

INAUGURAL STELLA PRIZE HONOURS AUSTRALIAN WOMEN WRITERS



The shortlist for the inaugural Stella Prize, the new major award celebrating Australian women and their contribution to literature was announced late last month. The prize will be announced and presented in Melbourne on 16 April 2013, for the best book published by an Australian woman in 2012. The winner will receive \$50 000.

Both fiction and non-fiction entries are eligible, and almost 200 entries were received. The entries were judged by the Stella Prize panel of judges: writer and critic Kerryn Goldsworthy, author Kate Grenville, actor and creator Claudia Karvan, bookseller Fiona Stager, and ABC broadcaster Rafael Epstein. The judges released a longlist of twelve books in February, and the shortlist of six in March.

In alphabetical order of author surname, the 2013 Stella Prize shortlist is:

- *The Burial* by Courtney Collins (Allen & Unwin)
- *Questions of Travel* by Michelle de Kretser (Allen & Unwin)
- *The Sunlit Zone* by Lisa Jacobson (Five Islands Press)
- *Like a House on Fire* by Cate Kennedy (Scribe Publications)
- *Sea Hearts* by Margo Lanagan (Allen & Unwin)
- *Mateship with Birds* by Carrie Tiffany (Pan Macmillan/Picador)

The Chair of the judges, Kerryn Goldsworthy, says: "The shortlist features a wide variety of subject matter and genre: the list contains a collection of short stories and a verse novel; it includes fantasy, speculative fiction, two historical novels and one that has been described as Australian Gothic. There are stories set in the past, the present and the future; there are stories set in both urban and rural Australia as well as in other countries and in imagined places.

We noticed a strong common theme in several of the books on the shortlist: *Sea Hearts*, *The Sunlit Zone* and *Mateship with Birds* all explore in thoughtful, imaginative and unexpected ways the relationships and the boundaries between the human and the non-human, showing where those boundaries are weakest and might be broken down.

In choosing a shortlist of six books from the longlist of twelve, the judges concentrated on picking the six we thought were the best books regardless of form, genre and subject matter. While no nonfiction book appears on the shortlist, we were glad to have been able to longlist three, chosen from a large field of entries in which fiction outnumbered nonfiction by almost four to one.

The consistent high quality of the shortlist makes every book listed a serious contender for the prize."

For more information on the judges, their reports on the shortlisted titles, and the Stella Prize, please visit the website: www.thestellaprize.com.au