

## Dean's awards honor excellence in student writing

Benjamin Kelly

Staff Writer

Most of the time, Guilford writers struggle anonymously. Theirs is a private battle: when athletes are glorified, when drama students receive top billing in the new play, when student government leaders have the honor of holding lofty titles, the writer is grinding out page after page, alone.

But once a year, there is the Dean's Writing Awards Contest.

The contest recognizes exemplary student writing and rewards winners with cash prizes. Students are invited to submit work in six different categories. Traditionally academic categories, like Writing in the Physical and Natural Sciences, are supplemented by awards for poetry and fiction.

Writing Director Cynthia Nearman, who joined the Guilford faculty last semester, is organizing the 2005 contest.

"The contest helps raise the profile of writing on campus," she said. "We are committed to creating more opportunities for (writers)."

"Writing is really hard work," she continued. "If you can write at a college level - that deserves celebration."

The contest is now in its tenth year. English Department chair and contest founder Jeff Jeske organized the first Dean's Writing Award Contest when he was writing director.

"Guilford defines itself as a writing intensive school. The contest was a natural outgrowth of that," Jeske said.

Originally, the contest only rewarded academic writing. In 2000, the English Department introduced the Betty Place Prize for Poetry, and last year a fiction category was added.

"The addition of fiction and poetry categories has regenerated interest in the past years," Jeske said.

In 2004, students submitted 50 pieces of writing. This year, the judges are hoping for 100 entries.

"What we really want more than anything is for a lot of writers to submit stories and poetry," said tutor Doug Smith, who is a judge for both the poetry and fiction contests.

Many students who plan to submit their writing praised the contest.

"The fact that it has deadlines and rules motivates me," said sophomore Daniel Bullard-Bates.

"Entering the contest will be rewarding in itself - it feels good to put energy into getting my writing out to people," wrote sophomore Dylan Grayson in an e-mail. "I'm glad Guilford has such an opportunity, and I hope we will have more opportunities for creative writers."

Opportunities are coming: a writing track will likely be introduced soon to the traditional English major. A fiction workshop and the success of poetry readings are other indicators that Guilford is becoming a haven for writers.

"There's a confluence of forces: students bringing the interest, and the college seeing the expanding of the writing program being consistent with its mission," Jeske said. "Students seem to come to Guilford enormously interested in writing."

Though many students are excited by this year's contest, some are still angry over the 2004 outcome. Last year's winning fiction entry, "Me and Jesus," won Katie Elliot '04 both the first Dean's Award for Fiction and the harsh criticism of CCE student Lara Kadlecek and other offended Christians.

Elliot writes through the voice of an issue-laden woman who is sexually obsessed with Jesus. The story presents a satire of a personal relationship with Jesus and closes with the phrase, "Jesus is inside me," skewed to sexual connotations.

"I was appalled at the contents of Ms. Elliot's story, not only because of the vulgarity and pornographic content, but more so because of what her story does to the name of Jesus Christ," Kadlecek wrote in a letter to the English department.

Despite complaints, the English Department and Adrienne Israel, the Academic Dean, stood by the judges' decision.

"We support the right of the contest judges to award (the story) first place-even while we deeply regret that the story and the awarding of the prize offended you personally," Jeske wrote in a letter to Kadlecek.

"That's what makes writing stand out," Nearman said about the story. "It walks on the edge, it pushes the limits."

Smith agreed that the contest should not be limited by cultural proscriptions.

"We're looking for originality in language and mastery of form," said Smith. "Beyond those two things anything is open."☼

## Sex and the Semester: The slut phenomenon, part one

Samantha Kittle

Sex Columnist

I've always been intrigued by a notion I came across while reading some of the works of 90's feminist Naomi Wolf. She wrote that for a woman to have sex in our culture does not make her a slut: talking about it and enjoying it does.

Let's examine this idea; do you remember the girl from your junior high school that wore fishnets, tight clothes, and thick, black eyeliner? She was the slut before ever having sex.

I was intrigued by her - this archetype who was the scapegoat for our age group when we were all ashamed about our budding sexuality. Whatever desire we had for anyone around us, we blamed her. By laughing about the blowjob she gave behind the bleachers, we were all a little bit safer, cleaner, purer. How frightened we were.

Have we grown up since then?



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Where down the line did we realize that sex felt good and that we actually wanted it? Why do we still blame the slut for liking what we all want?

I must expand upon an idea brought up by Camille Paglia in *Sexual Personae* to explain this further: women's genitals are essentially hidden, holy, a mystery.

There is a secret to her sexuality, which man inherently wants to discover. Out of his frustration with being unable to perceive her genitals and sex the way he can his own, he is led to constant anxiety over her sexuality, and a constant desire to either understand it fully or destroy it completely.

Now, back to sex at Guilford. I believe now that we are college age, we have a better idea of what sex is and we do not need the slut as a scapegoat the way we did when we hit puberty. Back then, we thought masturbation made us blind and that casual sex rendered one forever damaged and revolting to the opposite sex. Now we know better; most of us aren't too afraid of sex - we are experimenting and getting comfortable.

College-age men are realizing the power that women have over them sexually and that makes them angry. College-age women are beginning to see that some girls utilize this power more often or effectively than they and that makes them angry.

No one wants to relinquish their power and no one wants to feel weakened, especially when it comes to sexuality.

So, we have this girl who is having the sex the rest of us want, and she is not ashamed to talk about liking it. We brand her a slut because she represents the person with the strongest grasp on the aforementioned mystery and holiness of female sexuality.

She is most closely attached to the life giving force and sexually powerful energy that everyone else desires to claim as their own. But it is not theirs; it belongs to the sexually assertive and powerful woman.☼