

Tom Thompson

## Mudrooroo

### A Publishing History

In 1965, publication of 'Wild Cat Falling' (Sydney: Angus & Robertson), described as the "first novel by a part-Aborigine", appeared in hardback with a foreword by Mary Durack. Its critical success prompted a ten-year license to Penguin Books (Hammondsworth, UK), their first edition printed in 1966.

In 1975, Johnson travelled to San Francisco where he met Ferlinghetti; he began work on a second novel, 'Long Live Sandawara'. The following year he travelled to Tasmania to research another work-in-progress, 'Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World'.

In 1977, Johnson began studying towards a B.A. (Hons.) degree at the University of Melbourne. 'Long Live Sandawara' was published in 1979 by Quartet Books (Melbourne), followed by the sixth printing of 'Wild Cat Falling' (Sydney: Sirius). 'Before the Invasion: Aboriginal Life to 1788', co-authored by Johnson with Colin Bourke and Isobel White, was published in 1980 by Oxford University Press. Later the same year, Johnson and Jack Davis co-founded the National Aboriginal and Islander Writers, Oral Literature, and Dramatists Association (AWOLDA).

1983 saw the publication of Johnson's third novel, 'Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World' (Melbourne: Hyland House) to great critical acclaim. In 1986, Tom Thompson, Publisher at the Australian Bicentennial Authority, contracted Johnson to write a volume of poetry, 'Dalwurra, the Black Bittern'. He also commissioned new work for Indigenous writers Glenys Ward, Ruby Langford, Sally Morgan, Nose-Peg, and supported the creation of Magabala Books, the first Indigenous publishing house in Australia.

In 1987, Johnson completed his B.A. (Hons.) degree at Murdoch University, Perth. 'Wild Cat Falling' was among the plays chosen to be workshopped at the First National Black Playwrights Conference, Canberra.

In 1988, Johnson was appointed Lecturer in Aboriginal Studies at the University of Queensland; he moved to Bungawalbyn, Northern NSW. 'Dalwurra, the Black Bittern: A Poem Cycle', edited by Veronica Brady and Susan Miller, was published by UWA Press (Nedlands, WA), followed by another poetry collection, 'The Song Circle of Jacky and Selected Poems' (Melbourne: Hyland House). 1988 also saw Johnson adopt Mudrooroo as his trade name (nom de plume; legal name Mudrooroo Narogin, later Mudrooroo Nyoongah). The second title of the 'Wildcat Trilogy', 'Doin' Wildcat: A Novel. Koori Script as Constructed By Mudrooroo', was published in Melbourne by Hyland House.

1989 witnessed the death of his mother, aged 91. Tom Thompson, as the new Publisher of Literature at Angus & Robertson, commissioned 'Wild Cat Screaming' and 'The Kwinkan'.

1990 saw the publication of 'Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature in Australia' (South Yarra, Vic: Hyland House), and 'Paperbark. A Collection of Black Australian Writings' (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press), edited by Jack Davis, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo and Adam Shoemaker; it contained a novella by Mudrooroo, entitled 'Struggling' (pp. 199-290). A second printing of 'Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World' was issued by Hyland House (Melbourne).

In May 1990, Mudrooroo participated in Belles Étrangères (Australian Writers Program in Paris), as part of the Angus & Robertson writers' party. Another edition of 'Wild Cat Falling' appeared in Angus & Robertson's Imprint series (Pymble, NSW), while 'Capricornia' by Xavier Herbert, with an introduction by Mudrooroo, was included in Angus & Robertson's Imprint Classics.

In 1991, Mudrooroo's appointment as Head of Aboriginal Studies, Murdoch University, Perth, was followed by the publication of 'Master of the Ghost Dreaming: A Novel' (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson), and 'The Garden of Gethsemane: Poems from the Lost Decade' (South Yarra, Vic: Hyland House).

From July to September 1991, Mudrooroo was Writer-in-Residence at the Centre for Performance Studies, University of Sydney, where he and Gerhard Fischer collaborated on devising a 'frame play' around Heiner Müller's 'Der Auftrag', translated as 'The Commission' by Fischer. The outcome was a new, original play, 'The Aboriginal Protesters Confront the Proclamation of the Australian Republic on 26 January 2001 with a Production of "The Commission" by Heiner Müller', usually abbreviated to 'The Aboriginal Protesters'. At the end of his residency, Mudrooroo's script was workshopped over two weeks by Brian Syron (director) and a group of Aboriginal actors, followed by a staged reading at Belvoir Theatre, Surry Hills. Mudrooroo's novel 'Master of the Ghosts Dreaming' won the Human Rights Commission Award (Media).

1992 saw the publication of the final title in the 'Wildcat' trilogy, 'Wildcat Screaming' (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson), while 'Wild Cat Falling' was re-published as an Imprint Classics Edition, with a new introduction by Stephen Muecke (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson). Mudrooroo's 'Garden of Gethsemane' was a Double Winner of the WA Premier's Award (Best Entry and Best Poetry Collection). This was followed by another reprint of 'Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription' (Melbourne, Vic: Hyland House), and a Dutch language edition of the same title, translated by Regina Willemse, published as 'Hoe Het Einde Van Wereld Te Verdragen: Een Recept van Dokter Wooreddy' (Amsterdam: Bridge Books).

A new novel, 'The Kwinkan' (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson) was published in 1993, along with 'The Mudrooroo/Müller Project. A Theatrical Casebook' (Sydney: UNSW Press), edited by Gerhard Fischer. The book was short-listed for a NSW State Premier's Award where Mudrooroo received a Special Prize for 'The Aboriginal Protesters', the centrepiece of 'The Mudrooroo/Müller Project'. A Text Response Guide to Mudrooroo's 'Wild Cat Falling', by Sue Perry (Ballarat, Vic: Wizard Books), was also published that year.

In 1994, Thompson's commission of Mudrooroo's 'Aboriginal Mythology: An A-Z Spanning the History of Australian Aboriginal Peoples from the Earliest

Legends to the Present Day' appeared in the UK (London: Thorsons) and was reprinted the same year (London: Aquarian). Also published that year was another edition on Mudrooroo's 'Wild Cat Falling', by Rick McLean (Glebe, NSW: Pascal Press).

1995 began with the publication of 'Master of the Ghost Dreaming' in the French language as 'Le Maître de Rêve-Fantôme', translated by Christian Seruzier (La Tour-d'Aigues, Vaucluse, France: Éditions de L'Aube), the publisher and author being assisted by the Australia Council for a promotional tour of France. 'Us Mob: History, Culture, Struggle. An Introduction to Indigenous Australia' (Sydney, London: Angus & Robertson), and 'Pacific Highway Boo-Blooz: Country Poems' (St. Lucia, Qld: UQP) were both published that same year, along with a reprint of 'Wildcat Screaming' (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson). 'The Aboriginal Protesters' premiered at The Performance Space, Redfern, as part of the Festival of Sydney, on 10 January 1996; subsequently, Mudrooroo toured with the all-Aboriginal cast in Germany, with performances in Weimar and Munich, July 1996. While in Germany, Mudrooroo began work on a verse drama, 'Iphigeneia in Buchenwald' (based on Goethe's 'Iphigenie in Tauris'). A German-language edition of 'Aboriginal Mythology' was published as 'Die Welt der Aborigines. Das Lexikon zur Mythologie der australischen Ureinwohner', translated by Wolf Koehler (Munich: Goldmann).

Following the publication of a newspaper article, 'Identity Crisis', by Victoria Laurie in *The Australian Magazine* (20-21 July), the Dumbarton Aboriginal Association, Perth, released a public statement on 27 July, denying Mudrooroo's claim to Nyoongah identity and Aboriginal descent. Despite this, 'Us Mob' won the Kate Challis RAKA Award later in the year.

1997 saw the publication of 'The Indigenous Literature of Australia: Milli Milli Wangka' (Melbourne, Vic: Hyland House), and a Polish language edition of 'Mitologia Aborygenow / Aboriginal mythology' (Poznan: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis), translated by Misolaw Nowakowski.

In 1998, Mudrooroo's seventh novel, 'The Undying', was published (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson) as the second volume in the 'Master of the Ghost Dreaming' series. A reprint of the French 'Le Maître de Rêve-Fantôme' was offered by Éditions de L'Aube.

1999 saw the publication of 'Underground' (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson), the third volume of the 'Ghost Dreaming' series, as well as a reprint of 'Dr Wooreddy' (Melbourne, Vic: Hyland House). A German language edition in hardback of 'Master of the Ghost Dreaming' appeared in Switzerland as 'Flug in die Traumzeit', translated by Wolf Koehler for Unionsverlag, Zurich.

Australian publishers continued to support Mudrooroo through 2000 with publication of 'The Promised Land' (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson), the final volume of the 'Ghost Dreaming' quartet, and with reprints of both 'Long Live Sandawara' and 'Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription' (Melbourne, Vic: Hyland House).

Mudrooroo left Australia in 2001 to begin a self-imposed exile at Kapan, Nepal. A reprint of 'Wild Cat Falling' under the A & R Classics label (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson) was issued shortly after his departure.

In 2002, Mudrooroo married Sangya Magar, a Nepalese citizen. Following the G-8 Summit in Genoa, Mudrooroo began a lecture tour of Italy, while another reprint of *'Le Maître de Rêve-Fantôme'* was published in France. At the conclusion of the lecture tour, Lorenzo Perrona became Mudrooroo's Italian agent, arranging the publication of an Italian edition of *'Wild Cat Falling'* in 2003, *'Gatto Selvaggio Cade'* (Florence, Italy: Casa Editrice Le Lettere), translated by Perrona. Subsequently, four stories were also published in Italian, all translated by Perrona.

In 2003, Mudrooroo's and Sangya Magar's son, Saman Nyoongah Magar, was born in Nepal.

An international volume of critical studies, *'Mongrel Signatures: Reflections on the work of Mudrooroo'*, edited by Annalisa Oboe, was published by Rodopi in Amsterdam and New York. After accepting Mudrooroo's request to be his sole agent (outside of Italy), Thompson reverted *'The Song Cycle of Jacky'*, including stock from Hyland House, all copies and title to *'Dalwurra'*, and *'The Kwin-kan'*, *'Wild Cat Screamin'*, *'Master of the Ghost Dreaming'*, *'Underground'* and *'The Undying'* from HarperCollins, paying Mudrooroo to move all these titles to Thompson's company, ETT Imprint.

In 2004, *'Flug in die Traumzeit'* was reprinted in Switzerland (Unions Verlag). Despite his absence from Australia, over 1000 copies of *'Wild Cat Falling'* were sold in 2007, and Copyright Agency permissions for use of *'Us Mob'* by other publishers drew over AUD 2600 to the author. *'Long Live Sandawara'* was reprinted by Hyland House.

In 2010, Thompson contracted *'Wild Cat Falling'* in a French translation by Christian Seruzier as *'Chat Sauvage en chute libre'* (Paris: Asphalte); the edition included Mudrooroo's Playlist for the writing of this book: *'You Can't Catch Me'* (Chuck Berry), *'Heartbreak Hotel'* (Elvis Presley), *'Blue Suede Shoes'* (Carl Perkins), *'Ain't that a Shame'* (Fats Domino), *'Trouble in Mind'* (traditional), *'See you later Alligator'* (Bill Haley), *'The Great Pretender'* (The Platters), *'Young Blood'* (The Coasters), *'Rebel Rouser'* (Duane Eddy), *'Ready Teddy, Rip It Up'* (both Little Richard), *'So Tough, The Wild One'* (both Johnny O'Keefe), and *'I'm not a Juvenile Delinquent'* (Frankie Lymon).

The international critical reception of Mudrooroo's work continued with scholarly articles in India and in China.<sup>1</sup> Mudrooroo sent his essay *'Me - I am Me!'* by email to Thompson and Fischer.

In 2011, Mudrooroo and his family returned to Australia for medical treatment, residing in Brisbane, Queensland. His *'Portrait of the Artist as a Sick old Villain'* was published in ASAL, 11, 2010, 2.

In 2012, HarperCollins reverted audio rights to *'Wild Cat Falling'*, and ETT Imprint acquired all stock and title to *'Doin' Wildcat'*, *'The Garden of Gethsemane'* and *'The Indigenous Literature of Australia'* (all from Hyland House).

2013 saw Mudrooroo reading *'Wild Cat Falling'* at the Motion Focus Music studios in Brisbane for Bolinda Audio, co-produced with ETT Imprint, as well as

1 Antara Ghatak: Identity and Belonging in Mudrooroo's *'Wild Cat Falling'*; Yong-Chun Yang, Xian-Jing Xu: Religious Identity in *'Wild Cat Falling'*.

publication of 'Old Fellow Poems' (Kolkata, India: ETT Imprint), with Mudrooroo recording these poems for ETT Imprint Audio.

In 2014, Sue Sherman published a volume on Mudrooroo's 'Wild Cat Falling' for Insight Publications in Cheltenham, Victoria.

2015 saw the publication of Mudrooroo's campus novel 'An Indecent Obsession', as well as a new edition of 'Wild Cat Falling' by ETT Imprint, Exile Bay, NSW, the latter including the essay 'Me - I am Me!'. Gale/Cengage (Detroit, MI) produced a booklet on Mudrooroo containing 5000 words from 'The Indigenous Literature of Australia', and the journal article 'Portrait of the Artist as a Sick Old Villain'. In September, Thompson contracted with Mudrooroo for two works-in-progress, 'Balga Boy Jackson', and a memoir 'The Hippy Trail' (finally published as 'Tripping with Jenny').

In 2016, a new edition of 'Doin' Wildcat' appeared under the ETT Imprint (Exile Bay, NSW), and Thompson contracted with Mudrooroo a full agency agreement for all his published works. Publication of 'Old Fellow Poems' as both an ebook and audio book were followed by the publication of 'Balga Boy Jackson' under the ETT Imprint (all Exile Bay, NSW), while 'Chat Sauvage en chute libre' was reprinted by Asphalte in Paris, France. Mudrooroo's essay 'The Final Chapter', an addition to Joan Lindsay's 'The Secret of Hanging Rock', was reprinted four times to 2021.

2018 saw the publication of 'Tripping with Jenny' (Exile Bay, NSW: ETT Imprint), with an afterword entitled 'I'm a nomad, it's in my blood' by Gerhard Fischer. While Mudrooroo was too ill to record 'Balga Boy Jackson' as audio book, Thompson commissioned Kirk Page as reader and Thompson's old band King Biscuit to record 31 blues introductions (co-production Bolinda Audio and ETT Imprint).

On 28 September 2018, Mudrooroo wrote a last will, designating his estate to his son Saman Nyoongah Magar, with all literary elements of his estate to be administered by Thompson serving as trustee of his Creative Property Trust.

Mudrooroo died in Brisbane on 20 January 2019, just before the new edition of 'Dr Wooreddy's Prescription' (Exile Bay, NSW: ETT Imprint) was published with an afterword by Paul Spickard.

In 2020, Thompson contracted with Ivan Saporos of Selva Canela (Buenos Aires, Argentina), for the Spanish Language rights to 'Wild Cat Falling'. The same year, new editions of 'Long Live Sandawara', 'Aboriginal Mythology', and 'Master of the Ghost Dreaming' were published by ETT Imprint of Exile Bay, NSW.

In 2021, these titles were followed by the novels 'Underground', 'The Undying' and 'The Promised Land' (all Exile Bay, NSW: ETT Imprint). 'Los sueños del gato salvaje' was published by Selva Canela, translated by Martin Felipe Castagnet. Gerhard Fischer's memoir 'Remembering Mudrooroo' was published.<sup>2</sup>

In 2022, 'Aboriginal Mythology' was reprinted and published under the Imprint Classics label (Exile Bay, NSW: ETT Imprint).

In 2024, rights to Mudrooroo reading 'Wild Cat Falling' were reverted; it will be published by ETT Imprint, along with a new revised edition of 'The Aboriginal

2 Gerhard Fischer: Remembering Mudrooroo (1938-2019).



Protesters' (previously part of 'The Mudrooroo/Müller Project'), edited and introduced by Fischer.

### ***Books by Mudrooroo available in ETT Imprint***

The Aboriginal Protesters (2024)  
 Long Live Sandawara (2021)  
 The Indigenous Literature of Australia (2021)  
 Pacific Highway Boo-Blues (ebook 2021)  
 Aboriginal Mythology (2020)  
 Tripping with Jenny (2019)  
 Dr Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World (2019)  
 Balga Boy Jackson (2018)  
 Doin' Wildcat (2016)  
 Wildcat Screaming (ebook 2017)  
 Wildcat Falling (ebook 2015, audio 2013)  
 An Indecent Obsession (ebook original 2015)  
 The Kwinkan (ebook 2017)  
 The Song Circle of Jacky (ebook 2018)  
 Old Fellow Poems (ETT India 2011, ETT audio 2017)  
 The Garden of Gethsemane (1991)

Master of the Ghost Dreaming series: (all ebooks 2017)  
 Book 1: The Master of the Ghost Dreaming (2019)  
 Book 2: The Undying (2021)  
 Book 3: Underground (2021)  
 Book 4: The Promised Land (2021)

### ***References***

Fischer, Gerhard: Remembering Mudrooroo (1938–2019). In: *Anglica*, 30, 2021, 1, pp. 5-19.  
 Ghatak, Antara: Identity and Belonging in Mudrooroo's 'Wild Cat Falling'. In: *Rupkartha Journal*, 2, 2010, 2, pp. 154-161.  
 Yang, Yong-Chun, Xian-Jing Xu: Religious Identity in 'Wild Cat Falling'. In: *US-China Foreign Language*, 9, 2010, 6, pp. 398-403.