



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
For Excellence In Poetry

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Press Release

**THE GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE ANNOUNCES
THE 2013 INTERNATIONAL AND CANADIAN SHORTLIST**

TORONTO – April 9, 2013 – Scott Griffin, founder of The Griffin Trust For Excellence In Poetry and David Young, trustee, announced the International and Canadian shortlist for this year's prize. Judges Suzanne Buffam (Canada), Mark Doty (USA) and Wang Ping (China) each read 509 books of poetry, from 40 countries, including 15 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 12th. 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 evening on Thursday, June 13th, will each be awarded \$65,000.

International

***Like a Straw Bird It Follows Me, and Other Poems* • Fady Joudah, translated from the Arabic, written by Ghassan Zaqtan**
Yale University Press

***Liquid Nitrogen* • Jennifer Maiden**
Giramondo Publishing

***Night of the Republic* • Alan Shapiro**
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

***Our Andromeda* • Brenda Shaughnessy**
Copper Canyon Press

Canadian

***What's the Score?* • David W. McFadden**
Mansfield Press

***Sailing to Babylon* • James Pollock**
Able Muse Press

***Personals* • Ian Williams**
Freehand Books



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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 12th, 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> or by calling (416) 408-0208.

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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 to place an order. Winner book stickers will be available after June 13th.

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Links: Shortlisted Publishers' Web sites:

Able Muse Press: www.ablemusepress.com
Copper Canyon Press: www.coppercanyonpress.org
Freehand Books: www.freehand-books.com
Giramondo Publishing: www.giramondopublishing.com
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: www.hmhbooks.com
Mansfield Press: www.mansfieldpress.net
Yale University Press: www.yalebooks.com/margellos

Downloadable photographs of the 2013 shortlisted poets:

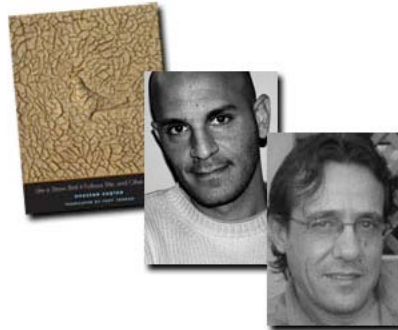
<http://www.griffinpoetryprize.com/news-and-events/media-resources/>



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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THE 2013 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE SHORTLIST
CITATIONS, BIOGRAPHIES AND SUMMARIES

International



***Like a Straw Bird It Follows Me, and Other Poems* • Fady Joudah, translated from the Arabic, written by Ghassan Zaqtan**
Yale University Press

Judge’s Citation: “What does poetry do? Nothing and everything, like air, water, soil, like birds, fish, trees, like love, spirit, our daily words... It lives with us, in and outside us, everywhere, all the time, and yet, we are too often oblivious of this gift. It’s a poet’s job to bring this gift out and back, this gift that makes us human again. And Mr. Zaqtan has done it. His poetry awakens the spirits buried deep in the garden, in our hearts, in the past, present and future. His singing reminds us why we live and how, in the midst of war, despair, global changes. His words turn dark into light, hatred into love, death into life. His magic leads us to the clearing where hope becomes possible, where healing begins across individuals, countries, races...and we are one with air, water, soil, birds, fish, trees...our daily words pregnant with beauty, and we begin to sing again till ‘... the singer / and the song / are alike (Biography in Charcoal)’. This is Mr. Zaqtan’s only ‘profession’. It’s now also ours. About the translation: as a translator of poetry myself, I know the danger, frustration and the joy in the process of catching the fire from the original and delivering it through/into another language, another culture, another sentiment. Mr. Joudah delivered with such grace and power. My salute to Mr. Joudah, as translator to translator, as poet to poet, as doctor to doctor.” —Wang Ping

Biographies: Fady Joudah is a practicing physician of internal medicine and an award-winning poet and translator. Among his translations are two poetry collections by Mahmoud Darwish, *The Butterfly’s Burden* (2007) and *If I Were Another*, for which he won the 2010 PEN USA Literary Award. He lives in Houston, Texas.

Palestinian poet Ghassan Zaqtan is a novelist, editor, and the author of ten collections of poetry. He was born in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, and has lived in Jordan, Beirut, Damascus and Tunis. He returned to Palestine in 1994 and now lives in Ramallah.

Summary: In this inspired translation of *Like a Straw Bird It Follows Me, and Other Poems*, Ghassan Zaqtan’s tenth and most recent poetry collection, Fady Joudah brings to English-language readers the best work by one of the most important and original Palestinian poets of our time. With these poems Zaqtan enters new terrain, illuminating the vision of what Arabic poetry in general and Palestinian poetry in particular are capable of. Departing from the lush aesthetics of such celebrated predecessors as Mahmoud Darwish and Adonis, Zaqtan’s daily, delicate narrative, whirling catalogues, and at times austere aesthetics represent a new trajectory, a significant leap for young Arabic poets today.



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International



***Liquid Nitrogen* • Jennifer Maiden**
Giramondo Publishing

Judge's Citation: "Jennifer Maiden's *Liquid Nitrogen* may very well be the most contemporary collection of poetry you'll ever read. Over the course of these dense, obsessive, and allegorical long poems, Maiden has created an absurdist theatre of global politics in which the spirits of public figures from across the last century share the stage with politicians, terrorists, dissidents and fictional creations from our continuous present. Combining a free-wheeling, meditative style with crisp, lucidly elegant lines, Maiden's philosophical verse investigates the poetics of narrativity itself, not only as mediated by the news on TV, but by the no-less ethically charged realm of art as well. An extended meditation on the uses and abuses of power, the moral gravity of *Liquid Nitrogen* is buoyed throughout by Maiden's self-effacing sense of humor and her tenderness towards her grown daughter, Katherine, who stands at the heart of this collection. Epic in its scope and utterly eccentric in its approach, *Liquid Nitrogen* is a work of rare passion and unprecedented poetic achievement from one of Australia's most prominent living writers, 'alert to the point of twitching,' like the ox to whom she likens herself on page one, who nevertheless 'still tramples through the difficult.'" —Suzanne Buffam

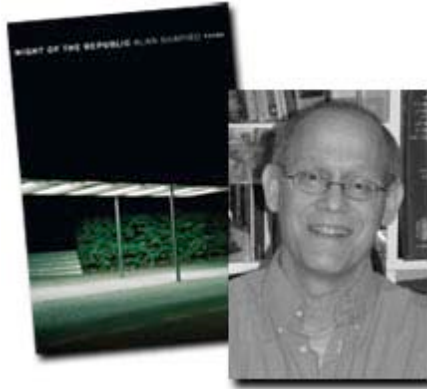
Biography: Jennifer Maiden has published sixteen collections of poetry; her most recent book, *Pirate Rain* (2010) won the Age Poetry Book of the Year Award and the NSW Premier's Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry. She is a recipient of the Christopher Brennan Award for lifetime achievement.

Summary: Jennifer Maiden's 'weaving' poems are like verse essays or conversations, in which the political issues of our time and the figures who dominate them are presented with the same clear intelligence and eye for detail, as the most personal aspects of the poet's experience. This is the quality of liquid nitrogen which gives the book its title – 'the frozen suspension which is risky / but also fecund and has beauty' – a substance which permits intense and heated interactions, and at the same time the survival of delicate organisms. In the cool medium of Maiden's poetry Julia Gillard is considered by her mentor Nye Bevan, Kevin Rudd shares a flight with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Eleanor Roosevelt plays Woody Guthrie for Hillary Clinton. The poems focus on the terrorist attacks in Mumbai, Breivik in Norway, dissidents in Beijing, the protests in Tahrir Square and Gillard's use of power, alongside tributes to friends and family, the ox and the tiger, music and the power of poetry.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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International



***Night of the Republic* • Alan Shapiro**

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Judge’s Citation: “This extraordinary poetic sequence, Alan Shapiro’s eleventh book, is an attempt to enter and diagnose a pervasive emptiness at the heart of contemporary American life. Shapiro’s unwavering gaze fixes on vacant public spaces at night — parking garage, car lot, park bench, gas station men’s room — and finds in those absences a way to read the marks of human presence, the scuffs and scars and damages that reveal the vulnerability that lies beneath our ambition, our hurry and our disregard. These meditative, syntactically supple lyrics bring a new level of abstraction and of sophistication to this poet’s work, marking a maturation of an already accomplished style that makes him a poet commensurate with the strange, aching, exhilarating spaces of modernity.” —Mark Doty

Biography: Alan Shapiro’s recent collection, *Old War*, won the 2009 Ambassador Book Award. A National Book Critics Circle Award finalist and winner of the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, Shapiro is the William R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Summary: An urgent and timely collection by one of America’s most inventive and accessible poets. In *Night of the Republic*, Alan Shapiro takes us on an unsettling night tour of America’s public places—a gas station restroom, shoe store, convention hall, and race track among others—and in stark Edward Hopper-like imagery reveals the surreal and dreamlike features of these familiar but empty night spaces. Shapiro finds in them not the expected alienation but rather an odd, companionable solitude rising up from the quiet emptiness.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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International



***Our Andromeda* • Brenda Shaughnessy**

Copper Canyon Press

Judge’s Citation: “Brenda Shaughnessy, in her third collection, continues to work the rich verbal surfaces and punning, allusive textures that marked her previous work, but her art has been transformed by a galvanizing sense of necessity into a more riveting, sometimes fiercely direct consideration of what it is to love a child, to care for one whose ability to care for himself is profoundly limited. What Wallace Stevens called ‘the pressure of reality’ has deepened and furthered the work of a poet whose early poems indeed might have come from the same well as *Harmonium*. Without losing her music, playfulness or sass, Shaughnessy has established herself as a poet of breath-taking emotional depth; to read such clear, affirming song made out of love, grief and danger is both devastating and uplifting at once.” —Mark Doty

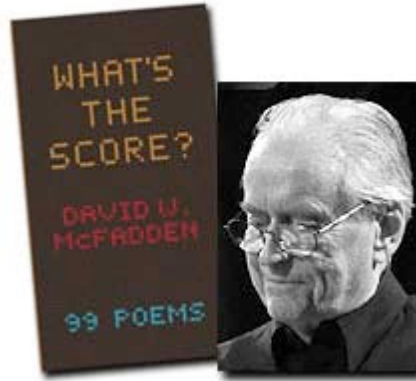
Biography: Brenda Shaughnessy was born in Okinawa, Japan, and grew up in southern California. She is the author of *Human Dark with Sugar* (2008), winner of the James Laughlin Award and a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and *Interior with Sudden Joy* (1999). Shaughnessy’s poems have appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *Harper’s*, *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review* and *The Rumpus*. She is an assistant professor of English at Rutgers University, Newark and lives in Brooklyn with her husband, son and daughter.

Summary: Brenda Shaughnessy’s third collection, *Our Andromeda*, delves into the idea of parallel existence by imagining the galaxy of Andromeda as a utopian. At once humorous and heart-breaking, fanciful and filled with difficult realities, Shaughnessy takes on the vastness of the universe by turning inward, examining human vulnerabilities as they are manifested in the struggles surrounding motherhood, human frailty, and a divided self.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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Canadian



What's the Score? • David W. McFadden

Mansfield Press

Judge's Citation: “ ‘If the fool would persist in his folly, he would become wise,’ advised William Blake in his Proverbs of Hell. As if whispering through the ages into the ear of Canada’s deadpan court jester, Blake’s radical spirit slyly presides over David McFadden’s exuberant thirty-fifth publication, *What’s The Score?* With their arch yet affable tone, these ninety-nine irreverent and mock-earnest poems lay siege to the feelings of boredom, anxiety, and alienation that afflict a culture obsessed with wealth and prestige, leading us, again and again, down the road of excess to the palace of wisdom. ‘My poems go leaping from crag to crag,’ McFadden boasts in one poem, before quickly, and characteristically, scuttling this Romantic image of the egotistical sublime ‘like a stubble-faced crybaby, it’s probably / because I’ve been writing for so long, / forty years of poems to various friends.’ The easy, casual intimacy of these poems will befriend you on the first page. Their astonishing leaps and their genuine philosophical urgency will compel you to keep reading. ‘Stick around,’ invites this artful and knowing wise fool, ‘everyone should have a chorus / following his steps and reminding him / of his central role in some great dream.’ ” —Suzanne Buffam

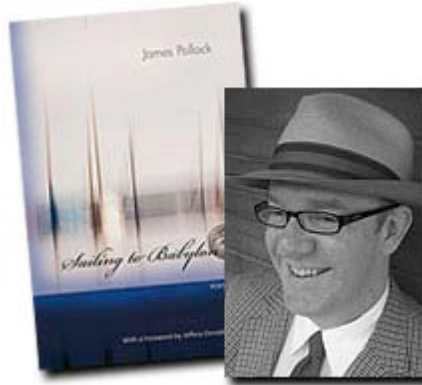
Biography: David W. McFadden began writing poetry in 1956 and began publishing poetry in 1958. *Why Are You So Sad? Selected Poems of David W. McFadden* (2007) was shortlisted for the 2008 Griffin Poetry Prize and *Be Calm, Honey* (2008) was shortlisted for the 2009 Governor General’s Literary Award for Poetry (his third such nomination). McFadden is the author of about thirty-five books of poetry, fiction and travel writing. He lives in Toronto.

Summary: The often outrageous and always wise follow-up to 2008’s Governor General’s Award-nominated *Be Calm, Honey* shows David W. McFadden at his most inquisitive and provocative. Here you’ll find ninety-nine poems full of surprises by a Canadian long-distance poet in his sixth decade of writing, a writer who never rests on his laurels or allows himself to become complacent. This is a book full of mystics and Golden Age movie stars, friends of McFadden and long-dead philosophers, and their tales are all told in the poet’s deceptively plainspoken voice.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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Canadian



***Sailing to Babylon* • James Pollock**

Able Muse Press

Judge’s Citation: “The sentence, in James Pollock’s remarkably assured debut volume, is a unit of music and of time, a carefully modulated choreography that moves the reader through an elegantly constructed set of meditations on place and history and the education of the self—a self we come to know, in part, through the poet’s evocation of a rich company of tutelary spirits: Glenn Gould and Northrop Frye, Henry Hudson and C. P. Cavafy. Quietly confident, formally adept, assured in their music, these artful lyrics are not only an accomplishment in themselves but promise to register, as the poet says, ‘the breaking changes of a life to come’.” —Mark Doty

Biography: James Pollock grew up in southern Ontario, Canada. He graduated summa cum laude with an Honors B.A. in English literature and creative writing from York University in Toronto, and earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in creative writing and literature from the University of Houston, where he held several fellowships in poetry. He was a John Woods Scholar in poetry at the Prague Summer Program at Charles University in Prague, and a work-study scholar in poetry at the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference. His poems have been published in *AGNI*, *The Paris Review*, *Poetry Daily*, and more than a dozen other journals. His critical reviews have appeared in *Contemporary Poetry Review*, *Books in Canada*, *The New Quarterly*, and elsewhere, and a collection of his criticism, *You Are Here: Essays on the Art of Poetry in Canada*, is forthcoming from The Porcupine’s Quill. He is an Associate Professor at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, where he teaches poetry in the creative writing program. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

Summary: You will hear in these poems something like the jouncing and ruckus of a wilderness traveller adjusting the gear on his back, steeling his resolve, finding his footings and heading off. In the end, Pollock’s departures are an exploration of that inward Northwest Passage where the borderlines themselves between real and imagined, the present and the past, the found and the lost, seem almost to dissolve—passages, as Pollock says, ‘breaking up within’—and where, in this anthem of mixed voices, our wondering where home is becomes our wandering where home is... I would almost prefer to be the reviewer, or some boastful exegete revealing to readers one hundred years from now some of the untold treasures that, its many readers notwithstanding, lie hidden here still.” —Jeffery Donaldson taken from the Foreword to *Sailing to Babylon*.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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Canadian



Personals • Ian Williams

Freehand Books

Judge's Citation: "The moment I opened *Personals*, I was smitten. Mr. Williams is a musician. His words sing like brooks and streams through a virgin forest, laugh like waterfalls, startle and delight along the way with hidden eddies and boils. Mr. Williams is also an artist. His images fly like kites in the wind, with whistling somersaults. He blends personal emotion with historical tension, tradition and modernity, ordinary and magical so seamlessly. When he pulls the strings of contradictions: light and heavy, hilarious and serious, I can't help but dance like a happy puppet in the masterful hands. I'm so happy to find another shining star above Canada's poetry horizon!" —Wang Ping

Biography: Ian Williams' previous books are *Not Anyone's Anything* (2011) and *You Know Who You Are* (2010). He is the winner of the 2011 Danuta Gleed Literary Award for the best first English-language collection of short fiction, a finalist for the ReLit Prize for poetry, and was named as one of ten Canadian writers to watch by CBC. Williams completed his Ph.D. in English at the University of Toronto and works as an English professor. Williams has held fellowships or residencies from Vermont Studio Center, Cave Canem, Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts and Palazzo Rinaldi in Italy. He was also a scholar at the National Humanities Center Summer Institute for Literary Study. His writing has appeared in *Fiddlehead*, *Arc*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Rattle*, *jubilat*, *Confrontation*, *The Antigoniish Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Folio*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *Callaloo*, *Descant*, and *Matrix Magazine*. He currently lives in Brampton, Ontario.

Summary: These are not love poems. These are almost-love poems. Jittery, plaintive, and fresh, the poems in Ian Williams' *Personals* are voiced through a startling variety of speakers who continually rev themselves up to the challenge of connecting with others, often to no avail. Williams writes in traditional poetic forms: ghazals, a pantoum, blank sonnets, mock-heroic couplets. He also invents his own: poems that spin into indeterminacy, poems that don't end. With a deft hand and playful ear, Williams entices the reader to stumble alongside his characters as they search, again and again, for intimacy, for love and for each other.

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