

Readership & Awards

An editor's note

Every few years a flurry of discussion goes out concerning the place of literary writing in the wider culture. Is poetry too rarified for a sizable readership? Is fiction too self-conscious or gimmicky? Poetry Foundation president, John Barr, for example, began a September 2006 essay, "Poetry in this country is ready for something new." I hope so. Poetry always is ready for something new, which, in part, explains why the form—any literary form—can be seen as difficult or mysterious by much of the general population. Cynthia Ozick, in the April 2007 issue of *Harper's*, gives a Gertrude-Steinian shrug to those who wonder how to locate the larger reading audience, saying, "*there is no there there*. The audience, or most of it, has gone the way of the typewriter and the telephone booth," meaning, into other technologies. The question for Ozick is not who will read but how they will read, and she calls for richer critical discourse to deepen appreciation for contemporary writing. I like that, and *New Letters* will participate.

At *New Letters*, we also continue our faith in both literary writing and literary readers, and that's where you—reader—come in. Last year we inaugurated the annual *New Letters* Readers Awards; and we again invite you to send us nominations of your favorite poetry, fiction, and essays from the past volume year in *New Letters* (volume 73, numbers 1 to 4). John Barr may believe that American poetry is undergoing fatigue; I don't. The Readers Awards celebrates the irrepressible connection between readers and their favorite writing from *New Letters*. Ultimately, literature will—to mimic Ozick who mimicked Stein—*do what it does*, evolving and startling us in ways no one can control or technology diminish.

Send us your nominees by November 5, 2007—see www.newletters.org—and we will cite them and the winners in the next issue of the magazine.

—Robert Stewart