



OPEN PAGE



Nam Le is the author of *The Boat* (2009). He has received the Dylan Thomas Prize (2008), the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, the New South Wales Premier's Literary Award for Book of the Year (2009) and the *Sydney Morning Herald* Best Young Novelist Award (2009), among other prizes. His fiction has been widely anthologised. Currently the fiction editor of the *Harvard Review*, he divides his time between Australia and overseas.

WHY DO YOU WRITE?

Grim ecstasy. (And indolence, impudence, loneliness, confusion, pride and fear).

ARE YOU A VIVID DREAMER?

Once I took Lariam, a sometime-psychotic anti-malarial drug, and dreamt that a fat American in a panama was sitting at the foot of my bed.

WHERE ARE YOU HAPPIEST?

Hungry, in front of food; lonely, beside good friends; and warm, within shouting distance of big bodies of water.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE WORD?

I couldn't possibly choose. But I like lots of mono-syllabic ones. I'm always amazed at how many more there are to be discovered.

WHICH HUMAN QUALITY DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

Grace.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?

The OED (I've been using the online version, if that counts).

AND YOUR FAVOURITE LITERARY HERO AND HEROINE?

Maybe Odysseus and Calypso.

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, IMPEDES YOUR WRITING?

To be honest, what doesn't?

HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOUR FIRST BOOK APPEARED?

Twenty-nine.

IN A PHRASE, HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERISE YOUR WORK?

Written – for better or worse – by me.

WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE AUTHOR?

It will always be tough for me to go past Shakespeare.

HOW DO YOU REGARD PUBLISHERS?

With the same emotional variousness I'd turn toward older siblings.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE STATE OF CRITICISM?

A healthy state of disrepair.

IF YOU HAD YOUR TIME OVER AGAIN, WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO BE A WRITER?

I wouldn't say I chose to be a writer; I chose to write; I hope I'd choose the same again.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WRITERS FESTIVALS?

They never fail, I think, to surprise.

DO YOU FEEL ARTISTS ARE VALUED IN OUR SOCIETY?

I think most of us are undervalued – while a small number of us just think we are!

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?

I'm waiting for it to be done with me, so I'll know.