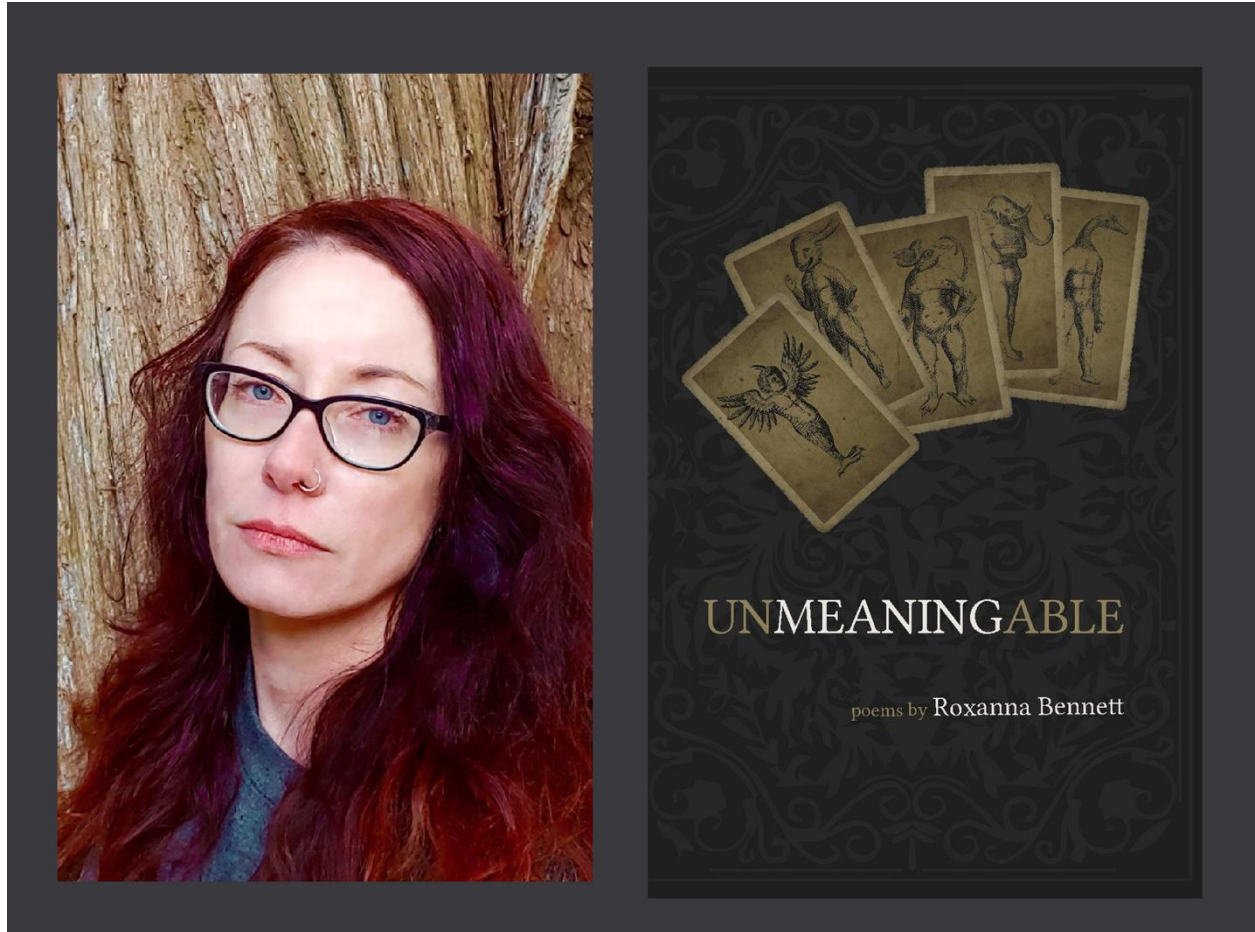


2020 Pat Lowther Memorial Award Shortlist

***Unmeaningable* by Roxanna Bennett (Gordon Hill Press)**

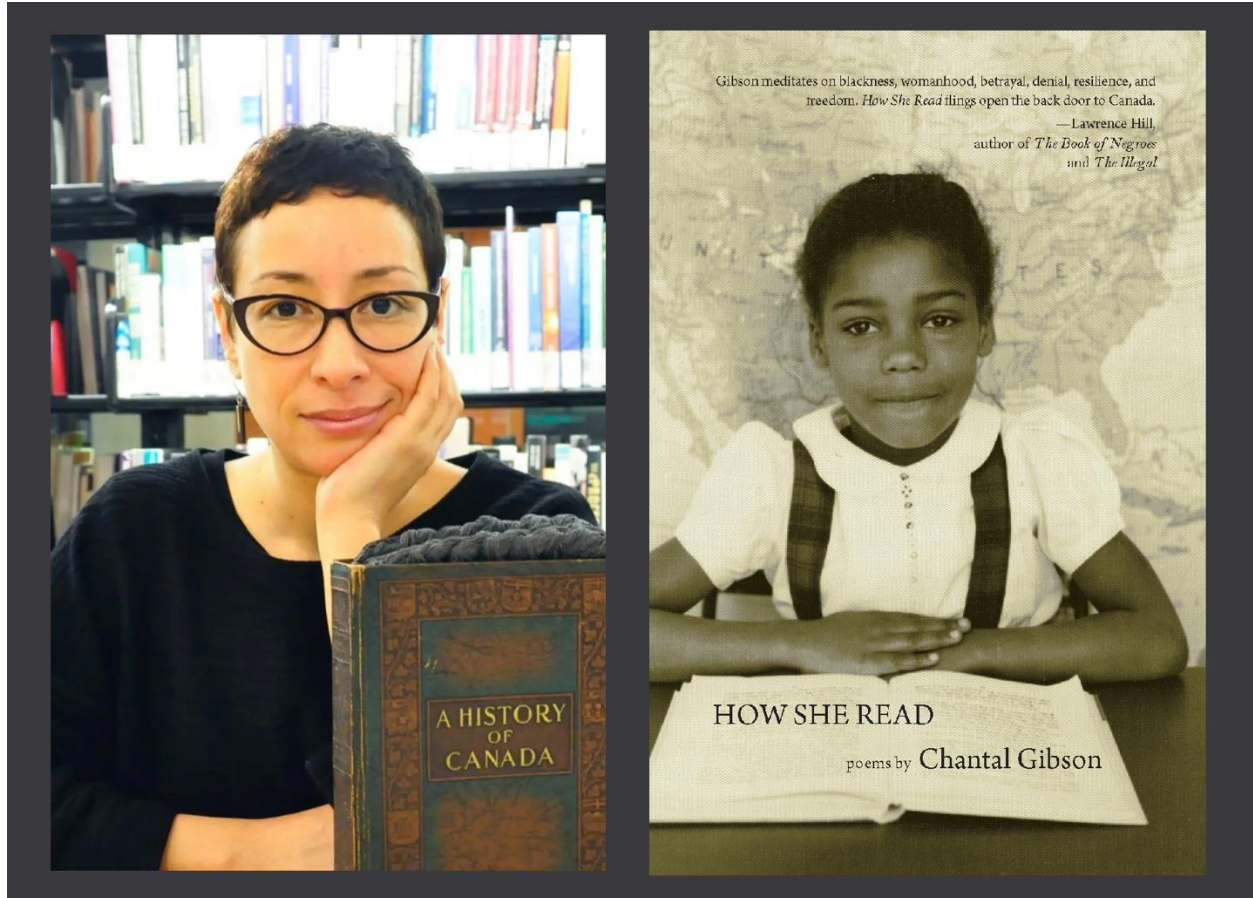
Roxanna Bennett is a disabled poet gratefully living on the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation which is covered under the Williams Treaties. She is the author of *unseen garden* (chapbook, knife | fork | book, 2018), *The Uncertainty Principle* (Tightrope Books, 2014) and *Unmeaningable*, available from Gordon Hill Press.



From the Jurors: Roxanna Bennett's *Unmeaningable* explores pain and the body with a devastating and vital honesty. These poems subvert expectation—both in chosen poetic form, but also in the assumptions of an ableist society—and challenge the reader to rethink ability and otherness. Bennett explores restraint not simply as a limitation, but as a means of amplification. These poems don't ask for—nor need—permission.

***How She Read* by Chantal Gibson (Caitlin Press)**

Chantal Gibson is a poet-artist-educator from Vancouver working in the overlap between literary and visual art. From academic history books to kitschy souvenir spoons, her work unpacks imperialist ideas quietly embedded in everyday things. Confronting colonialism head-on, her literary and visual works exploit the myths, tropes and narratives that go unchecked across the Canadian cultural landscape. While forging new spaces for voices silenced by historical erasure, Gibson challenges and celebrates representations of Black womanhood. Named one of CBC's 6 Black writers to watch in 2019, Gibson is an award-winning teacher in the School of Interactive Arts & Technology at Simon Fraser University.



Author Photo: Marianne Meadahl

From the Jurors: Chantal Gibson's *How She Read* creates its illuminating poetics through language, image, and a hieroglyphic that only slowly reveals its significance. From a song of praise to Black girls; to an homage to the poet's grandfather, a member of the 1967 CPR Mixed Bowling Team; to the dark wit of women in a daguerreotype and an oil painting considering their place in art and science, Gibson shows us how we are taught racism, and opens a door to its unlearning. What she asks of the reader is to read closer; to decipher what has been hidden; to acknowledge what has been said and said all along. Calling to many Black women in Canadian literature – Dionne Brand, Afua Cooper, Lorena Gale and M. NourbeSe Philip, among others – Gibson's work is both communal and wholly its own, *How She Read* is unforgiving and unapologetic, fierce and adoring.

***Sotto Voce* by Maureen Hynes (Brick Books)**

Maureen Hynes' first book of poetry, *Rough Skin*, published by Wolsak and Wynn (Toronto, Ont), won the League of Canadian Poets' Gerald Lampert Memorial Award for best debut book of poetry by a Canadian. Her second collection, *Harm's Way*, was published by Brick Books (London, Ont), followed by *Marrow, Willow* in 2011 from Pedlar Press, and, also from Pedlar Press, her fourth book of poetry, *The Poison Colour*, in fall, 2015. In 2016, *The Poison Colour* was a finalist for two national poetry awards given out by the League of Canadian Poets: the Pat Lowther Memorial Award and the Raymond Souster Award.

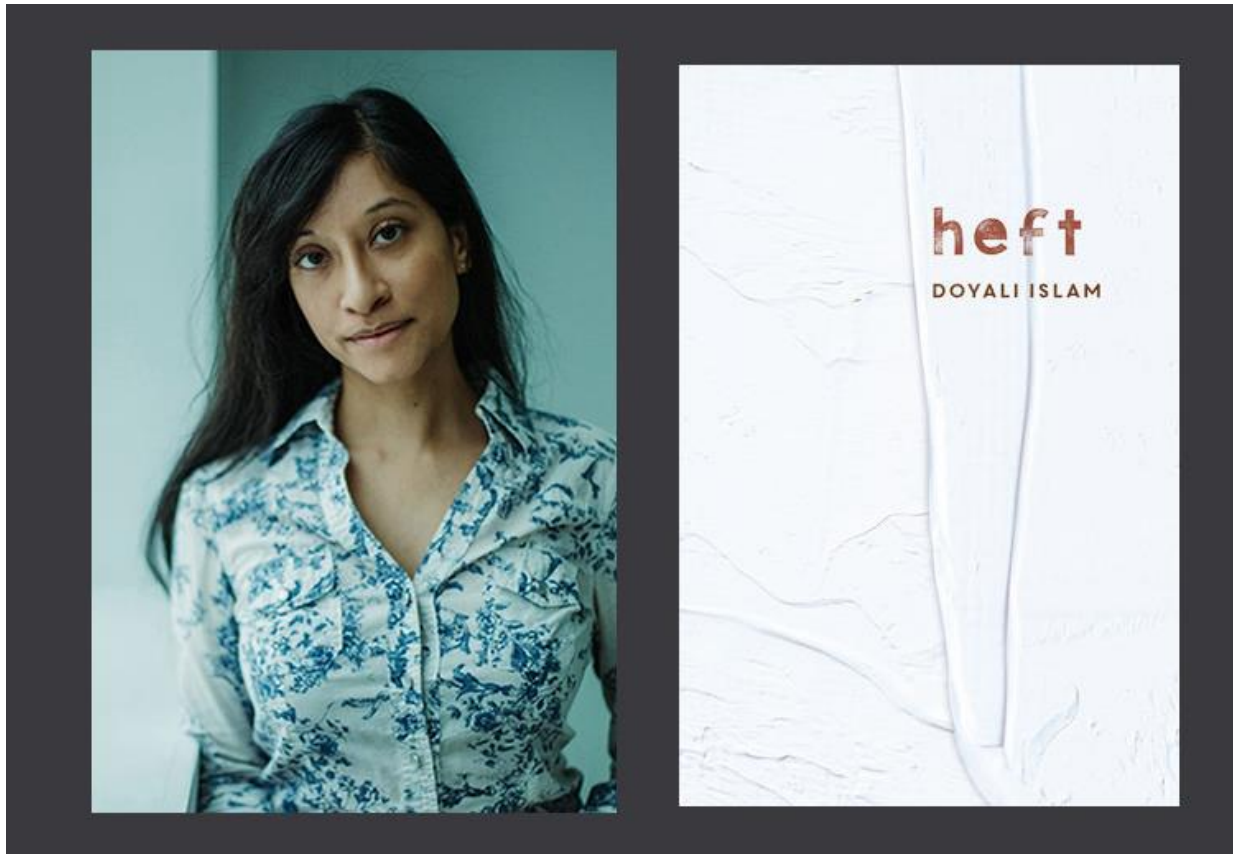


Author Photo: Vivek Shraya

From the Jurors: Maureen Hynes's *Sotto Voce* offers brave whispers to a world too often prone to silence—and silencing. From environmental concerns to injustice and reminders to love, these poems soothe and celebrate, yet question and critique. Hynes serves as both truth seer and seeker as her wise meditations invite readers to reconsider the things that matter. Sometimes the softest voices are the loudest—and most meaningful.

***heft* by Doyali Islam (McClelland & Stewart)**

Doyali Islam is a 2020 Griffin Poetry Prize finalist for *heft* (M&S, 2019). Doyali has participated in CBC Books' *Why I Write* video series, and has discussed the value of silence on *The Sunday Edition*; language, form, beauty, and empathy with Anne Michaels in *CV2*; and the relationship between poetry and the body on *The Next Chapter*. She has also been in conversation with Forrest Gander, and you can find their discussion of grief, art-making, and poetry ethics in *The Adroit Journal*. Doyali wishes you light during this COVID-19 pandemic. www.doyali-islam.com.

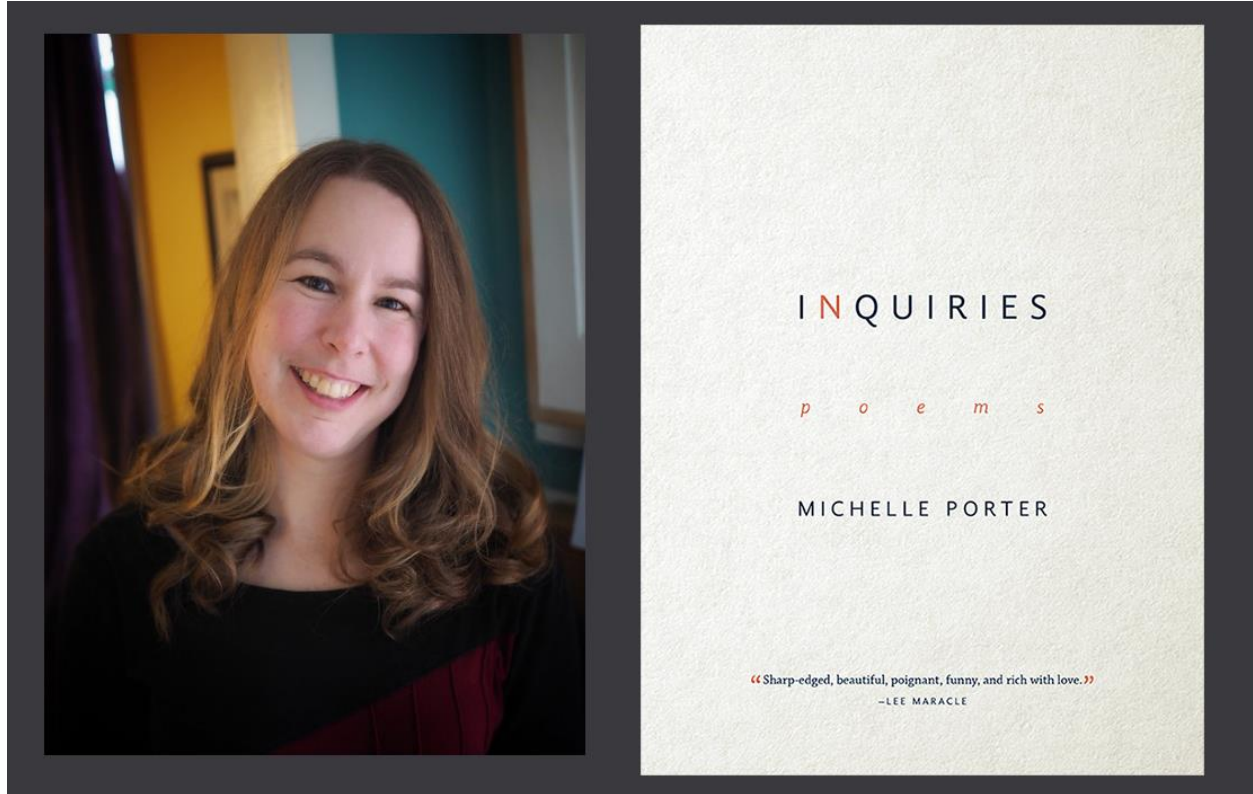


Author Photo: Arden Wray

From the Jurors: In her sophomore collection *heft*, Doyali Islam unfolds multitude possibilities from poetic form. Through her split sonnets, double sonnets and parallel poems, Islam creates a delicate tension between histories and geographies. The author's attention to language — sonorous, limpid, and precise — is mirrored by her care for the surprising moments both outside her and within. By turns personal and political, her poems feel as though they could be folded over onto themselves, their sometimes divergent experiences finding touching proximity. Through her poems, our lives gather intimacy across a world's vastness.

***Inquiries* by Michelle Porter (Breakwater Books)**

Michelle Porter is a Red River Métis poet, journalist, and editor. She holds degrees in journalism, folklore, and geography (PhD). Her academic research and creative work have been focused on home, Métis mobility, and the changing nature of our relationship to land. She's won awards for her work in poetry and journalism, and has been published in literary journals, newspapers, and magazines across the country. She lives in St. John's. Michelle's nonfiction has been anthologized in *Best Kind* (recently named a Foreword INDIES finalist), and her debut collection of poetry, *Inquiries*, was published by Breakwater Books in 2019, and her next book, *Approaching Fire*, will be released this fall.



From the Jurors: In *Inquiries*, Michelle Porter traces a Métis family's history, their mother's resilience, and their complex sense of home despite stark poverty and transience across houses, towns and cities, and rivers. Porter brings a magic realism to her poetry, where the kitchen, the refrigerator, the faucet and sink, the door, all become witnesses, alongside the poet, to the lives lived. Her lyric sings with quiet grace and undeniable integrity. If the people whose portraits are drawn here sought a way out, these poems nonetheless seek a way further in, to the wisdom the experience carries.

***The Caiplie Caves* by Karen Solie (House of Anansi Press)**

Karen Solie was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. She was educated at the University of Lethbridge, where she earned a BA, and at the University of Victoria, where she pursued graduate study. In her poems, Solie often tracks a journey, or several journeys at once, following the mind's movement across changing landscapes. Solie is the author of several collections of poetry, including *The Caiplie Caves* (2019), *The Road In Is Not the Same Road Out* (2015); *The Living Option: Selected Poems* (2013); *Pigeon* (2009), which won a Griffin Poetry Prize, a Pat Lowther Memorial Award, and a Trillium Book Award; and *Short Haul Engine* (2001), which won a Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize. Her work has also been featured in the anthology *Breathing Fire: Canada's New Poets* (1995) and has been translated into Dutch, French, and Korean. Solie has served as an associate director of the Banff Centre Writing Studio program and as international writer-in-residence at the University of St. Andrews. She lives in Toronto.

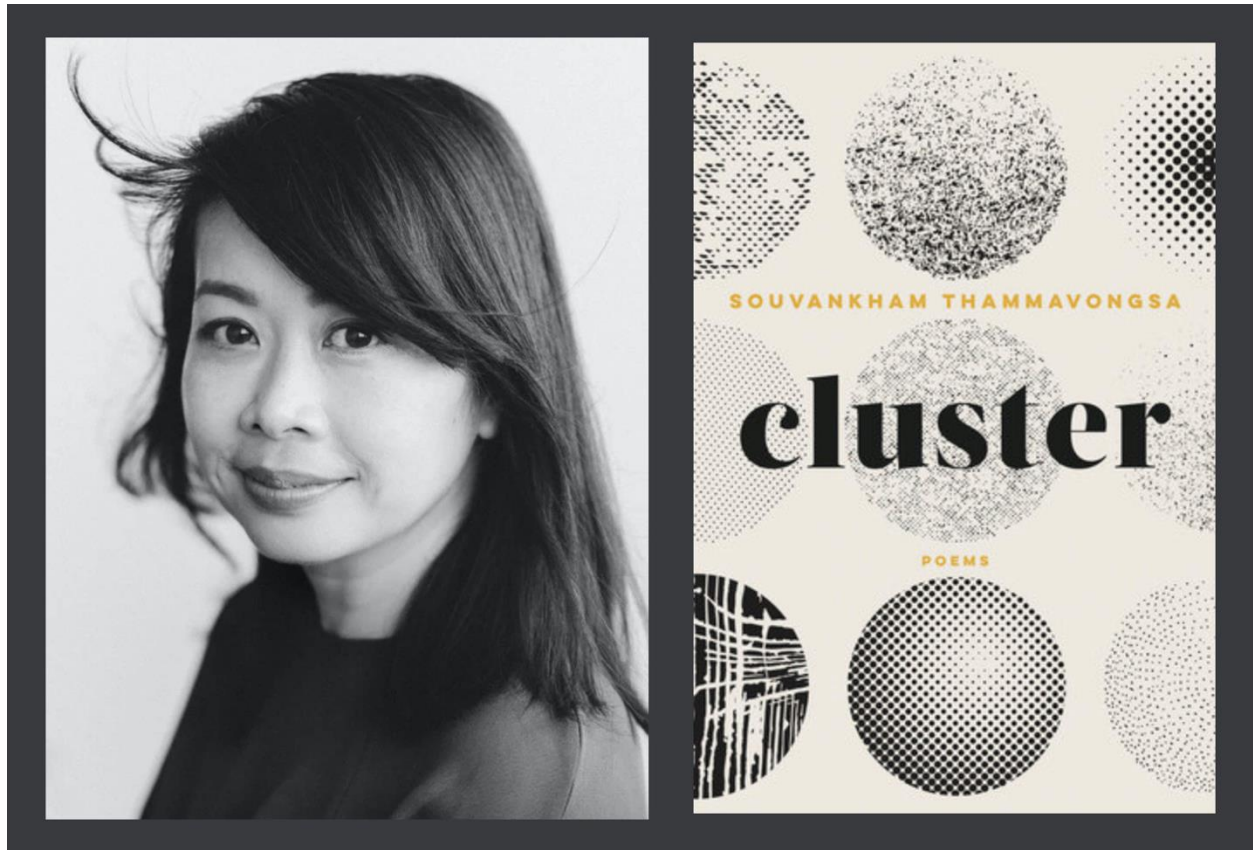


Author Photo: James Langer

From the Jurors: Blurring the lines between worlds medieval and modern, Karen Solie's *The Caiplie Caves* sheds new light on an ancient (and traditionally male) debate—is it better to lead a life of action or one of contemplation? Solie's complex response brings a speaker exploring contemporary Scotland into proximity with Ethernan, a semi-legendary seventh-century hermit. At the heart of both figures' self-imposed exiles is a keen sense of failure, but also a search for meaningful consolation. With wit, wisdom, and clarity, *The Caiplie Caves* lends insight into the worlds that surround us and the ones we cultivate within ourselves.

Cluster by Souvankham Thammavongsa (McClelland & Stewart)

Souvankham Thammavongsa's first story collection, *How To Pronounce Knife*, will be published by Little, Brown (U.S.), McClelland & Stewart/Penguin Random House (Canada), and Bloomsbury (U.K.) in April 2020. Her stories have won an O. Henry Award and appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, *The Paris Review*, *The Atlantic*, *Granta*, *NOON*, *The Believer*, *Best American Nonrequired Reading 2018*, and *O. Henry Prize Stories 2019*. She is the author of four books of poetry, *Cluster* (2019); *Light* (2013), winner of the Trillium Book Award for Poetry; *Found* (2007), now a short film; and *Small Arguments* (2003), winner of the ReLit prize. She has been called "one of the most striking voices to emerge in Canadian poetry in a generation" (*The Walrus*). She is working on her first novel.



From the Jurors: Over and over, and like the arachnid in her poem "A Spider," Souvankham Thammavongsa spins elaborate webs of resonance out of smallness and obscurity. Often understated until the illumination of their final lines, the poems in Thammavongsa's fourth collection *Cluster* surprise the reader with their expansiveness and depth of insight: the simple image of a man making soap bubbles with a mop doubles as a meditation on artistic creation; a speaker's quiet longing is rendered large and universal in "Ants"; a shaky photograph of two childhood friends lays bare the totalizing impermanence of our relationships over time. Affecting and wise, the collection proceeds with complex but precise extended metaphors that force the reader to slow down.