

[TW Contests: “A Low Hum in My Chest” \[1\]](#)

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News Update

Meet the Judges for TW’s 2013 Contests



Click here for [TW Contest Details \[3\]](#). Deadline: October 1.

At TW, we believe many writers do some of their best work in nooks and crannies all over the Web. They keep writing, even if they tread a decidedly nontraditional path. Says Joanne Avallon, this year's judge for the Talking Writing Prize in Flash Fiction, "I started writing flash fiction when I had small children." Lorraine Berry, judge for the Talking Writing Prize in Creative Nonfiction, puts it this way: "The best nonfiction stories are those that create a low hum in my chest." In their role as contest judges, Lorraine and Joanne exemplify TW's dedication to supporting emerging and innovative voices online. Below, they talk about why their chosen genres matter to them—and what they're looking for in prize-winning entries. Lorraine is an associate editor at TW and teaches creative nonfiction at a college in upstate New York. Joanne received an Academy of American Poets Prize from Wellesley College and now teaches in the Boston area. Both have published in TW and many other venues.



Joanne Avallon: Why Flash Fiction?

I started writing flash fiction when I had small children. I thought that I would have time to write flash because it was short. I think being a new mother affected my ability to form logical arguments. I can get the first draft of a piece of flash down pretty quickly, but, after that, I labor over every word, every piece of punctuation, and each nuance. The compression required in flash fiction makes every piece of it matter so much. That's the challenge of the form and also its beauty."



Lorraine Berry: Why Creative Nonfiction?

For me, the best moments in reading are when I feel the boundary between writer and reader break down. It doesn't depend on the writer's ability to do the kinds of parlor tricks that one learns in a top-flight writing program, although I'm not by any means denigrating our top MFA programs. Rather, what I look for are those moments when a writer resonates with me. The best nonfiction stories are those that create a low hum in my chest, a recognition that, while the writer is being specific to him- or herself, what's described feels universal. That's the kind of writing that excites me. While I sit up and take notice when someone does something amazing with language, I'm also drawn to writing that captures feelings in such a way that I can do more than identify—I can feel the emotion being expressed. As I tell my students, those things happen through attention to details, through allowing oneself to be vulnerable and honest on the page, by telling a story that immerses me within it and does not leave me feeling like an outsider."

Read More in TW by the 2013 Judges

- ["Joanne Avallon: Flash Fiction."](#) [4] May/June 2012.
- ["Joanne Avallon on 'How to Become a Writer.'" \[5\] news update in TW, August 8, 2012.](#)
- ["Raquette Lake" \[6\] by Lorraine Berry, March/April 2012.](#)
- ["Lust: The Literary Courtesan" \[7\] by Lorraine Berry, September/October 2012.](#)

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