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**Judges' Citations**  
**for the 2014 Literary Award Winners**

For over 50 years, the PEN Literary Awards have honored and introduced some of the most outstanding voices in literature across such diverse genres as fiction, poetry, biography, children's literature, science writing, translation, and drama. This year, with the help of its partners, supporters, and judges, PEN will confer 18 distinct awards, fellowships, grants, and prizes, awarding nearly \$150,000 to writers, editors, and translators.

For inquiries regarding PEN Literary Awards, please contact us at [awards@pen.org](mailto:awards@pen.org).

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**[PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award \(\\$10,000\)](#)**

*For a book of literary nonfiction on the subject of the physical or biological sciences published in 2013.*

Winner: *High Price* (Harper), Dr. Carl Hart

Judges: Akiko Busch, Rivka Galchen, and Eileen Pollack

The lifetime of research that is the foundation for *High Price* stretches from the streets of Miami's hood to the labs of Columbia University. In drawing on such a broad range of resources, neuroscientist Carl Hart demonstrates how personal experience and scientific study can inform and validate each other for a deeper understanding of human behavior and addiction. Dr. Hart's unflinching view of his past, along with his rigorous academic inquiry, make for a document of innovative thinking and profound humanity. Written with clarity, honesty, and courage, *High Price* offers a compelling argument to reconsider this country's policies on drug use, which have proved so ineffective not only from a legal standpoint, but from medical and social perspectives as well.

**PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay (\$10,000)**

*For a book of essays published in 2013 that exemplifies the dignity and esteem the essay form imparts to literature.*

Winner: *Critical Mass* (Doubleday), James Wolcott

Judges: Geoff Dyer, Stanley Fish, Ariel Levy, and Cheryl Strayed

It is difficult to know what to admire more, James Wolcott's panoramic and encyclopedic variety—he writes on a huge canvas with a cast of characters numbering in the thousands—or the precise structuring of individual sentences that can be Swiftian in their tendency to go on and on and be chock-full of names, places, put-downs, bric-a-brac, all wrapped in a contagious pleasure in the fecundity of language, or Wildean in their concise and wicked performance of precision bombing. When he says about critic Manny Farber that he “always packed his pieces with rock salt” so that “the spray of his densely packed sentences left a wide pockmark” he could well be writing about himself. When he concludes a comparison of Edgar Allan Poe and Alfred Hitchcock by declaring that “Ravens belong on both men's shoulders, perched forevermore,” he simultaneously conjures up a comic, surrealistic image, makes a serious literary-critical claim, and teases us with the echo of Poe's “nevermore” (itself an echo) which is turned quite marvelously into an assertion of timeless value. And when he says of Michael Mann's movie *Heat* that “each character carries an abyss inside,” he invites us to recall in juxtaposition the haunted faces of Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Val Kilmer, and Jon Voight, faces that *are* the real plot of Mann's masterpiece. And what can we say about a critic who can at one moment be telling us about “Updike's hard fist of meaning” and in the next moment convincing us that there is meaning to be found and savored in the Doris Day-Rock Hudson comedies which, he says, “have kept their crease and slant”? Well, we can say that he is a master of his craft and a more than worthy recipient of the PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay.

**PEN/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for Biography (\$5,000)**

*For a distinguished biography published in 2013.*

Winner:  *Holding On Upside Down: The Life and Work of Marianne Moore*

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux), Linda Leavell

Judges: James Atlas, Lisa Cohen, and Wendy Gimbel

For over two decades, Linda Leavell mined elusive veins rich with treasure. Now she has surfaced with a gem polished to brilliance that is a precious addition to literary biography.  *Holding On Upside Down* is, first of all, a meditation on the nature of contradiction. Leavell treats the paradoxes in Marianne Moore's life with tremendous respect and tact. Moore willingly inhabited a prison of devotion to a tyrannical mother, never distinguishing between Madonna and Medea, and, against all odds, turned her surrender into a form of freedom, writing poetry of intense originality. Leavell's own fierce intelligence gives this biography its rigor. But her compassion is responsible for her unwillingness to categorize or pathologize her complex subject: the brilliant modernist, the astute editor, the spinster in the tricorne hat who wrote ditties for soda pop sales, the flamboyant eccentric who courted celebrity while wrapping herself in the cape of virginal self-effacement. One could say of Leavell's lucid, compelling achievement what Moore wrote of her own:

If you will tell me why the fen  
appears impassable, I then  
will tell you why I think that I  
can get across it, if I try.

**PEN Open Book Award (\$5,000)**

*For an exceptional book-length work of literature by an author of color published in 2013.*

Judges: Catherine Chung, Randa Jarrar, and Monica Youn

Co-Winner: *domina Un/blued* (Tupelo Press), Ruth Ellen Kocher

In *domina Un/blued*, Ruth Ellen Kocher layers culture on culture—the American quotidian on top of modern-day Italian on top of the remnants of Roman civilization—a palimpsestic technique that highlights how supposedly extinct contours and patterns bleed through to the present day. The primary subject of this collection is a monstrous one—slavery—and Kocher approaches it backwards, holding a mirror. This oblique approach allows us to triangulate our way to truths that remain unavailable to the standard histories, the way the heritage of slavery continues to shape our society. Kocher’s formal innovations reflect unexpected angles on her subject, and surprise us everywhere—in architectural details, in questions of translation, in the dilemmas of sexual intimacy. These repeating images and themes echo through the white space of these poems, creating resonances that are both rigorous and sensuous.

Co-Winner: *Cowboys and East Indians* (FiveChapters Books), Nina McConigley

In *Cowboys and East Indians*, Nina McConigley gives us Wyoming precisely the way we expect it—in landscape, sky, and animal life—and in ways we don't. The inhabitants of this surprising, thrilling, and richly textured short story collection are unpredictable, both in their actions and identities. A cross-dresser, a kleptomaniacal foreign exchange student, a disabled mother, and others share a domestic setting—featuring trailers that look like dollhouses, motels whose rooms are identical, no matter the city they're in—reflecting the stuckness and wanderlust of the collection's characters, who are insider/outside in every sense. In these stories, McConigley has shaped a work destined to be a classic, like Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. Its characters—Indians in America, Americans in India, and Indian-Americans in both places—echo Vonnegut’s statement that “Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can't see from the center.” It's electrifying to be out on the edge with this book.

**PEN/ESPN Award for Literary Sports Writing (\$5,000)**

*To honor a nonfiction book on the subject of sports published in 2013.*

Winner: *League of Denial* (Crown Archetype), Mark Fainaru-Wada & Steve Fainaru

Judges: Joel Drucker, Chad Harbach, and Jackie MacMullan

*League of Denial* is such a compelling and important book—one the National Football League fervently hopes you never read—because it so meticulously and convincingly connects serious brain injuries to the game of football. Authors Steve Fainaru and Mark Fainaru-Wada unveil the manner in which the NFL, America’s most powerful and profitable professional sports league, consistently failed to acknowledge their role in minimizing the serious health risks their players have been exposed to for decades.

With exhaustive reporting and brilliant prose, the authors also expose the unseemly tactics of competing medical entities who jockey for the right to study the brains of deceased NFL players, often within hours of their passing.

There was a time when concussions were merely dismissed as temporary and harmless setbacks, a case of football players “having their bell rung.” *League of Denial* has shredded that myth, and serves as a cautionary tale for all football players, professional and amateur alike.

**PEN/ESPN Lifetime Achievement Award for Literary Sports Writing (\$5,000)**

*To a writer whose body of work represents an exceptional contribution to the field.*

Winner: Dave Anderson

Judges: Kostya Kennedy, David Rosenthal, and John Schulian

For more than half a century, Dave Anderson has waded into the hurly-burly of sportswriting with quiet dignity and a true craftsman’s regard for the language. You didn’t read him for bombast or half-cocked opinion. You read him because, quite simply, he knew whereof he wrote. He was the last reporter to cover the Dodgers for the Brooklyn Eagle, and achieved art with his *True* magazine profile of Sugar Ray Robinson at twilight. But it was at *The New York Times* that he became the Dave Anderson we know best, winning a Pulitzer Prize for his impeccable columns, turning out best-selling books, mining the humanity in Muhammad Ali and Jack Nicklaus, and refusing to back down to George Steinbrenner and Don King. His integrity never wavered, his grace never disappeared on deadline, and his readers never got cheated. That’s the way pros operate, and Dave Anderson was the ultimate pro.

**PEN/Voelcker Award for Poetry (\$5,000)**

*To a poet whose distinguished and growing body of work to date represents a notable and accomplished presence in American literature.*

Winner: Frank Bidart

Judges: Peg Boyers, Toi Derricotte, and Rowan Ricardo Phillips

Throughout his career, Frank Bidart has produced poems marked by extreme states of consciousness. Many of these poems are built around characters drawn from myth, or newspapers, or movies, or literature, others from his own family history. But whatever the persona he inhabits, Bidart has been a poet of roiling intensity, a poet singularly unafraid of excess. And there, precisely, has been the great and singular achievement of Bidart's work, for this is a poet who has found many different ways to contain excess without neutralizing it. No poet of our time has so embodied conflict, creating living expressions of a consciousness moving through guilts and unmastered desires without resorting to easy resolutions. A model to younger poets who marvel at his ability to encompass both rage and tenderness, he has also been exemplary not only in tackling a wide range of lyric forms but in boldly investing in long narrative poems. Now in his mid-seventies, Bidart is clearly working at the height of his powers, and his recent volume *Metaphysical Dog* seems to many poets the best book he has ever written. Surely it is fair to say that he is an absolutely essential poet on the current American scene and that the legacy of his original, consistently powerful work will be felt in American letters for generations to come.

**PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award**  
**for a Master American Dramatist**

*Three awards which honor a Master American Dramatist, American Playwright in Mid-Career, and Emerging American Playwright. This is the inaugural year of the Award for an Emerging American Playwright.*

Winner: David Rabe

Judges: John Lithgow, Elizabeth Streb, and Maria Tucci

We recall the harrowing experience of first encountering Rabe's plays, some forty years ago. In our opinion, they have withstood the test of time and will remain a powerful record of American life for decades to come. Rabe's early works were produced under the aegis of Joseph Papp's Public Theater during the 1970s. More than any other writer, he has come to define that extraordinary decade of bold, creative achievement at the Public. The great Rabe war trilogy—"The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel," "Streamers," and the Tony-winning "Sticks and Bones"—present a searing vision of the Vietnam War years unmatched by any other playwright. But the trauma of Vietnam has not been his only subject. A few years later, "Hurly Burly" arrived on Broadway, offering up a mordant, unflinching portrait of the stoned-out anomie of Hollywood in the 1980's, reflecting the uneasy state of society at large. Recent revivals of Rabe's plays have confirmed their craft, compassion, and staying power. Taken together, the judges feel that they place him firmly in the ranks of Master American Dramatists.

**PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award  
for an American Playwright in Mid-Career (\$7,500)**

*Three awards which honor a Master American Dramatist, American Playwright in Mid-Career, and Emerging American Playwright. This is the inaugural year of the Award for an Emerging American Playwright.*

Winner: Donald Margulies

Judges: John Lithgow, Elizabeth Streb, and Maria Tucci

Donald Margulies has already produced enough plays to fill the quota of any playwright's career. But judging from his unflagging creative energy, he has many more plays ahead of him. For this reason, and for the high quality of his varied work, the judges have chosen to honor Donald Margulies at mid-career. In memorable plays like "Sight Unseen," "Collected Stories," "Time Stands Still," and the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Dinner With Friends," Margulies has explored the strains on human relationships wrought by ambition, self-doubt, the loss of integrity, the loss of love, the passage of time, and the persistence of traumatic memory. But if his work grapples with the serious business of life, it is shot through with sly, literate humor and it is far from grim. And though all the plays listed above are essentially realistic works, he loves to surprise us: he is capable of fantastical yarn-spinning ("Shipwrecked! An Entertainment"), surrealistic allegory ("The Model Apartment"), and show-stopping theatrics ("The Loman Family Picnic"). Margulies is a respected citizen of the American theater: while he works in other literary genres, he is deeply committed to the stage; he nurtures a new generation of playwrights as a professor of English and Theater Studies at Yale; and not least among his many attributes as a dramatist, actors simply love to perform his work. The judges (two of whom are actors) are pleased to name him the winner of the PEN/Laura Pels Award for an American Playwright in Mid-Career.



**PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award for an Emerging American Playwright (\$2,500)**

*Three awards which honor a Master American Dramatist, American Playwright in Mid-Career, and Emerging American Playwright. This is the inaugural year of the Award for an Emerging American Playwright.*

Winner: Laura Marks

Judges: John Lithgow, Elizabeth Streb, and Maria Tucci

We are pleased to honor the work of Laura Marks. A recent graduate of Juilliard's writing program, the youthful Ms. Marks has written four plays. Two of them, "Mine" and "Bethany," have already been produced extensively to critical acclaim, and the New York production of "Bethany" was a nominee for the 2013 Lucille Lortel Outstanding Play Award. Ms. Marks chooses her subjects fearlessly. No other playwright has so forthrightly taken on the complex emotions of a mother's childbearing and post-partum panic, as she did in "Mine." And "Bethany" is a horror story rooted in absolute reality, portraying the appalling toll exacted from an unremarkable middle class woman caught in the vise grip of today's harsh economic conditions. The judges read both of these plays and were dazzled by Ms. Marks' command of dialogue, character, and structure. With the skill of an artist far beyond her years, she knows how to make an audience desperate to find out what comes next. We feel the same way about her nascent career.

**PEN/Steven Kroll Award for Picture Book Writing (\$5,000)**

*To a writer for an exceptional story illustrated in a picture book published in 2013.*

Winner: *The King of Little Things* (Peachtree Publishers), Bil Lepp

Judges: Mac Barnett, Ted Lewin, Elizabeth Winthrop

With sprightly humor and clever wordplay, Bil Lepp tells an engaging tale of a king who affirms the notion of simplicity. Readers will delight in the comic rhymes and inspired vocabulary. A moral is there, but deftly buried in the wild contest between two opposing rulers, one who relies on power and might, while the other turns to things as small as buttons that pop and pants that drop.

### **PEN Translation Prize (\$3,000)**

*For a book-length translation of prose into English published in 2013.*

Winner: *Autobiography of a Corpse* by Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky (New York Review Books),

translated by Joanne Turnbull & Nikolai Formozov

Judges: Ann Goldstein, Becka McKay, and Katherine Silver

*Autobiography of a Corpse*, by the Russian writer Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky (1887—1950), is a collection of thematically and stylistically linked stories written in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and '30s but unpublished until the first decade of this century. Fantastical, hallucinatory, and wildly imaginative, the book is rich in linguistic playfulness—part metafiction, part exploration into the farthest reaches and minutest details of reality. In one story, the narrator falls into his lover's pupil, only to find there reflections of all her previous lovers; in another, a hermit's prayers temporarily heal all the cracks and seams in the universe.

Joanne Turnbull, in collaboration with Nikolai Formozov, has produced a compellingly readable translation that is also inventive, that improvises when necessary and consistently insinuates a strangeness and beauty of other worlds, both literary and real. Turnbull remains true to an English voice of her own making, while weaving in bright threads of the unfamiliar to push the boundaries of our language.

Turnbull provides helpful information in her extensive endnotes, which elucidate the text without being didactic, editorializing, or intrusive. With her notes and her translation, she effectively offers us Krzhizhanovsky's genius—unrecognized and suppressed during his lifetime—rather than drawing attention to herself and her own considerable resourcefulness and artistry. This is a rare and welcome conjunction of a literary text that allows the art of translation to shine and a translator who has brilliantly met the challenge.

**PEN Award for Poetry in Translation (\$3,000)**

*For a book-length translation of poetry into English published in 2013.*

Winner: *Diaries of Exile* by Yannis Ritsos (Archipelago),  
translated by Karen Emmerich & Edmund Keeley

Judge: Kimiko Hahn

Yannis Ritsos' *Diaries of Exile* spans an era in Greece that was politically dangerous, especially for a radical who would not compromise his art. The three diaries include a peculiar lyric in the form of "a censored postcard" —ten lines or less—that was imposed by prison guards. Ritsos used the compressed form to his advantage. These ten-lined poems, as well as the other "diary entries," are brilliant stops in time. The individual titles are dates and add social context to his world, as in "January 10": "You have to tie your own hands. / You tie them. / Night cuts the cords." Stellar translators Karen Emmerich and Edmund Keeley take these poems from their limited context and bring out a universal predicament, that is, writing from an existence of harshness and hope. I feel privileged to hold these.

**PEN/Edward and Lily Tuck Award for Paraguayan Literature (\$3,000)**

*To a living author of a major work of Paraguayan literature not yet translated into English.*

Winner: *En Tacumbú* (El Lector) by Raúl Silva Alonso

Judges: Idra Novey, Yvette Siegert, and Mark Statman

The winner of the PEN America/Edward and Lily Tuck award for 2014 is Raúl Silva Alonso for his collection of micro-fictions, *En Tacumbú*. Like Robert Walser, Alonso's micro-fictions are unpredictable, vivid, and radically unlike anything else being written in his country. The reality Alonso writes of in this collection is a fatally crowded and tragic one. Tacumbú is the largest prison in Paraguay's capital city, Asunción. Amid frequent outbreaks of tuberculosis and gang fights, Alonso zeroes in on the sight of a red balloon passing over the prison yard, the curious food preferences of various inmates, and the unlikely friendships that develop between them. *En Tacumbú* is a book of great humanity and of mysterious moments of grace. We congratulate Raúl Silva Alonso on this exceptional collection of micro-fictions.

**PEN/Phyllis Naylor Working Writer Fellowship (\$5,000)**

*To an author of children's or young-adult fiction, who has published at least two books, to complete a book-length work-in-progress.*

Winner: Linda Oatman High for her manuscript "The Taste of Elephant Tears"

Judges: Kathi Appelt, Johanna Hurwitz, and Padma Venkatraman

There have been several elephants in children's literature: Kipling's Elephant's Child, de Brunhoff's Babar and Dr. Seuss's Horton to name just three. Now author Linda Oatman High introduces us to a new pachyderm, the circus elephant, Queenie Grace. In her lovely story, "The Taste of Elephant Tears," the author tells her tale from the point of view of Queenie Grace who is mourning the 6'5" man who was her best friend and keeper, Bill. The chapters alternate with narration from Lily Pruitt, Bill's twelve year old granddaughter who comes from West Virginia to attend his funeral in Florida. How Lily and Queenie Grace become friends as each mourns Bill and other of life's disappointments and losses makes a moving and very original story. It is well written with strongly developed characters. We predict that before long Queenie Grace will be as loved by young readers as the elephants who preceded her in children's books.

**PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction (\$25,000)**

*To an author of an unpublished novel that addresses issues of social justice. The prize also includes a publishing contract with Algonquin Books.*

Winner: Ron Childress for his manuscript "And West is West"

Judges: Terry McMillan, Nancy Pearl, Kathy Pories

When an air force drone pilot in Nevada participates in a military strike that causes collateral damage half a world away; and a programmer on Wall Street develops an algorithm whereby his company can profit from international disruptions, their moral compromises begin to affect their lives. As they seek redemption for participating in systems they have lost faith in, their paths begin violently to converge. Their lives, and the lives of those around them spiral out of control, leading some toward disaster and others toward redemption.

By taking us into the lives of these and other characters, "And West Is West" reveals how the lower-order participants in corrupt systems take the fall when things go badly. Even more so, it's about the impossibility of steering clear of corruption both on Wall Street and in the military. But at the same time, this novel is not just a look at an America in crisis; it is also a story of love, loss and hope.

"And West Is West" will be published by Algonquin Books in Fall 2015.