

MELBOURNE PRIZE FOR LITERATURE 2009

Finalist Exhibition Catalogue

—

9–23 November 2009

Federation Square, Melbourne

—

www.melbourneprizetrust.org

2009 PARTNERS & PATRONS

The Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 is made possible by the generous support of our partners and patrons.

Government Partners



Founding Partners



Corporate Partner



Exhibition and Event Partner



Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 Partner



Civic Choice Award 2009 Partners



Media Communications



Audio Visual Partner



Wine Partner



Best Writing Award 2009 Patron



Associate



Partner



Patrons

Diana Gibson AO



Professional Services



Print Partner



Website Development

littleirrepressiblewonton.com

Names24.com.au

Exhibition Signage



Exhibition Consultant



Banners



Trophies



ABOUT THE MELBOURNE PRIZE FOR LITERATURE 2009

Public exhibition 9–23
November 2009 in the
Atrium at Federation Square,
Melbourne.

The Melbourne Prize Trust and our partners and patrons are delighted to offer the Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009, Best Writing Award 2009, Civic Choice Award 2009 and the public exhibition of finalists, held at Federation Square between 9 and 23 November 2009.

In 2008 Melbourne was designated by UNESCO as an international City of Literature, only the second in the world after Edinburgh. The designation recognises the importance of literature to the city and the state and the central role that writers have played, and continue to play, in the cultural life of our community.

The Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 and Awards recognise and reward the abundant writing talent in our state. The Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 program is proudly supported by the Victorian Government through its City of Literature initiative.

As a community, we are fortunate to have local and state governments, organisations and private individuals who recognise the importance of and generously support arts and cultural activities.

With the support of the City of Melbourne and all our partners and patrons, we are delighted to provide opportunities for writers to advance their literary talent. In doing so, we demonstrate the importance of our creative capacity and reinforce Melbourne's reputation as a cultural centre.

The work of finalists in each category form a unique display at the free public exhibition held in the Atrium at Federation Square, Melbourne. Recipients will be announced on our website on 11 November 2009. Also follow us on www.facebook.com.

Votes for a finalist to win the \$3,000 Civic Choice Award can be made at www.melbourneprizetrust.org or in the voting form in this catalogue, which is supplied during the exhibition. The recipient will be announced on our website on 27 November 2009.

Simon Warrender
Executive Director & Founder

Melbourne Prize Trust
www.melbourneprizetrust.org

Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 Finalists

Barry Hill
Shane Maloney
Alex Miller
Gerald Murnane
Hannie Rayson

–

Best Writing Award 2009 Finalists

Tom Cho
Joel Deane
Lisa Gorton
Chloe Hooper
Simmone Howell
Myfanwy Jones
Lally Katz
Nam Le
Amra Pajalic
Jeff Sparrow

**MELBOURNE PRIZE FOR
LITERATURE 2009 FINALISTS**

—

**BARRY HILL
HANNIE RAYSON
SHANE MALONEY
ALEX MILLER
GERALD MURNANE**

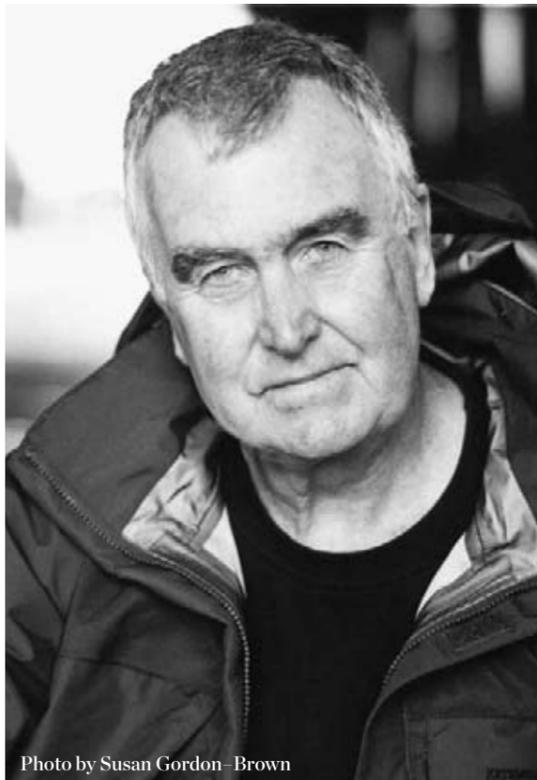


Photo by Susan Gordon-Brown

BARRY HILL

Published Books

Barry Hill is a distinguished Australian writer in several genres. He has won Premier's Awards for poetry, non-fiction and the essay. His short fiction has been widely anthologized and translated into Japanese and Chinese. He has written extensively for radio, and his first libretto, 'Love Strong as Death,' was performed at the Studio, at the Sydney Opera House in 2002. He is possibly best known for his monumental, multi-award winner, *Broken Song*, a study of the linguist TGH Strehlow, which Professor John Mulvaney has described as 'one of the great Australian books,' and by Professor Robert Manne as 'a landmark event in the history of Australian high culture.' Over the last few years his poetry has appeared in the annual editions of *Black Inc's Best Poems*. Of his most recent books of poems: *As We Draw Ourselves*, was short listed for the 2008 Victorian Premier's Awards; *Necessity: Poems 1996-2006* won the 2008 Judith Wright Prize. Between 1998 and 2008 he was Poetry Editor of *The Australian*. He has recently completed a three-year stint as a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

The Schools
Penguin, 1977

A Rim of Blue: stories
McPhee Gribble, 1978

Near the Refinery: a novel
McPhee Gribble, 1980

Headlocks & Other Stories
McPhee Gribble, 1983

The Best Picture: a novel
McPhee Gribble, 1988

Raft: Poems 1983-1990
Penguin, 1990

Sitting In:
Heinemann, 1991

Ghosting William Buckley: a poem
Heinemann, 1993

The Rock: Travelling to Uluru
Allen & Unwin, 1994

The Inland Sea: poems
Salt, 2001

*Broken Song: T. G. H. Strehlow
and Aboriginal Possession*
Knopf, 2002

The Enduring Rip: A History of Queenscliffe
MUP, 2004

The War Sonnets
Picaro, 2004

Necessity: Poems 1996-2006
Soi 3, 2007

As We Draw Ourselves: Poems
Five Islands Press, 2008

—

Extracts:
Old Photo: The Union Burial...

A solid pack around his grave.
Good steel to a magnet, the sky leaden
with the warmth, somehow, of common
ground.

I did not know them all
but the bulk of them knew me.
Their leader told them of his bookish son
and of his grand children gathered—see,
near my elbow on the lava plain
on the hard crust of the Flats

near thistles, stone walls, *Carbon Black*
and the cracker's flame leaping
where the cranes once flew

over a lad's lizard-hunting days.
That was the time of solid stories,
of organizing rather than mourning.

This group, with family in it, is resolution.
I remember stupidly thinking, the clay's so
Sticky no union man could turn in it.

A Long Swim

Swimming out there
Musculature in ultramarine,
In weed-green sea
You can think 'mackerel'
Till you're blue in the face
But you go like tow rope—
Heavy, frayed, stretched
From pier to pier
From year to year

Entering at the southern one
Mind finned with intent
Crossing crags and sea-grass
Gutters gouged by ebb tides
Rays much wider than beds
Their glide--aways heavenly
Over sands that cloud the hourglass
In light that breaks the light,
Squid invisible, abalone opalescent,
The flood tide your freedom
Its reverse your test of worth

Emerging at the northern one
Your body out of water
Your flesh, on arrival
The underside of flounder,
Each tooth in your head
A little colder, your sense
Of time like coral

Himalayan Fire

As you casually entered the gumpa--
Travel weary, a meagre warmth in you,
Too much mist in the lungs--
The winter sun hit the sutras.

The mountain light, having raised the black
frost

Shafted the night wind south
Raided the cave
Struck the west wall.

The ten thousand leaves slept in their boxes
Their hundred thousand sounds
Were wrapped in saffron.
The scrolls were as separate as toffees.

Then, with the wall as good as on fire
And every box glowing like an old coal
You could hear the seed syllables
Crackling away inside you.

Darjeeling 2005

Egret

It's not even standing at a sensible angle to
the river:
beak neither facing downstream
nor into the flow of fish. It's askew, the hulk
wedged

the head re-coiled so that
it's slack on the dowdy shelf of itself.
A study in oddball patience, non-
expectation.

We'd been talking about the pace of Noh
plays
and of the way the ghost or the ghost of a
ghost
bears witness: the vantage point being the
thing.

But this stillness, so unobserved, seems
post-ghost.
Its dream if it has one is way up river,
its own witness, standing indifferent to
drama.

Impossible bird! But then
as if suddenly fed up with our spectatorship
it drops, stone-grey, a curtain.

Then an inner wing cleaves to that outer
wing

and a long night cloak has fallen—
a twin-panelled shroud.

Majestically erect in attendance upon itself,
sword drawn, its feet are powerfully still
in the river's rushing inks.

Savagely it knit-picks its breast, stretches,
stabs at the autumn sky—
wounding the emptiness over cold waters.

*Acknowledgements: all poems have been
selected from Best Australian Poems
(Black Inc) between 2004–2009.*



HANNIE RAYSON

Works

Hannie Rayson was born and educated in Melbourne.

In 1981, she graduated from the VCA and cofounded Theatreworks. She became a full time writer, producing newspaper columns, magazine features, television scripts and thirteen plays.

She attracted serious attention with *Hotel Sorrento*, which became an AFI-award-winning film in 1985. Her plays are on the VCE syllabus and have been performed by all major Australian theatre companies, with overseas productions in the UK (including the West End), Canada, New Zealand, Germany, Japan, Slovenia, Austria, France and Finland.

Her awards include Victorian, NSW and Queensland Premiers' Literary Awards, Green Room Awards, three Helpmanns and the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award. She is the only playwright ever to be nominated for the Miles Franklin Award for a play.

Hannie is a graduate of the University of Melbourne and the VCA, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by La Trobe University.

Please Return to Sender
Theatreworks, 1980

Mary
Theatreworks/Playbox, 1981

Leave It Till Monday
Mill Theatre, 1984

Room to Move
Theatreworks/Playbox, 1985, AWGIE for Best Original Stage Play

Hotel Sorrento
Playbox, 1990, AWGIE, NSW Premier's Literary Award and Green Room Award for Best Play

Sloth
episode of *Seven Deadly Sins*, ABC TV, 1993, nominated for AFI for best screenplay in a TV drama

Falling from Grace
Playbox, 1994, NSW Premier's Literary Award and The Age Performing Arts Award

Hotel Sorrento
Dir. Richard Franklin, 1995. The film won two AFI Awards including Best Screenplay

Scenes from a Separation
MTC (co-writer with Andrew Bovell), 1985

Competitive Tenderness
Playbox, 1996

HQ magazine columnist, 1991-99, Columnist of the Year, Magazines Publishers Society of Australia, 1999

SeaChange
ABC/Artists Services, 2000, co-author of two episodes

Life After George
MTC/STC, 2000, Victorian Premier's Literary Award, Green Room Award for Best New Australian Play, Helpmann Awards for the Best New Australian Work and for Best Play, and nominated for the Miles Franklin Award.

Inheritance
MTC/STC, 2003

Two Brothers
MTC/STC, 2005, selected for Shaw Festival, Canada.

The Glass Soldier
MTC, 2007

The Swimming Club
Black Swan/MTC (2009)

-

Extract:
The Swimming Club
(Act One)

BIRD: As if I could afford to drop everything and swan off to Greece. I was at my sister's. She always has a barbecue on Easter Sunday. And I was thinking how annoyed I get when people kiss me on the mouth. I just think there should be a rule. You don't kiss people on the mouth - unless you're having sex. There's this guy Lloyd Cunningham. He's an orthodontist. He's a friend of my brother-in-law. My sister goes, 'Bird, you remember Lloyd...?' And every year I say, 'Yes. Hello, Lloyd' and before you know it, Lloyd has moved in too close. I offer my cheek but he's going for the lips and we make a sort of wet contact somewhere between my chin and my ear. It's so humiliating. As if I'm weird with men. Which I'm not. As though that explains why my marriage failed. Which it doesn't.

I mean it's very clear to me why Lloyd Cunningham's on his own. But I wonder if it's very clear to other people why I don't have a husband. But I don't want everyone to be speculating about me at a barbecue before they've even heard my name, before I've even opened my mouth to speak, before I've even handed over my poached pear and radicchio salad which is ludicrously too elaborate for this barbecue, for any barbecue where people have children who have to be ferried to netball or squad or piano or Saturday detention and whose husbands are sailing on weekends. Those women don't have time to make poach pears in verjuice and pat them dry with kitchen paper before drizzling virgin olive oil over them. Those women bring lettuce and tomato in wooden bowls with Praise Italian Dressing and no-one pokes around in their salad going, 'This is different'.

Lloyd Cunningham believes that teeth can never be too straight. He's got patients who've been wearing bands on their teeth for six years. Which is how he can afford to go sailing in the Med every year.

I am in the middle of my life, but I'm not in the centre of it. Does that make sense? It's like life is always happening somewhere else. I try to say to people: the trouble is I don't know how to live. Really. But they don't understand so I've stopped saying it. Of course I know how to live. I own my own apartment. I earn OK money. I drive an OK car. I go to my sister's for barbecues. I have a subscription to the Sydney Theatre Company and after the show I go out with my girlfriends to dinner at Nicks in Paddington. I'm just.... like every other single fifty year old woman in Sydney who knows that there is only one single heterosexual man left: Lloyd Cunningham.

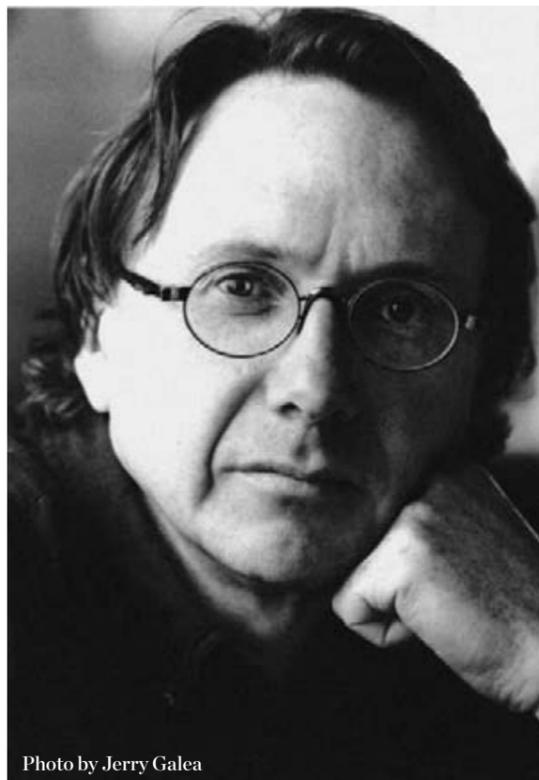


Photo by Jerry Galea

SHANE MALONEY

Text Publishing

Published Works

Shane Maloney is one of Australia's most popular novelists. His award-winning and much loved Murray Whelan series—*Stiff*, *The Brush-Off*, *Nice Try*, *The Big Ask*, *Something Fishy* and *Sucked In*—is characterised by a strong sense of humour and an acute sense of Melbourne's political and cultural nuances. He has been published in the UK, Germany, France, Britain, Japan, Finland and the U.S.

Before becoming a full-time writer, Shane was, among many other things: a booking agent for rock bands, promotions manager for Melbourne public radio station 3RRR, public relations director for the Boy Scouts Association, arts bureaucrat for state and local government, founding director of the Melbourne Comedy Festival, and a swimming pool lifeguard.

Shane is a regular contributor to newspapers, magazines and anthologies. There's a portrait of him painted by Melbourne artist Rick Amor in the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. The seventh and final Murray Whelan novel is due for publication in 2010.

Novels:

Stiff
Text Publishing, 1994

The Brush-off
Text Publishing, 1996,
Winner, Ned Kelly Award,
Best crime novel 1996

Nice Try
Text Publishing, 1998

The Big Ask
Text Publishing, 2000

Something Fishy
Text Publishing, 2002

Sucked In
Text Publishing, 2007

Novella:

Under the Umbrian Weather – summer serial in *The Age* Jan–Feb 2006

Whimsy:

The Happy Phrase: Everyday Conversation Made Easily (with Guy Rundle),
Text Publishing, 2002

Essays and Short Stories:

Introduction, *Readings and Writings: Forty Years in Books*
Readings Books, Music and Film, 2009

Introduction, *The Murder of Madeline Brown*, Francis Adams
Text Publishing, 2000

'Carl Asks for a Fair Go',
Best Australian Humorous Writing
Melbourne University Publishing, 2008

'Il Mondo di Casanova',
Best Australian Essays 1999
Bookman Press, 1999

'Melbourne Is Murder', *On Murder: true crime writing in Australia*
Black Inc., 2000

'The Holocaust on Fast Forward',
Seams of Light: Best Antipodean Essays,
Allen & Unwin, 1998

'In the Deep End at Brunnie Baths',
Hot Sand: An Anthology
Viking Penguin, 1997

'I See Red',
Best Australian Stories 2007,
Black Inc., 2007

'Two Parties, Two Parties',
On a Wing & a Prayer: Scenes from the 2004 Australian Election
UNSW Press 2005

'Hanging Out at Hanging Rock',
Something Like Fire: Peter Cook Remembered, Methuen 1996

Historical Sketches:

'Encounters' series (2005–present),
Monthly, Schwartz Publishing

Magazine and newspapers:

Since 1992, over 300 columns, reviews and feature stories in *The Age*, *Arena*, *Australian*, *Eureka Street*, *Big Issue*, *Spectator*, *Bulletin*, *Australian Educator* and others.

–

Extract: *The Brush Off*

Below was the river, its banks hidden by trees. The occasional swish of a car wafted up from Alexandra Avenue. In the distance, tipping the foliage, the neon sign above the Richmond silos told the hour. NYLEX 3.08. The pub had closed at one. Time was meaningless. Across the river, the lights of the city glowed. A loft, she'd said.

'Princes Bridge.' She cocked her head towards where the fence was concealed in a border of hardy perennials. Princes Bridge was the nearest point we could cross the Yarra. Bliss was a twenty minute walk away. Never again, I swore by the sacred name of Baden-Powell, never again would I be caught unprepared.

We climbed the fence and began our way across the treed lawns of the Queen Victoria Gardens. The heehaw of an ambulance siren washed through the night towards us, echoing the pulse of my horny urgency. As we headed for the bridge, the sound grew louder, insistent in the stillness, urging us forward.

At the floral clock, where the trees ended and the lawn met the broad boulevard of St Kilda Road, the sound abruptly stopped. We stopped, too, and stared.

Across the road sat the National Gallery, its floodlit façade looming like the screen of a drive-in movie, a faceless wall of austere grey basalt. Extending along the wall was a shallow ornamental moat walled by a low stone parapet. In the moat stood a gigantic multi-hued beast with three legs and a head at each end.

This sight was not, in itself, remarkable. The gallery with its moat and its sculptures was a prominent civic landmark. A tourist attraction, a cultural resource. We'd both seen it a thousand times before. But neither of us had ever seen it like this.

An ambulance was drawn up at the gallery's main entrance, a dark mouse-hole in the blank wall. Both of the vehicle's rear doors were flung open. Its light was flashing. Giant shadows, thrown up by the spinning flare, played across the façade of the building like characters from a half-glimpsed puppet show. Like the figures in Plato's cave. Two men were kneeling on the parapet of the moat. Their heads bobbed. Their arms jerked rhythmically. A little cluster of figures moved about the ambulance, engaged in some obscure task. The sudden silence, the lack of passing traffic, was absolute. The tableau was compelling in its mystery.

Drawn irresistibly, we crossed the road. It was a pointless detour, a distraction. Stupid.



ALEX MILLER

Allen and Unwin

Published Works

Alex Miller is one of Australia's best loved writers. He is the author of nine novels, including *Lovesong*, to be published in November 09. Alex is a recipient of the Federation Medal, "For Services to the Australian Cultural Community", and the Manning Clark Medal, for "An outstanding contribution to Australian cultural life." Alex is twice winner of the prestigious Miles Franklin Literary Award, Australia's premier literary prize, first in 1993 for *The Ancestor Game* and again in 2003 for *Journey to the Stone Country*. His fifth novel, *Conditions of Faith*, was published in 2000 and won the Christina Stead Prize for fiction in 2001 in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. It was also nominated for the Dublin IMPAC International Literature Award, shortlisted for the Colin Roderick Award, the Age Book of the Year Award and the Miles Franklin Award. Alex is also an overall winner of the Commonwealth Writers Prize, for *The Ancestor Game*, in 1993. In 2008 Alex became only the second novelist ever to be awarded the Manning Clark Medal "for an outstanding contribution to Australian cultural life." In the same year in Beijing Alex received the People's Republic of China award for Best Foreign Novel for *Landscape of Farewell*. He is currently working on a novel based on the life of the Australian artist, Sidney Nolan. Alex lives in Castlemaine with his wife Stephanie.

Novels:

Lovesong,
forthcoming, Allen & Unwin,
November 2009

Landscape of Farewell,
Allen & Unwin 2007, Short listed Miles
Franklin and numerous other awards.
Winner Manning Clark Award 2009
for "An outstanding contribution to
Australian cultural life." Winner Peoples
Republic of China, Weishanhu Award for
Best Foreign Novel 2009.

Prochownik's Dream,
Allen & Unwin, November, 2005 Long
listed Miles Franklin Award. Film rights
purchased by the Paris based director
Elise McCleod.

Journey To The Stone Country,
Allen & Unwin, October 2002, Sceptre
(UK), September 2002 Winner Miles
Franklin Literary Award 2003, Film rights
purchased by the Australian company
Resonance Productions.

Conditions Of Faith,
Allen & Unwin, June 2000; Sceptre (UK),
May 2000; Scribner (USA), July 2000,
Ballantine Books (USA) pb 2001, Winner
Christina Stead Prize for Fiction, NSW
Premier's Literary Awards 2001, Short
listed Miles Franklin Award.

The Sitters,
Viking, May 1995. Reprinted Allen &
Unwin 2003, Short listed Miles Franklin
and many other awards.

The Ancestor Game,
Penguin, August 1992; Graywolf (USA),
July 1994. Rye Field (Taiwan), July
1996; Chongqing (China), August 1996.
Reprinted Allen & Unwin 2003, Winner,
The Commonwealth Writers Prize, 1993;
The Miles Franklin Literary Award, 1993;
and the Barbara Ramsden Award for Best
Published Book, 1993.

Michael Ondaatje said of this book,
"A wonderful novel of stunning intricacy
and great beauty."

The Tivington Nott,
Robert Hale (UK), 1989. Reprinted
Penguin 1993, Allen & Unwin 2005,
Winner The Braille Book of the Year, 1990

*Watching the Climbers on
the Mountain*,
Pan Macmillan 1988. Scheduled
for reprinting by Allen and Unwin in
2010 under the title, *The Stockman*.

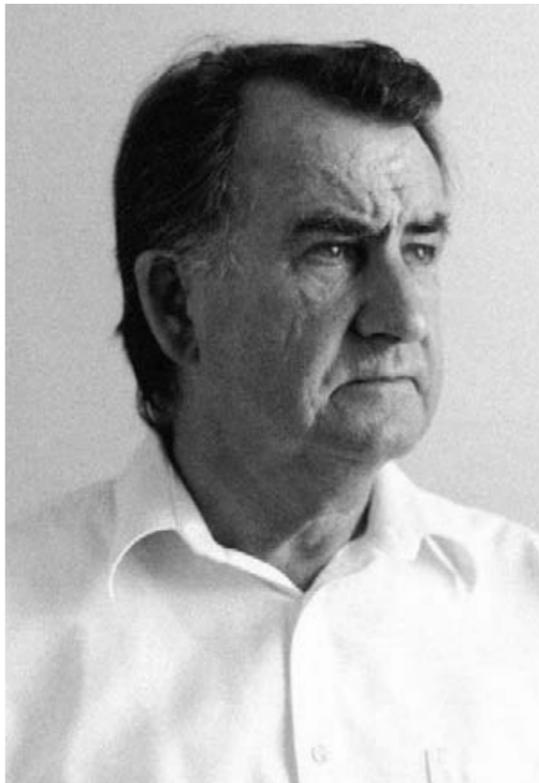
Short Stories, Essays

Alex Miller has published numerous
occasional pieces, short stories and essays
in most of the major Australian periodicals,
dailies and literary journals.

Extract:

Landscape of Farewell

... I stood gathering my resolve,
steadying myself with a hand to the
bedhead, trembling and unshaved, my
spectacles askew. I had not expected this
wretchedness. Writing his story had been
a secret and a nightly joy. I did not want
to lose it. Alone with Gnapun and my
journal I had forgotten this old age, this
grief, this terrible decline and had lived
again as a young man. No, I had not
expected this euphoria to end with the
end of the story, this sudden miserable
fall into the banal realities of my poor
existence. If it were a reward I looked
for, then I had already received it. I gazed
unhappily at my journal where it lay on
the covers. I would have gone on with the
story, but there was no more to be said.
The story was finished. The bird had flown.
My little journey into fiction was over.
The surprise, more impressive in its way
than my disappointment, was that what
I had done was no longer mine.



GERALD MURNANE

Giramondo Publishing

Published Works

Gerald Murnane was born in 1939 in Coburg, a northern suburb of Melbourne. He spent part of his childhood in country districts of Victoria but has lived continually since 1950 in the suburbs of Melbourne. He has seldom left Victoria and has never been in an aeroplane or thought of leaving Australia.

Gerald Murnane was first a primary teacher, later an editor of government publications, and then, until his early retirement, a teacher of fiction writing at tertiary level. He was married for forty-three years to the same person until her death in 2009. Three sons resulted from the marriage. His first published book of fiction was 'Tamarisk Row' (1974). His most recent is 'Barley Patch', published in 2009 by Giramondo. His best-known book to date is 'The Plains', which is currently published by Text.

Tamarisk Row
William Heinemann, 1974, reprinted by
Giramondo, 2007

A Lifetime on Clouds
William Heinemann, 1976

The Plains
Norstrilia Press, 1982

Landscape With Landscape
Norstrilia Press, 1985

Inland
William Heinemann, 1988

Velvet Waters
McPhee Gribble, 1990

Emerald Blue
McPhee Gribble, 1995

Invisible Yet Enduring Lilacs
Giramondo Publishing, 2005

Barley Patch
Giramondo Publishing, 2009

–

Extract:
Barley Patch

As I approach yet again in my mind the three-pronged building that I first read about in the early 1950s, I keep my eyes fixed on the windows of the nearest room in the prong or wing at my left. Behind those windows, the blinds are always drawn. The nearest to me of the rooms in the wing on my left is the furthest room along the corridor for someone standing inside that wing and also the most remote room in the house from the main living areas. The door to that room is always locked, just as the blinds are always drawn in the windows. In the dim, locked room lives Huldah, one of the several siblings of the older generation of the family who live at Kinie Ger. Huldah has lived in her room since she was a child. Her siblings, presumably, know why she hides from the world and perhaps even visit her in secret late at night. The younger persons at Kinie Ger have never seen Huldah and can only guess at her story. They mostly guess that Huldah has some hideous disfigurement that she wants to keep hidden from the world or else that she has an illness of the mind that causes her to live her life in secret.

From the moment when I first read about Huldah, she was for me the chief character of *The Glass Spear*. I often disregarded the facts of the novel, so to call them, and thought of her as a young woman of marriageable age rather than the middle-aged person she surely was. Given that the version of myself who stepped easily into the scenery of books of fiction was a young man of marriageable age, it was inevitable that I would spend much of my time as a hanger-on at Kinie Ger in trying to attract the attention of the unseen Huldah. I did what little I could think of doing. I walked past her windows several times each day, always with a book in my hands as a sign that the world in which Kinie Ger stood among vistas of arid grasslands with trees in the distance – that world was not for me the only possible world. When I had tired of so walking, I would sit with an opened book in front of me in the living-room, in the central wing of the house. I was far from Huldah's room, but one of her trusted siblings might have reported to the hidden young woman that the newcomer who had found his way across pages of text into the dim rooms of a remote homestead was a reader; that even in a place I had only read about, I still read about other places.

**BEST WRITING AWARD 2009
FINALISTS**

—

**TOM CHO
JOEL DEANE
LISA GORTON
CHLOE HOOPER
SIMMONE HOWELL
MYFANWY JONES
LALLY KATZ
NAM LE
AMRA PAJALIC
JEFF SPARROW**



TOM CHO

Giramondo, 2009

Look Who's Morphing

Influenced by the young adult book series Sweet Valley High, Tom Cho began writing fiction in his mid-teens. His stories have appeared in publications in Australia and overseas, and he has performed at events and festivals around the country, including in the award-winning show Hello Kitty, which combined literature with karaoke. Look Who's Morphing was completed as part of Tom's PhD in Professional Writing at Deakin University. His website is at www.tomcho.com

–
Extract:

Look Who's Morphing

Dirty Dancing

This is the summer of 1963 and everybody is calling me 'Baby'. I am at a resort with my Auntie Feng and Uncle Stan for a holiday. The resort is on a small island that is located ten miles off the coast of North Devon where the Atlantic meets the Bristol Channel. My auntie and uncle think the resort is very exciting and they soon get involved in all the resort activities – golf, macramé, etc. Me, I think the only moderately interesting thing about the resort is Johnny Castle. Johnny is a dance instructor at the resort and he has a very nice body. As it turns out, Johnny ends up teaching me the mambo in preparation for a dance performance together and so we start spending a lot of time with one another. In fact, one night, Johnny and I find ourselves alone in his cabin. At first, we are just talking about our favourite 80s television shows and pop songs. But there is something in the way that discussions about popular culture can bring people together and hence our conversation soon leads to Johnny and me having sex. The thing is, while Johnny looks very nice and all, I do not really feel very 'in the moment'. In fact, as Johnny is panting and thrusting, I feel very detached from the experience. It is like I am a bystander, looking on as someone else is having sex with Johnny. And that someone else is a Caucasian man with a moustache. This man is tall and very well-built. He is wearing a leather cap and leather chaps. His name? Bruce. As Bruce reaches for Johnny's wrists, I take the opportunity to watch him. I find myself admiring the sheer physical power of Bruce's masculinity. And Bruce is so confident when it comes to sex. He doesn't say anything; he just pushes Johnny's face

into the pillow. In the end, I watch as Bruce and Johnny spend all night having the hottest sex you can imagine.

The next morning, Bruce and Johnny get out of bed. They are feeling tired from a lack of sleep from the night before, but they are also pleased about the sex that they have had and the fact that they have gotten together. They hope that everyone else is going to be pleased that they are now a couple. But it turns out that Auntie Feng is not pleased about them being together at all and I look on as she forbids Bruce from seeing Johnny.

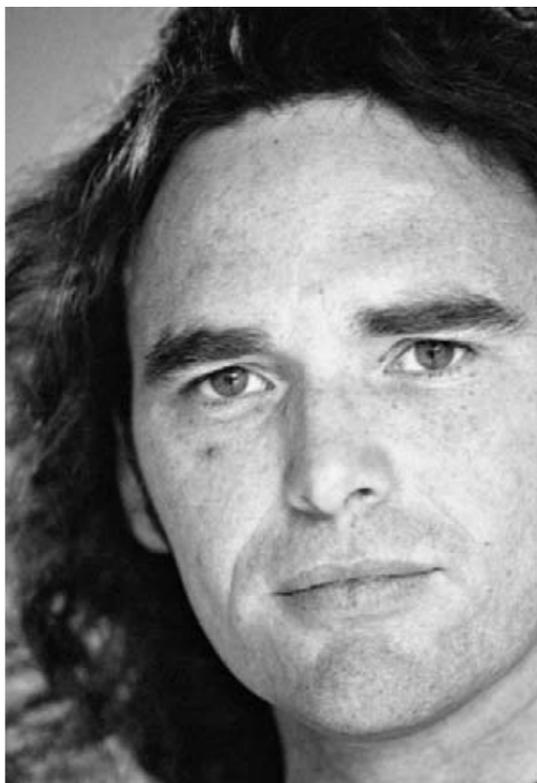
–
Inspiration:

Look Who's Morphing

Throughout the nine-year process of writing *Look Who's Morphing*, I remained intrigued by its theme: identity. These days, the term 'identity' is widely used. Yet the concept of identity is full of mysteries – mysteries that I wanted to explore. *Look Who's Morphing* is full of the riotous, but at its heart is a sense of investigation, of questioning. So intriguing was the theme of identity to me that I decided to incorporate the writing of this book into a PhD. Ironically, identity is still mystifying to me. However, in writing this book, I gained a deeper appreciation of and insight into identity's mysteries.



Photos by Owen Leong



JOEL DEANE

Australia Scholarly Publishing, 2008

Magisterium

Joel Deane is a poet and novelist. He spent his childhood in country Victoria and, at 17, started working as a copyboy at The Sun News-Pictorial. Since then, he has worked in Melbourne and San Francisco as a reporter, editor, producer, and press secretary, as well as chief speechwriter for two Premiers, John Brumby and Steve Bracks. His debut novel, Another, was called 'reminiscent of Tim Winton's Cloudstreet'. His debut poetry collection, Subterranean Radio Songs, was short-listed for the Anne Elder Award. His second collection of poetry, Magisterium, has attracted attention for its collision of poetry and 'apocalyptic' language and been compared to Judith Wright. Deane featured in the Best Australian Poems 2008 anthology and was commissioned to write a poem, 'Bushfire Elegy', for the National Day of Mourning following the Black Saturday fires. His second novel, The Norseman's Song, will be published in 2010.

Extracts:
Magisterium

Requiem

Perhaps those archetypes of immortality,
the beautiful doomed,
have a story to tell after all:

That there is only now.
No golden afternoon just gone.
No promise of a silver morning.
That they are not forever young,
suspended in telegenic animation,
but forever dead instead.
That, unless phrenology has moved on
from the so-called science of the mind
to yet another mismeasure of mankind,
the dead are beyond our vanities.

And that, if anything matters,
if anything does in the long, slow
fuck of life—
a car crash in time lapse
where our family sedan slews off
the shoulder of the highway,
 over and down,
 down and over
the embankment,
gathering turds of sod in its seams
as it gathers momentum towards
a barbed-wire fence

fencing in a gouged creek and
orchards burned grey
by salt—
If there is anything to be learned
from these revolutions,
these guttural exclamations,
as our bodies penetrate other bodies
—are perforated themselves—
as the concussion of our
manmade capsules
colliding against the blunt trauma
of earth continues
for a time less than we imagined,
for longer than we thought possible;

If there is anything to be learned,
it is *this*.
What matters most is that
we love this life we are leaving
and are unafraid of the next.

The First Terrorist

Tender in its infancy,
effervescent
in the heat of its adolescence,
building, slowly, slowly
into an adulthood cruel in its ambition:
the fire was all too human.
Slowly building, building
until its magisterial voice
came roaring
over the spurs and gullies
of the once blue-green hills.
Calling us to judgement
in a language
we could not comprehend.
Driving us to the mouth of a sea
that foamed and hissed—
taking us by surprise.
Taking us by surprise
because,
in fearing only ourselves,
we had forgotten

the first terrorist was nature,
and we the infidels in *its* Jerusalem.

Modus Vivendi

Was that the first bell or the third?
Which lie made the rooster crow?
Does this hunger have a word?
Am I the insect or the bird?

Is this year dragon, pig, or dog?
When does predator become prey?
Should I bleed and butcher the hog?
Is life's fire a blackened log?

In which beast's belly do I lie?
Does my maker fetch and heel?
Does it walk or crawl or fly?
Is mercy found in its cold eye?

When Lindow man drowned in the bog
Which quadruped did he call *God*?

Inspiration:
Magisterium

The word 'magisterium' generally
refers to the authority of the Catholic
Church to determine spiritual truth. In
my second collection of poetry, though,
Magisterium refers to a personal search
for spiritual, political and personal truth.
The inspiration for that search came
out of personal loss. In the aftermath
of that loss I questioned everything,
finding few satisfactory answers. In the
process, I wrote a suite of poems about
all that troubled me—from the environment
to reconciliation to democracy to the war
on terror to mortality. *Magisterium* is a
poetic interrogation.





LISA GORTON

Giramondo, 2007

Press Release

Lisa Gorton lives in Melbourne with her partner and two young children. Press Release, her first poetry collection, won the Victorian Premier's Prize for Poetry. She was the inaugural winner of the Vincent Buckley Poetry Prize. A Rhodes Scholar, she completed a Doctorate on John Donne at Oxford University and won the John Donne Society Award for Best Publication in Donne Studies. Her poems, essays and reviews have appeared in journals and newspapers in Australia, the UK and the US. She has also written a novel for children, Cloudland.

–

Inspiration:
Press Release

These poems combine farfetched imagery with emotion. Some are set in the Mallee in WWII; others are set in cities of the past, present and future, from Pompeii to New Titan. They all seek an individual, intimate experience of public spaces and events. The title poem, 'Press Release', set in the future, takes the voice of a mother farewelling her child, placed in hibernation to colonise a new planet. It uses these large dimensions of space to dramatise a mother's apprehension of loss. The Mallee Sequence, which draws on a grandmother's experience running an orange orchard in drought, explores how people affect the land and how the land affects people; it also works as a meditation on ambition, patience and waste.

Extracts:
Press Release

Morphine

i. m. Ethleen King

i.
You're slumped in your lunch tray,
corn soup gunked in your new-curled hair,
spilling from the tray and *thop pthop-pthop* –
in clammy handshakes –
meeting itself distractedly on the floor.

There's a triangle of bread, one
corner bitten out of it, buttered to your cheek,
and your false teeth an inch from your mouth
as though we've sprung them *clack clackety-clicking*
into the soup in their imperturbable hunger.

ii.
The soup is smooth under our nails,
bland on our tongues, is everywhere –
until the nurse brings a towel
and smears you clean awake.
Then, out of that blank we had thought death,
you sit up and eye us coldly: 'I have no future.'

iii.
Say we are fires so lit with ourselves we burn bewilderedly
because the world is made of things indifferent to fire.
There we are ranged in chairs half-circling you
propped in that white bed winched too high –
a contraption of pulleys and levers the nurse works
with an adeptness like contempt – and we say nothing,
nothing, and leave at the end of visiting hours.

iv.
So call this a prayer for morphine:
that it soothed the sheet,
that it held your hands in the vein,
that its fingers were light
that drew you in, like a drawing-in of breath,
and did not let you go.





CHLOE HOOPER

Hamish Hamilton / Penguin, 2008

The Tall Man

Chloe Hooper's first novel, A Child's Book of True Crime, was short-listed for the Orange Prize and became a New York Times Notable Book. In 2006 she won a Walkley Award for her writing on the inquest into the death of Cameron Doomadgee. The Tall Man, her book-length account of the case, has been published internationally, and has won the Victorian, New South Wales and Queensland Premiers' Awards. She is currently working on a novel.

Extract: *The Tall Man*

Palm Island's grimy air terminal was decorated with a collection of the local fourth-grader's projects on safe and unsafe behaviour. One, a rough drawing of a bottle with a cross through it, read: 'Stop Drinking!' Another: 'I feel safe when I'm not being hunted.' The island's Aboriginal mayor collected me and the two lawyers I'd travelled with and drove us into town along the narrow road fringing the water. Rocks jutted from the shore. On a boulder someone had spray-painted in purple 'TALL MAN'.

In the township there was a jetty, a beer canteen, a hospital, a long-broken wooden clock tower, and one store. Outside the store a child sat in a rubbish bin while another cooled him with a fire hose. In the circle of shade under a tree, more children played a gambling game: some form of two-up, with bottle lids or seed pods landing in the dirt.

Two men in their early thirties were stumbling around, leaning on each other.

"They're brothers," the mayor said.
"They're blind."

"Obviously." I assumed she meant blind drunk. One of the brothers then shook out a white cane and I saw that the men were connected with a piece of string, the man with the cane leading his brother by the wrist. "How did they go blind?"

"Nobody knows."

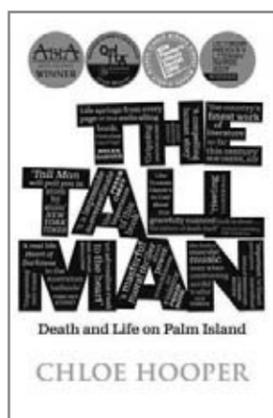
Travelling to Palm Island had been like a sequence in a dream: the pale green sea so luminous and the plane flying so close I could almost see the life in it—dugongs, giant turtles, whales. All around were

moored small, pristine islands. Then, on the horizon, like a dark, green wave, came a larger island. As the plane turned to land, the wilderness unfolded. Mountains of forest met the palm-lined shore, which met mangrove swamps, the coral reef. Then the dream shifted.

'Tropic of Despair', 'Bitter Paradise', 'Island of Sorrow' were the headlines I'd been reading. Three months earlier, on 19 November 2004, an Aboriginal man called Cameron Doomadgee had been arrested for swearing at a white police officer. Forty minutes later he was dead on a cell floor, with injuries like those of someone who'd been in a car or plane crash. The police said the man had tripped on a step, and the state-appointed pathologist reported no signs of brutality. The community did not agree: a week later a mob burned down the island's police station and the arresting officer's house. The officer, Senior Sergeant Chris Hurley, went into hiding on the mainland.

Inspiration: *The Tall Man*

The Tall Man: Death and Life on Palm Island tells the story of Cameron Doomadgee's November 2004 death in the Palm Island police station and the struggle to bring Senior Sergeant Christopher Hurley to trial. I first went to Palm Island in February 2005, and followed the case until Hurley was tried for manslaughter two and a half years later. *The Tall Man* attempts to discover who Hurley and Doomadgee were; and, by exploring the forces that led to their fatal meeting, to document race relations in early twenty-first century Australia.





SIMMONE HOWELL

Pan Macmillan, 2008

Everything Beautiful

Simone Howell was born in Melbourne. She is the author of Notes from the Teenage Underground and Everything Beautiful. Notes from the Teenage Underground was awarded the 2007 Victorian Premiers Prize for Young Adult fiction and the inaugural Gold Inky Teenage Choice Awards via Inside a Dog. Everything Beautiful is shortlisted for the 2009 Gold Inky. Simone lives and writes in central Victoria.

Extract:

Everything Beautiful

My mother, Lilith Maree Rose, died two years ago, when I was fourteen. Of all of the facts of my life this was the one that wouldn't change. If I ever chanced to forget about the Mum-shaped hole in my life, the grief would come back like a Chinese burn on my heart. It was Cancer - fast and ugly - and it left Dad and me gasping for air. Pain ends - if you believe the grief guides. Apparently visualisation helps - close your eyes, imagine you see your loved one laughing, open your eyes. Breathe. Cue me: sweet sixteen and still gasping. I felt incomplete, cut up and I couldn't talk about it. Insert life change here.

Six months after Mum died, Dad moved us back to the town where he grew up. He had all his old friends and I made precisely one: Chloe Benson. Dad started going to church again and not just on Sundays - he got involved. It was months of church-activity craziness. He even auditioned for *Moses! - The Musical*. Dad is a terrible singer. His breathing is all over the place. He sings like someone's chasing him - and it turns out someone was: Norma. Her name is onomatopoeic which means she looks like she sounds - she's all soft and droopy-drawly, and she's kind. I didn't want her to be kind.

When term ended Dad sat me down to tell me that he and Norma were "pretty serious". And even though the rest of me was numb I still managed a smart mouth because that's my best defence. I said, "Pretty serious? Pretty? A qualifier is like a seed of doubt." Dad squeezed my hand and that squeeze cut the qualifier out.

My smart mouth is one defence; my weight is another. I am Chubby Con Carne, thirteen stone and rising.

The whole Norma Trauma kit came with free counselling: "Do you think, Riley, that your weight is the moat around the real you?" Or, "Would you say, Riley, that you only feel good when you're being bad?"

All year I'd been hurtling towards catastrophe. There was the thing with the bucket bong, my almost failing mid-terms, my schizo MO - hugging Dad one day, railing at him the next - but the tipping point was when a group of us broke into the local pool for a spot of night-swimming. Your honour, I admit it. We were drunk on vodka jellies. My mascara had run in vampira streaks down my face, which was delirious-happy because I was just about to kiss Ben Sebatini! He of the inky hair and that smile that made me steady myself against stair-rails. I still can't believe that for nine hot minutes - until the cops busted in and ripped us asunder - the boy was mine.

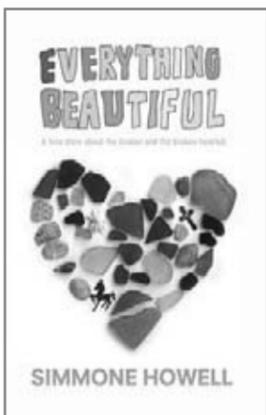
Inspiration:

Everything Beautiful

Everything Beautiful is about the unlikely romance between an angry atheist girl, and a despondent paraplegic boy at a Christian camp in the Little Desert. It's a novel about transformation, utopia, and modern teenage sexual mores. It was inspired by my Catholic upbringing, where from an early age I observed inconsistencies within Church culture, endured Christian holiday camps and parish youth groups, and made it my duty to battle the pious, the unadventurous, the dull and the small-minded.

Riley Rose is a cracker of a girl: fat, dramatic and totally out of her element.

I wanted to write someone who seemed to be the opposite of beautiful, someone who is forced to look at her life from the outside. Riley's quest is for self-knowledge, tolerance, acceptance, and becoming open to the possibility of love.





MYFANWY JONES

Viking, 2009

The Rainy Season

Myfanwy Jones worked in Vietnam for two years in the mid-1990s as a freelance writer and sub-editor for the Saigon Times and the Vietnam Investment Review, before returning to Melbourne to study professional writing and editing at RMIT. She has had numerous short stories published, including, most recently, 'Wetland' in the anthology Readings and Writings: Forty Years in Books. The Rainy Season is her first novel. This year she also collaborated with Spiri Tsintziras on a non-fiction book, Parlour Games for Modern Families, published by Scribe in November. Myfanwy lives in Melbourne, and finds playing absurd games with her family the perfect counterbalance to writing novels.

Extract:

The Rainy Season

Inside, the airport is musty and worn, hollow-feeling; it's not much more than a great empty shed. We're the only late arrivals and a queue quickly forms beneath slow-moving ceiling fans. I slip gratefully in. I will do what everyone else does. I can be just another sheep in the mob.

While we're waiting, I notice two uniformed men walking slowly down the length of the queue towards me, shiny rifles slung across their shoulders, faces closed. Another wave of adrenaline rips through me. I focus on breathing, in and out. This is peacetime, I remind myself. I am in no danger.

Somehow, I make it through passport control, baggage collection, customs, and onto the street outside. The group disintegrates and I am engulfed by cab drivers, all hard smiles and fast talking. I take a step back, trying to explain that I need to get to Pham Ngu Lao, the backpacker strip, and they're all nodding fiercely when a tall guy with dreadlocks bowls up. 'Hey, you going to Pham Ngu Lao? Want to share?'

I barely hesitate. 'Yeah, that'd be good.'

I get in a cab with him and his friend. They're from Sydney.

'Did you know that during the war Tan Son Nhat was the busiest airport in the world?' says the tall one, Mick. He is vibrating with excitement.

'Really?' I say, though I knew this – of course I knew this.

'We're going to find a bar soon as we've checked in,' offers his friend, Marcus.

'Nah, mate, before we've checked in,' laughs Mick. 'Fancy a drink?'

They look at me. I smile. 'I don't know. I'm pretty tired.' I want to explain: This is my first night in a foreign country. I have a broken heart and I've barely slept in ten days. This is not how it was supposed to be.

I press my face to the window but can't see much. Streetlamps shed yellowy light onto figures moving against shabby backdrops. We overtake dozens of people on bicycles but I keep missing their faces. Ghostly pale moths flit across the windscreen, engaged in some kind of extreme bug sport.

When we get into the centre, though, it's like someone switches on the lights, turns up the volume, and suddenly here we are, in a big, strange city, late at night. The cab slows to a walking pace as we enter a swarm of bicycles, motorbikes and cyclos. I wind down my window. Engines rev, horns burp, billboards flash. I smell petrol fumes, sewage, some kind of barbecued meat. I have an image of Christopher Walken in *The Deer Hunter*, wandering dazed – ruined – through the pumping Saigon night. Did it look the same in 1969? Did it smell the same? What was my father thinking when he saw these streets for the very first time?

–

Inspiration:

The Rainy Season

Inspiration for *The Rainy Season* began in my childhood: it was my generation whose fathers and uncles fought in Vietnam. I have early memories of being carted off to peace rallies, watching the war on TV, and, as a teenager, listening to a friend's father's drunken confessions about his time in Vietnam. In 1994 – the year the US embargo was lifted – I travelled to Vietnam and ended up staying for two years. It was a time of enormous social and economic change which was incredibly exciting to be part of. These two sources of inspiration, the old and the new, came together in my particular interest in the adult children of Vietnam Vets – 'the second generation' –

whose dark inheritance had drawn them to visit the places where their fathers fought. In my main character, Ella, I hoped to communicate something of this long reach of war, and also of the potential for healing.





LALLY KATZ

HLA Management, 2009

Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd



Photo by Jeff busby.
Scene from *Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd*

Lally Katz is a graduate of the University of Melbourne's School of Studies in Creative Arts and studied playwriting at London's Royal Court Theatre. She is a core member of Stuck Pigs Squealing Theatre, which has rapidly built a reputation as one of the country's most exciting theatre companies. Her plays include: The Apocalypse Bear Trilogy, When The Hunter Returns, Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd, Frankenstein, The Black Swan of Trespass, The Eisteddfod, Criminology (with Tom Wright) and Goodbye New York, Goodbye Heart. Various awards include Melbourne Green Room Award for Best Independent Production and a New York International Fringe Festival Producer's Choice Award. Lally recently became the recipient of The Louis Esson Prize for Drama at the Victorian Premier's Literary Award 2009 for her play Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd.

Extract:

Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd

Bones stands up from the piano. He walks the long, slow way down to the front of the stage.

BONES. It's not so bad really. I've aint seen everything there is to see, but I've seen enough to know that somewhere at the end of every flood, there's land. And everyone's piling into their boats. Just like Noah did. Collecting everything they think they can't stand to lose. I'll let you in on something. I'll tell you something right from my heart. But you can't never tell no one else. Because I'll know it were you that told. You is the only one I'm telling. Because I've seen you there. All night. In the darkest seat of the house. And I know you seen me see you. We locked eyes. One time. Two time. We locked eyes. And I trust you.

This is me. These are the ten things I would pack on my ark, if I happened to be Noah:

1. My piano. 2. My foot stop-itching cream.
3. A photograph of my mama when she were young. 4. A program from Mudd's Castle. Only need one, every night were the same. 5. A can opener. 6. Can I say a hundred and still count it for one thing? You'll let me, won't ya? One hundred tins of pineapple. 7. The kind of mirror that makes your face look long. 8. Another one

- hundred tins of pineapple. 9. A back-up can opener. In case the first one breaks.
10. A photograph of Ethelyn Rarity.

Ethelyn floated down Swanston River. And Swanston River, like all rivers becomes something like the sea. And yes, she'd been dead already But it were still pretty scary for her body. You don't know what it's like, the dark rust underneath a ship. The night-time sky hitting the waves. She floated to the top of the world and up near Germany. I went almost the whole way too. Following on my silly little paddle boat. I wanted to hold her hand, though of course I couldn't reach it. I like to think it was a comfort for her though, my trying like that.

And finally, when the sea split into two currents, I was in one and she was in the quicker. I could see her white, satin costume join the phosphoresce that the whales eat. And I thought to myself, she'll be all right there.

I hope that's what I saw.

I'm ready. For the night before tomorrow. I'm ready for today.

He begins to take his make-up off, with Ethelyn's handkerchief.

You hear it? The rain. It's stopped.

—

Inspiration:

Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd

The Malthouse Theatre commissioned Director Chris Kohn and I to create a new play. Chris suggested that it be about Vaudeville in Melbourne, just before World War I. We began a creative fellowship at the State Library of Victoria. One of the most important elements of the research was the inspiration of just being at the Library. Going into that building everyday was like entering another world, or another time. At lunch time, I would sit outside, on the steps and watch Swanston Street. It occurred to me after a little while, that the trams that moved along the street, were like barges on a river. And the people who came and sat on the grassy hill below the library, were like bathers on a river bank. In my mind, Swanston Street became Swanston River. And this is where the play is set.



Photo by Dave Tacon

NAM LE

Hamish Hamilton / Penguin, 2008

The Boat

Nam Le's debut collection of short stories, The Boat, was published in 2008 and has since been translated into twelve languages. The Boat was shortlisted for the Victorian, NSW and Queensland Premiers' Literary Awards as well as the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Fiction. It was selected as a book of the year by publications including The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Herald Sun, the Australian Book Review, The Monthly, The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, and The Independent. Le is currently the fiction editor of the Harvard Review and will be a writer-in-residence at RMIT in 2010-2011.

Extract:
The Boat

From "Tehran Calling"

Seven thousand miles she'd come and she'd failed their friendship in every way. Parvin had confided in her—had made her mind and soul intelligible—and Sarah had pushed her away, pushed her into the teeth of some horrible proof. There was the thirteen-year-old girl, those small dark rooms and small bright rooms, there the woman with a girl's face, the man trussed by his wrists to a ceiling fan. A metal chair with a gas flame beneath it. Her heart smashing inside her ribs. Why had she come here? What had she wanted? She'd wanted purpose, sure, but every part of this turned-around place gave purpose to some action—leave, never leave, come back. She'd wanted to look past herself but now, when she did, she saw nothing at all that was different. She was alone. Parvin was alone.

Mahmoud was standing behind her. Then he was propping her up, sliding her closer to the bed. He laid her on her back and went away, returning with a glass of water.

"It is okay," he said. He handed her some hotel napkins. "Listen to me. She will be safe. Like last time."

"How do you know?"

"Try to rest," he answered.

She pushed herself back on the bed. The naked bulb glaring down from the ceiling. The sound of incessant traffic outside. She stilled herself, succumbed to the noise of her body—its angry clunk and shudder.

After a while, Mahmoud leaned over her, looked at her closely before saying, "Wait here."

"Where are you going?" She was revolted, even before she spoke, by the desperation she expected in her voice. She closed her eyes, started shivering. She waited.

Hours passed, or maybe minutes, and he came back in and chain-locked the door behind him. He took off his jacket. Then he laid out on the desk two long pipes, a plastic-wrapped baggie, a candle.

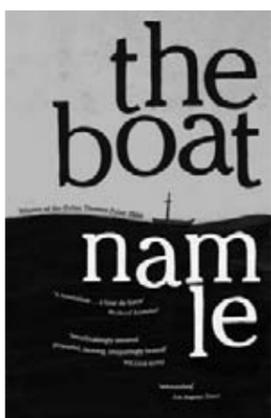
"This will help," he said.

"What is it?"

He looked up at her curiously. "It is better than drunk," he said.

Inspiration:
The Boat

I wrote the stories in *The Boat* as I started seriously reading and falling in love with short stories. I was inspired by the freedom of the form. I was inspired by its spaciousness and promiscuity: its 'sprungness.' I loved the illusion of the end always in sight. I loved the stakes being always so high. I felt licensed to lash out. The stories, in their turn, punished me amply. And they rewarded me too.





AMRA PAJALIC

Text, 2009

The Good Daughter

*Amra Pajalic was born in 1977. Her first novel, The Good Daughter was shortlisted in the 2007 Victorian Premier's Awards for Best Unpublished Manuscript by an Emerging Writer, and was published in 2009. Her short stories Siege and F**k Me Eyes have appeared in the 2004 and 2005 Best Australian Short Stories. Amra lives in St Albans, Melbourne with her husband, daughter and three cats.*

Extract:
The Good Daughter

When I got home Mum stepped into the hall while I was taking off my shoes. Shoes littered the hallway and chatter came from the living room. Visitors, again. Mum's eyes widened. 'What did you do to your hair?' she gasped.

I touched it self-consciously. 'I dyed it brown.' I wanted to look like Madonna for the costume party I was going to. She thrust me into the living room. 'Look at my stupid daughter. Girls would kill for her long, blonde hair and she does this.' She took a handful of my hair and tossed it. One of the female visitors squinted at my head. 'It's multicoloured.'

I touched my hair again. 'There wasn't enough dye to cover all my hair.'

'She's still half-blonde,' another woman said, and they all cackled.

The next morning I tied my hair into a ponytail so that the patches of blonde kind of resembled streaks. I twisted and turned in front of the mirror. I was fooling myself. I put my cap on and poked my ponytail out the back.

Brian was waiting for me at the bike-shed. 'How did it go?'

'Mum won't give me any money because she wants me to go back to blonde.' At Brian's blank look I elaborated. 'It's a wog thing. They're all try-hard Anglos and only believe that hair dye should flow one way, from brown to blonde.'

'You can always go to the party as Poison Ivy.'

I shook my head. 'I'm not letting her win.' I had two weeks to save the money. We walked to the oval and met up with the rest of the group.

My disguise didn't last the first period.

'Ms Omerovic, please remove your cap,' Mr Singh, my science teacher, commanded from the front as soon as I sat down.

'Can I please keep it on?'

He smiled. 'Take it off now or go to the principal's office.'

He hated me because I didn't do any homework and I hated him because he was a crap teacher, so we were even.

I removed my cap. Everyone gasped. 'Perhaps if you paid more attention to science you would have had a better outcome,' Mr Singh said.

'I was aiming for this look.' I pulled my hair out of the ponytail. The only way to win was to show no fear.

Mr Singh turned to the whiteboard.

'What the hell did you do?' Gemma whispered loudly.

'Nothing.'

'Ms Omerovic if you persist in disturbing the class I will have no choice, but to call your mother.'

'She's taken,' I shot back.

There was silence for a second, before the class exploded into laughter.

Inspiration:
The Good Daughter

As a high school student I was always reading, but there seemed to be no books that represented my story about growing up. I'm talking about coming from the Western suburbs of Melbourne. About being from a migrant background and the family expectations placed on you to be a good wog girl, while at heart being Aussie and wanting to break out of this mould. So I wrote *The Good Daughter* for myself and for teenagers like me so they have something to read that speaks to their experiences and that will inspire them to fight for their 'outlandish' dreams.





JEFF SPARROW

Melbourne University Press, 2009

Killing

Jeff Sparrow is the editor of the literary journal Overland. He is the co-author of Radical Melbourne: A Secret History and Radical Melbourne 2: The Enemy Within, and author of Communism: A Love Story. He is a Research Fellow at Victoria University.

Extract:
Killing

We sat in the bar and ordered water—Jerry didn't drink—and I took out my tape recorder. Then I hesitated. Asking someone about the first man he'd killed felt wildly inappropriate in a public place, but the cable football coming from the TV nearby provided a certain privacy, a kind of aural screen.

'Remember, when I joined the team, they didn't have anyone on death row', Jerry explained. 'It wasn't until 1982 that we got our first prisoner. Man called Frank Coppola.' Coppola was an ex-cop, self-confessedly guilty of a violent murder. What's more, he wanted to die, and that made the process easier. 'He said, sarge, I don't want my family to grow up knowing their father is incarcerated on death row. He said that's why he was doing this [volunteering for execution]. I couldn't say, well, go ahead and do it, but I worked with him and the execution wasn't that hard because here was a person who was volunteering to go along with it.'

But Coppola's willingness to die didn't entirely negate the stresses of killing him. It was the first electrocution in Virginia after the informal moratorium, and the procedure attracted enormous attention. 'The place was packed,' Jerry said. 'From the front door to the back. Because it was the first in twenty years, it drew a lot of media attention. They were taking pictures and stuff like that. I was worrying about making a mistake; I don't want to overdo it, because I haven't did this before.'

'Did you practise pulling the switch ...' I began, but he interrupted, a little exasperated.

'It's a button you press, not a switch. I don't know why people always say switch—it's a button.' It made sense that an electric chair operated with a button: just about every modern piece of electrical equipment does. So why did the word 'switch' come so inexorably to mind? Perhaps because

it was an image from a horror movie: the mad scientist commencing unspeakable experiments, loosing the lightning with an enormous lever. A button seemed more clinical, more modern: that, perhaps, was why Jerry needed to correct me.

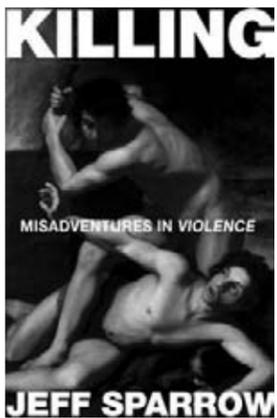
Yes, he said, they did practise, or at least they tried to, but they couldn't rehearse the actual act itself without a live body on which they could test the level of current.

Virginia eventually adopted lethal injection as well as the chair, giving the prisoners a macabre freedom to choose how they wished to die. Jerry learnt the new method by observing teams in Texas, a state that operated like a de facto college for executioners.

'Lethal injection.' He enunciated the words as if tasting them, checking they were as bitter as he remembered. 'We had a guy in Texas, and he sung a hymn, and he'd almost repeated that hymn before the chemicals took effect. Electrocution is like flicking a light off and on. But lethal injection ...it's a slow process ...'

Inspiration:
Killing

Killing: Misadventures in Violence was written from a sense that, after the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, military violence had become increasingly normalised, to that extent that none but the most extreme atrocities even registered any more. It's an investigation of what killing means, both for perpetrators and for society as a whole.



Judges Quotes

2009 Awarding Committee

Hilary McPhee AO
Writer & Editor

A large number of Australia's finest writers living in this state are now at the peak of their powers, with bodies of work produced over thirty years or more, and all having made substantial contributions to the culture. The cross-generational debate around the candidates for the Melbourne Prize for Literature was hugely enjoyable.

The submissions for the Best Writing Award were impressive and judging was tough. Lots of edgy young adult fiction and new and distinctive voices in non-fiction, novels, plays and essays and some fine poetry. Most pleasing also were the many good-looking books from new small publishers, as well as established houses, were testament to a lively writing and publishing scene.

–

Professor Brian Matthews
Writer and Emeritus Professor

Judging the Melbourne Prize for Literature and the Best Writing Award was, as on the previous occasion, an exciting and liberating experience, involving renewal of acquaintance with some of Australia's great and established writers, and an introduction to many of the most talented newcomers.

–

Mark Rubbo OAM
Managing Director, Reading Books Music & Film

The Melbourne Prize for Literature and the authors and books nominated for it, reflect the health and diversity of Victorian writing. It has been a pleasure and great privilege to be involved in the judging process this year. The quality of the nominations for the Melbourne Prize for Literature made it difficult, personally, to determine a shortlist let alone a final winner. The Best Writing Award showcases the talents of younger writers and based on the entries we received, I am terribly confident that we have major talents emerging.

2009 Advisory Group

Sophie Cunningham
Editor, Meanjin

The array of talent on display in the Victorian literary community made shortlisting and choosing the winner for both the Melbourne Prize for Literature and the Best Writing Award a real challenge. The sheer breadth and depth of writing we were privileged to have the chance to consider, across a range of literary genres, and pitched at such a variety of audiences, made me proud, all over again, to be part of the Melbourne writing scene and proud to be an advisor on the award held in the city's name.

–

Louise Swinn
Editorial Director, Sleepers Publishing

The breadth of genres covered in the Best Writing Award is a happy accident that simply illuminates the plump girth of talent we are lucky enough to be able to take for granted. The shortlists for both prizes contain works that have helped shape me, and are continuing to do so; I am confident that these names will be etched into the literary landscape over time. If you believe that words, placed well, have the power to save lives, then these are the surgeons I'd surrender my literary bypass to – in a heartbeat.

–

Stephen Armstrong
Executive Producer, Malthouse Theatre

An invitation to read for the Melbourne Prize is a two-faced inducement. Day upon night upon day stuck in a chair in a room, the only relief: bathroom stops, and even that means staring down the mountain of yet-to-be-read entries in the hall. But that's just half of the story. What suffers the body into cramps turns to turbo in the mind. Just as it takes an imagination to write, so it takes one to read or hear aloud: that unholy and adulterous alliance of the imaginations. There's a whole new dimension when reading for the Melbourne Prize because, in a sense, these couplings are all from inside our own tribe. I don't think its vanity to prize our tribe for its artistry, experiment and heart. Even less among the short-listed writers for an unshakeable attachment to the other as a form of belonging.

–

Michael Williams
Editor and Broadcaster

Being closeted away with boxes of entries for the Best Writing Award and the Melbourne Prize for Literature gave heartening insight into a rich history of local writing and publishing and a range of powerful voices, both established and emerging. Being closeted away with the judges for the Best Writing Award and the Melbourne Prize for Literature was a (fiesty) privilege. Never has such heated debate resulted in such warm equanimity. It wasn't so much an exercise in comparing apples and oranges as it was in comparing apples and cocker spaniels, but in the end we came up with two extraordinary and diverse shortlists.

Prize Details

Melbourne Prize For Literature 2009 \$60,000

The Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 is for a Victorian author whose body of published/produced work has made an outstanding contribution to Australian literature and to cultural and intellectual life. The author's work can include all genres and forms for example, fiction, non-fiction, essays, plays, screenplays and poetry.

The Prize is supported by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. With this Prize, the Trust encourages local and overseas travel for career development and to foster our arts and culture.

Best Writing Award 2009 \$30,000

The Best Writing Award 2009 is for a piece of published or produced work of outstanding clarity, originality and creativity by a Victorian writer, 40 years or under. The work can be any genre or form, for example, fiction, non-fiction, essays, plays, screenplays and poetry.

The Best Writing Award 2009 is supported by its patron, The Robert Salzer Foundation.

The recipient of the Best Writing Award 2009 will be invited to participate in a 3-month association with the School of Culture & Communication at The University of Melbourne.

The above prize and award recipients will be published at www.melbourneprizetrust.org on 11 November 2009.

Civic Choice Award 2009 \$3,000

The Civic Choice Award 2009 is supported by Readings Books Music & Film and Hardie Grant Books.

Cast your vote for a finalist to win the \$3,000 Civic Choice Award at www.melbourneprizetrust.org or in the voting form in this catalogue. The recipient will be published on 27 November 2009 at www.melbourneprizetrust.org.

The Melbourne Prize Trust

Launched in 2004, the Melbourne Prize Trust was established to recognise and reward excellence and talent, inspire creative development and enrich public life. The Trust achieves this aim by running the annual Melbourne Prize, which is funded by a collaboration of partnerships and patrons.

The Trust is an Income Tax Exempt Charity with Deductible Gift Recipient status. The origins of the Trust date back to the establishment of the children's garden precinct at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and the commissioning of *The Magic Pudding* sculpture in 2000. Proceeds from the sale of limited edition miniatures of this landmark sculpture contribute to the Trust. Please contact the Melbourne Prize Trust regarding the miniatures.

The annual Melbourne Prize has become one of the most valuable creative development initiatives of its kind in Australia. It runs on a three-year cycle and rewards sculptors, writers and musicians in turn. The current cycle is:

- / Melbourne Prize for Urban Sculpture (2008)
- / Melbourne Prize for Literature (2009)
- / Melbourne Prize for Music (2010)

The Prize is unique, celebrating artistic excellence under the banner of Melbourne. With its focus on Victorian artists, the Prize provides our local creative talent with significant financial, professional development and exhibition opportunities.

The major event of the annual Melbourne Prize is the free two-week public exhibition of finalists' work and the prize announcement held each November at Federation Square. The exhibition increases the public's exposure and access to the creativity of our community and enhances Melbourne's reputation as a cultural capital.

The Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 program is proudly supported by the Victorian Government through its City of Literature initiative, the City of Melbourne and our many partners and patrons shown at the front of this catalogue.

2009 Exhibition Concept

Presenting works of literature in the context of an exhibition poses unique challenges, the standard format for written works being published reproductions – books and scripts intended for personal individual use. By selecting a thoroughly contemporary medium – the ubiquitous flat screen for the Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 – the work of each finalist is shifted onto an unconventional format.

Coupled with revealing interviews of the authors, the exhibition aims to prompt viewers into reassessing their preset comprehension of interacting with the printed word.

The exhibition concept and design was conceived by Cornwell Design. Microhire provided the exhibition screens and production services and the interviews were made by filmmaker, Peter Leiss. Thank you for the kind assistance of Ian Connell, narrator.

Acknowledgments

The generous support of the many partners and patrons this year has made it possible to provide the Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009, Best Writing Award 2009, Civic Choice Award 2009 and the finalist exhibition at Federation Square, held between 9 and 23 November 2009. Thank you to the many prize and award applicants and publishers who nominated writers. The Trust greatly appreciates the support of all finalists, who have helped contribute to the activities this year.

We are fortunate to live in a community where the generous financial and in-kind support of partners and patrons enables arts and cultural projects to flourish. The Melbourne Prize Trust would like to thank Arts Victoria, through its City of Literature initiative, and the City of Melbourne for their ongoing and generous support.

Thank you to the Awarding Committee, Mark Rubbo OAM, Hilary McPhee AO and Professor Brian Matthews and to the Advisory Group, Louise Swinn, Stephen Armstrong, Michael Williams and Sophie Cunningham for their dedication and hard work in judging this year. The ongoing direction of Melbourne Prize Trust Directors, Dr Janine Kirk AM, Professor Andrea Hull AO and Pamela Warrender is appreciated, along with Anthony Poynton and David Blake as members of the Management Committee.

Founding Partners Cornwell, Ernst & Young, Minter Ellison and the Committee for Melbourne have played an integral role in establishing and maintaining the project since inception in 2004. Everything seen and used for the annual Melbourne Prize, including the catalogue and unique exhibition in the Atrium at Federation Square this year, is developed by Steven Cornwell and his team at Cornwell Design – thank you all.

Our Exhibition and Events Partner, Federation Square, enables the Melbourne Prize to have its ‘home’ in one of the highest profile public spaces in Australia. Thank you to Microhire for their support in staging the screen based exhibition in the Atrium and Peter Leiss, filmmaker, for his work in making the videos of each finalist. The Trust greatly appreciates the generous support of Corporate Partners Qantas, who help facilitate overseas travel of recipients and Sofitel Luxury Hotels for accommodation and the superb event to welcome the 2009 finalists and to thank our partners and judges.

The Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 would not be possible without the support of The Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation. The Best Writing Award 2009 has been generously provided by its patron, The Robert Salzer Foundation. The association of the University of Melbourne in this award is greatly appreciated. Readings Books Music & Film and Hardie Grant Books have generously made available the Civic Choice Award 2009, for which the public are able to vote for a finalist to win at www.melbourneprizetrust.org and in this catalogue.

The Trust acknowledges all its patrons for their generous donations. These include Diana Gibson AO, The Vera Moore Foundation, The John T Reid Charitable Trusts, the Tattersall's George Adams Foundation, the Urquhart Charitable Fund and The Tallis Foundation.

There are a number of organisations that provide valued professional services to the annual Melbourne Prize, for which the Trust is thankful for their generous and ongoing partnership. Royce provides strategic media and communications advice. Grant Thornton undertake the annual audit of the Trust and its activities.

The Trust would like to thank Fundere Fine Art Foundry Melbourne for crafting the unique presentation trophies each year for the awards. They also fabricate the miniatures of *The Magic Pudding* sculpture (located at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne).

Rothfield Print Management are generous supporters of the Trust's print requirements. Thanks to Premier Graphics who support the exhibition signage and construction. Thank you to Evan Evans for supporting our digital print requirements, to Bill Coleby for our risk management, to Lee Wong for our website management, to Rod Birrell for web hosting, to Amanda Clark for editing and to Marton Tákach for IT systems maintenance.

The support of the literary sector and publishers has been a key factor in the success of this years activities. Thank you to the Australian Publishers Association, the Australian Literary Agents Association, the Australian Society of Authors, the Victorian Writers Centre, the *Australian Book Review*, the *Weekly Book Newsletter*, the Australian Writers Guild and the many literary websites and publications who all have generously provided enthusiastic support.

The Trust is delighted to welcome Shelmerdine Vineyards of Heathcote and the Yarra Valley as our Wine Partner this year. Their generous support of gifts of wine for our finalists and wine for the main awards event at BMW Edge is greatly appreciated.

[Melbourne Prize Trust](#)
[Melbourne, Australia](#)

