



**THE GRIFFIN TRUST
For Excellence In Poetry**

Trustees:

Margaret Atwood
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**MARGARET AVISON'S *CONCRETE AND WILD CARROT*
AND PAUL MULDOON'S *MOY SAND AND GRAVEL*
WIN THE 2003 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE**

TORONTO, June 12, 2003 – The Canadian and International winners of the 2003 Griffin Poetry Prize are **Margaret Avison's, *Concrete and Wild Carrot*** and **Paul Muldoon's, *Moy sand and gravel***, it was announced tonight at the third annual awards event. The C\$80,000 Griffin Poetry Prize, the richest poetry prize in the world for a single volume of poetry, is divided between the two winners. The prize is for first edition books of poetry published in 2002.

The awards event was hosted by Scott Griffin; founder of the prize, Heather McHugh (International winner 2001) was the Emcee, with judges Sharon Olds and Sharon Thesen announcing the Canadian and International winners for 2003.

Among the more than 300 guests celebrating the awards were the Guests of Honour, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada and His Excellency John Ralston Saul. In addition, poets, publishers and other literary luminaries attended the celebration which took place in The Stone Distillery (formerly a whiskey distillery), Toronto's newly renovated centre for the arts, designated a historic site. The two winners will be invited to read at this year's Edinburgh International Book Festival on August 17th, the second year that the Griffin Poetry Prize winners have been showcased at the Edinburgh Festival.

Preceding the awards event, the seven short listed poets (three Canadian and four international) read excerpts from their books at a sold-out Special Harbourfront Reading Series Event on June 11th, attended by more than 500 devotees. The Canadian 2003 Shortlist includes Margaret Avison's *Concrete and Wild Carrot*, Dionne Brand's *thirsty* and P.K. Page's *Planet Earth: Poems Selected and New*. The international short listed books are Kathleen Jamie's *Mr. and Mrs. Scotland are Dead: Poems 1980-1994*, Paul Muldoon's *Moy sand and gravel*, Gerald Stern's *American Sonnets: Poems* and C.D. Wright's *Steal Away: Selected and New Poems*.

The judges for 2003 are the distinguished poets Michael Longley (U.K.), Sharon Olds (U.S.A.) and Sharon Thesen (Canada) who, between them, not only read 327 books of poetry from 16 countries, but selected poems from the shortlist to compile [The Griffin Poetry Prize Anthology: A Selection of the 2003 Shortlist](#), edited by Thesen and published by the House of Anansi Press. Royalties generated from the anthologies, published annually, are donated to UNESCO's World Poetry Day.



In addition, from the four copies of each book submitted for this year's prize, two thirds are donated to Corrections Canada, with one third going to the The Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The judges are selected on an annual basis by the Griffin Poetry Prize Trustees, Margaret Atwood, Robert Hass, Michael Ondaatje, Robin Robertson and David Young.

The Griffin Trust was created to serve and encourage excellence in poetry written in English anywhere in the world. Eligible collections of poetry, which includes translations, must be submitted by publishers in the calendar year of their publication.

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Book: *Concrete & Wild Carrot*

Poet: **Margaret Avison**

Publisher: Brick Books

Citation: “If beauty, as Alfred North Whitehead defines it, is “a quality which finds its exemplification in actual occasions,” and if beauty is more completely exemplified in “imperfection and discord” than in the “perfection of harmony,” then **Margaret Avison’s** *Concrete and Wild Carrot* is an occasion of beauty. Avison’s poetry is also alive in its sublimity and its humility: “wonder, readiness, simplicity” – the gifts of perception Avison attributes to her Christian faith – imbue every poem in this book with a rare spirit of disorderly love. **Margaret Avison** is a national treasure. For many decades she has forged a way to write, against the grain, some of the most humane, sweet and profound poetry of our time.”

Biography: **Margaret Avison** was born in 1918 in Galt, Ontario, raised in Regina, Calgary and Toronto, where she completed high school in 1936. She continued her studies at University of Toronto earning a B.A. in 1940 and an M.A. in 1963. Her work has been recognized with two Governor General’s Awards for Poetry (*Winter and Sun* and *No Time*), by three honorary doctorates and by an officership in the Order of Canada. One of the poems in *Concrete and Wild Carrot* (“Prospecting,” retitled from “An-astronomy”) was awarded first place in the category of the Canadian Church Press Awards for 2000. Her other publications include *The Dumbfounding*, *sunblue*, *Selected Poems*, *A Kind of Perseverance* (prose) and *Not Yet But Still*.



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Book: *Moy sand and gravel*

Poet: **Paul Muldoon**

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Citation: “Reading **Paul Muldoon**’s poetry is like looking through a kaleidoscope while he jiggles your elbow. The complex rhyme-schemes, the repeated words and phrases, the refrains, the wonderful patterning unexpectedly dislocate this poet’s deep sense of place and shuttle the reader between order and chaos and back again. He reminds us that rhyme used with great resource does not restrain: rather, it is aleatory; it beckons the random and the risky. It is indeed a rich paradox that this most à la mode of poets takes us right back, again and again, to poetry’s ancient beginnings. As well as leading us a merry dance, he tells stories and sings cradlesongs and makes up nursery rhymes and riddles and says prayers. His elegies and love poems are among the finest of our times. With Mozartian grace and daring he renovates the traditional forms – sestina, sonnet, haiku. In modernizing the time-honoured he keeps surprising himself and his readers.”

Biography: **Paul Muldoon** was born in 1951 in County Armagh, Northern Ireland. He received his B.A. from Queen’s University in Belfast and was a radio and television producer with the BBC in Northern Ireland for 13 years. Since 1987, he has lived in the United States, where he is now Howard G.B. Clark Professor of the Humanities and Director of the Creative Writing Program at Princeton University. In 1999 he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. He is the author of eight previous volumes of poetry, including *New Weather* (1973), *Mules* (1977), *Why Brownlee Left* (1980), *Quoof* (1983), *Meeting the British* (1987), *Madoc: A Mystery* (1990), *The Annals of Chile* (1984), and *Hay* (1998). *Poems 1968-1998*, published by FSG in 2001, is a collection of his eight volumes. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Muldoon received an American Academy of Arts and Letters award in literature in 1996. Other recent awards include the 1994 T.S. Eliot Prize and the 1997 Irish Times Literature Prize for Poetry.