Research Statement

**Title:** Sing Fox to Me (published by Affirm Press)
**Creator:** Sarah Kanake
**Year:** 2016

Research Background

‘Sing Fox to Me’ is a full-length Tasmanian Gothic novel which emerges from Dr Sarah Kanake’s practice-led PhD (2015) addressing the limitations of the “Down ‘S’yndrome novel” (termed in her PhD) and representations of characters with Down syndrome. Her research found that characters with Down syndrome are rarely, if ever, given a POV voice. ‘Sing Fox to Me’ and Samson Fox (a POV character with Down syndrome) are Dr Kanake’s creative response to this research.

Research Contribution

In ‘Sing Fox to Me’ Dr Kanake has created a character with Down syndrome who has agency, purpose and, most importantly, a substantial POV. Samson Fox is a distinctly new type of character and his POV presents a new model for the inclusion of intellectual disability within fictional narratives. As a text, ‘Sing Fox to Me’ is unique, and represents a significant shift in how characters with Down syndrome are viewed, constructed and included in fictional narratives.

Research Significance

‘Sing Fox to Me’ is one of only two Australian (adult) novels ever published including the POV of a character with Down syndrome.

The significance of ‘Sing Fox to Me’ is not just the inclusion of the POV of a character with Down syndrome, but also that it avoids the restrictions inherent in the “Down ‘S’yndrome novel”. As a text it argues for the creation and inclusion of a different kind of character with Down syndrome. A character with purpose and agency, the ability to reflect and the space to be fully realised. A character that is not ignored or built into the scaffolding of the novel, but rather included as an active agent. This focus on representation and agency mean that SFTM has significant impact in both creative writing and disability research.

Sarah Kanake has a significant publication history with measurable esteem from industry - ‘Sing Fox to Me’ was longlisted for the Vogel’s award and reviewed favourably in multiple newspapers including ‘The Australian’ and ‘The Age’, as well as ‘The Big Issue’ and ‘Australian Women’s Weekly’. Dr Kanake has also published several articles about Down syndrome and writing ‘Sing Fox to Me’ in noteworthy publications like ‘The Conversation’. 