

# New England WRITERS CENTRE

For people who love writing and reading

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**Newsletter**  
**July -August 2009**

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## DOUBLE CELEBRATION



*Congratulations to member, Helena Pastor on two big wins for her writing this year. See Workspace, page 5 for details.*

## NEW EVENTS

### Writing novels for children & teens

- with **Sophie Masson**

Writing for young people can be one of the most rewarding, viable and interesting literary careers of all. There's a constantly replenishing supply of readers, publishers are looking out constantly for new books and new authors, and the field is very wide and diverse--all genres,

all ages. Perhaps you've got a burning ambition to write a novel for young people, but you're not sure how to start. Or you're not sure if you know what young people like to read today. Or you have something that sounds like it might be a good idea, but you're not sure where to go with it. Or you simply would like to toss around a few ideas, pick up a few tips and ask a few questions.

Sophie's workshop is a great place to get started. Sophie has published more than 30 novels, many for children and young adults.

DATE: Saturday, November 7.

TIME: 10am to 4pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$65/\$55 members

Must be booked in advance.

## Workshops for youth & children

As part of our Youth Online project this year, performance poet **Miles Merrill** will take a workshop at Armidale High School on August 13, and **Susan McMichael** will take a workshop for children at NEWC, Saturday October 3, 2-5pm. More details of Susan's workshop on website soon.



*Performance poet, Miles Merrill coming to Armidale in August to host the SLAM09 poetry competition at Armidale Library, at noon, Saturday, August 15, and take workshops at schools. For details about the poetry competition contact the Library.*

**\* More events page 2.**

## WORKSHOPS/EVENTS

### TALKING POETRY - Julian Croft & Yve Louis

In celebration of **Poetry Week**, New England Writers' Centre and Armidale Dumaresq Library are putting on this free public event at the library.

Poets **Julian Croft & Yve Louis** will discuss their work, issues in poetry, and how they worked together in a mentorship program when Julian was Yve's mentor.

They will read a poem of their own, a favourite poem by another writer, and there will be time for questions.

DATE: Friday 4 September, 4pm to 5.30pm

VENUE: Armidale Dumaresq Library

COST: Free entry

### WRITING GYM

This one-day workshop with novelist **Wendy James** is a great way for writers at all stages of development and in any genre to exercise their imagination. Don't sit around waiting for inspiration to come to you, come to the writing gym and learn how to make creative ideas happen.

DATE: Saturday 26 September, 10am to 4pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$50 non-members / \$45 members

### POLISHING FOR PUBLICATION

This one-day workshop with **Wendy James** will help you to get your work polished and edited, ready for publication. If your work is still at an early stage, you can learn now what you will need to do to polish the final draft.

DATE: Saturday 24 October, 10am to 4pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$60 non-members / \$55 members.

### ONE-DAY WORKSHOP WITH LITERARY AGENT PIPPA MASSON

What do agents do? How do you approach them? What are they looking for? These days it's nearly as hard to get the attention of an agent as of a publisher.

Pippa will answer questions, give examples of what they reject and accept, how she works with clients, and will show participants how to write the synopsis necessary to approach agents and publishers – whether for a real manuscript or a hypothetical case, participants will write a synopsis and get feedback from Pippa.

*\*PIPPA MASSON is an agent at Curtis Brown and has worked there for some eight years. She represents a wide variety of authors in many genres: from commercial to literary, adult fiction and non-fiction, children's picture books and novels and illustrated gift books. Her clients include Nick Earls, Scot Gardner, James Phelan, Matt Nable, Freya Blackwood and Libby Gleeson as well as countless others! Curtis Brown is Australia's biggest and oldest literary agency.*

DATE: Saturday October 31, 10am to 4pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$80 non-members / \$65 members

- More events will be announced end of August.



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## TALKING POETRY

**Yve Louis and Julian Croft**  
**September 4, Armidale City Library**

Yve Louis has written and published poetry since the early 1980s. Coming from a background in theatre and media she served a long apprenticeship with language working as an actor; playwright and director; scriptwriter and copywriter.

Her work has been published in leading Australian journals as well as others in the US. Her collections (from 1999 to 2009) include *Lilith's Mirror*, *Voyagers*; *The Yellow Dress* and *Notown*. She also edited *New England Review* (1996 - 98) and *Skylines: New Writing from New England* (1999). Believing that poetry is vital to a community's arts heritage she was the driving force in co-founding Poetzinc (with poets Val Chubb and Gregory Shortis) in 2000. Taking that belief into print, she is currently the *Matilda Poets* series editor for Blue Tongue Press, Armidale. Both of these ventures encourage and support poets to write, perform and publish original work that might otherwise go unrecorded – leaving no trace in the shared making of a 21<sup>st</sup> century New England cultural identity.

*We asked Yve to give us some details on how a mentorship works:*

*When were you awarded your mentorship?*

It was in the 1999-2000 round of the program offered by the Australian Society of Authors in conjunction with the Australia Council.

*What is a mentorship?*

It offers the chance for an emerging poet (or writer) to complete a full-length manuscript, working with an established poet as mentor.

*How does it work?*

There are some set guidelines, but basically, each mentor/mentee team will find individual ways to work together to make the most of the 20 hours of mentoring provided for. Many work by email but I was fortunate in working face-to-face with Julian Croft, a poet of international standing whom I'd long admired, and who lives in Armidale.

*How is the mentor/mentee team decided?*

By individual preference on part of the mentee and by individual acceptance on part of the prospective mentor. It's all very open, but focused at the same time. Good outcomes are generally achieved, and it certainly was so in my case.

*Could you expand on that point a little?*

Yes, and I think this is worth mentioning. Although subsequent publication of the completed manuscript is not considered under the terms of the mentorship program, it certainly helps to raise a publisher's interest. My outcome was the publication of *Voyagers* by Five Islands Press in 2002

- Pam Summers

## NEWS & INFORMATION

**Armidale International Film Festival: July 31 – August 2**, 13 award-winning films from Europe, Americas, Asia and the Middle East. Festival tickets available at the Belgrave Twin Cinema. Contact: Caroline Downer 0428 305 962.

## VISIT BY ANTON ENUS



SBS newsreader, journalist and author, Anton Enus is to visit Armidale on Thursday, September 3. He will be at the University Arts Theatre 1, 5.30 for 5.40 pm.

On September 4 he will be holding a workshop at the university in the morning - open to the public - with all the students from the English Dept.

The visit has been organised jointly by Friends of the ABC, UNE and TAFE and is a fund raiser for the Friends of ABC

**Poetry Slam** – Saturday, August 15, hosted by Miles Merrill. The local heat of this nationwide event will be held at the Armidale Dumaresq Library at noon. There is an open invitation to poets to perform their own compositions. The audience acts as judges. Heat winners will compete in the

State final at the State Library of NSW on November 13. NSW's top two slam poets will compete against state and territory winners at the Sydney Opera House on December 3. Cash prizes of over \$20,000 are on offer and the opportunity to perform at the Ubud Writers & Readers Festival next year.

**Poetzinc** will be celebrating National Poetry Week with a presentation in the Armidale Dumaresq Library.

**Read-in** at the library. On September 30, at 10.30 am, the Friends of the Library are presenting a reading of Patrick White's *Happy Valley*. Julian Croft will speak at 11.00 am about the dimensions of White's work on this significant date which marks his death in 1990. The Library holds a rare first edition of *Happy Valley*, published in February 1939.

In addition to this event, an exhibition of treasured older books will be on display, demonstrating a long history of readership dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Literary Institute and School of Arts forebears.

**Richard Harland**, multi-award-winning Australian fantasy author, has just completed a labour of love—a 145-page website of tips for fantasy, speculative fiction and genre writers. It's at [www.writingtips.com.au](http://www.writingtips.com.au), as big as a small book and totally FREE. Richard says he took four months off from his own fiction writing—"it started out as a small service to the writing community and just kept growing and growing!"

The tips range across all levels from basic to advanced. There's (i) *Good Writing Habits*, getting feedback and revising; (ii) *Action, Setting, Dialogue* and presenting *Inner Thought*; (iii) creating *Characters* and character's point of view; (iv) *Story* from beginning to climax, narrative momentum and pacing; (v) *Language*, style, first-person narration, names and titles; and, last but not least, (vi) *Getting Published* – how the publishing system works, how to break into it and what happens afterwards. Check it all out at [www.writingtips.com.au](http://www.writingtips.com.au).

**Have you** self-published a book? As a self-published author you are required, under the Copyright Act 1968, to make a Legal Deposit of your published book to the National Library of Australia and the appropriate State Library. Unless you have arranged with your publishing service provider that they will do it on your behalf, it is your responsibility.

A legal deposit ensures that works are preserved for use by future generations and also that they receive wide exposure.

Go to the website of the National Library: <http://www.nla.gov.au/services/ldeposit.html> for more information or write to: National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT 2600 or (02) 6262 1111.

**The Australian Writers' Guild** is offering an enhanced script assessment service. It is described as: 'A best practice script assessment service designed to give constructive and balanced evaluation of draft scripts.' This not-for-profit service provides choices to suit your experience level and the stage of the script's development. This includes two tiers of assessment and a range of reporting and consultation options. For further information, Script Assessment forms and Assessor biographies go to [www.awg.com.au](http://www.awg.com.au) or (02) 9319 0339.

**The Australian Society of Authors (ASA)** describe themselves as 'The professional association for Australia's literary creators'. As a member you can: list your upcoming book launch; download all of the ASA's papers and contracts free; list your website/blog/Facebook page; download back copies of the newsletter (as far back as 2006; list your new book.

The ASA website has all the latest ASA campaigns, upcoming seminars, new books by members, plus a monthly calendar of events, awards, competitions, fellowships and residencies. Go to: [www.asauthors.org](http://www.asauthors.org)

The following is an article which appeared in the January 2009 issue of the Australian Society of Authors' newsletter:

## **DIGITAL MOVES BY PENGUIN, RANDOM HOUSE**

Penguin Group USA announced a new digital publishing venture called *Penguin 2.0*. The venture consists of two programs. These can be accessed at [www.penguin.com/whatsnext](http://www.penguin.com/whatsnext).

*Penguin Personalized* will allow buyers to add a custom dedication to certain Penguin books. These books will be printed on demand and shipped. *Penguin Mobile*, an iPhone application, available free from the Apple App store. The application makes the blog, book previews, podcasts, news and Penguin specific book available on the iPhone. The Penguin Mobile application offers the Penguin 2.0 site's enhanced content, not access to Penguin e-books. Some Penguin e-books are already available to iPhone users through eReader.

Random House has announced a partnership with Stanza, an iPhone e-book reader. The move follows recent announcements from Pan Macmillan and other companies. E-books written by several Random House authors are available free through

Stanza. The first books available come from these authors' backlists and will include previews of upcoming 2009 titles by each. The move works on the premise that greater availability of free content will drive sales of new books.

## **WORKSHOP FEEDBACK**

### **Write to Live – freelance journalism**

I attended Lesley Sly's course on freelance journalism on June 6 and I would like to give some feedback on the day's event. Lesley presented a lively, interesting discourse on freelance journalism – how to start writing, how to make our work attractive to buyers, etc. Her vast experience in the field of journalism left no doubt in my mind that I was being given valuable tips and insights from a successful journalist. Many thanks, Lesley. The day with you has made it easier for me to choose a path in my life.

**- Dr Mahri Koch**

When it comes to journalism, Lesley Sly has certainly 'been there and done that'. As a trainer, her depth of experience and easy presentation style were a great help.

**- Peter King**

### **Voice Skills for Writers**

What a treat! Judith and Chris Ross-Smith promised they would teach us the reading skills necessary to 'perform' our writing to our book-buying audience. They did just that. Initially with some nervousness we read excerpts from our writing and then with growing confidence and ability we proceeded through an engaging series of tasks to end the workshop with much more confidence, knowledge and the skills needed to captivate our audience.

Developing and practicing these skills was always preceded by both clear explanation and demonstration and then followed by an encouraging balance of individual praise and helpful suggestions. I had never really considered those technical aspects of successful reading such as pacing, pausing, appropriate parentheses, book position, volume variation etc. Learning about these was the highlight of the workshop for me. However, the breathing and articulation explanations and exercises were a close second. I'll never forget the fun of trying, through controlled breathing, to keep a tissue on the wall. Clearly I need more practice!

Thank you so much, Judith and Chris. I learnt heaps! Your knowledge and demonstrations were inspiring. I do promise to keep practicing and assure you all your thorough preparation and excellent teaching will not be in vain.

**- Robin Jones**

## **WORKSPACE**

### **Helena Pastor**

Armidale writer, Helena Pastor, has had a great year. She has won a NSW Varuna Residency to work on a manuscript about a youth work project based in Armidale, and she has won an ASA mentorship, to work on a memoir she wrote as part of a Master of Philosophy (Creative Writing) at University of Queensland.

"It's nice to have some wins for a change!" said Helena

Helena was among 20 writers to be offered mentorships. The program's judges, Delia Falconer, Kate Forsyth, Libby Gleeson, Martin Langford, Craig Smith and ASA executive director Dr Jeremy Fisher were impressed with the overall quality as well as the quantity of the entries.

Speaking on behalf of the judges, Dr Fisher said: "With such an expert selection panel, it should be an easy process to select the best entries, but it was arduous because so much of what was offered was so good. In the end, though, this meant all the pieces fell together and we found we had selected an eclectic and refreshing mix."

Selected from 268 entries, the 20 successful applicants will have the opportunity to work closely with a mentor of their choice for 30 hours over up to 12 months. At the completion of the mentorship, a number of participants will be invited to read their work, appear 'in conversation with' or participate in panel discussions at state and/or regional writers' festivals.

We love to share in members' successes so if you have achieved something, let us know.

### **Review of *Dreams from my Father* by Barack Obama (Text Publishing) (442pg)**

In response to our invitation for contributions to the newsletter, member Russell King has sent us the following:

‘Where once I’d felt the need to live up to his expectations, I now felt as if I had to make up for all his mistakes’ So says Barack Obama of his father in the sentence which is at the core of this fascinating memoir.

Written 15 years ago when the unknown Barack Obama was the first black President of the Harvard Law Society the book sold modestly.

Unsurprisingly now back in print it is a bestseller.

Most politicians write their memoirs after, rather than before the event justifying and glorifying their actions. Or they write political tracts full of self promotion. This is neither of those sorts of book.

Instead we enter the mind and inner thoughts of the 33-year-old Obama as he tries, at times painfully, to grapple with his own identity and purpose.

Obama’s autobiographical details are as unusual as they are intriguing and offer some sort of explanation as to the man he was later to become.

Born in Hawaii to a black Kenyan academic and white university student who hailed from Kansas he spent his primary school years in Jakarta before returning to Hawaii to live with his maternal grandparents and attend a private high school. The only memories he retains of his father are from aged 10 when “the old man”, as Obama calls him, returns from Kenya for a brief, tense family Christmas in Hawaii. When the Old man, now in his third marriage and with numerous children, is killed aged 45 in a Kenyan car accident Obama is robbed of the opportunity to establish a relationship.

Obama writes lucidly with wonderful turns of phrase and if his chosen profession fails to work out he has another readymade as a writer. We sense his confusion and resentment at school where he is known as Barry, kids run their hands through his tight curls, give him high fives and treat him like a cool street rapper. He hangs out with his white grandfather in black bars and at card games and tries to grasp his grandmother’s fear of being robbed by a black man at the bus stop. We follow his progress as a student where he lives in a flat eating soup from a can and even sleeping rough in New York when he is locked out of his apartment. A growing desire to try and understand the place of the black man in America takes him to Chicago and there are some moving insights into his work as a Community Organiser; surely the most thankless of tasks. We read of his efforts to motivate communities where on cold week night evenings he speaks in church halls at woefully attended meetings. He tries to understand the paradox that as many of the black people in this most divided of cities become successful their communities break down; they retreat to soulless suburbs and lock their doors. The final section of the book is cathartic as

he visits Kenya and meets his large extended family: “My name belonged and so I belonged, drawn into a web of relationships, alliances and grudges that I did not yet understand”.

Some strong characters emerge from the pages:

His rather sad maternal grandfather, Gramps, so full of dreams and aspirations but who finishes as a ineffectual insurance salesman. His streetwise assistant in Chicago, Johnnie, who was as happy discussing “...jazz, black women’s backsides or Federal Reserve Bank policy...”. His wonderful Kenyan half sister Auma, who because of intelligence and verve finds herself supporting the extended Kenyan family. And inevitably his father who transforms from debonair, wealthy, bright high level public servant to womanising, drinking, feckless failure and then back to somewhere in between over the course of the narrative.

Criticisms of such a brave book seem harsh. His mother appears briefly and is not well drawn yet we know she was his most powerful influence. The subject matter is by nature introspective and though never self indulgent or pitying may have benefited from more wit. Some sections are overly long.

What else can “Dreams from my Father” tell us about the 44th President of the United States? His intelligence and eloquence go without saying but here is a man who is also self critical, analytical, sensitive and contemplative. He will need a full hand of all these talents as he embarks on his greatest challenge to date.

One senses however that he no longer feels the need to either live up or make up for the dreams of his father.

- **Russell King**

## COMPETITIONS

**August 28:** The John Marsden prize for young Australian writers: a short story, poem or first chapter of a novel could win up to \$4500 in prize money plus publication in the December issue of *Voiceworks* magazine. Go to [www.expressmedia.org.au](http://www.expressmedia.org.au)

**August 30:** Write a book in a day is a writing challenge that raises funds for Children’s Hospitals Australia. The challenge is for teams of 5 – 10 people to plan, write, edit, illustrate, bind and submit a children’s book in 12 hours. Each team (any age, writing or graphic skill) must obtain sponsorship (minimum \$300) to enter. Contact: the Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers Centre, [kspf@iinet.au](mailto:kspf@iinet.au)

**August 31:** 200 Seconds short film competition for students in Australian secondary schools, tertiary multi-media courses and the general public. This film competition gives you 200 seconds to tell a narrative tale featuring a parcel. The two winning films will be screened at the 2009 AFI Industry Awards. Go to: <https://200years.auspost.com.au>

**August 31:** Scarlet Stiletto Awards; prizes: Harper Collins \$750, Kill City \$400, Readings \$300, Allen & Unwin \$400, The Olvar Wood Late Starters Award \$650, The Kerry Greenwood Malic Domestic Award \$500, The Cate Kennedy Award for best new talent \$350, The Dorothy Porter Award for Innovation \$300, Benn's Books Best Investigative Award \$200, Scriptworks Great Film Idea Award \$200, Pulp Fiction Funniest Crime Award \$150 (voucher) . Contact: Carmel Shute, 0412 569 356 or Scarlet Stiletto Awards, PO Box 121, Bittern, Vic 3918 or go to [www.vicnet.au/sincoz/](http://www.vicnet.au/sincoz/)

## **PUBLISHING/FELLOWSHIPS/ OPPORTUNITIES**

Pantera Press is seeking books by previously unpublished Australian authors that have strong mass appeal, whether fiction or non-fiction. Currently not accepting picture books, illustrated books, photography, poetry, play scripts or self-help books. Do not submit work being considered elsewhere. Go to: <http://www.panterapress.com/> Poetry Idol 2009 – heats to be held throughout Victoria until August. Total prize money \$4000 and possible book publication. Go to [www.para-diseanthology.com](http://www.para-diseanthology.com)

World of Women (WOW) Film Festival is a short film festival that promotes and awards the talents of women directors, producers, writers, editors and cinematographers in the Australian film industry and in Oceania. Entries should be up to 55 minutes long and from any genre, 'presenting the world through the eyes of women.' The film must either have a woman director, or, if it is directed by a man, must have women in two of the following roles: producer or writer or editor or cinematographer. Go to [www.nsw.wift.org/wow](http://www.nsw.wift.org/wow) or [wowfilmfestival@wiftnsw.org.au](mailto:wowfilmfestival@wiftnsw.org.au)

**Closing: July 30**

A Month in the Country: National Performing Arts Residency is funded through the Albury City, Arts NSW, Arts Victoria, the Australia Council, Myer Foundation and operated by Hot House Theatre, A Month In The Country is a national arts resource to facilitate the creation of new Australian performing

arts work. This initiative involves an on-going residential program that brings creative teams of writers, actors, directors, designers and other performing artists from across the country to Albury Wodonga during the creative development stage of a myriad of different projects. Groups of artists from around the country will be supported to live and work in a large farmhouse and studio just outside Albury for periods of 1 - 5 weeks. Financial support for transport and living allowances available. Go to [www.hothousetheatre.com.au](http://www.hothousetheatre.com.au)

**Closing: August 15**

DigiSPAA, a creative project of the Screen Producers Association of Australia [SPAA], is offering an opportunity for low budget filmmakers to enter and have the chance to win \$15,000 cash and \$20,000 worth of post-production, a guaranteed screening of their film on the Movie Extra channel, as well as a return airfare and free registration to the CineMart International Film Festival, Rotterdam. Go to: <http://www.spaa.org.au>

**Closing: September 19**

Arts Residencies in Asia 2010, Literature, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Arts Management. Contact: Rosemary Hinde, Performing Arts Manager (in office Monday – Wednesday), The Asialink Centre, Level 4, Sidney Myer Asia Centre, (Cnr Swanston St & Monash Rd), The University of Melbourne, Vic. 3010 or (03) 8344 3578 or go to [www.asialink.unimelb.deu.au](http://www.asialink.unimelb.deu.au)

**Closing: September 4**

*Lip* invites submissions of articles, poetry, short stories and reviews from young writers 14 - 26. Go to: [www.lipmag.com](http://www.lipmag.com) or [editor@lipmag.com](mailto:editor@lipmag.com) for details.

## **CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS FESTIVALS**

The Byron Bay Writers' Festival, August 7-9, with workshops running from August 3. Go to: [www.byronbaywritersfestival.com](http://www.byronbaywritersfestival.com)

October 16 – 21, Writing, yoga and improvisation in Byron Bay. Go to [www.sarah-armstrong.com](http://www.sarah-armstrong.com) Book Creators Circle is described as 'An international website for writers and book industry people who share their passion for books'. They are holding a Marketplace Day on July 27 at the Mercure Inn, Cairns. Contributors can sell books, network and create links. Contact: [admin@bookcreatorscircle.com.au](mailto:admin@bookcreatorscircle.com.au)