

Ethel Turner Prize for young people's literature (\$30,000)

Dianne Bates, *Crossing the Line*

Ford Street Publishing, an imprint of Hybrid Publishers

The subject matter of *Crossing the Line* is confronting, even gruelling. Sophie, as main character and narrator, moves in and out of therapy, in and out of relationships, craving affection and intimacy, yet simultaneously bristling, defensive and distrustful. Her strong presence dominates the novel.

Sophie falls into a transference relationship with her therapist, which leads to emotional obsession and stalking behaviour even more extreme than her acts of self-mutilation. What makes the story believable is the raw intensity of her voice and point of view. Sophie is a troubling and uncomfortable character, yet undeniably, overpoweringly real. Dianne Bates's book will be a valuable text to stimulate discussion, especially among teenage girls.

Michelle Cooper, *A Brief History of Montmaray*

Random House Australia Pty Ltd

The isolated, imaginary island kingdom of Montmaray, largely deserted as a result of lives lost in World War One and the emigration of much of the remaining population, is again threatened by the outside world, particularly the Spanish Civil War and the rise of Nazi Germany. Sophie FitzOsborne, the king's niece, records the events of late 1936 and early 1937 in her journal, a sixteenth birthday gift. She is a lively and engaging writer and her journal contains entertaining glimpses of the everyday life of a most unusual and interesting family, as well as events of high adventure and suspense, with a touch of the supernatural.

Sophie's reflections introduce other themes, among them the nature of history, the value of literature and traditional roles of women. These ideas are presented with a light touch, thanks to Sophie's sense of humour, but nevertheless leave the reader with much to think about, in addition to the excitement of the story.

D. M. Cornish, *Monster Blood Tattoo Book Two: Lamplighter*

Omnibus Books

D.M. Cornish is a wordsmith and a world-creator. Following on from *Foundling* in the *Monster Blood Tattoo* trilogy, the story of Rossamünd scales new heights in *Lamplighter*. In this second volume, the main action gets massively under way, the thematic implications come clear and the major revelation at the climax makes sense of everything that has happened so far.

Lamplighter is a masterpiece of high fantasy. In richness and complexity, the world of the Half Continent bears comparison to Tolkien's Middle Earth. In this case, the cultural parallels are post-medieval, more akin to a fantastical version of the eighteenth century. Cornish's love of words is also Tolkienesque, evoking a distinctive reality through inspired coinages. Here is a Young Adult book that will appeal equally to adult lovers of fantasy.

Alison Goodman, *The Two Pearls of Wisdom*

HarperCollinsPublishers Australia Pty Ltd

Inspired by ancient Chinese lore, *The Two Pearls of Wisdom* engages traditional elements of fantasy. There is the creation of a new world, battles against evil, a quest for good to triumph. Eon the hero, who is a girl disguised as a boy, meets the political and sexual conspiracies and complex obstacles that challenge her quest. Eon is seeking to become a Dragoneye, a lord able to master wind and water to protect the land.

Alison Goodman's narrative is very well written, filled with magic, rituals, the Orient, hardships, friendships, betrayals and adventure. Great strengths of *The Two Pearls of Wisdom* include the engaging characterization of Eon/Eona, the pageantry, and life and death challenges. Ultimately it is an exciting narrative for young adult fantasy readers.

Nette Hilton, *Sprite Downberry*

HarperCollinsPublishers Australia Pty Ltd

Nette Hilton writes with sensitivity and warmth, exposing a family in crisis. While *Sprite Downberry* reaches into confronting issues including pedophilia, drugs, family breakdown, mental illness, and runaway children, the underlying theme is the child as carer of the family. These are serious issues, yet *Sprite Downberry* does not become didactic or dark. Nette Hilton's characters delight and engage readers. The love within the family shines through. The adventures of Sprite and her little brother Mozz and the runaway boy Luther, are convincing, exciting and emotional.

Sprite says at the end, 'They were survivors'. However this is a novel about more than survival. It is about the great capacity for young people to relate, love, care and find their place in the world. Although *Sprite Downberry* has relevance to all readers, its primary audience is from twelve to early teens.

Joanne Horniman, *My Candlelight Novel*

Allen & Unwin

Sophie is the older sister of Kate, the narrator of *Secret Scribbled Notebooks*, 'a reading girl' on a journey of self-discovery. The novel explores themes of abandonment and belonging and of the nature of love, through a variety of Sophie's relationships, old and new, and through the changing perspectives of the child and adult Sophie.

The richness and beauty of Joanne Horniman's language offer the reader a fresh appreciation of the value of everyday incidents and surroundings. There is great tenderness in Sophie's bond with baby Hetty and an invitation to explore the world of books so important to Sophie. This is a gentle, honest, well constructed and moving story which will be appreciated by older as well as Young Adult readers.