

**Aurealis Awards 2009**  
**Anthology/Collection**  
**Judges' Report**

**Panel members**

Jervina Dorney (convenor), Toni Johnson-Woods, Simon Petrie, Cat Sparks

**Number of entries**

Anthologies: 8

Collections: 4

**Judging criteria**

Anthologies and collections were judged on a number of criteria. The general quality of the writing, the tightness of the editing and the placement of stories within the volume were all of importance. Where applicable, judges also took into account the way in which each individual story contributed to the overall theme of the volume. In addition to technical excellence, the contribution of a volume to the genre as a whole, the lasting impression of its stories and its overall entertainment value were also key aspects of the evaluation process.

**Overview of entries**

The field of entries this year was intriguingly varied, from hard SF couched in modern-day parables to gothic horror to upbeat and offbeat detective mysteries. The standard of entries as a whole was outstanding, and each of the winning volumes had to overcome serious competition to rise to the top of our lists.

**Finalists**

**Anthology**

*Eclipse 3*, Jonathan Strahan (editor), Night Shade Books WINNER

*The New Space Opera 2*, Gardner Dozois and Jonathan Strahan (editors), Harper Eos

*New Ceres Nights*, Alisa Krasnostein and Tehani Wessely (editors), Twelfth Planet Press

*X6*, Keith Stevenson (editor), Coeur de Lion Publishing

*Eclipse 2*, Jonathan Strahan (editor), Night Shade Books

**Collection**

*Oceanic*, Greg Egan, Gollancz WINNER

*A Book of Endings*, Deborah Biancotti (author) & Alisa Krasnostein (editor), Twelfth Planet Press

*Slice of Life*, Paul Haines (author) & Geoffrey Maloney (editor), The Mayne Press

*Johnny Phillips Werewolf Detective*, Robbie Matthews (author) & Donna Hanson (editor),

Australian Speculative Fiction

**Review of finalists**

**Anthology**

*Eclipse 3*, Jonathan Strahan (editor), Night Shade Books WINNER

The third volume in this series of anthologies, *Eclipse 3* presents itself as a fascinating collection of disparate and individually captivating stories, all working towards a coherent and integrated whole that is definitely greater than the sum of its parts. Featuring some of the hottest voices in SF today, this is a deeply engaging anthology that is a must read for any enthusiast of short fiction.

*New Ceres Nights*, Alisa Krasnostein and Tehani Wessely (editors), Twelfth Planet Press

An anthology of stories set in a shared world— a colonised planet mirroring itself in the retrospective purity of eighteenth century Earth— arguably this work has the narrowest theme of any entrant in this year's anthology division of the Aurealis Awards. The imaginative flair and broad appeal of so many of this volume's stories is testament to the skill of its authors— a mix of both the new and the well loved voices of the Australian speculative fiction community.

*X6*, Keith Stevenson (editor), Coeur de Lion Publishing

The strengths of the novella, a much-neglected genre of fiction, are shown to fine effect here in Keith Stevenson's un-themed anthology of six stories by some of Australia's most prominent speculative fiction writers. Fully utilising the capacity of a novella for deeper exploration of themes and characterisation, all six stories in this anthology are memorable, immersive and finely crafted. This is definitely speculative fiction on the literary side, ranging from sweetly poignant to darkly chilling.

*Eclipse 2*, Jonathan Strahan (editor), Night Shade Books

This predecessor of *Eclipse 3* has much to recommend it, containing an eclectic mix of fantasy and hard SF from established authors worldwide. Stories in this anthology frequently blend genres with fascinating and engrossing results. An entertaining anthology featuring some truly outstanding stories.

*The New Space Opera 2*, Gardner Dozois and Jonathan Strahan (editors), Harper Eos

This is an anthology for every SF fan, delivering classic titles by a line-up of celebrated authors both international and domestic. Stretching the broad canvas of space opera even further, this anthology explores big ideas in impossible dimensions, feeling fresh and original while still familiarly anchored in the enduring themes of this genre.

### **Collection**

*Oceanic*, Greg Egan, Gollancz **WINNER**

This is a powerhouse collection of Egan's writing, featuring broad-ranging stories that demonstrate his unique mastery of diamond-hard SF, combined with the unexpected artistry of crafting characters that are both credible, real and richly detailed. Whether set on Earth in the here-and-now or across the Milky Way in the far distant future, this is an expertly rendered collection of stories that demonstrate mastery of SF concepts both old and new.

*A Book of Endings*, Deborah Biancotti (author) & Alisa Krasnostein (editor), Twelfth Planet Press

This is an outstanding debut by a strong and original voice. This collection of Deborah Biancotti's stories features a cast of credible female leads whose dilemmas unfold in haunting and immersive stories of dark dystopias barely a step sideways from the urban grit of the familiar everyday. Demonstrating truly captivating and masterful prose, each story in this collection is a gem.

*Slice of Life*, Paul Haines (author) & Geoffrey Maloney (editor), The Mayne Press

Bleak, blackly humorous and brutally self-deprecating, this is uncomfortable yet fascinating and engaging fiction from an author whose no-holds-barred, no-prisoners-taken approach to writing is on glorious display in this collection. Juxtaposing life with air travel, psychosis and Machiavellian talking cats, this is Australian masculinity and sexuality as fiction at its most dark and disturbing. Not for the faint of heart, read a "slice" at a time.

*Johnny Phillips Werewolf Detective*, Robbie Matthews (author) & Donna Hanson (editor), Australian Speculative Fiction

Wry, quirky, light of heart yet deep on entertainment, this is an intriguing and weirdly effective collection of Matthews' stories about his lycanthropic private investigator, Johnny Phillips.

Presented in chronological order, follow Johnny Phillips as his mundane attempts to keep his business afloat frequently and comically run awry of his clients' demonic dilemmas. This collection is recommended for a light and enjoyable read of stories both endlessly inventive and marvellously entertaining.

### **Conclusion**

All the finalists were outstanding and each had something unique with which to recommend itself to the judges. The broad range of genres and styles represented meant that every judge found something of particular appeal in the entries for this year's awards. Despite this though, we are all happy to recommend our respective anthology and collection winners, each of which is a work that truly stood out as of particular note in this year's field. Through stiff competition, the winners of the Aurealis Award for best anthology and collection of 2009 have received the unanimous endorsement of this panel.