



GLCA Announces Winners of the 2016 New Writers Award

The Great Lakes Colleges Association is pleased to announce the winners of the 2016 GLCA New Writers Award for fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction. Now in its 47th 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 and talk about writing with students and faculty members.

The 2016 winner for Poetry is Natalie Scenters-Zapico, *The Verging Cities*, published by The Center for Literary Publishing at Colorado State University. Our GLCA judges note:

Natalie Scenters-Zapico's poems in *The Verging Cities* travel back and forth across the borders of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, across the gritty, dangerous realities of border zones, and across the bodily and emotional boundaries of lovers from opposite sides of the borders. But this description is much more orderly and plain than these wildly imaginative poems, whose essential metaphoric and metamorphic gestures keep transforming body, self, soul, and city into each other. Scenters-Zapico engages an impressive and virtuosic variety of poetic forms and rhetorical structures, offering evidence that this poet – and this book – is in search of the right code to express something that doesn't want to hold still. By turns erotic and ironic, *The Verging Cities* bears witness to the way both the body and the psyche register what it means to dwell in between. Politics is everywhere implicated in the blood, bones, ghosts of the dead. Scenters-Zapico gives powerful expression to the interweaving of identity and womanhood in the modern terms and landscapes of a border setting. These border poems have *duende* and they are at once deeply personal and openly public in their provocations.

The 2016 winner for Fiction is Lauren Acampora, *The Wonder Garden*, published by Grove Atlantic. Our GLCA judges note:

Lauren Acampora's *The Wonder Garden* is a collection of precision; the book is artfully and beautifully made. Acampora's suburban milieu isn't just incidental; the physical facts of Old Cranberry prove essential for understanding the stories' protagonists' hopes, fears, values, and desires. Story to story, moment to moment, the author's eye lands on the details the casual observer misses and delves us deeper into the sometimes strange and sometimes simple desires – and actions – of her characters. The way the stories and thus the community she's created fit together is just masterful. Like her forebear Cheever, these stories are about ripping the facade away from those that feel most comfortable and showing us their vulnerabilities,

delusions, and heartbreaks. She is unforgiving in her portrayals and we are the wiser for it. While the book seems to have been categorized as “interwoven stories,” it has the unity of a novel. The writing is so lucid that it tempts us to think it’s artless, until we look more closely or consider how hard making fictional people real *actually* is.

The 2016 winner for Creative non-fiction is Shulem Deen, *All Who Go Do Not Return*, published by Graywolf Press. Our GLCA judges note:

This brave and honest memoir recounts the author's estrangement and eventual banishment from the sequestered Skver Hasid community in which he'd been raised and had raised his own children. The narrative is a kind of bildungsroman tracing the author's journey toward spiritual and intellectual maturity – a journey that begins with small acts of curiosity about the outside world (listening to the radio, reading forbidden books in the library, searching the Internet), and that culminates with the author's loss of faith, family, and the security of prescribed belief. Without sentimentalizing, the author illustrates both the joy and pain of abandoning one’s faith and embarking on a secular journey of new-found values and intellectual freedom. With a potent narrative voice that’s both vulnerable and even handed, Shulem Deen both moves and teaches his reader – about Hasidism and the crucial work of rejecting shame and other limiting beliefs, even when it means losing everything. Themes of longing and desire, the mysteries of the body, the meaning of gender, and what it costs to be an insider and an outsider propel this memoir that reads like a novel for its exquisite use of language, detailed scenes, and rich detail and characterization. As he makes clear throughout the narrative, one of the most difficult, but also the most hopeful aspects of his struggle, has been its open-endedness. And thus the narrative closes, not with a resounding conclusion, but a moment of loss which opens forward into possibility.

Judges of the New Writers Award are faculty members of creative writing and literature at GLCA’s member colleges.

The judges of the 2016 award in Poetry were:

Christopher Bakken, Allegheny College,
Jennifer Clarvoe, Kenyon College, and
Pablo Peschiera, Hope College

The judges of the 2016 award in Fiction were:

Joseph Aguilar, The College of Wooster,
Mike Croley, Denison University, and
Mary Lacey, Earlham College

The judges of the 2016 award in Creative non-fiction were:

Peter Graham, DePauw University,
Marin Heinritz, Kalamazoo College, and
Sylvia Watanabe, Oberlin College

For more information on the New Writers Award, please contact Gregory Wegner, director of the New Writers Award (wegner@glca.org), or Maryann Hafner, coordinator of the New Writers Award (hafner@glca.org).

Additional information is available on the GLCA web site: www.glca.org.