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2016 Starrett winner ‘burns through the stages of a woman’s life to invent what’s next’

PITTSBURGH—Erin Adair-Hodges, a poet, essayist and blogger from Albuquerque, New Mexico, is the winner of the 2016 Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize. Her manuscript, *Let’s All Die Happy*, will be published next fall by the University of Pittsburgh Press, sponsor of the prize.

Ed Ochester, editor of the Pitt Poetry Series and final judge for the Starrett, said, “What’s most impressive in this powerful book is the female speaker’s voice—it’s striking because what it says is often unexpected, surprising, and exactly right.”

The poems in *Let’s All Die Happy* explore apostasy, concerned with what happens after the beliefs and institutions which promised fulfillment leave us empty instead. Darkly humorous, the collection examines a patriarchal culture in which women are defined through their relationship to others. “This inheritance weighs heavy not only on the lives we lead,” Adair-Hodges said, “but shapes what kind of life it’s possible to even imagine.” Her poems push against these restraints, “burning through the stages of a woman’s life until there’s nothing left but to invent what’s next, finding both loneliness and liberation,” she explained.

Adair-Hodges was born and raised in Albuquerque. The 40-year-old teaches writing and literature there, where she is the co-creator and curator of the Bad Mouth Reading Series, bringing the best in fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and music to her hometown. She blogs about the writing process at We Are Leaving Without You <https://erinadairhodges.wordpress.com/>

Her poems have appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *Boulevard*, and *Green Mountains Review*, among other venues. Winner of the Loraine Williams Poetry Prize, she’s also been a Bread Loaf Rona Jaffe scholar, and has received awards from the Rockland Residency and The Writer’s Hotel.

“The affirmation of this award says to keep going, to keep stealing minutes from my chores and child to write,” Adair-Hodges remarked. “I had broken up with poetry for a long time, and I’m so grateful we found our way back to each other.”

The Starrett prize is awarded for a first full-length book of poems. Named after the original director of UPP, it carries a cash award of \$5,000 in addition to publication.

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