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TASMANIAN WRITER AMANDA LOHREY WINS THE PATRICK WHITE AWARD

The novelist, short story writer, essayist and former academic, Amanda Lohrey, is the winner of the Patrick White Literary Award for 2012, worth \$23,000.

Judging Committee's Citation

Born in Hobart in 1947 and living now in the north-east of Tasmania, the winner of this year's Award, Amanda Lohrey, is the author of four award-winning novels, two novellas and a collection of short stories, along with many highly regarded essays, articles and book reviews.

Amanda Lohrey was educated at the University of Tasmania and Cambridge University. She published her first novel, *The Morality of Gentlemen*, in 1984. This was followed in 1988 by *The Reading Group*, which was shortlisted for the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. The late Stephen Murray-Smith, editor of *Overland*, described *The Morality of Gentlemen*, which is still in print, as the best political novel to have been written in Australia. Both these early novels explore the social and political contexts in which ordinary people are tested and often found wanting.

From 1988 to 1994 Amanda Lohrey was a lecturer in writing and textual studies at the University of Technology, Sydney, where she was influential in developing its prestigious creative writing program. 1995 saw the publication of her *Camille's Bread*, a novel examining the lives of a small inner-city family challenged by conflicting ideologies, and in which food, especially the making of bread, stands as a metaphor for contemporary relationships. *Camille's Bread* won several awards including the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal and has remained in print since it first appeared.

The writer's fourth novel, *The Philosopher's Doll* (2004), was longlisted for the Miles Franklin Award and for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Two novellas have also appeared, one a contribution to the book *Secrets* (with Robert Dessaix and Drusilla Modjeska, 1997) and more recently *Vertigo: a Pastoral* (2008). Her latest fiction publication is a collection of stories, *Reading Madame Bovary* (2010) which was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best Book (SE Asia and South Pacific Region). It won the Best Fiction Book in the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards in 2011 and also the 2011 Steele Rudd Award for the best collection of Australian short stories.

In her fiction Amanda Lohrey creates memorable characters shaped by moral or ethical dilemmas and questions. Her prose style has developed a distinctive grace and lucidity in expressing these complex issues. *The Philosopher's Doll* probes the question of choice about having children. *Vertigo* sees a couple grappling with the social and environmental consequences after they settle in a small coastal town. *Reading Madame Bovary* presents characters caught between body and spirit, memory and desire, ambition and morality.

From 2002 to 2006 Amanda Lohrey was a lecturer in the postgraduate Creative Writing program in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland. In 2005 she was awarded an Asialink Writers' Residency and in 2007 a Literature Board Senior Fellowship. She has also developed a reputation as an essayist of distinction, contributing most notably to the *Quarterly Essay* series, with *Groundswell: the Rise of the Greens* (2002) and *Voting for Jesus: Christianity and Politics in Australia* (2006).

The judges are delighted to select Amanda Lohrey as winner of the 2012 Patrick White Literary award. Her outstanding contribution to Australian literature as a fiction writer and her distinguished work as an essayist mean she is a most deserving recipient of this prestigious award. The panel congratulates her on her success and looks forward to her future publications.

About the Patrick White Literary Award

Established by Patrick White with the proceeds of his 1973 Nobel Prize for Literature and managed by Perpetual as trustee of the philanthropic Trust behind it, the Patrick White Award has been given annually to an author who has 'made a contribution to Australian Literature' and deserves further recognition. With this year's Award, the 39th, the total amount given to all the winners from 1974 to 2012 exceeds \$760,000.

The broad and generous terms of the Award – which acknowledges a body of work rather than a single publication – mean that authors of different status and experience may qualify for consideration. Many have been older writers, for whom the Award has often meant a significant boost to their creativity. Some have been younger writers whom the prize has encouraged to continue writing.

The Patrick White Award is not confined to a particular genre. Poets, fiction writers and playwrights have been among the recipients who have so far benefited from Patrick White's generosity and vision. The first winner was Christina Stead (1974), while others have included Randolph Stow (1979), Rosemary Dobson (1984), Thea Astley (1989) and Gerald Murnane (1999). The most recent winners were Beverley Farmer (2009), David Foster (2010) and Robert Adamson (2011).

The judging committee's current members are Dr Michael Costigan, Associate Professor Debra Adelaide, Professor David Carter and Dr Bernadette Brennan.