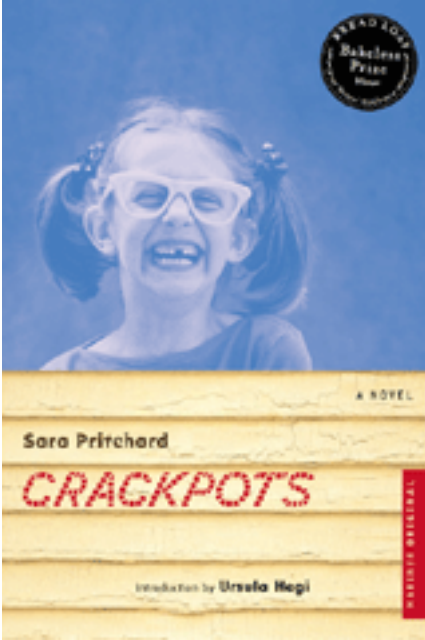


## Press Release



# Crackpots

by Sara Pritchard

- Introduction

"Beneath the pungent, dazzlingly original voice, beyond the revelations of the heart's most secret corners, a brilliant mind unravels and remakes our standard conceptions of chronology, at the same time pouring forth metaphors of astounding beauty. This is a most unusual book." — Andrea Barrett, author of *Servants of the Map* and *Ship Fever*

"Telling and vivid . . . The more intimate moments are engrossing . . . The dialogue is tight and the observations lyrical." — *Publishers Weekly*

## Introduction

---

By turns hilarious and heartbreaking, *Crackpots* is the story of Ruby Reese, a woman bent on surviving despite the ghosts of her past. Selected by Ursula Hegi as the winner of the 2002 Bakeless Prize for fiction, Sara Pritchard's *Crackpots* explores the intersection of memory and imagination, and brilliantly captures the vitality and craziness, the sorrow and resilience, of one woman.

Sara Pritchard's novel tantalizes with a chronology that *Kirkus Reviews* has called "nimble kaleidoscopic." When we first meet Ruby Jean Reese she's a spunky kid in 1950s Pennsylvania — a tap-dancing, cowboy-hat-wearing whirlwind. Her mother is a puckish woman who roams the hallways at night playing her violin. Her demolitions expert father, bookish sister, Albertine, and talented and self-destructive brother, Mason, are what everyone in their town calls "a buncha crackpots."

Ruby's adulthood is plagued with hopelessly complicated romantic entanglements — three husbands who also define the very notion of "crackpots." There's Boo, whose wildness and passion are matched only by his violent nature; Oskar-the-Mumbler, a Swedish efficiency expert who dreams of winning the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes; and Miles, who

has an eye for the ladies and a taste for Jack Daniel's. *Publishers Weekly* praised *Crackpots*: "Individual vignettes are telling and vivid, and the more intimate moments are engrossing . . . The dialogue is tight and the observations lyrical, and they hold Ruby's world together beautifully." The true pleasure of this novel is moving with Ruby from her past to the present and back again, discovering what has made her, despite all obstacles, such a creative, introspective, and resilient woman.

Writes Ursula Hegi in her foreword, "Sara Pritchard dares to be serious and irreverent all at once . . . With wisdom and wit, she pulls us into the lives of her characters so deeply that we identify with them . . . I feel honored to introduce this passionate and absorbing novel." Thoughtful and perceptive, filled with those small but important moments that truly define us, Sara Pritchard's *Crackpots* is the debut of an innovative, imaginative, and skilled storyteller.

The Katharine Bakeless Nason Literary Publication Prizes were established in 1996 to support new writers of literary fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. The winners are selected from a national competition sponsored by the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. Also available this year is Jennifer Grotz's debut poetry collection, *Cusp*, selected by Yusef Komunyakaa. Judges for the 2004 Bakeless Prizes are Robert Pinsky for poetry, Charles Baxter for fiction, and William Kittredge for creative nonfiction.