



Brisbane Writers Festival Association Inc  
PO Box 3453 South Brisbane Queensland 4101 Australia  
12 Merivale St South Brisbane Queensland Australia  
Telephone 61 7 3255 0254 Facsimile 61 7 3255 0362  
info@brisbanewritersfestival.com.au www.brisbanewritersfestival.com.au  
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## BRISBANE WRITERS FESTIVAL

*Growing Minds Through Conversation and the Written Word*

17-21 September 2008

[www.brisbanewritersfestival.com.au](http://www.brisbanewritersfestival.com.au)

### Biographies of International Guests

#### CHRIS ABANI (Nigeria) *Song for Night*

**Genre:** Fiction

**Release date:** *Song for Night* (August 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *The Virgin of Flames; Becoming Abigail; GraceLand; Kalakuta Republic and Masters of the Board*

**Quote:** 'If you want to get at the molten heart of contemporary fiction, Abani is the starting point.' **Dave Eggers**  
'The most naked, harrowing expression of prison life and political torture imaginable, reading them is like being singed by a red hot iron.' **Harold Pinter** (*Kalakuta Republic*)

**Book:** *Song for Night* is the story of a West African boy soldier's lyrical, terrifying, yet beautiful journey through the nightmare landscape of a brutal war in search of his lost platoon. The reader is led by the voiceless child who, as part of a land mine-clearing platoon, had his vocal chords cut, a move to keep these children from screaming when blown up, and thereby distracting the other minesweepers. The book is written in a ghostly voice, with each chapter headed by a line of the unique sign language these children invented. This book is unlike anything else ever written about an African war.

**Author:** Recipient of over 17 awards including the PEN USA Freedom-to-Write Award Winner, Abani wrote his first book, political thriller *Masters of the Board*, about a neo-Nazi takeover, when he was 16. In 1985, at 18, the government of Nigeria, who had suddenly decided that his novel was a 'threat to national security', incarcerated him.

When he got out he joined a street theatre group, which only sent Abani back to jail, this time in a maximum security prison Kiri Kiri. After a year, he was released and studied literature at a Nigerian university. He continued to write, but his third play, *Song of a Broken Flute* (1990) took him this time to Kalakuta Prison where he was locked up with other political prisoners on death row. The charge against him was treason and he was found guilty.

There he wrote his famous collection of poetry *Kalakuta Republic*. It is a poetic tribute to the people he suffered with and those that died in prison. Abani was able to leave Nigeria for exile in 1991. He has since lived in England and the United States.

Abani is a Professor at the University of California, Riverside. He is the author of five novels and four poetry collections. He is a popular keynote speaker at human rights celebrations and plays the clarinet.

**Related links:** [www.chrisabani.com](http://www.chrisabani.com)

**CHRIS CLEAVE (UK)** *The Other Hand*

**Genre:** Fiction

**Release date:** *The Other Hand* (September 2008)

**Previous title:** *Incendiary*

**Quote:** 'Profound, deeply moving and yet light in touch, it explores the nature of loss, hope, love and identity with atrocity its backdrop. Read it and think deeply.' **Sarah Broadhurst**

**Book:** Described as extremely funny, but also containing a horrific beach scene, *The Other Hand* reflects Chris Cleave's admiration for brave and funny people facing horrible situations. In his novel, two women's lives, a 16 year old Nigerian refugee and a high-flying London executive, are inextricably linked by a chance meeting and tragedy, which neither can put behind them. Inspired by his early childhood in West Africa, Cleave is making a broader statement about the treatment of illegal immigrants from the developing world. Cleave was inspired by his time working in a canteen at a British removal centre for asylum seekers which included Nigerian refugees.

**Author:** Chris Cleave's debut novel *Incendiary* was an international bestseller published in 20 countries. An emotionally charged open letter to Osama bin Laden about a London bomb plot, *Incendiary* gained notoriety for the macabre coincidence of its UK publication on 7th July 2005, the day of the London terrorist bombings. It won the 2006 Somerset Maugham Award, was short listed for the 2006 Commonwealth Writers Prize and won the Prix Special du Jury at the French Prix des Lecteurs 2007. In late 2008, *Incendiary* will be released as a major motion picture, starring Michelle Williams and Ewan McGregor.

Chris Cleave is 35 and has a regular column in *The Guardian*. He has been a barman, long-distance sailor, teacher of marine navigation, an internet pioneer and journalist. He writes literary fiction but figures it is okay to maintain a sense of humour when exploring serious subjects. He lives in London with his French wife and two mischievous Anglo-French children.

**Related links:** [www.chriscleave.com](http://www.chriscleave.com)

**NORMAN DOIDGE (Canada)** *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain*

**Genre:** Non-Fiction

**Release date:** *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain* (March 2008)

**Quote:** 'A remarkable and hopeful portrait of the endless adaptability of the human brain.' **Oliver Sacks**

'The power of positive thinking finally gains scientific credibility. Mind-bending, miracle-making, reality-busting stuff with implications for all human beings, not to mention human culture, human learning and human history.' **The New York Times**

**Book:** A *New York Times* bestseller; an Amazon US top ten science book of 2008 and one of Amazon Canada's top books of 2008; Norman Doidge M.D. champions an astonishing new scientific discovery called Neuroplasticity, using personal stories. A special needs woman cures her deficits with brain exercises and now cures those of others; blind people learn to see. We are taken to the fantastic heart of the Neuroplasticity revolution. An immensely moving, inspiring book that will permanently alter the way we look at our brains, human nature, and human potential.

**Author:** Norman Doidge, M.D., is a research psychiatrist and psychoanalyst on the faculty at the Columbia University Psychoanalytic Centre in New York and the University of Toronto, as well as an award-winning writer. He has presented his scientific research at the White House.

**Related links:** [www.normandoige.com](http://www.normandoige.com)

**GWYNNE DYER (Canada)** *Climate Wars*

**Genre:** Non-Fiction

**Release date:** *Climate Wars* (September 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *Future: Tense: the coming world order; War: the lethal custom; Fighting Decline: American power and the rise of Asia; The Mess They Made: the Middle East after Iraq*

**Quote:**

**Book:** From one of the world's great geopolitical analysts, *Climate Wars* is a terrifying glimpse of the none-too-distant future, when climate change will force the world's powers into a desperate struggle for advantage and even survival. Dyer asks the question, "What if the average global temperature were 5 degrees Celsius higher than today?" In response he offers both an apocalyptic and wise response. Prescient, unflinching, and based on exhaustive research and interviews.

**Author:** Gwynne Dyer has worked as a freelance journalist, columnist, author, broadcaster and lecturer on international affairs for more than 20 years. His twice-weekly column on international affairs is published in 175 newspapers in some 45 countries and is translated into more than a dozen languages.

**Related link:** [www.gwynnedyer.com](http://www.gwynnedyer.com)

**DAVID FRANCIS (USA/Australia)** *Stray Dog Winter*

**Genre:** Thriller

**Release date:** *Stray Dog Winter* (September 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *Agapanthus Tango*

**Quote:** 'Francis' subtle and spare prose is lyrical and compelling, such beautiful writing I read it all in one go.' **Sydney**

**Morning Herald**, 'Books of the Year' (Agapanthus Tango)

**Book:** From the author of *Agapanthus Tango*, David Francis' *Stray Dog Winter* is a Cold War thriller in the style of Graham Greene. Darcy, a restless young artist, travels to 1980s Soviet Union to visit his elusive half-sister Fin. A searing story unfolds about a young man's search for his own family truths.

**Author:** David Francis grew up in rural Victoria and represented Australia in equestrian events at the Olympics. He now lives in Los Angeles, where he works as a lawyer. His first novel, *Agapanthus Tango*, was published by Fourth Estate in the UK, and was translated into eight languages.

**JAMES FREY (USA)** *Bright Shiny Morning*

**Genre:** Fiction

**Release date:** *Bright Shiny Morning* (June 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *A Million Little Pieces*; *My Friend*

**Quote:** 'He comes at you like a boxer. Hard and fast.' **Sydney Morning Herald.**  
'Heartbreaking, inspirational, essential.' **Bret Easton Ellis**

**Book:** Welcome to LA - city of contradictions. It is home to movie stars and down-and-outs with palm-lined beaches and gridlock, shopping sprees and gun sprees. *Bright Shiny Morning* takes a wild ride through the ultimate metropolis, where glittering excess rubs shoulders with seedy depravity. Frey's trademark filmic snapshots zoom in on the parallel lives of diverse characters, bringing their egos and ideals, hopes and despairs, anxieties and absurdities vividly to life. Some suffer, like the otherworldly wino who tries to save a spoilt teenage runaway. Others gain, like the canny talent agent who turns sexual harassment to blackmailing advantage. Some are loaded, or grounded, and have luck on their side. Others, like the countless actresses-turned-hookers, or schoolboys-turned-gangsters, are doomed.

**Author:** James Frey is originally from Cleveland, Ohio. His first memoir, *A Million Little Pieces*, was published in spring 2003. Its follow-up, *My Friend Leonard* followed two years later. Both books became New York Times #1 bestsellers. In late 2005 and early 2006, *The Smoking Gun* and other investigators discovered elements of his memoir, *A Million Little Pieces* were untrue. As accusations against the book continued, Oprah Winfrey invited Frey onto her show, to find out whether he had lied to her and her viewers or had simply embellished minor details. The controversy spread around the world. *Bright Shiny Morning* is a novel.

**Related link:** [www.james-frey.com](http://www.james-frey.com)

**STEVEN GALLOWAY (Canada)** *The Cellist of Sarajevo*

**Genre:** Fiction

**Release date:** *The Cellist of Sarajevo* (March 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *Ascension*; *Finnie Walsh*

**Quote:** 'A gripping story of Sarajevo under siege.' **J. M. Coetzee**

**Book:** In May 1992, as the siege of Sarajevo entered its second month, 22 people were killed as they queued to buy bread. For 22 days after, the local cellist, Verdran Smailovic played, Albinoni's Adagio in G Minor on the site of the bombing. In *The Cellist of Sarajevo*, Steven Galloway imagines those 22 days. An absorbing novel, with universal resonance.

**Author:** Steven Galloway was born in Vancouver in 1975. His debut novel, *Finnie Walsh*, was nominated for the Amazon.ca/Books in Canada First Novel Award. His second novel, *Ascension*, was nominated for the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, and translated into seven languages. He is currently the Cliff Writer in Residence at the University British Columbia Creative Writing Program and the fiction mentor at The Writer's Studio at SFU. He lives with his wife and 2 daughters in British Columbia, Canada.

**Related links:** [www.stevengalloway.com/](http://www.stevengalloway.com/)

## **MARK GIMENEZ (USA)** *The Perk*

**Genre:** Thriller

**Release date:** *The Perk* (April 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *The Colour of Law*, *The Abduction*

**Quote:** '*The Next Grisham.*' **The Times**

**Book:** A grieving widower gets caught up in the politics of his Texas hometown, when he returns to make peace with his father. Mark Gimenez returns to where he is at his best – jam-packed legal thrillers. City lawyer, Beck Hardin, returns to his Texas hometown after 20 years - and his estranged father - after the death of his wife leaves him with two children to raise. *The Perk* has mystery, humour and history along with well-drawn characters that readers care about.

**Author:** Mark Gimenez grew up in Galveston County, Texas. Once a partner at a major Dallas law firm, Gimenez has given it up in order to start his own solo practice and to write. He lives in Texas with his wife and two sons.

**Related link:** [www.markgimenez.com](http://www.markgimenez.com)

## **MICHAEL HASTINGS (USA)** *I Lost My Love In Baghdad: A Modern War Story*

**Genre:** Non-Fiction

**Release date:** *I Lost My Love In Baghdad: A Modern War Story* (June 2008)

**Selected previous titles:**

**Quote:** '*There's a long tradition of young reporters going off to wars that test their journalism skills and their capacity to absorb emotional pain. Michael Hastings' pain was off the charts, but he manages to tell his story and the tragic story of his girlfriend Andi with dignity, humour, and grace. A searing personal drama and a raw, compelling account of the daily battle to cover the war in Iraq.*' **Andrew Nagorski** (Director of Public Policy, EastWest Institute, New York)

**Book:** In January 2007 Andi Parhamovich was killed in Baghdad. She was a 28-year-old American aid worker whose car had been ambushed in one of Baghdad's worst neighbourhoods. Andi was also engaged to the author, *Newsweek's* Iraqi correspondent Michael Hastings. In *I Lost My Love in Baghdad*, Hastings charts the ups and downs of their relationship, a modern love story played out against the ultra-violent backdrop of Iraq.

**Author:** He was the Baghdad correspondent for *Newsweek* magazine. For two years, the 27-year-old covered the war in Iraq. His other writings have appeared in *Slate*, *Salon* and *Foreign Policy*. He currently resides in Washington D.C and is covering the 2008 US Presidential. A portion of the author's proceeds from *I Lost My Love in Baghdad* will go to the Andi Foundation.

**Related link:** [www.theandifoundation.org](http://www.theandifoundation.org)

**LAWRENCE HILL (Canada)** *Someone Knows My Name* (*The Book of Negroes* alternative title)

**Genre:** Historical Fiction

**Release date:** *Someone Knows My Name* (September 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *The Deserter's Tale: the Story of an Ordinary Soldier Who Walked Away from the War in Iraq*; *Black Berry*; *Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada*; *Any Known Blood*; *Some Great Thing*

**Quote:** 'You feel you are turning the pages of history, the pages of truth' **Austin Clarke,**  
*Washington Post*  
'Lawrence Hill's hugely impressive historical work is completely engrossing and deserves a wide, international readership.'

**Book:** Winner of the 2008 Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best Book, *Someone Knows My Name* is a sweeping slave narrative, from a tribal African village to the plantation fields of South Carolina. Abducted as an 11-year-old child, from her village in Sierra Leone, and forced to walk for months to the sea in a coffle—a string of slaves—Aminata Diallo is sent to live as a slave. Years later, she forges her way to freedom, serving the British in the Revolutionary War and registering her name in the historic 'Book of Negroes'.

**Author:** The son of African-American immigrants - a black father and a white mother, much of Hill's writing touches on issues of identity and belonging. Growing up in the mainly white '60s suburbs of suburban Ontario, Hill was greatly influenced by his parent's work in human rights.

Formerly a reporter with *The Globe and Mail* and parliamentary correspondent for *The Winnipeg Free Press*, Hill also speaks French and Spanish. He has lived and worked across North America and Europe. As a volunteer with Canadian Crossroads International, he has travelled to the West African countries Niger, Cameroon and Mali. He has a B.A. in economics from Laval University in Quebec City and an M.A. in writing from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

**Related link:** [www.lawrencehill.com](http://www.lawrencehill.com)

**MICHAEL HOFMANN (Germany/UK)** *Selected Poems*

**Genre:** Poetry

**Release date:** *Selected Poems Michael Hofmann* (March 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *The Faber Book of Twentieth Century German Poems*; *Corona Corona*; *Behind the Lines*; *Approximately Nowhere*; *Acrimony*

**Anthology:** A retrospective of new poems from award-winning Michael Hofmann. His work has been widely admired, notably for their gift of vividly pointed reportage, and the collision course of words and dictions. Subject matters cover his relationship with his father, East and West; and contemporary England.

**Author:** Poet and translator, Hofmann was born West Germany in 1957. The son of the German novelist Gert Hofmann, his translation of his father's novel, *The Film Explainer*, won *The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize* in 1995. He has translated work by Bertolt Brecht, Joseph Roth, Patrick Süskind, Herta Mueller and Franz Kafka. His published poetry includes *Nights In The Iron Hotel* (1983), which won the Cholmondeley Award; *Acrimony* (1986), which won the Geoffrey Faber. In 2005, he edited the *Faber Book of 20th Century German Poems*. He has twice been the winner of the Weidenfeld Translation Prize and his *Selected Poems* was published in 2008. Hofmann lives in London

**RICHARD HOLMES (UK)** *The Age of Wonder*

**Genre:** Biography

**Release date:** *The Age of Wonder* (September 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *Sidetracks: Explorations of a Romantic Biographer; Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer; Coleridge: Darker Reflections; Dr Johnson & Mr Savage; The Pursuit*

**Quote:** 'This - and I can't remember ever thinking this before so strongly - is a biography to grow old with.' **The Independent (UK)**

**Book:** *The Age of Wonder* is an examination of the life and work of three remarkable scientists of the Romantic age, who laid the foundations of modern science in Britain. It tells the story of astronomers William and Caroline Herschel, chemists Humphry Davy and Michael Faraday and medical scientists, John Abernethy and William Lawrence. They each challenged traditional ideas about human identity, morality and religious belief and they were pioneers, in a time where distinctions between poetry, art and science were yet to take hold.

**Author:** One of the greatest living biographers, Richard Holmes is an immense authority on history, military and is a household name on the BBC. His biography of *Shelley* won the Somerset Maugham Prize. *Footsteps* (1985) revolutionised the way biography was thought about and written. Part one of his biography of *Coleridge* won the 1989 Whitbread Book of the Year Prize. His portrait of the friendship between *Dr Johnson and Mr Savage* won the James Tait Black Prize. The concluding volume of his Coleridge biography won the Duff Cooper Prize and the William Heinemann award. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, a Fellow of the British Academy and was awarded an OBE in 1992. He lives in the UK with novelist Rose Tremain.

**LLOYD JONES (New Zealand)** *Mr Pip, Here at the End of the World We Learn to Dance*

**Genre:** Fiction

**Release date:** *Mr Pip* (2007); *Here at the End of the World We Learn to Dance* (June 2008 re-issue) *Biografi* (September 2008 re-issue)

**Selected previous titles:** *The Book of Fame; Choo Woo; Paint Your Wife.*

**Quote:** 'A work of great charm and rigour.' **Australian Book Review**

**Book:** Winner Of The 2007 Commonwealth Writers' Prize and short-listed for the 2007 Man Booker Prize – *Mr Pip* tells us how the power of imagination can be a dangerous provocative thing. The story concerns Matilda, a 13 year old girl living in a remote village surrounded by civil unrest in the Pacific. With services shutting down, the only remaining white man, Mr Watts, takes over classes in the schoolroom, reading aloud to his class from *Great Expectations*. Soon Dickens' hero Pip starts to come alive for Matilda, becoming as real to her as her God-fearing mother, and the greatest friendship of her life begins.

**Author:** Award-winning novelist Lloyd Jones was born in 1955 in New Zealand. He has worked as a journalist and covered Papua New Guinea's blockade of Bougainville during the 1990s, the setting for his latest book *Mister Pip*. Jones has received awards including the Katherine Mansfield Memorial Fellowship in 1988, the Deutz Medal for Fiction, the Tasmania Pacific Fiction Prize (2003) and the Montana New Zealand Book Award (2001) for *The Book of Fame*. An early collection of Jones' short fiction *Swimming to Australia and Other Stories*, was short-listed for the New Zealand Fiction Award.

**Related link:** [www.bookcouncil.org.nz/writers/joneslloyd.html](http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/writers/joneslloyd.html)

**MAHVISH KHAN (USA)** *My Guantánamo Diary: The detainees and the stories they told me*

**Genre:** Memoir

**Release date:** *My Guantánamo Diary: The detainees and the stories they told me* (September 2008)

**Quote:** 'To the Afghans she met, [Mahvish] brought much more than ... her knowledge of the culture and country her parents had told her about. With her bunches of flowers and scented rice and lamb dishes, and her easy chat about anything at all, she restored them from numbers to human beings again.' **The Guardian**

**Book:** In a highly disturbing and impassioned memoir, Afghani-American, Mahvish Khan, writes of her experiences serving as a translator for lawyers representing detainees at the U.S. military prison at Guantánamo Bay. Khan perceptively details a catalogue of horrors and humiliations suffered by the prisoners, including many instances of torture, lack of medical care, and other human rights abuses. She highlights the plight of so-called enemy combatants, who ended up at Guantánamo because of large bounties paid by U.S. forces. A blistering exposé of the blatant injustices inflicted in the name of fighting terrorists.

**Author:** Mahvish Khan is an American lawyer, born to immigrant Afghan parents in Michigan. Outraged that her country was illegally imprisoning people at Guantánamo, she volunteered to translate for the prisoners. She spoke their language, understood their customs, and brought them *Starbucks* chai, the closest available drink to the kind of tea they would drink at home. She is a recent law school graduate and journalist. She has been published in the *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and other media. She lives in San Diego.

Related link: [www.mahvishkhan.com](http://www.mahvishkhan.com)

**ALICE KUIPERS (UK/Canada)** *Life on the Refrigerator Door*

**Genre:** Fiction

**Release date:** *Life on the Refrigerator Door* (October 2007)

**Quote:** 'In Kuipers' utterly original debut, the deceptively simple is charged in equal part, with technical dazzle, heartfelt humour, and emotional truth. Wow.' **Allan Stratton** (*Chanda's Secrets*)

**Book:** *Life on the Refrigerator Door* is a poignant and deeply moving first novel about the bonds of love and frustration that tie mothers and daughters. Told entirely in a series of notes left on the kitchen fridge—some casual, some intimate, some funny, some angry—it is the story of nine months in the life of 15 year-old Claire and her single mother.

**Author:** Alice Kuipers was born in England, and now lives in Canada, where she works as a Pilates teacher and lives with her author partner Yann Martel, also at **BWF**. She is a graduate of Manchester Metropolitan University and has had short stories published in literary magazines and produced for CBC radio. *Life on the Refrigerator Door* will be published in 21 countries.

Related link: [www.refrigeratordoor.ca/](http://www.refrigeratordoor.ca/)



**YANN MARTEL (Canada)** *Life of Pi*

**Genre:** Fiction

**Release date:** *Life of Pi (Illustrated Edition 2007)*

**Selected previous titles:** *Self; The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccmatios*

**Quote:** 'A terrific book... fresh, original, smart, devious, and crammed with absorbing lore.' Margaret Atwood, Sunday Times

**Book:** After the tragic sinking of a cargo ship, a solitary lifeboat remains bobbing on the wide, wild Pacific. The crew of the surviving vessel consists of a hyena, one zebra (with a broken leg), an orang-utan, a 450-pound Royal Bengal Tiger named Richard Parker and Pi — a 16-year-old Indian boy. *Life of Pi* is a dazzling work of imagination that will delight and astound readers in equal measure. It is a triumph of storytelling and a tale that will, as one character puts it, make you believe in God.

**Author:** Winner of the 2002 Man Booker Prize for Fiction for *Life of Pi*. Martel was born, Spain, in 1963, of Canadian parents. He grew up in Costa Rica, France, Spain and Mexico, in addition to Canada. He has a Philosophy degree from Trent University Ontario, worked variously as a tree planter, dishwasher and security guard before taking up writing full-time from the age of 27. *Life of Pi* will eventually be published in over forty countries and territories, over thirty languages. The film rights have been optioned by Fox Studios.

**ALANNA MITCHELL (Canada)** *Seasick*

**Genre:** Non-Fiction

**Release date:** *Seasick (September 2008)*

**Selected previous titles:** *Dancing at the Dead Sea: Tracking the World's Environmental Hotspots*

**Quote:** 'A riveting book of revelations about Earth's largest and most important habitat.' Tim Flannery

**Book:** *Seasick* is the first book to examine the hidden ecological crisis of the global ocean and create a page-turning cohesive story from it. It is a disturbing reality that many people believe the oceans of our planet are largely devoid of life and ecological significance. In actual fact, the oceans are the great unexamined ecological crisis of our planet. Globally the oceans cover 71 per cent of the planet's surface and contain 90 per cent of the mass of life on Earth. While tremendous attention and money have been invested in saving the ecosystems of our land animals and plants, the gradual deterioration of ocean life has been happening in secret. Scientists are just beginning to piece together the growing crisis beneath the waves and its implications for future life on this planet.

**Author:** Alanna Mitchell is the author of the internationally acclaimed *Dancing at the Dead Sea: Tracking the World's Environmental Hotspots*. In 2000, while working as science reporter at Canada's national newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, she was named the Best Environmental Reporter in the World by the Reuters Foundation. The prize led her to be a visiting scholar at Oxford University's Green College. In her 17 years as a newspaper journalist, she won three international reporting awards as well as several national awards for her work on social trends and finance. She is now a public speaker and independent writer living in Toronto, Canada.

**LEILAH NADIR (Iraq/Canada)** *The Orange Trees of Baghdad*

**Genre:** Memoir

**Release date:** *The Orange Trees of Baghdad* (September 2008)

**Quote:** 'Lovingly woven together from inherited memory and family lore, her Iraq is infinitely more vivid, more textured, and more heartbreaking than what we see nightly on the news. In the debates about winning and losing the war, this is a book about what loss really means —the theft of history and of homeland.' **Naomi Klein**

**Book:** Born to an Iraqi-Christian father and a British mother, and raised in Britain and Canada, Leilah Nadir has never set foot on Iraqi soil. Distanced from her Iraqi roots through immigration and now cut off by war, the closest link she has to the nation is through her father, who left Baghdad in the 1960s to pursue his studies in England. His Iraq is of mythical origins; his beginnings are in a garden at the family home that now lays vacant. Through her father's memories, Leilah recounts her family's lost story, from Iraq at the turn of the twentieth century during the British occupation, to the Iraq– Iran War and the Gulf War. Through her cousins still living in Baghdad, she experiences the thunderous explosions of the present-day conflict. A wonderfully detailed exploration of life in Baghdad filtered through the voices and memories of the Iraqi Diaspora.

**Author:** Leilah Nadir is a freelance writer who has written and broadcast political commentaries for the *CBC*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *The Georgia Straight* and *in Brick* magazine. She has a master's degree in English literature from the University of Edinburgh and a joint honours bachelor's degree in English and history from McGill University. She has worked in London and Vancouver in the publishing industry. She lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Related link: [www.leilahnadir.com](http://www.leilahnadir.com)

**CAROL OFF (Canada)** *Bitter Chocolate*

**Genre:** Non-Fiction

**Release date:** *Bitter Chocolate* (July 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *The Lion, The Fox and The Eagle; The Ghosts of Medak Pocket*

**Quote:** 'Astonishing . . . a wrenching story and one well-researched by an investigative journalist who has proven she knows the ropes . . . *Bitter Chocolate* is a compelling and important book.' The London Free Press

**Book:** Chocolate is synonymous with pleasure, but the real story of chocolate is often far from sweet. *Bitter Chocolate* begins by tracing the fascinating origins and lore of the cocoa craze while showing that exploitation and inequity have always been closely tied to chocolate production throughout its long history. The modern heart of *Bitter Chocolate* is Carol Off's inside look at the situation in the Ivory Coast in West Africa, which produces nearly half of the world's cocoa beans.

Ground-breaking and eye-opening, *Bitter Chocolate* is a social history, a passionate, personal investigative account and a brave exposé of the workings of a multi-billion-dollar industry that has institutionalised misery as it has served our pleasures.

**Author:** Carol Off is an award-winning Canadian Television and radio broadcaster and journalist with extensive experience in covering international affairs. She has reported on many significant issues including the US-led 'War on Terror' in Afghanistan, followed the Former Yugoslavian war crimes trial and the post-war reconstruction of the Balkans, and covered conflicts in the Middle East, India, Europe and the former Soviet Union. She has won numerous awards for her television documentaries. *Bitter Chocolate* is her third book.

**ANN PATTY (USA)** Industry Speaker (*Harcourt Publishing*)

**Selected First US Publications/Authors acquired, edited and introduced to the US market:** V. C. Andrews (*Flowers in the Attic*); Olivia Goldsmith (*The First Wives Club*); Peter Hedges (*What's Eating Gilbert Grape*); Yann Martel (*Life of Pi*); Michael Moore (*Downsize This!*); Frank Zappa (*the Real Frank Zappa Book*), Jeanette Winterson (*Lighthousekeeping*)

**Speaker:** An executive editor at *Harcourt*, with 28 years in the publishing business, Ann Patty sifts through 10 to 20 manuscripts a week. She began as an editor at *Pocket Books*. At the age of 29, she founded *Poseidon Press* in 1982 (an imprint of *Simon & Schuster*) where she was Publisher and Editorial Director. In 1993 she moved to *Crown Publishers*, first as Editor at Large, then as Editorial Director. Since 2000, she has been Executive Editor at *Harcourt*. She describes her role simply. "I'm the mother of the book . . . you dress it up, give it good manners, try to introduce it to nice people. It's exactly like being a mom." Patty was born in Indiana and went to college at UC Berkeley

**SUN SHUYUN (UK/China)** *A Year In Tibet*

**Genre:** Non-Fiction

**Release date:** *A Year in Tibet* (September 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *The Long March*; *Ten Thousand Miles Without a Cloud*

**Quote:** 'Remarkable , brilliant and compelling' **The Times** (Sun Shuyun's writing)

**Book:** Sun Shuyun grew up in China and has always been fascinated by Tibet and Buddhism. Both an author and historian, Shuyun takes the reader, with her latest book, to a tiny and isolated village in Tibet, known for its anti-Chinese stance. She and a television crew, who were half Chinese and half Tibetan, lived and worked there for eighteen months, filming and recording daily life. *A Year in Tibet* is an insight into the relationship between the Chinese and Tibetans, the history behind it, and the way the two interact in the 21st century. Written with Sun Shuyun's characteristic insight into relationships, this is social and political history with an emphasis on humanity.

**Author:** Sun Shuyun was born in China in the 1960s and grew up during the Cultural Revolution. She graduated from Beijing University and won a scholarship to Oxford. She is now a film and television producer. For the past decade she has been dividing her time between London and Beijing, making documentaries for the UK's BBC, Channel 4 and international broadcasters.

**RYAN J-W SMITH (UK)** *New World Order*

**Selected previous productions as playwright and director::** *Sweet Love Adieu*; *The Power Play*; *Love Labours Won*

**Quote:** 'A true Renaissance man.' **The Scotsman**

'*The Bard Mark Two*' **BBC & Channel 4**

**Production:** Already nominated for an Amnesty International/Big Issue Freedom of Expression of Award - *New World Order* is currently being performed at Edinburgh Festival. The play is a one-man show, written, directed by, and starring Ryan J-W Smith. It takes audiences into the pseudo-classroom of the would-be nefarious world ruler as he gives a master class in leading a nation to war through fear and propaganda. Smith's play is an unique, humorous and disturbing commentary on the startling truths surrounding America's current Neo-Conservative administration, its rise to power, how it relates to past administrations and fits in with America's overall quest for global hegemony since the end of World War II. *New World Order* presents some of the evidence supporting the suggestion that 9/11 was an inside job. Like all Smith's plays, *New World Order* is written entirely in rhyming iambic verse.

**Artistic Director:** Ryan J-W Smith is the Artistic Director of *The Rogue Shakespeare Company*. Founded in 2001, the company's first production was Smith's first verse play *Sweet Love Adieu* performed in the Roman Amphitheatre at St. Albans, UK. Smith has been a professional actor since the age of 19 and graduated from Trinity College, Dublin. He is a solo recording artist and keeps a sonnet blog. [www.sonnetblog.com](http://www.sonnetblog.com)

**Related link:** [www.ryansmith.com](http://www.ryansmith.com)

**SIMON WINCHESTER (UK)** *Bomb, Book and Compass: Joseph Needham and the Great Secrets of China*

**Genre:** Non-Fiction

**Release date:** *Bomb, Book and Compass: Joseph Needham and the Great Secrets of China* (September 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *The Map that Changed the World; Surgeon of Crowthorne; Krakatoa*

**Quote:** 'Absolutely riveting –tour de force.' **The Times** (*Surgeon of Crowthorne*)

**Book:** Known as the *Erasmus of China*, Joseph Needham is one of history's brilliant eccentrics. Both a Cambridge scholar and bio-chemist, Needham's outstanding achievement, his 24-volume *Science and Civilisation in China* is relatively unknown. Celebrated author Simon Winchester, as in *Surgeon of Crowthorne* has put remedy to this in his extraordinary book. Joseph Needham was a keenly intelligent, charismatic young biochemist, working towards a glittering career at Cambridge, when he fell in love with a young Chinese student. His passion for his mistress quickly led to a fascination with her country's language and history, and he soon developed an astonishing reputation as a self-taught, albeit oddball, scholar of Chinese culture. When, in 1943, the British government sent him on a diplomatic mission to help save China's universities from the occupying Japanese forces, he began the research that would occupy him for the rest of his life and which would one day lead him to write the greatest work on China ever created in the Western World.

**Author:** Simon Winchester, OBE is a British author and journalist who lives in the United States. Winchester studied geology at St Catherine's College, Oxford before working in Africa and on offshore oil rigs. He then spent a twenty-year career as a foreign correspondent for *The Guardian*, winning several awards. While at *The Guardian*, he was a witness to the events of 'Bloody Sunday'. He has more recently written for such publications as *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *National Geographic* and *The New York Times*. Before his success in book writing he was notable for being a journalist held captive by Argentinean forces in the Falkland Islands. In the BBC television drama about the invasion, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, he was played by Paul Geoffrey.

**RONALD WRIGHT (Canada)** *What is America?*

**Genre:** Non-Fiction

**Release date:** *What is America?* (September 2008)

**Selected previous titles:** *A Short History of Progress; Stolen Continents; A Scientific Romance*

**Quote:** 'Ronald Wright is an historical philosopher with a profound understanding of other cultures.' **Jan Morris**

**Book:** From the award-winning, number one bestselling author of *A Short History of Progress* comes another surprising, frightening and essential book. The USA is now the world's lone superpower, whose deeds could make or break this century. How did a marginal frontier society, in a mere two centuries, become the de facto ruler of the world? Why do America's great achievements in democracy, prosperity and civil rights now seem threatened by forces within itself? Brimming with insight into history and human behaviour, and written in Wright's captivating style, *What is America?* shows how this came to pass and reframes the debate about our ally and ourselves.

**Author:** Ronald Wright, novelist, historian, and essayist, has won prizes in all three genres, and is published in ten languages. His non-fiction includes the number one bestseller *Stolen Continents*, winner of the Gordon Montador Award and chosen as a Book of the Year by *The Independent* and *The Sunday Times*. His first novel, *A Scientific Romance*, won the 1997 David Higham Prize for Fiction and was chosen as book of the year by *The Globe and Mail*, *The Sunday Times*, and *The New York Times*. Ronald Wright is also a frequent contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement*, and has written and presented documentaries for radio and television on both sides of the Atlantic. He was born in England, educated at Cambridge, and now lives in British Columbia, Canada.