

27 April 2010

Short list for Kibble and Dobbie Awards for women writers announced

Perpetual today announced this year's short list for two of Australia's most prestigious writing awards, the Nita B. Kibble Literary Award for Women Writers and the Dobbie Encouragement Award.

The Kibble Literary Award recognises the work of an established Australian woman writer and provides the winner a \$30,000 prize, while the Dobbie Award provides \$5,000 and recognises the work of a first published Australian woman writer. Perpetual manages the Awards as trustee for the Estate of the Late Miss Nita May Dobbie.

Short-listed for the Awards are:

Kibble Literary Award:

Josephine Emery for 'The Real Possibility of Joy'

Kristina Olsson for 'The China Garden'

Shirley Walker for 'The Ghost at the Wedding'

Dobbie Encouragement Award:

Karen Hitchcock for 'Little White Slips'

Deborah Forster for 'The Book of Emmett'

Robyn Mundy for 'The Nature of Ice'

Two authors were also recognised as Highly Commended for the Dobbie Encouragement Award:

Jennifer Mills for 'The Diamond Anchor'

Judith Lanigan for 'A True History of the Hoola Hoop'

Perpetual's General Manager of Philanthropy, Andrew Thomas, says, 'The Kibble and Dobbie Awards are among the premier writing prizes in Australia, and we are privileged to be associated with them.'

The objectives of the Awards are to benefit women writers of a published book of fiction or non-fiction classified as 'life writing', to advance Australian literature and to help provide incentive for women writers. The work must be written and published in the 12 months prior to the Awards and describe day-to-day Australian life.

The judging panel, consisting of Professor Robert Dixon of the University of Sydney, Maggie Patton of the State Library of NSW, and Jean Bedford, novelist and creative writing teacher at the University of Technology, were impressed with the high calibre of this year's entries.

Chair of the judging panel, Professor Robert Dixon said, 'The short-listed authors have each created an outstanding contribution to Australian literature and for the first time ever, the judging panel has acknowledged two highly commended authors outside of the official shortlist. This is a reflection of the outstanding quality of entries.'

The Awards were established via the will of Ms Nita May Dobbie, a librarian and writer who was concerned with the difficulties faced by female writers and recognised the need to foster women's writing in the community.

Mr Thomas says that the Awards are a great example of how one person's vision and foresight has provided an ongoing and sustainable gift to the literary community.

'Since their establishment in 1994, the Awards have provided more than \$300,000 to a prestigious group of Australian women writers. As trustee for Miss Dobbie, Perpetual is proud to be associated with such an inspiring legacy – one that has encouraged and will continue to encourage Australian women writers for years to come,' said Mr Thomas.

The winners of the Awards will be announced Wednesday, 2 June 2010.

For further information, please contact:

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Appendix

Judges' comments on the 2010 Kibble and Dobbie Awards Short-listed for the Kibble Literary Award for women writers

Josephine Emery

'The Real Possibility of Joy'

Published by Murdoch Books

'The Real Possibility of Joy' is a searingly honest, beautifully written and often challenging memoir about Josephine Emery's life-long journey from man to woman. Emery, who began publishing short stories as John Emery, is the author of several acclaimed novels, including 'The Sky People' and 'Savage Triangle', she has worked as a script-writer for directors Phillip Noyce and Scott Hicks, headed the screenwriting department at Australia's national film school and ran the Literature Board of the Australia Council. But beneath this long and successful career in writing and arts management runs a tide of personal anguish and a quest to realise her true identity that was finally achieved only at great cost to herself and to her family.

Written in the style of literary fiction, Emery's memoir, 'The Real Possibility of Joy', is a beautifully realised, emotionally honest and occasionally confronting account of one person's difficult quest to find integrity and joy in everyday life.

Kristina Olsson

'The China Garden'

Published by University of Queensland Press

The China Garden is set in a small coastal town in northern NSW. Laura has returned home from Italy for the funeral of her mother and discovers a secret which challenges her views about her mother and her own childhood. 'The China Garden' is a fascinating story about childbirth, adoption and motherhood.

This is a quiet and beautifully written story with a narrative which deftly handles the very emotional issue of grieving and regret. Olsson's characters are fascinating and skillfully wrought - each of them approaching and accepting their grief in a different way. Olsson also has a special skill for describing the simple tasks of preparing a meal, making a cup of tea, or pruning a rose bush, in tantalising detail.

Shirley Walker

'The Ghost at the Wedding'

Published by Penguin Group Australia

'The Ghost at the Wedding' is a moving family memoir about the lives of Shirley Walker's Scottish and Scandinavian forebears in the Clarence River district during the years of the Great War. A companion volume to her acclaimed earlier memoir, 'Roundabout at Bangalow', it focuses on the life of her mother-in-law, who as a young woman farewelled her brother Joe and sweetheart Eddie bound for the battlefields of Gallipoli and France. Wounded at Pozieres, Eddie returns to a difficult courtship

and a loving though not untroubled marriage, his face disfigured by a shell blast and the primitive surgery of the time. Joe, who is killed in action at Morlancourt, is the ghost at their wedding.

Based partly on family documents and historical records, Walker's memoir of the preceding generation of her family is also a deeply re-imagined account of these legendary battles, and of the lives of the women and men who waited out the war at home. Her account of life on the Clarence in the early years of the twentieth century is a lyrical elegy for a lost pastoral world.

Short-listed for the Dobbie Literary Award for a first published book

Karen Hitchcock

'Little White Slips'

Published by Pan Macmillan

'Little White Slips' is a highly accomplished collection of short stories that offers sharp and insightful glimpses into the lives of contemporary women.

The stories are spare, poignant, sometimes funny, but always intelligent and controlled. They achieve everything that the form requires - windows into other lives, fleeting moments of beauty, loss or understanding - while celebrations and failures are all captured on the page in concise and crystal-clear prose. With this first published book, Karen Hitchcock shows a mastery of the short story form and brings a strongly original new voice to Australian writing.

Deborah Forster

'The Book of Emmett'

Published by Random House Australia

This is a novel about the Brown family, set in the western suburbs of Melbourne in the 1950s and 60s. In particular, the story is about the father, Emmett Brown, whose failures, abusive childhood and alcoholism profoundly affect his relationship with his wife and his children. Emmett loves poetry and classic novels, and on a good day talks at the dinner table about spelling contests and the origin of words. On a bad day random acts of violence and emotional abuse create a menacing atmosphere which affects relationships between family members and shapes their attitudes and the choices they make about their futures.

This is a powerful and emotional debut novel from Deborah Forster which portrays the complex relationships in a broken family. Forster beautifully portrays the fear and shame experienced by this family but also the love and courage that sustains them.

Robyn Mundy

'The Nature of Ice'

Published by Allen & Unwin

This is a skillfully constructed novel about a young woman's experiences in present-day Antarctica. Freya Johansson, a photographer, is compiling a homage to the Australian photographer and film maker Frank Hurley and his iconic images of Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911-14, while also coming to terms with her own broken marriage and her intense reaction to the extraordinarily beautiful but unforgiving landscape of Antarctica.

A freshly imagined narrative of the pre-World War 1 expedition includes extracts from diaries, letters, and newspaper accounts, and reproductions of Hurley's photographs, and weaves subtly through the contemporary story, providing historical texture and evoking our sometimes tragic historical relationship with Antarctica alongside a modern consciousness. This is a beautifully written and dramatic novel that resonates long after the reading is over.

About Nita May Dobbie

Nita Dobbie established the Kibble Literary Awards for Women Writers in recognition of her aunt, Nita Kibble, who raised her from birth after her mother died.

In the late 1800s, Miss Kibble had successfully answered an advertisement for a junior assistant at the Public Library of New South Wales, when her signature was taken for a man's. She later became

the first woman to be appointed a librarian with the State Library of New South Wales and held the position of Principal Research Officer from 1919 until her retirement. Throughout her career she worked hard to raise the status of the library profession and was a founding member of the Australian Institute of Librarians.

Miss Dobbie followed her aunt into the library profession and recognised the need to foster women's writing in the community and so established the Awards, named after her inspirational aunt, through her will.

About Perpetual

Perpetual Group is one of Australia's most experienced investment and trustee groups, with an enduring passion for protecting and growing our clients' wealth.

Founded in Sydney in 1886, we have helped generations of Australians invest and manage their wealth through all market conditions.

Perpetual Group manages investment funds exceeding \$29 billion, administers over \$222 billion of client funds, and advises clients on over \$8 billion of investments (as at 31 December 2009).

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For over 100 years, Perpetual has helped individuals, families and companies contribute to the health and well-being of others through philanthropic endeavours.

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