



relinquished the subconscious expectation that a man would somehow appear, buy me a house, or save me. As my mother used to say, who would want you with three children from another man? Written well before the #MeToo movement, the story was my conscious way of showing younger women things were not always rosy emerging into womanhood in Australia.

Did you have any qualms about being so frank in your description of the sex scenes in the novel?

Not at all. The sex scenes have no erotic intent. To do that successfully is an exquisite art. The book's clumsy, failed, and often awkward or naïve sex is very much how it was for many girls in my day. I know from friends over the years, I am not alone in having let the occasional man get his way, just to get rid of him. It was quicker. We were pragmatic.

Many women I've known would agree that we often fell for a man's interest in us rather than making appropriate choices. Years ago, a *Women's Weekly* article argued that women spend more time choosing their refrigerators than they do their partners. On the other hand (in my observation), men are deliberate in whom they choose when it comes to marriage or permanent partnership. Male friends confided in me that they were happy when they found someone with whom they felt comfortable.

What are your expectations of the responses of younger, female readers?

Although I intended to open a discourse about the intimate side of women's lives, I can't know the answer until some 20-30-year-olds give me feedback. Most of those who have read the story, women of various ages, tend to focus their responses on the outback itself, the historical integrity of the setting, the delicacy of the Indigenous content or the poignancy of the family drama.

When I have outlined the story to young women, they replied that they'd love to read 'something like that'. There is always curiosity about the inside story of how things were for other women, older women.

Since this is your first novel, how did you approach the narrative arc: are you a 'plotter' or 'pantser'?

I have a minimalist approach to planning. A bare-bones structure marked in an upward diagonal timeline on an A4 Landscape page in Word, divided into three parts with significant events spaced along the line, starting at the bottom (the beginning) and rising to the top (the outcome/end).

This is the structure I am using for my current novel, *High Rise Society*. It keeps me on track but leaves things open. I am someone who finds that their characters start to tell their own stories.

Tell me about the research process?

As an anthropologist, I was trained in research. As a writer, however, the process is totally different because I start with a relatively strong sense of the story, the setting and who the protagonist is, and why. Therefore, my literary research is more about filling gaps in my knowledge. Where I have a superficial understanding, and need detail, I do the research. In the early 1960s, I lived in Darwin for many years; then, in the 1970s I lived there as a wife with three infants and went back in my early 50s on my own. Darwin was a different place each time. So, even when I 'know' a place, research is essential.

Memory is full of forgetting. It romanticises, and marks things, people and events with meaning, experience, and emotion. In a novel, settings are part of the story, so we cannot rely on memory alone. Research mostly comes after I capture the story's essence.

Will you be doing any literary events/public talks about the novel?

In my April 2022 blog on www.wattletales.com.au, I'll share everything from the launch of *The Publican's Daughter*. Also, Holdfast Bay Libraries purchased two copies for their catalogue and arranged for it to be uploaded to the State Library's *epub* lending service, *OverDrive*, in about 10 days. I'm doing an author talk in the Kingston Room of the Brighton Library on 2 June 2022. Dymocks Glenelg will have copies for sale.

It's March 2022. I'm writing this book review when *The Publican's Daughter* (Wattletales Publishing, 2022) is fresh off the presses. The author has sent me a copy which I immediately notice has a well-designed cover and silky, tactile feel. I'm enjoying having a physical book in my hand after spending time reading on screen. I've read the book in three sessions only – testament to the fact that it's a 'page-turner' – as Jude Aquilina who wrote the Foreword has described.

My first impressions are of a female-centred narrative that contains an implied post-colonial perspective. I cannot help comparing the novel with Australian films such as *Wake in Fright* (1971), *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978), and *Animal Kingdom* (2010), in the brutality and chauvinism of the male characters, and the vulnerability of the white women and Indigenous peoples.

I decide to interview Lindy Warrell, who is perhaps best known in South Australia as a poet. I want to know more about what motivated her to write her first novel. To this end, I pose a series of questions. Here is an excerpt from that interview:

What inspired you to write this novel? How close is it to your real-life experiences?

I wrote the book because, in my day and where I came from, socially speaking, we grew up thinking that finding a husband was the height of achievement. Really there was nothing else that you were supposed to dedicate yourself to. But the specifics of the story are not mine. That grew from retrospective rage at the way things were. I wanted to say, 'look, this is what it was like growing up girl in my day'. Things are different now, whereas I was about 50 before I genuinely

Dr Kathryn Pentecost is a local poet, essayist, book reviewer and scholar.