

# The Norma K Hemming Award

for race, gender, sexuality, class and disability in speculative fiction

*Norma Hemming with two young Arcturian players*



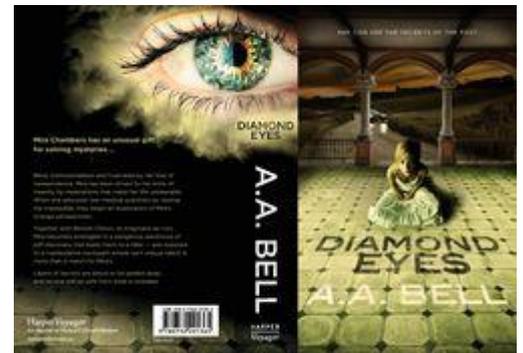
Norma Kathleen Hemming (1927–1960) was a British author who migrated to Australia in 1949 and wrote for local pulp magazine *Thrills Incorporated* and enthusiastically participated in the Australian fan scene.

She was a founding member of the femme fan group Vertical Horizons, and wrote and acted for the SF theatrical group The Arcturian Players.

Norma returned to international publishing in the late 1950s with stories in *Nebula SF* and *New Worlds*, but died at the age of 33 of lung cancer on 4 July 1960.

The 2011 Norma K Hemming Award for excellence in the exploration of themes of race, gender, sexuality, class and disability in Australian speculative fiction was won by author A A Bell for her first speculative fiction novel **Diamond Eyes** published by HarperCollins in Nov 2010.

Anita Bell, like the protagonist Mira Chambers in *Diamond Eyes*, is cursed with terrible eyesight. She's also, by her own admission, a lover of multi-layered psychological crime thrillers, science fiction and fantasies – especially those with non-linear time lines. She looks for revelations in her reading that throw a whole new light on different aspects, not just in the plot but also character insights.



Writing *Diamond Eyes* (as A A Bell) gave her a chance to do all that herself, albeit with stacks of twists and in-jokes that, whilst they may be laid on thick and fast for readers bright enough to know them all, are pitched at about the right level for most of us. Enough of the puns are easy to spot. Other more subtle ones are directed at fellow fans of specific genres.

This is a well-written book with interesting and thought-provoking perspectives. Some readers unused to crossing genre boundaries and suspending judgement on unfamiliar ideas may find it takes a little longer to get into this book. But it's worth the effort, as the Hemming Award jurors\* agreed unanimously when they selected the author, A A Bell, as the winner.

\*writer-editor Russell Blackford; editor-publisher Rob Gerrand; author Tess Williams; and editor Sarah Endacott

**The Norma K Hemming Award for excellence in the exploration of themes of race, gender, class and sexuality in science fiction was established in 2010 by the Australian Science Fiction Foundation. Disability was added as an additional category in 2011**



According to its designer, graphic artist Sarah Xu, “the award trophy consists of a mounted glass plate with a boab tree-hydra design motif. The circular design represents the yonic (in contrast to so many phallic award representations) and the boab represents the Australian speculative fiction landscape, the boab being uniquely fantastical in itself, and the hydra reminding us of diversity within that.