Elizabeth Baines

Elizabeth Baines was born in South Wales and lives in Manchester. She has been a teacher and is an occasional actor as well as the author of plays for radio and stage, and three novels, *The Birth Machine*, *Body Cuts* and *Too Many Magpies*. Her short stories have been published widely in magazines and anthologies. *Balancing on the Edge of the World* is her first short story collection. She’s also an active literary blogger (elizabethbaines.blogspot.com) and writes the well-known Fiction Bitch blog: fictionbitch.blogspot.com

Baines has received a number of prizes for her writing, including BBC Radio 3 Short Story Competition Runner-up 1980, Listowel Festival Competition Joint winner 1981, Moondance International Film Festival Runner-up 2003 and 2004, London Writers’ Inc Commended 2006 and Raymond Carver Competition Runner-up 2008.

‘Compass and Torch’

The short story, ‘Compass and Torch’ is taken from Baines’ debut collection of short stories, *Balancing on the Edge of the World*, published by Salt Fiction in October 2007. The stories in the collection are about power: children without it, adults trying to get or keep it, the boy caught between divorced parents, the arts worker conman, the avenging wife.

‘Compass and Torch' was first published in the online magazine ‘East of the Web’.

Baines writes in her blog: ‘This story was triggered by actually seeing a young boy and his father setting off for a camping trip in the way the father and son in the story do, but I soon realized it was really informed by my own childhood and family experiences. These last probably affected my perception of the real-life pair in the first place: I wasn’t even really seeing them for what they were – maybe in reality they were as happy as Larry and had a wonderful understanding – so the story was not at all about them.’
Baines on her writing

Of her work, Baines says, ‘I’m interested in the unacknowledged, the edge of things.’ She consciously explores and experiments with style and tone.

‘I’d say that a big aspect of writing for me is the tension between pushing the boundaries and pleasing readers who, in my experience, are generally more comfortable with the conventional. Being inventive with language and structure is what I find exciting… I don’t have any sort of literary mission, it’s just that sometimes it’s only by finding new or different ways of telling stories that you can show the truth as you see it. However, I’ve become increasingly aware of the need to find ways of doing this without alienating too many readers.’

Bibliography

Elizabeth Baines’ website
elizabethbaines.com

Elizabeth Baines on her short stories
youtube.com/watch?v=C55DU6jDayM

Read ‘Compass and Torch’ online on ‘East of the Web’
eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/Comptorc.shtml

Read ‘A Glossary of Bread’ online on ‘East of the Web’
eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/Glosbrea.shtml

Listen to two podcasts from her new book: Too Many Magpies
blog.saltpublishing.com/2009/10/05/listen-to-elizabeth-baines-too-many-magpies

sarahsalway.blogspot.com/2009/02/writer-worth-cooking-muffins-for.html