

2008 *page seventeen* Competition Results

Poetry section

1 st	Anne Elvey (Vic)	Christmas holidays at home
2 nd	Ian Gibbins (SA)	turtledove
Commended	Derek Motion (NSW)	defiance of sitting
Commended	John Egan (NSW)	The Mariner
Shortlisted	Anne Elvey (Vic)	Cinders
Shortlisted	Anne Hollier Ruddy (Qld)	Villanelle for a patient
Shortlisted	Derek Motion (NSW)	tracing-paper
Shortlisted	EA Gleeson (Vic)	A short time to live
Shortlisted	EA Gleeson (Vic)	Collateral Damage
Shortlisted	Holly Buschman (Qld)	Catfight
Shortlisted	Ian Gibbins (SA)	local knowledge
Shortlisted	Janine McGinness-Whyte (Vic)	garage sale
Shortlisted	Kevin Gillam (WA)	full-stopping the sky
Shortlisted	Kristen Roberts (ACT)	Amid Winter
Shortlisted	Marian Spires (Vic)	Wedding Day
Shortlisted	Nadine Piotrowicz (WA)	Coming home

Short Story section

1 st	Jennifer Mills (NT)	The capital of missing persons
2 nd	Philip Mainwaring (Vic)	The Breath of Heaven
Commended	Simon Stuart (Vic)	piano
Commended	Susan McCreery (NSW)	Things in Common
Shortlisted	Angela Meyer (Vic)	Mentioning Ben
Shortlisted	Carmel Lillis (Vic)	Ashamed
Shortlisted	David Gibb (SA)	The Cheap Shirt
Shortlisted	David McLaren (Vic)	27
Shortlisted	Jenny Sinclair (Vic)	Jacaranda blooming
Shortlisted	Susan McCreery (NSW)	Rose

Competition Judge's Report

Poetry section

I have been writing judge's reports for literary competitions for over ten years now and, after reading the 154 entries in this competition, I felt for the first time that some poets, a lot of poets, have been reading them. I always emphasise the importance of strong imagery and original metaphor, rhythms that speak for the poem rather than against it, devices that let the poem swim rather than drown and, above all, that our poetry should reflect that we live in the 21st Century, that we drive cars, talk on mobile phones and cook with microwave ovens. So many poems, which did not make the short-list, did all of this and more. For this reason, it took a long time to make those necessary and sometimes painful decisions that a judge has to make. That said, 'Christmas Holidays at Home' is a deserving winner. Like all good poems, it gives up more with each reading. The details here are sparse but they tell a story that has no end in its possibilities. The central character is a colossus of a man, standing only up to his knees, he teaches the persona to dive. By the ninth stanza, through carefully selected details, we have come to love and trust him. The turn arrives late in the poem and it kicks hard:

I am eighteen, reading you at twenty-one/
Morotai, August 15, 1945: *learning to walk with limbless heart.*

It is only through rereading that we see the danger signs, the shallows, the shark patrol. Second place went to 'turtledove', a short poem with two stanzas, two questions held together with first-line anaphora, 'What if we think of her', held together by the central metaphor of the turtledove and the themes of migration and refugees. Its simplicity only increases its impact.

Garth Madsen

Competition Judge's Report

Short Story section

Judging a competition is a process: a sequence of exchanges, an act of trust, a series of decisions, a pronouncement.

I read through all of the stories. All of them. Because they are all important. Because I've been trusted with them. Because the winner is in there somewhere and I love finding it. First read is a kind of winnowing. I must let go of stories that need help with setting, character definition, dialogue. The ones that sound poetic but have no story. The ones that have a great story but are poorly told. The ones that just need more work.

By the end of the first reading I had set aside ¼ of the stories as the Long List. I read the Long List and fall in love with stories all over again, but I'm harsh this time. Small things cause rejection: lapses in the narrative, poor punctuation, American-style spelling.

The Very Short List leaves me with ten stories. All to be published, four to be given prizes.

I am torn between first and second place. I am comparing apples with oranges, it isn't fair. I want everyone to have a prize.

In the end I choose *The capital of missing persons* as first prize. The powerful imagery, the visceral grasp of setting in counterpoint to the strength of family resonates. An Irish ex-pat friend once observed to me that *Family is Mecca at Christmas in Australia*. Maybe it's the sense of the age and country around us:

We get sort of reverent in the bush maybe it's what happens when you haven't found any treasure, you've used up all your screaming, and you are still faced with nothing.

The Breath of Heaven came a very close second. Sharp as the scent of diosma, nostalgia is the pain of remembering. This story moves through time, from the present to the protagonist's childhood, compassionate memories, the impossible distance of the past.

Amanda le Bas de Plumetot