
2014

CITY OF FREMANTLE
T.A.G. HUNGERFORD AWARD

MEDIA RELEASE

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All-female Hungerford list looks to Asia Pacific for inspiration

Five authors are contenders for the 2014 City of Fremantle T.A.G. Hungerford Award. Louise Allan, Madelaine Dickie, Portland Jones, Mihaela Nicolescu and Nicole Sinclair are in the running for a cash prize of \$12,000 plus a publishing contract with Fremantle Press.

Fremantle Press fiction publisher and Hungerford judge Georgia Richter said the Hungerford was an anonymous competition in which manuscripts were judged on content, style and market appeal.

'It is unusual that the shortlist contains only women and that four out of five authors set their stories in the Asia Pacific. It is also clear from the 61 entries that new Western Australian authors are interested in exploring how we interact with the cultures and peoples of our near neighbours,' said Richter.

Richter said the award had a long history of helping authors of outstanding talent at the crucial early stages of their careers, with not only winners but sometimes shortlisted contenders identified for publication.

'Established authors like Gail Jones and Brenda Walker each had their first publishing opportunity thanks to this award, while more recent winners have gained recognition in the Miles Franklin Literary Awards, the Barbara Jefferis Award for Literature, the Kibble Literary Awards for Women Writers and in the *Sydney Morning Herald* Young Novelist of the Year awards,' said Richter.

The shortlist was announced by the Mayor of Fremantle at a City of Fremantle ceremony on Thursday 11 December. Mayor Pettitt said the City prided itself on its vibrant arts culture.

'Our commitment to the City of Fremantle T.A.G. Hungerford Award is a way of fostering the emerging writers who will contribute so much to our culture,' said Mayor Pettitt.

The winner of the 2014 City of Fremantle T.A.G. Hungerford Award will be announced in early 2015.

The Hungerford is given biennially to a full-length manuscript of fiction or creative non-fiction, by a Western Australian author previously unpublished in book form. It is sponsored by the City of Fremantle, Fremantle Press, writingWA and *The West Australian*.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Claire Miller, cmiller@fremantlepress.com.au, 0419 837 841

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The shortlist

Ida's Children – Louise Allan

Tropo – Madelaine Dickie

Seeing the Elephant – Portland Jones

Other Place – Mihaela Nicolescu

All That's Gone Before – Nicole Sinclair

About the authors

Ida's Children – Louise Allan, 48 years old, Swanbourne,

Louise Allan is a West Australian writer of women's fiction and memoir. Her background is as a Medical Practitioner, until she stopped practising in 2010. She completed an online writing course soon after, and enjoyed it so much she took up writing. She has been a student of the online writing programmes at Gotham Writers' Workshop and Creative Non-Fiction, as well as attending local workshops and courses in Perth, Western Australia. She coordinates the Booklength Project Group at FAWWA. Louise has had a number of short stories and memoir pieces published in anthologies, and in 2014, she was granted a Varuna Residential Fellowship to continue working on her novel, *Ida's Children*. You can find out more about Louise and her writing on her website at louise-allan.com.

Tropo – Madelaine Dickie, 28 years old, Broome

Madelaine Dickie studied creative arts and journalism at the University of Wollongong. In 2011 she received a Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeavour Award to move to West Java, Indonesia, and complete her first novel, *Tropo*. As part of this award, she worked with mentors at Universitas Padjadjaran and Universitas Islam Bandung. She is also the recipient of the Illawarra Mercury Journalism Prize (2011) and the Nicholas Pounder Prize (2009). In 2012 she was shortlisted for the Robert Hope Memorial Prize. Her writing has appeared in numerous publications including *GriffithREVIEW* (2013), the American journal *Creative Nonfiction* (2012), *Hecate* (2010) and *Kurungabaa* (2009, 2010, 2012). Her radio stories have been broadcast on Radio National and ABC Kimberley and she also writes and rides for the surfboard company Treehouse Landscapes and Handshapes. Madelaine currently lives in Broome, Western Australia, where she works for KRED Enterprises, a charitable trust committed to sustainable Aboriginal economic development.

Seeing the Elephant – Portland Jones, 44 years old, Herne Hill, Swan Valley

Portland Jones says she can't decide if she is a writer who trains horses or a horse trainer who writes. Portland lectures in equine behaviour at Murdoch University and has written widely on horse training for the equestrian press. As a writer Portland has worked in as many different non-fiction genres as possible, including journalism, marketing and academia and she has edited and collaborated on books with other writers. Portland completed an MA in 2001. *Seeing the Elephant* is her first novel and was written as part of a PhD thesis. Portland lives and works on a property in the Swan Valley with her partner and three children. She is on the board of an animal welfare charity and in her spare time likes to run. She is currently working on a second novel, based on the life of her great-grandfather.

Other Place – Mihaela Nicolescu, 34 years old, Leeming

Mihaela was born in Romania in 1980, was brought up in Sweden, and then spent 13 years in London, where she completed her MA in Creative Writing at Birkbeck College, University of London. In 2013, she finally escaped to Perth, where she discovered the joys of perpetual sunshine ... and the misery of perpetual sunshine. Her short stories have been published in a number of magazines, including *Mslxia*, *The Mechanics Institute Review*, *Aesthetica Magazine*, and *The New Writer*, and her plays have been produced by Parrabola and Total Beast Theatre, and as part of

London's Off Cut Festival. She was guest editor for three issues of the World Arts Platform publication, *Write from the Heart*, celebrating the work of writers who use English as a second language.

All That's Gone Before – Nicole Sinclair, 40 years old, Donnybrook
Nicole Sinclair's stories have won the Katharine Susannah Prichard Award and the Down South Writers competition. Her work has been published in *indigo* journal, *Westerly*, *The West Australian* and *Award Winning Australian Writing*, and excerpts are also included in public artworks adorning Busselton Jetty. Nicole has interviewed various authors for the Margaret River and PIAF Writers Festivals, presented book reviews on ABC Regional Radio and been a judge of the Margaret River Press Short Story Competition since its inception. She has taught creative writing in secondary schools and Edith Cowan University South West. Currently juggling nappies and research, she is completing a PhD, of which *All That's Gone Before* is a component. She lives in Donnybrook with her husband and two daughters.

About the Award

The 2014 City of Fremantle T.A.G. Hungerford Award is a biennial award that celebrates literary merit and originality, and is given for a full-length manuscript of fiction or creative non-fiction, by a Western Australian author previously unpublished in book form. The Award carries a cash prize of \$12,000 and a publishing contract with Fremantle Press. It is sponsored by The City of Fremantle, Fremantle Press, writingWA and *The West Australian*.

About T.A.G. Hungerford (1915–2011)

T.A.G. Hungerford was widely admired as a quintessential Western Australian writer and identity. He was a major contributor in helping us define our sense of self and place in a rapidly changing world. His first collection of short stories was published in 1976 by Fremantle Press. *Stories From Suburban Road*, *A Knockabout with a Slouch Hat* and *Red Rover All Over* have all been major publishing successes. In 1987 T.A.G. Hungerford was made a member of the Order of Australia. In 2002 he was the recipient of the Patrick White Award and in 2004 he was declared a Western Australian State Living Treasure. He was proud to have the unique WA award for debut writers, the T.A.G. Hungerford Award, named for him. He was always a great supporter of new and emerging writers.

Past winners

1990 Brenda Walker, *Crush*
1991 Gail Jones, *The House of Breathing*
1993 Simone Lazaroo, *The World Waiting to be Made*
1995 Bruce Russell, *Jacob's Air*
2000 Christopher Murray, *A Whispering Fish*
2002 Nathan Hobby, *The Fur*
2004 Donna Mazza, *The Albanian*
2006 Alice Nelson, *The Last Sky*
2008 Natasha Lester, *What is Left Over, After*
2010 Jacqueline Wright, *Red Dirt Talking*
2012 Robert Edeson, *The Weaver Fish*

Judges' Report

The City of Fremantle T.A.G. Hungerford Award 2014 attracted 61 full-length manuscript entries. The large number of entrants to this biennial award testifies to the importance of the award and to the continuing number of unpublished West Australian writers producing fiction and creative non-fiction manuscripts. This is the last time that writingWA will manage the award, for its partners Fremantle Press, WA Newspapers and naming sponsor the City of Fremantle.

Three judges, Delys Bird, Susan Midalia and Richard Rossiter, judging the award together for the second time, were pleased by the number of entries and the high standard of many of the manuscripts. However, this made coming to a decision about the manuscripts to be sent to Fremantle Press for final consideration by publisher Georgia Richter, a difficult one. All the manuscripts were judged anonymously. They were read by two of the judges, while those considered potentially eligible for the award were read by all three. Five manuscripts were shortlisted and sent to Fremantle Press, from which a winner will be chosen and announced by the Press and a publishing contract for the work issued.

The entries in this year's award were predominantly fictional narratives; there were two collections of short stories and a few memoirs and personal and historical manuscripts. Some works were highly literary, others fitted more into the realm of popular fiction and several were suited to young adult readers. The judges were most interested in the quality of the writing, the development of a narrative voice, the depth of characterisation achieved and the structure and plotting of the narrative; these criteria applied to all the manuscripts. Some manuscripts drew on historical events or the past. There were family sagas, coming-of-age stories and several concerning relationships, some very amusing. There were a number of parallel, inter-generational narratives, where what is undone in one generation is resolved in the next. There was little crime fiction this year. Romantic themes are always popular and were often well handled.

One notable aspect of this year's award was the emphasis on our regional neighbours: Papua New Guinea, Sumatra and Vietnam were some of the settings depicted. It would seem that many emerging Western Australian writers are looking to articulate our relationships with our nearer neighbours – in this year's Hungerford, many Australian characters ventured abroad, or Asian characters immigrated to Australia. These novels looked outward to a variety of cultures with curiosity, wonder and an acknowledged imperfect understanding. The emphasis of these manuscripts on representing other cultures also shows how critical to our national character the ethnic melting pot can be, and it is wonderful to see the depth and complexity of 'Australian-ness' represented in this way.

With many of the individual works showing promise, the judges responded to those manuscripts that stood out either in their subject matter or the quality of the narrative voice, where the reader's interest was captured from the beginning and sustained throughout the narrative. Our commendation to all those who submitted their work to the 2014 T.A.G. Hungerford Award and good luck with your writing in the future.

Comments on the shortlist

Ida's Children – Louise Allen

Ida's Children is an at-times heartbreaking narrative about the childless Ida who gives her love to her nieces and nephews, the often neglected and mistreated children of her troubled sister Nora. A narrative spanning several generations, this novel is simply written and contains many moments of beauty and sadness. The novel raises important questions about past attitudes: the proprietorial attitude to children and the reluctance of society to intervene in the 'private' realm of the family.

Tropo – Madelaine Dickie

Penelope comes to Lampung, Indonesia, to begin a job as a hotel manager for Shane, the charismatic and boorish Australian. Penelope is adrift, having cast herself free from a conventional and conservative boyfriend in Perth, and she is nostalgic for the Indonesia of her childhood where she lived for a year. The nature of modern-day Indonesia creeps upon her by degrees: with its religious unrest and growing resentment of foreigners – especially Australians – and also its abiding belief in the power of black magic. *Tropo* is a beautifully observed novel with a strong sense of place about a young Australian abroad witnessing a culture and caught up in events she only half understands.

Seeing the Elephant – Portland Jones

Minh, a Vietnamese immigrant who is undergoing chemo, finds that his treatment and the confrontation of his own mortality opens his mind to memories long suppressed. *Seeing the Elephant* is the story of a young Australian called Frank who is placed in charge of Vietnamese villagers, mountain men, training them to be resistance fighters against the communists in the north. Frank's letters home to his grandfather intersperse and intersect with Minh's narrative as we read of the young man's work as an interpreter for Frank. *Seeing the Elephant* portrays the Vietnam War from an unexpected angle as a love story develops between Minh and Frank, true brothers-in-arms.

Other Place – Mihaela Nicolescu

Other Place is a collection of short stories of refreshing range, written by an author with an excellent understanding of the form. Strong stories included (but were by no means limited to) 'Coiled' (Mina returns to Romania for her aunt Lili's funeral), 'The Impressionist' (a cynical teacher has an affair and finally realises the talent of her nerdiest student), 'Frozen' (a man recalls a tragic childhood event during a winter on an island in Finland) and '866' (a refugee in Perth finds an unexpected ally in his neighbour's daughter). This author has the capacity to inhabit a range of voices and situations and countries with impressive flair.

All That's Gone Before – Nicole Sinclair

The story of two generations, this novel is set in country Western Australia and Papua New Guinea. *All That's Gone Before* tells the tale of true love, of love lost and found. Clem and Rose find each other in a small country town in Western Australia. Their daughter Beth, with a broken heart, chooses to leave WA and head to PNG. There she must learn to heal herself in a country where the diurnal ebb and flow can be beautiful or brutal. The achievement of this affirming work lies in its balancing of dual narratives, as they are revealed in the past and present.

Judges: Delys Bird, Susan Midalia, Richard Rossiter and Georgia Richter

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