

New Writers Award Newsletter



Great Lakes Colleges Association
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February 2019

Albion • Allegheny • Antioch • Denison • DePauw • Earlham • Hope • Kalamazoo
Kenyon • Oberlin • Ohio Wesleyan • Wabash • Wooster

GLCA ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE 2019-20 NEW WRITERS AWARD

From a submission list of over 150 volumes in three categories, the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) announces the winners of the 2019-20 GLCA New Writers Award for Poetry, Fiction, and Creative Non-fiction.

Now in its 50th year, the New Writers Award confers recognition on promising writers who have published a first volume in one of the three genres. Winning writers receive invitations to visit GLCA member colleges – where they give readings, meet with students and faculty members, and discuss technique and creativity in the writing process.

The 2019 winner for Poetry is Marcelo Hernandez Castillo, **Cenzontle**, published by BOA Editions, Ltd. Our GLCA judges note:

Castillo's narrative itself couldn't be more timely and significant: it's a story of undocumented immigrants, border crossing, transgression, and the tantalizing fictions and facts of the American dream. From the opening poem, one is immediately drawn into the lush, honed music of these lines, which imaginatively translate states of dislocation, high anxiety, grief, and desire into a distinctive, urgent voice. The title word itself is Nahuatl for "four hundred years" – likely alluding to the approximate time of colonialism in the Americas. But it also refers specifically to a type of mockingbird, a bird in south-central Mexican and Aztec mythology, with four hundred voices. The second-person intimacy, the use of white space, the very idea of the mockingbird and its multiple voices and songs infuses the entire collection with mystery, beauty, and wisdom. To read these poems is to participate in a journey – and an unexpected one towards illumination and the complexities of longing and belonging. Castillo's sweep is large but his voice is particular and clarified. This is mature, engaged poetry.

The 2019 winner for Fiction is Lesley Nneka Arimah, **What it Means When a Man Falls From the Sky**, published by Riverhead Books. Our GLCA judges note:

This is a superb collection with each story carefully crafted and moving. It ranges widely, from a traditionally-structured fable, through classical realism, to several stories



Marcelo Hernandez Castillo



Lesley Nneka Arimah



Dawn Davies

with magical or dystopian elements. The intertwining of contemporary and traditional modes of storytelling is essential to Arimah's larger themes: generational conflict, transnational migrations, the unexpected ways that the past can reach forward to throw the present off course. Arimah's voice is always assured, the writing often beautiful and occasionally breathtaking. There's a matter-of-factness here that sparkles, a lack of sentimentality that drives home the high stakes in each story. These characters have stories they want to tell – about family, especially mothers and daughters; about love and its dangers; about the struggle of women to be heard against the social chorus of gendered expectations. It is a memorable collection both for its subject matter and the strong female characters navigating between two worlds.

The 2019 winner for Creative Non-fiction is Dawn Davies, **Mothers of Sparta: A Memoir in Pieces**, published by Flatiron Press. Our GLCA judges note:

Dawn Davies' Mothers of Sparta deploys an accomplished and startling combination of funny and deeply serious language. Davies explores her identities of mother, wife, and partner, but also brings wry-self-awareness to the reality that our chosen identities transform us. She is able to produce paragraphs that are simultaneously hilarious and horrific, and also balance statements of unbearable pain with others of lightness, without slipping into either slightness or overbearing melancholy. Davies writes direct and probing essays about death, depression, sexuality, and parenthood from surprising angles. She deftly weaves her experiences as a woman with a simplicity of language, an elegant structure and a depth of emotion in these often redemptive essays. "Mothers of Sparta," among the book's most powerful pieces of writing, explores parenting with compassion and responsibility, making a significant contribution to our cultural conversation about disability. These essays examine our modern ways of being and becoming.

The GLCA congratulates these winning writers and hopes you will welcome them to your campus this fall.

THANK YOU TO THE JUDGING PANEL

Judges of the New Writers Award are faculty members of creative writing and literature at GLCA's member colleges. The judges of the 2019 award were:

- **Poetry:** David Baker, Denison University; Joe Heithaus, DePauw University; Lynn Powell, Oberlin College
- **Fiction:** Danit Brown, Albion College; Eric Freeze, Wabash College; Jennifer Hayward, The College of Wooster

- **Creative Non-fiction:** Matthew Ferrence, Allegheny College; Marin Heinritz, Kalamazoo College; Rhoda Janzen, Hope College.

The GLCA is grateful for the time, energy and thoughtful contributions that these judges provided in support of the New Writers Award. If you are interested in being a judge, please contact Greg Wegner at wegner@glca.org.

WINNING VOLUMES ARE ON YOUR CAMPUS!

Each campus has received a copy of the winning volumes. We hope you will take the time to review them and invite the writers to give a reading and speak with students and faculty.

Keep in mind that this year's winners will be traveling from a good distance. To help defray costs, please consider coordinating with a campus near you.

THIS YEAR'S WINNING WRITERS: UPCOMING SCHEDULED VISITS



Pictured above is 2018 NWA Poetry winner Chen Chen with Earlham faculty member and host, Tessa Yang.

Chen Chen

Poetry

- Albion, Feb 14
- Hope, March 7
- Wabash, March 20
- DePauw, April 10
- Kenyon, April 24
- Oberlin, April 25

Emily Fridlund

Fiction

- Denison, Feb 14-15
- Albion, March 14
- Earlham, TBD

Hilary Plum

Creative Non-fiction

- Denison, Feb 14-15
- Hope, March 7-8
- Albion, April 8
- Oberlin, April 18
- OWU, TBD



Pictured above is 2018 NWA creative non-fiction winner, Hilary Plum, giving a reading at Earlham.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

For the 50th year, the GLCA's thirteen independent Mid-western colleges will confer recognition on a volume of writing in each of three literary genres: poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction. Publishers submit works on behalf of their authors; the key criterion for this award is that any work submitted must be

an author's first-published volume in the genre. The GLCA is ready to accept entries for the 2020 award, which must be post-marked by June 25, 2019. To read the complete guidelines, please see the website [here](#). Winning writers are announced in January 2020.

If you are interested in having an author visit your campus, please contact [Greg Wegner](mailto:wegner@glca.org) (wegner@glca.org) or [Colleen Monahan Smith](mailto:smith@glca.org) (smith@glca.org) at the GLCA.

