

2014 International Literary Awards Announcement

With great pleasure we announce the finalists, winners, and honorable mentions in the 2014 International Literary Awards, sponsored by Center for Women Writers at Salem College. Our preliminary readers carefully & thoughtfully read each submission a few times and made extensive comments on each piece. We met weekly to discuss their choices and debate the finer points. We whittled down to semi-finalists, then finalists, and we sent off to the judges, who had the hard and rewarding task of selecting the final winners and honorable mentions. The submissions process was fair: we read “blindly”: the staff of the Center for Women Writers removed the names from each submission and replaced the names with a number and letter. The staff of the Center for Women Writers were not involved in the preliminary reading process; however, the Director of the Center was a preliminary reader for all submitted work, but was not involved in removing names from submissions. The judges will be given the names of the winners at the same time the public has the information.

Winners in each category receive a cash award of \$1,000.
Honorable mentions in each category receive a cash award of \$150.

The Deadline for the 2015 ILA competition is **31 December 2014**.

Without further ado, we present the winners!

On behalf of the preliminary readers ~Metta Sáma

2014 Rita Dove Award in Poetry

Winner: Joseph Bathanti for “DiDomeni”

Honorable Mention: Heather H. Thomas for “Slit of Silence”

What judge Veronica Golos had to say about her selections:

“DiDomeni” -- First

It is difficult to sustain a long poem, but I felt this poet did just that--we are looking, at first read, to see what happens. The special details, "Of God" "crippled" "brutto""malocchio" "corpus" "Caro Guisepe" etc., throughout the poem, bring us close to the people the poet described. I appreciated the four-line stanza, which both help to clarify and focus us on each stanza as well as the entire poem.

The relationship of the bread, the name Of God, the smell of the bakery like "Lord God of Hosts", stained glass, and even Mrs. Di Domeni emerging like Venus/Mary barefoot, the ceremony of the cookie, (wafer) naming it corpus, the fudge that crowned it, bring that Catholic (Italian) undertone to the entire poem.

And not just in general, but one realizes that what the poet has done is to re tell the Christ story, and very uniquely. We have the "misunderstood" mother, the son who is Crucified by the people in the neighborhood, the stranger who is the father.

But what really brings out the talent laden in the entire 5 page poem is how the poem moves into the idea of the symbols of the church, to the beautiful son, Francesco, "crucified" for having a "curl twisted/coquettishly over an eye, and his "Negro" father, and the discussion on race so skillfully done, extenuating the differences between the Father and other fathers, as he "genueflected" and threw the ball to the children.

Then comes the confession of the speaker, "punching/his unctuous porcine body//like he was mine to take it out on...i made him cry./Wasn't that proof of something." The language is plain yet evocative. The poet takes us through a kind of pilgrimage, and it is well done.

“Slit of Silence” -- Honorable Mention

First, the title is wonderful. Makes silence something one could rip through. The poem does well in the couplets the speaker chooses, so she pairs her shooting range in the first two stanzas and the action of the Girl in Sarajevo for the remaining five. The tone of the poem is third person, as would be appropriate, the speaker poet approaching from a far distance. The poet captures so much in simple images: "The leaves tender on trees not yet burned for fuel" that tells so much about the condition of the war. This is a re read poem, where we find wonderful images "plate of the sun the only unbroken thing" as the poet leads us literally to the other side.

2014 Penelope Niven Award in Creative Nonfiction

Winner: Brandel France de Bravo for “A Tale of Two Rivers”

Honorable Mention: Tracy Chiles McGhee for “Beneath the Flowery Sheets”

What judge Samuel Autman had to say about his choices:

First Place - "A Tale of Two Rivers."

This had all of the hallmarks of superb creative nonfiction: good writing, storytelling and research. This piece succeeds because the writer knows the material well. The first person narrator point of view never eclipses the larger story being told about the complexities of Washington, D.C.'s racial divide. The voice lofty without being pompous. The writer also references a vast array of sources without allowing the research to overwhelm. The voice is tight, the narrator knows when to step in with the personal and when to allow the research to carry to piece. The fragmented structure makes the piece feel experimental, contemporary and traditional simultaneously. This is astonishing in its ambition and

scope.

Honorable Mention - "Beneath the Flowery Sheets."

People come to creative writing to learn something they didn't know beforehand. In this memoir essay, the writer walks the reader through innocence, anticipation, devastation, fear, anger and resolution in ways that keeps the piece fresh. This is a devastating, yet illuminating piece of writing. At one point the narrator shifts from "I" to "her" in a way that seems sudden and possibly a mistake. It's clear this writer knows precisely what she is doing on the page, demonstrating that it's possible to tell an age-old story with vividness and verve that can make a reader wanting more.

2014 Reynolds Price Award in Fiction

Winner: Bushra Rehman

Honorable Mention: None selected

What judge Zelda Lockhard had to say about the winner:

First Place goes to "Ajax, Raid, Mr. Clean": The story was intriguing throughout, because the development of the main character's external world of culture, neighborhood, and the environment of her household were detailed and specific as she encountered wars of bugs and later me that brought her out of innocence and into adolescence.

"Whenever my mother needed Raid or milk, she sent me to the bodega on the corner. The front windows of the bodega were full of dish detergent, Ajax, Raid, Mr. Clean, but the back shelves were barely stocked with anything. The bodega was really a front for selling drugs. I didn't know this back then. I just thought the men who worked there were really nice."

Her struggle with the roaches was one layer of war that she was fighting within the small scope of her pre-adolescent vision, but by the story's end we quickly see that other invading forces, like the inappropriate familial comments of the bodega owner, and the molestation by her neighbor's uncle, were the new forces she'd have to wage war against.

The simile and metaphor in the story served not only the purpose of comparison, but as a secondary tool of character and plot development: "I moved next to my mom until I felt stuck to her side like a mouse caught in a glue trap." Though the author could have chosen any number of comparisons, the author chose a comparison that further sets the war against vermin.

In the short space of 10 pages, the author used humor and the loyal, curious, observant voice of a main character who then offered the reader a world of immigrant solidarity,

while offering the large and small coming-of-age wars fought under substandard, urban-American conditions.

Finalists in the 2014 Rita Dove Award for Poetry

Judith Montgomery: “Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath”
Arisa White: “inconvenient roof”
Ellen Bass: “Not Dead Yet”
Susanne Eules: “Passaglia I”
Kristi Carter: “Knot of Silk”
Melinda Palacio: “And Then the Dismantling of the Boudoir”
Valerie Fox: “in the lurking places”
Makalani Bandele: “negro section as frontage” and “self-portrait in three cycles”
Joy Priest: “doula”
Maureen Alsop: “Who Was the Girl in the Window”
Joseph Bathanti: “DiDomni”
Heather Thomas: “Slit of Silence”
Alison Pelegrin: “Blame the Moon”
Niki Herd: “figure study 3: the fingers”
Cherise Pollard: “Steelton Speaks”
Michelle Deatrick: “The Light-Lust of Trees”
Shayla Hawkins: “Cage” and “Lettuce”
Magali Roy-Fequiere: “At the equinox, a valediction”
Raven Jackson: “he unbuttons my shirt & i light a flame of junebugs” and “i watch papa bury our dog in a grave the size of a pond”

Finalists in the 2014 Penelope Niven Award for Creative Nonfiction

Beth Ann Fennelly: “Correspondence Course: the Evolution of a Friendship”
Joanne B. Mulachy: “Inside the Whistle”
Brandel France de Bravo: “A Tale of Two Rivers” and “Black Girls, White Girls”
Roohi Choudhry: “On Island”
Tracy Chiles McGhee: “Beneath the Flowery Sheets”
Kathy Conde: “This is the Place Where it All Breaks Down: A Family Alphabet”
Denise S. Cline: “Raising”
Colette Sartor: “The House on Bentley Avenue”
Sarah Messenger: “Under a Different Sun”

Finalists in the 2014 Reynolds Price Award for Fiction

Heather Bell Adams: “Siler Road” and “Compensation”
Robin Luce Martin: “Bob and Hope”
Tara Masih: “If You Had Stopped”
Cindy Schimanski: “Hope in Small Packages”

Alexandria Carriero: "Cinderblock Room, Eight Photographs, You"
Bushra Rehman: "Ajax, Raid, Mr. Clean"