

**Aurealis Awards: Fantasy Short Story
Judges' Report
Date: 2008**

Panel Members

Jervina Dorney (convenor), Natalie Costa Bir, Lynne Green, Adrian Stagg, Amy Williamson

Number of Submissions

156

Judging Criteria

The Fantasy Short Story panel for the 2008 Aurealis Awards evaluated submissions to this division by a number of criteria. Judges looked for originality in the submitted work, for the skilled use of language, for the exploration of themes applicable in modern society and particularly for the emotional engagement of the reader. An appeal to a broad cross-section of the audience was of particular interest, as was, of course, the overall entertainment value of the piece.

Overview of Nominations

The submissions for this year's Fantasy Short Story award were of an outstanding quality; memorable, lyrical and thought-provoking, there were stories to appeal to just about every facet of the audience, ranging from dark and gritty to humorous, light and almost ethereal in tone. At every turn the judges were treated to fresh and interesting approaches to age old myths and to modern-day fairy-tales, from stories rooted in European legend to tales springing from the rich and complex tapestry of the native Australian Dreamtime.

There simply weren't enough places on the short-list to give due recognition to the many entries the judging panel found to be brilliant, lavishly entertaining and profoundly thought-provoking.

Shortlisted Works

Cat Sparks, 'Sammarynda Deep', *Paper Cities* WINNER

Thoraiya Dyer, 'Night Heron's Curse', *Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine, Issue 37*

Karen Maric, 'The Last Deflowerer', *Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine, Issue 32*

Angela Slatter, 'Dresses, Three', *Shimmer Volume 2, Issue 4*

Kim Westwood, 'Nightship', *Dreaming Again*

Honourable Mentions

Peter M. Ball, 'The Last Great House Of Isla Tortuga', *Dreaming Again*

Rjurik Davidson, 'Twilight In Caeli-Amur', *Dreaming Again*

Review of Shortlist

Cat Sparks, 'Sammarynda Deep' WINNER

Long after reading, this is a story that returns to haunt the reader. From the very first word, "Sammarynda Deep" drags you into a world both wonderfully exotic and strange, yet undeniably familiar in the emotions and ambitions that drive its inhabitants.

Thoraiya Dyer, 'Night Heron's Curse'

Written simply but beautifully, "Night Heron's Curse" is a tribal fairy-tale steeped in the mysticism of native Australia. Well told and thoroughly enjoyable, this story is uniquely Australian in theme and gets better with every reading.

Karen Maric, 'The Last Deflowerer'

This was a sly, vivid and lushly told tale of nature and passion triumphing over discipline and order. 'The Last Deflowerer' was clever and highly innovative; a new twist on an old tale of conformity.

Angela Slatter, 'Dresses, Three'

Beautiful, dreamlike and mythical, this story is both entrancing and intriguing as the reader is drawn into the events unfolding before the eyes of its narrator. 'Dresses, Three' is a lyrical fairy-tale that updates the genre for a modern audience.

Kim Westwood, 'Nightship'

Bleak, gritty, despairing yet hopeful, 'Nightship' is a rich and surprising tale that lingers with the reader long after the last page has been turned. Dazzlingly dark, the unique style of this story sets it apart from its contemporaries and is worthy of applause.

Review of Honourable Mentions

Peter M. Ball, 'The Last Great House Of Isla Tortuga'

'The Last Great House Of Isla Tortuga' is a thoroughly engaging story with crisp and enjoyable prose and vividly three dimensional characters. The reader becomes completely lost in the world described by the author.

Rjurik Davidson, 'Twilight In Caeli-Amur'

A beautiful story, smoothly written and effortlessly evoking an atmosphere of decaying majesty and dusty nostalgia. 'Twilight In Caeli-Amur' is an excellent example of confident world-building that rings true with every word.

Conclusion

Overall, the quality of entries for the 2008 Aurealis Awards was outstanding and the panel felt that all of the finalists for the Fantasy Short Story division were both vividly memorable and fabulously written. Our list of finalists was an exercise in democracy, as every judge had nominations they found uniquely appealing and engaging.

All told, the FSS panel feel that we were well matched and we were all happy to throw our support behind the final short-list and the ultimate winner.