



CITYLIT
PRESS

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Poet Enlivens Everyday Moments with Extraordinary Power *Marylander Wins First Annual Harriss Poetry Prize*

BALTIMORE, MD—The taste of a penny. Running for the bus. Carpets rolled and stacked like logs into a child’s mountain. Laura Shovan mines gems from the everyday caverns of life. From these moments Shovan collected *Mountain, Log, Salt, and Stone*, inaugural winner of the Clarinda Harriss Poetry Prize.

The prize is named in honor of Clarinda Harriss, eminent Baltimore poet, publisher, and professor of English at Towson University. Harriss, educated at Johns Hopkins University and Goucher College, is a widely published, award-winning poet. She also serves as editor and director of BrickHouse Books, Maryland’s oldest literary press.

In rounds of blind judging, Shovan’s entry topped submissions by finalists from Oregon and Washington state. Nearly forty writers entered CityLit Press’s first chapbook contest, which was judged by physician, critic, and poet Michael Salcman.

“Laura enlivens her quotidian subjects—the carpet rolls in the title poem, the pussy willow bud in ‘The Listening of Plants,’ and the dogwood petal in ‘Because We Were Rushing to Catch the Bus’—with a shrewd and powerful use of metaphor, a critical strategy all too often neglected in contemporary work,” Salcman said.

Shovan grew up in New Jersey. She is an honors graduate of the Dramatic Writing Program at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. During her first career as a high school English teacher, Shovan was active in the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation’s Poetry Program, studying with Maria Mazziotti Gillan, Madeline Tiger, Renee Ashley, and Laura Boss. She coordinated poetry readings by award-winning teens at the 1996 and 1998 Dodge Poetry Festivals. Since 2002, Shovan has been an Artist-in-Education for the Maryland State Arts Council, leading poetry workshops for school children.

“For me, this collection tells a story about the transition from childhood to parenthood,” said Shovan. “I hope the poems speak to those moments when something—a strange scrap of memory, an odd comment from a child—compels us to stop and pay complete attention to the sensory world.”

Shovan has written articles and essays about education, parenting, learning disabilities, and the arts for *Baltimore’s Child*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and other publications. Her poetry has appeared in many journals, including the *Global City Review*, *Jewish Women’s Literary Annual*, *Lips*, *Little Patuxent Review*, and *Paterson Literary Review*. She has earned two Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards honorable mentions. She is actively involved in the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI), with credits in *Highlights! for Children* and *Shoofly* audio magazine.

Shovan has taught for the Maryland Humanities Council’s “Totally Ekphrastic: Picturing America Through Poetry” program, the G/T Summer Institutes in Howard County, Maryland, and (full disclosure) the “Write Here, Write Now” workshops offered by CityLit Project (CityLit Press’s parent nonprofit organization).



Jennifer Lewis

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Laura Shovan
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“The Harriss Poetry Prize is the second national, blind-judged chapbook contest that I’ve been associated with where the first winner has been a Marylander,” said CityLit Press publisher Gregg Wilhelm. “I think it speaks to the quality of literary art being created in the region.”

In addition to publication, Shovan will receive \$250 in prize money.

CityLit Press’s mission is to provide a venue for writers who might otherwise be overlooked by larger publishers due to the literary quality or regional focus of their projects. In addition to stand-alone titles, it manages two chapbook contests: the Harriss Poetry Prize and Black Infinity: Adele V. Holden Prize for New African-American Poets. It is the publishing imprint of nonprofit CityLit Project, which presents public events, writers’ workshops, and youth programs to instill a life-long love a literature.

Details about the Harriss Poetry Prize can be found at www.CityLitProject.org click on CityLit Press. The next chapbook contest’s deadline is October 1, 2010.