

November 21, 2008



## MURDER STORY IN VERSE WINS 15<sup>TH</sup> SCARLET STILETTO AWARDS

A murder story in verse has won **Sisters in Crime's 15th Scarlet Stiletto Award** presented the tonight in South Melbourne (21/11).

**Evelyn Tsitas** (Canterbury, Vic), a former senior journalist at the Herald Sun, won the **HarperCollins first prize of \$750** plus the coveted trophy, a scarlet stiletto shoe with a steel stiletto heel plunging into a perspex mount for "Undeceive", a story about poetry, literary theft and betrayal. It also took out the **Dorothy Porter Award for Innovation** (\$250) which Tsitas won last year for her story "Xenos". Her novel *Xenos* and her investigation into what it means to be human in the 21st century will form the basis of her PhD in Creative Writing at RMIT University. She has written libretti for two children's operas *Software* and *Bookworm* and play *Springs Eternal*.

Sisters in Crime spokesperson, **Phyllis King**, said that ironically poet Dorothy Porter had established a Scarlet Stiletto Award for Verse in 2002 but decided to change it last year into an award for innovation as the category usually only attracted half a dozen entries.

"Dorothy Porter's wish for a beautifully crafted crime story in verse has now been fulfilled. The judges didn't even consider another story for the top prize," she said.

"This year's stories reflected a new theme – investigating infants, well actually babies tagging along while mummies look into suspicious circumstances. Maybe it's the baby boom!"

Sisters in Crime's national short story competition offers \$3100 in prizes and attracted 137 entries.

**Malla Nunn**, author of *A Beautiful Place to Die*, a crime novel set in South Africa, presented the awards and also spoke about crime writing and growing up in Swaziland with **Dr Sue Turnbull**.

Fashionista **Sally Browne** was announced as the shoes' patron, offering an on-going supply of scarlet stilettos in which she's been photographed in all over the world, including the peak of Mt Kilimanjaro. Brown also lent scarlet stilettos as table decorations for the award ceremony at Bells Hotel.

**Kirsti Watson's** (Malvern East, Vic) first-ever crime story, "Monitoring the Neighbours", a tale about what the baby monitor picks up next door, won both **Kill City 2nd prize (\$400)** and the **Chronicles Bookshop Award for Best Investigative Story (\$200)**. Watson has been shortlisted in the Glen Eira Literary Festival for the past four years.

**Readings Books Music Film 3rd prize (\$250)** was shared between **Janet Stutley** (Thornbury, Vic) for "Red Gold", a story set on the Victorian goldfields on 1854, and **Natasha Cretani** (Coves,

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***Fighting for justice for women crime writers; promoting women's crime fiction***

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Vic) for "Hot Dogs", a tale about the disappearance of neighbourhood dogs. Stutley won awards in the 2001 and 2002 Scarlet Stiletto Awards, performs 'activist cabaret' with Reds under the Bed and is currently writing a new series of children's fantasy novels under the *nom de plume* of Jaz Ghent for Clean Slate press (NZ). Cretani, an award-winning country music singer and songwriter, is writing her first novel about the high misadventures of a heroine who is Nancy Drew meets Bridget Jones by way of Lauren Bacall.

Two twelve-year old school girls from Melbourne shared the **Allen & Unwin Young Writers' Award (\$250)** for writers under 21 – **Nese Gezer** (Pahran, Vic) from Loreta Convent for "Crossroads" and **Isabella Beischer** (Balwyn, Vic) from Genazzano FCJ College for "Viola Stiletto and the case of the serial husband". (Note: where prizes are shared, Sisters in Crime pays the full amount to both winners.)

**Ronda Bird** (Balwyn, Vic), who won the **The Kerry Greenwood Malice Domestic Award (\$500)** in 2000, took it out again for "Kitchens can be dangerous", where the 13-year-old narrator cooks up a plan to kill the stepfather who raped her. Bird discovered a flair for writing short stories as a mature age student in the nineties and has won more than 50 short stories prizes in Australia and Britain. She is trying to find a publisher for her novel about a Melbourne PI.

**Corinne Pentecost** (Chippendale, NSW) was awarded **The Cate Kennedy Award for Best New Talent (\$350)** for "Snow Angel", a story as much about beauty of an isolated winter land as it is about its inhabitants, and the potential of both to destroy.

**The Pulp Fiction Bookshop Award (\$150 gift voucher)** for the funniest story went to last year's 1st prize winner, **Aoife Clifford (East Ivanhoe)**, for "Wax", an hilarious story where a woman at a beautician's overhears another talking about an affair with her husband and decides to tackle the situation head on or rather hair off. Clifford, a former union official, wrote the story while suffering from morning sickness with her third pregnancy and didn't realise how important a focus it was in her life until she found herself thinking that Scarlett would be a good name for her unborn daughter.

Special commendations also went to: **Jane Blechynden** (Mt Hawthorn, WA), last year's youth award winner, for "Wormystery" and **Erin Brumpton** (Sherwood, Qld) for "Creepy Crawly" (Youth category); **Cheryl Rogers** (West Swan, WA) for "Green Dream"; **Natasha Molt** (Kambah, NSW) for 'Hoarder"; **Margaret Hickey** (Glenrowan, Vic) for "Fill her Up"; **Maris Morton** (Uki, NSW) for "Spider"; **Myra King** for "My Brother Brannigan"; **Karen Allingham** (Ballarat, Vic) and **Robyn McMcWilliam** (Avalon, NSW) for "The Condom Tree".

A second volume of winning stories from the Scarlet Stiletto Awards is to be published next year by The Five Mile Press.

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The 16th Scarlet Stiletto Awards close on August 31, 2009. The entry fee is \$10. Entry forms will be available next year by writing to Sisters in Crime, GPO Box 5319, Melbourne 3001 or on its website:

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~sincoz/>

Print quality photos can be emailed on request.

**Further info: Contact Phyllis King on 0411 084 300**



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