

National Centre of Biography, ANU

Biography Workshop

Kim Mahood

The Writer as Cartographer

Date: Thursday 26 July 2018
Venue: Jean Martin Room, Beryl Rawson Building,
13 Ellery Cres, ANU
Time: 12 midday until about 1.30 p.m.
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Map-making at Paruku, 2005 (Photo: John Carty)

'I am someone who returns again and again to geography, as the writers of another generation returned repeatedly to Freud and psychoanalysis.'

This quote from Barry Lopez encapsulates my own preoccupations as a writer and artist, and reflects my conviction that geography is central to shaping who we are.

My first book, *Craft for a Dry Lake*, was structured as a journey. The spine of the narrative was an actual journey, a story that unfolded as I travelled, with incidents and encounters that propelled it forward even as the past inserted itself and shed light on the present.

My second book, *Position Doubtful*, is structured like a map. It is about maps and map-making, and the process of writing it was a form of cartography. As my experience of the country became ever more layered and complex, the progression from journey to map was a natural one. A map is constructed from many journeys and is how we come to know a place. It allows you to align geography and metaphor in a seamless diagram of place and imagination, and to see your own tracks among the many that make up the story.

Kim Mahood is the author of the award-winning memoir *Craft for a Dry Lake* (Random House 2000), and *Position Doubtful* (Scribe 2016), which explores the relationships between Aboriginal and settler Australians, and between people, art and country in the Tanami Desert. Her essays have been published in art, literary and public affairs journals. The essay *Kartiya are like Toyotas – white workers on Australia's cultural frontier*, has become a standard text for the induction of newcomers working in remote Aboriginal communities. She co-edited the book *Desert Lake: art, science and stories from Paruku* (CSIRO 2013). Her artwork is held in state, territory and regional collections.