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Colum McCann Wins National Book Award



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Colum McCann, winner National Book Award

Colum McCann, a member of the advisory board for the Wilkes University Graduate Creative Writing Program, has won the National Book Award for his novel *Let the Great World Spin*. The award was presented on Nov. 18 in New York City. The award – considered one of literature’s most prestigious – is presented in the categories of fiction, nonfiction, poetry and young people’s literature.

As a member of the Wilkes creative writing program’s advisory board, McCann has provided input on course content and curriculum, performed readings from his work at its residencies, and been a thesis reader for degree candidates in the program.

Let The Great World Spin takes place in August 1974, when a mysterious tightrope walker is running, dancing, leaping between the Twin Towers, a quarter mile above the ground. It chronicles the lives of a group of New Yorkers, weaving their separate stories against the backdrop of the tightrope walker’s feat.

Some of McCann’s other novels include *Zoli*, *Dancer*, and *This Side of Brightness*. His fiction has been published in 30 languages and has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *GQ*, *Paris Review*, *Bomb* and other places. He has written for numerous publications including *The Irish Times*, *Die Zeit*, *La Repubblica*, *Paris Match*, *The New York Times*, *the Guardian* and *the Independent*.

In 2003 he was named *Esquire* magazine’s “Writer of the Year.” Other awards and honors include a Pushcart Prize, the Rooney Prize, the Hennessy Award for Irish Literature, the Irish Independent Hughes and Hughes/Sunday Independent Novel of the Year 2003, and the 2002 Ireland Fund of Monaco Princess Grace Memorial Literary Award. His short film, “Everything in this Country Must,” directed by Gary McKendry, was nominated for a 2005 Academy Award.

McCann lives in New York City, where he teaches creative writing at Hunter College.

The mission of the National Book Foundation and the National Book Awards is to celebrate the best of American literature, expand its audience, and to enhance the cultural value of good writing in America.

Marlon James Named Finalist for National Book Critics Circle Award



Marlon James, Finalist for National Book Critics Circle Award in fiction

Marlon James' novel *The Book of Night Women* was a finalist for a National Book Critics Circle Award in fiction by the National Book Critics Circle.

The finalists were announced in January, and the winners were announced on March 11. Other finalists included memoir writer Mary Karr, former U.S. poet laureate Louise Glück, and former National Book Award winner William T. Vollmann. The other fiction nominees included Hilary Mantel, Jayne Anne Phillips, and Michelle Huneven. Mantel won the fiction category for her novel *Wolf Hall*.

The National Book Critics Circle, founded in 1974, is a nonprofit organization with around 600 members, "book reviewers who are interested in honoring quality writing and communicating with one another about common concerns."

James worked on *The Book of Night Women* while he was enrolled in the creative writing program. He also teaches at Macalester College in Minnesota.

Cecilia Galante Joins Creative Writing Faculty



Cecilia Galante, newest member of Creative Writing Faculty

Young adult novelist Cecilia Galante has joined the faculty of the Graduate Creative Writing Program.

She is the author of five young adult novels. Her first, *The Patron Saint of*

Butterflies, was selected as a Young Adult Book of the Year by the Northeast Independent Booksellers Association, a Top Ten Pick for 2008 by Amazon, and a Recommended Read for Teens on Oprah's website. Another one of her books, *Hershey Herself*, will be translated into Polish in 2010. Her other novels include *Willowood*, and *The Sweetness of Salt*, which will be published in 2011. She has BA from King's College and an MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College.

Her first interactions with the faculty and students came in January when she attended the residency. "It was thrilling. I had no idea that I was going to be among such a crowd of intellectuals and have peers that are so successful," she said.

Galante is no stranger to teaching. She spent years teaching high school English in the Wilkes-Barre area, though she is currently on sabbatical. But when it comes to teaching in the Graduate Creative Writing Program, she plans to use what she learned as a graduate student at Goddard.

"I'm trying to borrow more from my experience as a student. My teachers at Goddard were incredibly supportive and astute," she said. "I've been able to draw from that experience and insert criticism in a way that doesn't kill the spirit."

Besides teaching, Galante is also hard at work on her first adult novel, and the process has not always been easy. "It's been incredibly daunting. For young adult, you're allowed to write more simply and straightforward," she said. "So, I was getting caught up in sounding like an adult and sounding smart enough."

Galante added that the process has been easier lately, and she's confident the book will stand on its own. She has to submit a manuscript by the end of April.

Though this will be Galante's first adult novel, she admitted that she was not initially attracted to the young adult genre.

"I wasn't even familiar there was a YA genre when I wrote my first book, *The Patron Saint of Butterflies*. My agent said we were going to market it as young adult, and I was devastated. I didn't think it was young adult," she said. "I sat back and waited, and she was right. It became a successful young adult book and a crossover book. It appeals to adults and young adults at the same time."

Bonnie Culver Helps Area High School Students Take Written Work from "Page to Stage"



Bonnie Culver

Students in four northeast Pennsylvania school districts have a chance to become playwrights in a special program being piloted by Bonnie Culver, director of the Graduate Creative Writing Program. Culver worked with two graduate students, Sarah Pugh and Cory Brin, on a master of fine arts project developing a pilot program, "Page to Stage." Culver is working as guest artist in four high schools – Hanover Area, Hazleton, Tunkhannock and Wyoming Valley West – to teach basic elements of playwriting to students.

Culver was in the schools Tuesdays and Wednesdays from Feb. 2 to March 25. Each student presented a 10-minute play. One or two plays from each school will be chosen to be presented at the Fine Arts Fiesta in May.

Wilkes University's long-term goal is to replicate this with fiction, poetry, film, and nonfiction with creative writing students and faculty serving as guest artists in area schools with a final arts festival on campus.

Faculty/Staff Notes

Christine Gelineau's essay "Cops" was published in the winter issue of *The Florida Review* as a runner up in their Editors' Award in Nonfiction.

Rashidah Ismaili Abu-Bakr's poetry was published in *Bending the Bow*, a collection of love poems from Africa, published by Southern Illinois Press.

Sara Pritchard's story "Sip the Wine" was published in Vol. 76, No. 1 of *New Letters* (Dec. 2009). Her story "Two Studies in Entropy" won a Pushcart Prize and is included in the 2010 PUSHCART PRIZE XXXIV BEST OF THE SMALL PRESSES anthology, and her story "Help Wanted: Female" is forthcoming in Vol. 6 (2010) of *The Tusculum Review*. Sara will be reading at the River Festival of Books in Huntington, West Virginia, on Friday, April 16, 2010.

Student/Alumni Notes

M.A. student Amy Archer had part of her memoir entitled “Bad Connection” published in the December issue of the Journal of Truth and Consequences.

M.A. student Cindy Dlugolecki’s play, “Violet Oakley Unveiled,” was showcased at Villanova University on Thursday, March 18. The one-woman show helped celebrate Women’s History Month. Violet Oakley was the first woman in art history to paint murals in a public building, and her home and studio were only a few miles from Villanova’s campus, according to Dlugolecki. Dlugolecki, the actress, director, and tech team were also the guest of five different departments at Villanova, including Women and Gender Studies, History, and Art.

M.F.A. student Brian Fanelli’s poem “Freshman Year” was published in the February issue of My Favorite Bullet.

http://www.interiornoisepress.com/0010_FANELLI_FreshmanYear.html,

and his poems “In a Club’s Cracked Mirror” and “Why I Said No” were published in the March issue of Word Riot

<http://www.wordriot.org/archives/976>.

Alum Pete Kaszyk’s short story, “You’re Not My Father,” was accepted for publication by Kerlak Publishing for inclusion in its WTF Anthologies edition. Publication date is pending.

M.A. student Kimberly Loomis-Bennet’s poem, “It Is Sweet and Decorous To Be Poor in One’s Country,” was published in the Winter 2010 issue of The November 3rd Club.

<http://www.november3rdclub.com/2010/02-2010/poetry/loomis-bennett.html>

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