

write turn

a publication of the nt writers' centre

At the Edge of the Centre: Poetry in Central Australia

by Leni Shilton

Over the past ten years Central Australian poets have been well represented in the Northern Territory Literary Awards tallying up five winning and nineteen shortlisted poems in the Red Earth Poetry section. The awards show the strength and depth of the CA writers and success in this platform is certainly exciting, but to rely on the Literary Awards alone would not be telling the whole story. Competitions do not always unearth new and sparkling talent, especially if there are poets in Central Australia not putting their work up for this 'NT only' competition, preferring instead to be considered on the national stage. There are CA poets getting their work into the world in other ways as they publish on the net, in blog sites or online journals, or are working towards publishing nationally. Anthologies like *the milk in the sky* (2006), *Fishtails in the dust* (2009) and more recently, *This country anytime anywhere* (2010) have showcased poets from Central Australia and many of these names will be on the literary awards prize lists in the next few years.

One such writer is Hans Katarinja, a poet living in Tennant Creek. In her blog, Sandra Thibodeaux describes Hans (wordpress Sept 2011), as having the voice and stage presence of Tom Waits, with poetry that is 'soulful and intense'. Hans' work evokes country with an exactitude that can only come from a deep love and knowledge of place, seen here in his haunting poem 'The Pain Rains':

Irresistible, the feeling of this country flows
through me,
foaming with rage like the Todd after rain.
Only now do I realise
my soul is crying for my country,
not company ... (IAD 2010)

Hans' work sits along side that of Maureen O'Keefe, Rosemary Plummer, in the bilingual anthology *This country*

anytime anywhere (2010), a joint project of IAD Press and the Northern Territory Writers' Centre.

Maureen O'Keefe from Tennant Creek has taken her poetry to the Sydney and Darwin Writers' Festivals. She writes about her family and her country with such love that we see her joy in a single moment, in the movement of an ant or the sound of the desert, as in this poem 'Red Desert' (IAD 2010):

Listen to the leaves rustle as the squawk of the
white cockatoos
breaks the desert's silence...
The desert beetle scuttling across the dunes and
burrowing into the
soft sand.

In the poetry of Rosemary Plummer from Tennant Creek, we hear her political voice as she holds a mirror up to the issues of the day all the while writing with a beauty and intensity that forces our attention. Her poem 'Broken Song' interestingly echoes repetitions in Central Australian history carrying, the same title as Barry Hill's biography of TGH Strehlow (2002):

The new boss wants a new song... a new song to
get rid of me!
But he doesn't acknowledge
That the old people's song, he has broken!
(IAD 2010)

The writing from Tennant Creek is strong and energetic and in 2011 they launched the Barkly Writers Ink blog site to help the writers experience editing and preparing their work for publication. Another Tennant Creek voice venturing into the world is that of Ktima Heathcote. She has a background in journalism and has contributed much of the text in the Barkly Writers Ink blog. In the last two years she has turned her energies to poetry with beautiful results!

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welcome to our new patrons

The NT Writers' Centre has been very fortunate in securing two remarkable Territorians to be out patrons - Ted Egan AO and Tessa Pauling. I'm sure they both need no introduction with Ted Egan having a long association with the arts and folklore in the Territory before serving as Administrator; and Tessa Pauling nurturing many artists and writers in Darwin's theatre and literary scene.

By the time you get this Newsletter, Tessa will have already attended her first function as Patron when she launches Kaye Aldenhoven's latest poetry collection *Botanica Erotica* at Off the Page. We look forward to welcoming Ted Egan at an event in Alice Springs before the end of the year.

As we wind down towards the end of the year, we have a couple of final events to whet your appetite.

Sophie Cunningham will be in town during the last week of November and will run a workshop on 'Writing a Novel'. Few people know the Australian publishing industry better than Sophie Cunningham, from her years as an editor at Penguin and Allen and Unwin and her subsequent career as a writer. She is someone who has seen the novel from both the publisher's and the writer's perspective.

Sophie will also grace the stage for our final Darwin Off the Page, which will be held at the Railway Club on Thursday 29 November. This Off the Page will also feature three local poets who have had their work published by PressPress: Kelly-lee Hickey, Kaye Aldenhoven and Sandra Thibodeaux.

Hamish McDonald
Executive Officer



Tessa Pauling and Ted Egan, NT Writers' Centre patrons

members news

Ali Cobby Eckermann won the 2012 Deadly Award for Outstanding Achievement in Literature for her verse novel *Ruby Moonlight* (Magabala). **Jo Dutton** and **Kelly-lee Hickey** have been awarded residences by Writing Australia. Kelly-lee is on her way to Kangaroo Island and Jo to Geraldton to take up their residencies.

write turn newsletter of the ntwriters' centre

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Disclaimer

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At the Edge of the Centre:

Poetry in Central Australia

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Mardijah Simpson is a major contributor to publishing in Alice Springs as a member of the small press Ptilotus Press. In her latest work *a hammock of stars* (Wandering Line Press 2010) she writes of love, country and children. No matter what the subject all her poems have a liquid sensuality that flows through them. From her poem 'In Touch':

I remember you before;
you in water at night
each movement bright in water –

And again from 'Waiting: Full Moon':

Waking early
high in the pre-dawn sky
the moon rolls;
a golden egg.

Alice poet Kelly-lee Hickey is making impact interstate and overseas as the sparse use of language in her poetry only serves to increase the intense power of her work. She does not hold back and we need to be prepared, as in 'Sacrament' (PressPress 2011):

jesus was wrong
we are not bread and wine

we are whiskey
and places to sleep
we are hangovers
drunk with ego

throwing punches
so we can be
touched

Sue Fielding's writing has been in the public forum this year after she made the decision to leave her day job and focus on poetry. She has been busy since then contributing to three art exhibitions in town, and inspiring poetry in others as the Café Poet gig at Olive Pink Botanical Gardens. Sue's writing is pared back until just pure essence sits before you on the page, seen here in the poem 'Psalm' (2012):

I climb high into the tight
folds of the range,
and lay my head down on the rock.
Day passes over me.

There is an exciting group of very young writers in the towns and bush communities of the Centre. Two of these are Sally Scales from Pipalytjara and Stevie Wilson from

Alice Springs whose work appear in *See myWorld* (NTWC 2010). Fifteen-years-old, Stevie uses narrative and dialogue to great effect, seen here in 'As the night came':

As the night came in close
the old man tells me storm coming...

It was so strange the next day,
the creek was flowing and the clouds were gone,
the sky was blue and I saw that old man.

He said *I saw them fighting*.

I said *who?*

He said *them snakes*.

what snakes? I said

them rainbow serpents he said

wrong people at this place...

From one so young, we are offered a way into understanding the intensity of being 'in place' in Central Australia.

There is only room to mention a small number of poets in this piece – so much more could be said about the poets making their mark in Central Australia and beyond. Over the coming year we need to be watching the work of these poets and many others such as Penny Drysdale, Lynette Nalyirri Lewis, Glenn Morrison and Simon Smith. As poets drop into the deep place from where poems arise and as they work and develop their craft, we will continue to see Central Australian names in high numbers on the awards lists.

Further reading:

The milk in the sky 2006 Ed J. Hutchinson, Ptilotus Press, Alice Springs

Fishtails in the dust 2009 Ed. J. Hutchinson, Ptilotus Press, Alice Springs

This country anytime anywhere 2010 NTWC & IAD Press, Alice Springs

a hammock of stars 2010 Mardijah Simpson, Wandering Line Press, Alice Springs

Thicker than Water 2011 Kelly-lee Hickey, PressPress, Berry, NSW

Beyond Conversation 2012 Sue Fielding, Alice Springs

See my world 2010 Ed A. Cobby Eckermann, NTWC, Darwin

Northern Territory Literary Awards 2012 publication, NT Library Services, Darwin, http://artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/northern-territory-library/news/literary_awards#.

UGjXz0Jpsy4

Barkly Writers Ink: <http://thebarklywritersink.wordpress.com>



In Alice Springs: Sue Fielding

I am currently the poet-in-residence at the Bean Tree Café in Olive Pink Botanic Garden in Alice Springs. I began in June 2012 and my placement is for 6 months, until the end of November. The Café Poet program is run by Australia Poetry, the national peak body for poets and poetry. AP invites applications from poets around the country. My application was accepted, and I then approached The Bean Tree café. They were unreservedly enthusiastic about the idea. The café is situated outside in beautiful natural surroundings. It caters for many creative community events. The owners were keen to introduce a poetic life to the cafe. They support the program by providing me with a space to work, publicity and free coffee. Always a bonus!

What does a café poet do?

Café poets promote poetry in cafes. This is done in a variety of ways depending on venue and poet. I decided to set up in the café on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11-1pm and be available for writing, reading and sharing about poetry. This time span is across the lunch break, allowing people to come from work.

I began by creating a bright table display, complete with checked tablecloth and a vase of neon yellow plastic flowers. People who are interested come over and sit down, engage in reading, writing or talking poetry with me. I bring a wide range of poetry books along from the Town Library and also my own collection, and am enjoying going through them myself...catching up on some reading and broadening my knowledge of poetry.

It is a wonderful experience for me as a poet. I really enjoy engaging with the public about poetry, which is my passion. And when it's quiet, I use the structure to do my own writing.

More about the things I do :

Writing practice- lead simple poetry writing exercises using both the Red Room Company's box of poem cards called *Poems to Share* and *The Practice of Poetry, writing exercises from poets who teach* by Behn and Twitchell. It's lots of fun.

A publication- currently compiling poetry submitted for a planned publication, *In the Pink -poems from the Garden* by participants in the café poet program. This will be launched at the end of my residency in late November. I am looking for sponsors to assist with publication costs.

Workshop- organising a workshop with local well known and published poet Leni Shilton, called 'Poetry Writing-the craft'. This will be held on Saturday November 10th from 9-12 at Olive Pink, in the mudbrick room next to the café. Cost is \$60. Limited places Bookings: Sue Fielding phone 8953 2776.

Monthly Poetry Lunch- facilitate a poetry lunch in which people bring poems to share-either their own or other people's. It is well attended and lots of fun. A solid hour of eating and readings. The next one is Tuesday October 30th, from 12-1 at The Bean Tree.

Publicity and promotion- display poetry at the café. The curator at Olive Pink, Ben Convey, has donated use of a large pinboard on the outside of the café wall. I refresh this every week with a display of work by both a local poet, and also another poet. So far the local poets who have displayed work include Meg Mooney, Michael Giacometti, Leni Shilton and Penny Drysdale. The 'other' poets include: Denise Levertov, Grace Paley, Phillip Whalen, Mary Oliver, Janet Frame and Glen Coloquon.

Redhot Arts publicises café poet events through their regular online magazine. Anyone can subscribe through redhotarts.com.au

Past Events

- **a café poet poetry writing session** at the Desert Eco-fair. This began with a silent stroll through the Botanic Gardens, relaxing and tuning in the senses. We set up in a secluded picnic spot and read a range of poetry about nature, and then did some of our own writing.
- **request to write and perform a poem** for educational purposes about water conservation by Alice Water Smart, a local community group. I wrote a poem called 'Aeon' which is published in the public domain.

Café Poet enquiries Alice Springs: phone Sue Fielding on 08 8953 2776, or come down to the Bean Tree café.

Café Poet program at Australian Poetry: www.australianpoetry.org

Central Australian wrap up

I hope you are all winding down from Central Australian festival season and easing into summer.

To kick off the season that we had Zoe Dattner from SPUNC (small press underground networking collective), Louise Thurtell from Allen & Unwin and Simon Groth from IF:BOOK come to Alice Springs for the Meet the Publisher forum in July. One of the highlights was Louise Thurtell's Pitch Perfect: Tips for Getting Published workshops discussing the mechanics of a good novel and how to polish up a manuscript so it catches a publisher's eye. We'll be running more workshops to help you develop your manuscript for publication in 2013.

One of the highlights of this year's Alice Desert Festival was the Central Australian Heats of the National Poetry Slam, with over 100 people crowding into Soma to see fifteen local wordsmiths battle it out for a place at the National finals in Sydney this December. The quality and range of performances were breathtaking, with newcomer Laurie May taking the crown on the evening with her heart-wrenching and defiant piece about growing up as a housing commission kid.

We were fortunate to be a part of ... Sharing our Stories at IAD press as part of the festival, presenting a session on

digital publishing and supporting Tennant Creek writers to travel down for the event. This one-day event builds on the First Friday events that have been happening throughout the year, and was a showcase of the remarkable talent of Indigenous writers from the Centre and beyond. Local legends Warren H Williams and Bob Randall were joined by visiting writers Kerry Reed Gilbert and Marie Munkara for an inspiring day of workshops, readings and song. IAD Press has big plans for 2013 so be sure to check the Red Hot Arts Artefact or our website for details of First Friday and IAD events next year.

Add to all of this the Cafe Poet lunch and a spoken word showcase with Jo Dutton and Pru Gell at the Alice Desert Festival club, it's been a busy few months. We'll be rounding off the year with an Off the Page event in December. We're in the early stages of planning *Eye of the Storm* writers' festival in Alice which will be held April 25th-28th 2013. We'd love to hear your ideas for the festival and our program next year. Drop me a line info@ntwriters.com.au

I look forward to hearing from you all.

Kelly-lee Hickey

workshops...

WRITING A NOVEL with Sophie Cunningham
**Wed 28 November, 5-8pm, Frog Hollow
Conference Room**
Full \$60 / Concession \$50 / NTWC Members \$40
Bookings: www.trybooking.com/CBHE

This is a practical workshop for writers ready to make the leap into creating a full length work of fiction. Using a combination of writing exercises and discussion, this workshop will focus on the joy of novel writing and help give writers the confidence to begin the development of a full draft of a novel. Topics for discussion will include plot, voice, character and dialogue.

Sophie Cunningham has worked in publishing in Australia for more than twenty-five years. She started as a reader of unsolicited manuscripts, and has gone onto edit and publish hundreds of Australian writers including Tim Winton, Richard Flanagan, Fiona McGregor and Luke Davies. From 2007-2010 she was the editor of *Meanjin* literary journal, and she is the current Chair of the Literature Board of the Australia Council. She is the author of two novels, *Geography* (2004) and *Bird* (2008) and the non-fiction, *Melbourne* (2011). She is the director of Faber Academy's 'How to Write a Novel' course in Melbourne and a founding member of The Stella Prize, a prize for Australian women's writing. She's currently writing a book about Cyclone Tracy.

POETRY MASTERCLASS with Leni Shilton
**Sat 10 November, 9 am-12 noon, Olive Pink
Botanic Garden, mudbrick room next to the cafe**
\$60/\$50 NTWC members.

**To book contact Sue Fielding 8953 2776.
(Numbers are limited, so bookings are essential.)**

Building on earlier workshops that have focused on the elements used in writing poetry, this workshop will examine the craft of poetry using your poems as the texts. Each poet has their own individual 'voice' and by exploring this we can learn more about what it is we are saying in our own work. Participants will email two poems to Leni by 5 November

Leni Shilton is a prize-winning poet, whose work has been published widely in journals and anthologies. She has lived in Central Australia for many years and has worked as a lecturer at Bachelor Institute, coordinating the Creative Writing program. Leni is a very experienced teacher of poetry writing. She is currently undertaking a PhD in Creative Writing through Central Queensland University, writing a verse novel about the historical character Bertha Strehlow.

Short+Sweet

While planning is well underway for our Sydney festival, Short+Sweet is opening our electronic doors for script entries for our 2013-14 cycle. We are now accepting entries for all of our international festivals to take place after Short+Sweet Sydney 2013, which includes S+S's Bangalore, Brisbane, Chennai, Malaysia, Melbourne, Mumbai, Singapore and Sydney 2014.

Writers who have submitted before are welcome to submit again, and any scripts you've sent to us in the past will be assessed afresh. For more details and a link to the entry form, see:

<http://www.shortandsweet.org/shortsweet-theatre/submit-script>

Calibre Prize for an Outstanding Essay – Entry now open!

Australian Book Review seeks entries for the seventh Calibre Prize for an Outstanding Essay, the nation's premier award for an original essay.

The Calibre Prize is intended to generate brilliant new essays and to foster new insights into culture, society, and the human condition. We welcome essays from leading authors and commentators, but also from emerging writers. All non-fiction subjects are eligible.

First prize: \$5000

Closing date: 10 December 2012

[w] http://www.australianbookreview.com.au/files/Calibre_2013_Web_Entry_Form_1.pdf

Peter Porter Poetry Prize – Entry now open!

Entry to the ninth annual *Australian Book Review* Poetry Prize – named the Peter Porter Poetry Prize, in memory of the late Australian poet – is now open.

The Peter Porter Poetry Prize is one of Australia's most lucrative and respected awards for poetry, and guarantees winners wide exposure through publication in *ABR*.

First prize: \$4000

Shortlisted poems: \$400

Closing date: 30 November 2012

Judges: David McCooey and Bronwyn Lea

[w] http://www.australianbookreview.com.au/files/PPPP_entry_form_and_guidelines.pdf

ABR Ian Potter Foundation Fellowship – Applications now open!

Australian Book Review seeks applications for the *ABR* Ian Potter Foundation Fellowship. This Fellowship – the sixth to be offered by *ABR* – is generously supported by The Ian Potter Foundation.

The Fellowship is worth \$5000

Applications close 31 October 2012

We are seeking proposals for a substantial article on any aspect of literary studies – either a profile of a major writer, or a discursive essay with literary/cultural themes. Any Australian writer with a significant publication record (books, creative writing, essays or journalism) is eligible to apply.

The *ABR* Fellowships are intended to reward outstanding Australian writers, to enhance *ABR* through the publication of major works of literary journalism, and to advance the magazine's commitment to critical debate.



500 words

A writing challenge

A non-fiction writing challenge that invites you to explore the world of short-form online writing and publish your work on the ABC.

Each month we'll set a new theme to inspire you:

- Oct** Caught Out
- Nov** Someone Who Shaped Me
- Dec** Family Rituals
- Jan** Like It or Not

Everyone has a story - here's a chance to tell yours in your own words.

Tips to get you started

- 1 This project is non-fiction, write about a real life story.
- 2 Keep it short and simple. Write the way you talk. Short sentences are better than long descriptions.
- 3 Give your story a great title.
- 4 Don't make it too short. Minimum count is 150 words.
- 5 Choose a great image. A really compelling photo will bring more readers to your story.
- 6 Be careful if you're identifying other people. If you publish a story featuring someone else, make sure they're happy with it.
- 7 Before you submit, check your spelling and grammar.

How to publish your 500 Words

- 1 Go to abc.net.au/open and select Projects
- 2 Click on the 500 Words box
- 3 Click on Get Involved



OPEN To find out this month's theme and read stories by other regional Australians, click on 500 Words at abc.net.au/open

opportunities prizes...

Overland Judith Wright Poetry Prize

The *Overland* Judith Wright Poetry Prize, supported by the Malcolm Robertson Foundation, was established in 2007 to foster poetry by writers who have not yet published a book of poems. This year the major prize is \$6000, with a second prize of \$2000 and a third prize of \$1000. The competition closes midnight, Thursday 15 November 2012.

Right Now

Right Now, a human rights volunteer media not-for-profit organisation, is calling out for creative content. Every month, the Right Now website highlights a particular theme of human rights issues and publishes related articles and creative submissions (including fiction, poetry, memoir, creative non-fiction and graphic story telling) but we accept submissions with a human rights theme at any time.

More information:

[w] <http://rightnow.org.au/about/contribute/> for more information

[e] submissions@rightnow.org.au

Varuna's pathway to publication

Applications open 1 – 30 Nov 2012

It's every writer's dream — to work in peace at a beautiful mountain retreat with a respected literary mentor, knowing that a major publisher is waiting to read the finished manuscript.

Varuna's unique Publisher Fellowship Program is Australia's most dynamic literary partnership, opening important doors for writers of novels, short stories, poetry and non-fiction in a creative, collaborative process that delivers finely honed manuscripts to leading publishers.

The Publisher Fellowship Program offers 14 selected writers the following opportunities:

Private writing time: Immerse yourself in the natural drama of the Blue Mountains with a one-week residency at Varuna, where there is nothing to do but write.

A literary mentor: Work with an experienced literary consultant who understands manuscript development and knows what publishers want.

A date with a publisher: The jewel in the crown is the guarantee that your manuscript will be read by one of seven leading Australian publishers.

To find out more about this exciting program, visit http://varuna.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=238:varunas-publisher-fellowship-program-2013&catid=48:what-we-offer-writers

Call for Entries: Patrick White Playwrights' Award and Fellowship 2012

The Patrick White Playwrights' Award

The Patrick White Playwrights' Award offers a cash prize of \$7,500 for a full-length unproduced play of any genre written by an Australian playwright. The readers and judges assessing the scripts will be seeking a work that is original and artistically ambitious, with great potential for a stage production.

The Patrick White Playwrights' Fellowship

The Patrick White Playwrights' Fellowship is a career advancement opportunity for an established Australian playwright whose work has been produced professionally in Australia within the last four years. The winning playwright receives a \$12,500 prize in recognition of their body of work and previous artistic achievements, as well as a commission from Sydney Theatre Company, worth \$12,500.

Applications and scripts must be submitted online at:

<http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about/information-for-artists/patrick-white-playwrights%E2%80%99-award-and-fellowship.aspx>

The closing date for submissions is Friday 9th November.

See the website for more information.

Spineless Wonders Resident Commentator

Spineless Wonders is looking for an energetic, insightful reader of contemporary short fiction who will post a regularly commentary on our Earworms audio fiction. The posts could be in any form (although we'd prefer video or audio to a written blog since the stories are audio). And the posts could include interviews with authors (by phone or Skype) or they can simply be the thoughts of our resident commentator.

We are building an exciting range of audio stories and we think this will be an excellent add on for listeners. No money involved just plenty of free audio and lots of glory. Another first from Spineless Wonders!

Info: bronwyn@shortaustralianstories.com.au

Annual Text Prize for Young Adult and Children's Writing

Text is searching for talented writers of young adult and children's books. One lucky winner receives a Text Publishing contract worth \$10,000. Why not apply yourself, and send us that novel you've been meaning to finish? The Text Prize is open to published and unpublished Australian and New Zealand writers of all ages.

Submissions open: 4 March 2013

Submissions close: 29 March 2013

More info: <http://textpublishing.com.au/about-text/the-text-prize>

all about agents

By Sophie Hamley

Literary agent, The Cameron Creswell Agency, and President of the Australian Literary Agents' Association

Just because most of Australia's literary agents are in Sydney or Melbourne doesn't mean that they only want to represent writers from those places. Australian stories come from all over the country and agents welcome submissions from writers in every state and territory. Yes, it's nice if you can meet your agent in person but it's not absolutely necessary – agents often have clients they never or rarely meet (but call or email on a regular basis). Even if you're a writer who has no intention of setting foot in any eastern state, we still want to hear from you. Hopefully the following information will help make us more approachable and also give you some tips on how to approach us.

What do agents do?

In simple terms, we manage the business of writing. But that really doesn't describe all of what we do. We find new writers and place them with publishers; we manage careers, and career planning; we negotiate contracts; we give advice (about all sorts of things, not just writing, as often issues to do with 'writing' are not about writing at all). Some agents provide editorial support, giving feedback on manuscripts. Some manage foreign rights for their writers, so they try to place their work with agents and publishers overseas. There aren't a lot of agents in Australia, so most of us don't specialise (as some American agents do) – you'll find that most agents handle a range of both fiction and non-fiction, and some will also look after children's books.

How should you approach an agent?

As not all agents may represent the genre you're writing in, it's wise to submit only to an agent who would be likely to be interested in your work. You can find a list of agents on the website for the Australian Literary Agents Association (<http://austlitagentsassoc.com.au/>) – this is not a list of all agents in the country as not everyone is a member of the association, but most agents are on it.

It's advisable to visit the websites of agents to whom you wish to submit, to read their submission guidelines and also to see who they represent, which should give you an indication of what they're looking for. Many authors trip themselves up on this point: children's writers, for example, send submissions to agents who don't represent children's books, and that submission is then a waste of the writer's and the agent's time. Many agents don't

represent sci fi or fantasy novels, so if you write in one of those genres, don't waste your time by submitting to an agent who does not represent them.

If the agent's website does not give an indication of what they're looking for – or they don't have a website – contact them (via phone or email, whichever they indicate is their preference) to ask.

Most importantly, when you are submitting, *follow the submission guidelines*. The fastest way to get rejected is to completely flout the guidelines. We don't have guidelines because we want to annoy writers – we have them to make it easier to assess submissions (to compare apples with apples, if you will). We all receive a lot of submissions and having some rules makes the process more streamlined.

NB: Agents – like publishers – may periodically close their submissions. This is due to the volume we receive and the fact that we have to look after our clients first. But it would be unusual for every single agent to be closed at the same time, so just submit to the ones who are open and keep checking the websites for the others.

What should you do before approaching an agent?

Make sure your manuscript is as ready as it can be. This doesn't mean it should be 'perfect' – we don't expect that it will be publication-ready – but it does mean it shouldn't be a first draft. Too often writers will submit a manuscript when it's not ready – and they actually know it's not ready – and they'll get rejected and then grow disheartened. Patience is indeed a virtue when it comes to submitting to agents (or publishers) so take your time with your work – don't throw away everything you've done to date simply because you've been impatient.

Are agents open to submissions from all parts of Australia?

Absolutely. I would personally love to see more stories from rural and regional Australia, and specifically from Western Australia and the Northern Territory – there is a noticeable lack of fiction and non-fiction being submitted from those parts of the country. Australia is not just the eastern seaboard! We need your stories in our culture, and having them published is a very good way to make that happen. I'm aware that for people who aren't in New South Wales and Victoria it can sometimes seem as if the publishing industry is a long way away and doesn't care about what's happening in other parts of the country, but that's not the case: we just sometimes forget to tell you that we are interested in your stories.

Some tips

This is a potted version of advice I often give to writers.

1. Writing is a job – it is work, work, work. Successful writers know that they have to draft and often will not submit till draft five or six. And that's with the awareness that they'll probably have to do another draft once their agent or editor gives them feedback. If you don't feel you're able to draft and re-draft, writing may not be the gig for you.
2. The book publishing process is slow, and in order to succeed you will need to be very patient. Once your book is taken on by a publisher, you can then expect to wait at least a year till it hits the shelves. A snap survey at a Romance Writers conference in the US– found that they had all written on average four manuscripts before getting published.
3. Fiction is always harder to place than non-fiction – not necessarily because publishers are publishing less fiction now, but because there are a lot more people trying to get published. To keep yourself sane, it helps to not have high expectations and it also helps to just keep writing. It helps distract you, for one thing, but it also shows agents that you are prepared to work – and that's information that publishers want to know.
4. Sometimes you'll need to accept that the manuscript you really, really want to see published just isn't working, for whatever reason – perhaps the timing isn't right; perhaps the writing isn't as good as it should be. The wisdom of knowing when to put that manuscript in the bottom drawer is hard won but will stay with you forever – and after you've relinquished your attachment to the bottom-drawer manuscript, you create space in your brain for new stories.
5. If you are serious about becoming a writer, don't assume that your agent or editor or publisher should do everything for you. It's your job to write a great hook and synopsis; it's your job to convince an agent to take you on, because they then have to convince a publisher to take you on. If you approach an agent with the attitude that the agent would be lucky to have you – that you are the best unpublished writer in the world – then you're probably 100% guaranteed to get knocked back.
6. The most important point of all for you in trying to become a published writer: read. Read in your genre, read outside your genre – just read. The best writers are those who read a lot. It also helps you to place yourself within the industry and the literary world in general.



P O E T R Y L U N C H

Date:

Tuesday October 30th

Place:

Bean Tree Café, Olive Pink Botanic Garden

Time:

12-1pm

Bring: a poem or two to share, and enjoy an hour of eating and reading.

All welcome

Info:

Sue Fielding phone 8953 2776

Palmerston's Own Writers present

Hey, Listen to This!



Friday 23rd November
6:30-7:30 pm
Palmerston Library Community Room

Many of the short stories that comprise *The Rest Is Weight* were first published in the NT. The opening story, 'Look Down With Me' was first published in the NT Writers' Centre anthology *Bruno's Song*, and more came to light through the efforts of Ptilotus Press in Alice Springs. She is now living in South Australia, but we can lay some claim to nurturing her talent.

The writer's five years in Alice Springs have clearly left a mark on her style and her subject matter: the outback features strongly, the writing is economical and almost as taciturn as the characters whose hesitant utterings hide and hint at deeper rumblings. But while the centre might be an influence, the writer takes us far and wide on her travels – both geographically and thematically. A number of the stories are set in China, one in Mexico, another in Russia. More remarkable is the astounding thematic diversity of the situations that Mills evokes: a woman with a stolen baby in a seaside town; an architect designing urban utopias in China; a young girl dealing with a schizophrenic half-sister – and so you could go on through the twenty-seven stories that make up *The Rest Is Weight* as they move from the quotidian to the grotesque and from the banal to the metaphysical.

The title refers to the final piece in the collection, but it is also an apt description of Mills' prose style, and her approach to story telling. The sentences are lean, short and pointed, occasionally taking startling twists or offering poignant insights. The action will shift suddenly, as if the intervening threads and connections were ... weight. And much is left unsaid.

This stylistic choice casts a veil of homogeneity over the otherwise diverse stories; skilful, and even daring, as the elisions were, I did at times find myself wishing the writer would probe the situations more deeply, and wondering whether economy of means had occasionally fallen into poverty of means.



THE REST IS WEIGHT

stories

JENNIFER MILLS

'A writer of extraordinary range and imagination' CATE KENNEDY

Skating across countries, slipping from first person to third, moving from unresolved tension to unresolved ending, the overall impression created by the collection is of a disjointed and unsettling world - a post-modern *anomie* inhabiting a shredded reality where the reader is left to join the dots. In the general revival of the short story evinced by books such as Nam Le's *The Boat*, *The Rest Is Weight* joins exalted company.

off the page darwin

Sophie Cunningham and PressPress Poets | Music by Flugendorf

Thu 29 November, 7.30pm, Railway Club (Somerville Gardens, Parap)

Get ready for a great night of spoken word and music as one of the most respected members of the Australian literary scene headlines this November 'Off the Page'. Sophie Cunningham's two novels *Geography* and *Bird* have won critical praise as has her history of her home town, *Melbourne*. She is joined by three local poets who have all recently had work published by PressPress - **Sandra Thibodeaux, Kelly-lee Hickey and Kaye Aldenhoven.**

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marbles

A new stage play, *Marbles* by Kate Wyvill

Following the success of her last play *The Wardrobe*, Kate Wyvill takes us once again into the depths of family life with her poetry, absurdity and pathos in 'Marbles'.

'I enjoy writing about families and the complicated layers of their relationships', says Kate. 'Playwriting for me is about depicting the perplexity of our lives and how we try and make sense of it. I like to make my characters highly charged but very recognisable even if at times, for that very reason they are uncomfortable to watch.' Kate's plays have been described as 'gut-wrenchingly funny' (NT News) and her writing as 'perceptive, witty and lyrical' (Birmingham Post UK). 'Most importantly I want to provide an engaging, thought provoking and high energy evening of entertainment.'

The plays central character is Stanley who was once a highly successful patriarch that ran his family with the same force of personality as he ran his business. The incapacitating creep of Alzheimer's has diminished his authority and made him dependent upon the full-time care of his eldest daughter, Natasha. Board rooms, management buy-outs and union battles have made way for beaches, sea gulls and feather collecting. However Stanley still has control over one thing – a promise he extracted from his children several years ago. Now with his other two daughters converging to celebrate his 77th birthday, it is his chance to act... but can he?

Fast paced and full of surprises, this funny and moving drama scrapes away the veneer of family civility with hilarious and devastating consequences.

Brown's Mart Theatre, 12 Smith St, Darwin
November 15th – 30th

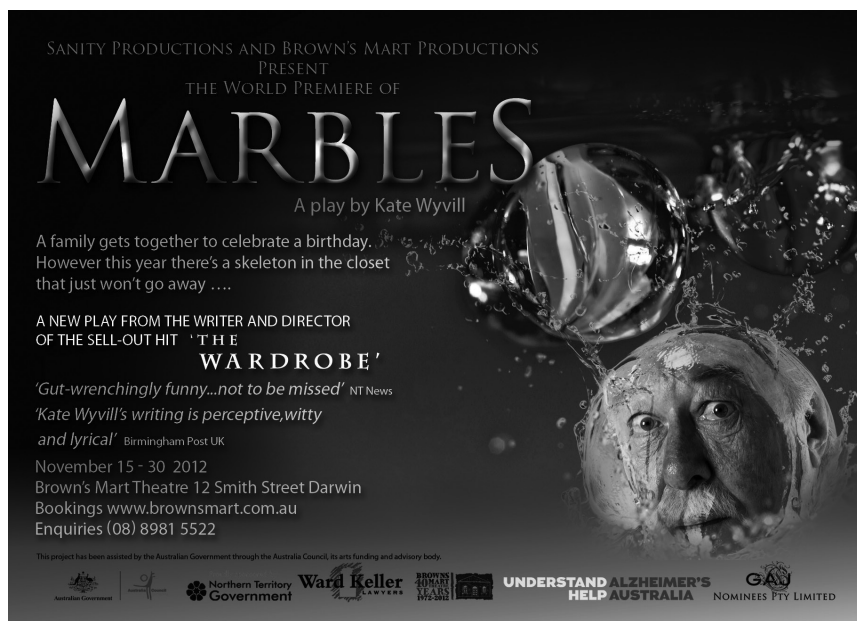
Tickets: \$37 Full. \$32 Concession.

Weekday matinees special offer - schools and seniors \$15

Bookings: www.brownsmart.com.au

Enquiries: (08) 8981 5522

More information about this production at
www.sanityproductions.com



SANITY PRODUCTIONS AND BROWN'S MART PRODUCTIONS
PRESENT
THE WORLD PREMIERE OF
MARBLES
A play by Kate Wyvill

A family gets together to celebrate a birthday. However this year there's a skeleton in the closet that just won't go away

A NEW PLAY FROM THE WRITER AND DIRECTOR
OF THE SELL-OUT HIT 'THE WARDROBE'

'Gut-wrenchingly funny...not to be missed' NT News
'Kate Wyvill's writing is perceptive, witty and lyrical' Birmingham Post UK

November 15 - 30 2012
Brown's Mart Theatre 12 Smith Street Darwin
Bookings www.brownsmart.com.au
Enquiries (08) 8981 5522

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

Australian Government Northern Territory Government Ward Keller Lawyers BROWN'S MART THEATRE UNDERSTAND ALZHEIMER'S HELP AUSTRALIA GAN NOMINEES PTY LIMITED

nt writing groups darwin/palmerston

DAGS: The Darwin Authors' Group is an informal network of Darwin-based writers with a common interest in sharing and discussing the craft and business of writing. Writers of all genres welcome. The group generally meets at the Frog Hollow Centre for the Arts Conference Room on the second Thursday of each month. All welcome. For further information contact Sopihe: sophieanddarryl@yahoo.co.uk Or Rohan: princessrohani@gmail.com

POW: Palmerston Own Writers meet at the Community Room, Palmerston Library, on the first Wednesday of every month from 5:30-7pm. All welcome. Contact Sandra Parker on [t]: (08) 8988 2172 or [e]: sandra@parkershouse.net.

The Fellowship of Australian Writers is currently in recess and urgently requires a new facilitator. FAW has a strong nation wide history. If you are interested in reviving the Darwin chapter of FAW, please contact: Ted Kilpatrick on 8948 1216.

other regions

A NEW GROUP FOR ARNHEM LAND: is now meeting in Nhulunbuy. For more information, contact Ian Maclean on E: ian@nightsskysecrets.com

ALICE WRITERS' GROUP Currently the group is meeting at 5.30pm @ redHOT Arts on the first Tuesday of the month.

KATHERINE REGION OF WRITERS: Contact ROYELENE HILL: albalea7@bigpond.com for more information.

nt support networks

The NT Film Office provides advice on locations, policy, industry contacts and production matters, and offers support through annual grants programs. T: 8951 1162. email: film.office@nt.gov.au

The Australian Writers' Guild is the peak national organisation for writers working in screen, theatre, radio and performance. [w]: www.awg.com.au.

If you know of local writers' groups open to new members, please let us know!

Gifts

I want the stars
but only the hint of stars

I want the night sky undivided
and the rain completely

I want the sound of birdsong
the notes falling over themselves,

The rocks in their clusters
and the uninterrupted panorama

The scented air of mornings.

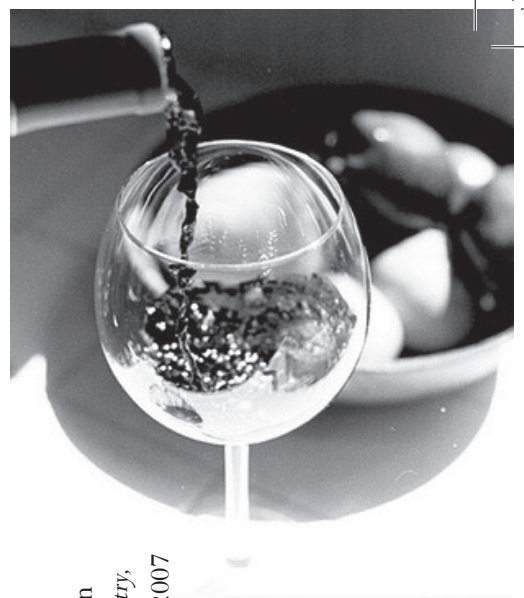
*

These are the things
that fall from the sky

and the gifts we make of them

for we are still children
afraid of the dark.

- Adrian Robinson
From *the slow country*,
Five Islands Press 2007



Adrian Robinson is this month's winner of the Coriole poem prize. For your chance to win, email your poem to executive@ntwriters.com.au



a publication of the nt writers' centre

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