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## 2016 DOROTHY HEWETT AWARD FOR AN UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT

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The second Dorothy Hewett Award attracted 85 entries of fiction, non-fiction and poetry. The judging panel, which consisted of Terri-ann White, Director of UWA Publishing, critic James Ley, and poet Lucy Dougan, selected a shortlist of six manuscripts. The winner and two highly commended places were announced at the 2017 Perth Writers Festival.

### Shortlisted entries

Rachael Mead's collection of poems, 'The Flaw in the Pattern', mines the legacy of the strong bonds between writing and walking. She is in control of a lovely energetic long line that imbues her work with an ecstatic quality. There is an ever-present sense of encountering place through a sense of powerfully alive embodiment. The musical and landscape aspects of these poems make the collection a pleasurable walk through the senses.

Christopher Hill's 'The Savage Club' is an ambitious novel tracking the legacy of the colonial experience between Aboriginal people of Forrest River in the Kimberley region of Western Australia and European settlers through artefacts, ideas from the discipline of Anthropology, the Royal Commission of 1926 and through the dissolution of the protagonist to the Redfern Speech by Paul Keating, Prime Minister, in 1992. The novel follows failure and self-absorption in an echo chamber of history with its unresolved and conflicted nature.

Karen Han Throssell's 'The Man Who Wasn't There' mixes memoir, poetry and an account of literary, family and political history to mount a defence of the author's father, the son of Katharine Susannah Prichard, from the ceaseless attacks on him from the right of politics in Australia that have continued after his death. Much more than a whispering campaign, Ric Throssell was vilified in his career in foreign affairs and the author responds with this gentle account of a loving father and son, an earnest and shy man.

### Highly Commended

Carolyn Abbs's poems in her poised collection 'The Tiny Museums' live in the gap between deep time and now. They are insistently alive to the rich tensions between those two registers. This pairing of past/present plays out in other unifying doublings and mirrorings, particularly those between the UK and Western Australia, between photography and poetry, and a fertile creative relationship shared by sisters. Abbs deftly creates the world of her book through a phenomenological approach. Elegant layers of textures, colours, sounds and movement invite the reader into an experiential sense of this trench between the past and the present. In this way, her sensibility is painterly but it's a Northern light in her poems reminiscent of the crisp mysteries of a Vermeer. Abbs's poems dealing with family grief are the centrepieces of the book and are admirable in their ability to move the reader without any cloying sentimentality. Along with a skilled attentiveness to the ways in which sound moves through a line, this beautifully modulated emotional intelligence is a very great strength of her poetry.

Ann-Marie Priest's 'A Free Flame' is a compelling account of the careers of four notable Australian women writers: Gwen Harwood, Dorothy Hewett, Christina Stead and Ruth Park. Written with clarity and insight, it weaves biography, literary criticism and cultural history into a fascinating study of the various ways in which these talented literary figures sought to negotiate the peculiar struggles that go along with being a woman artist. Taking as its unifying theme the idea of writing as a vocation, it

develops into an acute examination of the process of self-realisation. It charts the creative evolution of each of its subjects, illuminating the way in which their sense of themselves as writers forged their singular identities and sustained them through the doubts, discouragements and difficulties that are an inevitable part of the writing life. A Free Flame was the clear standout among the non-fiction entries, a work that it as commendable for its perspicacity as for its readability.

#### **Winning entry**

As with some other of the shortlisted entries, Odette Kelada's short novel 'Drawing Sybylla' concerns itself with Australian women writers. It is a work that wears its significant research very lightly and provides the reader with a tremendously original and imaginative set of pictures about the ideas of creativity and using language to make stories, over and again. What is at stake alongside the act of writing is included here, elegantly drawn. The authorial voice is fully developed in 'Drawing Sybylla,' allowing in subtleties, a wry humour, the politics of representation and poignancy. Its brevity is a marvel and results in an intense reading experience: no words are wasted. We believe this quiet and measured novel announces an important new literary name in Australian writing.

Lucy Dougan  
James Ley  
Terri-ann White  
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