

# write turn

a publication of the nt writers' centre

## CROC SCORES BOOK DEAL



Not really, but several other locals did. There have been some great titles released by Territory writers over the last twelve months. They include: *Cassie* and *A Croc called Copone*, both by Barry Jonsberg; *The Devil you Know*, by Leonie Norrington; *My Life in the Sea of Cars* by James Murray; *The Red Highway* by Nicolas Rothwell, *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists* by Vivian Johnson; *Listen deeply, let these stories in*, by Judy Lovell and Kenmarre Wallace; *Brumbies in the Night* by Diane Lucas and (illustrator) Colwyn Campbell; *Every Secret Thing* by Marie Munkara; *The Diamond Anchor* and *Threading Earth* both by Jennifer Mills; *Due Inheritance: Reviving the Cultural and Economic Wellbeing of First Australians* by Ted Egan; *Quoll* by Sandra Kendell; *Tom Tom* by Rosemary Sullivan and (illustrator) Dee Huxley; *Meta-Detective* by Levin Diatshenko *Hope Endures* by Colette Livermore and *My Private Pectus* by Shane Thamm. Anthologies include *How to look after your poet in the event of a cyclone* edited by Kay Aldenhoven and Sandra Thibodeaux, *Fishtails in the dust: writing from Central Australia*, edited by Janet Hutchinson and *Make-believe, magic & mayhem* by the Katherine Region of Writers. Congratulations to all on your publishing achievements and good luck to the Territory Read entrants.

### YEAR OF THE EDIT

Following on from the Years of the Novel, Screenplay, Life Writing and Play, we thought that NT writers might be in search of a good, hard edit. Thus, we have decided that 2010 will be the Year of the Edit.

The course will consist of a series of workshops and online components centred around structure, style and voice, expression, grammar, punctuation and peer critique. Course fees will range between \$300-600 depending on final class numbers and the number of face-to-face workshops. Final fees will be announced February.

Year of the Edit will be staged in Darwin and Alice Springs (subject to numbers). Online components may also be available to others living elsewhere.

Give your manuscript and your writing career the best chance by developing your editing skills. If you would like to be involved, register your interest at [executive@ntwriters.com.au](mailto:executive@ntwriters.com.au)

### WORDSTORM 2010

Plans are on the boil for next year's *WordStorm*, the NT Writers' Festival, that will be held in Darwin, May 13-16.

While we are still in the process of selecting NT participants, most of the interstate and international writers have been confirmed. The S.E. Asian guests include the hip, the controversial, the lyrical and the award-winning. Hear about feminism and Islam, see the film that's been viewed by almost every Indonesian, encounter a violent and sexual Singapore

you've never seen before, become familiar with the first novels to be published in Tetum and read the book that features a clone of The Prophet.

Wordstorm 2010 also features Australian writers who delve into Australian-Asian relations, such as Alic Pung and Patrick Allington. We'll be reviewing the Balibo story with our own Jill Jolliffe and Tony Maniaty, and confronting the climate change issue with Australian legend Tim Flannery. Indigenous writers will be packing a punch this year with the likes of Professor Marcia Langton, Archie 'Day of

the Dog' Weller, Alexis Wright and more. However, the festival won't all be serious, with Mary G, Wendy Harmer and our annual literature vs sports debate (That Books are Better Than Barra) giving us plenty to cackle about.

WORDSTORM 2010 needs volunteers. Become a part of the action - rub shoulders with Tim Flannery and shoulder pads with Mary G, get behind the wheel of that bus (you know you want to) and score yourselves a collectible t-shirt. Volunteer now at [info@ntwriters.com.au](mailto:info@ntwriters.com.au). See the festival for free!

# greetings from sandra



Hi writers - and season's greetings to you all,

I'm just back from Jakarta and Singapore where I had a very busy time, participating in festivals, selling books and having meetings with our collaborators in the region. In the photo, I'm chairing a panel featuring Lily Yulianti Farid and Isa Bin Kamari - two of the writers who will be appearing at *WordStorm* 2010.

At the SE Asian meetings we discussed potential ventures such as: residencies and retreats in Singapore, Yogyakarta, Darwin and Alice Springs; translation/publication projects between Australia and Indonesia; and a closer partnership between the NT Writers' Centre and the Jakarta Literary Biennale.

It was fantastic to catch up with old friends - I performed alongside Triyanto Triwikromo, had a beer with Alvin Pang and Yong Shu Hoong, and received new books by Linda Christanty, Goenawan Mohamad and writers who'll be attending *WordStorm* 2010.

In Singapore, I also caught up with other festival directors at the festival directors' meeting. I took the opportunity to secure the services of Steve Grimwade, Festival Director of Melbourne Writers' Festival, to be one of the judges of *Territory Read*, 2010. Joining him is celebrated novelist Gail Jones, poet Yvette Holt and one of the most important figures in children's literature, Mark McLeod. Meanwhile, I will be the fifth member on this panel that is currently working through the short listing process - stay tuned.

November has seen me swamped by funding applications and preparations for our 2010 program, including *WordStorm*. The cover page gives you a snapshot of some of our plans, and do stay tuned to our website for further details on 2010 activities (also of interest is Arts on the Map where Robyn has been updating our events - search under organisations, NT Writers' Centre). The Alice and Darwin offices will be closed for the holiday period from 11 December until 31 January.

Have a great holiday,

Sandra

## members' news

Poems by Meg Mooney (*Birdwatching during the Intervention*) and Ali Cobby Eckermann (*Intervention Pay Day*) have been published in *The Best Australia Poems 2009* (Black Inc) edited by Robert Adamson. Both poems originally appeared in *Fishtails in the dust: writing from the Centre* (Ptilotus Press, 2009).

Michael Giacometti's essay *Kwatye (Water)*, which was highly commended in the Wildcare Nature Writing Prize 2009, has been published in *Island 118*; his short story *Encounter at Kalaykapi, circa 1880* will be published in the next edition of *Meanjin*.

Annie Drum was runner up in ABC Radio Nightlife Competition.

Rohan Wightman's stories won 2nd prize ('Lures') and highly commended ('Rabbit Holes') in the scribbligum short story contest.

Caroline Reid's poem, *Bella's Wedding*, has appeared in the Spring edition of *Indigo*, WA. Another poem, *A Ceremony to Commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II*, will be published in the *FourW Anthology*, NSW, while her play *Prayer To An Iron God* will be published by Currency Press in February 2010.

Two prize-winning stories by Jennifer Mills feature in Award Winning Australian Writing (Melbourne Books, 2009), the NT Literary Awards winning 'Plain Indians', and 'The Capital of Missing Persons' which won the p.17 short story competition.

## write turn newsletter of the ntwriters' centre

Editors: Natalie Sprite  
Sandra Thibodeaux

Sub Editor: Robyn McLean

Production & Layout: Natalie Sprite

## advertising

1/8 page = \$40

1/2 page = \$100

Inserts = \$30 per 100

Deadlines for advertising

Bookings: the middle of the month or by arrangement. Adverts in electronic form are preferred. Please provide as 150dpi tiff or jpg files.

## new members

Tegan Cann  
Dixi Joy Bankier  
Christine Tylor  
Lynette Lowe  
Collette Livermore  
Kathie Rea  
Natalie Parkes  
Anne Mooney  
Shona Welsh

## Disclaimer

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The past three months, just like the entire year of 2009, have been 'interesting' to say the least.

A week in Melbourne meeting with the other writers' centre directors and catching a few sessions at the Melbourne Writers' Festival. It made me realise (again) how special the Alice Springs Writers' Festival was this year. Intimate. Thought provoking. Inspiring.

September began with a rush of readings for National Poetry Week. *Poets on a Plate*, a series of lunchtime readings at The Bean Tree Café, were a treat. Jennifer Mills and Michael Watts were outstanding, the outdoor environment brought extra meaning to the poems of Meg Mooney and Mardijah Simpson, and a little rain was nature's poetic response to Pru Gell and Michael Giacometti. The intimate launch of *How to look after your poet in the event of a cyclone* was well received, with the readings by Leni Shilton being the highlight.

To round out the week, almost twenty authors met with publishers from Text, Penguin, HarperCollins, PressPress and IAD Press during the *Meet the*

*Publisher* weekend of consultations and seminars. The publishers were genuinely impressed with the quality of writing, and several authors are one step closer to being published as a result.

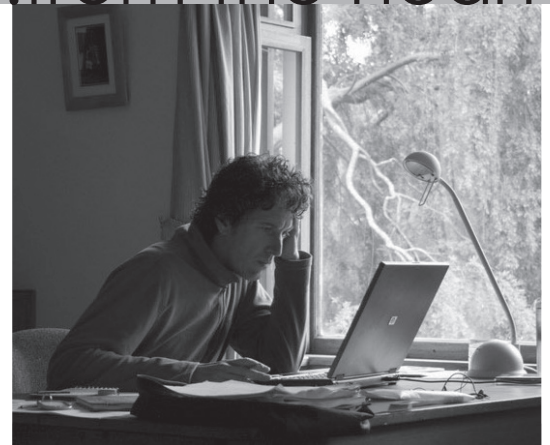
Congratulations to the Alice Springs writers shortlisted in the 2009 NT Literary Awards, and especially to Dani Powell for her challenging poem, *Sketch of this day*, which won the poetry section. Remember, the date for next year's awards has changed and entries are due by the end of January 2010. Entries forms are now available.

To round out the year, an informal workshop, *Prize-winning writing*, will be held on Tuesday 1 December, and the final *Off the Page & Open Mic* event will be held at Storylines on Thursday 10 December.

Note: the Alice office will be closed from 11th December to 31st January, reopening on the 2nd February.

From the heart,

Michael



## prize-winning writing

with Michael Giacometti

Tuesday 1 December, 5.30-7.30pm

Thinking of entering the 2010 NT Literary Awards? What catches a judge's eye? An informal review of the 2009 finalists in fiction, travel, poetry and essay, and a discussion of their weaknesses and strengths.

Venue: RedHOT Arts Space, cnr Bath St & Stott St, Alice Springs Cost: free  
e: [alice@ntwriters.com.au](mailto:alice@ntwriters.com.au)



In late September, writers in the Barkly region were given an incredible opportunity to work with award-winning Indigenous author Yvette Holt.

Given the remoteness, associated costs and connection to land and family, it is difficult for writers of this vast region to have access to support and professional opportunities. So Barkly Regional Arts,

and the NT Writers' Centre organised five days of workshops in Tennant Creek giving authors in this area and from the communities of Ali Curung (170km south of Tennant) and Canteen Creek (150km south-west) a chance to improve upon and strengthen their writing and performance skills.

Eight ladies and one brave man spent their time scribbling away - and eating. Writing, for those not in the know, is hungry work.

Throughout the week the participants, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, were given exercises to inspire their imaginations and stimulate their senses. Yvette, originally from Queensland and now living in Alice Springs, guided everyone through the creative process, helping them to fine-tune their pieces and offering encouragement along the way. After five days of laughter - and a few

tears - nearly all participants had a piece ready to read out at a public performance at Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre on Friday evening. Despite some last-minute nerves and the odd hiccup, everyone in the audience was impressed with the writers' confidence and poise.

"Each writer presented a totally authentic, original view of the world in beautiful prose. Some stories were so harsh it was excruciating for the listener to hear and we squirmed in discomfort and pain. Other stories were so delicate and sensitive, the thoughts so direct, we held back our tears," said visiting teacher Lindy Morrison.

Now a seed has been planted for talented and emerging writers from the Barkly to get together and work towards sharing their stories with the rest of Australia.

Ktima Heathcote

# highlights from the year

## Eye of the Storm

Arnold Zable

'It was a lot of fun. I haven't been able to stop thinking about it. I have been to quite a few writers' festivals, but this one made the deepest impression by far. I keep thinking of the people I met, especially the Indigenous writers like Ali, Rosemary, Romaine, Yvette, Valerie and Kenny – there is a renaissance going on in indigenous writing, authors that have so much to teach us if we are able to listen. It was the haunting red centre that got to me most and the great paradox: so much

austere beauty and ancient presences, but also the haunted faces of the dispossessed on the dry Todd River bed. So many paradoxes that I have been contemplating since I left.

There is much more that can be said about just these few days, the passion of the writers at the workshop, the outdoor setting at Olive Pink, the many stories and conversations, sitting around the fire in Michael's back yard...'

Jeremy Fisher

'For me, it was a better experience than the recent Sydney Writers' Festival, which

has become such a big occasion in which writers tend to feel a bit lost. In Alice, writers were able to talk together easily and communicate about common concerns. The country definitely was influential. I doubt anyone who was there will forget the Sunday evening reading by Arnold Zable at Simpsons Gap. We sat or lay on the sand of the dry river, listening to Arnold's words. Roos came up behind us in the dusk to listen too. Overhead the stars sparked in a clear sky. Words were the only sound echoing from the rocks. Then the readings around the candle circles in the dark. Powerful stuff. I can still hear Yvette Holt's



photos by Caterina Di Girolamo and Bob Gosford



# that was...

poems. I know I returned inspired. While I enjoyed the Sydney Writers' Festival, it didn't leave me with the same feeling. It didn't charge my muse. Maybe that's because it's really the Sydney Readers' Festival. It's not for writers, it's about writers. Alice was for writers. May there be more festivals like it.'

## Catherine Lewis

'We loved the whole event and thought it was much more fun than the Melbourne one, really interesting events as well as sessions and the venues were outstanding!'

## Janet Hutchinson

'A fantastic festival... So well organised, such fabulous guests, great panels.'

## Linda Jaivin

'*Eye of the Storm* was about connection - between Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers, local and national writers, writers and readers, writers and the land where we write.'

## Mary Anne Butler

'Egalitarian, welcoming, friendly. Inclusive: a festival of the heart, as well as the neurons ... I emerged with my heart full, my head humming, and enough inspiration to carry me for a while longer.'

## Andrew McMillan

'For me, the best things about *Eye of the Storm* were the intimacy of the events and the opportunities to meet with other writers and readers and exchange ideas and experiences, to sit in the bush or around a table talking with people who weren't necessarily like-minded but who shared a passion for words. *Eye of the Storm* was as diverse as it was intimate, a wonderful opportunity to meet with, and learn from, readers and other writers in a spectacular environment.'



Broome meets Coober Pedy meets Doomadgee

## see my world

*When they were little girls their Nanas used to grab these grass seeds and throw them on their backs when Marie and May weren't looking. If there's a lot of grass on you that means you got a lot of boyfriends.*

(Leekeshia Kelly, 22, Coober Pedy SA)

Well I don't know about grass seeds but 'seeds of literature' were strongly planted during the *See My World* National Writing Workshops at Victor Harbour, held 26 - 31 October 2009. The quality of peer group friendship amongst the young writers was powerful. Within a few hours of arrival it was easy to see the caring and cultural etiquette amongst the 16 storytellers and writers, summed up in this short poem:

*My problems might not be as big as yours, but they still hurt.*

*You may be worse off but I still cry.*

*Your life may be pretty messed up, but I got feelings too.*

*So don't bring me down, help me out. And I'll help you...*

(Dani Sibosado, 15, Broome WA)

Youth, aged 14 - 29, travelled from Broome and Warmun WA, Coober Pedy SA, Robinvale VIC, Doomadgee and Townsville QLD, Alice Springs, Pipalytjatjara and Hidden Valley Town Camp NT. Indigenous author/mentors included Bruce Pascoe, Terry Whitebeach and Jared Thomas, with

special guests including local Ngarrindjeri Elders, graphic novelist, Brenton McKenna, Mike Ladd from ABC Poetica and the SA Writers Centre. Each participant inspired another, and often writing sessions continued on the laptops until after midnight.

As stories progressed on the page, 'character' questions were flung around the room: "Hey are they in jail yet? Are they dead yet?" This was real life experience being documented in autobiographical and fictional short story, and all young people brought their hearts to the *See My World* project.

*I don't know the end of this story. I wrote this story because when you see life through my eyes you see people drunk, fighting and kids getting hurt. That's what happens when you drink.*

(Stevie Wilson, 15, Alice Springs NT)

2010 will be the third and final year of *See My World* in its current model. I don't know where the end of the project will lead but look forward to further fun, honest and successful literary workshops across the country. And a ground breaking anthology of these stories and poems will be published in 2010. That's what happens when you write!

Ali Cobby Eckermann

## Best Australian Poems 2009

The *Best Australian Poems 2009* has just been published by Black Inc. This year includes two poems by Northern Territory poets, Meg Mooney and Ali Cobby Eckermann.

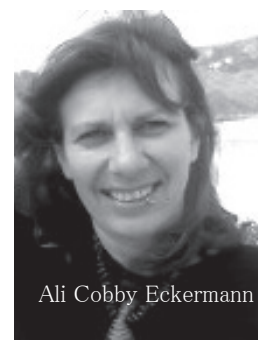
This new anthology includes works by 105 poets, yet in Robert Adamson's introduction it is Meg and Ali's work he focuses on. He reflects on Meg's "orange-beaked finches, and how through

their songs we can hear two poets, one in 1880s Ireland (Yeats) and the other at the bottom of the world in 2008, singing through time and space."

Then he writes of first hearing Ali read her poem at a Regional Poetry Festival last year. "The Audience was clearly moved. Somewhere between a ballad and written spoken word, it makes a new shift into what a poem might say or be."

Both poems, Meg's *Birdwatching during the intervention* and Ali's *Intervention Pay Back*, were also included in *Fishtails in the dust*. (Ptilotus Press).

Mardijah Simpson  
(for Ptilotus Press)



Ali Cobby Eckermann

# competitions ... awards...

## NEW 2009 OVERLAND JUDITH WRIGHT POETRY PRIZE

Closing 7 December

This is an award specifically designed to encourage new poets and new poems. The award is open to poets who have not yet had a collection of their work commercially published: that is, by a publishing house with commercial distribution. Entry \$9.90. First prize is \$3000.

Entry forms from the website.

[http://web.overland.org.au/?page\\_id=1551](http://web.overland.org.au/?page_id=1551)

## HILL OF CONTENT BOOKSHOP 2009 HAL PORTER SHORT STORY COMPETITION

Closing 18 December

Short stories up to 2500 words and written in any style may be entered for the first prize of \$1000. No entry form required. Entry fee \$5.50 payable to East Gippsland Art Gallery. More info from Peter Millard.

E: [pedrom53@bigpond.net.au](mailto:pedrom53@bigpond.net.au)

## 2010 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE

Closing 31 December

This is a reminder that the deadline for the C\$100,000 2010 Griffin Poetry Prize is approaching. Books must be submitted postmarked no later than December 31, 2009 for books published between January 1 and December 31, 2009.

W: [www.griffinpoetryprize.com](http://www.griffinpoetryprize.com).

## GILGAMESH CONNECTIONS FABLE COMPETITION

Closing 7 January 2010

First prize is \$1001 and offer of publication in a book of contemporary fables to be published by Gilgamesh Connections Fables must be in English, previously unpublished and no more than 1000 words. Entry is free. Email for details and entry forms.

E: [harriet@gilgameshconnections.net](mailto:harriet@gilgameshconnections.net)

## WRITING RIGHTS: SHORT STORY & POETRY COMPETITION

Closing 29 January 2010

The Human Rights Arts and Film Festival are running a competition asking for pieces of work that discuss human rights. There's \$1000 on offer for the winners of both the poetry and short story categories.

[www.hraff.org.au](http://www.hraff.org.au)

## JOSEPHINE ULRICK LITERATURE & POETRY PRIZES 2010

Closing 30 January 2010

First prize \$10,000. Entry forms from the website. [www.griffith.edu.au/ulrick](http://www.griffith.edu.au/ulrick)

## PAPER RADIO - seeking submissions & contributions

Paper Radio is a brand new online audio journal based in Melbourne.

W: [www.paperradio.org](http://www.paperradio.org)

E: [broadcast@paperradio.org](mailto:broadcast@paperradio.org)

## KNOCKOUT

Receiving submissions now. Send 4-6 unpublished poems. Payment is contributor copies. [www.knockoutlit.org/submit.htm](http://www.knockoutlit.org/submit.htm)

e: [knockoutpoetry@gmail.com](mailto:knockoutpoetry@gmail.com)

## NEW FAVOURITE SHORTS - seeking play scripts & short stories

Closing 18 December

The Armidale Playhouse Inc seeks short stories and/or play scripts to be considered for our 2010 season of "Favourite Shorts".

E: [scripts@armidaleplayhouse.org.au](mailto:scripts@armidaleplayhouse.org.au)



## NEW ISLET (ISLAND ONLINE) - seeking contributions

Islet is a new, free, online literary publishing space. Islet has a particular interest in publishing micro writing, so please take careful note of maximum lengths for submissions: short story (600 words), reviews (400 words), poetry (25 lines). Payment \$75 for fiction/review, \$50 for poems.

W: [http://www.islandmag.com/islet\\_submission.html](http://www.islandmag.com/islet_submission.html)

E: [islet.online@utas.edu.au](mailto:islet.online@utas.edu.au)

## NEW RED HILL PUBLISHING - seeking manuscripts

Red Hill Publishing is a new Brisbane-based publisher specialising in non-fiction. We are a fee-for-service publisher, but very much not a vanity publisher. Red Hill only publishes titles that we consider have true commercial potential, and we apply stringent editorial, design and production standards to all of our titles. E: [sally@redhill.me](mailto:sally@redhill.me)

W: [www.redhillpublishing.com](http://www.redhillpublishing.com)

THE DAILY CENSORED NEWS - looking for BLOGGERS to contribute. The Daily Censored News is now accepting new Guest Bloggers and Permanent Writers. email Adam. Include a small biography and a picture of yourself. email: [adam@dailycensored.com](mailto:adam@dailycensored.com) (Adam Armstrong)

## NT FILM OFFICE 2009-10 SCREEN GRANTS FUNDING PROGRAM OPEN

The program is designed to help Territory screen practitioners with professional and project development opportunities. For more information about the grants, or to apply, check the website. [www.filmoffice.nt.gov.au](http://www.filmoffice.nt.gov.au)

## ASIA LITERARY REVIEW - calling for submissions

A young English language quarterly devoted to fiction, reportage, documentary photography, travel writing, memoir and poetry. ALR has a global reach and readership, with distribution from Australia to India, the UK to China, Canada to Singapore, and Paris to the Philippines. ALR pays for submissions accepted for publication and has experienced editors to work closely with writers. Vontact the editor, Chris Wood.

[chris.wood@asialiteraryreview.com](mailto:chris.wood@asialiteraryreview.com)

## AUSTRALIAN WRITERS GUILD SCRIPT ASSESSMENTS

AWG have created a best practice script assessment service designed to give you constructive and balanced evaluation of your draft scripts.

Their not-for-profit service provides you with choices to suit your experience level and the stage of your script's development. Their assessment team has been selected to include over 40 high quality assessors, ensuring an excellent standard of assessment and fast turnaround. [www.awg.com.au](http://www.awg.com.au) T: 02 9319 0339

## NT LITERARY AWARDS 2010

Closing 31 January 2010

Categories include: essay, short story, poetry, travel writing, play script, film/TV script, youth and Indigenous. Over \$5000 in prize money. Free entry. Entry forms from the website, Dymocks bookstores, libraries and NTWC.

W: [www.ntl.nt.gov.au/news/events/literary\\_awards](http://www.ntl.nt.gov.au/news/events/literary_awards)

# prizes...

## ALAN MARSHALL SHORT STORY AWARD

Closing 5 February 2010

The Nillumbik Shire Council is celebrating 25 years of the Alan Marshall Short Story Award. Judging the 2010 competition is best-selling author, Michael McGirr, whose short stories have been published in Australia and overseas, and for five years worked as the fiction editor for Meanjin.

The prizes are \$2000 First Prize and \$1000 Second Prize in the Open Section for stories up to 2500 words by writers residing anywhere in Australia. \$400 Young Writers' Section Prize for a story up to 1000 words by writers aged between 15 and 19 years

Guidelines and entry form from website. [http://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Page/page.asp?page\\_Id=2282&h=0](http://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Page/page.asp?page_Id=2282&h=0)

## NEW FLINDERS NEWS PROSE AWARD

(Laura Literary Awards)

Closing 20 February 2010

Open section, short story. Up to 1500 words, prize \$200. Entry \$10. Young adult (13-18) up to 1000 words, prize \$50. Free entry. Junior (under 13) up to 500 words, prize \$25. Free entry. [www.laurafolkfair.com/laura-literary-awards.php](http://www.laurafolkfair.com/laura-literary-awards.php)

## NEW CJ DENNIS POETRY AWARD

(Laura Literary Awards)

Closing 20 February 2010

Poem up to 60 lines. Open prize \$200. Entry \$10. Young adult (13-18) prize \$50. Free entry. Junior (under 13) prize \$25. Free entry. [www.laurafolkfair.com/laura-literary-awards.php](http://www.laurafolkfair.com/laura-literary-awards.php)

## AMA EMERGING ARTS WRITERS AWARD:

Closing 26 February 2010

As the world grows smaller through technology, does our sense of community grow bigger, differently? What does 'community' mean for artists today; what has it meant through the ages?

Open category prize: \$2000 plus publication in a special Art + Community edition of AMA in 2010. Senior School Age category prize: \$500, plus \$500 in art supplies for their school.

Entry guidelines from the website. [www.artmonthly.org.au](http://www.artmonthly.org.au)

## NEW 2010 HENRY KENDALL POETRY AWARD

Closing 12 March 2010

A biennial award offered by the Central Coast Poets Inc. Poems to 32 lines. First prize \$500, with prizes for 2nd and 3rd. Entry \$7 per poem. Open theme. An anthology will be published, including many poems selected from the entries.

Download entry forms from the website.

W: [www.centralcoastpoets.com.au](http://www.centralcoastpoets.com.au)

BLEMISH BOOKS is now accepting suites of poetry

Submissions close 1 February 2010.

For details go to [www.blemishbooks.com.au/triptych.html](http://www.blemishbooks.com.au/triptych.html)

# opportunities...

## NOVELTUBE - find a literary agent

NovelTube maximizes a writer's chances of finding representation by leading Literary Agents. For Literary Agents, finding new publishable fiction writers just got easier. NovelTube saves Agents time and energy by grouping all submissions by genre, pre-reading/grading upon request and, highlighting top 10 percent of all submissions every month.

NovelTube seeks no participation in publishing royalties. However, if successful, we will certainly ask the writer for a testimonial.

W: <http://www.noveltube.com>.

## DIGITAL OPPORTUNITES - GEEK IN RESIDENCE and DIGITAL CULTURE FUND

Closing 18 December

Geek in Residence brings the expertise of technically confident artists and creative technicians together with a host arts organisation. The pilot program will seed innovative digital arts practices by providing an opportunity to intensively share skills, ideas and experiences.

The Digital Culture Fund is a pilot grant available to confident digital arts practitioners. The Australia Council is asking initially for expressions of interest from these new creators working at the frontier of digital technology. With a strong focus on the 'live event', the ultimate arts projects could exist in either physical or online worlds.

[www.australiacouncil.gov.au](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au)

## RESIDENTIAL EDITORIAL PROGRAM at VARUNA

Closing 11 January 2010

APA and Literature Board have launched the 2010 Residential Editorial Program. The prestigious project will take place at Varuna - The Writers' House between 3-8 May.

The REP offers mid-career editors a unique opportunity to take part in an intensive five-day program to develop literary editing skills with highly respected industry practitioners, including mentors Jane Gleeson-White, Jo Jarrah and Judith Lukin-Amundsen. [www.publishers.asn.au](http://www.publishers.asn.au)

## LONG STORY SHORTS - CALLING FOR SUBMISSIONS OF SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS

Closing 1 February 2010

Short story collections may be back in vogue following the overwhelming success of Nam Le's *The Boat*. Independent publisher Affirm Press is planning to publish six collections of short stories by single authors in 2010. They are calling for submissions of between 40,000 to 70,000 words (short stories, flash fiction, novellas, bits of narrative that defy categorization). At least half of the work must be previously unpublished.

[www.affirmpress.com.au](http://www.affirmpress.com.au)

DARWIN FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN WRITERS is looking for a new President. Darwin FAW is currently in recess, and will be forced to close if this position is not filled. If you are interested or would like more information, contact Ted Kilpatrick on 8948 1216, or write to FAW Darwin, PO Box 37512, Winnellie NT 0812.

"On completing a book, for a while you think, that must surely be the greatest novel written ever. And a surprisingly short time after that, it's just hideously embarrassing, just hideously embarrassing, I can't tell you. People compare it to having a child, and it's very true. You have this long gestation, and then it comes out and you have a brief patch of postnatal depression, and then it's incredibly cute and charming, and then suddenly, it's a great, drunken adolescent being sick in front of you and it's horrible. Horrible!"

- Philip Hensher



# writer's block...



Let's face it. We've all been there, victims of the dreaded condition known as writer's block. The juices stop flowing. Or maybe there's still a trickle, but nothing you write anymore sounds eloquent or profound or even interesting. At least you don't think so.

Quite a lot has been written about writer's block and almost all of it points to perfectionism as the cause: you have high standards for yourself and you know when you are not achieving them. Now, having high standards is a good thing. The problem is when we have them all the time. If you've got writer's block, it usually means you've lost sight of a fundamental principle. We've all heard the mantra: writing is a two-stage process—first you generate, then you revise. In the generative stage, you need to let go. Be playful. Write “shitty first drafts”

as the American writer, Anne Lamott, says in her book on writing, *Bird by Bird*. Muzzle your inner critic until you begin the second stage of revision.

However, these words of wisdom are easy to forget once you get something published. It's what writers live for. We crave publication. Not just for the boost to the ego, although that is nice, but also because it means that all of those hours we've spent alone in a room for days and weeks on end, sweating blood to find the right word, wasn't for nothing. We've connected with another person, for whom our rendering of an aspect of the human experience resonates. For just a moment, we find communion as we whirl through space together, sharing the tragicomedy of this fragile thing called life.

Trouble is, this high doesn't last long. The next time you sit down to write, you find that the room is getting crowded. It's no longer just you and the blank screen but also the lingering, sweet memory of those who praised your writing. Then they begin to morph into other figures bearing the distinctive critical demeanor of agents and editors. Suddenly you

know that what you write this time has to be better than last time and you become paralyzed by anxiety. The minute you type a sentence, your inner critic begins to bark, lunging on the leash and frothing at the mouth. It's all over.

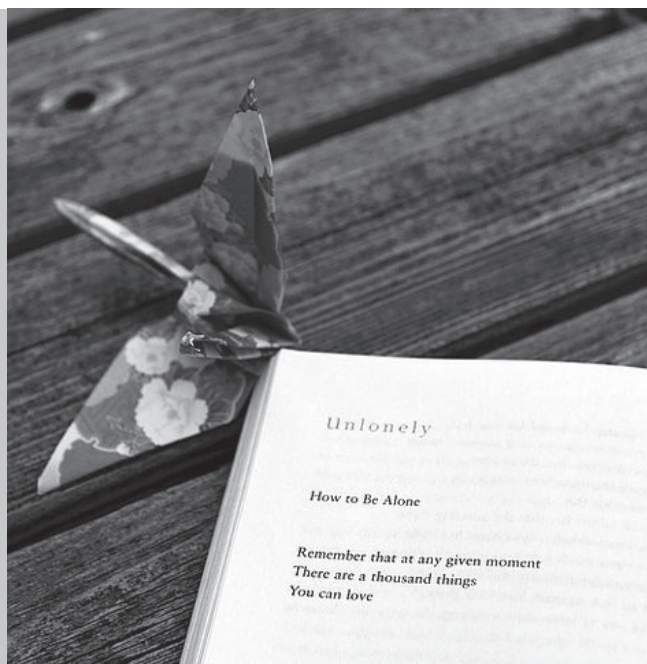
Procrastination ensues. Because as long as you're not writing, there's still the possibility that you will write something phenomenal one day—tomorrow, maybe, or next week. Just not today. Because once you put words to paper, the ideal becomes real and can be judged. And – you are convinced – found to be hopelessly flawed. Even banal.

There's nothing quite like writing for putting yourself on the line. As the British novelist, Jeanette Winterson, said, “Art isn't a surface activity. It comes from a deep place and it meets the wound we each carry.” All good writing comes from naming a truth. Your truth. You have to push past your fears and doubts, your barking inner critic, your insecurities and outright self-loathing to go deep and name your truth. Because that's the only one that you can name.

Kathleen Epelde

“In my experience, the angel does, almost always, come. If I keep faith. On some days, keeping faith means simply staying there, when more than anything else I want to get out of that room. It sometimes means going up without hope and without energy and turning on my computer. And, at the end of two or three hours, and without hope and without energy, I find that I have indeed written some sentences that wouldn't have been there if I hadn't gone up to write them. And – what is even more surprising – these sentences written without hope or energy often turn out to be just as good as the ones I wrote with hope and energy.”

– Gail Godwin, “Rituals and Readiness”, in National Book Awards: The Writing Life





(continued from previous newsletter) The next stop was Alice Springs, a town that seemed to have more good writers per capita than anywhere else I'd been in Australia.

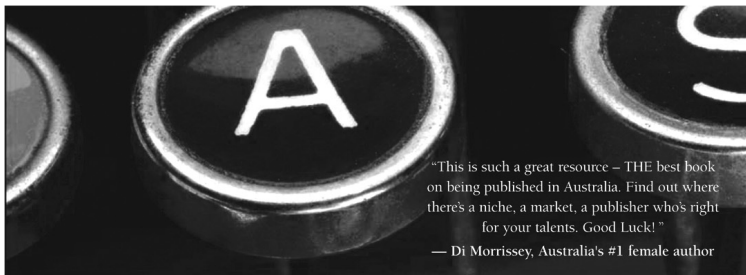
It was on the way there that I drove past the scrubland that, in all probability, Falconio's body still lies. For an Englishman on holiday there it would have, in the final seconds of his life, seemed like an impossibly remote place to die. One of the writers who was in the workshop I ran in Alice Springs, Jennifer Mills (author of *The Diamond Anchor*), has written a series of stories set in the desert borderlands between Mexico and the US. When a member of the group who was a newcomer to Alice Springs asked why so many of the writers from the area were interested in landscapes where death is less than a heart beat away, one of the workshopppers told us that a friend of hers had died recently. Simply gone for a walk and been found dead some days later. It was just what can happen when you misjudge things. That shocking story explained, in a sense, the anxiety that flickered in the

back of my head as I burned down the Stuart Highway at the legal limit of 130 km, and overtook road trains at 150 km. What if a tire blew in the heat of the day (it was crippling hot) and it was a few hours before a car passed? How many times would a car roll if the tire blew at that speed? It was easy to imagine becoming dehydrated within half an hour, severely sun burnt within an hour. At some spots on the road there was no shade to be found. Suddenly all those stories about blown tires made more sense to me.

Despite that, when I looked out at the constantly changing landscape I realised that it did not seem bleak to me, or empty, but full. Just out of Tennant Creek, for example, I stopped at what was known as the Devil's Marbles but is now known as Karlu Karlu. It's a sacred site and, walking around it, it made absolute sense that it would be. Indeed this was the case with all the sacred sites I visited – sections of Uluru (home to several, rather than a single sacred site) and what were once known as the Olga's and are now called Kata Tjuta.

If you are alert to it you can sense the logic of these designations. This becomes clear, too, when you look at some of the extraordinary art from communities such as Papunya Tula and Utopia. The paintings, despite their abstraction, looked like the landscapes I'd just driven through. I realised that, despite my distance from central Australia and the indigenous culture there, I had heard aboriginal stories and looked at aboriginal art for much of my life. Those words, and pictures, had, given me a way of seeing the beauty in this, one of our richest landscapes. The people I worked with in the workshops over those twelve days had all given me a different way of looking at the territory as well: a place of watery cows, complexity, bulldust, danger and shimmering beauty.

*Author, publisher and editor, Sophie Cunningham visited the Northern Territory as a guest of NTWC earlier in the year. Above is an excerpt from her article, previously published in The Age, June 20th.*



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# every secret thing...



*When culture and faith collide...nothing is sacred. In the Aboriginal missions of far northern Australia, it was a battle between saving souls and saving traditional culture. Every Secret Thing is a rough, tough, hilarious portrayal of the Bush Mob and the Mission Mob, and the hapless clergy trying to convert them. In these tales, everyone is fair game. At once playful and sharp, Marie Munkara's wonderfully original stories cast a taunting new light on the mission era in Australia.*

'Told with biting wit and riotous humour' – *Judges' comments, Queensland Premier's Literary Awards (2008)*

(The following interview is reprinted courtesy of Bob Gosford from the Northern Myth.)

For me, *Every Secret Thing* is one of the best books written about life in the Northern Territory since Xavier Herbert's *Capricornia* – that's a pretty big call but I reckon this book is just as funny, brave and deadly serious as that grumpy old curmudgeon's masterpiece.

And I'm more than happy for you to disagree – but first read what Marie has to say here – and then go and buy her book.

In this first part of the interview we talk about how she came to write *Every*

*Secret Thing*, her thoughts about what for me is the fine line of humour that runs through the book and her thoughts on the process of writing.

The Northern Myth – You were born in Arnhem Land but grew up on the Tiwi islands?

Marie Munkara – Yes, I was born on the banks of the Mainoru River in central Arnhem Land and then went to Nguui on the Tiwi islands when I was about 18 months old. I was sent down south when I was 3 years old and went back to Tiwi when I was 28.

TNM – In September 2008 you won the David Unaipon Award for best unpublished manuscript by an Aboriginal writer person.

MM – Yes and “*Every Secret Thing*” was published by the University of Queensland Press in early September 2009 and was first launched in Brisbane, where UQP is based, and the Darwin launch was held in early October.

TNM – This is your first book? Are there any more coming? From reading it seems like you've got a lot more stories to tell.

MM – Oh, yeah!. There are a few more stories and books coming, don't you worry about that!

TNM – How does it feel to have that book in your hands after all this time and effort?

MM – It was really amazing (laughs)... it was like giving birth to a child. There it is!

TNM – When people talk to you about it how do you feel?

MM – I'm quite pleased with myself and I'm quite intrigued. Everyone has different impressions about the book. I thought everyone would react the same to the same passages – you know, “That was funny” etc and there are some parts that I didn't even think twice about. But people come up and say “Oh, that was my favourite part of the book”.

TNM – Do you re-read it or just put it out there and say – its gone now...

MM – No, it is out there, it is done. There are always things you would change – but you just have to put those things to rest and be happy with what you've done and move on to the next one.

TNM – When did you start writing and what did you write about when you started?

MM – Well, I've always written stories since I was a kid. This was just going to be a short story entry – based on the first chapter of the book – for the NT Literary Awards and it didn't make it – it wasn't shortlisted. So I just thought I could add a bit because it didn't really say all that I wanted to say. *Every Secret Thing* took me 12 months to write and it was just a fantastic thing – I enjoyed every moment of it.

TNM – What do you do when you write – block out a few hours at a time or just bang away on the keys when you find time?

MM – For me it just becomes a routine – my daughters would go off to school, I'd do a bit of cleaning for half an hour and then sit down and off I go until they come home. Sometimes a bit of an idea would come into my head in the middle of the night but I'm lucky in that I can wake up in the morning and get into it – I don't forget those ideas.

TNM – Do you show work to other people? Do you talk to other writers about what you are writing?

MM – No, mostly I just go off and do it. Occasionally I'll get a good friend to read a chapter so that I can get a good idea of where it is going. No-one has ever been negative about it so that has been one good thing. I just get into it.

TNM – What about countrymen and family? You write about some fairly sensitive issues here, have people talked to you about that side of things?

MM – No, no-one in my family has read it yet! I'm just waiting for the responses to the book from them. Initially the material in *Every Secret Thing* came from things I would hear my family talk about while we were sitting around yarnning.



# marie munkara



Marie Munkara accepting the David Upton Award

We would be laughing about what so and so did and remember when this or that happened. That is where it all started from and those ideas get a life of their own.

TNM - Someone said to me that you were very brave to talk about the personal and sexual issues in *Every Secret Thing* the way that you do. Do you feel brave?

MM - No, not really. It wasn't even planned that way. If I had sat down and said "I've got to write a story about this business" I wouldn't be able to do it. I really only wanted to write down some of the funny stuff so that one day my daughters would be able to know what happened and how things were for their mother, grandmother and other people. I didn't write *Every Secret Thing* to be brave or funny. It is just something that came out of my head and I had a great lot of fun doing it!

TNM - You take no prisoners with your humour - everyone is up for it. Where does that deep funny side come from?

MM - Well, some of it is probably genetic! (laughs) I didn't actually set out to make it funny - I just wanted to be sarcastic. Someone said to me recently "It is so hard to write humour, how do you do it?" and I

could only respond that "I'm not actually writing to be funny, I'm just writing what is in my head and to be sarcastic."

TNM - When you write about the anthropologist, for example, and the piss-taking that you have people inflicting on him, that is certainly sarcastic!

MM - That was actually based upon a true set of events. I won't mention the anthropologist's name but I'm sure if people put two and five together they will be able to work it out. My grandfather told me that story - and he is one of the characters in there of course.

TNM - Tell me about the writing process. Did you ever feel blocked?

MM - No, never! It just...it was almost like someone else was writing it through me. I never felt blocked and every moment was a joy - it was a really, really wonderful thing. And when I wrote the last sentence I knew that it was the last sentence.

-o0o-

*Every Secret Thing* is available now from all good bookstores. Marie Munkara will be a guest at *Wordstorm* 2010.

## 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 Bronwyn Mehan: [b\\_mehan@bigpond.com](mailto:b_mehan@bigpond.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](mailto:sandra@parkershouse.net).

The Fellowship of Australian Writers contact is Ted Kilpatrick on [t]: 8948 1216. The FAW meets on the first Saturday of the month at the Millner Electorate Office, Rapid Creek Shops, 2-5pm.

Australian Society of Authors contact in Darwin is Helen Pavlin [t]: 0402 482 384.

## other regions

A NEW GROUP FOR ARNHEM LAND: is now meeting in Nhulunbuy. For more information, contact Ian Maclean on E: [ian@nightskysecrets.com](mailto:ian@nightskysecrets.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 Jill Pettigrew: [wjpp@clearnet.com.au](mailto:wjpp@clearnet.com.au) for more information.

## nt support networks

The Society of Editors (NT) welcomes editors and writers interested in networking and sharing information. Contact: NT Society of Editors. E: [editors\\_nt@yahoo.com.au](mailto:editors_nt@yahoo.com.au).

The NT Film Office provides advice on locations, policy, industry contacts and production matters, and offers support through annual grants programs. (t) T: 8951 1162. email: [film.office@nt.gov.au](mailto: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](http://www.awg.com.au).

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



CORIOLE

## Best poem wins 2 bottles of Coriole Wine

The NT Writers' Centre in conjunction with Coriole Wines will be giving away two bottles of wine every newsletter to the writer of the best poem received. To be in the running for some good plonk, simply send your poem of less than 15 lines/100 words to [executive@ntwriters.com.au](mailto:executive@ntwriters.com.au) with 'Coriole Poetry' in the subject heading. Entries are restricted to NT Writers' Centre members who may submit their work at any time of the year. No correspondence will be entered into.

By the way, Coriole wines are exquisite and ideally suited to a warm climate.



october / november 2009

# write turn

a publication of the nt writers' centre

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