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### **2008 Starrett winner embodies Zen spirit in her poems**

PITTSBURGH—Cheryl Dumesnil is the 2008 winner of the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize—one of America’s most distinguished awards for a first book of poetry—for her collection *In Praise of Falling*.

Dumesnil’s manuscript was selected from several hundred entries, with Ed Ochester, Pitt Poetry Series editor, serving as judge. It will be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in the fall of 2009.

“When Ed Ochester called to tell me that *In Praise of Falling* had won the Starrett Prize, I had a quintessential ‘pinch me to see if I’m dreaming’ moment,” said the 39-year-old San Francisco author. “I thought, ‘I know I took a nap this afternoon. Did I not really wake up yet?’”

Describing her collection, Dumesnil explained, “The overarching theme of *In Praise of Falling* is encapsulated in the Zen proverb, ‘fall down seven times, get up eight.’ The poems address the ways in which we fall—through disillusionment, disappointment, or plain, old-fashioned mistakes. And they address the ways we rise up—out of personal debacles, unfortunate circumstances, family legacies, and collective struggles.”

A California native, Dumesnil is the editor of *Hitched! Wedding Stories from San Francisco City Hall* (Thunder’s Mouth Press 2005) and co-editor, with Kim Addonizio, of Dorothy Parker’s *Elbow, Tattoos on Writers, Writers on Tattoos* (Warner 2003). Her poems have appeared in *Calyx*, *Indiana Review*, *Many Mountains Moving*, and *Nimrod International Journal*, among other literary magazines. She teaches writing workshops in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Starrett Prize was established in 1981, and bears the name of the Press’ first director. It is awarded for a first full-length book of poems and includes a \$5,000 prize and publication in the Press’s acclaimed poetry series. The series was founded in 1968 to publish the best in contemporary American poetry.

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