

Drue Heinz announces winner

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Lives, loves and losses. According to Anne Sanow, these are the raw materials from which she crafted the winning manuscript of the 2009 Drue Heinz Literature Prize.

"It really is exciting to have the opportunity to be published in the company of truly talented writers," said Sanow of her success.

The 42-year-old author currently works in Cape Cod as an editor and writing instructor. Her entry, "Slow Stately Dance in Triple Time," was chosen from a pool of close to 300 entrants in the University of Pittsburgh Press' 29th annual short story collection award.

The Press launched The Drue Heinz Literature Prize in 1980 and annually awards one author a \$15,000 cash prize, along with the publication of his manuscript.

Sanow's entry contains several short stories composed and published independently over a span of about five years beginning in 2002.

All of these recount the remarkable everyday lives of men and women living in Saudi Arabia over a 50-year time period beginning at the end of World War II.

And paradoxical juxtaposition though it may seem, Sanow's deeply envisioned and richly designed personas were, according to her press release, specifically created to allow "the epic and minute to become enmeshed."

"I don't want to present one-dimensional characters, because that's a cheap shot and a simplistic read — and also a lie," said Sanow.

Though this collection will be Sanow's first published book, she is no newcomer to the field of writing. She composed a novel at age 10.



Courtesy Maria Stocco

"Slow Stately Dance" won this year's Drue Heinz Literary Award for its in-depth tales of Saudi Arabia, some of which come from Sanow's own experience.

"I've always loved the power of creating people and places and situations that came about because I was combining my imagination with this wonderful thing called language. It's a process of never-ending discovery," she said.

Sanow wrote her forthcoming book, to be released this fall, with the intention of showing the many changes that have occurred in the Middle East over the past century through the lives of the various characters she created.

The author said that her passion for history, landscape and place is a major source of inspiration for this book and her writing in general.

Sanow's experience living in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where she stayed for two years after graduating high school, heavily influenced *Slow Stately Dance*.

"Let's just say that moving from Sunnyvale, Calif., to Riyadh expanded my world dramatically and rather quickly," said Sanow of her time living overseas.

Despite the obvious impact of knowing firsthand the sights, smells and overall feeling of being immersed in Saudi culture, however, Sanow stresses that her stories "were never meant to be an autobiographical project."

Rather, Sanow allowed her experiences to aid her in attempting to demystify the Middle East, a place so often shrouded in misconceptions and a false exoticism here in the western world, with her relatable and multi-faceted personas.

Rebecca Chace, a preliminary screener for the Drue Heinz contest, described Sanow's book as "so compelling. This collection of stories is extremely well written. The world and the characters feel very real."

Each of the judges — fiction writers selected by editor of the Drue Heinz series, Ed Ochester — submit one to two manuscripts to the final judge, who makes the selection as to who will be the overall winner.

But while waiting, Sanow wasn't stressing too much.

"The most sensible way to approach contests or submissions of any kind is to send it off and forget about it," said Sanow. "Forgive yourself for having the occasional fantasy about winning and, above all, keep writing. And if the lovely surprise comes, remember to enjoy it."