



THE GRIFFIN TRUST  
For Excellence In Poetry

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*Press Release*

**THE GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE ANNOUNCES  
THE 2016 INTERNATIONAL AND CANADIAN SHORTLIST**

**TORONTO – April 12, 2016** – Scott Griffin, founder of The Griffin Trust For Excellence In Poetry is pleased to announce the International and Canadian shortlist for this year's prize. Judges Alice Oswald (UK), Tracy K. Smith (USA) and Adam Sol (Canada) each read 633 books of poetry, from 43 countries, including 25 translations.

The seven finalists—four International and three Canadian—will be invited to read in Toronto at Koerner Hall at The Royal Conservatory in the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning, 273 Bloor Street West, Toronto, on Wednesday, June 1<sup>st</sup> at 7.30 p.m. The seven finalists will each be awarded \$10,000 for their participation in the Shortlist Readings.

The winners, to be announced at the Griffin Poetry Prize Awards on Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, will each be awarded \$65,000.

**International**

*The Quotations of Bone* • Norman Dubie  
Copper Canyon Press

*Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* • Joy Harjo  
W. W. Norton & Company

*40 Sonnets* • Don Paterson  
Faber and Faber

*Heaven* • Rowan Ricardo Phillips  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

**Canadian**

*Frayed Opus for Strings & Wind Instruments* • Per Brask and Patrick Friesen,  
translated from the Danish written by Ulrikka S. Gernes  
Brick Books

*Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* • Liz Howard  
McClelland & Stewart

*Tell: poems for a girlhood* • Soraya Peerbaye  
Pedlar Press



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Each year, The Griffin Trust For Excellence In Poetry presents an anthology of poems selected from the shortlisted books, published by House of Anansi Press. Royalties from *The Griffin Poetry Prize Anthology* are donated to UNESCO's World Poetry Day.

Tickets for the Shortlist Readings to be held on Wednesday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, at Koerner Hall at The Royal Conservatory in the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning, 273 Bloor Street West, Toronto are available at <http://performance.rcmusic.ca/event/2016-griffin-poetry-prize-shortlist-readings> or by calling (416) 408-0208.

**NOTE:** The publishers mentioned in our release are those who submitted the books.

**NOTE TO BOOKSELLERS:** Griffin Poetry Prize book stickers are supplied free of charge by The Griffin Trust. Please contact [info@griffinpoetryprize.com](mailto:info@griffinpoetryprize.com) to place an order. Winner book stickers will be available after June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

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**Links: Shortlisted Publishers' Web sites:**

Brick Books: [brickbooks.ca](http://brickbooks.ca)

Copper Canyon Press: [coppercanyonpress.org](http://coppercanyonpress.org)

Farrar, Straus and Giroux: [fsgbooks.com](http://fsgbooks.com)

Faber and Faber: [faber.co.uk](http://faber.co.uk)

McClelland & Stewart: [penguinrandomhouse.ca/imprints/mcclelland-stewart](http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/imprints/mcclelland-stewart)

W. W. Norton & Company: [wnorton.com](http://wnorton.com)

Pedlar Press: [pedlarpress.com](http://pedlarpress.com)

**Downloadable photographs of the 2016 shortlisted poets:**

<http://www.griffinpoetryprize.com/news-and-events/media-resources/>



THE GRIFFIN TRUST  
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**THE 2016 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE SHORTLIST  
CITATIONS, BIOGRAPHIES AND SUMMARIES**

International



***The Quotations of Bone* • Norman Dubie**  
Copper Canyon Press

**Judges' Citation:** “The poems in Dubie’s newest collection are deeply oneiric, governed by vigorous leaping energy that brings the intimate into contact with history, and blurs the distinction between what is real because it once happened, and what is real because of the emphatic manner in which it has been felt. Longtime admirers of Dubie will certainly recognize the familiar mind and spirit able to punch through the surface of experience and into deep psychic quandary with a single revelatory gesture (“Did you ever want to give someone // All your money?”)—but that tendency is greatly amplified here. One feels the unconscious mind working ceaselessly, even playfully, alongside memory, imparting the poems as if with a strange and consoling living spirit. This makes for a heightened sense of mystery and mortality in poems of private experience. And when such an impulse is aligned with public history—the division of Germany, say, or the acceleration of the planet’s ecological crisis—it is outright haunting. Dubie’s uncontested mastery of the lyric poem has, in this collection, broken into strange and revelatory territory.”

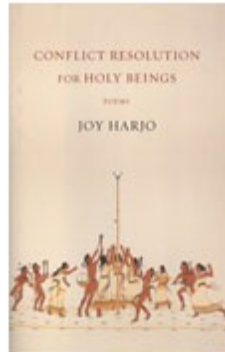
**Biography:** Norman Dubie is a Regents professor at Arizona State University. A practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism whose work has been translated into thirty languages, Dubie has been the poetry editor for *The Iowa Review* and the director of the graduate poetry workshop at the University of Iowa. Regularly published in *The New Yorker* and other magazines, Dubie is a highly regarded and widely anthologized poet. He has won the Bess Hokin Award of the Modern Poetry Association and fellowships from The Ingram Merrill Foundation, The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He lives in Tempe, Arizona.

**Summary:** In his twenty ninth collection of poems, Norman Dubie offers a rich, colour-soaked vision of the world. Strangeness becomes a parable for compassion, each poem leading the reader to an uncommon way of understanding human capacities. In the futuristic sphere of *The Quotations of Bone*, the mind wanders meditatively into an imaginative and uncontainable history.



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International



***Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* • Joy Harjo**  
W. W. Norton & Company

**Judges' Citation:** “Joy Harjo has been a crucial figure in American letters for decades, and her latest collection, *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings*, presents her at the height of her powers. Intermingling Mvskoke storytelling, rock-and-roll lyrics, cityscapes and personal address, Harjo’s poems are at once sweeping in their concerns and intimate in their tone and approach. Harjo’s is a poetics that is not afraid to speak directly when the moment warrants, nor to refer to traditions – literary traditions, folk traditions, musical traditions – with effortless erudition. *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* is a book of transitions and transformations, inhabiting liminal spaces like hotel rooms and deteriorating natural landscapes. The poems urge engagement, but they also encourage a wider perspective, because for Harjo even ‘the edge between life and death is thinner than a dried animal bladder.’ In the midst of profound change both personal and global, these poems offer guidance and empathy, ceremony and admonishment, wisdom, comfort and song.”

**Biography:** Joy Harjo is an internationally known performer and writer of the Mvskoke/Creek Nation, the author of ten books of poetry and, most recently, a memoir, *Crazy Brave*. A critically acclaimed poet, her many honours include a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Josephine Miles Poetry Award, the William Carlos Williams Award, and the American Indian Distinguished Achievement in the Arts Award. She lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**Summary:** Joy Harjo’s long-anticipated new collection, *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* continues the work we have come to know her for—poems that connect personal experience, nature, the political, the feminist, Native American history and myth, the subconscious. Harjo sees poets as “the workers for justice, / the dancers of ceremony, the singers of heartache, / the visionaries, all makers and carriers of fresh / meaning.” For Harjo, life, work, and poem cannot really be separated; these poems speak out of the wisdom of all the years of Harjo’s life and poetry, and they speak into the work Harjo sees to be done in the world. These poems are observations and instructions.



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International



**40 Sonnets • Don Paterson**

Faber and Faber

**Judges' Citation:** "About half the poems in Don Paterson's latest book are strict sonnets and half are wild or disobedient sonnets (four beats to a line, one word to a line, one word to a whole poem or sometimes just plain prose) but these variants of one form work together to make a fascinating and sustained piece of music, like a fugue. The poems use their patterns to think through questions about consciousness. They are smart and exact but at the same time surprisingly emotional. Since 1993 Paterson has been eroding his style from the light loose poems of *Nil Nil* towards the spare almost mathematical brilliance of this book. He can write now with resonant clarity about anything: his dog, his children, the air, Dundee Council, Tony Blair, the soul. The melody of the sonnet form gives all these subjects an unstrained seriousness. *40 Sonnets* is a wonderful offering, patiently made."

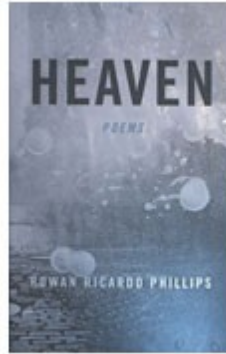
**Biography:** Don Paterson was born in Dundee in 1963. His previous poetry collections include *Nil Nil*, *God's Gift to Women*, *Landing Light* and *Rain*. He has also published two books of aphorisms, as well as translations of Antonio Machado and Rainer Maria Rilke. His poetry has won many awards, including the Whitbread Poetry Prize, the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize and all three Forward Prizes; he is currently the only poet to have won the T.S. Eliot Prize twice. He was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 2009. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, the English Association and the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and is currently Professor of Poetry at the University of St. Andrews. Since 1997 he has been poetry editor at Picador Macmillan, and he also works as a jazz musician and composer. He lives in Edinburgh.

**Summary:** *40 Sonnets*, Don Paterson's first collection since the Forward Prize-winning *Rain*, is a rich and accomplished work from one of the foremost poets writing in English today. While some take a traditional form, and some are highly experimental, all these poems show the rare intelligence and lyric gift that has been the hallmark of his work since his first book, *Nil Nil*, in 1993. Addressed to friends and strangers, the living and the dead, to children, poets, musicians and dogs—as well to as the author himself—these poems display an ambition in their scope and tonal range matched by the breadth of their concerns.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST  
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***Heaven* • Rowan Ricardo Phillips**

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

**Judges' Citation:** “Rowan Ricardo Phillips’ second collection of poems pushes off from his debut, *The Ground*, by looking out and off toward the many Heavens we find in our midst: the heaven of the natural world, large and silent and sublime; the heaven of ecstatic language and lyric possibility; the heavens of memory and of love; the flawed, finite, deeply familiar heaven of 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In poems of exquisite craft, rich allusion and nimble intelligence, Phillips creates a gathering ground for glimmers of Homer and Shakespeare, Frost and Stevens. But he casts a wide net, also making surprising use of sources as unlikely as the Wu Tang Clan and Mel Gibson, and as chastening as the recent preponderance of shootings that have left unarmed blacks dead and their assailants deemed ‘Not Guilty.’ This is a book that manages to make something indelible of what we’ve wrought and lost, and of what we are still desperate to decipher--the truth we’ll only know from learning to ‘squint in its direction and poke.’ ”

**Biography:** Rowan Ricardo Phillips is the author of *Heaven* (2015) and *The Ground* (2012). He is the recipient of a Whiting Writers’ Award, the PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award, the GLCA New Writers Award for Poetry, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. He lives in New York City.

**Summary:** “Who the hell’s heaven is this?” Rowan Ricardo Phillips offers many answers, and none at all, in *Heaven*. Swerving elegantly from humour to heartache, from the beatitudes of Malibu to the beats of the Wu-Tang Clan, from knowledge to ignorance to awe, Phillips turns his gaze upward and outward to face the beyond. Meditating on feverish boyhood, on the Kingdom of Heaven as an excuse for mayhem, on a dead rooster by the side of the road in Ohio, on “Alpenglow ripening the mountain peaks / Into rose-pink pyramids steeped in clouds,” his language remains eternally intoxicating, full of play, pathos and surprise.





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***Frayed Opus for Strings & Wind Instruments* • Per Brask and Patrick Friesen, translated from the Danish written by Ulrikka S. Gernes**  
Brick Books

**Judges' Citation:** "This collaboration between Danish poet, Ulrikka Gernes and Canadian writers, Brask and Friesen, is astonishingly successful, every line at home in its new language. The poems have not stopped being poems. In fact, now that they are speaking through three mouths (one female, two male) they seem to have gathered an extra layer of strangeness which suits their dream-like, mutable, almost anonymous voice: 'Since then I have been standing in the subway singing to passersby and nobody knows my name ...' The world of the poems is twilit, borderless, melancholy, associative, seeping; and these qualities are carried over from the imagery into the fluid, blended structures of the verse. Full of arresting detail and quiet everyday language, this is the second Gernes book to be translated by these writers and it is masterful."

**Biographies:** Per Brask is a Professor in the Department of Theatre and Film at the University of Winnipeg where he has taught since 1982. He has published poetry, short stories, drama, translations, interviews and essays in a wide variety of journals and books. This is his fifth volume of poetry co-translated with Patrick Friesen.

Patrick Friesen is a poet, essayist, playwright and translator living in Victoria, B.C. His most recent publications are *jumping in the asylum* (2011), *a dark boat* (2012) and *a short history of crazy bone* (2015). He has co-translated five volumes of poetry with Per Brask.

Ulrikka S. Gernes was born in 1965 in Sweden to Danish parents. At the age of twenty-two she moved to Copenhagen, Denmark, already a published and highly acclaimed poet. Her first collection, *Natsvoermer*, was published in Denmark in 1984, when she was eighteen years old. Since then she has published an additional ten collections, all of them received gratefully in the Danish press. She is also the author of two books for children, as well as many short stories, songs, and various contributions to literary anthologies, art catalogues, magazines, newspapers and Danish National radio.

**Summary:** Elegantly translated by Canadian collaborators Per Brask and Patrick Friesen, *Frayed Opus for Strings & Wind Instruments* is a new collection of poems from celebrated Danish poet, Ulrikka S. Gernes. These are lyrical, somewhat surreal poems that are nevertheless full of concrete, earthy details; they zoom in and out of places and states of mind, from a lit bicycle shed in the backyard to a root canal in November, from a typhoon in Hong Kong to instincts astray in various Copenhagen neighbourhoods.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST  
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Canadian



***Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* • Liz Howard**  
McClelland & Stewart

**Judges' Citation:** “With penetrating intelligence and playful musicality, Liz Howard’s ambitious debut collection keeps us delightfully off-balance with its mix of lyricism and experiment, allusion and invention. In her efforts ‘to dream a science that would name me,’ Howard explores a dizzying array of texts and landscapes, from Dante to Erin Mouré, from logging camps to high school dances. But for a poet so attuned to the self as ‘a fictive province,’ we are all ‘infinite citizens,’ constructed of dredged materials and fraught histories. Howard is capable of thrilling leaps of language, repurposing Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* or imagining an oddly tender childhood memory of a ‘boreal swing’ made from the carcass of a moose. These poems are filled with energy and magic, suspended between competing inheritances, at home in their hyper-modern hybridity. *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* confronts its legacies with vivid imagery and crackling language, and introduces us to a bold, original poetic voice.”

**Biography:** Liz Howard was born and raised in northern Ontario. She received an Honours Bachelor of Science with High Distinction from the University of Toronto. Her poetry has appeared on Canadian literary journals such as *The Capilano Review*, *The Puritan*, and *Matrix Magazine*. Her chapbook *Skullambient* was shortlisted for the 2012 bpNichol Chapbook Award. She recently completed an MFA in Creative Writing through the University of Guelph and works as a research officer in cognitive psychology at the University of Toronto.

**Summary:** In Liz Howard’s wild, scintillating debut, the mechanisms we use to make sense of our worlds—even our direct intimate experiences of it—come under constant scrutiny and a pressure that feels like love. What Howard can accomplish with language strikes us as electric, a kind of alchemy of perception and catastrophe, fidelity and apocalypse. The waters of northern Ontario shield country are the toxic origin and an image of potential. A subject, a woman, a consumer, a polluter; an erotic force, a confused brilliance, a very necessary form of urgency—are all loosely tethered together and made somehow to resonate with our own devotions and fears; made “to be small and dreaming parallel / to ceremony and decay.”





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***Tell: poems for a girlhood* • Soraya Peerbaye**  
Pedlar Press

**Judges' Citation:** "Harrowing and deeply empathetic, *Tell: poems for a girlhood* traces the events surrounding the 1997 murder of teenager Reena Virk by a group of high school classmates. Peerbaye bears brave witness to the unspeakable brutality of these events, drawing from testimonies of the convicted, the victim's autopsy report, and a history of the landscape itself. And yet, the power of this book derives only partly from the unbearable facts of violence, hatred, and alienation. The true miracle of *Tell* is not merely its choice to sing of such things, but its ability to sing in such a way as to urge the reader to embrace painful sympathies. Peerbaye's language becomes a vehicle not just for exploring what others in the world may be capable of, but also of drawing readers into excruciating proximity with our own adolescent longing, fear, shame and rage."

**Biography:** Soraya Peerbaye's first collection of poetry, *Poems for the Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names*, was nominated for the Gerald Lampert Award. Her poems have appeared in *Red Silk: An Anthology of South Asian Women Poets* (2004), edited by Priscila Uppal and Rishma Dunlop, as well as the literary journals *Other Voices*, *Prairie Fire* and *The New Quarterly*; she has also contributed to the chapbook anthology *Translating Horses*. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Guelph. Peerbaye lives in Toronto with her husband and daughter.

**Summary:** Reena Virk was a girl of South Asian descent who was murdered on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1997, in Saanich, British Columbia. At least eight young people participated in the initial assault, while more looked on. Seven of her assailants were girls; five were white. Virk rose from that beating and walked north across a bridge toward home. Her drowned body was found in the Gorge Waterway. In *Tell: poems for a girlhood*, without a trace of sentimentality and with heart-wrenching courage, Soraya Peerbaye gathers evidence into an entire poetic vision of contemporary adolescent fury and angst.

**NOTE:** Summaries are taken from promotional materials supplied by the publisher, unless otherwise noted.