

Save As

Writing Competition 2014: Fiction

Judge's report

There was a fantastic response to the competition and it was a pleasure to read such a varied collection of pieces. As a reader I am always drawn in by a distinctive voice, a sense of style and command of form, and a sense of place, and the pieces I've selected reflect those concerns. Each one stayed with me and left me feeling a little unsettled, a little shaken up, and I think this is a good thing.

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: The Tower (submission 54)

I found this piece so unsettling, so compelling. We are drawn into a world which is slightly awry through subtle quotidian detail; the increase of tension as the intensity of heat and noise builds to a genuinely disquieting conclusion. Much is left unsaid, intimated, and ambivalent — for me this always makes for an enjoyable reading experience — yet the prose itself is tremendously precise and controlled.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: The Woman (submission 33)

This short piece is full of wonderful meticulous imagery and I loved the way the ambiguous ending is realised through form. The shift from a close, immediate point of view to detached observation is bold and so skilfully handled; there is a keen sense of how much space to leave for the reader, and a confidence in leaving things unstated.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Broch (submission 34)

There's such a sense of place here, which feels utterly embedded in the narrative and the lives of the characters; this is not just backdrop, people live and work here, and the story emerges from that. The voice is convincing and engaging, and there's a real warmth and subtlety to it. The muted dying fall of the closing paragraph is beautifully done.

Commended:

Blue Sun (1)

A striking voice and an original idea, with a pleasingly bitter aftertaste.

Northern Lights (27)

This has the feel of a folktale, offset by the intrusion of the contemporary world, and there's a chilly sense of inevitability in the outcome.

Time and Tin Soldiers (32)

The structure, pacing, and stylish prose impressed me here.

Cleansing Christmas (52)

An experimental piece which makes use of a slippery narrative style to disorient the reader very effectively.