



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

## THE 2011 AUSTRALIAN CENTRE LITERARY AWARDS

### ASHER LITERARY AWARD

Award for women writers offering an anti-war theme. Presented in association with the Australia Council for the Arts. Award value, \$10,000.

There was a strong and diverse field for the Asher Award, and the judging panel was impressed with the ways women writers interrogated the glorification of war and reflected on the suffering and trauma of its impact across time and place. From a shortlist of significant texts, the judges were unanimous in their decision to split the Asher Award between PM Newton and Roberta Lowing.

PM Newton's *The Old School*, a crime novel set in 1992 in Sydney, offers a compelling and sophisticated account that probes how the violence of the past — whether that be colonial massacres of Indigenous peoples or war in Vietnam — is implicated in the search for justice and truth in the present.

Roberta Lowing's *Ruin* is a sequence of poems about the Iraq War that is ambitious, sometimes audacious, and very moving. Narrating events from both Iraqi and American perspectives, Lowing's work gathers momentum as it questions the moral consciousness and crisis of global conflict today.

**WINNER:** \$5,000 PM Newton, for her novel, *The Old School* (Penguin)

**WINNER:** \$5,000 Roberta Lowing, for her poetry collection, *Ruin* (Interactive Press)

#### SHORTLIST:

Van Badham, *Swamplands*, 2010 (play)

Quynh Dao, *Tales from a Mountain City*, Odyssey Books 2010 (memoir)

Jennifer Maiden, *Pirate Rain*, Giramondo, 2010 (poetry)

**JUDGES:** Kate Darian-Smith (Chair), Anne Orford, Gail Jones

### THE 2012 PETER BLAZEY FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship for a work in progress in the non-fiction fields of biography, autobiography and life-writing, made possible by a donation of funds from Clive Blazezy and Tim Herbert. Award value: \$15,000 plus a residency at the Australian Centre.

This year there were some truly outstanding entries which made the task of choosing a winner very difficult. In the end, the judges were unanimous in their choice of Helen Ennis as the recipient of the 2012 Fellowship. Her proposed biography of the renowned Australian photographer Olive Cotton is an exciting project which will explore the life and work of one of few women working in the field in the early to mid-twentieth century. Her draft chapters are extremely engaging and a joy to read. The judges believe that the Fellowship will help Helen Ennis research and complete an important book that will be read and appreciated by a wide audience.

The judges also highly commend Jill Joliffe for her account of her early life as an adopted child. Written in a truly distinctive voice, Joliffe's striking autobiography has a 'slow-burn' intensity that promises to captivate. Monica Dux's account of the perils of giving birth is written with an assured and delightful verve. Dux's witty and illuminating observations of the very human experience of motherhood is also highly commended.

**WINNER:** Helen Ennis

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:**

Monica Dux and Jill Joliffe

**JUDGES:** Michael Gawenda (Chair), Hannah Kent, Lily Chan, Stephen Armstrong



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### KATE CHALLIS RAKA AWARD

Prize for indigenous creative artists, made possible by a donation of funds from Professor Emeritus Bernard Smith. The 2011 Award is for creative prose. Award value: \$25,000.

The field considered within the 2011 RAKA awards positions Indigenous literature at the leading edge of Australian fiction writing both in terms of quality and genre breadth, including literature in its more innovative and popular forms and short stories.

The judges noted that with such a close field that even a commendation seemed inadequate. Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance* was the clear winner. Noted as a great Australian novel Scott invents new literary language and techniques to write about the microhistory of the West Australian coast. Beautifully written with engaging and strong characters, its vision of Indigenous and settler Australia is expansive and nuanced. Its shifting time-scape and poetic language brings a dream-like rendering to a moving and poignant narrative.

The judges commend three works: Alexis Wright for her novel *Carpentaria* which was profoundly innovative and breathtaking in scope. Gayle Kennedy was commended for *Me, Antman & Fleabag* which was warm, inviting and engaging and Tony Birch was commended for *Shadowboxing* which like the others, pushes boundaries of Indigenous literature and the art of the short story as well as a reconfiguration important rendering of Aboriginal identities in urban Melbourne.

**WINNER:** Kim Scott for his novel *That Deadman Dance* (Pan Macmillan, 2010)

**COMMENDED:**

Alexis Wright for her novel *Carpentaria* (Giramondo, 2006)

Gayle Kennedy for *Me, Antman & Fleabag* (UQP, 2007)

Tony Birch for *Shadowboxing* (Scribe, 2006)

**JUDGES:** Ian Anderson (Chair), Gillian Whitlock, Jennifer Jones, Kate Challis.

### VINCENT BUCKLEY POETRY PRIZE

\$10,000 award for an Irish poet to support a trip to Australia.

The award of the Vincent Buckley Prize for 2011 goes to Irish poet, Miriam Gamble. The panel of judges considered her work was forthright, energetic and technically skilled. There is both darkness and a weird humour to her poetry. The judging panel is looking forward to the discussions and contacts Miriam Gamble will generate when she visits Australia. James Harpur's extraordinary poetry gained him a highly commended award, and the judges hope that he will in the future visit Australia.

**WINNER:** Miriam Gamble

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:** James Harpur

**JUDGES:** Kevin Brophy (Chair), Bronwyn Lea, Jane Crawley

### WESLEY MICHEL WRIGHT PRIZE

\$3,457 award for poetry.

**WINNER:** Rosanna Licari

*Professor Marilyn Lake, President of the Australian Historical Association, presents:*

### ERNEST SCOTT PRIZE

\$12,240 Award for a work in Australian, New Zealand, or colonial history.

**WINNER:** Jim Davidson, *A Three-cornered Life: The Historian W.K. Hancock* (UNSW Press, 2010)

Emma Christopher, *A Merciless Place: The Lost Story of Britain's Convict Disaster in Africa and How it Led to the Settlement of Australia* (Allen & Unwin, 2010)

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