious process of checking one box, taking photographs and notes and then checking other boxes in an effort to recreate the chronology of production but I am confident in my reconstruction of the process.

In the first box of the Ruby Langford Ginibi archive there is a binder filled with hundreds of pages of handwritten autobiography. Although some passages of the text do not have many full stops (most pauses are indicated by commas) the prose is written in sentence form including subclauses and has time markers and descriptions, and a great sense of humour. To offer just one example, Langford Ginibi describes a 'Ball at the Sydney Town Hall' which 'was a lovely affair, it had been 11 years since I'd been back there, when Pearl made her debut, there was a terrific crowd there'.<sup>126</sup> Notice that Langford Ginibi correctly capitalised proper nouns, used past perfect and subclauses. While the sentence continues down the page with commas instead of full stops and she miswrites 'crowd' for 'crowd', the prose is fluent,

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<sup>126</sup> MLMSS 5615 1/1

descriptive and intelligible. The same is true for all the pages of her holographs that I read. There is variation in the register — some of the expressions or phrases are more formal than the surrounding prose — but there is fluency and consistency and, most importantly, voice. To illustrate the editing process, I will offer examples of both Ruby Langford Ginibi's draft and Hampton's rewriting. The opening of the first draft text reads:

When my Bill died I went into a state of shock I became that sick within myself I had to go to bed, I didn't know what I would have done without the help of good friends like Neridah & Gert as they took care of the children & the house, Bills spirit had me locked in, I could see people come into the room, and could see there lips move but couldn't hear a sound, and I wouldnt eat, I was a mess, they were worried about me & sent for my mother, I could here her speacking to me [sic] and she said "you want to go out to the grave & talk to him" and tell him to leave you alone." You know in our way they can take you with them." And I knew if I didnt do something it would be the end of me.<sup>127</sup>

The equivalent text in Hampton's hand reads:

After Bill died I couldn't hear anything. I stayed in bed for five days? and Gert and Neddy looked after me. I saw them come into the room & go out, but I couldn't hear anything. It was like I was in a huge fog. Nobby came & took me out to the back to the toilet & waited, & brought me back in again. There were no outside noises. Bill's spirit had me locked in. I stayed in bed. People came into the room, I could see their lips moove [sic] but I couldn't hear the voices. I stopped eating. Gert & Neddy sent for my mother.

I could hear my mother. She told me to go out to the grave and talk to him, and tell him to leave me alone. I knew if I didn't get out of bed it would be the end of me.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> MLMSS 5615/2/1

<sup>128</sup> MLMSS 5615/2/2

Clearly these two texts are different from each other, but close examination reveals precisely how the drafts differed and what change the edits effected on the text. Let me begin with the question of Langford Ginibi's hearing. In the first draft (which I will henceforth call D1), the reader first understands the hearing loss around halfway through the paragraph. Making her hearing loss part of the first sentence, the second draft (D2) avoids the sense that this is a revelation, appearing mid-way through a scene. As with other drafts of Langford Ginibi's, D1 does not include full stops though many of the commas could easily be changed to perform this role. Notably, there is added material in D2 that describes Nobby helping Langford Ginibi go to the toilet. Most likely, this material would not come from the mind of Hampton but would have been contributed by Langford Ginibi. Similarly, the information that Langford Ginibi was in bed for 'five days' as indicated in D2 could not have come from Hampton, unless Hampton was fabricating details, which seems unnecessary given the drafting process and undesirable in terms of the result for the finished book. Otherwise D2 is a little more concise than D1, since it conveys some more detail in roughly the same word count.

To take another example, I will now compare the Langford Ginibi holograph and Susan Hampton holograph sections titled 'About Aunt Nells Brooch'.<sup>129</sup> In the Langford Ginibi pages, the passage opens:

With the money I learnt from Chiefy Pie, and also running messages for the grand sum of 3 pence & 6 pence a message, I decided it would be nice to get something for Mother Nell for Mothersday ... I found a catalogue at home & browsed through it, something caught my eye. it was a mother of pearl brooch made in the shape of a leaf, with mother written in gold lettering and underneath hanging by a small chain was a

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<sup>129</sup> MLMSS 5615/2/1

tiny heart on which the lords prayer was written so small you practicy need a microscope to read it.

This passage includes spelling errors but also has a clear setting of the scene, subclauses and plenty of detail about the brooch, painting a clear picture for the reader.

The published version reads as follows:

When I got back home that night, there was a mail order catalogue on the table. I always read those things. On the second page there was a mother-of-pearl brooch made in the shape of a leaf with MOTHER written in gold lettering and underneath hanging by a small chain was a tiny heart, on which the Lord's Prayer was written so small you practically needed a microscope to read it. (21)

In this version the errors have been corrected but the most striking thing is the bridging sentence connecting this anecdote to what preceded it. Connections of this nature facilitate a fluidity in the prose and the sense of a larger story as opposed to a string of anecdotes.

However, the suggestion to connect separate sections adds fluency to existing material rather than an unusual or original contribution to the text. This comparison offers evidence for my contention that Langford Ginibi did not require the assistance of a co-writer since she was capable of penning her own story in language that was clear, vivid and descriptive and with sentences of sufficient detail and complexity to perform the act of authorship herself.

Now that I have considered two passages and noted some differences, I can address the question of whether the work has been changed beyond the usual processes that are called 'editing' and whether the changes constitute re-writing or co-authorship. As discussed in the introduction, editors such as Maxwell Perkins and Gordon Lish, as extreme examples of editorial intervention, regularly made changes of this degree of significance and perhaps more — notably that Lish amended as much as 'seventy per cent of the draft' (Max). By my reckoning, the question of medium has a significant impact on the recognition of the kind of

work an editor is doing. Since Hampton did not use a typewriter, her revisions are literal rewritings; that is, she rewrote text by hand. However, while they require re-inscription, they do not change the meaning and in many instances do not substantively change the phrasing or word choice. Instead, the edits dealt with repetition and comments that might be read as ambiguous or unclear.

Although elsewhere in the drafts Hampton has made notes requesting ‘dialogue’, here is an instance where she has removed it. This is because as the scene continues, Langford Ginibi does not go to Bill’s grave but instead visits the site in the house where he passed away to speak with his spirit. This revision is consistent with general editorial work in that it takes two separate passages that appear to be in conflict with each other and ensures a consistency between them. The edits Hampton made, though seemingly extensive insofar as Hampton physically rewrote full chapters of the work, are not as substantial as such an act might suggest. With the close similarities in vocabulary, content and mood, I have answered the first question with the response: the text was changed but not beyond the bounds of traditional editorial intervention. Indeed, from my experience as an editor, I know it is common for writers who do not usually express themselves on the page to use commas instead of full stops when they first turn to writing. Amending this is straightforward and unremarkable.

The second question of how the edits change the tone and content of the work finds an answer in my reading of one of Hampton’s edits as an example of the sort of ‘gubbarising’ of which Langford Ginibi complained. If I take the concept of community as being at the heart of First Nations experience, then it is notable that Hampton’s edits shifted the attention in D1 where Neridah and Gert ‘took care of the children and the house’ to D2 where they ‘looked after me’. In the original the focus is on Langford Ginibi’s household and in the second it is purely on her — arguably a move from the community to the individual. Changing the text in this way reads as a shift from a more community-minded to a more individualist

standpoint. This calls to mind Johnson/Narogin's critique of Sally Morgan: that she emphasised individuals over family and kinship. These interventions are also outside the scope of moving to greater consistency or fluency and instead shift the meaning. Both from the perspective of maintaining the author's meaning and from the perspective of fidelity to First Nations experience, such edits are undesirable.

### **Author as Teacher: Sharing knowledge and Culture**

Approaching from the opposite direction, Langford's work as an author was also in part as an educator — in her case for settler readers. Anne Brewster articulates this dynamic:

Langford's narratives have a clear educative agenda. In work-in-progress on her son's biography she says: 'That's what I keep bumping my gums about! ... Trying to educate people with my talks about conditions [of poverty in which her family lives]' (Langford 1994b: 55). She sees her role of writer and speaker as a professional one and humorously underlines her role as an educator after a conversation with some people about her country: 'just leave my lecturing fee on the counter', she says as she leaves. (73)

In other words, Langford Ginibi's work is not just operating on an aesthetic level or as entertainment. She is also deploying a pedagogical mode — trying to educate settler readers on the experiences of Aboriginal people with a view to encouraging an awakening about the kind of treatment Aboriginal people endured — and continue to endure — in Australia. Similarly, critic Elizabeth Guy finds that Langford Ginibi is acting as an advocate on behalf of her people, arguing, 'Ginibi's personal history celebrates the eternal recurring patterns for women (especially Black) of birth, death and rebirth — where she evolves into a political educator for her people and where she grows and leaves behind things that restricted her full development' (73–4).

There are multiple sources of this pedagogical mode that are products of Langford Ginibi's entanglement with settler technologies and systems. As scholar Linda Westphalen finds: 'While her formal 'mainstream' education was of little use to her during the period of her life when she lived in bush and fringe camps ... this education ... facilitated and empowered her to "edu-ma-cate" non-Indigenous Australians' (317). Here is another instance of taking up the tools that in other instances can contribute to the oppression of First Nations people and exploiting them for Langford Ginibi's own ends.

At the conclusion of *Don't Take*, Langford Ginibi claims one of her reasons for writing the book is 'That it might give some idea of the difficulty we have surviving between two cultures' (269). Conscious that readers may not respond in the way she has intended or may question the kind of work that she produced, this comment is a framing device to encourage settler readers to think of the work as part of their education about First Nations experience. Further, Langford Ginibi worked to control the drafting and editing process, but she also takes up the 'master's tools' — to recall Jeanine Leane's comment on *Dropbear* — in her decision to give her papers to the State Library of NSW. In this act, she takes what is traditionally a colonial institution and repurposes it, demonstrating her ability to successfully appropriate Western means of history-making and information control to serve her ends. Her project of contributing correspondence, drafts, launch materials and interviews to the library was an ongoing project from 1993 until 2008. To quote from the interview in which she described her attitude to the archive: 'I've been researching for the last eleven, going on twelve years, and I've got all my writing, every draft of my writing, stored in the State Library, you know. It's for education purposes, you know. I put it there so that they would understand better about Aboriginal people, you know' (*In Conversation* 12).

Both because of her comments about the role of her work and because of the shift in the way that settler critics engage with First Nations work, Langford Ginibi is often characterised

as an educator by others — reaching out through her work to settler readers as I have mentioned. Her success as an educator is evident in the number of courses that have taught her work — both at high school and tertiary levels — and in the legacy of her thinking and writing on scholars such as Linda Westphalen, John Barnes and Anne Brewster, all of whom contributed to a tribute to Langford Ginibi in the *Journal of the European Association for the Studies of Australian Literature* in 2012 as well as Anita Heiss (*The Garrett*) and Jeanine Leane (*Swansong* 19) who cite her as an important influence. While commentary on the editorial process has all focused on a unidirectional movement of Hampton imposing a settler subject position onto Langford Ginibi's Aboriginal text, I can demonstrate from the work itself, from the archives and from commentary that Penny van Toorn has made about her own collaboration with Ruby Langford Ginibi that there was, in fact, a pedagogical force moving in the other direction as well.

Indeed, any editor can describe the education a given manuscript offers them; each editorial task will include an opportunity to learn from the work. In the case of Langford Ginibi, the archive does not hold an explicit response from Hampton describing what she learnt, however, from the materials included with the manuscript, I infer what she would have learnt over the course of the editorial process. The first example for *Don't Take* is in Bundjalung language, or what Langford Ginibi called 'lingo'. Although not fluent in the language of her people, Langford Ginibi had vocabulary for animals, plants, people and familial relations. The archive includes a glossary for Language that appears in the book. Another archival holding is evidence of non-linguistic instruction, notably a drawing that Langford Ginibi did that shows a 'washing tub, a billy can, washing up dish and kero tin' among other items.<sup>130</sup> This sheet is a disambiguation that mirrors Hampton's disambiguation of 'they're/their/there' making clear the distinctions between some similar tools that I will

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<sup>130</sup> MLMSS 5615/2/2

describe in more detail shortly. Lastly, there is the kind of education that any settler reader benefits from reading Langford Ginibi's work in that she describes the life experience of First Nations people two centuries after colonisation.<sup>131</sup> Extending from education on Language and practice, *Don't Take* offers a social and labour history, an examination of the effects of the carceral system and an elaboration on kinship and connection, extending the editor a range of invitations to gather new knowledge.

### **Editor as Teacher: Creative writing lessons on the holograph**

Existing writing on the relationship between Hampton and Langford Ginibi has almost exclusively focused on the questions of copyright or 'gubbarising' but there is another element that the archive reveals; Hampton did not just operate as an editor but, in part because of her experience as a teacher at NSW Institute of Technology<sup>132</sup>, she was performing the role of a creative writing teacher as well. To varying extents an editor will always be working to offer advice which can be read as 'teaching', but this relationship is made explicit because of Hampton's notes in the archives. This is clear from her notes, the inclusion of a rates sheet about fees to creative writing teachers and the tone of some of her comments. Further, as she had co-written an HSC textbook called *About Literature* (1984) before working with Langford Ginibi, clearly her work experience at this point in her career was in teaching rather than editing.

Susan Hampton's figuration of the relational dynamic between editor, writer and text could be co-opted to a discussion of teacher-student-text but in that configuration, the positioning of power and authority settles on the teacher and the text in a way that is never so straightforward in a book publishing context. Such a dynamic positions Langford Ginibi in a

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<sup>131</sup> Thanks to this skill, her work has been particularly interesting to overseas readers with dedicated attention to her oeuvre from Indian, Spanish and German scholars (Sareen; Mathur; Haag; Schuermann-Zeggel). Part of their fascination with her work is its ability to bring to life descriptions of the lives of First Nations people otherwise unseen in foreign representations of Australia. In the case of Catalan scholars, it has been relevant to a minority group struggling against the oppression of the majority (Pizzaro).

<sup>132</sup> MLMSS 5615/1

more subordinate position than a more common author-editor relationship would afford in many instances. However, this is not to say that such positioning can only be read as detrimental. Arguably, Langford Ginibi was receiving the creative writing training she would not otherwise have had access to but which became increasingly common over the eighties and into the early part of the twenty-first century (McGurl 25). New work from Joseph Steinberg has reintroduced the concern to Australian literature focusing on Helen Garner and noting that while she did not study creative writing at a tertiary level, her engagement with universities as a visiting fellow or guest lecturer had a profound effect on students at these institutions and on Garner's own writing (np). Similarly, although Langford Ginibi did not study creative writing, the effect of the creative writing program on her work is evident in the archive, embodied in Hampton's editorial practice.

The project of a teacher and the project of an editor do not neatly align. A tertiary teacher is much less conscious of the market (especially a teacher who is also a poet such as Hampton) and their goal is to develop the work — there is a focus on training that an editor would not normally engage in. Editors can function as social barometers, as I explored in the relationship between Thea Astley and Meredith Rose or anticipate readers' reactions as I saw in relation to Ruth Park and Beatrice Davis and are answerable to the work and to the publisher. What complicates my argument here is that a teacher is, in effect, employed by the student but in Hampton's case, she was employed by the author and funded by the Arts Council. In this sense, Hampton-as-editor is closer to performing the role of a teacher — her client is the author-student. However, since Langford Ginibi is an author and this is her life story, there is no tidy overlap with this comparison.

Although several scholars have described the ways they have been 'edu-ma-cated' by Langford Ginibi (Ballyn; Westphalen), they have not examined the pedagogical dynamic that arose between Susan Hampton and Langford Ginibi and the polyvalence of this dynamic.

Part of the reason for this gap is the lack of consultation of the archives that stage a performance of this relationship on the page. The archive offers evidence of Hampton positioning herself as a teacher and of Langford Ginibi teaching Hampton. A key document in understanding the dynamic between the two women is a typed sheet that reads as a sort of employment record of Hampton's teaching at NSW Institute of Technology (which later became the University of Technology Sydney). It may be that she supplied this to Langford Ginibi as a kind of resume. From Autumn 1981 to Spring 1986 Hampton taught a range of creative writing subjects that included Poetry, Fiction Writing Workshop, Professional Writing I and II, Basic Action Writing, Modern Australian Drama, Advanced Fiction Workshop, Narrative Writing and Experimental Fiction.<sup>133</sup> As an institution, the NSW Institute of Technology was perhaps the first of its kind in Australia in terms of creative writing teaching and was a factor in the careers of authors such as Gillian Mears who thanks Hampton in the acknowledgments for her second novel, *The Grass Sister* (1995) and had a significant and ongoing relationship with Mears as Bernadette Brennan notes in her biography, *Leaping into Waterfalls* (2021). Since Langford Ginibi did not get her leaving certificate, as described earlier in this chapter, her creative writing education was adjacent to institutions.

Hampton's teaching operated on several levels. In the papers of one of the drafts for *Don't Take Your Love to Town* is the disambiguation:

there	place
their	(own)
they're	they are <sup>134</sup>

An author's confusion of these words can be corrected at the editorial stage, but Hampton has taken the time to write out this note, seemingly to give Langford Ginibi something to

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<sup>133</sup> MLMSS 5615 1/2

<sup>134</sup> MLMSS 5615/2/1

refer to during the drafting process. Indeed, that was not the only example of explanation. Elsewhere in the manuscript, Hampton's teaching ranges from the grammatical to the stylistic. Her comments on the manuscript reiterate creative-writing teacher truisms such as, 'Show don't tell'.<sup>135</sup> Another maxim common to creative writing teaching (or academic writing for that matter) is to avoid passive voice and Hampton includes an example of active voice versus passive voice elsewhere on the manuscript.<sup>136</sup> She also marks the following disambiguations: 'Buy — bought \$ / Bring — brought'; 'Imagery / Simile / Metaphor / The sun is a big red ball'; 'Description (reporting) / Action (scene) / Dialogue (talking)'.<sup>137</sup> While having the terminology to discuss the different elements of prose can prove useful, from the holographs in Langford Ginibi's hand, it is clear she was able to tell stories from her life, to use both reported speech and direct dialogue. Perhaps most importantly, however, her writing has voice which is famously the component of prose that is hardest to teach and most rewarding to read.<sup>138</sup>

Later she adopts a position that is more consistent with other editorial feedback that this thesis documents, posing a question rather than offering an edict. In one note, Hampton writes:

Things to ponder on

An intelligent reader at this point is going to ask for another layer of awareness to be inserted into the text.

Examples: the descriptive passages used interpretation as well - the idea that there's a mind playing over this material and making some meaning of it, learning something.

What is learnt must inform the writing but not moralise about the situations.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> MLMSS 5615/1/2/5

<sup>136</sup> MLMSS 5615/2/2

<sup>137</sup> MLMSS 5615 1/2

<sup>138</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/12/learning/writers-voice.html>

<sup>139</sup> MLMSS 5612/2/3

These notes are the kind of contribution that one would expect from a structural editor or developmental editor — not least because they fall within the parameters of work described in editing textbooks for each of these stages (Flann et al). As such, they offer further evidence that Hampton's work can be characterised as editing as opposed to co-writing.

Elsewhere she asks Langford Ginibi to consider:

What is the position of the urban Aboriginal women and does it differ in any way from the position of the man. How do women / men think things will change for the better?

These things don't need to be explained in the novel, but they must be understood and thought about so that the writing informed by certain attitudes, including changes of perception, changes in your own life. What is it in your life that makes you identify as Bundjalung, and how will this help your kids and grandkids? Is an autobiography about creating an identity, or understanding it (or both?).<sup>140</sup>

By invoking a potential reader, Hampton is performing the role of editor, as I have discussed in regard to Ruth Park and Thea Astley. Further, by asking questions rather than laying down edicts, she is not acting as a co-creator but rather a kind of foil for the author, using questions as prompts for the author to furnish the details. Hampton's imagined reader is clearly from a similar subject position as the editor herself; she is not an Aboriginal person.

An important difference in this invocation of a reader for Langford Ginibi is that most readers in Australia, and the rest of the world, are non-First Nations. This can be read as part of the process of 'gubbarising' the text and the kind of manoeuvre that Jackie Huggins was keen to avoid in *Auntie Rita* (1). By encouraging the author to think of the reader, who is more likely to be non-First Nations, the editor is effectively asking the author to change their text for the sake of accessibility for non-First Nations readers. Having worked as an editor, I am

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<sup>140</sup> MLMSS5615/2/3

conscious that authors making decisions based on their vision for the work that ignore the potential demands of readers can have a deleterious effect on the text's ability to reach readers — and for many authors, the desire to reach the greatest number of readers possible is the highest priority. However, if the author privileges their vision for the work over the question of the size of their readership, then this generates a different result.

Hampton's relationship with Langford Ginibi, and the two-year collaboration on the work might be read erroneously as an indication that they were co-authors since, in trade publishing, editors do not generally work on an individual book for such a long period of time. Aside from the fact that the length of time is not sufficient evidence in and of itself; such an involved drafting process is not without precedent. Just as she was a useful comparison for Sally Morgan, so I invoke Langford Ginibi's contemporary Drusilla Modjeska here. In her essay collection, *Timepieces* (2002), Drusilla Modjeska recounts how her editor from Angus & Robertson met with her every week for a year to develop her thesis into *Exiles at Home* (1981). Over the same period, she was also regularly visiting Dorothy Green and receiving feedback (*Timepieces* 30–1). It is possible for non-First Nations writers to speak of editorial feedback, even at this level of involvement, without fear of being told that their work belongs to someone else. First Nations authors do not enjoy the same latitude.

While Hampton was operating as a creative writing teacher, there are several important differences in the dynamic she had with Langford Ginibi. First, a teacher is employed by an institution and is responsible for a class at a time. Their feedback is usually on assessment tasks and their attention during class is split between the students. In the case of an amanuensis/editor hybrid as Hampton seems to have been for Langford Ginibi at times, the relationship is much more of a collaboration and the responsibilities shift. The aim for a teacher is to develop capacities and skills whereas an editor is working to produce a final book. For a teacher, they would like to see a student succeed but they are usually at a remove

from both the published work and any credit for assisting the author; they can be even more invisible than an editor. While a class may bear witness to the way a teacher/student relationship operates, an editor/author relationship is largely private.

Though not perfectly contemporaneous (Mears studied at NSW Institute of Technology in 1983) it is worth considering the case of Hampton's early involvement in Gillian Mears' oeuvre. Initially it was a straightforward, though close, relationship as Bernadette Brennan documents in her biography of Mears. Hampton draws on traditional creative writing advice (fewer adjectives, simplify the prose and leave gaps for the reader to fill [Sullivan *Work of Revision*, 102]) and becomes increasingly positive in her feedback as Mears learns to follow the advice; indeed Mears comments in her the dedication to debut collection, 'it was she and she alone who made me a writer' (Brennan 19). Something that would have potentially been a difficulty for creative writing teacher like Hampton working with someone like Langford Ginibi would be the latter's level of formal education. NSW Institute of Technology was developing a reputation as one of the best options for creative writers. The kinds of students included young writers such as Beth Yahp (Brennan 19). Evidently, these students are different from Langford Ginibi who was in her fifties when she worked with Hampton and did not have the formal education that students at NSW Tech would have had. Langford Ginibi's autobiographical work was operating in a different mode from the early work of Gillian Mears or Beth Yahp: perhaps that was part of the reason why Hampton wrote on a more than one page of the holograph that she was 'bored'.<sup>141</sup> Before moving on, it is worth noting that this comparison can only hold to a point since, as Brennan's biography documents, after Mears' graduation, she and Hampton had an intimate relationship — something that was never a component of Hampton's connection with Langford Ginibi.

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<sup>141</sup> MLMSS 5612/2/3

### **Editor as Editor: Hampton's work in the standard editorial mode**

One of the changes that occurs throughout the drafts is a shift to make for a more consistent register. Langford Ginibi's drafts, on occasion when she used a phrase in a higher register, Hampton changed it to a lower register. For instance, Langford Ginibi wrote 'the memory surfaced' and it was changed to 'the memory came back'.<sup>142</sup> Elsewhere she wrote 'we sat enthralled' and it was edited to 'we sat listening'<sup>143</sup> and 'I managed to purchase' became 'bought'.<sup>144</sup> In each of these cases, a more sophisticated phrase or word choice was replaced by a more casual expression. My reading of these changes is a determination that the prose would read as more cohesive, and therefore more fluent, if most of the word choices and phrasings were in a consistent register. Indeed, suggesting the editor consider the register of the prose is something that I have taught editing students. However, this approach may not be suitable for editing First Nations prose — especially at the time that Langford Ginibi was first being published. The shifts in register between formal and informal word choices can be read as representative of the kinds of negotiations that First Nations people performed towards the end of the twentieth century. Langford Ginibi was accustomed to a wide range of social and professional settings having lived in camps, in regional areas, worked in factories in urban areas and been involved in political organising. These variances in register in the drafts reflect her life experience and although the published version of the book does have the kind of consistency that editors are taught to apply to a manuscript, these edits remove some of the personal history and cross-cultural negotiations that Langford Ginibi would otherwise have included in her prose.

This shift in register can be read as an echo of Thea Astley's emendations of Peter Prior's English in *The Multiple Effects of Rainshadow*. By shifting a First Nations person's voice to a

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<sup>142</sup> 5615/3/3

<sup>143</sup> 5615/2/2

<sup>144</sup> *ibid*

lower register, the settler author patronises the initial author. This lowering of register happened for another Aboriginal author discussed in this thesis; Sally Morgan's work in the previous chapter with the change from 'mother' to 'mum'. This equivalence describes a throughline in the expectations of the editors about the relative informality in the speech, and writing, of Aboriginal people that does not necessarily reflect usage. A consistent lowering of register is not part of the editorial contributions for any of the small sample of non-First Nations authors/characters I have examined elsewhere in this thesis.

As I discussed in the Astley chapter, another position the editor takes is of social barometer and evidence for Hampton performing this role appears in the drafts for *Don't Take*, particularly in relation to the term 'half-caste'. In the 1930s and 1940s as Langford Ginibi was growing up in regional New South Wales, the term 'half-caste' was commonplace. By the time the book was being prepared for publication it had fallen from common parlance and can be seen as part of a colonial imposition of alien norms on First Nations people. In Langford Ginibi's first draft, she introduces her book as 'a true life autobiography of the struggle of one half caste aboriginal woman's life to raise a family of nine children in the divided society between the black and white culture of colonial Australia.'<sup>145</sup> This was changed to 'an Aboriginal woman's struggle to raise a family of nine' (v) which is both more concise and avoids a racially freighted term.

### **Reception: Expectations of editorial input from writers and scholars**

As with Sally Morgan, the reception for Ruby Langford Ginibi's work has been tightly woven with speculation on editing and discussions of the editorial process. Aside from Stoneking's early praise, contemporary reviews of Langford Ginibi's work failed to appreciate her writerly project and subsequent scholarly engagement has sought to correct the record. Indeed, the publication of *Don't Take* went almost completely unremarked on the book pages in

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<sup>145</sup> MLMSS 5615/1/2

newspapers and magazines. Reviews of Langford Ginibi's second book, *Real Deadly*, which was published as part of series by Angus & Robertson include Rod Moran's response that the book, along with the other books in the series, *Stradbroke Dreaming* by Oodgeroo Noonuccal and *Marngit* by B Wongar, 'have a significance that is anthropological and not just literary' and finds that, 'Stylistically, [*Real Deadly*] will not meet with the approval of many professional critics. It is straight-from-the-shoulder prose, mixing standard English, colloquialism, profanity and Aboriginal vocabulary' (np). Moran was right. Critic Peter Pierce finds that '...soap opera is her preferred mode of narrative'. He believes, 'the role of author (as distinct from storyteller) was one foisted upon her.' ('Self-styled' 8). More critical still was Mary Rose Liverani, according to whom, 'Ginibi ... exhibits no moral consciousness at all — nor any apparent notion of cause and effect ... Ginibi can't write. Lacking formal education and a literary or social context within which to appraise her experiences, she has difficulty making sense of her life or offering insight into it ... If a white had written this manuscript it would have gone straight on to the publisher's reject pile' (6). This contradicts the advice that Susan Hampton had given; that a narrator should not moralise and instead leave room for the reader's responses.<sup>146</sup> Narogin/Johnson took issue with Liverani's characterisation of Langford Ginibi's writing countering that 'Her review raises many problems of the comprehension of the Literature of Aboriginality by non-Aborigines, problems which, in her case, she lacks the ability to perceive, let alone solve.' ('Literature' 382) Indeed, contemporary treatment of Langford Ginibi's work finds that Liverani was the person lacking 'literary or social context' to consider the work of Langford Ginibi and not the other way around.

Academic Tim Rowse also comments on what he perceives as the lack of ethical thinking Langford Ginibi expressed and how that applies to her children's behaviour, writing that 'Not once does [she] comment on their morality. What grounds this lack of censure, however, is

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<sup>146</sup> MLMSS 5612/2/3

not amorality but a different, barely articulated practice of loyalty to one's kin' (99). Although a more sympathetic reader than Liverani, he seems to have missed a number of comments that Langford Ginibi made about the deleterious circumstances that she and her family found themselves in were largely caused by settler practices such as bringing in alcohol and discriminating against First Nations people.<sup>147</sup>

As with *My Place*, Johnson/Mudrooroo emphasises the question of genre in two separate discussions of the work (*Writing from the Fringe* 150; *Willi Willi Wangka* 181), commenting on the publisher's positioning of the work as a 'battler' narrative. Peter Pierce in a review of *Real Deadly* also called Langford Ginibi a 'self-styled battler' ('Self-styled battler' 8). While this may have been part of the marketing strategy, 'battler' fits too easily into a settler idea of personhood, as critics Suvendrini Perera argues; she finds that assigning the term 'battler' to works of First Nations literature is inapposite since so many qualities associated with 'battlers' are distinctly settler and mostly male (75). Focusing on class were critics such as Liverani, cited earlier, and scholars who celebrate Langford Ginibi's work such as Janine Nyoongah Little who opined that edits on Langford's Ginibi's work, in particular *My Bundjalung People* (1994) were working to make the text more 'soberly middle class' (33). Given the forced removal of her people to missions and other government policies, it is impossible to read any commentary on Langford Ginibi's work as separate from her position as an Aboriginal woman in Australia.

In the academy, the response to Langford Ginibi's work has largely been positive, if sometimes still pursuing anthropological ends. Critics Anne Brewster, Johnson/Mudrooroo, Alison Ravenscroft and Stephen Muecke have all written on Langford Ginibi, but none of them references her archive and they do not cite interviews. In her book *Black Writers, White*

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<sup>147</sup> For example, in her poem 'Verballed Again', Langford Ginibi writes 'You were a victim of circumstances my son' and ends with 'Our cries for justice will be heard one day,/ when white authorities and the powers that be,/ take off the blinkers and really see/ all of the wrongs they've done to thee.' (*Real Deadly* 33)

*Editors* (2009), Jennifer Jones argues that ‘... without reference to the original manuscript, these opinions remain within the realm of insider knowledge. As influential critics voice these opinions, however, they perpetuate critical intrigue surrounding private pre-publication processes’ (212). Brewster, for instance, writes that ‘White editors and publishers mediate [Aboriginal women’s life writing], as Aboriginal narratives are to some extent determined by the white discourses that constitute them’ (54) but offers no specifics.

In 1989 when Susan Sheridan wrote about *Don’t Take*, she commented that:

Ruby Langford worked for two years on her book with white poet Susan Hampton, and they have achieved a distinctive narrative voice that succeeds remarkably well in moving back and forth between robust humour, precise description and brief comment, all within a simple chronicling narrative. Compared with Sally Morgan’s narrative voice, Ruby Langford’s is more flexible and inclusive, creating a strong impression of a speaking presence. (‘Different’ 23)

Johnson/Mudrooroo remarks that *Don’t Take* ‘was edited by a white woman, Susan Hampton. This is Koori literature and the life story at its best.’ (*Writing from the Fringe* 150) although after information about Langford Ginibi’s legal and copyright struggles came to light, his opinion changed and later was concerned about which elements had been ‘downplayed in favour of producing a text which will appeal to mainstream readers’ (*Willi Willi Wangka* 181).

Over time the difficulties with editing featured in commentary on Langford Ginibi’s work, referred to in comments from Alison Ravenscroft (2004) and Sue Ballyn notes Langford Ginibi’s thinking that ‘any interference with the manuscript on a linguistic level was yet another example of outside manipulation. Ruby herself had an experience of this type and apart from her dismay and anger she felt it was yet again an infringement of Indigenous Rights’ (70).

According to Ravenscroft:

... Hampton was implicated in the colonizing relations of the production of that text, so too are the text's white readers. As an editor, Hampton was asked to anticipate Ginibi's white readership. That is the role of editor. She did this very well: *Don't Take Your Love to Town* has been a popular text among a white readership. To critique Hampton's interventions in the text is implicitly to critique the white reader's pleasures in the text that her interventions anticipated and helped produce. (199)

Notably, Ravenscroft does not provide references for any of the claims in this paragraph, perhaps indicating the level of accepted wisdom on this topic. This is particularly clear in that she says Hampton 'was asked to anticipate Ginibi's white readership'. While this is plausible, since Hampton was involved before a contract was signed, it seems more likely she anticipated this readership herself.

What is missing from this sort of commentary, aside from consultation of the archive, is a discussion of the continuum of settler influence on First Nations expression — from schooling to operating within the settler-colonial state on a daily basis, there are elements of 'whitening' or what Langford Ginibi herself calls 'assimilation' (*Don't Take* 177) that are part of life for years before these authors start their life writing. This is a parallel finding to Brewster's objection to the idea that just because a text is created using Western technologies, First Nations people lose agency (37); so it is that a First Nations person's text may be edited, but the potentially limited capacity of the editor to engage with the text do not automatically nullify or erase the agency of the First Nations author. The intrusions may be greater in many instances than with non-First Nations authors but, except in the case of wholesale rewriting (of which *Don't Take* is *not* an example) then there is agency, there is voice and there is a degree of writerly self-determination. While the holographs demonstrate significant rewritings, it remains true that the story of her life in *Don't Take* was Langford Ginibi's alone

and while elements of the language and expression changed, her experiences cannot be divorced from her personhood. Ravenscroft acknowledges the editor as anticipating a readership in line with Greenberg's figuring of this dynamic and the editor's embodiment of this role — the friction occurs when I consider which readers the editor embodies and whether they are similar to or different from themselves.

It is worth noting that despite Langford Ginibi's difficulties with the editing of her first book, she was not insured against further problems with her subsequent books. Perhaps the book that had the least editorial intervention was *Real Deadly* judging by the archive and Langford Ginibi's commentary, published by Angus & Robertson — the book that attracted Liverani's derision. For Langford Ginibi's third book, this time published by University of Queensland Press, she also endured significant editorial intervention as Nyoongah Little recounts:

In a recent conversation, Ginibi told how *My Bundjalung People* was 'fucked up', becoming something almost unrecognisable from the sweeping manuscript of prose, speeches, letters and testimonials she churned out after her fingers had ceased to smart from another notorious encounter with her first publishing house. I saw that manuscript, read it with admiration not only for Ginibi, but for Aboriginal women writers in general. There are so many tales of women spending years on manuscripts, only to start over again when the original is destroyed by fire — Glenyse Ward — or by storm — Labumore (Elsie Roughsy) — or, worst of all perhaps, by editing —  
Ginibi. (32)

As an editor, I am horrified at the idea that a writer would consider having a work destroyed by fire as equivalent to destruction by editing. It is in part so that present-day editors of First Nations work can have a more sound approach to their editorial practice that I am eager to share this research.

There is an inherent tension in the publishing process in that such work always anticipates readers and, even in the case of a commercially successful author such as Ruth Park, publishers make decisions at least partly based on profit margins and public reception. If a book is primarily intended for First Nations readers, then the audience is a small proportion of the total population of Australia. Some contemporary First Nations authors such as Alexis Wright and Melissa Lucashenko have successfully managed to maintain fidelity to their work and finding a market; this is in no small part a result of productive collaboration with publishers and exercising their agency. Future study of editorial collaboration with First Nations authors will likely be very different from what this chapter shows.

## Conclusion

After this experience with copyright and the legal system, Langford Ginibi inscribed ‘copyright’ at the top of every scrap of paper on which she wrote that is held in the archive. Though under Australian law, copyright is inherent<sup>148</sup>, she was sufficiently fearful of having her intellectual property misappropriated or exploited that she made this note to protect herself within settler systems. It is worth noting that when other editors worked with Langford Ginibi to facilitate publication of some of her later works — including Janet Hutchinson at UQP whom Langford Ginibi thanks in the acknowledgements to *All My Mob* for ‘care, concern and friendship’ (299) — they made no such claim on the copyright.

While Langford Ginibi’s Aboriginal identity is at the heart of her own writing and foregrounded in much of the scholarship on her work, from holographs in the archives I know that she was at ease writing in standard English with Aboriginal English expression. She was drafting in longhand, in scenes — not just minor excerpts — and that unlike collaborations such as *MumShirl* with Bobbi Sykes, when Langford Ginibi worked with an editor in advance of publication, it was not because Langford Ginibi was illiterate or

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<sup>148</sup> [www.copyright.com.au](http://www.copyright.com.au)

incapable of writing her own prose, it was that her editor was revising the drafts for publication.<sup>149</sup> As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, significant contributions from editors are relatively common and it should not be seen as an outlier case of editorial intervention.

Susan Hampton contributed significantly both in terms of her time and in terms of her version of care for the manuscript, but it is clear that she was not a co-author of *Don't Take Your Love to Town*. This is not only because it would be undesirable for marketing purposes to have a non-First Nations co-author for the book, but also because the editorial work that she did is consistent with some of the editorial intervention I note in other case studies in this thesis and does not quite reach the extremes of the limit studies of Lish or Perkins. Hampton's method, however, of rewriting whole sections by hand likely contributed to her misperception of her role. Even though she was relatively young when she left school, Langford Ginibi's drafts show that her prose was fluent, her vocabulary enabled her to tell the story with humour and emotion and even before she had editorial help, she was able to set scenes, orient them in time and build tension. While under Australian law, technically Hampton may have had a claim for shared copyright, it is also true that many professional editors would have been in a situation in the course of their career where they could have made such a claim and they did not. Further, it is not a coincidence that this string of events form the publication history of an autobiography by an Aboriginal woman. Langford Ginibi was not well-versed in contracts or the mores of the publishing world and followed the advice of people around her, to her detriment. Compounding the situation was Hampton's inexperience as an editor; had she worked for a publisher before she would have understood just how involved editorial labour can be.

As with other cases in this thesis, consulting the archive, with particular focus on the editorial process, has unveiled hitherto masked details about how *Don't Take* was produced

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<sup>149</sup> MLMSS 5156/1-3

and offers insights that have implications for literary scholarship, publishing studies and book history. It is also my hope that this information can help remind the majority of publishing industry workers who are not First Nations that their politics or goodwill does not insulate First Nations people from exploitation. This case study offers a portrait of the potentially harmful effects of ‘the soft bigotry of low expectations’.<sup>150</sup> Langford Ginibi could have found other paths to publication — ones that would have been less expensive for the Literature Board, some of which may have had a better outcome. Although there have been changes since 1988 in the Australian publishing industry, it is worthwhile remembering that good intentions do not guarantee good results and that recognition of the agency, self-determination and sovereignty of First Nations people are the only tools that can produce work of which First Nations authors will feel proud. When publishers afford this agency, the processes of editing, publication and promotion will result in better quality work and avoid disputes that can sully books as they reach the market.

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<sup>150</sup> Allow me to acknowledge that this term is not without itself limitations and has been misused as Noel Pearson has said. <https://capeyorkpartnership.org.au/noel-pearson-the-soft-bigotry-of-low-expectations/>