

Chair of Judges Tim Smit

'Our winning entries are both

This begins with some intriguing opening lines: why is the voice of the poem running? and what kind of house is this that no one owns? The opening is decisive and contains the DNA for the rest of the poem as it becomes clearer that he/ she may be coming from a disaster of our impact on our environment, and that the house may be the world. Once in the heart of a natural and biological, but also that this body is a weird and disturbing human/natural hybrid coated in a skin on non-human life. It has some great lines in there like 'the wind quietly untying its light', and all kinds of unexpected shifts in direction that keep the reader guessing and filling in the gaps. More than anything, this is a poem that has atmosphere and understated implications.

2nd Place -JR Carpenter 'what I'm after. Is a language'

It's tricky to write a good 'experimental' poem but this one does it with skill and clarity. To work, a poem like this needs to show us how to read it and it justifies the extra time it takes to allow its effects to work. And once those effects are working, it needs to add up to a structural/ formal metaphor that explores through the process of reading a key idea.

What I love about this poem is the way it carries me into the heart of its matter with such energy, fluency and precision. It begins simply with a moment in time and describes a sense of loss and outrage at a beautiful, familiar tree being cut down: there's a sense of violence and close identification between the poet and body of the tree. So far, so good, perhaps, familiarly so. What makes this a winner is the transformation that takes place at a more intimate level as the tree rots into a different and strange thing full of extraordinary resonances and comparisons. The poem casts a spell over the broken body of the tree not to mask it but to reveal what it might tell us. It does so through language that sings and flows, but which is tempered by the use of gaps to break the flow. I love the description of mould as 'white rot angels'; or the months worrying the bones of split wood in their mouths. I like the careful use of the technical term 'spalted' and the craft knowledge of the process of sanding down. What gets revealed is a moment of meditation, a reappraisal of the death, decay and the transformation of energy in a natural thing. What might be considered disgusting, even fearful, from the perspective of the human body and its mortality, becomes something beautiful and consoling. The body of the tree is cared for with great tenderness and carried through something akin to a funeral rite. Through this preparation of the body of the wood the poem beckons us into the heart of the natural world, acting with (and wondering over) its process and timescales rather than against them. What the soul of the tree might be we may never know, but the map left by its passing made by the poem stimulates the desire to go into the hidden worlds it contains.

Essays- Judges Comments Jenn Ashworth

Overall comments:

or Ian Carter– *The Gentle Art of Tramping* – the joys of solitary trespass and walking without mapping and Laurence Rose who in *Timestraps* also interested in the way walking, navigating and journeying can result in a more 'ecocentric' rather than 'egocentric' view of the environment

Language was a common theme, with many of these essays interested in the challenge of naming, describing and recording in a way that does not preclude seeing:

from a father patiently translating placenames on a map of HighParthshire in a story of belonging and estrangnts0 0 1 pl.(f)-9-3.9 (h (a)14.1 f* BT4 454.2 14.64 l (n)-4 (y)4 (o)8 (f)-4e.01

Nicola Carter, essay *Fragments of the Mountain Edge*, which boldly reminds us of the internal and external costs of climate change.

It is almost illogical to pick a winner, and to prize an individual's work from the literary ecosystem to which they belong.

Nevertheless:

Anna Flemming *Dinorwig: Play and Resistance in a Post-Capitalist Landscape* - a 10 Td Tj 4 (at t)6 I