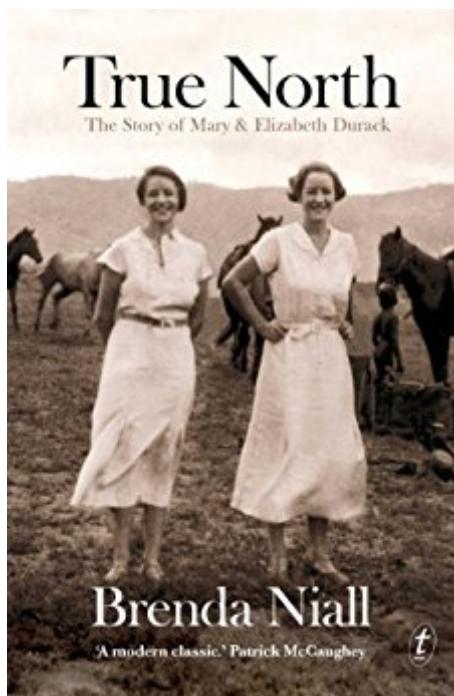


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# True North: The Story Of Mary And Elizabeth Durack



## Synopsis

Shortlisted, NSW Premier's Awards, Australian History Prize, 2012 Shortlisted, Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, 2012 Shortlisted, Australian Book Industry Awards, Biography of the Year, 2013 Shortlisted, WA Premier's Book Awards, 2012

Growing up in suburban Perth in the 1920s, the two Durack girls were fascinated by tales of the pioneering past of their father and grandfather overlanding from Queensland in the 1880s and setting up four vast cattle stations in the remote north. A year spent together on the stations in their early twenties ignited in the sisters a lifelong love of the Kimberley, along with a growing unease about the situation of the Aboriginal people employed there. Through war, love affairs, children and eventual old age, the Duracks continued to write and paint - their closely intertwined creative lives always shaped by the enduring power of the Kimberley region. With unprecedented access to hundreds of private family letters, unpublished memoirs, diaries and family papers, Brenda Niall gets to the heart of a uniquely Australian story that spans the twentieth century. Brenda Niall is one of Australia's foremost biographers. She is the author of four award winning biographies, including her acclaimed accounts of the Boyd family. In 2004 she was awarded the Order of Australia for 'services to Australian literature, as an academic, biographer and literary critic'. She frequently reviews for the Age, Sydney Morning Herald and Australian Book Review. [textpublishing.com.au](http://textpublishing.com.au) 'Brenda Niall has produced a graceful and perceptive biography of two extraordinary creative women. She treads carefully through the minefield of controversies about their family's exploitation of Aboriginal labour, as well as their own interventions in Indigenous art and politics.' Australian Book Review 'Through private letters, diaries and family papers provided by surviving Durack family members, Niall unravels a compelling Australian story that is just as relevant to today's social fabric as it was when it first began more than 130 years ago.' Courier-Mail 'A rich portrait of two complex and inter-connected lives...And throughout is the marvellous incisive Niall ability to distil, to capture the essence of a situation or problem, to ask the penetrating questions, to display sympathy and empathy but never to shirk criticism or to be afraid of exposing frailty. The individual portraits are beautifully drawn and very nicely contrasted with both the sisters emerging as their own person but yet with much that is shared...The book breaks important new ground. It is celebratory but far from uncritical and it confronts complexity on every page.' John Thompson 'Yet there is so much to admire and enjoy in this profoundly interesting biography. As a picture of Perth society in the first half of the 20th Century it is as good as anything I know. As a sympathetic portrait of the difficulty women as mothers had to be creative and absorbed in their work, it is profoundly moving. As a picture of a rare closeness between two sisters it is, if anything, enviable. Brenda Niall could not write a poor book.'

But this is, quite simply, one of her very best.' Canberra Times

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An interesting book about this historically important Western Australian family. The writing is a bit tedious and goes over the same ground many times but it is a good record of such a diverse and resourceful family.

The writing is clear but there was very little analysis of the characters of Mary and Elizabeth. Much of the history could have been found by reading Mary's "Kings in Grass Castles". I expected a more searching examination of their obviously privileged position in society. For instance their opportunity to take off up North leaving young children with the Loreto nuns was hardly something other lesser mortals would have had the opportunity to do! Their attitudes to marriage were not typical of the era or of their religious upbringing but Niall has glided over this implying that any fault lay with their husbands.

Great read about the love affair both Mary and Elizabeth Durack had with the Outback. How their

experiences and their struggle for survival culminated in their creative expressions.

More informative than entertaining, enjoyed the Durack family dynamics and the effect the NT had on the output of the two sisters.

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