Novelist Ashley Warlick has selected “This is Not a Barren Place” by Paul Mihas of Durham, NC, as the winner of the 2008 Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize. Warlick writes of this story, “The opening moments, where Nick Papadimitriou’s wife cuts his body from the rafters of their garage are hauntingly realized within the attenuated timeline of tragedy, and the story’s movement along these fragile currents of community grief in a strange open country is heartbreaking. This writer shows his ease with language, spoken and told, in a wealth of voices, on every page. Marvelous.”

Warlick also named one honorable mention — “Miller’s Deer” by Gary V. Powell of Cornelius, NC. She called “Miller’s Deer” a story “written in clean, compelling style and supreme confidence. Every so often you can hear a writer’s career in a single, sharp line — ‘Miller’s Deer’ is made whole-cloth of just such self-possessed work.”

Paul Mihas, the son of Greek immigrants, spent his childhood in Kemmerer, WY, and attended Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. He received his M.A. in English Literature from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1989 and teaches creative writing at Duke University Continuing Studies. One of his short stories, “One of Us Is Rich,” was recently published online at Pindeldyboz. He is currently working on a collection of short stories based on his travel to China, Argentina, and Greece.

Gary Powell is the author of several short stories and the soon-to-be-published novel, *Pointe of Contention*. A graduate of Indiana University and Indiana University School of Law, Powell currently resides with his family in Cornelius, NC, near Lake Norman. He is at work on his second novel, Beyond Redemption.

Mihas will received a prize of $1,000 from the North Carolina Writers Network, and both stories will be considered for publication by *The Thomas Wolfe Review*.

Final judge Ashley Warlick is the author of three novels, *The Distance From The Heart of Things* (1996), *The Summer After June* (2000), and *Seek the Living* (2005), all published by Houghton Mifflin. She is the youngest winner of the Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship, a founding member of the advisory board for the Novello Festival Press, and book reviewer for several newspapers. In 2006 she received a fellowship in literature from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Warlick read the stories of the nine finalists chosen by preliminary judge David Radavich. In addition to Mihas and Powell, the finalists were:

- Sita Bhaskar of Madison, Wisconsin, for “Safety in These Times”
- Lauren E. Holder of Chapel Hill, NC, for “Continuance”
- Jill Logan of Jacksonville, NC, for “Phyllis with Wings”
- Heather Newton of Asheville, NC, for “Tupelo Rose”
- Emily Stockard of Fort Ladulerdale, FL, for “Nine Patch”
- Danny Thomas of Sanford, NC, for “The Stardust”
- Thomas Wolf of Chapel Hill, NC, for “The Neighbor’s Dog”