

Cinnamon Literature Award

Thank you to everyone who entered the Cinnamon Literature Award this year. As well as introducing us to wonderful new voices and new pieces of writing, the awards are a mainstay in keeping us publishing so we really appreciate your participation. We also want to thank you for the trust you show in sending us your work. It's a brave thing to push the submit button and then wait patiently. We know as writers ourselves that writers put so much of themselves into the work and we want to honour that in how we read the manuscripts and take care in our decisions.

In the last two years we've seen a leap in quality and ambition in the writing submitted. We are living in strange times and it seems that one of the spin-offs of this is that people are more committed to what matters in their lives, including their craft and art. We are also seeing a rise in the quantity of submissions, meaning that on the one hand there is a plethora of riches to select from, but on the other hand, adjudication gets harder and our long and shortlists consequently get longer.

If your work reached the longlist, that's a significant achievement. We begin reading as soon as entries arrive, sifting and making lists to re-read, adding to these as new material comes in. It's a privilege to read work that shows so much commitment, not only to craft but to ideas and it's a thrill when we find those pieces that take risks with their genre, whether those risks are about form, style, language or emotional authenticity.

Thank you again for sharing your writing with us. Keep writing. Keep knocking on doors. Keep taking risks and loving language.

The manuscripts on the long list varied across genre, focus, styles and voices, but what they shared was two key features. Firstly, they took their form seriously (whether it was open field poetry or experimental prose or a linear narrative). In the prose this meant a pressure on language that was engaging, steering a course between the twin rocks of over-writing, which distances the reader with its superfluities, and bland telling, which allows the reader no scope to imagine and immerse. The prose here hooked us, gave us sensory details that mattered, left room for us to enter the stories and treated us as intelligent participants in the narrative. In the poetry this meant using white space to signal the interplay of poet and time, images that were fresh and resonant, lucid and precise writing that was honed and confident of its rhythms, however surprising.

Longlist

Lucy Abdullah

Shanta Acharya

Claire Barnard

Carole Belfield

Alfio Bernabei

Sylvia Bluck

Simon Bracken

Andy Breckenridge

Elaine Briggs

Lesley Burt

Kate Carne

Julian Cason

Anjana Chowdhury

Jody Cooksley

Frances Corkey Thompson

Mair De-Gare Pitt

Marie-Louise Eyres
Catherine Faulds
Michael Farren
Evie Ford
Margaret Freeman
Diana Gittins
David Harris
Jeanette Horn
Kate Hoyland
Christopher James
Ken Jones
Manon Jones
Annia Lekka
Fiona Longsdon
Ramune Luminaire
Phil Madden
Paul McDermott
Jane McLaughlin
Sighle Meehan
Diana Powell
Sue Proffitt
Bethany Rivers
Marg Roberts
Omar Sabbagh
K V Skene
Sarah Steele
Janet Swinney
Susan Utting
Lucinda Weldon
Marjory Woodfield
Patricia Helen Wooldridge
Barbara Young

Reducing the manuscripts down to the shortlist was no easy task. If you've got this far, we hope you will feel justly proud of your writing. The attention to detail in these manuscripts shone. The prose was not only engaging, convincing and immersive, but showed the marks of distinctive voices at work; the voices of people who had put in serious commitment. The poetry in this group of manuscripts was supple, alive, and honest.

Shortlist

Sylvia Bluck
Simon Bracken
Elaine Briggs
Kate Carne
Marie-Louise Eyres
Michael Farren
Catherine Faulds
David Harris
Jeanette Horn
Kate Hoyland
Christopher James
Manon Jones

Fiona Longsdon
Phil Madden
Sighle Meehan
Diana Powell
Sue Proffitt
Omar Sabbagh
Marjory Woodfield
Patricia Helen Wooldridge

Finalists:

Kate Carne
Michael Farren
Diana Powell
Omar Sabbagh
Patricia Helen Wooldridge

We whittled the manuscripts down to a final five after a lot of discussion.

What we loved about Kate Carne's short stories, 'Blood on His Hands' and 'Size of a Planet', was their high impact married to subtle and careful details. We were inside these stories, needing to know what happened next as the narratives went to the heart of the many ways in which a life might unravel.

Michael Farren's poetry, *A Year With No Head*, digs deeply into questions of perspective and how the world changes when head and heart are separated in our individual and communal vision. The lucid language contains unsettling and necessary questions, while form is pushed to open up gaps--the white space challenging any easy assumptions.

Diana Powell's novella, *The Sisters of Cynvael*, is an inventive rendering of a slice of Welsh mythology that demonstrates how dynamic and contemporary mythology can be. Time here is as fluid as the prose and we were captivated by the willingness to take risks that pay off in both the evocative language and the distinctive narrative voice.

Omar Sabbagh's *From Bourbon to Scotch, A Dubai Dairy*, is a celebration of language and richness of words as much as an engaging insight into the very particular lives of his characters. Interrogating people who are wrestling with identity and relationships, the story is densely layered and original; the prose completely compelling.

Patricia Helen Wooldridge's poetry collection, *Out in the Field* is a delight to read. The voice and tone are elegant, honed, precise. The images are breath-taking in their seeming simplicity and actual depth. The turns of phrase and the visual impact of the poetry on the page are exquisite. In this collection lyric and prose poetry encounter our largest questions as the poems face death, darkness, and the urgency of our fragile ecological state. Yet through this the poetry not only retains hope, but joy; a yes to life.

It wasn't easy to select a winner from these superb manuscripts and in the end we felt the only good option was to have two winners this year.

Winners

Diana Powell
Patricia Helen Wooldridge

Huge congratulations to Diana and Patricia whose novella and poetry collection will be published in 2023.