

The Philosophical Society of Texas

For Immediate Release

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Philosophical Society of Texas Presents Book Prizes for Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry

AUSTIN, Texas – The Philosophical Society of Texas announced its annual Book Prizes for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry during the Society’s Annual Meeting held in Austin, Texas on February 4, 2023. The prizes announced this year were for books published in 2021 and reviewed by the Committee in 2022.

The Fiction Prize was awarded posthumously to Jan Reid for his novel *The Song Leader* (TCU Press). *The Song Leader* is an epic and intimate story that ranges from West Texas to California to Vietnam to Zaire and back, about a young man in the second half of the Twentieth Century restlessly searching for his authentic self in the worlds of boxing and music. Jan Reid wrote with hard-won authority about these subjects during a long and distinguished career, and in this novel he embeds that expertise into a plaintive, deeply personal story. The result is an evocative, honestly rendered Texas novel that none of the committee members could stop thinking about.

The winner of the Nonfiction Prize was James E. Crisp for *Inside the Texas Revolution: The Enigmatic Memoir of Herman Ehrenberg* (TSHA Press). The book is a culmination of a 30-year project by Dr. Crisp to disentangle fact from fiction in Ehrenberg's important depictions relating to the Texas Revolution. Ehrenberg's eyewitness accounts of the major events of the Texas Revolution have always been captivating, but not until now have they been accompanied by the meticulous scholarly notes that allow us to know what was factual, what was embellished, and what was merely fabricated. And not until now have we had a translation that is at once authoritative and polished. The book is a tour de force.

Nonfiction honorable mention went to Neal Spelce for *With the Bark Off: A Journalist's Memories of LBJ and a Life in the News Media*, written with Thomas Zigal (Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at University of Texas at Austin). The book is a highly readable memoir that gives gripping firsthand accounts of many historic events of recent generations, including the 1960 presidential campaign and the 1966 UT Tower shooting, where, under fire and in real time, the author showed the world the horrors of a mass shooting. Spelce has written an utterly splendid book.

The Poetry Prize went to the outstanding collection by César De León, *Speaking with Grackles by Soapberry Trees* (Flowersong Press). The prize committee praised De León's talent for insightful imagery and his honest and authentic voice—"a true voice of the valley from which he comes."

Poetry honorable mention was awarded to Logen Cure for *Welcome to Midland* (Deep Vellum Press). Here the poet unfolds her life for the reader in a way that is totally believable and often touching. Here, too, the voice is authentic and honest, and the imagery is powerful.

In a year of strong literature originating in or related to Texas, the Philosophical Society of Texas congratulates the authors and their publishers on these splendid works.

Each award carries a \$2,500 prize for the author. Fiction and nonfiction books, as well as volumes of poetry, are submitted each year to the Society's Book Prize Committee. Nonfiction submissions must relate to Texas; fiction and poetry eligibility depends on the author's current or past Texas residency. For the purpose of the awards, Texas is defined as having the borders of the Republic of Texas as set forth by the Congress of the Republic in 1836, extending into parts of what are now New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.

Information about submitting titles for the 2023 Book Prizes (books published in 2022) will be posted in March 2023 at PSTX.org. For more information, please contact Society director, Dawn Orsak, directly at (512) 825-2249 or dorsak@pstx.org.

The Philosophical Society of Texas was founded December 5, 1837, in Houston, the capital of the Republic of Texas. The goal was to unite the efforts of the modern-day philosophers to collect and disseminate knowledge. The Society was incorporated as a nonprofit educational institution on January 18, 1936. On December 5, 1936, formal reorganization was completed.