TGH Strehlow’s *Journey to Horseshoe Bend*:
The re-publication of an Australian Classic

**Brief for a symposium and critical companion to be developed in conjunction with the republication of TGH Strehlow’s *Journey to Horseshoe Bend***

**Friday 30 October, 2015 at the State Library of NSW**

*In 2015 Giramondo Publishing will publish a new edition of TGH Strehlow’s classic Australian text *Journey to Horseshoe Bend*. To coincide with the republication, the State Library of NSW will host a symposium dedicated to this literary milestone.*

Following the symposium, a critical companion of essays emerging from the symposium will be developed for publication. Should you wish to contribute to the critical companion to *Journey to Horseshoe Bend*, please contact:
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*Journey to Horseshoe Bend* was first published in 1969 by Angus and Robertson. The book was a culmination of Strehlow’s obsessive engagement with a childhood journey he took through Central Australia in 1922 that culminated in his father’s death. The book could be regarded as an autobiographical memoir, but it also engages with far more than the journey itself. It criss-crosses a cultural and historical landscape as well as a physical one and, in this way, pre-empts certain kinds of experimental writing that would be later found in literary modulations of ethnography and biography. The re-publication of this classic Australian book is an opportunity to celebrate its re-appearance after a lengthy absence. Hardcover originals are now rare and copies of the softcover version published in 1972 by Rigby are no longer available.

The re-publication and auxiliary events will offer an opportunity to re-consider the book’s contribution to Australian literary, cultural and ethnographic traditions. When published, responses to the book were extensive, particularly in relation to some of the controversial aspects of the narrative. Later, the book inspired an installation (*The Book of Raft*), a cantata (Sydney Symphony), two films (*Mr. Strehlow’s Films, Cantata Journey*) and treatments in biographies (*Broken Song, The Tale of Frieda Keysser*). It has also been the subject of artworks, including scenes painted on pots by members of the Hermannsburg Potters. The book occupies a place in Aranda engagements with stories relating to the journey still circulating today.

The symposium on *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* is open to consideration of the book’s qualities as a text, its structure and latent meanings. The symposium will consider how the book offers material to think with and ways of reading and seeing the world – especially that of Central Australia in the early part of the 20th century. *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* has been variously described as a “film script” for its image-based literary projections of landscape and country, and as a means to join another sort of journey. The poetic journey that Strehlow takes is one within himself. As a part of the process of this form of memorialisation, Strehlow gives us an experience that is
foreknowledge of certain things "already remembered". Ros Poignant, meanwhile, stated that he wrote it “as a Calvary” about his father’s struggle with his faith. The Lutherans in the Strehlow circle responded critically and provoked a debate with TGH about the claims made in the book regarding faith and belief in God.

Some questions for consideration within this format are:

1. Given the earlier articulations of art, commentary and analysis, how does a new edition of *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* present a space for new reflections on the book?
2. Specifically, how does the book contribute to the contemporary context of reflections on Australian cultural traditions?
3. What are the points of contact between Western and Southern Aranda people and the stories made evident in the book?
4. What contributions does the book make to literary culture and more broadly to cultural knowledge in Australia?
5. Does the book offer opportunities for extending its interests and themes through various forms of creative practice?

Given the complexity and breadth of the potential topics related to *Journey to Horseshoe Bend*, there may be a number of other avenues of engagement for the symposium. The re-publication of *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* re-calibrates the potential impact of the book and opens the way for new and diverse responses.

For more information on the symposium and the critical companion to the new edition of *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* please contact:

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