

Subject: EM: Literature Dept - 6th Annual Creative Writing Prize Winners
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From: Haro Hernandez, Viviana

On Behalf of Professor Cole



**Literature Department
7th Annual Creative Writing Prizes**

POETRY PRIZE WINNERS:

SHAYAN ABBASI (\$1,000)

Abbasi's linked lyrics, "Inventory," "The Argument We Didn't Have," and "Self-Portrait as a Thing That Almost Happened," are united by a careful, plain-spoken idiom. They use this idiom, and a sly narrative structure, to talk concretely about a subtle question: how the imagination both builds up and feeds on absences and non-events. In particular, Abbasi's exploration of thrift, its psychological basis, and the way it inflects relations between people, represents a wise, timely take on cultures of consumption." -Noah Warren

RUNNER-UP: CHRISTY AHN (\$500)
HONORABLE MENTION: ARIA FAFAT (\$250)

FICTION PRIZE WINNERS:

ARIA FAFAT (\$1,000)

Aria Fafat's "The Desert Walkers" reads like myth: set in an unknown landscape where the desert is interrupted by a mysterious sea--"something no desert should hold"--and where a mysteriously shackled band of walkers roams in what prove, eventually, to be circles. Of their number, only Mari is named, apparently a sort of leader, who might save them; though as the story unfolds, she becomes less distinct, largely enfolded into the collective just as the walkers--like their predecessors whose warnings they don't heed--will eventually be buried in the sand.

"The Desert Walkers," ambitious in its world-building, is vividly evoked. Fafat's exhilarating diction brings the scenes to life. The author is to be commended for her prose. The story's vision is haunting: Mari and her fellow walkers, fearing the irrevocable choice of entering the water, fearing change and the unknown, doom themselves. This bleak parable might apply to any of us.
- Claire Messud

RUNNER-UP: ANTONIS PAPPAS (\$500)

2026 JUDGES:

Noah Warren	Claire Messud
Poetry	Fiction

THANK YOU TO ALL THE AMAZING WRITERS!