

2017 CLAIRE KEYES POETRY AWARD WINNERS

In 2014, Claire Keyes, poet, friend of poetry, and long-time poetry editor of *Soundings East*, launched and underwrote this annual competition that celebrates excellence within the larger poetry community. In addition, a student award promotes poetry at Salem State University, where Claire remains an honored professor emerita.

This year's winner of the national award is Faith Shearin.

Faith Shearin's voice is one of quiet authority. In these poems, there's both reach and restraint, there's an unfailing ear, an eye that looks, and a mind that makes connections—between memory and the imagined, between science and love, between the world writ large and small.

In "Darwin's Daughter," she writes: "It is said/that he lost his faith when he lost/his daughter." And later in that poem: "He was a scientist and he wrote/his memories of Annie, folded/them into a labeled box; he described how/she touched his hair..." Those lines remind me of a Randall Jarrell poem, "In Galleries," in which a museum guard's "gestures are full of faith in—of faith." In Shearin's poems we see a similar acceptance of mystery, an adherence to it, and that's part of why I love these poems.

*Andrea Cohen,
2017 Claire Keyes Judge*