

## NEWCASTLE POETRY PRIZE (NEW MEDIA) ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Firstly I'd like to dedicate this award to my father Jack Walker, who in large part encouraged my love of the English language.

This is very gratifying. I'm proud – not just that I've won the New Media section of the Newcastle Prize both in 2007 and 2009 - but that I've done it in collaboration with each of my talented sons. *Moon/ antipoem* with Matt in 07 was more interactive and non-linear. *Bibliophobia* with Ben in 09 was more filmic and text-oriented.

Again I thank the Hunter Writers' Centre for your continued support of the NPP – particularly your encouragement of the New Media section – and your hospitality in inviting us to be part of the presentation evening.

We'd all like poetry to have a wider audience, although in Australia at least, it seems destined to remain the passion of the minority. Certainly if you went into verse-writing with the ambition of making money you'd be likely to be disappointed. So an award like this is a wonderful unexpected bonus for any Aussie poet.

I believe that, notwithstanding its fine traditions, poetry should never be backward-looking or static. Our genre has a strong text-on-page tradition – and it always will – but whenever new forms of technology and communication appear there will always be poets who want to take advantage of the new medium. Previously 'print-only' verse can have new layers of meaning and understanding added through the visual. (Search for any of Billy Collins' animated work on YouTube if you need convincing.) Even in my own work (admittedly less talented and less famous than the former US Poet Laureate's!), I've managed to diversify from print to CDs and multimedia formats. I've also been privileged to have had my poem *dunes* inspire a beautiful composition for Zephyr String Quartet and been invited to work with fellow Adelaide poets and musos to produce exciting new synergies in *Max\_Mo*, an experiment in spoken word and jazz hip-hop.

So the possibilities are endless. Give it a go!

Rob Walker

27/11/09