

2010 PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS – Shortlist and Winner's Comments

CHRISTINA STEAD PRIZE (FICTION)

Shortlist Comments

J.M. Coetzee, *Summertime*

Summertime follows a biographer who embarks on a series of interviews with people who were important to the dead writer called 'John Coetzee', focusing on the years 1972-1977 when he was living with his widowed father in Cape Town. From the testimony of past mistresses comes a portrait of a detached and self-analysing man who felt his displacement in and from South Africa with a fierce and unrequited passion to find a true patrimony.

Built on several levels – the biographer's interviews, the notebook accounts, and the late author's comments on his own notations – *Summertime* is also a contemplation on the nature of fiction, and on the reliability of evidential history.

Cunning in its assurance, *Summertime* is an act of self-dissection enlightened by cool humour. Clever, at times playful, and always unafraid, J.M. Coetzee relies on prose itself to engage the reader in a progressively moving account of the human dilemma.

Richard Flanagan, *Wanting*

Against a dark background of the attempted eradication of Tasmania's aboriginal population, *Wanting* explores the disparate sensibilities of Lady Jane (wife of Sir John Franklin, the island's Governor) and Mathinna, a spirited aboriginal girl she has adopted.

The disappearance of Sir John Franklin, years later, in his search for the North West Passage, and his wife's turning to Charles Dickens for help, add further layers of drama and complexity. The intensity of Richard Flanagan's imagination and the poetry of his language fuse these elements into an engrossing narrative.

Cate Kennedy, *The World Beneath*

Sandy and Rich met as environmentalist activists way back on the Franklin River Dam blockade, but when baby Sophie came along, Rich couldn't face adult responsibilities and left Sandy to bring her up alone. Now Sophie is fifteen, a clever, wired, over-conscientious Goth girl with an unnoticed eating problem and a fierce contempt for her mother. Rich decides this is a good moment to make up for lost time by the two of them undertaking a taxing wilderness walk which pushes them both to their limits.

The World Beneath exposes the immaturity of the hippy parents, with humour and an understanding of the difficulties innate in reaching across generations. The wilderness itself becomes a metaphor for the treacherous terrain we all must traverse. Knowledge, particularly self-knowledge is the only rescue. Within a

narrative which is always compelling, Kennedy explores the tensions between humans and the world in which we live.

Steven Lang, *88 Lines About 44 Women*

When Lawrence Martin and his new wife Gizelle are out sailing beyond Sydney Heads, everything seems perfect – until he goes for a swim. Instead of picking him up she abuses him for his coldness, while he’s frantically treading water. Then the tables turn. Suddenly she’s in the water and he regains the boat, and Gizelle drowns. But is this the true story? Lawrence’s guilt infects his life, and it’s not till he travels to the other end of the earth that he’s able to confront the truth. He meets Sam, and her unflinching honesty brings out the same in him.

Lang evokes the landscape of the heart as powerfully as he does the highlands of Scotland, and his spare prose explores angst as only the Scots know how.

David Malouf, *Ransom*

In this short, exquisite novel Malouf explores a fragment from the Iliad, the story of how King Priam of Troy visits Achilles to beg for the body of his son Hector, whom Achilles has murdered and whose battered corpse he drags behind him daily, vengefully chained to his chariot. Insisting on making his request as a father rather than a king, Priam defies the advice of his wife and court and undertakes his journey in a humble cart pulled by the donkey Beauty. Along the route he encounters the carter’s simple folk wisdom and the protection of the gods’ messenger Hermes.

Employing the prose of a poet, Malouf retells one of the West’s foundation myths, blending it with Christian elements to reach the core of the human tragedy.

Craig Silvey, *Jasper Jones*

Set in 1965, this is the story of a group of pre-pubescent boys dealing with some of the uglier sides of life in a small Western Australian mining town, following the suspicious death of a young girl. In particular this novel examines the remarkably graceful reaction of a family of Vietnamese boat people living the exigencies of race hatred in isolated, small-town Australia.

An evocative and stylish depiction of the confusions felt by young boys trying to reconcile themselves to the adult world around them, Jasper Jones is an insightful and yet somehow optimistic examination of the toll that racism, fear and injustice take on people’s lives.

Winner’s Comment

J.M. Coetzee, *Summertime*

Summertime follows a young English biographer who embarks on a series of interviews with people who were important to the dead writer called ‘John Coetzee’, focusing on the years 1972-1977 when Coetzee, in his thirties, was living with his widowed father in Cape Town. From the testimony of these significant people, including past mistresses, a favourite cousin, and a Brazilian dancer whose daughter studied English with him, comes a portrait of a detached, self-analysing man who felt

his displacement in and from South Africa with a fierce and unrequited passion to find a true patrimony.

Built on several levels – the biographer’s interviews, the notebook accounts, and the late author’s comments on his own notations – *Summertime* is also a contemplation on the nature of fiction, and on the reliability of evidential history.

Cunning in its assurance, *Summertime* is an act of self-dissection enlightened by cool humour. Clever, at times playful, and always unafraid, J.M. Coetzee relies on prose itself to engage the reader in a progressively moving account of the human dilemma.

J.M. Coetzee’s work includes *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life & Times of Michael K*, *Boyhood*, *Youth*, *Disgrace* and *Diary of a Bad Year*. He was the first author to win the Booker Prize twice and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003.

The judging panel is pleased to announce that J.M. Coetzee’s *Summertime* is the winner of the Christina Stead Prize for fiction.

DOUGLAS STEWART PRIZE (NON-FICTION)

Shortlist Comments

Michael Cathcart, *The Water Dreamers: The Remarkable History of Our Dry Continent*

Michael Cathcart's *The Water Dreamers: The Remarkable History of Our Dry Continent* is a fascinating cultural history of our ceaseless quest for water. The title sums up his theme: that water dominates whitefella dreaming in this mostly arid country, just as it has always dominated Aboriginal dreaming.

The search for water was the first task for the First Fleet. The local Aborigines directed the newcomers to the Cadigal, the stream that had supplied them with water for thousands of years; within a decade, the 'Tank Stream' was a sewer. As settlers and explorers moved inland, dreaming of an inland river system, they found instead dry riverbeds, dry lakebeds, desert, and 'howling silence'. But the dream of abundant water continued to inspire politicians, pastoralists and farmers, poets and novelists, to become a patriotic truth. Hopes were invested in great water schemes: irrigation and dams would transform the 'dead heart' of Australia. When in the 1920s the geographer Griffith Taylor declared that rainfall determined the viable limits of settlement, he was demonised.

More than two centuries later, anxiety about water still lies at the heart of national environmental debates. A cultural historian well versed in our literature and historical geography, Michael Cathcart offers us an imaginative understanding of ourselves as The Water Dreamers.

Graham Freudenberg, *Churchill and Australia*

Thousands of books have been written about Winston Churchill, indisputably one of the world's most important political leaders of the twentieth century. Yet, in *Churchill and Australia*, Graham Freudenberg breaks new ground. Drawing upon contemporary documents collated by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as Churchill's own writings and a vast array of secondary sources, he presents a blow-by-blow account of Churchill's ambivalent, tempestuous relationship with Australia between 1907 and 1955.

In Freudenberg's words, 'Churchill's conflicts with Australia were about his concept of the Empire and Australia's role in it'. The book's focus, inevitably, is upon the two World Wars, most notably the fiery disputes in and after 1942 between Churchill and the Australian prime minister, John Curtin. The calamitous Gallipoli campaign of 1915 (which was, of course, Churchill's brainchild) is also covered at length.

Written in the elegant prose for which Freudenberg is renowned, and frequently enlivened with turns of dry, subtle wit, *Churchill and Australia* draws upon Freudenberg's deep personal knowledge of history and politics, both British and Australian. In the judges' view, Freudenberg is more thorough and convincing – and more original – when analysing World War Two than World War One. Overall, however, this is a distinguished contribution to Churchillian scholarship in a superbly erudite and readable form.

Anna Goldsworthy, *Piano Lessons*

Anna Goldsworthy's engaging memoir *Piano Lessons* is her first book, and it reveals her to be as talented a writer as she is a musician. The story of her childhood and adolescence in Adelaide, *Piano Lessons* is also a tribute to the Russian pianist Eleonora Sivan, whom she had the good fortune to have as her teacher from the age of nine until she realised her ambition to be a concert pianist.

'Mrs Sivan ...is on the Liszt list ...Liszt taught the teacher of her teacher's teacher', Anna's grandfather tells her. In her fractured English, Mrs Sivan transmits her fierce love and understanding of music, of the great composers – their names roll out in the chapter titles - and their compositions. As she lays her hands on young Anna's, we intuit that the 'Liszt list' is a living heritage.

A precociously gifted child, Anna has to learn to harness her ambition to the obsessive discipline of long hours of daily practice. Her parents are tactfully supportive and generous: for seven years her father (the writer Peter Goldsworthy) attends all her lessons and takes notes, finding in Mrs Sivan inspiration for his novel *Maestro*. When Anna is in her mid-teens, they buy her a grand piano. Throughout, Mrs Sivan's elliptical insights help her to mature both as a person and as a musician. *Piano Lessons* seems destined to become a classic 'coming-of-age' memoir. It is also a captivating introduction to classical music.

Richard Guillatt and Peter Hohnen, *The Wolf: how one German raider terrorized Australia and the Southern oceans in the First World War*

Drawing on eyewitness accounts, declassified government documents and unpublished diaries and letters, Richard Guillatt and Peter Hohnen's *The Wolf* uncovers one of the great untold stories of World War One.

SMS Wolf was a German merchant steamship converted into a heavily armed, cunningly disguised raider that wreaked havoc upon Allied shipping across the South Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans between November 1916 and February 1918. Over 444 days, Captain Karl August Nerger and his crew mined, or captured and scuttled, some thirty Allied ships, without once putting into port: The Wolf depended upon fuel and rations seized from captured vessels. Also taken on board were some 400 captured passengers – men, women and children, many of them Australians – who were held as prisoners-of-war in the iron hull of The Wolf.

Guillatt and Hohnen paint an extraordinary portrait of the German captain and his code of honour, and of the unlikely respect and friendship – even, in a few cases, romance – that developed between the crew and their captives, as they sailed the world in their strange and dangerous isolation. The authors also cast a new light on Australian policies and attitudes during World War One, particularly the virulent anti-German sentiment encouraged by the Government led by Prime Minister Billy Hughes.

The Wolf is that rare treat: a ripping yarn that is also an important contribution to World War One history.

Paul McGeough, *Kill Khalid: Mossad's failed hit ... and the rise of Hamas*

The veteran foreign correspondent Paul McGeough's *Kill Khalid* is an outstanding contribution to contemporary Middle East history. It is a thrilling yet sobering account of the life of the Hamas leader Khalid Mishal and the rise of Hamas itself.

The survivor of an audacious Israeli assassination attempt in 1997, Mishal is today a US-designated foreign terrorist shunned by the Israelis, and a Palestinian nationalist leader courted by Western statesmen who consider him a potential key player in any peace settlement. Based on lengthy interviews with many of the protagonists, including Mishal and his family, and extensive use of secondary sources, McGeough's book is a singularly authoritative work.

McGeough has pieced together a minute-by-minute account of the assassination attempt, which Mishal survived thanks largely to the efforts of the Lebanese journalist Randa Habib and King Hussein of Jordan. King Hussein (backed by President Clinton) helped to secure the antidote for the poison administered to Mishal, and also the release from gaol of Sheikh Yassin and other Palestinian prisoners in Gaza in exchange for the Mossad assassins.

Thirteen years later the Israelis still have good reasons for regarding Mishal (now based in Damascus) as their enemy. His oratory, McGeough tells us, 'is rich in the rhetoric of jihad' and he steadfastly refuses to renounce the Hamas Charter, which calls for the destruction of Israel.

Given the magnitude of the moral and geopolitical issues raised by his subject-matter, the judges had some reservations about McGeough's scrupulous objectivity; we would have welcomed some of the good investigative journalist's reflective analysis. What we unreservedly respect is McGeough's determination to pursue this story, regardless of personal risk, and to report it forensically and in depth.

Noel Pearson, *Up From The Mission: Selected Writings*

Up from the Mission is Noel Pearson's first book. A collection of essays, columns, speeches and occasional writings dating back to 1997, it is the essential primer on the Cape York lawyer and activist who established ownership of the Aboriginal agenda a decade ago with an electrifying essay entitled 'Our Right to Take Responsibility'. In it, Noel Pearson attacked the welfare dependency that besets so many Aboriginal communities today, challenging the conventional wisdom that colonialism and racism are exclusively to blame. Instead, he urged his people to embrace accountability and self-determination.

Most of these pieces are similarly combative, tackling urgent issues of the day. Their importance lies in the insights they offer into Noel Pearson's formative experiences and the intellectual foundations of his convictions. He writes of growing up in the tight-knit community of Hope Valley Lutheran Mission on the eastern Cape York Peninsula, fluent in two Aboriginal languages, as well as the Bible and the writings of Luther; of learning a third language from its last speaker when he returned to research an oral history of the community.

A man whose blunt opinions are sought by Australian political leaders, Pearson comes to each of his causes well read in the heavy hitters on the subject, from

Immanuel Kant and Adam Smith to Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. *Up From the Mission* is an exhilarating example of a political activist producing masterly writing from plain speaking.

Winner's comment

Paul McGeough, *Kill Khalid: Mossad's failed hit ... and the rise of Hamas*

The veteran foreign correspondent Paul McGeough's *Kill Khalid* is an outstanding contribution to contemporary Middle East history. It combines first-hand reportage and scholarly research in a thrilling yet sobering account of the life of the Hamas leader Khalid Mishal and the rise of Hamas itself.

The survivor of an audacious Israeli assassination attempt in 1997, Mishal is today a US-designated foreign terrorist shunned by the Israelis, and a Palestinian nationalist leader courted by Western statesmen who consider him a potential key player in any peace settlement. Based on lengthy interviews with many of the protagonists, including Mishal and his family, and extensive use of secondary sources, McGeough's book is a singularly authoritative work on the Hamas leader who undoubtedly still stands at risk of assassination.

Mishal was a child in 1967 when, as a result of the Six-Day War, his family and thousands of other Palestinians were driven out of the West Bank, ending up, in their case, in Kuwait, where his father became a mullah to the Kuwaiti royal family. Always devout and committed to the Palestinian cause from an early age, at college Mishal joined the Muslim Brotherhood with fellow Palestinian activists. He went on to teach physics in high school while behind the scenes travelling throughout the Palestinian diaspora building financial support and commitment to the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular for Sheikh Yassin's Brotherhood in Gaza, as a rival to Yasser Arafat's secular Fatah movement. When the first Intifada erupted in 1987, Yassin launched the violent Islamic Resistance Movement known as Hamas. Despite his initial commitment to non-violent worldwide jihad, Mishal endorsed the Hamas Charter of 1988, which called for the destruction of Israel, and the terrorism of suicide bombers; within a year, the Israelis had gaoled Sheikh Yassin. In 1990, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, Mishal and his Kuwaiti team moved to Amman, under the protection of King Hussein. By 1997, Mishal, still based in Amman, was head of Hamas's political bureau and a target for assassination by Mossad.

Paul McGeough has pieced together a minute-by-minute account of the assassination attempt, which Mishal survived thanks largely to the efforts of the Lebanese journalist Randa Habib, King Hussein (backed by President Clinton), who helped to secure not only the antidote for the poison administered to Mishal, but also the release from gaol of Sheikh Yassin and other Palestinian prisoners in Gaza in exchange for the Mossad assassins. Paul McGeough shows that Mishal's survival guaranteed that the leadership of Hamas passed to him. (In 2004 the wheelchair-bound Yassin died in an Israeli missile strike.)

Thirteen years later the Israelis still have good reasons for regarding Mishal (now based in Damascus) as their enemy. His oratory, McGeough tells us, 'is rich in the

rhetoric of jihad' and he steadfastly refuses to renounce the Hamas Charter, which calls for the destruction of Israel. Yet, as McGeough points out, the same Mishal offered Israel a hudna, or thirty-year truce, on the basis of the 1967 borders, accepted the Hamas diaspora's calls for a halt to the suicide bombers of the second intifada, and endorsed Hamas's participation in the 2005 democratic elections in Gaza – which resulted in an unexpected victory for Hamas. McGeough's inconclusive conclusion is that Khalid Mishal is a 'Palestinian enigma ... impossible to pigeon-hole'.

Given the magnitude of the moral and geopolitical issues raised by his subject-matter, the judges had some reservations about McGeough's scrupulous objectivity; for all that it is the hallmark of the fine reporter, we would have welcomed some of the good investigative journalist's reflective analysis. What we unreservedly respect is Paul McGeough's determination to pursue this story, regardless of personal risk, and to report it forensically and in depth. Kill Khalid is compelling contemporary history of international significance, and the outstanding entry in the 2010 Douglas Stewart Award.

KENNETH SLESSOR PRIZE (POETRY)

Shortlist Comments

Jordie Albiston, *the sonnet according to 'm'*

The sonnet according to 'm' is a series of fifty-four sonnets of the most incredible variety. The title of each poem begins with the letter 'm'. Some are based on the unpublished journal of the author's maternal grandmother; some are drawn from her paternal great-great grandmother's published memoir of the Victorian goldfields; the rest are the works of the author's own imagination. On one level they amount to a fascinating social and psychological portrait of the lives of women in the 1850s, 1950s and the present. But this is to limit and misrepresent them.

A collection based on this premise could so easily have read like a tricky exercise but these poems convince with their variety, their inventiveness, their exuberance, their warmth, and their ultimate seriousness – every poem is full of delights and surprises. The more outrageous inventions – poems made out of alphabetic letters, numbers, text-messaging, abbreviations, slang, colloquialisms, archaisms, borrowed lines – are all tied back to a sense of a mind in tension with its circumstances. There is comedy in these poems but there is also an understated desperation.

Emily Ballou, *The Darwin Poems*

From the opening poem in which the young Charles Darwin treads underfoot 'honeysuckle, dirt, cow dung, field grass, wildflower, hay, leaf' and thinks 'that either his father was no doctor / or God was a donkey', to the last in which the now elderly scientist muses 'how flimsy we are inside all of this time / really, how ephemeral', the poems in this collection weave a thoroughly engaging portrait of the man, his family and his social and intellectual world. They are an implicit challenge to Coleridge's assertion that 'poetry is opposed to science' - they demonstrate that science and poetry can be allied ways of knowing the world.

This is an impressive and substantial book. It is based on thorough research and contains all sorts of fascinating detail but it is the pace, interest, liveliness and variety of the poetry, not the history, which carries the reader along. Each poem is poised, well-judged and stands alone; each is sure in line, phrase and image, and has a poetic and human resonance beyond the subject matter.

Judith Beveridge, *Storm and Honey*

Storm and Honey is a collection in two parts. The first, 'Driftgrounds: Three Fishermen' tells the stories of two trawlermen, Grennan and Davey, through the voice of a younger, unnamed crew member. This section is full of descriptions of storms, fish, ropes, tackle, and the like, and the strange characters the three men meet. These highly descriptive poems build into a suggestive picture of the three men and their way of life. The second section, 'Water Sapphire', comprises unrelated poems on subjects as various as the harbour, rain, mosquitoes, horses, herons and bees.

The poems are characterised by precise observation, associational shifts, sympathetic identification and shy humour. Image builds on startling image in a

mesmerising way to celebrate not only the beauty and power of the natural world but the material beauty and flexible strength of language itself. In this rich, layered poetry the control of sound and line is unerring.

Emma Jones, *The Striped World*

The Striped World is an exhilarating first collection of poems which sweeps up time, colonialism, dispossession, containment, alienation and much more in its restless momentum. The poems are almost kaleidoscopic in their daring conceptual leaps but remain securely grounded in history and personal observation. The poems range from the imagined world of the goldfish in its bowl, through the tiger in its cage and Daphne transformed into a tree, to the long and powerful 'Zoos for the Dead' which uses the figure of a parrot to investigate the horror and sadness of the stolen generation.

There is a 'wildness' of imagination and image and a depth and daring of thought which makes these poems attractive and challenging. Their lines flex with an intellectual and rhythmic energy which drags you along at speed at the same time as it keeps you off balance.

Morgan Yasbincek, *White Camel*

White Camel is a deceptively simple, mysteriously suggestive collection of poems. Their subjects arise from childhood, death, grief, travel, family, and experiences in the suburbs and the desert. Their tone is set by an undercurrent of spiritual and mystical knowledge drawn from Cabbalistic, Buddhist and Christian traditions. They are bound together by a desire to find understanding within change, in a place 'where your feet will leave / bowls of air in the sand', where a camel makes 'this direction into a future', or where a reindeer and a girl step 'breath by / breath, into a final migration'.

There is a quiet poise and delicacy of touch in these poems. They seem to have time, space and silence around them. The observations and perceptions, ordinary as their subjects and surfaces may be, have been deeply processed. There is a clarity and precision in sound and image which manifests as humility. The poems let in a sense of wonder, even wisdom, and keep growing in the mind.

Winner's Comment

Jordie Albiston, *the sonnet according to 'm'*

The sonnet according to 'm' is a series of fifty-four sonnets of the most incredible variety. The title of each poem begins with the letter 'm'. Some are based on the unpublished journal of the author's maternal grandmother; some are drawn from her paternal great-great grandmother's published memoir of the Victorian goldfields; the rest are the works of the author's own imagination. On one level they amount to a fascinating social and psychological portrait of the lives of women in the 1850s, 1950s and the present. But this is to limit and misrepresent them.

A collection based on this premise could so easily have read like a tricky exercise but these poems convince with their variety, their inventiveness, their exuberance, their warmth, and their ultimate seriousness – every poem is full of delights and

surprises. The more outrageous inventions – poems made out of alphabetic letters, numbers, text-messaging, abbreviations, slang, colloquialisms, archaisms, borrowed lines – are all tied back to a sense of a mind in tension with its circumstances. There is comedy in these poems but there is also an understated desperation.

It is tempting to describe this collection as flawless. The placement of each poem, and each syllable in each poem, is brilliantly orchestrated. There is a deft manipulation of form, rhyme and tone and a dextrous movement between the immediate and personal and the historical. One cannot fail to respond to the zest and verve of this collection or to the strength of mind and sensibility that informs it. This book demonstrates just how exciting, up-to-date, and enjoyable a good collection can be.

PATRICIA WRIGHTSON PRIZE (CHILDREN)

Shortlist Comments

Allan Baillie, *Krakatoa Lighthouse*

Kerta, the son of the lighthouse keeper is afraid of Orang Aljeh, the malevolent spirit that we know as the volcano Krakatoa. He is right to be afraid. Allan Baillie's multi-layered and ambitious novel tells the story of the last few months before the cataclysmic eruption of 1883 – an event heard five thousand kilometres away and one that turned the skies red in New York – through Kerta's eyes. It is through Kerta we come to appreciate the world that Krakatoa destroyed in an instant. Baillie writes beautifully, economically and vividly conjuring up a lost world without the book ever becoming 'simply' a historical novel. This powerful story of a boy and his family resonates long after Orang Aljeh has spoken.

Morris Gleitzman, *Grace*

Grace and her family are very special. The church they belong to teaches that their members will be the only ones allowed into Heaven and the elders enforce strict rules. Grace has been brought up by her father to think for herself, to ask questions and to be independent. So Grace is confused about the rules and why dreadful things seem to be happening to her family. This book is driven by Grace's character, her independence, her questioning the rules of the elders, her devotion to her father, her insight into her mother's anguish, her determination and her childlike, literal interpretation of the bible stories she's been told. The story is dramatically told, moving, very involving, with touches of humour and is ultimately a book about tolerance and the power of love.

Lincoln Hall, *Alive In the Death Zone: Mountain Survival*

When mountaineer Lincoln Hall blacked out after reaching the summit of Mount Everest, his climbing companions thought he was dead and reluctantly left him on the mountain. *Alive in the Death Zone* is the story of how Hall literally returned from the dead and managed to find his way back to safety, a feat of survival that became an instant climbing legend. In this clear and informative book Hall tells his story in an unsentimental and compelling fashion. The layout and photography are excellent and support the story on every page. A positive and life-affirming book with particular appeal to boys.

Richard Newsome, *The Billionaire's Curse*

A mysterious letter, an unsolved robbery, a white bleached messenger and a secret crypt – Richard Newsome creates just the right balance of intrigue, suspense, engaging dialogue and characters that young readers will enjoy and go along with, as they solve the mystery of the stolen Noor Jehan diamond. Gerald has just inherited billions of dollars from a hitherto unknown aunt, but with wealth comes intrigue and an assortment of unsavoury characters. *The Billionaire's Curse* sets a cracking pace leading to the discovery of the lost diamond. Newsome's narrative unfolds across London, the British Museum and a seemingly quiet country village, pitting the young and likeable heroes – Gerald and his new friends Sam and Ruby – against a mixture of classic archetypal English villains, ineffective law enforcement

and a disturbing assassin. Appealing to boys and girls alike, *The Billionaire's Curse* is a stirring read and the first in the Billionaire Trilogy.

Gregory Rogers, *The Hero of Little Street*

The Hero of Little Street sees a boy and his dog venture into an art gallery to escape bullies, only to find themselves on a magical journey into a Vermeer artwork in seventeenth century Holland. Our two heroes venture across canals, rescue imprisoned canines and deliver justice to an unscrupulous butcher. They befriend a musician, escape captivity and lead a pack of dogs in a musical symphony – all without a word being written or read. This meeting of graphic novel, picture book and comic demonstrates the increasing popularity of this genre as well as showing both the simplicity and sophistication of visual images. Readers of all ages will be able to engage with the story, discovering the Boy and The Bear characters from Rogers' earlier books, as well as delving into fine art and history, as they take a tour of Vermeer's hometown of Delft. The pencil and watercolour illustrations move from comic strip style to full page cityscapes. Rogers understands that young readers implicitly understand pictures, how the tilt of an eyebrow or the use of a high angle can create warmth or power, and his images offer the thoughtful viewer fruitful revisits and discoveries.

Margaret Wild and Freya Blackwood (Illus), *Harry and Hopper*

Ever since he was a jumpy little puppy, Hopper has done everything with Harry. One day when Harry comes home from school Hopper isn't there to greet him and Harry realises his dog will never be there again. The shock and grief Harry feels at the sudden death of his beloved pet is all-consuming and he deals with it in his own way. But he gradually learns that in his memory Hopper can be with him always. Margaret Wild's story is poignant, warm and ultimately satisfying. There is an economy of words in her writing that convey the story of this special relationship with style and the touch of a true professional. Freya Blackwood's expressive and tender illustrations capture the mood of the story perfectly and enhance the relationship between Harry and his dog. A definite tearjerker for all ages.

Winner's Comment

Allan Baillie, *Krakatoa Lighthouse*

This book is a marvel of precision and economy, stuffed to the gunnels with ideas, and brimming over with a dark energy. Allan Baillie gives a masterclass in how to write. Set against the imminent catastrophic eruption of Krakatoa in 1883, *Krakatoa Lighthouse* is much more than a story of a natural disaster. It is a richly-layered historical novel, dissecting the political and colonial forces at work in the Java of the late nineteenth century. Baillie's main protagonist is Kerta, the young son of the keeper of the Anjer lighthouse. It is through Kerta that we become immersed in the lost world of pre-Krakatoan Java. Never preachy or patronising, Baillie's prose is spare and unsentimental, painting a clear picture of a particular time and place that resonates in contemporary society. Although his writing is ripe with symbolism, Baillie never oversells the links he makes between the islanders' incipient revolution and the volcanic forces stirring malevolently beneath the ocean.

Krakatoa Lighthouse is that rare find: an exciting, moving story that keeps opening doors to larger questions. Baillie puts the reader right there in the moment with stunningly accurate detail that rings true, yet we never feel the dead hand of history overwhelming us. Instead we discover the setting through Kerta's gradual politicisation, his burgeoning friendship with a Dutch boy and a Scottish scientist, while in the background the rumbling anger of Orang Aljeh grows more and more insistent.

And Baillie doesn't flinch when it comes to the big moments, or the big questions. As Orang Aljeh flexes a finger and Kerta sees his world destroyed, and as all the characters – terrorists, colonials, the Javanese, the scientists – become simply human in the face of monstrous nature, Baillie makes his points so effectively, and in such a concise way, that the reader is left breathless. A wonderful book which fully deserves to become a classic.

ETHEL TURNER PRIZE (YOUNG PEOPLE)

Shortlist Comments

Kathy Charles, *Hollywood Ending*

Death and the nature of celebrity are at the core of this topical story about a teenage girl, Hilda, and her fascination with the murders and suicides of Hollywood stars. Hilda shares this morbid obsession with her friend, Benji, and together they explore the dark nooks and crannies of Hollywood, searching for stories, mementoes and meaning.

This original, pop-culture entrenched tale is vividly imagined and told using lively prose and dialogue. First-person narrator, Hilda, undergoes a coming of age that is believable and engaging, while secondary characters add different perspectives to the matters at hand – love, loss, trust, personal responsibility, mental illness and privacy. The characters and setting of this highly atmospheric tale are deeply entwined, to the point that one defines the other, while instances of humour balance the darkness, culminating in an edgy, memorable novel from a first time author.

Richard Harland, *Worldshaker*

This entertaining and wonderfully imagined adventure is set in an alternative 1995, in which a pseudo-Victorian society lives aboard a giant juggernaut. Col, comfortable with his world on the Upper Decks, has his life and beliefs thrown into disarray when he meets Riff, a “Filthy” escapee from the lower decks. Together Col and Riff make an unlikely but strangely charismatic team, leading us through an elaborate, endlessly-captivating setting filled with determined characters who are often comically over the top.

Harland uses this vast, industrial world to explore themes such as patriarchy, class systems, slavery and cruelty, environmental destruction and the dangers of indoctrination. Yet the novel maintains a fast pace, and tension builds to a dramatic all-in conflict. Instances of humour and engaging dialogue also add to the novel’s appeal, while illustrations of the ship at the book’s end further emphasise how complex this imagined world is.

Justine Larbalestier, *Liar*

This irreverent novel is cleverly constructed, and it is a seamless amalgamation of three distinct genres. Micah is a young adolescent in New York whose passion for running becomes an important point when the novel switches from being a humorous romp, examining the woes of adolescent love and lack of it, and plunges the reader into a modern gothic milieu.

The novel portrays New York and the lives of young adults with sensitivity and accuracy. In true postmodern tradition, the narrator is unreliable and the reader begins to relish the possibility that this fantastical world created by Larbalestier could be another lie, perpetuated by the relentless eponymous character. The scope of the novel is audacious but successful as the reader is provided with great insights into the mind of the central adolescent; especially the implication that lying is perhaps a way of creating a better world than the global world of confusion post 9/11.

Glenda Millard, *A Small Free Kiss in the Dark*

The main character of this moving and confronting novel, Skip, is a young runaway and the novel's narrator. Alongside him, the reader is thrust into a dystopic future with vivid descriptions of Victoria under siege from an unnamed enemy. Despite his traumatic childhood and the myriad of frightening situations he now encounters, Skip is never cynical and he remains resourceful, responsible and humane.

The novel is cleverly constructed into twenty-two chapters and the language used by Millard is economical and lyrical, imbuing the work with a sense of poignancy. Despite the subjective narration, many of the minor characters are depicted with flair and originality. Young adult readers will be amply rewarded by this contemporary classic novel with timely, complex and thought-provoking insights

Kirsty Murray, *Vulture's Gate*

This thrilling, fast-paced adventure is set in a future Australia in which girls are extinct and civilised society has crumbled. Bo, who lives alone in a burrow in the outback, rescues Callum, who has just escaped from cruel kidnappers. The two children are revealed to be brave, strong and resourceful as they travel to the city in search of Callum's fathers. Their world is bleak and menacing, but the powerful bond of friendship between Bo and Callum, occasional flashes of humour and a hopeful ending make this an engaging, rather than depressing, read.

Murray has created a vivid, detailed world, filled with fascinating creature-machines and intriguing humans. The novel also explores significant themes, including terrorism, genetic engineering, environmental destruction and gender roles.

Pamela Rushby, *When the Hipchicks Went to War*

Sixteen-year-old Kathy dances off to the Vietnam War to entertain the troops, blithely unaware of the realities of war, interested only in escaping her dull Brisbane existence. Soon she is dodging bullets, comforting dying soldiers in hospital tents, watching coffins being loaded onto a plane and searching for her brother Mick, a recent conscript into the Australian army. She also experiences the kindness of strangers, learns her own strengths and weaknesses, and falls in love, returning to Australia a very different girl.

Kathy is a fresh, lively and honest narrator, and her dry Australian sense of humour makes this an engaging, emotionally satisfying read. Rushby has created a number of strong, appealing female characters, who provide a fascinating view of a war usually seen through soldiers' eyes. The stories of these young women allow complex, confronting issues – including conscription, post-traumatic stress disorder, and the ethics of journalism during wartime – to be explored in an accessible way. The novel also paints a vivid portrait of Australian life in the 1960s. This well-researched novel is an engrossing, touching read for both teenagers and adults.

Winner's Comment

Pamela Rushby, *When the Hipchicks Went to War*

Sixteen-year-old Kathy dances off to the Vietnam War to entertain the troops, blithely unaware of the realities of war, interested only in escaping her dull Brisbane

existence. Soon she is dodging bullets and bombs, comforting dying soldiers in hospital tents, watching coffins being loaded onto a plane and searching for her older brother Mick, a recent conscript into the Australian army. She also experiences the kindness of strangers, learns her own strengths and weaknesses, and falls in love, returning to Australia a very different girl.

Kathy is a fresh, lively and honest narrator, and her dry Australian sense of humour makes this an engaging read. Rushby has created a number of strong, appealing female characters, including entertainers, nurses, anti-war protestors and a journalist, who provide a fascinating view of a war usually seen through soldiers' eyes. The stories of these young women allow complex, confronting issues – including domestic violence, conscription, post-traumatic stress disorder, and the ethics of journalism during wartime – to be explored in an accessible way. This well-researched novel is based on actual events, and historical facts are woven effectively into the fast-moving narrative, with a conclusion that is both realistic and positive.

The novel also paints a vivid portrait of Australian life in the 1960s, at a time when options for girls, particularly those from working-class backgrounds, were limited. Kathy's large, chaotic and warmhearted family is lovingly portrayed, and the close relationship between Kathy and her brother Mick is believable and touching. This engrossing, emotionally-satisfying novel is recommended for both teenagers and adults.

UTS GLENDA ADAMS AWARD FOR NEW WRITING

Shortlist Comments

Steve Amsterdam, *Things We Didn't See Coming*

What if the Millennium Bug, once considered such a real threat, had actually materialised? These nine linked short stories offer us a dystopian vision of the future we might have had, and yet may have. We are invited to contemplate where our reliance on technology is taking us and to consider just how skin deep is our civilisation when faced with the challenges of life and death.

The young hero of these stories learns how to survive in a post-apocalyptic world in which, ultimately, the human qualities of love and imagination hold their own against our more physical needs.

Kathy Charles, *Hollywood Ending*

The story of two young people – Benji and Hilda – obsessed by celebrity, set in Los Angeles, a city built on it. They search for places where stars have died, and take home whatever mementoes they can find.

Second-rate stars will do – like Bernie Bernall, who stabbed himself with scissors in a run-down flat, where they meet Hank, the current tenant. He's old and paranoid, haunted by a disturbing past, which emerges dramatically at the end of the story.

This is pitch-black comedy, written in a scalpelled screenwriter style, without a wasted word. A remarkably assured debut.

Andrew Croome, *Document Z*

Document Z is set in Canberra at the height of the Cold War. Based on archival sources, it fictionalizes the true story of Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov, who worked for Moscow intelligence at the Soviet Embassy in 1951. It follows the train of events leading up to Vladimir's defection and the subsequent attempts by Soviet officials to force his wife's deportation back to imprisonment or death in Russia.

This is a compelling first novel, admirably sustained, and brooding in its tone and setting. Written with a sure touch, *Document Z* brings the reader inside the heads and hearts of the main protagonists of this particular episode of our murky Cold War history.

Glenda Guest, *Siddon Rock*

Perched flatly on the edge of a salt pan, Siddon Rock is a small Australian town like any other, and yet unlike any other. It is a place for dreamers: created on a whim by a man chasing a butterfly and inhabited by secret eccentrics, it is a place in which strangers simply arrive one day and never leave.

Glenda Guest brings a masterly blend of realism and dream to the creation of this apparently unpromising yet endlessly surprising town somewhere in the outback. Her novel intrinsically questions the very nature of reality and gracefully celebrates the power of imagination.

Karen Hitchcock, *Little White Slips*

A short story is like a watch, with every word a tiny cog pushing the clockwork along. To this compression, Karen Hitchcock adds another. There's the story, then a second one, intercutting it.

In *Drinking When We Are Not Thirsty*, the narrator's life is fraught enough without the complex medical questions that come at her before her exam. In *Weightlessness*, Alice has to wrestle with her suicidal brother while she obsesses about her weight. *Blood* counterpoints the tale of a hunter father with a barrage of facts about his quarry – the polar bear.

One reality intercuts another, telling us something of life – and of the art of fiction – that we couldn't know any other way.

Kirsten Reed, *The Ice Age*

The Ice Age is a road novel with a twist. A teenage girl gets a lift across America with an older man, but this is no ordinary ingénue tooling down the highway towards inevitable staid adulthood – she's a reverse Lolita, hell bent on getting as much earthy experience as she can muster in this out-of-time world of back roads and diners, amid visits to her reluctant companion's old girlfriends.

Lyrical, knowing and humorous, this freshly-minted fiction has captured that translucent moment at the end of childhood when a girl could almost play with the Devil himself, and get away with it. Reed's entertaining riffs on waitresses in greasy spoon cafes are a delight.

Winner's Comment

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This brilliantly researched book has used many archival sources, including the 1954 Royal Commission on Espionage, ASIO files, and accounts of the affair written by those at its centre, including the Petrovs' own testimony.

This is a compelling first novel, admirably sustained, and brooding in its tone and setting. Written with a sure touch, *Document Z* brings the reader inside the heads and hearts of the main protagonists of this particular episode of our murky Cold War history, and shows how betrayal can be both political and personal.

Document Z has won the Australian Vogel Literary Award, and has been shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize (South East Asia and Pacific region).

This judging panel is pleased to announce that it is the winner of the UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION AWARD

Shortlist Comments

Abbas El-Zein, *Leave to Remain: A Memoir*

This beautifully written memoir moves between Lebanon, where the writer was born, and other places around the globe where the author has both studied and worked. As a consequence of this peripatetic life and the nature of the different places, El-Zein lyrically traverses cities, landscapes and people with poignant accounts of the effects of war and displacement. This beautifully written memoir moves between Lebanon, where the writer was born, and other places around the globe where the author has both studied and worked.

Exquisitely realised in its narrative playfulness with at times painful and difficult issues, this memoir captures the complexities of identity and politics, history and religion across time and space. Growing up in south Lebanon in a family of sheikhs and spiritual leaders, El-Zein imbues his reflective and engaging prose with all the wisdom of this rich cultural upbringing, together with his expansive education on the road.

Tim Soutphommasane, *Reclaiming Patriotism: Nation-building for Australian Progressives*

This important book is an engaging text that takes a fresh approach to issues around identity, race, politics and citizenship. *Reclaiming Patriotism* launches an urgent and timely debate about what it means to be Australian. This book is particularly important when a limited kind of flag-waving nationalism has dominated the national discourse over the past decade, both narrowing the scope for debate and limiting access to those who might engage in it.

Philosopher and journalist Tim Soutphommasane draws on many sources, both contemporary and historical, unpacking complex ideas in an accessible jargon-free style. He calls for the reinstatement of Australian multiculturalism, not as the contaminated word it has become over the past decade, but in a form in which patriotic solidarity coexists with cultural diversity. While he comes from a left-liberal background, he avoids narrow partisanship, challenging progressives to question their prejudiced interpretations of concepts like patriotism and citizenship. This book is an important contribution in rethinking the discourse on cultural diversity and citizenship, and thus actively seeks to re-engage different constituencies in a dialogue that moves the nation forward.

Winner's Comment

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window to a world that most people don't have access to outside of news reports that tend towards the one-dimensional depiction.

Leave to Remain is a thoughtful and elegantly written collection of essays that makes a significant contribution to Australian literature in its portrayal of Shia Lebanese culture and its Australian connections, as well as on the influences that shape and determine migrant identities in a nation of culturally diverse subjects.

Leave to Remain is an outstanding example of contemporary Australian writing and is therefore the panel's choice for CRC Award for 2010.

THE BIENNIAL PRIZE FOR LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP

Shortlist Comments

Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession*

This is a highly detailed study of the last seven years of RLS's life, when he lived in the Pacific nation of Samoa, and wrote about its political and cultural issues. Jolly's literary, biographical, legal and historical knowledge is wide and thorough, yet the study is unfailingly readable and engrossing. Writerly identity is both the starting-point of the study, and the thread that guides the discussion, often via some astute psychological insights. As a study in contrast – the Victorian writer relocated to an (as it were) alien world – the book has considerable resonance that shows Stevenson in a whole new light. The book reveals, in effect, another kind of 'cross-cultural exchange': a nineteenth-century sensibility getting to grips with geographical and anthropological otherness, and rethinking writerly horizons accordingly. Jolly's synthesis of a wide range of materials, including letters, travel-writing, memoirs and biographies, is impressive, and exemplary in terms of extracting a cogent argument from such a mass of sources.

By documenting the sometimes flaying negativity directed at Stevenson's Samoan writings, which were perceived by some as uncharacteristic to the point of virtual betrayal, Jolly exposes readers', critics' and publishers' often deeply emotional investments in the Stevenson persona. Reviewers bemoaned Stevenson's departure from 'what he did best' – the Scottish romantic tale. *Catriona*, written in his self-imposed Samoan exile, was welcomed as a return to form; Jolly shows, fascinatingly, how its political argument was influenced by the writer's experience and observations in Samoa. The final chapter on the 'Tusitala' mythos that grew up around Stevenson during his later life and posthumously offers a fascinating account of how literary reputation is formed, promoted, and maintained. This book is, then, a boon to Stevenson scholars, and a model of its kind for other readers. Its subject is of significance to anyone interested in how authors transform themselves and what this means to their readers, their careers, and their relationship to posterity.

Philip Mead, *Networked Language: Culture and History in Australian Poetry*

The status and ongoing value of poetry in Australia today would appear to be in question; it has been superseded (apparently) by more relevant, effective and engaging forms of creative endeavour. This is the widespread belief that Philip Mead seeks to challenge in *Networked Language*. He brings to bear on his field of study a compelling double focus: first, examining how present-day technological concerns affect the reception and interpretation of poetry; then judiciously selecting some key episodes from history (Slessor and cinema, the Ern Malley affair, McAuley and the Quiros legend, Wright's extensive engagement with poetics) to shed considerable light on twentieth-century Australian poetry's relation to Modernism and its contemporary engagement with modernity. Recently, as Mead convincingly shows, far from consigning poetry to the margins of the contemporary literary sphere, digital culture has given it a new lease of life, locating the local and national very thoroughly in the global.

Mead is particularly illuminating when he traces out the lines of continuity between poetry and poetics, using the model of 'networked language' to show the mediation of different modes of thought by techno-cultural apparatuses. His research and range of reference is vast, rigorous and always insightful. One of the book's greatest strengths is the sometimes surprising, but always illuminating, expansive cultural frames it places around the examples of Australian literature it explores. Its ingenious reading of Kenneth Slessor's 'Five Bells' in terms of modernist cinematic culture and the 'Egyptian Deco' craze is exemplary, and a particular highlight. The book concludes with selective examples of recent indigenous and multicultural literatures in Australia, which Mead reads with persuasive panache. This very substantial book engages new perspectives to look back but also forward to a poetry that is perhaps not yet fully intelligible or recognisable to us.

Brigid Rooney, *Literary Activists: Writer-Intellectuals and Australian Public Life*

This is a lucidly argued, intelligently structured book that makes a very timely intervention into current academic and public discussion. It balances the finer points of postwar Australian history with the politics of writing, publishing and reading literary works. Its achievement is to offer new contexts for 'canonical' 20th-century Australian writers, implicating their work in the history that they inhabit. The seven writers Rooney profiles – White, Wright, Oodgeroo, Murray, Malouf, Garner, Winton – are brought to vivid life from both angles (commitment and creativity); Rooney has a sharp eye for finding the points of contact between the writers' commitments to various causes, and their creative literary outputs. These examples are distinct enough from one another to give a broad picture of the varieties and styles of literary activism and its intersection with other forms of activism, yet linked to one another in a way that means the book gains momentum and weight with each chapter.

There is an engaging immediacy to the book's exploration, grounding it in the identifiable here-and-now that Rooney herself inhabits as a feminist and academic. This is particularly the case with the engrossing introductory chapter, which uses the David Marr lecture to sketch a deft portrait of Australia's metropolitan intellectual scene. Throughout the book Rooney pursues the question of how exactly literature can be seen as a form of activism within Australian intellectual and political culture. In this context the treatment of the writers is generous but never afraid to recognise and discuss their limitations, political and aesthetic. In every chapter there is astute and helpful commentary on the writers' actual productions. Rooney is to be congratulated for producing such an expansive and timely piece of work, and for making it so accessible.

Winner's Comments

Philip Mead, *Networked Language: Culture and History in Australian Poetry*

The status and ongoing value of poetry in Australia today would appear to be in question, given its supersession by more relevant, effective and engaging forms of creative endeavour. This is the widespread belief that Philip Mead seeks to challenge in *Networked Language*, and in the main he succeeds brilliantly. He brings to bear on his field of study a compelling double focus: first, examining how present-day technological concerns affect the reception and interpretation of poetry; then judiciously selecting some key episodes from history (Slessor and cinema, the Ern

Malley affair, McAuley and the Quiros legend) to shed considerable light on twentieth-century Australian poetry's relation to modernism and its contemporary engagement with modernity. Ultimately, as Mead convincingly shows, far from consigning poetry to the margins of the contemporary literary sphere, digital culture has given it a new lease of life.

Mead is particularly illuminating when he traces out the lines of continuity between poetry and poetics, using the model of 'networked language' to show the mediation of different modes of thought by technocultural apparatuses. His research and range of reference is vast, rigorous and always insightful. One of the book's greatest strengths is the sometimes surprising, but always illuminating, expansive cultural frames it places around the examples of Australian literature it explores. Its ingenious reading of Kenneth Slessor's 'Five Bells' in terms of modernist cinematic culture and the 'Egyptian Deco' craze is exemplary, and a particular highlight. Careful readings of the changed valencies of the Ern Malley affair and the oeuvre of Judith Wright are followed by highly perceptive responses to recent indigenous and multicultural literatures in Australia.

This book appealed to the committee as adventurous and forward-looking as well as profoundly scholarly. It is insightful and constructive in its diagnosis of academic and public culture in Australia, and to changing attitudes to poetry as a 'national' medium. It locates the local and national very thoroughly in the global. Finally, it looks back but also forward to a poetry that is perhaps not yet fully intelligible or recognisable to us. The argument made in Mead's book has the potential to spread well beyond the academy; after reading *Networked Language*, anyone who thinks that poetry is an archaic literary form that belongs to a pre-technological era cannot but see it instead as a vibrant and thriving form of linguistic expression at the forefront of contemporary global culture.

PLAY AWARD

Not applicable. No short list or winner.

SCRIPT WRITING AWARD

Shortlist Comments

Jane Campion, *Bright Star*

Bright Star is a beautifully crafted script that chronicles the love affair between the English Romantic poet, John Keats, and his neighbour, the seamstress, Fanny Brawne. Set during the years when Keats wrote some his most celebrated poems, the story is told from Brawne's perspective. Fanny Brawne is a determined young woman whose duels with Keats' jealous and chauvinistic friend Charles Brown imbue her with agency, especially providing her with an opportunity for witty dialogue.

While the outer narrative is about the coming together of two young lovers, this script has an inner life that traces Brawne's introduction to poetry, and her journey and passionate embrace of the lyrical form. She reads and recites from memory Keats verses, and it is precisely here that the power of literature is revealed as an affective experience in all its sensuality. Keats tells Brawne that, "a poem needs understanding through the senses". Indeed, the script embodies a textual sensuality in its intimate exploration of love, loss and desire.

Adam Elliot, *Max and Mary*

An animated film about an unlikely pen friendship that develops between Mary, a lonely eight year-old in Sydney and Max, who is in his late forties, has Aspergers syndrome, and lives in a dank apartment in New York City. Correspondence between the two sustains them both for years, surviving misfortune and misunderstanding. The little stories within the larger narrative reveal some diverting observations about the world.

This script effectively mixes pathos and comedy through beautifully conceived characters. Loneliness and isolation as experiences are rarely rendered so engaging and entertaining. This screenplay is a moody, humorous and uneasy experience all at once.

Fiona Seres, *Tangle: Episode One*

This story revolves around an interrelated group of families in an affluent suburb of Sydney: middle class, middle-aged and upwardly mobile with teenage children whose secretive behaviour adds layers to the plot. At its centre is the study of professional and sexual rivalry played out between the adults. This is transformed into something more complex than the standard treatment on television: the dialogue is sophisticated and the characterisations are layered.

Episode One is a tightly constructed, energetic first instalment dealing with subject matter that is familiar – adults and their kids – but not predictable. *Tangle* is written with compelling truthfulness and vigour. The adult world is the set up, but this is only half the story; the kids' world – when we enter – is a disturbing reflection, satiric counterpoint and potential nightmare. *Tangle* is not going to follow the rules. Episode One impels the need to know what happens next. A brilliant beginning.

Michael Miller and Kristen Dunphy, *East West 101: Episode Thirteen*

A topical multicultural crime series set in the suburbs of Western Sydney. The central character is Malik, a detective of Arab Muslim heritage. Each episode revolves around a specific self-contained plot as well as an overarching plot that spans the second series. This particular episode brings some of the central themes to a climax.

Police are gathering evidence around a planned local terrorist attack as the city's shock jocks foment anti-Muslim feeling in the community. Within this larger story, the experiences of refugees who have crossed the seas and met with disaster are given voice to add to the complexity. While this episode is a tightly constructed narrative with a set of richly drawn characters, what is most compelling is the examination of racial politics in Sydney, and how it gets played out in everyday interactions. In particular, the interweaving of the voice of the shock jock between the dramatic action sets the tone of this episode. A compelling episode in a thoughtful series.

Aviva Zeigler, *Fairweather Man*

An exquisitely moving portrait of an obsessed and gentle loner, this documentary script is about art, the artist and exile. Ian Fairweather dedicated his life to the forces of creativity, letting go of everyday routine acts of living, and thus allowing himself the freedom to create from a place where he was neither constrained nor forced to interact with the mundane.

As a wandering and reclusive artist, this script brilliantly combines a few lines of surviving archival footage of Fairweather in his own words, with interviews and beautifully subtle re-enactments. The portrait drawn is of a heroic, eccentric and adventurous man whose dedication to creating work is born of the immediacy of the moment, and from the well of deep thinking that Fairweather immersed himself in. *Fairweather Man* is not only an exploration of the heartfelt journey of an extraordinary, and at times difficult life, but also a meditation on the complex states of creativity.

This documentary script is outstanding in giving voice to a remarkable individual who lived outside the parameters of ordinariness, thus achieving a brilliance that is at once unique.

Warwick Thornton, *Samson and Delilah*

This feature film script is sparse in its description of the hardships that two Aboriginal teenagers endure after they are forced to leave their community. The screenplay is stunning in its lyrical minimalism, capturing a place, a world, a compelling story. It reads like a short story using language economically to evoke a sense of the bleak that embodies the lives of Samson, a young man without family, and Delilah, a young woman who looks after her disabled grandmother until she dies.

Together, they embark on a journey away from their familiar, and end up under a bridge with a trickster type figure. The symbolic and real violence of postcolonial culture underwrites their everyday lives, as does a sense of enforced isolation and containment pervade the text. This script is suffused with meaning in its minimalism, rich in its moments of sadness. A beautifully written screenplay.

Winner's Comment

Jane Campion, *Bright Star*

Bright Star is a beautifully crafted script that chronicles the love affair between the English Romantic poet, John Keats, and his neighbour, the seamstress, Fanny Brawne. Set during the years when Keats wrote some of his most celebrated poems, the story is told from Brawne's perspective.

While the outer narrative is about the coming together of two young lovers, this script has an inner life that traces Brawne's introduction to poetry, and her journey and passionate embrace of the lyrical form.

This script is an ode to literature and to poetry in particular. The seamless interweaving of Keats' romantic poetry into the narrative gives the script a lush and lyrical texture.

Bright Star is an outstanding literary screenplay and is therefore the panel's choice for the Scriptwriting Award for 2010.

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Fairweather Man was a beautiful and interestingly written documentary script that gives "voice to a remarkable individual who lived outside the parameters of ordinariness, thus achieving a brilliance that is at once unique".

SPECIAL AWARD

Winner's Comment

Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature

This is a very comprehensive (nearly 1500 pages) anthology of writing in Australia during the past two centuries. It includes extracts from letters, diaries and speeches as well as fiction, non-fiction, poetry and essays. Indigenous writing is well-represented and there are useful introductory essays on the literature prior to 1900, 1900-1950 and then from 1950 onwards.

The volume would be an invaluable resource for students of Australian literature, but is sufficiently broad and entertaining to be of broad general interest.