

## Citation(s) for the 2012 Mary Gilmore Award

The 2012 Mary Gilmore Award for a best first book of Australian poetry published in the two preceding years netted 27 volumes from eight publishers. After sifting through the volumes, 21 were judged to be eligible and from those, a short list of six was decided:

Warwick Anderson, *Hard Cases, Brief Lives* (Ginninderra)

Peter Coghill, *Rockclimber's Hands* (Picaro)

Rosanna Licari, *An Absence of Saints*(UQP)

Vlanes, *Another Babylon* (UQP)

Chloe Wilson, *The Mermaid Problem* (APC)

Fiona Wright, *Knuckled* (Giramondo)

Fortunately we were unanimous in our judging of the 'best'. But recognising the variety of quality poetry we were keen to celebrate and commend that vitality and so each of us nominated a second volume for commendation.

The Highly Commendeds are:

- Peter Coghill, *Rockclimber's Hands* (Picaro) – for its fine, mature sense of the way landscape and habitation impinge on human experience and relationship to the natural and colonised worlds.
- Vlanes, *Another Babylon* (UQP) – for its creation of other worlds and mythologies, especially Sumerian and Babylonian, in a language that blends both free verse and allusively formal, bringing a sense of ancient pasts into contemporary imagining.
- Chloe Wilson, *The Mermaid Problem* (APC) – for its exhilarating and original reimagining of legendary and folkloric figures into a contemporary 'bestiary' – wickedly memorable and conceptually breathtaking.

The Winner is Fiona Wright's *Knuckled* (Giramondo).

Just about every poem in this volume is impressive, masterful, suggestive, discomfiting. This is forceful poetry that lives up to its title, showing violence, damage, anxiety: seismic tremors of personal, cultural and global dimensions. From the 'locals' of Sydney's various 'Wests' to Sri Lankan and other south-east Asian and Pacific memories, images, Wright interrogates eg. her grandfather's stories of war, Marjorie Barnard's persimmons and waterways as different old Adaminaby flooded and the turn-of-the-century Crimean coast with its 'baigneurs' (men who helped ladies take to the waters). These poems show 'bruising' to be a mark of human experience and writing. At once both physically 'real' and as well highly metaphorical Wright's poems confront, tease and detain us with their complex insights and serious intelligence. [Read two poems, maybe 'Watching' (or 'The Baigneur') and 'To the Children of Poets' – could pick any two really.]

We are sad that Fiona couldn't be here to hear our praise and receive the 2012 Mary Gilmore Award. We wish her well in what we hope will be constantly mesmerising career as a poet.

David Gilbey, Mark Macleod, Derek Motion.  
(Charles Sturt University)