

A TALE OF TWO PUBLISHING HOUSES

LINDA MARTIN

ABOUT THE BOOK

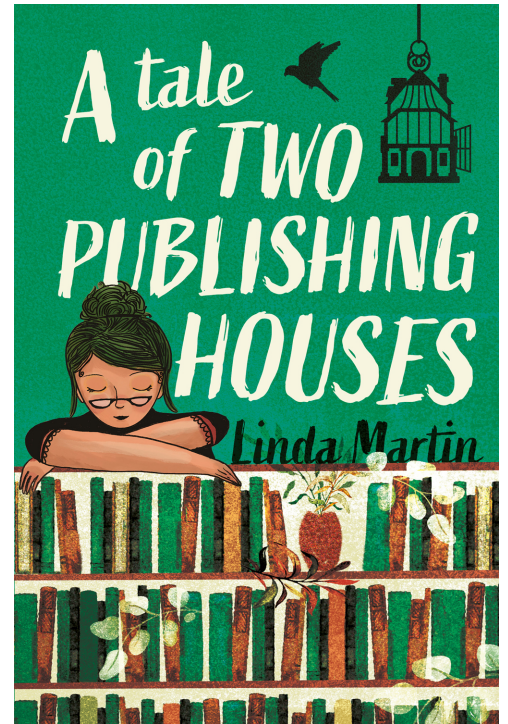
When editor Linda Martin sets out to uncover the origin story of a long-standing independent book publisher, she doesn't just rediscover the thrill of publishing – she decides to create a new publishing house of her own. Spanning two generations and four decades, Linda captures the ambition of two 1970s publishing pioneers, and sets her story against the challenges of a contemporary small press start-up, as each navigates the triumphs and trials of building something lasting from scratch. Both a tribute to early visionaries and a candid look at what it takes to start a press today, this is a story of risk, resilience and the communities that make books possible.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Martin is a writer, editor, publisher and co-founder of Night Parrot Press. She teaches publishing and editing at Edith Cowan University, where she completed her PhD. She is passionate about the publishing industry in Western Australia and enjoys mentoring emerging writers and editors.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think this narrator has chosen to tell the tale of two publishing houses, rather than just one of them?
2. What parallels are there to be found between the two experiences?
3. What do you think it was about the 1970s that created a climate for publishers around Australia to spring up?
4. What qualities, strengths and skills do you think are required in people to set up such a venture?
5. What are the risks and challenges of starting up and running your own publishing house?
6. What do you see as the rewards?
7. What is it, do you think, that allowed Fremantle Press to survive as a small independent publisher across 50 years (and beyond)?
8. What part of the publishing process would you most like to participate in; e.g. authoring a manuscript, editing, designing a book cover, marketing, promotion?
9. If you were to become a publisher, what kind of books would you like to publish?
10. Who would your readers be?
11. What are the most important aspects of an author–editor relationship?
12. What are some recent book designs that you have seen and liked – and why?
13. What do you think makes a good book jacket?
14. What is flash fiction? What can an anthology of flash fiction do that a novel or short story collection cannot?
15. How important are booksellers for publishing houses?
16. How is community important for start-up publishing houses? How does one build such a community?
17. Statistics show that over 50% of publishing start-ups don't make it past the first year. Why do you think this is?
18. Do you think creative non-fiction (where the narrator is a character in the true story) is an effective way to present social and cultural history?



INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

What inspired you to research and write about the history of Fremantle Press?

In the 1990s, I worked at Fremantle Press (then Fremantle Arts Centre Press) as a production coordinator. These were possibly the most wondrous years of my career. From my desk, I had an overview of the different roles and operations of the publishing house, and this ignited a passion for publishing that never left me. Inspired by FACP editor and publisher Ray Coffey, I went on to become a fiction editor and taught publishing and editing at universities. I often spoke nostalgically to students about the early days at the Press and, through those conversations, I came to see the need to collect and document the Press's history and personal recollections in detail – for my personal satisfaction, for the benefit of current and future students, and as a contribution to Australia's cultural publishing heritage and inheritance.

What had your prior experiences with Fremantle Press equipped you for when it came to setting up Night Parrot Press?

When working with Fremantle Press, I witnessed deeply respectful editor–author relationships from in-house and freelance editors that I believe were one of the publishing house's greatest strengths. New and diverse authors could trust the editors with their work, and their work was treated with sensitivity and care. I also appreciated the Press's approach in taking risk and valuing works. So, for me, the importance of respect for the author and respect for new (sometimes unconventional) work was the foundation for Night Parrot Press. My publishing partner, Laura Keenan, shared this philosophy and approach, so we had a good partnership from the outset. And of course, the project management and budgeting skills I developed as production coordinator gave me a solid grounding in the operational and business side of publishing.

What's next for Linda Martin and Night Parrot Press?

A Tale of Two Publishing Houses has given me the research and writing bug, and I have a couple of writing projects on the boil. I'm very excited to be a judge for this year's Dorothy Hewett Award with UWA Publishing. I also continue to enjoy mentoring and teaching the next generation of writers through teaching, projects and general support.

As for Night Parrot Press, 2026 is an exciting year with a new collection of flash fiction by Gillian O'Shaughnessy, novelettes by Karleah Olsen and Rashida Murphy, and the next issue of *the little journal*.