

Editorial

Welcome to the winter edition of *Writers Connect*. I have taken on the role of Guest Editor from Nichola Garvey and it seems that I have very big shoes to fill. I graduated from UTS in 2007 after completing my Honours year in Creative Writing. I developed my love of reading in libraries and bookshops and this shaped my identity and career. Books are so important for thought, inspiration and ideas. These days it is all too common to learn of another bookshop, literary magazine or independent publisher that is struggling or closing down. It is important that as a writing community we get involved in promoting books and reading as much as we can. Living in the cities we are fortunate to have arts festivals and literary events to inspire and encourage us, but many Australians don't have access to these events or even to an interesting and versatile range of books. 2012 is the National Year of Reading, a project that joins libraries, government, community groups, media and commercial partners and the public. It aims to create a nation of readers and to help people discover the joy of books through a range of activities.

One great way to get involved in this community is to become a Role Model for the Books in Homes Programme. The Charitable Foundation for Books in Homes Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that helps children and families living in remote and disadvantaged circumstances improve their literacy skills, develop and maintain a love for reading, and, ultimately, broaden their opportunities in life. Books in Homes delivers books to schools and communities in NSW, NT, QLD, SA, VIC and WA. The Schools participating in the Primary Programme hold Book Giving Assemblies at the end of each Term to celebrate the students receiving their new books.

The programme is looking for Role Models to participate in these Book Giving Assemblies. Role Models give a short talk about their personal and professional achievements and about how reading has helped them in some way. A fantastic part of being a Role Model is assisting in the presentation of books to the students and experiencing the excitement that these books bring. We would love to hear from you if you would be interested in being a Role Model at a Book Giving Assembly in Term 2 or Term 4 in 2012. In addition to the assemblies, or instead for those without the time, Books in Homes are also looking for Role Models to appear on the front page of their book catalogues. These are the catalogues from which students choose their books each term. If you are interested, they require a photo and a blurb of about 250 words. If you write for children or young adults, please consider becoming a Role Model and taking part in an assembly or being the face of their book catalogues.

Two of our alumni are very much involved in the National Year of Reading. Deborah Abela and Susanne Gervay, popular children's book authors, are State Ambassadors for the National Year of Reading and have been visiting schools all over NSW. I spoke to them about the role of Ambassador and what it includes and about why reading is so important. Both Deborah and Susanne had some great suggestions for making reading more exciting and thoughts about the impact of the digital revolution, relevant for readers, writers, teachers and parents! You will find these interviews featured in this issue, along with Nichola Garvey's interview with our

chair, Sharon Rundle, co-editor of the recently launched *Alien Shores*, and an article about Patti Miller's new book *The Mind of the Thief*.

Our spring edition will explore memoir writing and we welcome contributions on this topic. You may have written a memoir or you may relate to this genre in a more general sense. Writing is an effective way to make sense of life experiences, from our achievements and happiest moments to our challenges and losses. For those who feel that their writing – of any genre – particularly draws on their experiences or family history, I am interested to explore this how comes across in your work.

Please contact me (rosalind.bellamy@alumni.uts.edu.au) to share news, opportunities or events. You can also stay in touch on the UTS Writers' Alumni Facebook group. I look forward to working with you.

Roz Bellamy
Guest Editor of *Writers Connect*

News from our network: Winter Edition

As we start winter, we can keep in good spirits by celebrating the achievements of our alumni. Congratulations to all of our writers who are having their work published, launched, reviewed or acknowledged with awards at the moment.

Alumni Publications – *Get behind them and buy copies!*

Our very own Sharon Rundle launched her latest book, *Alien Shores – Tales of refugees and asylum seekers from Australia and the Indian subcontinent* (edited by Sharon Rundle and Meenakshi Bharat) in May. Please read on for information about the launches in Sydney and Melbourne.

Launching 'Alien Shores: Tales of Refugees and Asylum Seekers':

Sydney: A lively, stellar event launched *Alien Shores: Tales of Refugees and Asylum Seekers* on May 20 at The Hughenden Hotel in Woollahra. MC Roanna Gonsalves welcomed guests, authors and editors who contributed, authors attending in support of the anthology and the Consul-General of India, Sydney, Mr Amit Dasgupta who launched 'Alien Shores'.

Co-editors, Sharon Rundle and Meenakshi Bharat from Delhi, India, spoke about collaborating to publish the anthology of short stories from Australia and the Indian subcontinent. Authors, Abdul Hekmat, Linda Jaivin, Michelle Cahill, Susanne Gervay, Andrew Y M Kwong and Julia Mackay-Koelen read briefly from their stories and Rosie Scott from her foreword in *Alien Shores*. Publisher, Kabita Dhara from Brass Monkey Books spoke about her aim of specialising in Australian and Indian transnational literature. In releasing *Alien Shores*, the Consul-General

acknowledged the gravity of, and showed great empathy for, the plight of refugees. He spoke of the need for humanity and about how easily anyone could be thrust into similar situations. Remarkably, though, the Consul-General also included anecdotes of warmth, generosity and humour.

The official launch was followed by an afternoon tea party where contributing authors mingled with guest and happily signed copies of *Alien Shores*. The support of authors David Malouf, Mabel Lee, Devika Brendon, Patti Miller, Libby Sommer and Jacquie Everitt; translator and artist Shokufeh Kavani; Ana Tiwari; Devaki Monani and other eminents from film, literature and radio was warmly appreciated.



Contributing authors to *Alien Shores*: Julia Mackay-Koelen (Perth), Meenakshi Bharat (Delhi, India); Andrew Y M Kwong (NSW); Sharon Rundle (NSW); Michelle Cahill (NSW).



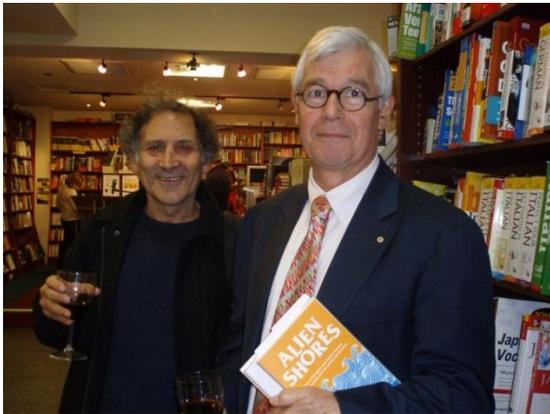
Consul-General of India, Sydney, Mr Amit Dasgupta (*photo by Raihana Hekmat*).



Abdul Hekmat, Linda Jaivin, Sharon Rundle

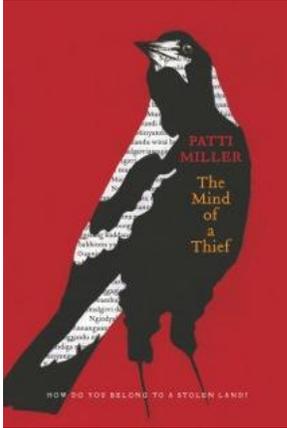


Michelle Cahill at Sydney launch.



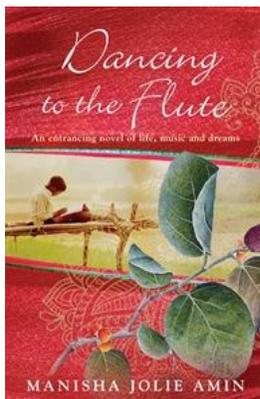
Contributing author Arnold Zable with Julian Burnside QC.

Patti Miller's sixth book, *The Mind of a Thief*, was just released by UQP. Don't miss the article about *The Mind of a Thief* in this issue of *Writers Connect*.



Manisha Amin's first novel *Dancing to the Flute* was recently released and launched. With all the energy and colour of India and its people, *Dancing to the Flute* is a magical, heart-warming story of this community's joys and sorrows, the nature of friendship and the astonishing transformative powers of music. Published by Allen & Unwin, the novel is available from Coop book shop and all good book stores.

<http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=651&book=9781742378572>



Kate Forsyth's book *Bitter Greens* was published by Random House in April. It interweaves a retelling of the *Rapunzel* fairytale with the scandalous life story of the woman who first told the tale, the 17th century French writer Charlotte-Rose de la Force. Please see <http://newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2012/06/bitter-greens> for more information.



Alumni Awards and Reviews

Michelle Cahill's poetry book *Vishvarupa* received a wonderful review by Mark Tredinnick in Australian Book Review (April 2012). He wrote, "Cahill pulls off these feats of language across an array of poetic forms of varying lengths: tercets, quatrains, prose poems, and free verse. Her collection is visually, as well as linguistically and sonically, satisfying."

Christopher Chen won an Aurealis Award for Best Children's Fiction Picture Book of 2011, for *Sounds Spooky*, illustrated by Sarah Davis. He says "No way did I expect this accolade and of course neither of us had a speech prepared (my mother always told me to be prepared but I don't think she had an award ceremony in mind) but I do think people realised I was well and truly stunned." Chris was very happy with the night, from having his spouse sitting with him to the fact that Kate Forsyth (another alumnus!) was the MC and that Sophie Masson presented the award, both of whom are children's book creators.

Pamela Freeman won an Aurealis Award for Best Fantasy Novel of 2011, for *Ember and Ash*, published by Orbit Books. *Ember and Ash* is a stand-alone novel set in the same universe as The Castings Trilogy, but twenty years later. *Blood Ties*, the first book of the trilogy, was Pamela's DCA thesis. This is her second Aurealis. The first was in 2009 for Best Children's Fantasy, for *Victor's Challenge*, illustrated by Kim Gamble. She says "it's nice to have won for both kinds of writing!"

Susanne Gervay's book *Ships in the Field*, illustrated by Anna Pignataro, is short-listed for the Speech Pathology Australia's Book of the Year Award 2012.

DC Green's unpublished children's novel *City of Monsters* has won two prizes in the last few weeks: first place in the Adult Category of the Writing Classes for Kids and Adults Fantasy Writing Competition and runner-up in the 8th Kathleen Julia Bates Memorial Writing Competition. DC has been touring fantastic Aussie author blogs from May 12-20 as part of his DC Green Grat Siege Blog Blitz Tour. The Blog Blitz roams over ten different blogs and writing sites and features great writing tips, plenty of laughs, insights into the writing process and the chance to interact with DC Green as well as wonderful host authors such as Ian Irvine and Robyn Opie. For details of the Blitz and the rest of DC's touring schedule, check out his blog at <http://dcgreenyarns.blogspot.com.au/>

One of the photographs featured in **Abdul Hekmat's** photographic exhibition "UNSAFE HAVEN: HAZARAS IN AFGHANISTAN" has been short listed for the Refugee Heartland Prize in Victoria. Abdul first exhibited "Unsafe Haven" in the UTS Tower Foyer, on 5 September 2011 – 7 October 2011 before it was shown all around Australia, most recently at RMIT Gallery in Melbourne. <http://cosmopolitancivilsocieties.com/2011/08/26/exhibition/>

Abdul was appointed a Refugee Week Ambassador for Refugee Week in June. <http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/ambassadors.php>

Other News

U: magazine, UTS's flagship title, aims to reflect the news, opinions, initiatives and successes of UTS and its staff, students and alumni. If you have any story suggestions or are keen to volunteer and write an article to help build up your portfolio, email us at u@uts.edu.au. Also, if you've had a book published in the last year, contributed some writing to a book, or even had a hand in editing a published book, let us know and we can review it for our U Read It page.



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