



January 13, 2020

GLCA Announces Winners of the 2020 New Writers Award

The Great Lakes Colleges Association is pleased to announce the winners of the 2020 GLCA New Writers Award for Poetry, Fiction, and Creative Non-fiction. Now in its 51st year, the New Writers Award confers recognition on promising writers who have published a first volume in one of the three genres. Judges of the New Writers Award are faculty members of creative writing and literature at GLCA's member colleges. 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 2020 winner for Poetry is **Aaron Coleman**, *Threat Come Close*, published by Four Way Books. Our GLCA judges note:

Aaron Coleman's historical imagination excavates racial history in this country, not veering from what is discovered, but inviting it, even dwelling in it personally. The poems explore the lyric interstices of black experience in the U.S. and youth and coming of age – including a growing consciousness of sexuality and desire. The book's apt title, *Threat Come Close*, can be read as a statement of fact and also a provocation. The poems learn by looking and loving outward, and there is much to learn by looking through the eyes of these poems. There is superb lyricism and a fine balance between an unabashed celebration of words and a near-plain style voice of witness. "I am made of what I am afraid to remember," he writes in the prologue poem, locating himself simultaneously in a cultural history inclusive of – yet never collapsed into – his own personal history.

Judges of the Poetry entries were:

Christopher Bakken, Allegheny College
Chanda Feldman, Oberlin College
Janet McAdams, Kenyon College

The 2020 winner for Fiction is **Eric Schlich**, *Quantum Convention*, published by University of North Texas Press. Our GLCA judges note:

Always humorous and wildly inventive, this collection is remarkable for the variety of characters and situations it portrays. In the title story, Schlich captures suburban malaise and our secret selves as the main character goes to a convention where every possible alt self exists – and every possible alternative wife! The range of protagonists that Schlich convincingly portrays – a religious young girl, a neurotic adult loner, the actress who played the Wicked Witch of the West, and more – demonstrate impressive skill. Movement between realist and speculative modes combined with imaginative and varied

story structures make the stories compelling, both individually and as a whole. These are very teachable stories that exemplify different facets of literary imagination and craft. They make a reader see and feel in new ways even when dealing with old themes.

Judges of the Fiction Award were:

Peter Grandbois, Denison University
Mary Lacey, Earlham College
Christiana Salah, Hope College

The 2020 winner for Creative Non-fiction is **Sarah Viren**, *MINE: Essays*, published by University of New Mexico Press. Our GLCA judges note:

Deeply inquisitive and probing, generous and judicious, Sarah Viren's *Mine* is a series of meditations, memories buoyed to the surface by love and loss and wonder. She transforms and illuminates the world as she mines it, whether it be accepting a murderer's futon, becoming "unmarried" to her partner after crossing state lines, or singing the ballad, "Tom Dooley," to her daughter. She examines her world precisely and with startling self-awareness, threading her own experiences to conversations on contemporary culture, community, politics, and the arts. Viren's essays are extremely well-crafted, and her prose beautiful. The voice is mature, full of wisdom and insight. A brilliantly rendered account of what it means to be of a place, Viren's collection also answers what it means to be of the world and what it means, ultimately, to be here today. A ruminative, absorbing book.

Judges of the 2020 award in Creative Non-fiction were:

Amy Butcher, Ohio Wesleyan University
Peter Graham, DePauw University
Bruce Mills, Kalamazoo College

For more information on the New Writers Award, please contact Gregory Wegner, Director of Program Development (wegner@glca.org), or Colleen Monahan Smith, Executive Assistant to the President (smith@glca.org) at the GLCA.

Additional information is available on the GLCA web site: [GLCA New Writers Award](#)