

Competition Results

2010



Nora Boxer, a graduate of the Creative Writing Program in the English Department at The University of Texas at Austin, has won the \$50,000 Keene Prize for Literature for her story, "It's the song of the nomads, baby; or, Pioneer." The Keene Prize is one of the world's largest student literary prizes. An additional \$50,000 will be divided among three finalists.

Boxer's story was chosen from 61 submissions in drama, poetry and fiction. Laconic in style, it unsentimentally evokes the artistic, old hippy, new punk eco-lifestyle in New Mexico. In a sharply evoked landscape of bare mesas and changing seasons, among a cast of characters ranging from the shallow and self-aggrandizing to the stoically compassionate, the pregnant heroine tries to make sense of her commitment to a life "off the grid."

"As we watch the devastating consequences of our oil addiction unfold in the Gulf of Mexico, Nora's story takes on particular resonance," said Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, chair of the Department of English and chair of the award selection committee. "She examines the costs and consequences of an attempt to live responsibly as well as creatively."

An emerging poet and fiction writer, Nora will receive an MA in Creative Writing from the University of Texas at Austin in 2010, and holds an undergraduate degree from Brown University. After receiving her MA, she will be a writer-in-residence at the Woodstock Byrdcliffe Colony in July 2010.

Nora is informed by a varied career in arts, agriculture, community and non-profit work settings including an apprenticeship at the Green Gulch Farm Zen Center in California, an arts and agriculture center for the developmentally disabled, and work with a literary organization in Taos, New Mexico, as well as two agriculture NGOs in East Africa serving the HIV+ population. Nora has worked in community education, with urban artists' collectives, and on Burning Man project collaborations. A 2006 writing travel grant took her to East Africa and is related to her novel-in-progress.

She is currently developing a nonprofit, sustainable urban arts residency in Oakland called The Resourcery, a public space and urban artists' residency which operates on principles of the local and the sustainable. For more information about The Resourcery, please visit their website, www.westoaklandresourcery.org.

Keene Prize Finalists:



Roger Reeves, master of fine arts graduate of the Michener Center for Writers, for his collection of poetry, “King Me.” These allusive poems appropriate paintings, classic literature and history to build a formally inventive, emotionally intense and rhythmically powerful structure.

Roger Reeves is currently earning his Ph.D., in American Literature and Creative Writing at UT Austin. In addition to his M.F.A., he holds an M.A. in American Literature from Texas A&M University. Reeves’s poetry has been published in several journals and anthologies including American Poetry Review, Best New Poets 2009, and American Literary Review.



Fiona McFarlane, master of fine arts student of the Michener Center, for two stories, “Mycenae” and “Exotic Animal Medicine.” McFarlane’s prose is polished, elegant and witty, while her displaced characters are sharp observers of the original and awkward situations in which she places them.

Born in Sydney, Australia, Fiona McFarlane is a graduate of Sydney University and holds a Ph.D. in English from Cambridge University. She is currently earning her M.F.A. at the Michener Center and has won several prizes and nominations for her writing, including a Pushcart Prize nomination and The Missouri Review Jeffrey E. Smith Editors’ Prize.



Virginia Reeves, master of fine arts student of the Michener Center, for three stories, “Investments as Big as These,” “Why Don’t You Put that Down,” and “Her Last Dead Child.” These stories employ strong dialogue and rich descriptive detail to evoke the complicated relations between parents and children.

Although currently working towards her M.F.A. at the Michener Center, Virginia Reeves also holds a Master of Arts in Teaching and served as a public school teacher for six years before becoming an Adjunct Professor at Carroll College. She has had several pieces published in such journals as the Baltimore Review, Takahe, and Storyglossia.