

MEDIA RELEASE

2022 Miles Franklin Literary Award Shortlist revealed

Today, the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund, alongside award trustee Perpetual, announced the 2022 Miles Franklin Literary Award shortlist featuring five exceptional titles. The announcement was broadcast nationally.

The 2022 Miles Franklin Literary Award shortlist is:

- [*The Other Half of You*](#) by Michael Mohammed Ahmad (Hachette Australia)
- [*Scary Monsters*](#) by Michelle de Kretser (Allen & Unwin)
- [*Bodies of Light*](#) by Jennifer Down (Text Publishing)
- [*One Hundred Days*](#) by Alice Pung (Black Inc. Books)
- [*Grimmish*](#) by Michael Winkler (Puncher and Wattmann)

This year the shortlist includes an author of a self-published title, a past Miles Franklin winner and three established authors. They will be competing for one of the most prestigious literary prizes in Australia, with the winner receiving \$60,000.

"The outstanding feature of this year's Miles Franklin shortlist is the range of dynamic and diverse voices that address the experience of pain, intergenerational trauma and intergenerational dialogue with compassion, exceptional craft and rigorous unsentimentality," said Richard Neville, State Library of NSW Mitchell Librarian and Chair of the judging panel.

Joining Mr Neville on the judging panel is author and literary critic, Dr Bernadette Brennan; literary scholar, Dr Mridula Nath Chakraborty; book critic, Dr James Ley; and author and editor, Dr Elfie Shiosaki.

Copyright Agency's CEO, Josephine Johnston, said, "This year's Miles Franklin Literary Award shortlist showcases some of our most talented and respected writers whose vibrant voices inspire and challenge our views of Australian life. We welcome the opportunity to celebrate the immense breadth of literary endeavour and our unique stories. Congratulations to all the shortlisted writers!"

Each of the 2022 shortlisted authors will receive \$5,000 from the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.

The 2022 winner, to be announced on 20 July, will receive \$60,000 in prize money for the novel judged as being 'of the highest literary merit' and which presents 'Australian life in any of its phases'.

Judges' comments and biographies on the authors follow.

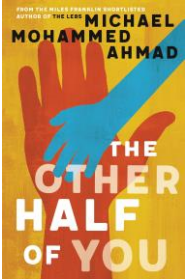
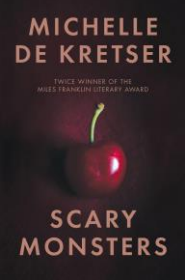
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For further information about the Miles Franklin Literary Award: <http://www.milesfranklin.com.au/>

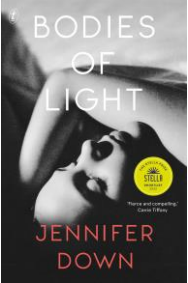
For enquiries or to request interviews, please contact:
Jane Morey

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Author Bio's and Judges Comments – 2022 Miles Franklin Shortlist

	<p>Michael Mohammed Ahmad <i>The Other Half of You</i></p> <p>BIOGRAPHY: Michael Mohammed Ahmad is the founding director of Sweatshop Literacy Movement and editor of the critically acclaimed anthology <i>After Australia</i> (Affirm Press, 2020). Mohammed's debut novel, <i>The Tribe</i> (Giramondo, 2014), won the 2015 Sydney Morning Herald Best Young Novelists of the Year Award. His second novel, <i>The Lebs</i> (Hachette Australia, 2018), won the 2019 NSW Premier's Multicultural Literary Award and was shortlisted for the 2019 Miles Franklin Literary Award. Mohammed received his Doctorate of Creative Arts from Western Sydney University in 2017.</p> <p>JUDGES COMMENT: The irrepressible Bani Adam is back! This time, as an Australian father murmuring home truths to the bundle of joy, the blasphemous new blood, that has arrived in his tribal life. Michael Mohammed Ahmad's latest addition to his Western Sydney trilogy takes us into the explosive intimacy of race and religion in Australia. <i>The Other Half of You</i> is the body-bruising, soul-searing confessional letter to a child, that anyone who has had to wrestle with the fluid-oozing, flesh-tearing oppositional pulls of family and freedom, community and calling, conformity and mutiny, will recognise. This is the howl of an Australian voice striving to be heard among the "nips, fobs, wogs and lebs" who animate the Bankstown line from centre to periphery, who crave Kentucky Fried Chicken, eschewing indiscriminately the delights of Lebanese kousa and born-again veganism. We accompany Bani on his journey from the fabled corridors of a sandstone university, where his English literary idols tell him in a thousand ways how he does not belong, into the arms of Sahara, warrior princess and hirsute love of his life. But love is a myriad-hued jewel, as Bani will discover: it exists equally in the tender image of Fatima wanting her freedom to wear pink g-strings and glued-on belly button rings, as it does in the anti-Arab skin of the White woman for whom Bani will exile himself from the House of Adam. In Kahlil, the White Wog son of Oli, the "half-insider, half-outsider" descendant of Alawites, Bani will also find the voice that sings the brilliant aria of Australia today.</p>
	<p>Michelle de Kretser <i>Scary Monsters</i></p> <p>BIOGRAPHY: Michelle de Kretser was born in Sri Lanka and lives in Australia. Her fiction is published across the world and has attracted wide acclaim.</p> <p>JUDGES COMMENT: <i>Scary Monsters</i> is a witty, meticulously witnessed and boldly imaginative work that rages against racism, ageism and misogyny. In this her seventh novel, Michelle de Kretser offers a provocative, disturbing yet often humorous take on some of the ways in which immigration 'breaks people'. Through the twin narratives of Lili and Lyle, two South Asian migrants, she interrogates issues of belonging and authenticity, centre and periphery. Can immigrants to this country ever be thought of as something other than a 'gimmicky trick'? And what of the gulf between being from Australia and being Australian? Lyle lives in the outer suburbs of Melbourne in a near dystopian future where Islamic worship is no longer tolerated, and a permanent fire zone and catastrophic sea levels have made much of Sydney uninhabitable. He works for 'The</p>

Department' in security and surveillance and to survive has become hollow, invisible and adept at 'screaming inside [his] heart.' Lili is on a gap year, teaching English in Montpellier before heading to Oxford. She is twenty-two, clever, ambitious and all too aware how her gender and skin colour circumscribe her opportunities. Mitterrand sweeps to victory but in *Scary Monsters* personal autonomy and the lived migrant experience are no match for 'History'. Of central concern in this novel is the question: 'What comes first, the future or the past'?



Jennifer Down
Bodies of Light

BIOGRAPHY:

Jennifer Down is a writer and editor whose work has appeared in the Age, Saturday Paper, Australian Book Review and Literary Hub. She was named a Sydney Morning Herald Young Novelist of the Year consecutively in 2017 and 2018. Our Magic Hour, her debut novel, was shortlisted for the 2014 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an unpublished manuscript. Her second book, Pulse Points, was the winner of the 2018 Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction and the 2018 Steele Rudd Award for a Short Story Collection in the Queensland Literary Awards, and was shortlisted for a 2018 NSW Premier's Literary Award. She lives in Naarm/Melbourne.

JUDGES COMMENT:

In *Bodies of Light*, Jennifer Down crafts a story of almost impossible regeneration from the ashes of unbearable pain and loss. The five-year-old Maggie, who will come to be known to us as Josie and Holly, undergoes a harrowing journey through state care, only to emerge with a new self. Through Maggie's unreliable narration, we learn about her unstable life of being and becoming, and, as readers, we become increasingly unsettled ourselves. With ethical precision, Down insists that we do not look away from the destructive consequences of life on the fringes, that we do not render invisible those who come through, miraculously, despite decades spent in the shadows of institutionalised neglect, socially sanctioned loneliness, unforgivable poverty and the attendant abuse that accompanies these conditions.

Can a sense of self exist if there are no records of a life? If there is no-one to remember? Maggie wrestles with such questions. And more than once is almost destroyed by them. Ultimately, however, *Bodies of Light* is a novel of affirmation, resilience and survival, told through an astonishing voice that reinvents itself from age six to sixty. Through recounting her story and recording her memories, Maggie builds herself a body and realises that finally she is known.



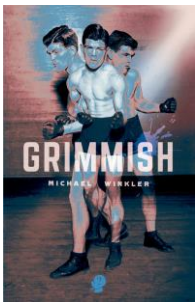
Alice Pung
One Hundred Days

BIOGRAPHY:

Alice Pung OAM is an award-winning writer based in Melbourne. She is the bestselling author of the memoirs *Unpolished Gem* and *Her Father's Daughter*, and the essay collection *Close to Home*, as well as the editor of the anthologies *Growing Up Asian in Australia* and *My First Lesson*. Her first novel, *Laurinda*, won the Ethel Turner Prize at the 2016 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. *One Hundred Days* is her most recent novel. Alice was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for services to literature in 2022.

JUDGES COMMENT:

In *One Hundred Days*, Alice Pung astutely explores the agencies of girls to unravel the bounds of gender, race and class and attempt to determine their futures for themselves. The novel follows the story of sixteen-year-old Karuna, who moves into a housing commission tower in Melbourne with her Philippines-born Chinese mother, Grand Mar, in the afterlife of her parents' divorce. When Karuna falls pregnant, Grand Mar locks her in their flat for one hundred days before the birth of her child. Within this story, mothering practices transcend the ordinary and intimate, becoming instead an epic site of intergenerational cultural struggle between mother and daughter. Questioning the extent to which children belong to their parents, Pung sophisticatedly explores the co-existence of love, protection, control and abuse. While *One Hundred Days* carries the heaviness of Karuna's captivity with suspense and claustrophobia, it is full of warmth and humour. Pung deftly revitalises traditional fairy tales by imbuing prickly and tenacious Karuna with lucid human agency, exploring diverse and complex narratives of hero(ine)ism, resilience and precariousness. We are fully

	<p>immersed into the lived experiences of young women who attempt to resist a prescribed fate. Pung has gifted us with a novel of national significance, by making visible the stories of those deemed powerless, and vividly patterning the mosaic of Australian literature.</p>
	<p>Michael Winkler <i>Grimmish</i></p> <p>BIOGRAPHY: Michael Winkler is a writer of fiction and non-fiction. Nobel Laureate JM Coetzee described Winkler's novel <i>Grimmish</i> as, 'The strangest book you are likely to read this year.' Helen Garner said, '<i>Grimmish</i> meets a need I didn't even know I had. I lurched between bursts of wild laughter, shudders of horror, and gasps of awe at Winkler's verbal command.' Winkler won the Calibre Prize for <i>The Great Red Whale</i>, an essay about Uluru, relationships between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians, mental illness and <i>Moby Dick</i>. His journalism, short fiction, reviews and essays have been widely published and anthologised. michaelwinkler.com.au</p> <p>JUDGES COMMENT: <i>Grimmish</i> is based on the true story of a boxer named Joe Grim — a terrible boxer who somehow managed to sustain a professional career in the early twentieth century solely on the basis of his ability to take a savage beating without falling over. Around the historical tale of Grim's unusual career, Michael Winkler has crafted an equally unusual novel that is by turns playful, funny, heartfelt and deeply reflective. Interweaving comical and philosophical passages with the tall tales told by the narrator's drunk "uncle" (one of which features a foul-mouthed talking goat), <i>Grimmish</i> sets out to anatomise the phenomenon of physical pain in mock-scholarly fashion. In doing so, it gently disentangles the ugly knot of violence and self-destructiveness at the heart of masculinity. Winkler approaches his subject with keen eye for life's absurdity, grotesquery and tragedy. The novel's metafictional dimension — it begins with a "review" of itself — is deployed to great effect, the ironies of its formal self-consciousness acting as cover for its underlying sincerity and its distinct note of melancholy. Daring and hilarious, <i>Grimmish</i> is a uniquely witty and original contribution to Australian literature.</p>

About the Miles Franklin Literary Award www.milesfranklin.com.au

Perpetual is the Trustee for the Miles Franklin Literary Award. The Award was established in 1954 by the estate of *My Brilliant Career* author Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin to celebrate the Australian character and creativity. It supports the betterment of Australian literature by each year recognising the novel of the highest literary merit which presents Australian Life in any of its phases. Since being established, the Award has distributed over \$1.24 million in philanthropic funds to authors. Those wishing to be part of the Miles Franklin legacy can donate to the [Franklin Support Fund](#) to become a friend of the Award. Please visit the website for further details.

About Perpetual Philanthropic Services

Perpetual is one of Australia's largest managers of philanthropic funds, with \$3.7 billion in funds under advice for charitable trusts and endowment funds (as at 31 December 2021). Perpetual is trustee for many [charitable trusts and endowments](#) and provides individuals and families with advice on establishing charitable foundations and structured giving programs. Perpetual also assists charities and not-for-profit organisations with [investment advice and management](#).

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About the Copyright Agency and Cultural Fund

The Copyright Agency is an Australian not-for-profit organisation that has been standing up for creators for more than 40 years. We enable the reuse of copyright-protected words and images in return for fair payment to creators. The Cultural Fund is the philanthropic arm of the Copyright Agency, contributing meaningfully to a wide range of Australian cultural, educational and artistic programs and creators. Through its support it fosters greater understanding and engagement of national culture both locally and internationally. Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund is a long-time supporter of the Miles Franklin Literary Award, providing \$5,000 to each of the finalists and granting more than half a million dollars to this premier Australian literary prize since 2004.