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March 13, 2013: 2013 Frostic Creative Writing Awards

Department of English

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2013 Frostic Creative Writing Awards

We are pleased and honored to announce the winners for the 2013 Gwen Frostic Creative Writing Awards. Below you’ll find the results for each genre, as well as comments from our judges. Please join us in congratulating the winners for their excellent work and their success.

Fiction

Judge: Chicago born Peter Orner’s novel Love and Shame and Love is now out in paperback. His first book Esther Stories will be re-issued this spring. His most recent book, a new collection of stories, Last Car Over the Sagamore Bridge will be published in August, 2014. His work has appeared in The Atlantic Monthly, The Paris Review, McSweeney’s, Ploughshares, and Best American Stories. Orner has been awarded a Pushcart Prize, the Rome Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Lannan Literary Fellowship. Orner has taught at the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop, University of Montana, the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College, Washington University, Bard, Miami University, Charles University in Prague. Orner is a long time permanent faculty member at San Francisco State where he is a professor.

Undergraduate

Winner: “Riding Parallels” by Tyler Smith

“An imaginative story that I found quite moving. Nice to be floating up there. It’s the sort of story that you wish happened to you, and there aren’t too many of these I come across. That woman in the green balloon. Wistful, heartfelt, concise storytelling here, a writer with a joyful way of seeing the world and its possibilities.”

Honorable Mention:“Dead Puppy” by Nick Mears

“Good characterizations, and I could really see the setting, Northwood in the snow. Strong descriptions throughout, such as’Tentative gray light reached through the industrial glass...’”

Graduate

Winner: “Lysol Fights” by Dustin M. Hoffman

“‘Lysol Fights’ has got this wonderful narrative energy from that first visceral punch of a sentence, ‘I hide under Tack’s bed.’ The story itself is very seeable, spellcheck is alerting me this isn’t a word, but you know what I mean (apparently spellcheck isn’t a word either), I can see this stuff happening in my eye. It’s a great skill to make this happen, and, to my mind, you can’t teach it. Whoever wrote’Lysol Fights’ is a natural. The ending is especially vivid. I’ve gotten to know April, Hector and Tack, and was sorry to leave them on that concrete slab above the frozen river.”
Honorable Mention: “Story” by Andrew Wickenden

“I’m especially appreciative of how the author uses time. Such a compressed piece, and yet it takes you through a lot of years and life—sad, impressive piece.”

Honorable Mention: “If This Is Really Us at Our Best” by Rachel Kincaid

“If This Really Us at Our Best’ really captures work, all those monotonous hours, all those intense friendships. I’ve been there, and this piece has too, hard to get on paper the truths, and the highs and lows, of the service industry, well done. ‘Rob, Lorraine’s boyfriend, always orders an Americano....’”

Gordon Prize in Fiction

Undergraduate

(There was a tie at the undergraduate level, so two winners.)

Winner: “Your Love Speaks in Unspoken Terms” by Shaina King

Winner: “Dead Puppy” by Nick Mears

Graduate

Winner: “One of Many Off-Seasons” by Laurie Ann Cedilnik

Honorable Mention: “Lysol Fights” by Dustin M. Hoffman

Poetry

Judge: Lisa Fishman is the author of five books of poetry (two are in press) and four chapbooks. Her newest collections are Current (Parlor Press, November 2010) and F L O W E R C A R T (Ahsahta, May 2011). Her most recent chapbook is at the same time as scattering (Albion Books, Fall 2010). Fishman’s earlier books are The Happiness Experiment (Ahsahta, 2007); Dear, Read (Ahsahta, 2002); and The Deep Heart’s Core Is a Suitcase (New Issues Press, 1996). Her chapbooks are Lining (Boxwood Editions, 2009), KabbaLoom (Wyrd Press, 2007), and “The Holy Spirit does not deal in synonyms: a Transcription of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Marginalia in Her Greek and Hebrew Bibles” (Parcel Press, 2008). Fishman’s poems are published in such magazines as 1913, Colorado Review, Conduit, Volt, A Public Space, Free Verse, Parthenon West Review and elsewhere.

Undergraduate

Winner: “My Midwest Sequoia” by Alison Glismann
“I hear a fresh, distinctive voice immediately in this poem. What makes it distinctive (indeed, what makes it ‘voice’) is the unadorned believability of someone just talking in the poem—but really there, present and candid. Perception is articulated just as it is, via memory in this poem, but borne first of observation: ‘the tree with a cut out trunk,’ ‘Janine and her sad mother from Vienna,’ and the wonderful, yet brilliantly spare, richness of the details of the latter (‘defiant in her crocheted bikini, unraveling, reading Kafka’). The poem also has a freedom of movement so that there are moments of turning and changing that feel unpredicted and unknowing (i.e., no ‘end’ or point in mind, just what happens, what’s seen, what is).”

Honorable Mention: “Bang!” by Andrew Conklin

“This poem begins with such power and brilliance—‘The trace of the path of the small object / Is a sound as minimal and loud as’—and contains such truly interesting and arresting language as, ‘[ . . . ] like minor felonies / On an otherwise beautifully trusted / Application writ in the wrong language / As though it were sometime another place [. . . ].’ Dazzling and utterly natural-feeling, generated by the author’s willingness to use language not just for communication but more mysteriously and magically, for making: the making of the sensation of being alive in the world—a real, observed world and surroundings, however glimpsed. What gives this poem its power needs only to keep going beyond where the writer may feel safer in stopping, at present, and so: keep on.”

Graduate

Winner: “[Empathy cannot be learned]” by Andrea England

“This poem, in its way of moving and way of making, does what may be art’s only purpose, a secret one: to create the conditions of freedom, and to do so just by enacting them. This poem is an action, one that happens without the writer having designs on the medium, the material, or the reader. It allows for interruption, improvisation, exclamation, and change—what could be more alive, and more true to how perception, memory, and being alive actually work/happen/are? The poem has humor that is rooted, not glib or ironic [so happy not to see glibness in any of the WMU poems!], and it allows itself, and its readers, to be surprised, to be in surprise.”

Honorable Mention: “Landscape” by Korey Hurni

“This is a uniquely vivid and haunting poem. The emotional life it creates is admirably restrained and subtle, allowed to come from facts and the details, which themselves are gorgeously observed with precision and accuracy that are rare.”

Playwriting

Judge: Sean Clark is an award-winning playwright whose screenwriting career includes the television series: Early Edition, Sliders, Sirens, Man of the People, Evening Shade, Northern Exposure, Coach and several series pilots, as well as the plays: Eleven-Zulu, Dog Explosion, and The Angeles Crest. He wrote the script for the feature film, Lenin and Us, which was released in Europe in 2009. He has worked as a
sportswriter, high school teacher, and a soldier. He is currently the Head of the Writing for Dramatic Media Graduate Program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

**Undergraduate**

**Winner:** “Sea of Trees” by Amber Tselios

“Uses traditional bunraku puppetry to drive home the enormity of the tragedy of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami and makes us feel the emotional cost perhaps more powerfully than a ‘realistic’ piece could have. Dialogue, narration and imagery achieve theatrical poetry.”

**Honorable Mention:** “The 3M Diet” by Taylor Rinkel

“Eases us into a late night conversation between two college roommates in which some slightly unusual behavior is dealt with in such a casual manner that we feel the real weight of that which is unspoken.”

**Graduate**

**Winner:** “Joy of the Worm” by Brandon Krieg

“Rich with metaphor, it’s an exercise in rhythm and timing. Playful use of language in satirizing more than one social convention. An obvious writer’s voice.”

**Honorable Mention:** “Sassypants” by Elissa Cahn

“An examination of how we look at ourselves, especially at one of the most vulnerable times in our lives, as teens, and how easy it is to forget that vulnerability.”

**Creative Nonfiction**

Judge: Robin Hemley is the winner of a Guggenheim Fellowship for his work on *DO-OVER!*. He has published seven books, and his stories and essays have appeared in the *New York Times, New York Magazine, Chicago Tribune*, and many literary magazines and anthologies. He is the editor of *Defunct magazine*. Robin received his MFA from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop; he currently directs the Nonfiction Writing Program at the University of Iowa and lives in Iowa City, IA.

**Undergraduate**

**Winner:** “Stag Family” by Joel Newsome

“What finally decided it for me was ‘Stag Family’ s’ language, simultaneously blunt and evocative. Images such as this announce from the beginning this is not going to be an easy ride: ‘The virus has made him skinny, his knuckles bulge over the jar like wooden balls sliding on an abacus, ticking off the time he has left.’”
Honorable Mention: “Ending” by Miles Baxter

“In second place, ‘Ending’ toggles nicely between irreverence, fear, and awkwardness surrounding the death of an old man and the father/son team who go in the middle of the night to pick up the body. The narrator is observant and mature, despite the patina of bravado with which he tells of this event. One of my favorite parts is his assessment of Larry’s life, told backwards from old to young man, by a procession of family photos lining the walls of the staircase on the narrator’s way to the bedroom where the old man lies. He writes: ‘Every step had brought me a little closer to Larry’s beginning, and Larry’s end.’”

Graduate

Winner: “I Am the Pulverizer” by Brandon Davis Jennings

“‘I Am the Pulverizer’ stayed with me because of its complexity and depth of emotion. There’s a raw and sometimes disturbing quality to the piece, mixed with a sense of whimsy to which I respond well. It tracks and chronicles the narrator’s feelings of rage and impotence back to their source in a pretty powerful way.

Honorable Mention: “Dusk or Rain or Echo or Lennon” by Laurie Ann Cedilnik

“Powerful and whimsical was the piece about the woman whose parents each had lovers, and how no one could acknowledge the dysfunction of the family. This was dysfunction with a cherry on top.”

Honorable Mention: “Oklahoma City” by Glenn Shaheen

“‘Oklahoma City’ traces in a complex and haunting way a persistent racist idiocy in America. It’s a lovely and depressing piece about racism directed against the narrator, as seen through the prism of the Oklahoma City bombing.”

Posted by Dustin at 9:57 PM