



18th DAVITT AWARD CEREMONY

**Swinburne University of Technology, The George Building,
Level 2, 34 Wakefield Street, Hawthorn**

6pm Saturday 11 August 2018

SCRIPT

7.00pm Leigh Redhead: [Ask people to take their seats.]

Sisters in Crime, Brothers-in-Law welcome to the 18th Davitt Awards, the night of nights for Australian women's crime...writing.

My name is Leigh Redhead and I am delighted that you have joined us tonight for what promises to be a night of fun, food and forensics.

Indigenous welcome:

At the outset, on behalf of Sisters in Crime Australia, I would also like to pay my respects to the people and elders, past and present, of the Wurundjeri [Wurr- UND-joo-ree] people and the Kulin [Koo-lin] Nation. We acknowledge and uphold their relationship to this land. Thank you.

Our Davitts presenter tonight is the multi-talented Danish author **Sissel-Jo Gazan** whom I will introduce properly a bit later but give her a big cheer for now. Please stand and take a bow Sissel-Jo.

Apart from Sissel-Jo and me, we can welcome 13 women authors with crime books under their belts. Some have come from interstate.

When I mention your name, please make your presence known – and, if you have books in contention tonight, get your pens ready for signings later.

- **Sarah Bailey**
- **Lindy Cameron**
- **Mirna Cicioni**
- **Cath Ferla**
- **Liz Filleul**
- **Sulari Gentill**
- **Jane Harper**
- **Ellie Marney**
- **P D (Phillipa) Martin**
- **Vikki Petraitis**
- **Allison Rushby**
- **Pamela Rushby**
- **Anna Snoekstra**
- **Emma Viskic**

Have we left anyone out?

The books of all shortlisted authors and some others are on sale here thanks to the Sun Bookshop. Many thanks for your great support.

It is now my pleasure to introduce **Dr Carolyn Beasley**, Course Director of Writing, Deputy Chair, Department of Media and Communication, and Academic Director of Research Training, at Swinburne University of Technology's Media and Communication Department, the Davitt's major sponsor.

Dr Carolyn Beasley: Swinburne is so very very honoured to be able to support the incredible work of Sisters in Crime, of each of you, and the Davitt Awards.

I'll just take a moment to OH&S you to the building. There are toilets just outside this door, stairs just past the elevator, and also stairs just out that door there. Swinburne is a smoke free campus but if you pop downstairs and light up, your cigarette will be done before security make it over here to arrest you. As crime writers, I suspect you all like to live dangerously so go ahead and make Security's day.

Having taught in a maximum security women's prison for over 6 years (which many would say it no different to working in a university) and having done my PhD on crime fiction (which again, a PhD is very much like being a prisoner serving a long sentence), I got to work intimately with many female perpetrators and victims of crime.

As a result of this, I'm always passionately interested in the ways that we write about women in crime fiction. And I have to congratulate you all on making such an effort to re-dress many of the simplistic assumptions about the intersection of women and crime, by bringing a brave authenticity to women's experiences with crime, with victimisation, with police forces, and with social and legal systems.

Thank you all so much for giving voice to vibrant, diverse, and hidden voices in your storytelling. Each and every one of you should each be proud of the contribution you've made.

And I'll just have to quickly thank Leigh Redhead because when her first novel *Peepshow* came out I was teaching in prison to rooms fulls of murderers, fraudsters, drug users and...strippers. Suddenly every woman with a rap sheet who had flashed their undies in a club to the tune of *Cherry Pie* decided they too were qualified to write a novel. And pages and pages started appearing.

Suddenly I was lugging a shoulder bag full of words about semen sticky carpet and peepholes out of the prison. Hilariously I was pulled aside by security one day who said, "Carolyn, it's come to our attention that you're encouraging the women to write pornography". I thought, "Oh no, I'm busted" but they pulled out a sample page and when I looked down it was a page from a Mills and Boon (which did involve a cucumber, to be fair, but it was a Mills and Boon!).

I promised never again to bring this dirty filthy Mills and Boon books in again so we went on to get funding for a full class set of Leigh's *Peepshow*. I haven't seen any of the student's work out there on the shelves yet but murderer sentences are long and Australia Post is slow, so who knows...they may still appear.

Swinburne would like to continue our relationship with you and your storytelling by offering you free use of our media and communication facilities. We have excellent new radio and podcasting studios that we are happy to offer for use for no fee if you're interested in working on audio projects, we can work with you on television and video related projects, and we have postgraduate and PhD by novel programs that are open to you.

So on that note, thanks to unstoppable Carmel and the Sisters in Crime crew for putting on such an exciting and much needed evening. And again, thank you for letting us help keep Ellen Davitt's spirit and your own great work, alive.

Leigh Redhead: [Thanks Carolyn.]

And thank you to everyone else who contributed to our appeal through the Australian Cultural Fund. We managed to exceed our target of \$2,200. And many thanks to the Danish Arts Foundation for supporting Sissel-Jo's [*Seizel-uhl-Yo's*] visit to Australia.

7.10pm Please join with me in welcoming the presenter of Sisters in Crime's 18th Davitt Awards – the multitalented **Sissel-Jo Gazan**.

[Pause for applause.]

Sissel-Jo is a biology graduate from the University of Copenhagen and author of six novels. The Danish Broadcasting Corporation named it the Danish Novel of the Year and *The Wall Street Journal* listed it as one of the 10 Best Mysteries of 2013. It also won the Golden Cleaver for being the Danish People's Favourite Crime Novel of the Decade, 2000–2010. *The Arc of the Swallow*, her second crime novel, won the 2014 Danish Reader's Book Award.

The Arc of the Swallow, Sissel-Jo's [*Seizel-uhl-Yo's*] second crime novel, won the 2014 Danish Reader's Book Award. Although not set in Australia, it was written and researched while she was here.

Sissel-Jo is married to an Australian with whom she has two children. The novel she is writing now, *Grace Street*, is her first to be partly set in Australia. After realising that members of her Australian family stayed at the scandal-riddled Box Hill Salvation Army Boys Home, she began to investigate child abuse scandals perpetrated by the church in Australia and Denmark, and also in other countries such as America and Ireland.

[Leigh Redhead and Sissel-Jo Gazan in conversation]

7.45pm Leigh Redhead: [Thanks Sissel-Jo]

Pause for applause.]

As many of you will know, the Davitts were set up at SheKilda 2001 Women's Crime Convention to celebrate the crime writing achievements of Australian women. 18 years later, we're still celebrating and there's a lot more to celebrate – something for which the Davitts can take some credit.

Back in 2001, there were 7 books in contention though the awards then didn't extend to True Crime – or what we're now calling Non-Fiction. This year a record 101 books have been battling it out.

[Pause for applause]

It is particularly gratifying to see the Davitts becoming a springboard to global success.

Emma Viskic, who won an unprecedented 3 Davitts in 2016 for her debut book, *Resurrection Bay*, has recently been shortlisted for 2 top UK crime awards, the CWA Gold Dagger and the John Creasey Debut Dagger for the same book.

Jane Harper, who won 2 Davitts last year for *The Dry*, her debut novel, also took out the 2017 CWA Gold Dagger for it.

So many women's crime books are also being translated for both the big and small screen. We have just heard about Sissel-Jo's [*Seizel-uhl-Yo's*] great news on this front.

We all probably know about the 2015 Davitt winner, **Liane [Lee-arn] Moriarty**, whose book, *Big Little Lies*, has been made into a hugely successful TV series, produced by and starring **Reese Witherspoon** and our **Nicole**. A second series based on a novella of [new] stories by Liane [Lee-arn] is currently filming, and **Meryl Streep** has joined the cast. Reese and Co are also doing a series on Liane's [Lee-arn] subsequent non-crime book, *Truly Madly Guilty*.

Reese is also filming *The Dry. Only Daughter*, the debut novel of **Anna Snoekstra**, which was shortlisted last year, has been optioned in the US by Universal Pictures. **Erin Cressida-Wilson**, who wrote the script for *Girl on the Train*, is on her final draft of the adaptation.

[Pause for applause]

The trophies were crafted by President **Lindy Cameron's** real-life sister and fellow crime writer, **Fin J Ross**.

On behalf of Sisters in Crime, I'd like to thank the judges for all their hard work: **Danielle Binks, Pauline Meaney, Jacqui Horwood, Michaela Lobb, Debbie Stephen and Jane Sullivan**. Unfortunately, Michaela, Debbie and Jane and Danielle can't be with us tonight but could, Pauline and Jacqui please stand and take a bow.

[Pause for applause]

I'll now hand over to Jacqui Horwood who will present the judges' report:

7.50pm Judges' Report from Jacqui Horwood:

Here we are again – another year, another 100 or so books read and judged.

We had quite a changeover in judging personnel this year. We farewelled **Maggie Baron** and **Deb Crabtree** (both busy writing their own crime novels) and **Sylvia Loader** (who went back to live in England) and welcomed Pauline Meaney, one of the new convenors on the Sisters in Crime committee; *Age* literary columnist, **Jane Sullivan**; and author agent and YA specialist, **Danielle Binks**. Convenor **Michaela Lobb** and forensic specialist, **Debbie Stephen**, came back for another round, as did I.

This year Sisters in Crime decided to open submissions to self-published books which increased the number of books to be read. We had 19 self-published books entered this year and I fully expect this to increase in the coming years.

Recently, author **Sophie Hannah** wrote a *Guardian* article about how, for the first time ever in the UK, crime books had become the bestselling genre. I don't think this comes as a surprise to any of us here. And it certainly comes as no surprise to the judges. Every year the number of crime books by Australian women writers increase in number and in quality. This we had 35 debut books to read. 35! It is truly comforting to know that there is so much talent in this country.

With our reading, we always notice trends in themes and content.

The biggest trend which I think we've all noticed is a literary move to the country. Many of the fiction – both adult and YA – were set in places other than regional towns across Australia. These stories explored the pros and cons of living somewhere where everyone knows you and where long-held secrets can echo through successive generations. It is heartening to read stories from an Australia that not all of us are familiar with.

We also saw writers back up successful debut novels with cracker second books – Jane Harper and Emma Viskic – and debut writers with stunning first novels who are already wowing readers with solid second novels – **Sarah Bailey** and **Megan Goldin**. And, of course, we saw seasoned writers get better and better – **Candice Fox, Sulari Gentill, Ellie Marney, Sophie Masson** and so on.

The judges agreed that this year was one of the best year's for Non-Fiction crime books ever. It was fantastic to read high-quality true crime books that challenged the reader; examined the wide-ranging impacts of crime and legal decisions on our lives; and revealed the life stories of Australian women that we have never heard before.

The children's and young adult books also keep getting better and better. We loved reading strong, multi-dimensional female characters dealing with complex and challenging situations. The reading options for our young people is truly amazing.

I'd like to finish by thanking my fellow judges for their time and dedication. I'd like to thank the writers without whom we'd just sitting around twiddling our thumbs, desperate for something good to read, and the publishers for recognizing and supporting talent when they see it. Of course, thanks to all you readers out there – keep reading crime and keeping supporting Australian women writers.

Leigh Redhead: [Thank Jacqui.]

[Pause for applause.]

8.00pm DAVITTS PRESENTATION

DAVITT (BEST NON-FICTION CRIME BOOK)

Leigh Redhead: 8 books competed this year for the Davitt (Best Non-Fiction Book) with 4 shortlisted. Please refer to your program.

Sissel-Jo Gazan: Highly commended is **Louise Milligan's** debut crime book, *Cardinal: The rise and fall of George Pell* (Melbourne University Press).

Louise Milligan is an investigative reporter for the ABC TV *Four Corners* program. She covered the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse. Her exclusive stories for the ABC TV 7.30 program on the allegations against George Pell won her two Quill Awards from the Melbourne Press Club, including the Gold Quill for best story of the year, the highest honour in Victorian journalism. For this book, she was awarded the 2017 Walkley Book Award and the Sir Owen Dixon Chambers Law Reporting Award. Milligan is Irish-born and was raised a devout Catholic.

Louise can't be here tonight as she had to go to Sydney to put the finishing touches to her Four Corner program on Cardinal Pell which goes to air on Monday night.

I now call on her publisher, **Sally Heath**, to accept her award.

[Sissel-Jo Gazan presents framed certificate to Sally Heath and they pose for pics.]

Sissel-Jo Gazan: It is now my great pleasure to announce the Non-Fiction winner – Gabriella Coslovich, *Whiteley on Trial* (also Melbourne University Press), her debut crime book.

As a child growing up in Footscray, in Melbourne's western suburbs, in the 1970s, Gabriella Coslovich's favourite board games were *Masterpiece* and *Cluedo*, so perhaps it was inevitable that one day she would write a book of true crime involving an alleged art fraud.

She took her good time getting round to it, spending several decades in journalism first, including 15 years at *The Age* newspaper, which wasn't at all a bad thing, as it sharpened her writing skills, introduced her to the world of the arts, and to Sally Heath, the editor who would go on to publish her first book. In July *Whiteley on Trial* won the prestigious second annual Walkley Arts Journalism Award.

Leigh Redhead: The Davitt judges report notes:

“*Whitely on Trial* by Gabriela Coslovich, centres on a trial to decide whether Australian art lovers had been fooled into buying fake Brett Whiteley paintings. Art fraud is not easy to determine and it’s a crime that the art community doesn’t like to discuss.

The judges thought this book was well-researched and highly engaging. The reader’s interest is sustained through all the twists and turns, and legal arguments, buoyed by a cast of very colourful and shady characters. An eye-opening read.”

Unfortunately, Gabriella went overseas last week so her publisher, Sally Heath, will read her acceptance speech.

[Sissel-Jo presents trophy to Sally Heath.]

Sally Heath: I am totally thrilled to receive this award and wish I were there to accept it in person. But I confess that when I looked at the strength of the books in contention, I figured it was fairly safe to accept my parents’ invitation to join them in Europe in August. I ruled out any chance of winning and didn’t think I’d be missed. The news came as a complete and delightful surprise.

I am honoured to have been listed among finalists of such calibre – everyone a winner. And I am honoured that Sally Heath, executive publisher of Melbourne University Publishing, is accepting this award on my behalf. She gently steered me from journalist to first-time author.

When the verdict at the heart of this legally treacherous book lurched from “guilty” to an acquittal, and I began to doubt whether any of the story could be told, she was a pillar of calm. She backed the book from the start, and she backed me.

I want to pay tribute too to the Davitt Awards and the role they play in celebrating Australian women’s crime writing. Awards that exclusively recognise women’s creative talents are so important – maybe at some point such awards won’t be necessary, but we’re not there yet.

The Davitts affirm women’s decision to write in a genre where the accolades in the past have largely gone to men. Women’s voices in the field of crime writing are strong and these awards bring attention to books that deserve to be recognised in a crowded, competitive market. Thank you, Sisters in Crime!

[Sissel-Jo Gazan and Sally to pose for pics.]

DAVITT (BEST CHILDREN’S NOVEL)

Leigh Redhead: This year 14 crime books have competed for the Davitt for Best Children’s Novel. 4 were shortlisted, as you’ll see from the program.

Sissel-Jo Gazan: And the Davitt for the Best Children’s Crime Novel goes to Brisbane author **Allison Rushby** for *The Turnkey* (Walker Books Australia).

Allison Rushby is the daughter of an author, a Highly Commended Davitt Award 2015 recipient, Pamela Rushby, who is here tonight with her Dad Peter. Allison was raised on a wholesome and steady diet of classic English literature. Some of her favourite books, re-read countless dog-eared times, include Rumer Godden’s *The Dolls’ House*, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*, and Noel Streatfeild’s “Shoes” series.

She has forever been a fan of cities with long, winding histories, wild, overgrown cemeteries, red brick Victorian museums, foxes and ivy. She likes to write with a cup of Darjeeling tea by her side and a Devon Rex cat called Claudia curled up in her lap.

Leigh Redhead: This is what the judges had to say:

The Turnkey by Allison Rushby is the story of Flossie Birdwhistle who is the Turnkey at Highgate Cemetery. She is responsible for ensuring the souls at the cemetery stay at rest, not easy with World War Two raging around her and a mysterious German soldier ghost up to no good.

"The judges were very much taken by this engaging book that audaciously combines mystery, the paranormal and history to tell a thoroughly engrossing story. Flossie is a smart, perceptive and courageous character, and a joy to read."

[Sissel-Jo Gazan to present trophy to Allison Rushby.]

Allison Rushby: I was very surprised when *The Turnkey* was longlisted in the children's novel section for the Sisters in Crime 2018 Davitt Award. I was even more surprised when it was shortlisted and to win... well, I'm truly honoured indeed.

It's always a strange feeling to see a book that you've worked on for so many years and finally sent out into the world is being enjoyed by other people. This is especially the case for *The Turnkey* as when I first began writing it, I had no idea whether it would be read at all. *The Turnkey* started out as nothing more than a very bizarre little list. I'd decided that I wanted to write a real "book of the heart" — a book filled with all the things I loved. These things included:

London

World War 11

Tea

Victorian cemeteries

Ivy

A talking fox (because I firmly believe every good book needs a talking fox)

With such strange beginnings, I had no idea if this book would end up being read by anyone else except my immediate family and so to see it win an award, to know that other people understand it — enjoy it even! — is an amazing feeling indeed.

I'm so grateful to Sisters in Crime for the time and effort involved in reading, judging and organising the 2018 Davitt Award and their continuing quest to promote crime books written by Australian women. I'm also indebted to Walker Books Australia for their support.

[Sissel-Jo Gazan and Allison pose for pics.]

DAVITT (BEST YOUNG ADULT NOVEL)

Leigh Redhead: This year's Young Adult field was again strongly competitive with the books just more complex and more enjoyable every year. 8 books were in contention with 3 shortlisted. Please refer to your program.

Sissel-Jo Gazan: Highly-commended is **Ellie Marney's** *No Limits* (Bearded Lady Press). As Jacqui mentioned, this year the Davitts were for the first time opened up to self-published books and Ellie's book is the first to be honoured.

Ellie Marney is a teacher and award-winning hybrid author of a bunch of YA books including *Every Breath*, *Every Word*, *Every Move*, *No Limits*, *White Night*, and the upcoming Circus Hearts series. Ellie is a LoveOzYA flag-waver, Begin-End-Begin contributor, previous Davitts and Scarlet Stiletto winner, and self-publishing

community organiser. A die-hard Sister in Crime Sister, she lives near Castlemaine with her partner and their four sons.

Leigh Redhead: The judges reported:

“*No Limits* by Ellie Marney sets the benchmark for self-published books. It is a full-on, no-holds-barred trip into the illicit drugs trade in regional Victoria. Through the eyes of Harris Derwent, who we first met in *Every Move*, and new character, Ami, we see first-hand the impact that ice is having on rural communities.

“The judges thought *No Limits* was an exciting and compelling read that will challenge young readers and adults alike.”

[Sissel-Jo Gazan presents framed certificate to Ellie and they pose for pics.]

Sissel-Jo Gazan: The winner of the Davitt for Best Young Adult is **Vikki Wakefield**, for her debut novel, *Ballad for a Mad Girl* (Text Publishing).

Vikki Wakefield is best known for writing contemporary YA realism. Her award-winning novels include *All I Ever Wanted*, *Friday Brown* and *Inbetween Days*, and her works have been published in the US, UK, Germany and other countries. Vikki’s style is distinctly Australian with a touch of magical realism, exploring coming-of-age, family, class, relationships, and the lives of Australian teens.

It was the crime novels she read by torchlight under the covers and writers such as Shirley Jackson, Ruth Rendell, Patricia Highsmith, Thomas Harris and Stephen King, who fed her fascination with a darker kind of storytelling. *Ballad for a Mad Girl* is a mash-up of the genres Vikki found so addictive in her formative reading years—crime, mystery, horror, suspense, and the supernatural. Vikki lives and writes in Adelaide, City of Pubs and Churches (and the unofficial Bizarre Murder Capital of Australia).

Leigh Redhead: And now for the judges’ report:

“*Ballad for a Mad Girl* by Vikki Wakefield is an Australian Gothic tale that smartly uses the supernatural to explore the depths of grief and growing up, and the pain to be found in both. Local prankster and daredevil, Grace Foley, experiences something odd and inexplicable one night which has her chasing the answer to a decades old mystery. As she does, her hold on reality slowly disintegrates. Is she possessed or is she losing her mind?

“The judges loved this caring and keening novel. It is creepy but tender and wholly marvellous, keeping the reader guessing and hooked until the end. Grace is a beautifully wrought, complex character who has the reader cheering for her until the end.”

Unfortunately, Vikki had a diary clash in Adelaide where she lives so Liz Filleul, a YA expert, will accept the award of her behalf.

[Sissel-Jo Gazan presents trophy to Liz Filleul.]

Liz Filleul: Thank you so much, Sisters in Crime, for this Davitt Award, and to Liz Filleul for accepting on my behalf. I’m gutted I couldn’t make it in person. Congratulations to everyone longlisted for YA and especially to Ellie Marney and Sophie Masson—I love your work and its an absolute honour to be shortlisted with you.

Most of my work has crime fiction elements, but *Ballad for a Mad Girl* was different from anything I’d written before—a mash-up of genres, and possibly too risky—and when I finished the first complete draft I didn’t quite know where this work would fit. ‘

Over subsequent drafts I tried to force it to be one thing or another—it was in danger of coming undone, and in the end it was a case of all out, or all in. I've always been an obsessive crime reader (starting with complete sets of the Trixie Belden and the Nancy Drew series when I was a kid) but I've never called myself a crime *writer*. I will from now on—with pride, conviction, and the wonderful sense of being a part of a community that this Davitt Award brings.

A massive thank you to Text Publishing and my editor, **Penny Hueston**, for supporting me in whatever direction I take. I imagine it's a challenge to grant artistic freedom and continually brace for whiplash, so this Davitt award is for you, too.

Thank you.

[Sissel-Jo Gazan and Danielle pose for pics.]

DAVITT (BEST ADULT NOVEL)

Leigh Redhead: Tonight, a record, astonishing 71 novels compete for the Davitt Best Adult Novel for the best crime novel with 6 books shortlisted. Please refer to your program.

Sissel-Jo Gazan: Drum roll please...

And the winner of the 2018 Davitt Award for Best Adult Novel is **Emma Viskic**, *And Fire Came Down* (Echo Publishing).

Emma Viskic's critically acclaimed debut novel, *Resurrection Bay*, has sold to numerous territories, including the US and UK. It won the 2016 Ned Kelly Award for Best First Fiction and an unprecedented three Davitt Awards. It is currently shortlisted for the UK's prestigious CWA Gold Dagger and New Blood Awards. The series was recently optioned for TV by a US studio.

Also a classically trained clarinetist, Emma studied at the Victorian College of the Arts and the Rotterdam Conservatorium. Her musical career ranged from performing in operas and musicals, to playing at an engagement party that ended in a brawl. She will be launching *And Fire Came Down* to the UK market at the Edinburgh International Book Festival later this month.

Leigh Redhead: And here's what the judges report says:

"*And Fire Came Down* by Emma Viskic takes us into the small town of Resurrection Bay beset by drug use and racial tension. Caleb Zelic [Zel-itch], first introduced to readers in *Resurrection Bay*, returns to home to investigate the death of a woman he encounters in a dark alley and who signs to him to help her.

"The judges love Caleb Zelic [Zel-itch] who, as a deaf sleuth, is a fresh and original addition to crime genre. He is complex, and unrelenting, edging his way into trouble and out again. Viskic's writing is taut and assured, and her sense of place means the reader can see and smell the bush, the tension and the atmosphere of *Resurrection Bay*. A compelling second novel."

[Sissel-Jo Gazan presents trophy to Emma Viskic]

Emma Viskic: I want to thank the judges and Sisters in Crime. Australia has a thriving crime writing scene, and it's due in large part to things like the Davitt Awards and the ongoing efforts of Sister in Crime.

It's an honour to have my name listed alongside so many wonderful writers for the Davitt Award. I've read all of the shortlisted books and many of the longlisted ones and they're fantastic. More than that, each book taught me something.

I sweated blood and tears over writing *And Fire Came Down*. At its heart, it's a story about the aftermath of trauma, and a story I was driven to write. But I had deep and lingering doubts about what people would make

of my attempts to push the boundaries of conventional crime fiction. It's an incredible validation to have actually won the Davitt Award for it.

For some reason crime writers often get asked why they write crime fiction. Female crime writers get asked it a lot. My answer is – why wouldn't you?

Crime fiction shines a light on the murky business of being human. It can entertain us, thrill and distract us, but it can also explore why people do such terrible and wonderful things. Maybe it can even offer us the possibility of growth. Of justice. Of hope. And given the moral darkness that currently surrounds us, it's no surprise that readers are reaching for it at ever growing rates.

So thank you to all the other writers for helping inspire me.

To finish, I want to thank my publisher, **Angela Meyer**, who has been unswaying in her support and enthusiasm. My brilliant editor **Kate Goldsworthy** who goes above and beyond. And special shout-out to the wonderful team at Echo Publishing in its past and present glory. And last, but never least, my family.

[Sissel-Jo Gazan & Jane to pose for pics]

DAVITT (DEBUT AWARD)

Leigh Redhead: The judges shortlisted 10 books for the Davitt (Best Debut Book) from a record 35 debut books across all 4 categories. Again, take a peek at your program for the list.

Sissel-Jo Gazan: And the winner is **Sarah Bailey** for *The Dark Lake* (Allen & Unwin).

Sarah Bailey is a Melbourne based writer. After 15 years in the advertising industry, she decided to fulfil her long held dream of writing a book. She wrote *The Dark Lake*, a crime thriller featuring Detective Gemma Woodstock which was published with Allen & Unwin in May 2017.

The Dark Lake was shortlisted in the 2017 ABIA General Fiction Book of the Year category and has been published in several markets around the world. In late 2017 Hopscotch Features secured the film rights.

Into the Night, the sequel to *The Dark Lake* was released in May this year and Sarah is now working on the third book in the Gemma Woodstock series which will be released next year.

Leigh Redhead: The judges said:

"*The Dark Lake* by Sarah Bailey introduces readers to Detective Sergeant Gemma Woodstock as she navigates her way through a murder and a rural town full of secrets.

"The judges loved the flawed Gemma Woodstock, a tough prickly, woman with secrets of her own. The story hooks the reader from the first page and doesn't let up the tension until the end. *The Dark Lake* is well plotted and solid debut."

[Sissel-Jo Gazan presents trophy to Sarah Bailey]

Sarah Bailey: Thank you. For me at least, the desire to write a book can't be traced back to a moment or an incident.

In fact, I think I was probably about five or six years old when I first became aware of it. I would scan the bookshelves in my childhood home and have this strange feeling.

A craving. A want. To one day have my name on a book. To be allowed a place on the bookshelf.

And while I had no idea *why* I wanted this so much, it was clear it was forever. I had been blessed with the creative curse: a restless, uneasy, frustrating life sentence.

Admittedly, the desire has, over the years, been inconsistent.

My life got in its own way. Many times. I discovered wanting to write a book is one thing. Sitting down to write one is something else altogether.

In my head it seemed so easy. But after several false starts and over 200,000 words, I had had enough. I was sick of *wanting* to write a book, of starting books. Enough. I simply had to finish one. No matter what.

It was time to take some risks. To buckle down. To get serious. Luckily, I had an idea. Ideas have never been my problem. It's the writing part I have issues with.

I will, I said very quietly to myself, *one way or another, get this book published by my 35th birthday.*

The Dark Lake was published one day after my 35th birthday. But I still considered my goal achieved.

During the one million hours I spent writing *The Dark Lake* in 2016, having it be recognized like this was the furthest thing from my mind. I feel lucky. I feel proud. I feel incredibly grateful to poor, tired, increasingly negative past me for persevering.

For wanting it enough. And for finishing the goddamn book.

I have a lot of amazing people in my life that played a part in *The Dark Lake* becoming a book but tonight I would like to direct my thanks to Sisters in Crime, for supporting me and for supporting so many women in their writing lives. Thank you."

[Sissel-Jo Gazan to pose for pics with Sarah Bailey]

READERS' CHOICE AWARD

Leigh Redhead: It's now our great privilege to present The Davitt (Readers' Choice) award. All 101 books competed for this award as decided by the 500 members of Sisters in Crime.

And the winner is ... **drum roll please...**

Jane Harper for *Force of Nature* (Pan Macmillan Australia).

[Sissel-Jo Gazan presents trophy to Jane Harper]

Jane Harper: I am absolutely delighted that *Force of Nature* has received the Readers' Choice Davitt Award. It is a genuine honour to be recognised by readers, especially those who know books and the genre as well as the Sisters in Crime members do. There is nothing I love more as a writer than to hear that readers have enjoyed my work, so I'm thrilled to win the Readers' Choice award. A huge thankyou to everyone who voted for *Force of Nature* and has supported it over the past year.

[Sissel-Jo Gazan and Jane Harper pose for photos.]

Leigh Redhead:

- [Sissel-Jo Gazan to draw raffle winners –3rd, 2nd, 1st]
- [Sissel-Jo Gazan to draw the 'Be Immortalised in Fiction' competition]

- [Thank Sissel-Jo Gazan – **present gifts.**]

Leigh Redhead: Thank you all for coming.

Special thanks to Dr Carolyn Beasley who has been here most of today, making this happen. [**present gift**]

We'd also like to thank Sisters in Crime convenor, **Michaela Lobb**, who has done a huge amount of work for tonight's event; plus **Caz Brown, Lindy Cameron, Pauline Meaney, Moraig Kisler, Robyn Walton, Carmel Shute** and Sisters in Crime's new treasurer, **Lesley Gillis**; and the judges **Danielle Binks, Pauline Meaney, Jacqui Horwood, Michaela Lobb, Debbie Stephen and Jane Sullivan.**

And now for some announcements:

- Sisters in Crime's **25th Scarlet Stiletto Short Story Competition** closes 31 August. Almost \$10,000 is on offer. You can grab a form on your way out.
- **Friday 7 September 8pm: Extreme situations elicit unusual crimes.** **Megan Goldin, Susi Fox and Pip Drysdale** talk to **Janice Simpson** about deception and delusion, revenge and retribution, and how Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* helps if you're hellbent on making him pay.
- **Friday 19 October, 8pm: True crime event (Followed by Sisters in Crime's AGM.) Rising Sun Hotel**

Please stick around for a bit, buy books and get them signed by the authors.

10% discount for members at the Sun Bookshop stall.

Don't forget to grab your complimentary proof copy of Anna Snoekstra's new book, *The Spite Game* (out October), kindly donated by Harlequin Australia.

At Sisters in Crime's front desk you can join, rejoin or put your name on the email event notification list.

Could you also please leave your name tag. It's part of Sisters in Crime's war on waste.

Grab a notice on your way out.

Please also put your hands together again for Sissel-Jo Gazan.

[**Pause for applause**] Thank you. See you again next year.

Could all the winners come up here for a group photo with their trophies.