

Press Release
North Carolina Literary Review
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Catherine Carter Receives Top Prize in Record-Breaking 2018 Applewhite Poetry Contest

Catherine Carter is the winner of the 2018 James Applewhite Poetry Prize in a record-breaking year of entries. Carter's prize-winning poem, "Womb-Room," will be published in the 2019 print issue of the *North Carolina Literary Review (NCLR)*. In addition, Carter will receive a prize of \$250 for her first-place entry. Final Judge Amber Flora Thomas explained her selection of Carter's poem for the prize: "I was very moved by Womb-room, which takes us inside the human body as a speaker considers her inability to bear a child," Thomas said. "The speaker finds a plethora of cavernous beauty within herself, which is what we expect from a poet who understands the fertile richness of the imagination. We keep having to remind ourselves that the world she finds is in a human interior; yet, if we pay attention, we find our connection with nature is no great surprise: how we see and experience the earth ends up rooted within our bodies. I care deeply about poems which recognize our connection with our environment and nature."

Catherine Carter is Associate Professor of English at Western Carolina University, where she teaches creative writing and English Education classes. Her third LSU Press collection of poetry, *Larvae of the Nearest Stars*, is due out in 2019. Her honors include publication in *Best American Poetry 2009*, winning Jacar Press's poetry chapbook contest with *Mark of the Witch* (published by Jacar in 2014), and winning third place in the 2017 Applewhite Poetry Prize competition (read that poem, "Billy Collins Pours Me a Beer," in the 2018 print issue, recently published). *NCLR* Editor Margaret Bauer reports that upon looking up the title of the poem Thomas selected for the prize, "I was so pleased to find that Catherine Carter is the author of the poem. She is a poet who gives back. Not only is she a well-respected teacher, she regularly responds to our request that she review poetry collections for *NCLR*."

The *North Carolina Literary Review* established the James Applewhite Poetry Prize in 2011. This year, 81 poets submitted 270 poems. These are record numbers of both poems and poets for the competition. Final judge Amber Flora Thomas selected the winning poem from finalists picked for prize and publication consideration by *NCLR* Poetry Editor Jeffrey Franklin.

Amber Flora Thomas is an Associate Professor of English at East Carolina University. She is the author of two collections of poetry. Her upcoming third collection, *Red Channel in the Rupture*, will be published by Red Hen Press in Fall 2018. She is a Cave Canem Fellow. Her other honors include the Dylan Thomas American Poet Prize and Ann Stanford Prize, and her poetry has been featured in the *American Literary Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and *Alaska Quarterly Review*, among other venues. Previously, she has interviewed Jaki Shelton Green and Anjail Rashida Ahmad for *NCLR*.

Thomas selected "Daybreak" by Sally Thomas for second place and "Dreams Speak: My Father's Words" by Glenis Redmond for third place. Other poems by both Sally Thomas and Glenis Redmond were selected as finalists, Thomas's "Magus at Twilight" and Redmond's "Sketch," "Every One of My Names," and "House: Another Kind of Field." All of these poems will be published in *NCLR* in 2019.

Second-place recipient Sally Thomas is the author of two poetry chapbooks published by Finishing Line Press. She has published poetry and fiction in a variety of venues and received honors in both genres. She lives in Lincolnton, NC, with her husband and their two youngest children. This is her first time submitting to the Applewhite competition. Of "Daybreak," the final judge says, "The poet moves our eye with care in this poem, presenting a vision of our particular American moment. Our attention moves quickly from the personal, hands flicking tap water, to the farther scene, a desolate landscape of a burned home between two highways, to the figure of the woman at the center of the poem whose face is lit in a cell phones glare, and finally to the mockingbird whose song captures the near and far. We need more poems that aren't afraid to look at the world honestly. It's a solid sonnet, as well."

Thomas said her third-place selection, Redmond's "Dream Speak: My Father's Words," stands out as a powerful portrayal of the way our loved ones continue to surround us, even after death. "In this poem, the father's voice is grounded in the earth and offers an honest message about the pain that is cyclic, especially relevant now as more Americans become aware of the way African American people are brutalized by police and racism plagues our society," Thomas said. "Yet, the message in this poem is one of hope, a turning, as all change is inevitable." She is a Cave Canem Fellow and the Poet-in-Resident at The Peace Center for the Performing Arts in Greenville, SC, and the State Theatre in New Brunswick, NJ. Her most recent poetry collection, *What My Hand Say* (Press 53, 2016), was reviewed in *NCLR Online* 2018. Her poetry has also appeared in such publications as *Obsidian II: Black Literature in Review*, *Appalachian Journal*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Kakalak*, and *African Voices*. Glenis Redmond's poems have been previously selected as Applewhite finalists before and were published in *NCLR* 2012 and 2014 issues.

Among the other finalists, Thomas named four poems for Honorable Mention, including "Girl Praxis" and "Self-Portrait as Wildfire" by Nilla Larsen, who has a third poem, "Post-Date Sunday," that was a finalist as well. The other two honorable mentions are "Smoke and Oreos" by Gwen Holt and "Black Girl Magic in Summers Past" by Crystal Simone Smith. This is Larsen's second time as a finalist for the Applewhite Prize; Holt and Smith are both new to the competition.

The other finalists in the 2018 competition are "How Rhodon the Tutor Prepared Cleopatra's Son" and "In my yard are henbit" by J.S. Absher; "Branch Drop" by Richard Betz, "Bombingham," "Fire and Brimstone," and "Forgiveness" by L. Teresa Church; "Divorce" by Kevin Dublin; "Day at a Historic Park" by Craig Friend; "Trespassing After the Hysterectomy, the Funeral" by Kimberly J. Simms; "Renovations" by Wayne Johns, "Prelude to Lust" by Jeanne Julian; "Eleanor: Suite" by Valerie Nieman; "The Ledge" by Jon Obermeyer; "Jump" by Frances J. Pearce; and "Echeveria" by Melinda Thomsen. Bauer notes that half of these poets are new to the competition.

The *North Carolina Literary Review* has won numerous awards and citations. It has been published by East Carolina University since 1992 and receives additional funding from the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, including the Applewhite Prize honorarium. The University of North Carolina Press has been publishing *NCLR* since 2017. Find submission and subscription information on *NCLR's* website at www.nclr.ecu.edu. ###