

Contestants push boundaries at Bad Feminist Poetry Contest

By Meredith Jones
STAFF WRITER

The fifth annual Bad Feminist Poetry Contest, held April 2 in the Greenleaf, managed to shock, amuse, frighten, and impress those in attendance, of which there were quite a few.

By 7:30 p.m., the coffee cooperative was packed with feminists male and female.

Judges Traci Connor, Liz Ermis, and Sonya Mitchell-Duffy were introduced by Associate Professor of Religion Eric Mortensen, who had a few words of advice for contestants.

"Some of (the poetry) is just over-the-top, and that's good," he said. "People who write poetry that's really good get low scores."

Accordingly, contestants consistently pushed the envelope.

We were hoping to terrify people," said sophomore Meredith Luby. Luby and sophomore Lani Cromwell offered a piece of performance art, which consisted of a Twinkie-flavored make-out session set to the dulcet tones of Prince's "Kiss."

Luby added, "We were going to do a banana originally."

Poems ranged from the plaintive to the eloquent.

"Why do you close your eyes when we make love?" asked alum Megan Sheridan in the closing line of her poem, which won an honorable mention.

"Defeat the phallus!" cried junior Spencer Musick. "Tampons of empowerment, marching as to

war!"

First-year Benjamin Sepsenwol garnered applause for the opening lines of his poem, which won third place.

"Our love is like a moose skiing downhill," he read, "flowing away from your hate / your abuse / and your masculine domination."

Last year's reigning champion, senior Jamie Metrick, gave a live interpretation of Karen Finley's "I'm an Ass Man." Metrick won second place for an enthusiastic performance of a piece so R-rated that the British police once threatened to arrest Finley if she continued to perform it.

Yet it was the first-place winner, first-year David Pferdekamper, who brought the house down with a poetic apology for his essential masculinity.

"I remember holding a door open for a woman," he lamented. "Were she righteous, she would have slapped me."

He continued with a description of the pain he finally received from his "adult circumcision / and a bad decision," which left him spotting blood.

"The doctor told me to go to the hospital," he said, "but I felt alive for the first time in my life."

His entry was, according to Mortensen, the first in the contest's history to receive a perfect score of 10 from each judge.

"You were terrible, man!" exclaimed Sepsenwol as Pferdekamper left the stage.

"So were you!" said



First-year **David Pferdekamper** is awarded first place at the Bad Feminist Poetry Contest on April 2. Religious studies professor **Eric Mortensen** hosted the reading.

Pferdekamper.

Not everyone was quite as pleased with the contest.

"I'd just like to take the opportunity to note that a man won this

contest," said second-place winner Metrick. "This is evidence of the violence inherent in the system. And I'm not jealous or anything."

In the end, however, the contest

left its audience laughing – which is what it's all about.

"I love people exploring their boundaries, you know?" said Mortensen. "It's a good thing."

Professor of Religion Jane Redmont publishes book on prayer

By Paula Wilder
STAFF WRITER

"Books have a life before they appear in print. They also have a life after their creation. Books also have a context," writes Jane Redmont in the preface to her newly released paperback edition, "When in Doubt, Sing: Prayer in Daily Life." "They live with us in history, in societies and cultures, and in the case of books like this one, in communities of faith and practice."

Redmont, assistant professor of religious studies, was contacted over one year ago by Tom Grady, a publisher who was looking for a copy of her first hardback edition. When he realized it was out of print, he called to ask if she would be interested in a paperback edition.

"The book started 15 years ago," said Redmont. "I wrote a very long essay about praying in a time of depression in early 1994 that caused me to receive more mail than I have received about anything that I've written before."

Redmont's literary agent showed her original article to HarperCollins and they accepted her book proposal and published the first hardback edition.

When Grady of Ave Maria Press contacted her last year, Redmont agreed to the paper-

back publication.

"This was the happiest thing that happened to me last year," said Redmont. "But what moves me the most is when people tell me that the book has been a resource book for them."

Amanda Mbuvi, lecturer in religious studies, is currently reading Redmont's book and has found it to be a resource in her spiritual life.

"Doing academic work in religious studies, I get used to moving through a lot of information really fast, said Mbuvi. "Jane's book is helping me back to the different rhythm of the spiritual life."

Redmont designed the prayer resource from personal reflections and testimonies from a variety of faith practices including Jewish, Christian, and Buddhist.

"I wanted to write a book that would be practical and helpful," said Redmont. "I appreciate the riches of different religious traditions with some resources contemporary and some quite ancient."

Each chapter ends with prayer and contemplative resources that the reader can use for his or her own prayer and/or meditation times.

Redmont acknowledged that people's prayer needs are different depending on where they are in the life journey.

"Our lives are different at different times," said Redmont. "We are young, we're old, we're stay-at-home moms, or we might be working."

The book is designed to touch the diversity of life and faith practice in a way that makes it relevant to anyone at any place.

Relevancy within different faith practices was one concern that Redmont had when she first wrote the book.

"One of the things that you have to be careful with is whether or not it is okay to use resources from other traditions if you aren't from that particular one," said Redmont.

Redmont eventually came to the realization that she believed it was acceptable to love your own tradition and that it was OK to practice and to appreciate those traditions that you found meaningful from other religions as well. Redmont writes, "If an insight or suggestion in this book is helpful or useful, enter into it. If not, leave it behind."

In addition to the diversity of religious tradition, the book also covers a variety of subjects relating to prayer, such as praying during depression, anger, sickness, doubt, and thanksgiving.

"Jane's book reminded me that it is OK to get angry with God. Praying in anger

and grief are good things," said senior Kate Tollas.

Redmont also discusses praying with the body, the voice, and in silence.

The book is sectioned in such a way that it can be read sequentially or sporadically, but its main purpose is to lead the reader to a place of prayer and contemplation.

"Contemplative prayer is a meditative discipline that prepares you for the gift of contemplation, which is the direct awareness of the Divine Presence," writes Redmont, quoting a Catholic who has harmoniously practiced Zen Buddhism.

"The prayer discipline creates the sacred space, disengages the filter which keeps us from experiencing God in a direct way."

The purpose of "When in Doubt, Sing" focuses on experiencing God in your own way, your own time, and with your own purpose – with the experience of reality and directness.

"I would recommend "When in Doubt, Sing" to anyone who is curious about prayer, needs prayer, wants to start a prayer life, hates to pray, is afraid to pray, loves to pray and anything in between," said Tollas.

Redmont's book is now available for purchase at the college bookstore and online at amazon.com.