**LINDQUIST & VENNUM PRIZE FOR POETRY**

**WINNER ANNOUNCED**

**May 20, 2015, MINNEAPOLIS, MN**—Milkweed Editions is pleased to announce that **Jennifer Willoughby is the winner of the 2015 Lindquist & Vennum Prize for Poetry**. For her manuscript, chosen from more than one hundred and fifty submissions from poets across the Upper Midwest, Willoughby will receive $10,000 **(one of the top-five cash prizes for a poetry contest, and the largest regional prize for poetry in the nation)** as well as a contract for publication of the work with Milkweed Editions.

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For fifteen years, Jennifer Willoughby’s day job as an advertising copywriter required, in her words, that she “inhabit a brand, so you’re constantly sublimating your ego to effect a connection between people and objects or entities.” Poetry, she explains, allows for expression in the opposite direction: “I get to let the ego run amok.” The prize-winning manuscript, entitled *Beautiful Zero*, does just that.

**Dana Levin**—acclaimed poet and judge of the 2015 Lindquist & Vennum Prize for Poetry—described Willoughby’s manuscript as follows:

“You were born the weirdo that you are,” writes Jennifer Willoughby in her very alive first collection, *Beautiful Zero*. With its sense of affection and straight talk, such a pronouncement sets the tone for these poems, whose speakers tumble and swerve as they urgently try to inhabit and describe the contours of being strange and alive in our electrified now. There’s a hint of dread, apprehension, to the speakers’ searches for connection and understanding, but the book’s primary argument seems to be for beauty, joy, surprise, release: “The world doesn’t want to see you / on your knees for more than a minute / when it could be inspecting a music / box that knew how to fly,” Willoughby writes in “Do Not Be Broken By This Day,” a poem whose title acts as command and charm.

Willoughby is the fourth recipient of this annual prize, and **Daniel Slager,** publisher and CEO of Milkweed Editions, remarked that, “In just a few years, the L&V Prize for Poetry has become recognized as a premier award, honoring outstanding poets from our region and bringing their work to a national stage. We at Milkweed Editions find it exceptionally gratifying to partner with the L&V Foundation to this end.”

*Beautiful Zero* will be published in November, and details will be announced soon for the public reading to celebrate the book later this fall.

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**Jennifer Willoughby** was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and currently lives in Minneapolis, MN. She earned a BA in English from St. Catherine’s University, as well as a MFA in poetry from the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. Poems from *Beautiful Zero* have appeared in *The Believer*, *Boston Review*, and the *Indiana Review*, among many others.

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Established in 2011 with a generous gift from **the Lindquist & Vennum Foundation**, the Lindquist & Vennum Prize for Poetry seeks to celebrate the work and advance the careers of exceptional poets living and working in the Upper Midwest. Unique among contests both in the size of its purse and its geographical focus, the prize was founded to shine a light on a region rich with poetic heritage, but sometimes overlooked in contemporary conversation.

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**Dana Levin** grew up in California’s Mojave Desert and earned a BA from Pitzer College and an MA from New York University. Her collections of poetry include In the Surgical Theatre (1999), Wedding Day (2005), and Sky Burial (2011).

**Milkweed Editions** is one of the nation’s leading independent publishers, with a mission to identify, nurture and publish transformative literature, and build an engaged community around it.

**The Lindquist & Vennum Foundation** was established by the Minneapolis-headquartered law firm of Lindquist & Vennum, PLLP, and is a donor-advised fund of **The Minneapolis Foundation*.***



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