

The Society for Humanistic Anthropology announces

Recipients of 2006 Writing Competitions.....



The Victor Turner Prize for Ethnographic Writing is awarded to Julie Cruikshank for *Do Glaciers Listen?*. Runner up is Piers Vitebsky for *The Reindeer People*.

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**Julie Cruikshank** is professor emerita in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of British Columbia where she also held the McLean Chair in Canadian Studies, 2001-2003. For more than a decade, she lived in the Yukon Territory where she worked with the Yukon Native Language Centre recording oral traditions and life stories with Athapaskan and Tlingit elders. She has also done research in Alaska and Siberia. Her research interests include environmental anthropology, circumpolar political developments and approaches to analysis of oral tradition. Her books include *Life Lived Like a Story* (1990, winner of the Canadian Historical Association's 1991 MacDonald Prize); *Reading Voices* (1991); *The Social Life of Stories* (1998) and *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters and Social Imagination*.

*Do Glaciers Listen?* originated in a puzzle from Cruikshank's early ethnographic research—the appearance of glaciers as unruly companions in life histories she had recorded two decades earlier. The book explores conflicting depictions of glaciers to show how natural and cultural histories are objectively entangled in northwestern North America where geophysical changes coincided with the social upheaval accompanying European exploration and travel. European visitors brought with them varying conceptions of nature as sublime, as spiritual, or as a resource for human progress. They saw glaciers as inanimate and subject to empirical investigation and measurement. Aboriginal oral histories, conversely, described glaciers as sentient, animate and quick to respond to human behavior. In each case, the experiences and ideas surrounding glaciers were incorporated into interpretations of social relations. Focusing on these

contrasting views during the late stages of the Little Ice Age (1550-1900), Cruikshank demonstrates how local knowledge is produced through colonial encounters, rather than discovered, and how it often conjoins social and biophysical processes. Stories, in Walter Benjamin's words, do not expend themselves. They preserve and concentrate their strength and are capable of releasing it after a long time. The book draws connections among divergent narratives that continue to weave through contemporary debates about environmentalism, scientific research, indigenous land rights, national parks and a new World Heritage Site encompassing the Saint Elias Mountains.

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**Piers Vitebsky** is the director of Anthropology and Russian Northern Studies at the Scott Polar Research Institute at the University of Cambridge, a position he has held since 1986. In addition to his long-term fieldwork with the Eveny, he has conducted fieldwork in both India and Sri Lanka. His books include *Dialogues with the Dead: the Discussion of Mortality among the Sora of Eastern India* (1993), *The Shaman: Voyages of the Soul from the Arctic to the Amazon* (1995). Vitebsky has also been involved with numerous ethnographic films and documentaries produced by the BBC and National Geographic, including "Siberia: After the Shaman," "Arctic aviators" and "Flightpaths to the Gods."

*The Reindeer People* is the culmination of nearly twenty years of fieldwork among the Eveny of northeastern Siberia. Piers Vitebsky was determined to loosen Soviet control over his own movements so that he could live with the Eveny. Once able to live with Eveny, and become acquainted with a wide range of characters that include Communist bosses, wolves, bears, aviators, psychics, and the spirits of the ancestors, he depicts them as a fully realized, and complex people. The Eveny are nomads that experience violence and the ravages of widespread alcoholism, but also joy in their consecrated relationship with the environment. Vitebsky argues that the nomads and the reindeer have an intimate relationship, a partnership they have long struggled to maintain in the face of Soviet attempts to settle them. His wide ranging account evokes a sense of timelessness in the discipline; he draws on the best of ethnographic practice from the early days of

anthropology (such as detailed hand-drawn maps and diagrams) but writes with the theoretical and ethnographic perspectives of 21st century anthropology. With a style sometimes reminiscent of Levi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, Vitebsky focuses on the experiences of three herding families as they battle with the effects of national history, resist and subvert local political movements, and use the reindeer to alter to their own destinies and sense of self.

Judges this year were Richard Grinker, George Washington University, Regna Darnell, University of Western Ontario, and Phillip Scher, University of Oregon.



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### **Ethnographic Poetry**

The 2006 SHA poetry contest has been a powerful, eclectic and joyful experience for all involved. Judges saw a three-fold increase in submissions from last year, the addition of one judge and an outstanding collection of ethno-poetry to appear in Anthropology and Humanism 2006-7.

The contest results for 2006 are as follows:

**First place** went to *Roy Jacobstein* for his heartrending poem of witness, "HIV Needs Assessment." Jacobstein is a public health physician, Adjunct Professor of Maternal and Child Health at the University of North Carolina, and a widely published award-winning poet. He holds a B.A., M.D. and M.P. H. from the University of Michigan and an M.F.A. from Warren Wilson College.

**Second place** went to *Alison Pelegrin* from the English Department at Southeastern Louisiana University for her poem, "The Bois Sec Suite." Her poems are both celebrations and elegies for Cajun Culture.

**Third place** went to *Anoopa Sharma* for her poem, "Living Bangladesh," based on research on the economic impact of visceral leishmaniasis in Bangladesh. Sharma was a PhD student in Epidemiology at Emory University before she died in 2005 after a car accident. A memorial has been set up in her name with proceeds going toward the education of children in India.

Honorable mentions include *Benjamin Vogt*, "How We Came to be Here"; *Lucille Lang Day*, "I Always Knew It"; and *Karen Rodriguez*, "Yellow Underwear."

The judges included Kent Maynard from Anthropology at Denison University and judges, Misha Cahnmann Taylor (formerly Melisa Cahnmann) from Language and Literacy Education and Dorine Preston from Creative Writing, both at the University of Georgia. The judges would like to thank all ethno-poets for their stirring contributions and encourage writers to submit poems to the next round by March 1, 2007.

*Interested in developing your ethno-poetry? Attend one of several SHA poetry workshops offered at AAA in San José.*



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### **Ethnographic Fiction...**

The award this year is shared by **Michelle Bellino** for her story, "All the Nice Restaurants" and **Sally Bellerose** for her story "Frenchie's Girls."

This year's judges were Ayala Emmett, University of Rochester, and Ruth Behar, University of Michigan. Our international judge was Jerusalem writer Judy Labensohn.