

New England WRITERS CENTRE

For people who love writing and reading

Newsletter
September- October 2010

 national science week 2010



The Poetry of Science: Science Made Marvellous

What is the science of poetry? Is there poetry in Science?

How is science marvellous? One might ask is the world marvellous? What is the best way to celebrate the marvellous? Since people had words to talk with, songs and poems have brought the world into sharper focus, amplified emotions and celebrated the extraordinary. This year a national poetry project has gathered together a set of science poems to celebrate National Science Week.

The project, Science Made Marvellous, is collecting poems that take up science, scientists, curiously investigating the facts, themes and language of science. A national call-out has drawn science poems from both scientists and writers with some 400 of poems submitted from all corners and all backgrounds.

It seems there is poetry in science: Far from being uninterested in science, this call out has seen writers take up tools to consider the Hadron Collider, astronomy, Euclid, the biosynthesis of 3-nitropropanoic acid, fossil fish, what we're made from, the nature of time and dark matter. And far from Keats's worry that science was unpicking the rainbow, its accelerated progress continues to bring new materials for writers and poets, taking the poetry beyond the inner emotional life, the purely domestic themes. As the late great Czech poet and immunologist Miroslav Holub puts it, "escape from the narrow limits of spectrum of metaphors that used menagerie, roses, cabbage, and, at best, garlic,

into the extended reality 'from pulsars to leptons, from prokaryotic organisms to our lymphocytes and 'interferons'.

Science Made Marvellous, a project funded by National Science Week will produce three booklets of science poems and an audio program to be launched in National Science Week 2010.

Chapbooks will be available free at the launch events, and also be available as a PDF download. A selection of poems and commentary broadcast as audio will be downloadable from writers' centres, The Poets Union, the Australian Poetry Centre, and will be broadcast on local radio.

Science Made Marvellous, is a project funded by National Science Week, in a partnership between The Poets Union -as a representative body for the literary community in collaboration with the Australian Poetry Centre, Australian poets contributing work, State and regional writers' organisations, readers and listeners, school and scientific communities. The work presented will showcase diverse fields of science and mathematics, showing how science's modern explorations and concerns are integral to how we operate in the world and provide a vivacious and natural subject for poetry.

New England Writers Centre will launch the chapbooks in Armidale to celebrate National Science Week, on August 21 at Armidale Dumaresq Library.

NEWC in conjunction with Science Made Marvellous and The Poets Union presents: *The Poetry of Science: Science Made Marvellous*. Poems on and about science by New England and other poets

When: Saturday, August, 21, 10.30-11.30

Where: Armidale-Dumaresq Council Library, Faulkner Street Armidale

Entry: Free

Curated by Michael Sharkey for the New England Writers Centre and the Armidale-Dumaresq Council

Program

Opening of the event by City Librarian, Ian Grenhalgh

Why Science Week matters (a brief account by Dr Tom van der Touw, School of Science and Technology, University of New England)

Poets and science: a very brief account Michael Sharkey).

Readings by New England poets

Contact: Sue McMichael at the NEWC 6772 7210 or newc44@dodo.com.au

Everyone welcome.

WORKSHOPS

For the Writers Reading program, see page 4. For the Youth Online program, see the website.

NOTE: Date of The Exercise Pen workshop has changed from August 14 to August 7.

The Exercise Pen

– creative writing with **Wendy James**, Saturday August 7. 10am to 4pm.
\$60/\$50.

A one-day workshop to stretch the imagination, learn techniques, and a lot more to help you to take a leap with your writing instead of reinventing wheels. Wendy will put you through your paces with challenging (and fun!) exercises that are guaranteed to help your writing 'break out'. Suitable for all offenders.

* Wendy James's latest novel, *Where Have You Been?*, a domestic thriller set in Sydney's northern beaches, was published by UWAP in February 2010. Her first novel, *Out of the Silence* (Random House, 2005), won the 2006 Ned Kelly Award for first crime novel, and was shortlisted for the Nita May Dobbie Award for women's writing. Her second novel, *The Steele Diaries*, was published by Vintage in 2008. A collection of short stories, *Why She Loves Him*, was published by UWAP in 2009.

Day In the Life of a Writer

– the reality of being published, a talk by **Jeremy Fisher** at Armidale Library, Friday, August 20, 4pm, pay at the door, \$5.

Jeremy worked as an editor and publishing manager for nearly 30 years before moving into rights management and advocacy roles. He was president of the Society of Editors (NSW) in 1996 and a member of the Board of the Australian Publishers' Association from 1998-2000. In 1984 he was awarded the inaugural Gold Medal of the Australian Society of Indexers (AusSI) for his indexing of "The Australian Encyclopedia", 4th edition. As a writer, Jeremy was first published in 1974. His writing encompasses fiction, poetry, prose, reviews and critical articles. He has been published in India and Vietnam.

In 2004, Fisher was appointed executive director of the Australian Society of Authors. In 2009 he took up the position of Senior Lecturer in Writing at UNE. His most recent book is *Music from another Country*, a novel about the humility of survival.

Creative Journal

- a workshop with **Karla Muir**,
September 4, 9.30am to 4pm, \$60/\$50.

This is a writers' workshop with a difference. Karla explains: Usually, the main purpose of writing is the *product* — here, it is the *process* which is at the centre of our attention. You can certainly use the techniques specifically to further your writing career, but the applications are potentially much broader than that. You can employ them for:

- problem solving
- to get in touch with your intuition
- to strengthen your creativity
- to get a healthier perspective on old issues, and
- in general, to get a more positive outlook on life.

They can also help to uncover layers of your subconscious mind. I have chosen six processes that were particularly helpful to participants of previous workshops. In nearly 40 years of journalling, I have learnt, adapted and developed the techniques I'm going to share with you. Self-help books, my studies of linguistics and psychology and my NLP training have provided many ideas and inspirations. Journalling is a great tool, and anyone can do it – you don't need any literary talents for it.

Final Draft

- with **Wendy James**,
Saturday, November 20, 10-4. \$65/\$55.

A workshop for refining your work, the last stage that can make or break your chances of getting an agent and/or publisher and, of course, an audience. Wendy will guide you on the long and sometimes arduous journey that begins with redrafting and ends in publication. Bring a piece to work on and be prepared to workshop and polish until you've got that elusive final draft. This workshop is not just for writers at an advanced stage, but also for writers who want to know what work they'll need to do when they get to a more advanced stage.

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Extract from *The Girls in My Head*

At College, the Girls kept on with Physics, Chemistry. I picked something different- learnt biology: the classification system; I learnt to classify insects. I captured grasshoppers, splashed them with formalin and was horrified when the grasshopper, caught, threw off its leg.

"I'll fail, I'll fail", I sobbed to my mother as we examined the legless orthopterous.

Nonsense! She exclaimed and picked up the leg with her nail tweezers.

"Get another pin. Is it its left or right leg?"

She used two of her ivory-headed pins to pin its left leg next to the body.

"Be careful to keep it flat before you get to class."

I keep everything, grasshoppers, books, feelings and afternoons with friends, flat in the typewriter case with the stiff brown locks. It's a much simpler classification system.

Mum's two sewing pins with ivory heads, secured the leg on the page, until 1999 when I recycled the assignment.

- Susan McMichael

WORK SPACE

Janene Carey again

Last time we profiled Janene Carey and congratulated her on being short-listed for the *Calibre Prize*. Don't miss her essay *Retreat to the Castle*, featured in the June issue of *Australian Book Review*.

The Varuna Experience

In December Susan McMichael, our Office Manager at NEWC told us that she had been awarded a Publisher Fellowship. This consisted of a week at Varuna, the writers' retreat in the Blue Mountains, and here she shares her experience with us:

I spent a week at Varuna, woken up by the sun in the maid's room and enjoying the spaciousness of Eleanor's studio. It has her typewriter, her son's encyclopedias and the tea caddies where she held biscuits, and the tea pot. The desk still has the marks from her cigarettes. The window lets in sun all morning.

I worked on the structure of my novel and changed several sections. There were five of us at the house; a poet, science fiction writer; someone writing their autobiography and a fiction writer. It was a fabulous week: the food that Sheila cooked was marvellous; I had time to organise the novel, and the space and people were fantastic.

Susan McMichael will be launching her first book, *Green Hair*, the fourth in the Matilda Poets' Series at Trax Restaurant on Sunday, September 19 at 200 pm. It will be launched by NEWC chairman, Michael Sharkey.

A book of poems and micro stories, full of colour and questions. Come to the launch, to find out the answers to what matches green hair, how to feed the cat and how best to fill in forms.

All welcome.

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

Write for Profit

I would like to thank Lesley Sly for the workshop on *Write for Profit*, we are very lucky here to have such people to share their vast knowledge and experience in journalism. The day was most enjoyable and I learnt more of the art, even how to make mistakes.

- Richard Belfield

After an intensive six hour workshop with journalist, Lesley Sly, I am completely energised and excited about writing better pieces of writing. I now feel I have the tools to get started in writing for profit...and enjoyment!

- Isabelle Devos

Come to your Senses

The day's workshop with Linda Jaivin was marvelous. She is so engaged and so accessible and

so knowledgeable. And, above all, so perspicacious and such fun. Can't get much better than that.

- **Susie Dunn**

Thank you for organising the Come To Your Senses workshop with Linda Jaivin. Linda is a clear and engaging teacher who explains in a very open and descriptive manner. She encourages active participation by everyone in the class. I found her explanations and exercises very helpful for construction and development and by the end of the day not only had more insight into writing technique but also a heightened attitude to listening and reading.

- **Steve Gapes**

Writers Reading – Session 1

I found the session with Jane O'Sullivan on the book *The Child in Time* by Ian McEwan stimulating and revealing. It was only through Jane's discussion with us all that the underlying complexities of the novel became clear to me. Without the session I would have dismissed the book as one I didn't like and could not recommend. Jane's class changed my opinion entirely.

- **Helen Evans**

Retool & Remix

David Reiter's Retool & Remix workshop was excellent. In just one day he gave a broad overview of the digital publishing industry, as well as a lot of detail about processes, technology, different formats for publishing and how to market and promote work online. David has been researching and developing his e-publishing business for years, and we were able to benefit from that in a very succinct way.

- **Lesley Sly**

WRITERS READING

These two-hour Saturday afternoon workshops are about reading – analysing great writing in order to improve your own. The tutors have selected favourite examples of great writing and will bring copies of these extracts for participants.

Thanks to the tutors donating their time, we are able to offer these five exciting workshops at a very low price. Must be booked (phone 6772 7210). The workshops will be held at NEWC and cost \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members per session.

Session 2: DR ANNE PENDER

The books for this session will be: *Arthur Boyd* by **Darleen Bungey**, some passages from **Hermione Lee's** biography *Virginia Woolf*, and **David Marr's** *Patrick White: A Life*. Anne is Senior Lecturer in English and Theatre Studies at the University of New England. Before joining the staff at

UNE, Anne lectured in Australian literature at King's College London. Anne has recently completed a biography of Barry Humphries entitled *One Man Show: The Stages of Barry Humphries*. She is also the author of *Christina Stead Satirist* and co-editor of a book of essays about the life and work of the Australian actor, writer and director Nick Enright entitled *Nick Enright: An Actor's Playwright*.
DATE: Saturday August 28, 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

Session 3: MICHAEL SHARKEY. The focus will be poems reflecting everyday occupations. Copies will be provided. Michael is a poet, essayist and reviewer, author of several collections of poetry, most recent of which is *The Sweeping Plain*, published by Five Islands Press.

DATE: Saturday, September 25, 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

Session 4: JEREMY FISHER

The book for this session is *Our Father Who Wasn't There* by **David Carlin**, published by Scribe. Jeremy has worked as editor, publishing manager, executive director of the Australian Society of Authors, and is now Senior Lecturer in Writing at UNE. His writing encompasses fiction, poetry, prose, reviews and critical articles. He has been published in India and Vietnam. His most recent book is *Music from Another Country*, a novel about the humility of survival.

DATE: Saturday October 23, 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

Session 5: ELIZABETH HALE

The book for this session is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll.

DATE: Saturday, November 13. 2pm to 4pm.

Elizabeth has taught at UNE since 2002, she has written scholarly articles on topics in children's literature, Victorian and New Zealand literature, and Australian theatre, with a special interest in the representation of classical texts in contemporary literature. She is currently completing a book on giftedness in children's literature (1837-1914). In 2010, she will be representing UNE at the prestigious Dickens University in California, where she will be talking about "marvellous boys" in *Oliver Twist*.



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We gratefully acknowledge the support of CAL for funding Youth Online this year.

Q & A Jeremy Fisher



Pam Summers asked Jeremy Fisher about his multi-faceted career in the literature industry which has involved writing, publishing advocacy and now senior lecturer in writing at UNE.

What do you consider are the most important changes that have been achieved in the literature industry in the past few years?

There has been one major change that has helped authors with income. That has been the implementation of Educational Lending Right in 2000. Lending rights (Public and Educational) now provide authors in Australia with close to \$20 million in income. This is important for authors since they do not earn a weekly wage, and the sales of books spike as they are published, but the books themselves can take years to write. Payments from lending rights help make working as an author more viable. We are lucky to have them in Australia. Authors in the USA do not have the security of Lending Rights. Only 27 countries in the world offer them, and only Australia offers a dedicated Educational Lending Right. But in other areas the industry is changing significantly due to the impact of digital technology – for instance, we don't have loose-leaf services or printed encyclopaedias any more. They have been replaced by online services. This has an impact on printing, because less material is commercially printed.

The economics of the industry are much more tightly focused these days. That does limit options for new and emerging writers because publishers more and more demand instant success. Most of our more successful authors have become successful after the publication of several books and the slow

development of their reputations. This puts significant pressure on new writers to produce mainstream books.

What are the most important issues still to be dealt with?

The impact of digital technology. This is both an opportunity and a threat. We still have no viable business model for e-books. But will e-books be the way of the future or just a fad? Will some other form of reading entertainment emerge? One thing is clear for writers – there is potential income from digital use of your writing, so don't lightly give away your digital rights. I make several hundred dollars a year now from digital use of my works. The good thing about this is that the income continues to grow and much of it derives from annual licences, so I get paid several times for ongoing use of my work. I have also put my latest novel, *Music from another Country* on Kindle and I will consider other digital avenues for it if they are offered. The digital world I think offers authors a lot more freedom to experiment and challenge tradition. At the same time, more books are being published than ever before. Many of them are being self-published or in print-on-demand editions because digital technology makes this an easier way to go.

Is the novel doomed in print form? How do you see its future?

Well, non-fiction outsells adult fiction in Australia and most other English-speaking countries and has for some time, but publishers continue to invest in novelists. I don't think the novel is doomed, but certain forms of it may wither away. Then we have the problem of the death of reading – younger people, especially younger males, are not reading novels. One of the reasons why we have so many vampires and romance books around is because they appeal particularly to younger female readers.

There's not a lot being aimed at young men because they don't buy or read novels. But they do read comics and graphic novels. And they buy and play electronic games. We'll see more graphic novels will be published and they'll become more mainstream. But this should be seen as part of the slow cycle of publishing. The novel after all hasn't always been regarded as the pinnacle of literature. When Dickens wrote his serials, he wasn't regarded as a 'great artist'. He was writing stories that helped sell the periodicals in which they appeared. It was popular fiction. Somewhere in the 20th century, we forgot that the prime purpose of a novel was to tell a story. We focused on Literature and Art. When you

look at the bestseller lists, what sells is popular fiction – good stories, well told. Entertainment. *Can creative writing be taught?*

You can teach the techniques and methodologies of writing. You can enhance the ability of students to tell stories through such teaching. But this teaching also involves reading and understanding how writers achieve their objectives. You can't teach writing without a significant amount of reading being involved. Notice that I haven't used the word "creative". To me, creation starts happening when writers have mastered their craft. I'm reminded of one of my favourite writers, Gerry Glaskin. His most famous book, *No end to the way*, is a tour de force, an entire novel written in second person and present tense. The second person, notoriously hard to sustain, creates a wonderful sense of collusion between the narrator and the reader. But Glaskin didn't choose it for that. He did it to solve a problem with two main male characters and the continual confusion between "he" and "he" in third person. Technique and craft equals creativity.

Has all that you have done on the business side of writing made it easier or more difficult when you are faced with a blank page as a writer?

Nothing makes it easier to start on a blank page. But I find that I work best when I have a deadline or a commission. Having a clear goal can make writing seem easier. For example, I will set myself a goal of a certain number of words a day or a certain number of pages a week. Doing this forces me to produce. Yes, the work produced may have to be rewritten, and it will definitely need editing, but it's a start.

What are you working on currently?

A detective-type novel featuring two characters I'm very fond of but whom I can't get to resolve the story line, another novel about the slow disintegration of a marriage culminating in murder, a memoir part of which has just been published in an online collection of writing and another part of which will appear in the US early next year, and a "meditation" on pastoral life partly inspired by my time so far in Armidale. And a lot of research work – a piece of that relating to the Australian publishing industry will appear in *Meanjin* in September and another will form the basis of a paper on Gerry Glaskin I'm giving in Melbourne in November.

**Jeremy Fisher will be on the selectors' panel for the Asialink Writing Residency details of which are on page 7.*

NEWS AND INFORMATION

A Decent Proposal, by Rhonda Whitton and Sheila Hollingworth (Common Ground Publishing 2001 & 2008) is a book which introduces writers to the techniques required to develop a convincing book proposal package. It also contains models for both fiction and non-fiction book proposals and claims to show you how to bypass the slush pile to become part of the publisher's catalogue. This book is only available online, price \$10, from www.rhonda-whitton.com.au

The following is an email received from the Australian Writers' Guild:

In a watershed decision, the wealth of talent and expertise among Australian television series writers has been acknowledged, with prime time television series credits now considered eligible experience when applying for feature film funding. This is a huge win for writers, and the AWG congratulates Screen Australia for this recognition of the role Australian television plays in our industry, and its continued success in reaching Australian audiences.

The threshold for feature film, telemovie and mini-series eligibility has also been reduced from three writing credits to two, recognising what a career achievement these credits are in such a small marketplace, and narrowing the previous disparity in defining experienced producers (1 credit) and writers (3 credits).

These changes to the guidelines dramatically increase the number of talented Australian writers eligible to access script development funding without a producer already attached, providing experienced writers the opportunity to develop their script before taking it to the marketplace and choosing a suitable producer.

Rewarding talent and experience with opportunity is a principle the AWG fights hard to achieve for writers, and today's announcement marks an important milestone in that endeavour.

COMPETITIONS

Inspiration

Apparently the prolific English fiction writer Agatha Christie found inspiration doing the dishes. Throw out the dishwasher, not only will you shrink your carbon footprint and save money on electricity you will be inspired!

August 26: Short Film, no more than 2-mins in length, any genre goes, films to be uploaded to Vimeo. Supported by *Filmink*, film magazine. Prize \$100 cash and place in final. Grand final: \$2,000 cash for 1st place; \$750 for 2nd; \$250 for 3rd; and \$1,000 for overall popular vote winner. Grand final winners to also each receive *Screen Hub* memberships. More information go to: www.playnowactnow.com.au

August 27: The Australian Writers' Guild and the 2011 BigPond Adelaide Film Festival fifth biennial INSITE Unproduced Screenplay Competition. Winning screenplay will receive a rehearsed public reading during the 2011 BigPond Adelaide Film Festival, which takes place from February 24 to March 6. The winning writer will receive travel to Adelaide to participate in rehearsals as well as a cash prize of \$2,500. Entry forms www.awg.com.au or go to: www.adelaidefilmfestival.org

August 31: Wet Ink short story competition, 1st prize \$3,000, publication in the March 2011 issue of *Wet Ink*, and a year's subscription to the magazine. Two highly commended entries will each receive \$100, publication in the March 2011 issue of *Wet Ink*, and a year's subscription to the magazine. No set theme, entry form available from www.wetink.com.au or Dr Dominique Wilson, managing editor, editor@wetink.com.au

November 30: The New Writer magazine prose and poetry competition. Guidelines: www.thenewwriter.com/prizes.htm

A Real Turn Off

Cate Kennedy, author of *The World Beneath*, judged last year's Australian Vogel Literary Award. When asked what turned her off a manuscript she said: "Showing off with preening stylistic flourishes is usually a big turn off – a sense that the author has laboured to be impressive at the expense of all else."

PUBLISHING/FELLOWSHIPS/ OPPORTUNITIES

Writing Residencies Asia 2011: spend three to four months in Asia on an Asialink Writing Residency. Choose a country that fascinates you, choose one of Asia's most dynamic writing organisations as your host, and immerse yourself in local creative culture. For information go to www.asilink.unimelb.edu.au/artsresidencies **Closing: September 10**

Varuna Fellowships for Writing Retreats – committed writers engaged on a major project are encouraged to apply. Fellowships are offered in all genres of

imaginative writing or illustrating, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, genre writing, writing and/or illustrating children's books, dramatic/screen writing, translation, essays or short stories. Go to: <http://bit.ly/df4IaC> **Closing: August 31**

Don't Waste the Popcorn! New England Short Film Festival. Categories for entries are: Documentary – Open (all ages); Musical video-clip – Open (all ages); Animation – Open (all ages); *60 seconds GO!* – Open (all ages) – Any topic, any genre, maximum of 60 seconds; comedy (youth and adult); and Drama (Youth and Adult). For further information go to www.gleninnesartscouncil.com

Closing: September 3

The Walkley Book Award is open to all examples of journalistic non-fiction works by Australian writers. Issues covered may be from true crime and biographies through to political analysis, business, war reportage, investigative journalism and foreign correspondence. **Closing: August 31**

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS FESTIVALS

The NSW Writers Centre is running a broad range of workshops in August, including Creativity in Practice, Writing the Fantastical, Writing Graphic Novels, Perfect Crime, Nothing But The Truth. For details go to: www.nswwriterscentre.org.au Or (02) 9555 9757.

Ubud Writers Readers Festival – October 6 – 10
Contact: info@ubudwritersfestival.com or go to www.ubudwritersfestival.com

The Green Screen, sustainable practice in the creative screen industries - Monday, August 30, 4pm, 5pm, 6:30pm and 7:30pm. Metro Screen describes this event as 'a unique opportunity to learn from pioneering Australian leaders in sustainable production practice. Intensive afternoon workshops will lead into lively evening panel discussions about the very real environmental challenges we face.' Each of the four events can be booked separately at \$10 / \$15 or buy our all day pass at \$30 / \$50. Go to <http://metroscreen.org.au/BookingRetrieve>.

Mudgee Readers' Festival, Friday, September 10, 6.30 – 8.30pm, Saturday, 10.00am – 9.30pm and Sunday 10.00am-12.00 pm. Full program and further information readersfestival@visitmudgeeregion.com.au or info@visitmudgeeregion.com.au or (02) 6372 1020 or 1800 816 304.