

The Philosophical Society of Texas

For Immediate Release

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

AUSTIN, Texas – The Philosophical Society of Texas announced its annual Kempner Family Book Prizes for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry during the Society’s Annual Meeting, held this year on South Padre Island, Texas on February 22, 2025. The prizes announced this year were for books published in 2023 and reviewed by the Committee in 2024.

The Fiction Prize was awarded to Elizabeth Crook for her novel *The Madstone* (Little, Brown). The fiction committee was deeply moved by Crook’s beautiful and captivating telling of this epic journey, a harrowing quest that lays bare the soul of the book’s narrator and the state of Texas itself. Like the finest work by luminaries such as Larry McMurtry and Katherine Anne Porter, *The Madstone* holds a mirror up to Texas history to reflect the complexities of our past, present, and indeed our future. It’s sweeping, rhapsodic fiction rendered in gorgeous prose that refracts the readers’ emotions like sunlight on the spinning rowel on an outlaw’s spur.

The winner of the Nonfiction Prize was Ron Tyler for *Texas Lithographs, A Century of History in Images* (University of Texas Press). Ron Tyler’s magnum opus is a gloriously illustrated book with more than a thousand crisp images, but what is especially delightful is the crisp exposition in Tyler’s consistently lucid prose. In this history of lithography, showing lots of images both familiar and unfamiliar, Tyler presents a great deal of highly relevant Texas history. This is a brilliant book for anyone who loves art, history, or the Southwest.

The Poetry Prize went to Ray Gonzalez for the outstanding collection *Suggest Paradise* (University of New Mexico Press). The poems in Ray Gonzalez’ prize-winning book do indeed suggest paradise—in nature as well as in details such as the imaginary birds brought to the poet by his daughter. A native of El Paso, Gonzalez captures the language and traditions of life on the border. His words embody the voice of a people with a rich past, who conquered a desert and live daily with many social and political complexities.

An honorable mention for fiction was given to *Holler, Child* by Latoya Watkins (Tiny Reparations Books). For nonfiction, honorable mentions were given to *Texas State Parks: The First 100 Years 1923-2023* by George Bristol (TCU Press) and *Before Lawrence v. Texas: The Making of a Queer Social Movement* by Wesley G. Phelps (University of Texas Press).

The Philosophical Society of Texas
P. O. Box 160144 • Austin, Texas 78716 • (512) 825-2249
www.PSTX.org

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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. Submissions must relate to Texas or be written by a current or past Texas resident. Books about Texas receive special consideration. 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. The book prizes are generously underwritten by a gift from the Harris L. Kempner, Jr. family of Galveston.

Information about submitting titles for the 2025 Book Prizes (books published in 2024) can be found on the Society's website - 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 in 1936.