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2024 Miles Franklin Literary Award shortlist revealed

Four first-time nominees are among the six talented writers shortlisted for the 2024 Miles Franklin Literary Award. They are joined by former winner Alexis Wright and twice shortlisted author Gregory Day.

Announced today by Perpetual as Trustee, alongside Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund, the 2024 shortlist is:

Only Sound Remains by Hossein Asgari (Puncher & Wattmann)

Wall by Jen Craig (Puncher & Wattmann)

Anam by André Dao (Hamish Hamilton, Penguin Random House)

The Bell of the World by Gregory Day (Transit Lounge)

Hospital by Sanya Rushdi (Giramondo Publishing)

Praiseworthy by Alexis Wright (Giramondo Publishing)

According to the judges, "This has been an extraordinary year for the Miles Franklin Award. The judges have been awed by the ambitious sweep and range of the novels. The writers have distinguished themselves with their experimentation with techniques, forms, and narrative styles. The six books on the shortlist hold a mirror to the expressions and excitements of contemporary Australian writing. They chronicle significant happenings, connect intimately with the multifarious denizens across Australia, and make us part of a global tapestry of interconnected imaginations. They reveal hidden genealogies of arrival and take us on journeys of discoveries to places left behind, both physical and philosophical, explore the innermost workings of our psyche, and interrogate accepted mores of society. There is an emphasis on listening, and the way we, the reading public, are called upon to ethically engage with the sounds and syllables of our times. Each of these novels crafts its own distinct world and demands our utmost attention."

The 2024 judging panel comprises Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian of the State Library of NSW and Chair; literary scholar, A/Prof Jumana Bayeh; literary scholar and translator, Dr Mridula Nath Chakraborty; book critic, Dr James Ley; and author and literary scholar, Prof Hsu-Ming Teo.

All the shortlisted authors receive \$5,000 each from the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.

Copyright Agency's CEO, Josephine Johnston, said, "Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund is thrilled to support the Miles Franklin Literary Award shortlist, which once again showcases the incredible literary talent we have in Australia. With a diverse offering of genre and literary style, and authors emerging and established, the shortlist takes readers on a journey of cultural expression and experience – something we all must treasure. Congratulations to all the shortlisted writers!"

The 2024 winner, announced on 1 August 2024, will receive \$60,000.

View this year's [shortlisted author videos](#) to hear what motivated them to write their novels.

Judges' comments and author biographies follow.

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For further information about the Miles Franklin Literary Award:

<http://www.milesfranklin.com.au/>

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#milesfranklin

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 \$1.48 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 \$3.3 billion in funds under advice for charitable trusts and endowment funds (as at 30 June 2023). Perpetual is trustee for over 1000 [charitable trusts and endowments](#) and provides individuals and families with advice on establishing charitable foundations and structured giving programs. Each year Perpetual distributes more than \$129 million to community organisations on behalf of its clients. 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 50 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 appreciation and engagement with Australian writing, publishing and the visual arts in Australia.

Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund is a long-time supporter of the Miles Franklin Literary Award, providing \$5,000 to each of the shortlisted authors and granting more than half a million dollars to this premier Australian literary prize since 2004.

Author biographies and Judges' comments – 2024 Miles Franklin Shortlist



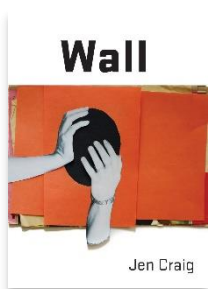
Hossein Asgari *Only Sound Remains*

BIOGRAPHY:

Hossein Asgari studied physics and creative writing. His short stories have appeared in *The Saltbush Review*, *Overland*, and *The Suburban Review*. His debut novel, *Only Sound Remains* is shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards in 2024.

JUDGE'S COMMENT:

This is a powerful story of a complex relationship between a son, Saeed, and his father, Ismael, that reflects on life in Iran from the vantage point of Adelaide. At one level, this is a tale where a father recounts to his son details of his own life in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary Iran, his hopes for Iran's future and the richness of Iran's history. Ismael's story is framed by his obsessive love for Forugh Farrohzad, the famed Iranian poet. Although Saeed is a conflicted listener, it is imperative that he hears his father's story. At another level, then, this novel is also about sound, about listening after years of silence and, perhaps, wilful silencing about a past and a culture that has undergone dramatic upheaval, shaping the lives of ordinary Iranians like Ismael. This is what Saeed must come to terms with, and what readers are privy to via Hossein Asgari's skilful narration. As a diaspora author, Asgari integrates Iranian literary forms, namely Farrohzad's poetry and the story of *Shahnameh*, in the English language to reveal to his readers a unique dimension of the modern Australian story.



Jen Craig *Wall*

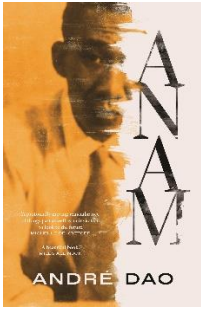
BIOGRAPHY:

Jen Craig lives on Gundungurra and Darug lands in NSW. She is the author of three novels: *Since the Accident* (2009), *Panthers and the Museum of Fire* (2015), and most recently *Wall* (2023), which was simultaneously released in Australia and North America, and shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards 2024.

Her body of work features, among many published pieces of short and micro fiction, essays, and reviews, the opera libretto *A Dictionary of Maladies*, for Swiss composer Michael Schneider, which saw a concert production in Lenzburg, Switzerland, in 2005. Jen holds a doctorate on transgenerational trauma, writing, anorexia, and the gothic from Western Sydney University, and now works as a trauma-informed psychotherapist.

JUDGE'S COMMENT:

Written as a monologue, Jen Craig's *Wall* is a masterful display of narrative control. The narrator describes returning to Sydney from England on the occasion of her father's death. As she sorts through the mountain of junk crammed into his house, she has an idea for an art installation that will display these quotidian remnants of his existence. Rendered in long, fluent, perfectly controlled sentences, the novel moves seamlessly between present and past, at times approaching a stream of consciousness, as the narrator reflects on her father's death, her battles with anorexia, her troubled time as a young art student and her subsequent artistic career. Her ambitious art project becomes analogous to the novel itself. In transforming the material remnants of her father's life into an installation, the narrator is attempting to understand her own. *Wall* is a brilliant novel full of pathos, humour and deep introspection that asks us to consider how we make meaning from life's material accretions, formative experiences, stray memories and emotional baggage.



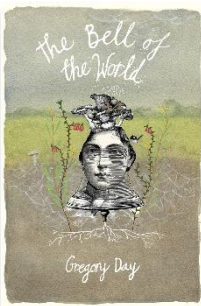
Andre Dao
Anam

BIOGRAPHY:

André Dao is a Melbourne-based writer, editor and artist. His debut novel, *Anam*, won the 2021 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript. His writing has appeared in *Meanjin*, *Sydney Review of Books*, *Griffith Review*, *The Monthly*, *The Lifted Brow*, *Cordite*, *The Saturday Paper*, *New Philosopher*, *Arena Magazine*, *Asia Literary Review* and elsewhere.

JUDGE'S COMMENT:

Memory and memorialisation, the failure of remembering, the re-constructions of revolutions past, the continuing but inconclusive meanings of the past in the present and the augury of that which remains to be revealed: these are the compulsions of *Anam*. Written over a tortuous period of twelve years, the novel traces the journey of a grandson discovering that his grandfather was imprisoned by the Communist government in Chi Hoa. A grandfather who enters the annals of Amnesty International by virtue of being a Catholic detained for 3653 days without being charged or tried. A quirk of history sees the grandson inherit an unmediated Vietnamese diasporic aspiration in Australia, embarking upon a doctorate in law. The narrator's quest to find out this family history starts from the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne and takes him to Boissy, France; Cambridge, England and Hanoi, Vietnam. It leads him to try and excavate the meaning of place names, and the meaning of names in places. But *Anam* is not just a metafictional treatise on the glorious failure of writing pursuits, whether it be in service of the identitarian or the doctrinal. It is about the here and now of returns: to a family whose legacy one bears, and to the future in one's children. In the process, *Anam* sweeps the world-in-making for our times, redraws maps and reinvents what fiction can do, lest we forget.



Gregory Day
The Bell of the World

BIOGRAPHY:

Gregory Day is a writer and musician from the Eastern Otways region of southwest Victoria, Australia. He lives on Wadawurrung tabayl. Gregory's writing has won many awards, including the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal. In 2019 his novel *A Sand Archive* was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award. In 2020 Gregory received the prestigious Patrick White Award for his ongoing body of work.

JUDGE'S COMMENT:

Bell of the World is a novel that defamiliarises the world; a beautifully strange cabinet of curiosities, sublimely crafted by a writer with a dazzling mastery of words—the meaning, sound, sight and texture of words—and the plenitude of silence. Set in early twentieth century regional Victoria, the novel recounts Sarah Hutchison's return from Europe to her uncle Ferny's property, Ngangahook Run. Conflict arises when the locals wish to erect a bell for the town. Day makes us aware that colonisation involves an aural component. The bell intended to proclaim the importance of the European town would instead toll a knell foreboding environmental disruption and degradation. And, as Ferny recognises, it would ring out 'our moral, not to mention *legal* illegitimacy as the scions of settlers' on stolen Wadawurrung country. In resonance with our age of disruptions and mashups, objects, events, and storytelling itself are transformed as the most unlikely things are juxtaposed and made new, made fresh. This neo-historical novel literally remembers and repackages the past for contemporary purposes, one of which is to urge us to listen, and to grasp our embedded selves within the rich interconnectedness of the world.



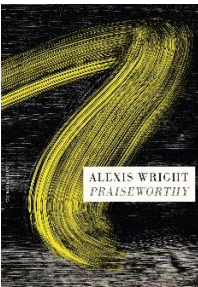
Sanya Rushdi
Hospital

BIOGRAPHY:

Sanya Rushdi was born in Bangladesh and studied the biological sciences and psychology at Monash University, the University of Sydney and Deakin University. *Hospital*, her first novel, was shortlisted for the 2024 Stella Prize. She currently lives in Melbourne, Australia.

JUDGE'S COMMENT:

Hospital is a fictional flourish of poetic utterance that is, in turns, affecting and absorbing in its disquisition upon the nature of psychosis. Based on the experiences of the Melbourne-based Bengali writer, the work is an illustration of what the narrator identifies as “someone’s picture turning out superbly, accurately representing a social system.” *Hospital* takes us through the corridors of treatment regimes of psychotic illness, while evoking the philosophical and political underpinnings of what constitutes the individual and the social. As the narrator navigates her way through these communities, she brings to us a world peopled with every rung of society. The short narrative is autofiction and testimonial, delineating the gap between normative family structures and friendships that are formed in medical establishments. The chronicle makes us wonder about the slippage between reality and fantasy, thought and language, humour and pain, defeat and joy. Ultimately, it is a feat of imagination undertaken by an utterly original voice rooted in contemporary Australia’s multicultural, multilingual ethos. Originally written in the author’s mother tongue, the book was translated by Arunava Sinha and retains the sparse economy and piercing psychotic insights of the source text.



Alexis Wright
Praiseworthy

BIOGRAPHY:

Alexis Wright is a member of the Waanyi nation of the southern highlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The author of the prize-winning novels *Praiseworthy*, *Carpentaria* and *The Swan Book*, Wright has published three works of non-fiction: *Take Power*, an oral history of the Central Land Council; *Grog War*, a study of alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory; and *Tracker*, an award-winning collective memoir of Aboriginal leader, Tracker Tilmouth. Her books have been published widely overseas, including in China, the US, the UK, Italy, France and Poland. Wright has won a number of literary awards, including the Miles Franklin Literary Award for *Carpentaria*, and a Queensland Literary Award for *Praiseworthy*, which was also shortlisted for the Dublin Literary Award, one of the world’s richest literary prizes. She is the first author to win the Stella Prize twice – for *Tracker* in 2018, and for *Praiseworthy* in 2024. She held the position of Boisbouvier Chair in Australian Literature at the University of Melbourne, and was honoured with the title of Distinguished Professor at Western Sydney University. She is the inaugural winner of the Creative Australia Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature.

JUDGE'S COMMENT:

Everything about *Praiseworthy* is expansive: its themes, its imagery, its vibrant demotic prose. The novel is at once an epic of classical proportions and a wild comedic romp. Set in a fictional town permanently enshrouded in a mysterious haze, the story takes a quirky Indigenous family and renders them in mythical terms. The patriarch, a crackpot entrepreneur and visionary called (among other things) Cause Man Steel, hatches a harebrained scheme to preempt impending environmental collapse by cornering the donkey market. The ructions this generates within the small community of Praiseworthy and his exasperated family develops into a monumental, swirling and often brilliantly funny narrative that grapples with the largest issues of our time: climate change, the internet, capitalism, the devastating consequences on Indigenous communities of colonialism and ongoing political paternalism. A stylistic tour de force, its tone capable of switching in an instant between the lyrical and the wickedly satirical, *Praiseworthy* triumphantly assesses its themes against the ultimate measures: the timelessness of Country and the indomitable spirit of Aboriginal Sovereignty.