

3rd Place PPW: “Dream On” by Minhal Khan

Research Writing, Instructor: Patrick Manning

PPW #3

The committee is excited to award the third place prize in the Public and Professional Writing category to “Dream On” by Minhal Khan. Minhal’s essay begins with a news item from two years ago: a sudden breakdown in ChatGPT’s ability to produce sensible, legible text. Instead, the system began generating a strange dreamlike gibberish. Consider this response received by a user who asked ChatGPT whether they should feed their dog Cheerios: “It’s in their pitter that dogs do their health jive, right to the zen of a ran throng-ponder and open baste, that sage.” The incident briefly rattled the AI industry, but for Minhal it sparked a question: What if ChatGPT’s faulty outputs sounded dreamlike because they *were*, in a sense, a kind of dream? Not the dream of a machine made conscious—as Minhal’s essay notes, humans are all too quick to anthropomorphize our own technologies—but a collective dream sourced from massive amounts of human data? Minhal explores this question with lucid prose and a wonderful spirit of open-mindedness. Committee members praised the essay’s sense of patience, curiosity, and maturity, and we hope to read even more delightful insights in the author’s future work some day. Congratulations, Minhal!

3rd Place Ossip: “Bright Lights” by Jake Jezyk

FY Seminar: Writing the Body, Instructor: JC Lee

Ossip #15

The committee is thrilled to award the third place prize in the Ossip Award category to “Bright Lights” by Jake Jezyk. Jake’s essay belongs to a subgenre of nonfiction we might call the literature of divergent bodies: bodies that our society deems, for whatever reason, “different.” “Bright Lights” is a profound meditation on one-handed life, both its frustrations and its triumphs. With vivid description and careful introspection, Jake’s essay explores the questions raised by the author’s experiences: What does it mean to desire normalcy? How can one make peace with one’s own body? And what lies on the other side of acceptance? Committee members also praised the essay for its confident voice, its powerful vulnerability, and its attention to sensory detail. We are eager to read more work from this excellent young author in the future. Congratulations, Jake!