

January 2003

The Christy Award: Excellence in Christian Fiction, An Annotated Bibliography.

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Recommended Citation

Schwedt, Rachel, "The Christy Award: Excellence in Christian Fiction, An Annotated Bibliography." (2003). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 6.

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The Christy Award

The burgeoning interest in Christian fiction that has marked recent years has brought with it a proliferation of new writers who are trying to make their way into the mainstream market. Alongside this growth has come a need to establish guidelines that would encourage a high standard of quality in the field. The Christian publishing industry itself responded to this challenge in 1999 by establishing an award that would identify novels and novelists of excellence. By acknowledging authors worthy of note, they hoped to encourage both creativity and quality in writing, broaden readership of the genre, and bring recognition and exposure to authors who had not yet reached a large readership.

Supporters of this award are dedicated to the genre. Their website states their belief in the power of story.

“In a postmodern age in which the power of story has an even more significant place than in the past for establishing new ideas, influencing thought, and captivating people’s minds and emotions, Christian fiction has an increasingly important role to play in the church and to a new generation of seekers. The Master Storyteller of all time did most of His teaching through fiction. A great story captivates, entertains, educates, inspires, and challenges the reader—The Christy Awards celebrate novels from a Christian worldview that achieve these goals.”

What is Christian Fiction?

To identify which novels may be considered as Christian fiction, the founders of the award have developed the following working definition:

“Christian fiction is a category of stories written by novelists whose Christian worldview is woven into the fabric of the plot and character development. Although this definition might seem either simplistic on the one hand or overly broad on the other, this grouping of novels is as comprehensive and as varied in age, interest, and spiritual depth as its readership. C.S. Lewis resisted the label “Christian” for his novels, contending that he was simply creating a story. But whether overtly or subtly, Lewis’ fiction came out of his understanding of God and of the universe He created, out of the knowledge that God cares deeply about His creation that has been damaged by sin, and He joined the human race to build a bridge back to himself. This bridge between God and humanity will in some way inform and characterize every Christian novel.

Good fiction, whether or not it is identified as Christian, will provide a memorable reading experience that captures the imagination, inspires, challenges, and educates. Fiction published for the Christian book market does not include the gratuitous demonstration of sin—whether language, violence, sexual situations, or the more hidden sins of idolatry and self-worship. Credible

characters in a fallen world, of course, will sin. But the Christian novel's presentation of the grit and grime of human circumstance will not be done for its own sake or to titillate, but to point the reader toward hope, toward God."

Because the essence of Christianity is a relationship with God, a Christian novelists' well-conceived story will in some way, whether directly or indirectly, add insight to the reader's understanding of life, of faith, of the Creator's yearning over His creation.

Catherine Marshall

The name chosen for the award honors Catherine Marshall, a notable and best-selling Christian writer. Her novel *Christy*, which was brought to national attention by its serialization for television, has over 10 million copies in print. The videos of these programs have become enduring classics, which reach across age levels and interest groups. Her novels and inspirational books together have more than 25 million copies in print. If Christian fiction is defined by the distinct worldview woven into its very fabric, then Catherine Marshall's stories stand as true examples of the genre.

Qualifications

To qualify as candidates for the award, works must be full-length novels published in English in the United States. They may be in paperback or hardcover format, but must be published the year preceding the presentation of the award. Most importantly, "the content must be consistent with a Christian worldview and the historic Christian tradition reflected in the Apostle's Creed."

Further definitions and guidelines for entry and eligibility can be found on the Christy Award web site at www.christyawards.com or can be received by mailing a request to: The Christy Award, LLC, 1571 Glastonbury Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103.

Categories

Beginning in 1999 with six groupings, by 2002 categories have been expanded to nine distinct areas. These include:

Allegory – Includes fiction written in the form of extended metaphor.

Contemporary/General – The setting for the novel is 1950 or after.

Futuristic – The setting for the plot is at a future time. This includes apocalyptic works.

North American Historical – The primary setting is North America. The time period is pre-1950.

International Historical – The primary setting is in countries other than the United States. The time period is pre-1950.

Romance – The focus is on romantic drama.

Suspense – Events in the novel are strange, frightening or thrilling.

Western – The story is set on the American frontier in the late 19th and early 20th century.

First novel - First novels are those written by an author who has not published commercially any book-length work. These titles may also be entered in another category.

Judging Process

Each fall, candidates are submitted for judging by participating publishing companies. Judging panels are made up of seven persons for each category. They are chosen from professors, librarians, editors and book retailers. Evaluations are given on a scale of one to ten, based on ten separate criteria. Three books from each category are named finalists, with the book achieving the highest cumulative score being given the Christy Award for that category.

Of these criteria are several that relate to all works of fiction such as effective characterization, clear development of plot and setting, quality of writing, and adherence to the norms of a particular genre. Other standards apply more specifically to Christian fiction including a concern that a coherent theme is presented without extensive sermonizing. Characters and theme are rated by the extent to which they reflect Christian values and the depth to which they engage the reader. Summarizing all of these is an overall satisfaction with the story

Anyone wishing to become a judge may contact the Christy Award by email at CA2000DK@aol.com, by mail at The Christy Award LLC, 1571 Glastonbury Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103, OR phone (734) 663-7931

Award Winners

Over the past three years, winners have included authors familiar to readers of Christian fiction as well as many new faces. Titles of winners are listed below. For a full description of the works, visit the Christy Award web site at www.christyawards.com.

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUTHORS</u>
Winners for 2002		
Contemporary Futuristic	<i>A Garden to Keep</i> <i>Oxygen</i>	Jamie Langston Turner Randall Ingurmanson & John Olson
International History North American History Romance	<i>While Mortals Sleep</i> <i>Hidden Places</i> <i>The Guardian</i>	Jack Cavanaugh Lynn Austin Dee Henderson

Suspense	<i>Drummer in the Dark</i>	T. Davis Bunn
Western	<i>The Long Trail Home</i>	Stephen Bly
1 st Novel	<i>Ezekiel's Shadow</i>	David Long

Winners for 2001

Contemporary/ General	<i>Home to Harmony</i>	Phillip Gulley
	<i>The Trial</i>	Robert Whitlow
Futuristic	<i>Transgression</i>	Randall Ingermanson
International History	<i>Unashamed</i>	Francine Rivers
North American History	<i>Edge of Honor</i>	Gilbert Morris
	<i>Reaping the Whirlwind</i>	Rosey Dow
Romance	<i>A Touch of Betrayal</i>	Catherine Palmer
Suspense	<i>The Great Divide</i>	T. Davis Bunn
First novel by a first time author	<i>Passing by Samaria</i>	Sharon Ewell Foster

Winners for 2000

Contemporary/ General	<i>A New Song</i>	Jan Karon
Futuristic	<i>By Dawn's Early Light</i>	Grant R. Jeffrey & Angela Hunt
International History	<i>Out of the Red Shadow</i>	Anne de Graaf
North American History	<i>The Meeting Place</i>	Janette Oke & T. Davis Bunn
Romance	<i>Whispers from Yesterday</i>	Robin Lee Hatcher
Suspense	<i>Final Witness</i>	James Scott Bell

(Quotes used by permission from the Christy Award web site.)

Winners for 2002 Annotations

A Garden to Keep Jamie Langston Turner

The discovery of her husband's unfaithfulness forces Elizabeth Landis out of complacency into an examination of her life that she compares to an untended garden. Coinciding with personal discovery is her growth from fledgling Christian to a believer of greater understanding and maturity. The rambling reminiscence of her past life could become tedious, but instead is insightful and powerful. This is an honest look at lives of human failure that are touched by God's grace.

Oxygen Randall Ingermanson and John Olson

The flight of Ares 10, the first manned mission to Mars, is plagued with trouble from the very beginning. As problems mount, Valkerie Jansen, a Christian physician assigned to the crew at the last minute, begins to suspect sabotage. When an explosion in deep space reduces the oxygen supply, drastic measures must be taken to save the ship and the lives of the crew. Well-developed characters are presented in a highly suspenseful mystery.

While Mortals Sleep Jack Cavanaugh

Caught in the maelstrom of World War II, young German pastor Josef Schumacher finds himself vacillating between feelings of national pride and his conscience. While pressured by members of his congregation to fully support the Nazi movement, Josef increasingly becomes aware of the evils being committed by those in political power. The choices he must face could jeopardize his family, his congregation, and his very life.

Hidden Places Lynn Austin

Left with three children to support after the death of her husband, Eliza Wyatt is determined to maintain the family orchards in spite of the Depression that has seized the country. When a mysterious young vagabond named Gabriel offers help, Eliza is uncertain whether to be grateful or wary. It takes intervention from eccentric “Aunt Batty” to help Eliza find her way. Underlying themes include recovery from abusive relationships and having the courage to follow your dream in spite of opposition from others.

The Guardian Dee Henderson

When Judge Carl Whitmore is murdered, U.S. Marshal Marcus O’Malley is assigned to track down the killer. At the same time, he must protect Shari Hanford, the crime’s only eyewitness. The situation becomes complex as Marcus and Shari begin to fall in love. Shari’s faith also challenges Marcus to reexamine his beliefs. Henderson successfully mixes suspense, humor, mystery and realistic character development in this inspirational thriller.

Drummer in the Dark T. Davis Bunn

When Congressman Graham Hutchings is bedridden by a stroke, Wynn Bryant is named to fill out the term of office by his brother-in-law, the present governor of Florida. The mission given to him in return for this political favor is to defeat Hutchings’ Jubilee Amendment, a measure designed to bring some amount of control to international currency trading. As Bryant’s research into the amendment uncovers a plot by international financier Pavel Hayek to pull off a huge currency scam, Bryant becomes

involved with a deadly race against powerful enemies to protect our nation's financial stability.

The Long Trail Home Stephen Bly

The devastation his family experiences during the Civil War, send Samuel Fortune into Indian Territory where he expresses his bitterness by robbing banks, trains, and freight companies. After release from prison, he hides out with his father and brother until he discovers that the only way to escape his past is to make amends for the wrongs he has done and to reconcile with his family and his God.

Ezekiel's Shadow David Long

After his conversion to Christianity, horror writer Ian Merchant is no longer able to write the stories that have made him famous. With his editor pressing for the yet another novel to please his past audience, Merchant struggles to reconcile his newfound faith with his choice of career. At the same time, a menacing figure begins to stalk him, using elements from his own books to torment him. Ian must trust his newfound faith to help him win against the evil that threatens to destroy him.

Winners for 2001 **Annotations**

Home to Harmony Philip Gulley

Nostalgic, hilarious, gentle, delightful and perceptive are all adjectives that have been applied to this collection of stories about the small town of Harmony, Indiana. From Frank, the 70-year-old secretary, to Deena, the lawyer who opened a coffee shop, to Miriam who rescued a niece from abusive parents, the characters are presented with humor and compassion.

The Trial Robert Whitlow

Kent ("Mac") MacClain is pulled out of despair over the death of his wife and two sons by a request to act as public defender for the alleged murderer of the daughter from a wealthy and powerful Hightower family. Combining mystery, suspense and inspiration, Whitlow uses his courtroom expertise to pen a convincing and exciting drama.

Transgression Randall Ingermanson

In a scientific experiment gone awry, Rivka Meyers, a Messianic Jewish archaeology student, and Ari Kazan, a brilliant Jewish physicist, are trapped in ancient Jerusalem with Dr. Damien West, a colleague of Ari's who is determined to assassinate the apostle Paul.

Ingermanson manages to effectively combine elements of both historical and futuristic genres in this suspense novel.

Unashamed Francine Rivers

Although others in the city of Jericho saw the danger posed by the approaching body of Israelites, only Rahab understood that life or death lay in the hand of the God of the Hebrews. Her journey from shame to faith and her courage in the face of extreme danger are vividly portrayed in this offering of Biblical fiction.

Edge of Honor Gilbert Morris

In response to a troubled conscience, a young Union doctor travels south to Arkansas to aid the widow of a Rebel soldier that he accidentally killed at the end of the Civil War conflict. When he falls in love with the widow, he must decide whether to return to his wealthy fiancé in the New York or remain and fight for the affections of one who used to be an enemy.

Reaping the Whirlwind Rosey Dow

Weaving a murder mystery in and around the famous trial of John Scopes, Dow creates a suspenseful drama while revealing much of the untruth that surrounds this historical event.

A Touch of Betrayal Catherine Palmer

Seeking ideas for a new line of fabrics, fashion designer Alexandra Prescott plans a trip to Africa but finds circumstances in the bush country of Nairobi, more difficult than she had thought. Adding to her troubles is news of financial problems back home. When repeated attempts are made on her life she turns to anthropologist Grant Thornton for help. Drawn together by circumstances, they both face larger challenges than they have ever anticipated.

The Great Divide T. Davis Bunn

Marcus Glenwood, a formerly successful corporate lawyer, agrees to investigate the disappearance of Gloria Hall, an activist who is investigating slave labor conditions in China. To do so, he must oppose corporate greed, Chinese government officials and politicians who seek to gain from these gruesome practices.

Passing by Samaria Sharon Ewell Foster

After witnessing the results of a cruel racial injustice, Samaria is uprooted from her family in Mississippi and sent to live with an aunt in Chicago. In this time of social unrest in the early 1900s, Samaria struggles to overcome her bitterness and emerge into a life of purpose and reconciliation.

Winners for 2000

Annotations

A New Song

Jan Karon

After his recent marriage and retirement as rector of Lord's Chapel in Mitford, Father Tim Kavanaugh is asked by his bishop to serve as interim pastor on Whitehead Island. The cast of quirky characters and Father Tim's mixture of naivety and wisdom continue the reading pleasure for devotees of this series.

By Dawn's Early Light

Grant R. Jeffrey and Angela Hunt

Based on prophecies given in the book of Ezekiel, this sequel to *Flee the Darkness* is a gripping account of possible coming world events.

Out of the Red Shadow

Anne de Graaf

Surviving repression by the Nazis of World War II and the pursuant Russian Stalinism, Poland is finally seeking renewed freedom through Solidarity. As Piotr Piekarz becomes involved in this dangerous movement, his nephew is drawn to Berlin by the promises of Western materialism and his grandfather attempts to extricate himself from his cold-war identity as a spy. Their family heritage of faith becomes vital to healing the scars of their painful past.

The Meeting Place

Janette Oke and T. Davis Bunn

A chance meeting on the day of their weddings, between Louisa, a Frenchwoman and Catherine, who is English begins a tentative relationship. This is the time of the French and Indian War, however, and their villages are on opposite sides of the conflict. In spite of obstacles placed in their path, the two women pursue their friendship, supporting each other through the difficult tragedies of war.

Whispers from Yesterday

Robin Lee Hatcher

When her world collapses, socialite Karen Butler reluctantly finds a home on her grandmother Sophia's Golden T. Ranch. She is little prepared to cope with the rough life and the summer camp for troubled teens that Sophia allows Dusty Stoddard to operate on her land. As she struggles with her pain, Karen finds truth that bring her peace in the diaries of a woman who died many years before she was born.

Final Witness

James Scott Bell

Rachel Ybarra, a paralegal recently hired by the U.S. Attorney's Office, is assigned to work on a case against a member of the Russian mob. When the prime witness is murdered, the suspense moves outside the courtroom and Rachel finds her own life in danger.