



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
For Excellence In Poetry

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Press Release

**THE GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE ANNOUNCES
THE 2014 INTERNATIONAL AND CANADIAN SHORTLIST**

TORONTO – April 8, 2014 – Scott Griffin, founder of The Griffin Trust For Excellence In Poetry and poet Jeramy Dodds, announced the International and Canadian shortlist for this year's prize. Judges Robert Bringhurst (Canada), Jo Shapcott (UK) and C.D. Wright (USA) each read 539 books of poetry, from 40 countries, including 24 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 4th 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 5th, will each be awarded \$65,000.

International

Pilgrim's Flower • **Rachael Boast**
Picador

Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire • **Brenda Hillman**
Wesleyan University Press

Silverchest • **Carl Phillips**
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Colonies • **Mira Rosenthal, translated from the Polish written by Tomasz Różycki**
Zephyr Press

Canadian

Red Doc> • **Anne Carson**
Jonathan Cape and McClelland & Stewart

Ocean • **Sue Goyette**
Gaspereau Press

Correspondences • **Anne Michaels**
McClelland & Stewart



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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 4th, 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/2014-griffin-poetry-prize-shortlist-readings> 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 5th.

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Links: Shortlisted Publishers' Web sites:

Farrar, Straus and Giroux: www.fsgbooks.com
Gaspereau Press: www.gaspereau.com
Jonathan Cape: www.randomhouse.co.uk
McClelland & Stewart: www.mcclelland.com
Picador: www.picador.com
Wesleyan University Press: www.wesleyanpress.edu/wespress
Zephyr Press: www.zephyrpress.org

Downloadable photographs of the 2014 shortlisted poets:

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



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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**THE 2014 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE SHORTLIST
CITATIONS, BIOGRAPHIES AND SUMMARIES**

International



***Pilgrim's Flower* • Rachael Boast**
Picador

Judge's Citation: "Rachael Boast's *Pilgrim's Flower* is remarkable for its intense lyricism, its metaphysical warmth and precision. Although Boast's poems do not depict life in any autobiographical sense, they do show us, perhaps more interestingly, a mind in action, a mind that connects with an electric charge to place, people, language. In 'Double Life', a poem addressed to Thomas Chatterton, Boast speaks of 'the mutable self fluttering by candlelight', a phrase which might serve as the key to her project: it is the lyric moment which offers a way of understanding the mutability of both the observer and the observed; it is the lyric moment which permits glimpses of the fluttering connection between. Other writers are evoked, too: Akhmatova and Coleridge are among those in conversation with the poet. The effect is to bring their writing, their thinking into the present moment for the reader, a kind of layered time-travel only the best lyric poems allow. The layers of history also emerge in those poems, which look inside and outside the boundaries of place. The spiritual and the physical co-exist in the stones of the cathedral in 'Caritas' just as they do in the sonnet in which they are held: 'And what comes across, half-said/into all that space, is that it's enough/to love the air we move through.' Rachael Boast's formal dexterity, her metaphysical reach, the clarity of her language and music make *Pilgrim's Flower* a collection of true lyric poetry, at its finest."

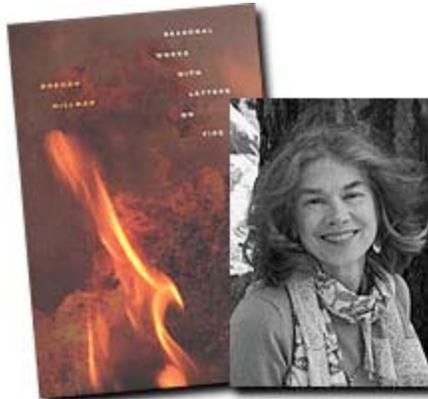
Biography: Rachael Boast was born in Suffolk in 1975. Her first collection of poetry, *Sidereal*, won the Forward Prize for Best First Collection and the Seamus Heaney Prize in 2012. She is editor of *The Echoing Gallery: Bristol Poets and Art in the City* and deputy director of the Bristol Poetry Institute. She currently divides her time between Scotland and the West Country.

Summary: Rachael Boast's first collection, *Sidereal*, was one of the most highly regarded debuts of recent years, winning the Forward Prize for Best First Collection and the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry Prize. Her second, *Pilgrim's Flower*, richly confirms and dramatically extends that talent—but where *Sidereal's* gaze was often firmly fixed on the heavens, Boast's focus here has shifted earthward. The book sings life's intoxicants—love, nature, literature, friendship and other forms and methods of transcendence—and sees Boast's pitch-perfect lyrical metaphysic challenge itself at every turn. *Pilgrim's Flower* gives an almost Rilkean attention to the spaces between things—the slippage between what we think we know and what is actually there—and in doing so brings the language of rite, observance and rune to the details of our daily lives.



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International



***Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire* • Brenda Hillman**
Wesleyan University Press

Judge's Citation: “*Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire* concludes Brenda Hillman’s tetralogy on the four elements of classical thought. She steers wildly but ably through another day of teaching, a ceremonial equinox, the distress of bee colony collapse; space junk, political obstruction, military drones, administrative headaches, and everything in between. The ‘newt under the laurel’ and ‘the herring purring through the eelgrass’ don’t escape her arc of acuity. *Seasonal Works* appears to be one of the most inclusive books a hyperactive imagination could wring out of the actual. The symbols of the alphabet come alive and perform acrobatic marvels. Phonetical birdcalls join in on cue. The mighty challenges of *now* are fully engaged. The book performs an ‘anarchic music’ and stimulates a craving for undiluted love, and a rollicking fury for justice that only its widely variant forms can sustain. This is a unique work. Its letters are on fire.”

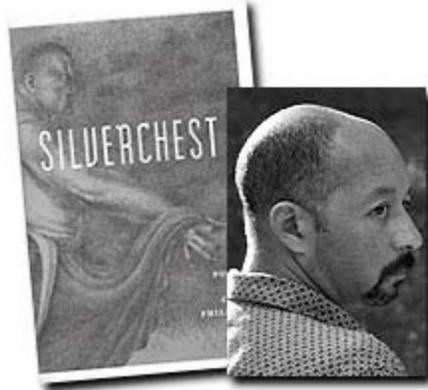
Biography: Brenda Hillman was born in Tucson, Arizona and spent part of her early childhood in Brazil. After receiving her BA from Pomona College, she attended the University of Iowa, where she received her MFA. Wesleyan University Press has published nine collections of Hillman’s poetry, including *Practical Water* (2009), for which she was awarded the Los Angeles Times Book Award for Poetry and, *Seasonal Works With Letters on Fire* that was longlisted for the National Book Award. In 2010 Hillman co-translated Jeongrye Choi’s book of poems, *Instances*. Hillman has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation, two Pushcart Prizes, a Holloway Fellowship from the University of California at Berkeley and the Delmore Schwartz Memorial Award for Poetry. Hillman serves as a professor and poet-in-residence at St. Mary’s College in Moraga, California. She is also a member of the permanent faculties of Squaw Valley Community of Writers and Napa Valley Writers’ Conference.

Summary: Fire—its physical, symbolic, political, and spiritual forms—is the fourth and final subject in Brenda Hillman’s masterful series on the elements. Her previous volumes—*Cascadia*, *Pieces of Air in the Epic*, and *Practical Water*—have addressed earth, air and water. Here, Hillman evokes fire as metaphor and as event to chart subtle changes of seasons during financial breakdown, environmental crisis and street movements for social justice; she gathers factual data, earthly rhythms, chants to the dead, journal entries and lyric fragments in the service of a radical animism. In the polyphony of *Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire*, the poet fuses the visionary, the political and the personal to summon music and fire at once, calling the reader to be alive to the senses and to reimagine a common life.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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Silverchest • Carl Phillips
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Judge’s Citation: “Carl Phillips is a poet of the line and a poet of the sentence, both at once. Rubbing these two intangible structures—one musical, the other linguistic—against one another is an ancient way of kindling verbal and intellectual fire, and Phillips does it in poem after poem with casual mastery. The lines are carved in low relief, shaped by internal assonance, not by end-rhyme, while the sentences trace a perfectly grammatical yet occasionally dizzying switchback trail, using the standard resources of prose to climb far beyond the prosaic domain. Phillips’s *Silverchest* consists in large part of reflections on a love affair gone bad. It is a gay male love affair in this case, but the anguish, the self-doubt, the sense of abandonment and loss, are captured here with a tenderness, depth, and precision that can dance through sociocultural fences as easily as deer can dance across the grass. *Silverchest* speaks, as great books do, out of its own profound particularity, to and for something wordless and shared by us all.”

Biography: Carl Phillips is a graduate of Harvard University and the University of Massachusetts. He taught high school Latin for eight years and is the author of twelve books of poetry, including *Speak Low* (2009) that was a finalist for the National Book Award and *Double Shadow* (2011), also a finalist for the National Book Award and winner of the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. He has received numerous awards and honours, including the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award, the Theodore Roethke Memorial Foundation Award in Poetry, a Lambda Book Award and the Thom Gunn Award for Best Gay Male Poetry, as well as fellowships from the Academy of American Poets, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Library of Congress. Phillips was elected a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 2006. He teaches at Washington University, in St. Louis, Missouri.

Summary: In *Silverchest*, his twelfth book, Carl Phillips considers how our fears and excesses, the damage we cause both to others and to ourselves, intention and not, can lead not only to a kind of wisdom but also to renewal, maybe even joy, if we’re willing to commit fully to a life in which ‘I love you / means what, exactly?’ In poems shot through with his signature mix of eros, restless energy and moral scrutiny, Phillips argues for the particular courage it takes to look at the self squarely—not with judgment but with understanding—and extend that self more honestly toward others. It’s a risk, there’s a lot to lose, but if it’s true that ‘we’ll drown anyway—why not / in color?’



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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International



Colonies • Mira Rosenthal, translated from the Polish written by Tomasz Różycki
Zephyr Press

Judge's Citation: "The sonnet, or 'small song,' arose in 13th-century Italy. It was successfully transplanted into English, through the supple voice of Thomas Wyatt, well before the birth of William Shakespeare. In Eastern Europe, however, the sonnet flowered much later. In Polish in particular, when it finally appeared, it met both popular acclaim and stiff-necked critical resistance. So the sonnet in Polish is, or can be, even now, a contentious and lively form. Tomasz Różycki's sonnet sequence *Kolonie* (*Colonies*), first published in Polish in 2006, demonstrates this clearly. In Mira Rosenthal's translation of this work, English-speaking readers can themselves confront the sonnet as something supple, fresh and a little bit strange. Różycki's quirky and self-deprecating humour permeates the poems. So does his sense of the fundamental homelessness of 21st-century human beings. Nine of these 77 sonnets begin with some variation on the line 'When I began to write, I didn't know...' and blossom into wry and hilarious reflections on the writing life. Others exude a heart-rending nostalgia for a world that is constantly being translated from meaning into money, and thus constantly destroyed."

Biographies: Raised in Northern California, Mira Rosenthal received her MFA from the University of Houston and her PhD from Indiana University. Among her awards are fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the MacDowell Colony, the American Council of Learned Societies and Stanford University, where she was a Wallace Stegner Fellow in poetry. Her first book, *The Local World*, won the Wick Poetry Prize in 2011. While on a Fulbright Fellowship to Poland she discovered her passion for translating contemporary Polish literature. She is the translator of two volumes of poetry by Tomasz Różycki, most recently *Colonies* that received the PEN Translation Fund Award and was nominated for the Robert Fagles Translation Prize. Her poems, translations and essays have been published in many literary journals and anthologies, including *Ploughshares*, *American Poetry Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Slate*, *PN Review*, *A Public Space* and *Mentor and Muse: Essays from Poets to Poets*.

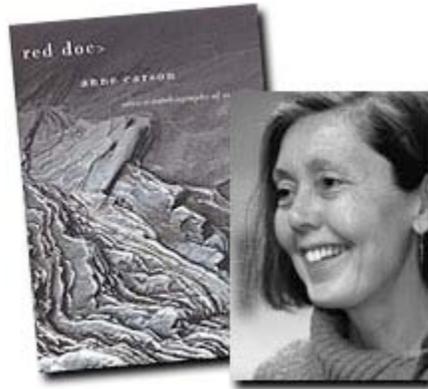
Tomasz Różycki is a poet, critic and translator who lives in the Silesian city of Opole in southwestern Poland with his wife and two children. He has published nine books since the mid-1990s, including the Koscielski Prize-winning epic poem *Dwanascie Stacji* (*Twelve Stations*, 2004) and the sonnet cycle *Kolonie* (*Colonies*, 2006), both of which were nominated for Poland's most prestigious literary award, the NIKE. His many other awards include the Josif Brodski Prize, the Czechowicz Poetry Prize, the Rainer Maria Rilke Prize and the 3 Quarks Daily Prize in Arts and Literature (2010). His work has been translated into English, French, Slovak, Italian, German and Serbian. *The Forgotten Keys*, a selection from his first five books translated into English by Mira Rosenthal, was published in 2007. He is a member of jury Koscielski Prize (Lausanne) and Prix du Jeune Ecrivain en France.

Summary: *Colonies*, the latest collection by one of Poland's most acclaimed younger poets, emerges from Tomasz Różycki's daily walks to work in his native city of Opole, a city that was once in Germany and became part of Poland after world War II. Through 77 linked sonnets, Różycki examines colonization and postcolonial experience, reflecting on dislocation, borders, the historical legacy of his family and region, homes and homelessness, as well as imagined childhood adventures to exotic locales. The poems also suggest an inner journey and meditation on the nature of writing.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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Canadian



Red Doc> • Anne Carson

Jonathan Cape and McClelland & Stewart

Judge's Citation: “*Red Doc>*, Anne Carson’s return to the characters of *Autobiography of Red*, stands on its own columns with pedestals in the fragments of Stesichorus’s account of Herakles’ final labor—to steal the red cattle of the monster Geryon. The narration puts the gaps to task. What is taken up again, more significantly than an update of *Autobiography*, is a daunting writer having her particular way with the language. Amid marvels of toaster-sized ice bats, barn-sized crows, and a silver-tuxedoed Hermes in humanlike form, is a dying mother’s request of the daughter to pluck the hairs from her chin. Geryon returns middle-aged, Herakles, a damaged war veteran. Sexual bent is irrelevant; nature outsized, glacial and volcanic. Words are rescued, morphed and slapped awake. Speech hurtles from vulgar to sublime. Everything accelerates except when a break is introduced disguised as riff, list or song and the mead is served in golden cups.”

Biography: Anne Carson was born in Canada and has been a professor of Classics for over 30 years. She was twice a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; was honored with the 1996 Lannan Award and the 1997 Pushcart Prize, both for poetry; and was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2000. In 2001 she received the T. S. Eliot Prize for Poetry—the first woman to do so, the 2001 Griffin Poetry Prize and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. She currently teaches at the University of Michigan and lives in Ann Arbor.

Summary: In a stunningly original mix of poetry, drama and narrative, Anne Carson brings the red-winged Geryon from *Autobiography of Red*, now called “G”, into manhood and through the complex labyrinths of the modern age. We join him as he travels with his friend and lover “Sad” (short for Sad But Great), a haunted war veteran; and with Ida, an artist, across a geography that ranges from plains of glacial ice to idyllic green pastures; from a psychiatric clinic to the somber house where G’s mother must face her death. Haunted by Proust, juxtaposing the hunger for flight with the longing for family and home, this deeply powerful verse picaresque invites readers on an extraordinary journey of intellect, imagination and soul.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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Canadian



***Ocean* • Sue Goyette**
Gaspereau Press

Judge's Citation: "Sue Goyette's *Ocean* is a capacious and ambitious book in which she does no less than re-write the sea and the history of our relationship with it. The individual poems are numbered from one to fifty-six, not named, as is exactly right for the way the book itself ebbs and flows. In *Ocean*, Goyette becomes the spokesperson for a mythical community of shore-dwellers, with the third person 'we' in every poem bringing the strength of the collective to the viewpoint, and a refreshing sense of poetry as a communal force rather than an individual plaint. The ocean is its own character—or characters—a pet, a starlet, a dragon, a pacing old man. The poems explore the idea of its depth and surfaces, the fear of the under-ocean, the nature and origin of saltiness. But even though the sea is a constant—sometimes more present, sometimes less, a tidal flow within the poems—Goyette's focus is on the shore. Her interest is in the moving boundary between ocean and land, where the shore-dwellers live. Here is a place of change and myth-making, where transformation happens every day. In *Ocean*, Goyette's vigorous language and large vision create an extraordinary new history of the way the sea has formed human consciousness, shoreline experience and poetry itself."

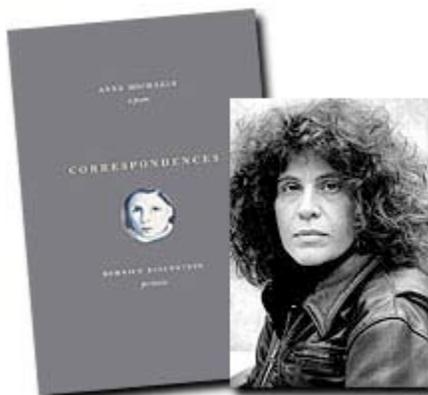
Biography: Sue Goyette has published three collections of poetry and a novel, *Lures*. She has won the Pat Lowther Memorial Award, the Atlantic Poetry Prize, the CBC Literary Prize for Poetry, the Earle Birney Prize, the Bliss Carman Award and has been shortlisted for the Governor General's Literary Award. She lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia where she teaches creative writing and works part-time at the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia.

Summary: The ocean has never had a biographer quite like Sue Goyette. Living in the port city of Halifax, Goyette's days are bounded by the substantial fact of the North Atlantic, both by its physical presence and by its metaphoric connotations. And like many of Life's overwhelming facts, our awareness of the ocean's importance and impact waxes and wanes as the ocean sometimes lurks in the background, sometimes imposes itself upon us, yet always, steadily, is. Goyette plunges in and swims well outside the buoys to craft a sort of alternate, apocryphal account of our relationship with the ocean. In these linked poems, Goyette's offbeat cast of archetypes pronounce absurd explanations to both common and uncommon occurrences in a tone that is part cautionary tale, part creation myth and part urban legend. All the while the anthropomorphized ocean nibbles hungrily at the shoreline of our understanding, refusing to explain its moods and winning every staring contest. *Ocean* demonstrates how a spirited, playful and richly mythopoetic engagement with the world can actually strengthen our grasp on its bigger truths.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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Canadian



Correspondences • Anne Michaels
McClelland & Stewart

Judge's Citation: "Anne Michaels' *Correspondences* is a single, intensely lyrical poem of something over 700 lines, in 54 unnumbered sections. With an exceedingly spare vocabulary and a voice as light as a whisper, the poem weaves recollections of Paul Celan, Nelly Sachs, and many others into an elegy for the author's father, Isaiah Michaels. The text is accompanied by reproductions of 26 gouache portraits by Bernice Eisenstein, and the physical book is designed and constructed in such a way that the portraits are subtly privileged over the text. In effect, the poem is hidden on the underside of the paintings. Yet the poem, for all its modesty, attempts something momentous. It is a sustained interrogation of language, memory, history, sunlight, and rain in search of words that are simple and clean enough to speak, as Michaels says, from someplace 'deeper than a single heart'. It is a search for a language not only the living but also 'the dead might understand and trust'. And it is an exercise in learning to read from and write on a highly elusive surface: the hidden place that Michaels calls the third side of the page."

Biography: Anne Michaels is the author of three highly acclaimed poetry collections: *The Weight of Oranges* which won the Commonwealth Prize for the Americas; *Minor's Pond* which received the Canadian Authors Association Award and was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award and the Trillium Award; and *Skin Divers*. *Fugitive Pieces* is Anne Michaels' multi-award-winning, internationally best-selling first novel that was the winner of the Lannan Literary Award for Fiction, the Chapters/*Books in Canada* First Novel Award, the *Guardian* Fiction Award and the Orange Prize for Fiction, among many other Canadian and international awards. *Fugitive Pieces* was also adapted as an internationally released feature film. Her second novel, *The Winter Vault*, was a finalist for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, the Trillium Book Award and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and a nominee for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Her work has been translated into more than forty languages.

Summary: This beautifully conceived book brings together the bestselling novelist and poet Anne Michaels and the acclaimed artist and writer Bernice Eisenstein in a unique, accordion-style format. Michaels' resonant book-length poem, a historical and personal elegy, unfolds on one side of the book's pages. On the other side, in unison with the poem, are Bernice Eisenstein's haunting portraits of the twentieth-century writers and thinkers Michaels' poem summons, those for whom language was the closest thing to salvation: figures such as Paul Celan, Nelly Sachs, W. G. Sebald, Anna Akhmatova, Primo Levi and Albert Einstein, each accompanied by quotations that illuminate the deeper connections among them. The poem is written to be read in sequence, as well as to join together with the portraits in a dialogue that perfectly reflects the thematic interconnectedness of this collaboration: "an alphabet of spirits and spirit" (Eisenstein); "the moment one life/becomes another" (Michaels). A stunning creation in both form and content, *Correspondences* is an unforgettable visual and poetic experience and a profound reflection on how the table of history is set by individuals.

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