

ALS Gold Medal Citation 2016

The judges found Brenda Niall's *Mannix* (2015), the winner of the 2016 Australian Literature Society Gold Medal, an impressive contender for the award. *Mannix* faced very fierce competition – the acclaimed novels *The World Without Us*, by Mireille Juchau, *Forever Young*, by Steve Carroll, *The Other Side of the World*, by Stephanie Bishop and *Clade*, by James Bradley; works of life writing such as Drusilla Modjeska's *Second Half First* and Kate Grenville's *One Life: Story of my Mother*; and some outstanding collections of short stories, such as *Six Bedrooms*, by Teegan Bennet Daylight and *A Few Days in the Country*, by Elizabeth Harrower. Niall's *Mannix* stood out as a meticulously researched work, ambitious in its scope and beautifully and patiently written. A biography of an extraordinary man, the book revisits much of what has been written about Cardinal Daniel Mannix, someone renowned for his reserve and inevitably someone irresistible to biographers. Niall's Mannix is a man of strength, courage and influence, an indefatigable political operator but also a man of great vulnerability who is at his truest self in the intimate world of Raheen, the mansion afforded the Archbishop of Melbourne. Brenda Niall is that kind of writer who remains throughout the book both a master storyteller completely in control of the wealth of material she uncovers and an unassuming presence whose skill and gift create a work of sheer craftsmanship. This is a book rich in the political intrigue and nasty politics of the Catholic Church across Australia, Ireland and the Vatican, but also a portrait of Australian society, culture and politics in the earlier part of the 20th century. To borrow Niall's own words when describing an appearance by Mannix on TV in 1971, this is a bravura performance.

Judging Panel:

Chair:

Prof Tony Simoes da Silva University of Tasmania

Dr Anna Johnston

Prof Imelda Whelehan