

## 2009 page seventeen Competition results

### Poetry section

1st	Chloe Wilson (Vic) – Black Swans
2nd	Ashley Capes (Vic) – botanic
Commended	Christina McCallum (Vic) – Bouquet
Commended	Virginia Danahay (Vic) – Morning Light
Shortlisted	Amanda Anastasi (Vic) – City Loop Train
Shortlisted	Anne Hollier Ruddy (Qld) – New Day
Shortlisted	Anne M Carson (Vic) – Bovine North South Tendency
Shortlisted	Denise Shakespeare (Vic) – Popeye
Shortlisted	Gemma White (Vic) – The Night Does Not Creep
Shortlisted	Janine McGinness-Whyte (Vic) – The truth and other small fictions
Shortlisted	Julia Wakefield (SA) – God’s Eye View
Shortlisted	Julia Wakefield (SA) – Shoreline

Thanks to everyone who entered this year’s competition. The responsibility of reading and deciding the final place-getters is something I have taken very seriously, considering the time, heart and hope that I know each writer invests in their work.

For those who didn’t get a mention I would encourage you not only to keep writing but reading. Read critically. Pay attention to images, economy of words, and to the arrangement of the poem on the page. Because these lessons inform your work, and are evident in every piece you write.

First place goes to *Black Swans*. This piece shows a fine balance and control as it reflects upon European arrival. Its tone fits the subject matter, there being a certain distance between the reader and the scene, as if we are witnessing this occurrence upon the horizon. And yet one is drawn deeper by its haunting question and the resonance it has to the experience of our indigenous brothers and sisters.

Second place goes to *botanic*. There are some lovely images in this poem which also shows a good deal of control. *beyond the gardens/sirens tunnel through air and wind plays a mean/ballet with nests*. It is a fine observation of the gardens and city, and with such a strong finish, the final lines... *then swiftly to shadows/in afternoon/where/bamboo stands together full of gossip*.

Also a mention to the commended entries *bouquet* and *Morning light*. These are small, delicate scenes which are handled very well. There is an honesty and refinement to them, proving that poems don’t need to be about grand narratives or ancient characters.

Congratulations to the place-getters and thanks and support again to all of those who entered. Keep writing and reading. Keep working hard on your poems to make your poems work hard.

Nathan Curnow

## 2009 page seventeen Competition results

### Short story section

1st	Alexis Hailstones (Qld) – Winter’s End
2nd	Samuel Rutter (Vic) – Burrows, Nests and Caves
Commended	Ellen McKechnie (Vic) – Marble
Commended	Lois Murphy (Vic) – Shifts
Shortlisted	Alan Cornell (Vic) – The Lodger
Shortlisted	Amy McKernan (Vic) – The Jigsaw Girl
Shortlisted	David Gibb (SA) – Other People’s Fathers
Shortlisted	David McLaren (Vic) – a tightness that does not turn
Shortlisted	Gabrielle Bridges (Vic) – Hey Guru, Nothing Doing
Shortlisted	Lisa Fitzpatrick (NSW) – Memories of a Friend

It is a humbling experience to be a judge for a literary competition, a privilege of course but also a responsibility. What to look for? A new perspective? A competent sense of style? Characters that ‘live’ beyond the page. That elusive something I can only describe as the magic of words. Artists have a variety of mediums. We, as writers, have only words. I am obsessed with language, the sound of it, the way it conveys (or doesn’t) visual images. Short story writers need to consider language just as carefully as poets.

With this in mind I read all the stories carefully. And most of them had something. Which is encouraging because it seems to me that short stories seem to be an increasingly neglected art form. The stories I discarded first were the ones I thought were second-hand, clichéd, derivative of something seen on television or read, stories that the writer had not actually felt for her/himself. I was looking for what I can only call an authentic voice. That is the good thing about being a judge. It is completely subjective. I chose the stories I liked, that I felt fitted into my criteria, that had that something extra, a turn of phrase, a depiction of character, dialogue that I could ‘hear’. Someone else may well have chosen differently.

Both the winner, *Winter’s End* and the runner-up *Burrows, nests and caves* had all these qualities and it was difficult to choose between them. I thought though that *Winter’s End* had an added poignancy because of its dreadful inevitability contrasted with the young man’s hopes for his unborn child. As I have said, I found a touch of something special in most of the entries I read. I hope you all go on writing because eventually you’ll get there. Entering a short story contest is an act of faith. Be assured, your stories were read and appreciated.

Zenda Vecchio