



GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE

Press Release

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THE GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE ANNOUNCES THE 2025 SHORTLIST

TORONTO – April 23, 2025 – The Griffin Poetry Prize is pleased to announce the **2025 Shortlist**.

The Great Zoo • Aaron Coleman

Translated from the Spanish written by **Nicolás Guillén**
The University of Chicago Press

Kiss the Eyes of Peace • Brian Henry

Translated from the Slovenian written by **Tomaž Šalamun**
Milkweed Editions

Psyche Running • Karen Leeder

Translated from the German written by **Durs Grünbein**
Seagull Books

Scattered Snows, to the North • Carl Phillips

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Modern Poetry • Diane Seuss

Graywolf Press

Trustees Emeriti:

Margaret Atwood
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Colm Tóibín
David Young

Judges Nick Laird, Anne Michaels, and Tomasz Różycki each read 578 books of poetry, including 47 translations from 20 languages, submitted by 219 publishers from 17 different countries.

The winner will be announced at the Griffin Poetry Prize Readings to be held at Koerner Hall in Toronto on Wednesday, June 4, and will be awarded \$130,000. The other shortlisted finalists will each receive \$10,000.

The evening will include readings by the 2025 shortlisted poets, the Lifetime Recognition Award recipient – to be announced on May 7 – and the Canadian First Book Prize winner – to be announced on May 21. The event will also feature a recitation by one of the 2025 Finalists of Poetry in Voice/Les voix de la poésie, a Canada-wide school recitation competition.



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Tickets are now on sale and can be purchased at the box office of Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor Street West, or online at <https://www.rcmusic.com/events-and-performances/2025-griffin-poetry-prize-readings>

General Admission, with 2025 Anthology – \$30.00
Senior/Student, with 2025 Anthology – \$25.00

To purchase this year's *Griffin Poetry Prize Anthology*, contact your favourite bookstore to pre-order. If you're interested in anthologies from previous years, visit <https://houseofanansi.com/collections/poetry>

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Shortlisted Publishers' web sites:

Farrar, Straus and Giroux: us.macmillan.com
Graywolf Press: graywolfpress.org
Milkweed Editions: milkweed.org
Seagull Books: seagullbooks.org
The University of Chicago Press:
press.uchicago.edu

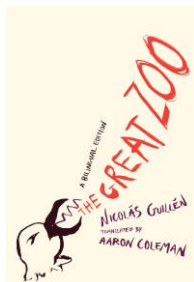
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GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE

THE 2025 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE SHORTLIST



***The Great Zoo* • Aaron Coleman**

Translated from the Spanish written by **Nicolás Guillén**

The University of Chicago Press

Biographies: Aaron Coleman is a poet, translator, educator, and scholar of the African Diaspora. He is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Cave Canem, the Fulbright Program, and the American Literary Translators Association. His debut poetry collection, *Threat Come Close*, was the winner of the Great Lakes Colleges Association New Writers Award, and his chapbook, *St. Trigger*, won the Button Poetry Prize. He is the translator of Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén's 1967 collection, *The Great Zoo*, selected for the Phoenix Poet Series by University of Chicago Press. His poems, essays, and translations have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Boston Review*, *Callaloo*, and *Poetry Magazine*. From Metro-Detroit, Coleman has lived and worked with youth in locations including Spain, South Africa, Chicago, St. Louis, and Kalamazoo. He is an assistant professor of English and Comparative Literature in the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan.

Nicolás Guillén (1902–1989) was a prolific Cuban poet, journalist, and activist. Born in Camagüey to parents of African and European ancestry, Guillén worked in printing presses and studied law before moving into Havana's literary scene. A virtuosic maker and breaker of forms, Guillén rose to fame by transforming a popular form of Cuban music into poetry that called attention to the experience of Afro-Cuban people, and he continued to interweave his artistic and political commitments as he traveled the world. Guillén received the Lenin Peace Prize, the International Botev Prize, and Cuba's National Prize for Literature. In 1961, he was named National Poet of Cuba. He authored sixteen poetry collections, including *Motivos de son*, *Sóngoro cosongo*, *West Indies Ltd.*, and *El son entero*. The first English-language anthology of his early work, *Cuba Libre*, was translated by Langston Hughes.

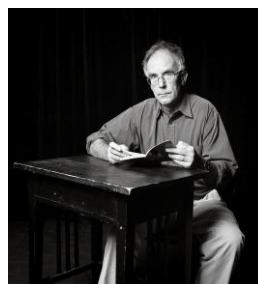
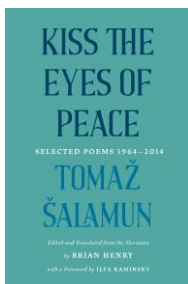


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Judges' Citation: *The Great Zoo* by Nicolás Guillén is one of the masterpieces of Latin American poetry. Originally published in Spanish in 1967 and translated by Aaron Coleman with a subtle understanding of the contexts of colonial oppression and exoticism, this bilingual edition remains a relevant commentary on our times. *The Great Zoo* seeks to integrate history, society, nature, and dreams into the territories of this singular park. It is not only an atypical bestiary of nonsensical and imprecatory zoography, not only a humorous book of fables with strange morals, but also a surprising essay of social criticism that mocks the taxonomic and classificatory pride of man pretending to gather, in cages, the living complexity of nature. The zoo's fauna comprises ideas, emotions, phenomena, anthropomorphized animals, and men who are animals; the descriptions of the species are masterpieces of suggestion, working on our imagination with great force. The book, entertaining and moving, is simply beautiful.



GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE



***Kiss the Eyes of Peace* • Brian Henry**

Translated from the Slovenian written by **Tomaž Šalamun**

Milkweed Editions

Biographies: Brian Henry is the translator of Tomaž Šalamun's *Kiss the Eyes of Peace* and *Woods and Chalices*, as well as Aleš Debeljak's *Smugglers*, and six books by Aleš Šteger, most recently *Burning Tongues: New and Selected Poems*. Henry is also the author of *Permanent State*, ten other books of poetry, and the collection of essays, *Things Are Completely Simple: Poetry and Translation*. His work has received numerous honours, including two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, the Alice Fay Di Castagnola Award, a Howard Foundation fellowship, and the Best Translated Book Award. He lives in Richmond, Virginia.

Slovenian poet Tomaž Šalamun (1941–2014) was one of Europe's most prominent poets of his generation and was a leader of the Eastern European avant-garde. He was born in Zagreb, Croatia and raised in Koper, Slovenia. Early in his career he edited the literary magazine *Perspektive* and was briefly jailed on political charges. He studied art history at the University of Ljubljana, where he found poetry suddenly, as a revelation, describing its arrival in a 2004 interview as "stones from the sky." His work has appeared in over seventy journals and magazines internationally and he has published fifteen poetry collections in English. Šalamun was a member of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Art and lived in Ljubljana, Slovenia, until his death in late 2014.

Judges' Citation: *Kiss the Eyes of Peace* is an extraordinary English selection of poems from the entire body of work of one of the best Central European poets of the twentieth century, Slovenian poet Tomaž Šalamun, presented by poet Brian Henry with precision and power. The English reader experiences this poetry at its finest, with its characteristic post-Dada, unlimited freedom, and a peculiar and unmistakable lightness of diction. Šalamun turns our reading habits upside down—he creates avant-garde linguistic structures in which the poem hangs on the question, on the collision of the concrete and the surrealistic, where a dance of imagination begins. A hypnotic sequence of extremely condensed phrases makes Šalamun's absurdism a realistic portrayal of a contemporary world where strangeness can be a source of extraordinary beauty. This selection restores faith in the glory and power of poetry, in its wild freedom and beauty.



GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE



Psyche Running • Karen Leeder

Translated from the German written by **Durs Grünbein**

Seagull Books

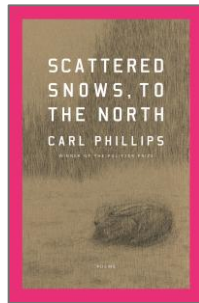
Biographies: Karen Leeder is a writer, scholar, and translator of contemporary German literature. She has received many accolades for her translations, including the Stephen Spender Prize for *Childhood in the Diorama* by Durs Grünbein, the John Frederick Nims Memorial Prize for Translation for Grünbein's *The Doctrine of Photography*, and the Schlegel-Tieck Prize for Grünbein's *Porcelain: Poem on the Downfall of My City*. Her work has also been recognized with an American PEN/Heim award for her translation of Ulrike Almut Sandig's *Thick of It* and a second Schlegel-Tieck Prize for *All Under One Roof* by Evelyn Schlag, among other honours. Leeder is the Schwarz-Taylor Chair of the German Language and Literature at the University of Oxford. In 2023, she began a three-year Einstein Fellowship at the Free University of Berlin for her project *AfterWords*.

Durs Grünbein was born in Dresden in 1962, and now lives in Berlin and Rome. Since 2005, he has been a professor of poetics and aesthetics at the Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf. One of Germany's most celebrated poets, Grünbein has earned the Georg Büchner Prize, the Friedrich Nietzsche Prize, the Friedrich Hölderlin Prize, the Berlin Literature Prize, the Premio Internazionale di Poesia Pier Paolo Pasolini, the Tranströmer Prize, and, most recently, the Zbigniew Herbert Prize. His poetry and prose have been translated into multiple languages, including Russian, Italian, English, French, Spanish, Swedish, and Japanese. His book *Ashes for Breakfast: Selected Poems*, translated by Michael Hoffmann, was shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize in 2006. Several of his works, including *Childhood in the Diorama*, *The Doctrine of Photography*, and *Porcelain: Poem on the Downfall of My City*, have won awards in Karen Leeder's English translations.

Judges' Citation: Durs Grünbein's *Psyche Running* is a brilliant overview and selection of a poet who satisfies our hunger to be serious, as again and again he finds himself "between words and things." Karen Leeder's adept translations establish a new version of Grünbein in English: universal, lyrical, philosophical.



GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE



Scattered Snows, to the North • Carl Phillips

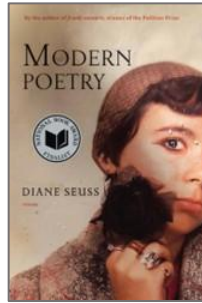
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Biography: Carl Phillips is the author of seventeen books of poetry, most recently *Scattered Snows, to the North*, and *Then the War: And Selected Poems 2007-2020*, which won the Pulitzer Prize. His other honours include the Jackson Poetry Prize, the Aiken Taylor Award for Modern American Poetry, the Kingsley Tufts Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, a Lambda Literary Award, the PEN/USA Award for Poetry, and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Library of Congress, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Academy of American Poets. His collection, *Silverchest*, was shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize in 2014. Phillips has also written three prose books, most recently, *My Trade is Mystery: Seven Meditations from a Life in Writing*, and he has translated the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles. He lives on Cape Cod, in Massachusetts.

Judges' Citation: It is Carl Phillips' mastery that these poems measure, weigh, question, prevaricate: "it seemed," "maybe," "what if," "it's hard, these days, to know for sure what's true," "We weren't afraid. Nor / unafraid." And it is Phillips' magic that this diction renders greater precision, not less; an astonishing accuracy in naming the liminal space from which our comprehension, acceptance, farewells, memories emerge and submerge again. Phillips has found a way to articulate love in all its assertions and disguises – calibrated in all its doubt, tenderness, forms of desire, loyalty, solitudes. In the poem "Stop Shaking," he writes: "I keep making the same avoidable / few mistakes that I've always made, and then regretting them, / and then regretting them less." In tone and diction, these poems never stray across the line between honesty and privacy. How grateful the reader is to enter and re-enter these poems, to be entered by them. For in their articulation of what is most elusive – what we cannot understand and also somehow know – in their recognition of unanswerable human limitation, is a kind of forgiveness.



GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE



***Modern Poetry* • Diane Seuss** Graywolf Press

Biography: Diane Seuss is the author of six poetry collections, including *frank: sonnets*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and the PEN/Voelcker Award; *Still Life with Two Dead Peacocks and a Girl*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize; and *Four-Legged Girl*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2020 and the John Updike Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2021. Seuss was raised by a single mother in rural Michigan, which she continues to call home.

Judges' Citation: Diane Seuss' *Modern Poetry* is the culmination of a life spent learning the art, of locating "the beauty of drawing near," of "seeing through time" – and her wry, compelling tone and effortless technique end in something very like wisdom. She has become an indispensable poet.