Jennifer Down wins the 2022 Miles Franklin Literary Award for Bodies of Light

By Perpetual
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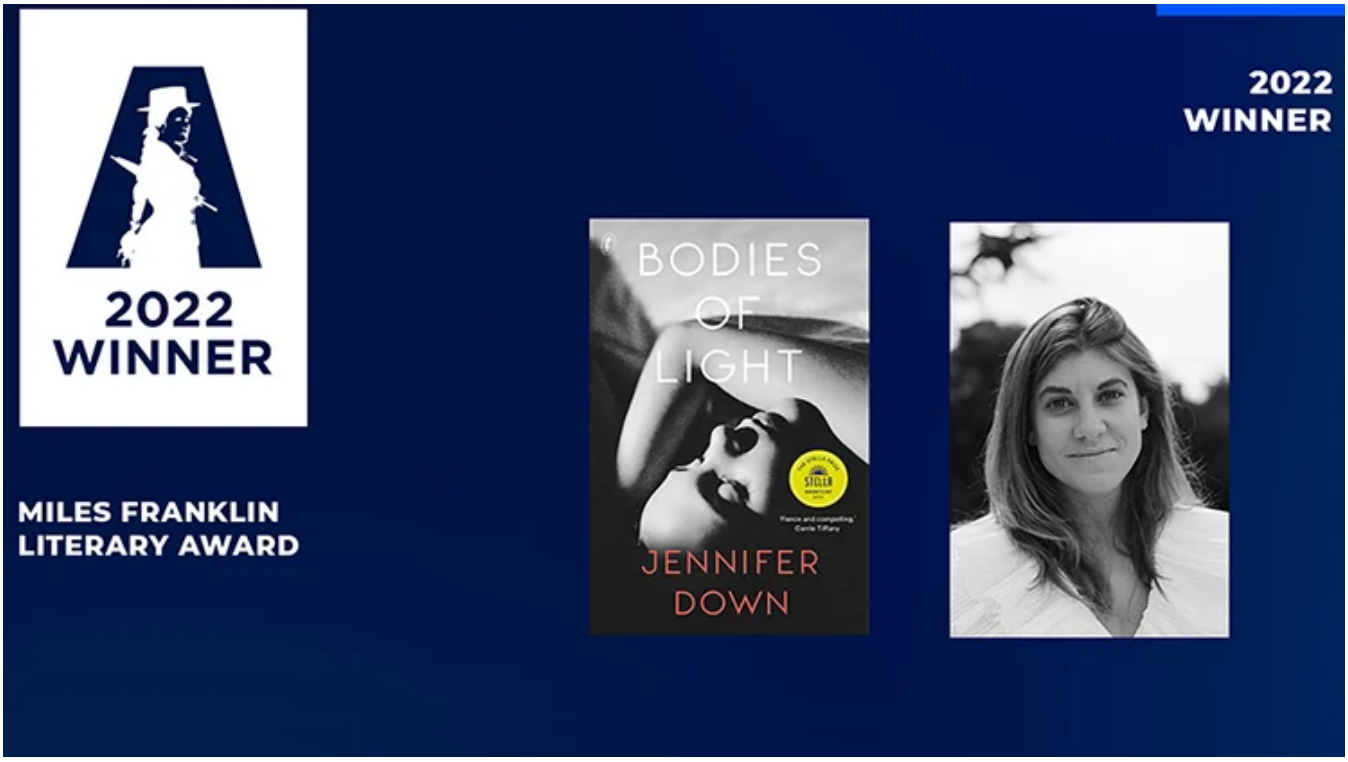

Jennifer Down has won the prestigious Miles Franklin Literary Award for her novel, *Bodies of Light,* published by Text Publishing. As one of the youngest authors to be honoured with the

Award in its 65-year history – the youngest being Randolph Stow for *To the Islands* in 1958 at 23 – Jennifer Down has established herself as a potent voice in the new generation of Australian writers.

On winning the award, Ms Down said: "It's a profound honour to be awarded the Miles Franklin Literary Award—I'm still pinching myself. To be longlisted, and then shortlisted, among authors whose works I've long read and admired, already felt like a stroke of exceptional fortune. I was, and am, elated to be in the company of writers embracing stylistic, thematic and formal diversity, whose works explore such different slivers of 'Australian life'."

"*Bodies of Light* took me a long time to write, and, many times over, I doubted I would finish it at all. It is not an easy book. It demands quite a lot from the reader, I think; not in the sense of being academic or intellectually challenging, but in what it asks the reader to sit with and witness. I'm grateful to the judges for their willingness to do so, and for considering this a story worthy of recognition," added Ms Down.

Established through the will of *My Brilliant Career* author, Miles Franklin, for the "advancement, improvement and betterment of Australian literature", the Miles Franklin Literary Award recognises a novel of "the highest literary merit" that presents "Australian life in any of its phases". Perpetual serves as Trustee for the Award.

Ms Down will receive $60,000 in prize money. Her novel was chosen from a shortlist that included two-time Miles Franklin shortlisted author Michael Mohammed Ahmad, two-time Miles Franklin winner Michelle de Kretser, award-winning novelist Alice Pung and self-published writer Michael Winkler.

When describing this year's winning novel, the judges said, "*Bodies of Light* invites readers to witness the all-too-often concealed, destructive forces of institutionalised care. With extraordinary skill and compassion, Down has written an important book which speaks to an urgent issue in contemporary Australian life."

The 2022 judging panel comprised of author and literary critic, Dr Bernadette Brennan; literary scholar, Dr Mridula Nath Chakraborty; book critic, Dr James Ley; NSW Mitchell Librarian and Chair, Richard Neville; and author and editor, Dr Elfie Shiosaki.

The 2022 winner announcement was streamed live on 20 July and can be viewed via the following link: YouTube.

For the third consecutive year the ABC is the award's media partner.

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