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Contact Art Goodtimes at 970-729-0220
or email Olivia@TellurideInstitute.org

Anna Scotti of California wins 20th Annual Fischer Prize

TELLURIDE ... The Telluride Institute's Talking Gourds Poetry Program announced that North Hollywood poet Anna Scotti's "Tanager" has won the \$1000 Fischer Prize.

In addition to her poetry, Anna Scotti is a writer, editor, teacher and public speaker who was recently awarded the Orlando Prize for Short Fiction. "Tanager" also received the Pocatigo Prize for Poetry (*Yemassee*) in 2013. Her work was selected for Best of Ohio 2014, and appears in recent issues of *The Comstock Review*, *Chautauqua*, *Crab Creek Review*, and *The Los Angeles Review*. Her website is www.annakscotti.com.

"Here is a prose poem that works beautifully, which is rare," said judge Chris Ransick, former Denver Poet Laureate currently living on the Oregon Coast. "The poet has eschewed one key tool -- the line break -- and in place of that wielded precise imagery, musicality, insistent rhythm, surprise, and delight."

And in naming Scotti's piece the winner, Ransick added, "The poem is deceptively complex, unfolding the narrative backward as the poem moves forward and doing what is perhaps most difficult in any poem: expertly plying the thin edge of just enough information so that the poem opens through its subtle movements. The speaker's voice is confident, compassionate, angry, elegant . . . so complex in tone yet utterly clear and in control of its instrument."

Ransick noted that "all of the finalists' poems were excellent; this is the one I wanted to read again and again, and after each reading, to pause in the glow it left."

Five finalists were each awarded \$200 cash prizes.: Anne Valley-Fox's "Because the Road Rises to Meet their Feet," Jennifer Rane Hancock's "St. Mary's Orphanage: Galveston Island, September 8, 1900," George Perreault's "Mr. Richardson's Nails," Helen Stevens Chinitz's "After Hearing Ellen Read Tarfia Faizullah," and James Crews' "My Father Asks for One Last Thing."

The award ceremony will take place Friday, May 19th, as part of the annual Telluride Literary Arts Festival. Currently Jennifer Rane Hancock, George Perreault and possibly Helen Chinitz are planning to attend the event and read their winning poems. For more info, visit telluridelitfest.weebly.com or talkinggourds.weebly.com.

Supplemental Info

Educated at the University of California at Berkeley during the Free Speech Movement.

Anne Valley-Fox began publishing in San Francisco in the early 1970s, and then settled in northern New Mexico in 1980. Her poetry collections are *Nightfall* (Red Mountain Press, 2016); *How Shadows Are Bundled* (University of New Mexico Press, 2009); *Point of No Return* (La Alameda Press, 2004); *Fish Drum 15* (Fish Drum Press, 1999) and *Sending the Body Out* (Zephyr Press, 1986). Valley-Fox received a William Matthews Poetry Prize from the Ashville Poetry Review in 2016. Her website is AnneValleyFox.com.

Of her winning poem, Ransick wrote, “This is a moving evocation of the speaker’s experience and I had a strong sense of the speaker’s recognition of her own status and safety counterposed to the plight of those whose travails she witnesses. A very well made piece.”

Having received her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and her PhD from Oklahoma State University, **Jennifer Rane Hancock** is currently Assistant Professor of English at Colorado Mesa University. Her first collection was *Between Hurricanes* (Lithic Press, 2015) and her poems have also appeared in *Ecotone*, *Crab Orchard Poetry Review*, and *Puerto del Sol*. Her website is www.jenniferranehancock.com.

Ransick said of her poem, “This is a precise, well written poem that haunted me after the first reading -- as I think it is meant to, and made to.”

Reno poet **George Perreault**’s most recent collection *Bodark County* (Grayson Books, 2016) features poems in the voices of characters living on the Llano Estacado. He has received a fellowship from the Nevada Arts Council and an award from the Washington Poets Association, was a finalist for the Backwaters Prize, and has served as a visiting writer in New Mexico, Montana, and Utah. His poems have appeared in thirteen anthologies and dozens of magazines. His website is www.georgeperreault.com.

“This poem is so clear I felt I had to wash the iron rust from my hands after reading it,” said Ransick of Perreault’s poem. “I was captured by the clarity of remembered detail and imagery.”

James Crews graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with an MFA and received his doctorate in writing and literature from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he was an Othmer Fellow and worked for Ted Kooser’s American Life in Poetry newspaper column. His first collection of poetry, *The Book of What Stays* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2011), won the 2010 Prairie Schooner Book Prize and received a Foreword Magazine Book of the Year Award. His second collection, *Telling My Father* (Southeast Missouri State Univ. Press, 2017), won the Cowles Prize. His work has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Raleigh Review*, *Crab Orchard Review* and *The New Republic*, among other journals, and he is a regular contributor to *The (London) Times Literary Supplement*. He lives on an organic farm with his partner in Shaftsbury, Vermont and teaches in the low-residency MFA program at Eastern Oregon University.

“I had a terrifically hard time not choosing this poem as the winner,” noted Ransick of

Crews' poem. "If pressed I'd say that it was so humble in its rendering, so clear and uncluttered, that the power of its sentiment struck me to my core."

A graduate of Bennington College, U.C. Berkeley and New York University, poet **Helen Stevens Chinitz** has been a teacher, a headmistress and a nationally ranked squash player. She spent two years in Senegal working for the United Nations on the Eco Conference of 1996. She has been a finalist in many poetry contests and is widely published in literary journals.

Ransick had this to say of her winning poem, "This poem is so powerful, I spent more time with it than any other poem I read for this competition. It honors the subject it addresses and the person at the center without once reaching for the easy mark. Kudos."

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