



January 13, 2022

GLCA Announces Winners of the 2022 New Writers Award

The Great Lakes Colleges Association is pleased to announce the winners of the 2022 GLCA New Writers Award for Poetry, Fiction, and Creative Non-fiction. Now in its 53rd 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 2022 winner for Poetry is **Sumita Chakraborty**, *Arrow*, published by Alice James Books. Our GLCA judges note:

The poems in Sumita Chakraborty's masterful debut, *Arrow*, range from the epic maximalism of long lyric poems to the minimalism of aphorisms and redacted translations. The book's journey is part imaginative mythmaking and part rigorous intellectual investigation.

The collection exhibits a capacity to narrow on the deeply personal and mythical, while also expanding to the cosmic, citational, and philosophical. These formal shifts in perspective amplify the poet's grappling with the residual presence of a sibling's death. This tension between direct address and obfuscation propels the collection's wide stylistic range and rich lyricism, refracting the book's explorations of loss and love outward into conversations with philosophy, astronomy, literature, and even deep into language itself.

Chakraborty's poems have a spell-like intensity of language – searching, lively, varied – sometimes expressing frustration, sometimes growing song-like. She speaks with a punctuating crispness, while retaining the power of poetry to leave us with astonishment and mystery.

Judges of the 2022 Poetry Award were:
David Caplan, Ohio Wesleyan University
Robin Schaer, Oberlin College
Orchid Tierney, Kenyon College

The 2022 winner for Fiction is **Michael X. Wang**, *Further News of Defeat*, published by Autumn House Press. Our GLCA judges note:

This collection demonstrates an extraordinary range: real and fantastic, urban and rural, young and old, past and present. The stories move with measured and unflinching prose.

The characters, charged equally by desperation and impulsivity, are live wires crossing powerful and often predatorial forces. Violence is endemic, personal and state-sponsored. The grace notes, humor, odd encounters and ironies leaven the violence and make it survivable.

The disparate narrators show Wang's extraordinary capacity to empathize with different people. Wang is thorough in imagining the thoughts of his characters, especially when their thoughts are questionable or when they're not behaving well. The authorial distance seems quite an accomplishment in a writer's first work. The stories are literary, but written as if told and not written. At its intersection, Wang delivers stories of remarkable symmetry.

This is a collection full of devastating loss, yet resonant light cracking against the long night.

Judges of the Fiction Award were:

Mari Christmas, Allegheny College

Andrew Mozina, Kalamazoo College

Robert Olmstead, Ohio Wesleyan University

The 2022 winner for Creative Non-Fiction is **Melissa Valentine**, *The Names of All the Flowers*, published by Feminist Press. Our GLCA judges note:

Melissa Valentine's story is one of collective trauma, rendered beautifully in the details of a large biracial family in the 1990s. Whether set in Oakland, California or Selma, Alabama, *The Names of All the Flowers* interrogates how place shapes consciousness, how identity can flower in unlikely locations but also be extinguished. Valentine offers us a lyrical but also anguished portrait of the complicated borderland between the good and bad sections of town, between black and white parents, between being innocent and being doomed.

Our narrator, who sees everything and shows it to us through shifting lenses, child and adult, uses present tense to hold us in a perpetual present. The pulse of this memoir is urgency. The story of her brother's untimely death, Valentine seems to say, not only never ends, it is always happening somewhere.

Standing in the family cemetery next to her brother's grave, she comes to see "how [my brother's] lost black life is every lost black life, how my grief is part of a collective sorrow." Anchored in place, Valentine's vision is indeed transcendent, evoking many ghosts and graveyards, troubled families and streets, across an entire country trying to survive as well as remedy a racist past and present.

Judges of the Creative Non-Fiction Award were:

Elizabeth Eslami, DePauw University

Eric Freeze, Wabash College

Daniel Bourne, The College of Wooster

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](#)