

Book Awards 2022

Shortlist

Pat Lowther Memorial Award

for a book of poetry by a woman

Open to Canadian women, the Pat Lowther Memorial Award has been awarded annually since 1981 for a book of poetry published in the preceding year. This prize is in memory of the late Pat Lowther, whose career was cut short by her untimely death in 1975. The award carries a \$2000 prize, and is sponsored by the LCP.



Field Requiem by Sheri Benning

Nightwood Editions



From the jurors: In a voice both deeply embedded and far removed from a Saskatchewan prairie farm, a settler farm; Benning conveys deep respect and immense sadness for the fragility of the land, community, family, and individuals endangered by and lost to production, men, and reproduction, women. Benning's flawless lyric lines, and superb technical and emotional vocabulary strafe a reader's consciousness and challenge notions of progress invoking stark visions of degradation and disrespect. Aptly photographed abandoned homesteads precisely locate their settler coordinates and disperse nostalgia under the gathering cloud of the dark cover.

Sheri Benning grew up on a farm in central Saskatchewan, Treaty 6 Territory. She's the author of *Field Requiem* and *The Season's Vagrant Light: New & Selected Poems* both published by Carcanet Press. Her other collections include *Thin Moon Psalm* (Brick Books) and *Earth After Rain* (Thistledown Press). Her writing has appeared in North American and European journals and anthologies, most recently *Brick*, *The Paris Review*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Poetry Review*, *PN Review*, *Prairie Fire* and *Grain*.

Undoing Hours by Selina Boan

Nightwood Editions

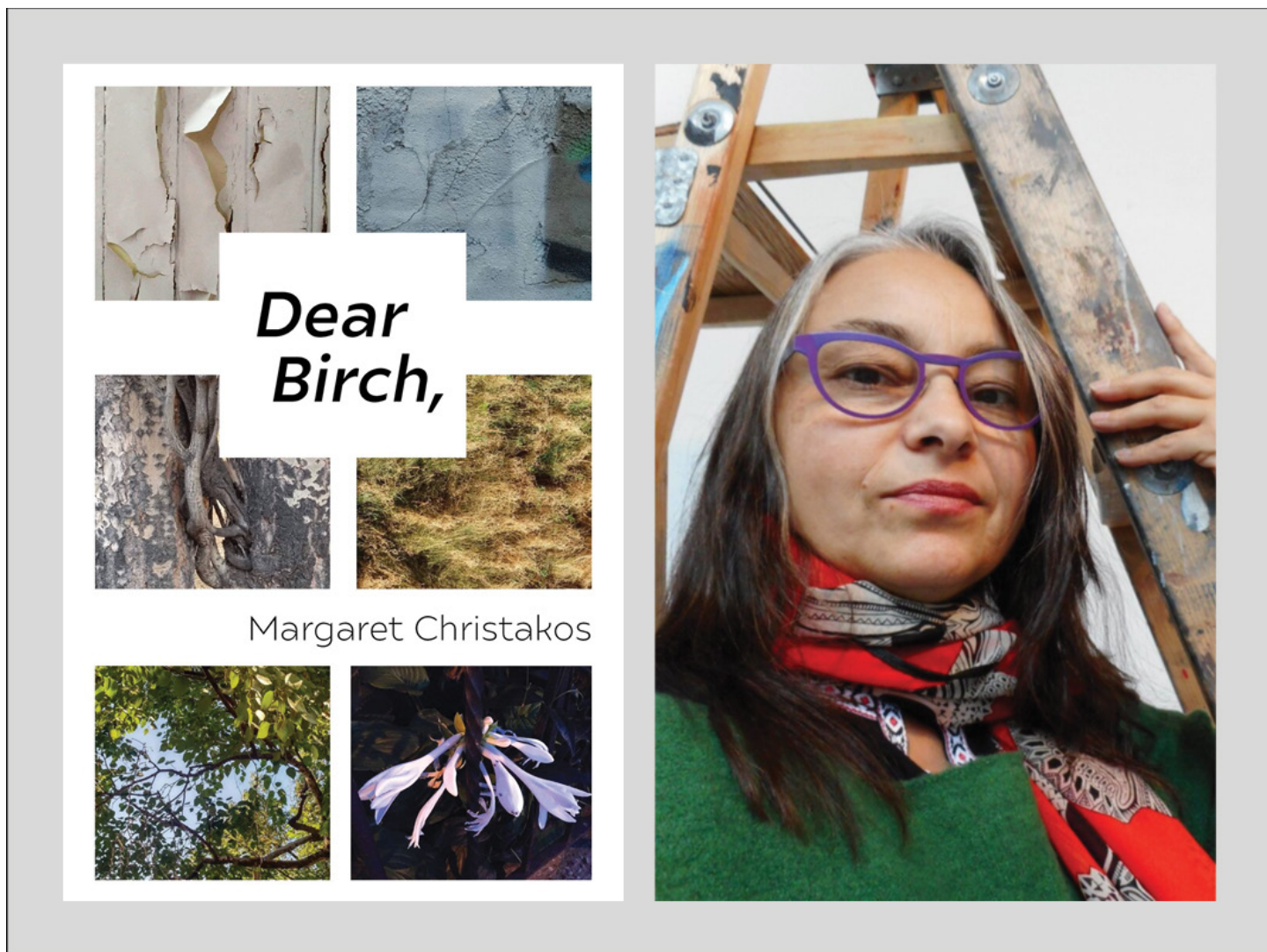


From the jurors: Boan sifts, smudges, wrestles gently, digs conscientiously undoing terrain and time. A poetry that “wants to read herself past syntax” soiling into her language(s), seeking to bring out the bones, create a renewed “plot/lot” of an unknown past. These poems grasp both the jarring and gracious bringing together awe-inspiring lapses of breath and rhythms in words between Cree and English that leave one panting. In this book, the reader is left beginning again to [re]learn and unlearn language as settler-newcomer, “part prairie, part invasion”, “the syllabus of earth, rearranged.” Selina Boan’s *Undoing Hours* is an admirable feat of working between our unique national dilemma “between two dialects” and that largeness of love for all things most dear such as Nohtâwi.

Selina Boan is a white settler-nehiyaw writer living on the traditional, unceded territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), səlilwətaʔt (Tsleil-waututh), and sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples. Her debut poetry collection, *Undoing Hours*, was published in Spring 2021 by Nightwood Editions. Her work has been published widely, including *The Best Canadian Poetry 2018* and *2020*. She has received several honours, including the 2017 National Magazine Award for Poetry, and was a finalist for the 2020 CBC poetry award. She is a poetry editor for CV2 and Rahila’s Ghost Press.

Dear Birch, by Margaret Christakos

Palimpsest Press



From the jurors: Christakos' *Dear Birch*, a-muses in soft lyric and couplet forms through one extraneous week of a diarist's poetic recitatif. 'She' is harmonizing leaves, drift and breeze, thin skins rustling into words around and through memory and time. Christakos 'winds' confessions of 'She' by way of public city dwellings: biking, headlights, neighborhood construction and private self: lovers touching the 'bitter body', permeations away from elusive media(s) to cicadas, foliage, garden toads to mothers to fire to ash. "She has to leave writing—sometime to resume the relief of solitude" from the daily aesthetic(s) of which 'She' mires into. It is the diarist's devotion to hold those branches of a 'beyond'. Christakos arrives, coalesces into Birch and/or with Birch. "She lifts her face toward your lilting white-grey arms, dear birch, foraging for..." Whitman and Thoreau are left to be recalled, yet Christakos communes in her 'now' self of 'She' sharing, settling, sheltering secretive ululations, *Dear Birch*, "Your Special Vitamin."

Margaret Christakos is attached to this earth. Homed in Toronto since the late 1980s, she is a white settler bisexual poet, writer, image-maker, and poetry mentor engaged in an experimental lyric feminist poetics of relationality, direct and indirect address, voice and touch, order and disorder, memory and public listening. *Dear Birch*, is her 11th collection.

Moldovan Hotel by Leah Horlick

Brick Books

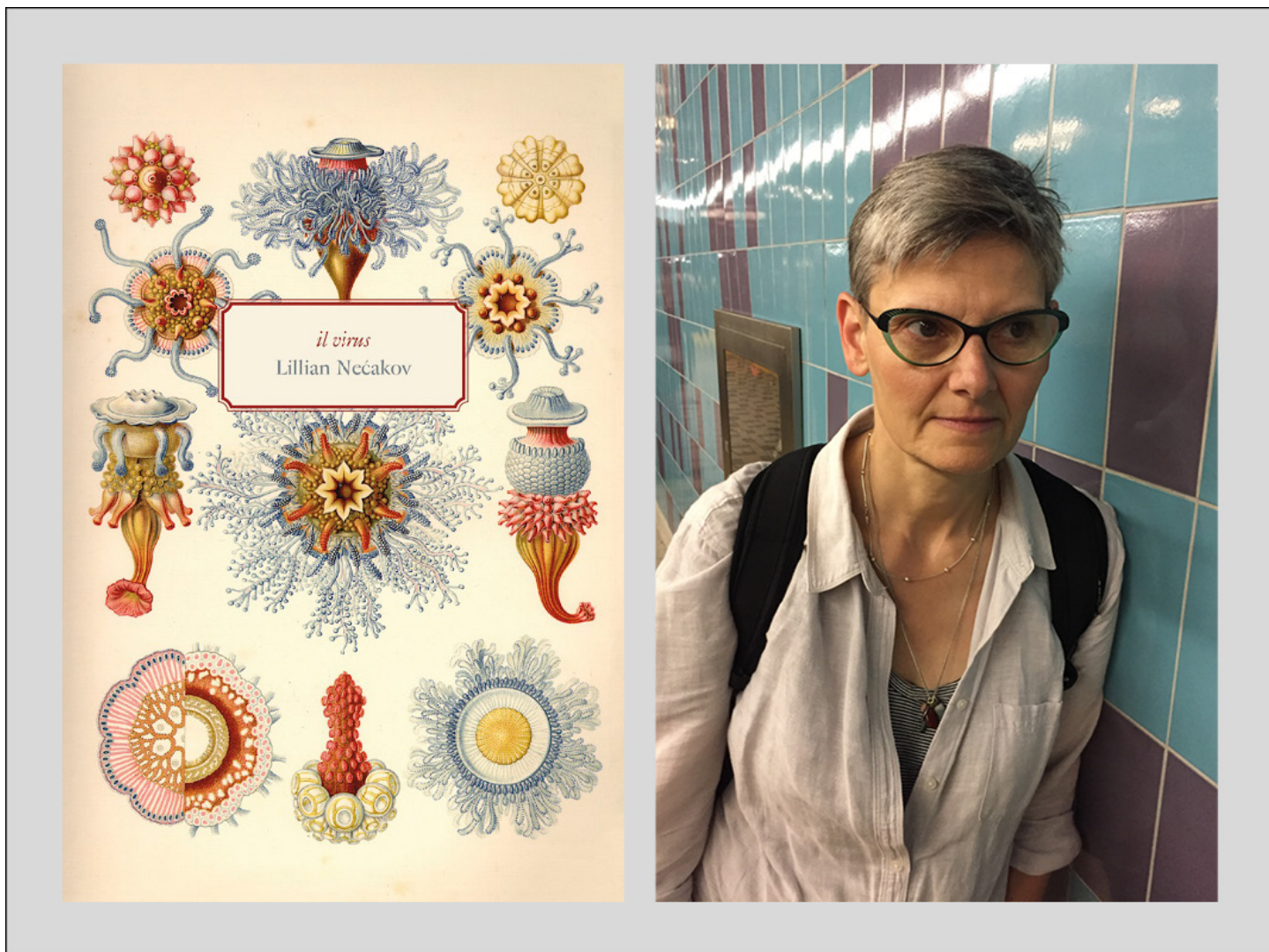


From the jurors: Horlick opens *Moldovan Hotel* with the fantasy of ancestors of past loves in a room together, their historical associations and interactions problematizing identity, relationship, truth, and story. The poems that follow pirouette between past and present, real and imagined, beautifully rendered countryside and the echoes of loss that does not come from the inevitability of life but from the purposeful destruction of other, whether national, religious, or ethnic. Yet these poems, with their purposeful and arresting use of language, together form a prayer for a better world, built not on burying old crimes, but on looking closely to see the truth of the past and to expose it so that it cannot poison the future.

Leah Horlick is a writer and poet who grew up as a settler on Treaty Six territory & the homelands of the Métis in Saskatoon. Her first book, *Riot Lung* (Thistledown Press, 2012), was shortlisted for a 2013 ReLit Award and a Saskatchewan Book Award. In 2016, Leah was awarded the Dayne Ogilvie Prize for LGBT Emerging Writers. That same year, her second collection, *For Your Own Good* (Caitlin Press, 2015), was named a 2016 Stonewall Honor Title by the American Library Association. In 2018, her piece “You Are My Hiding Place” was named *Arc Poetry Magazine*’s Poem of the Year, and was shortlisted for inclusion in the 44th Pushcart Prize by the Pushcart Board of Editors. She lives on Treaty Seven Territory & Region 3 of the Métis Nation in Calgary. *Moldovan Hotel* (Brick Books, 2021) is her third book.

il virus by Lillian Nećakov

Anvil Press

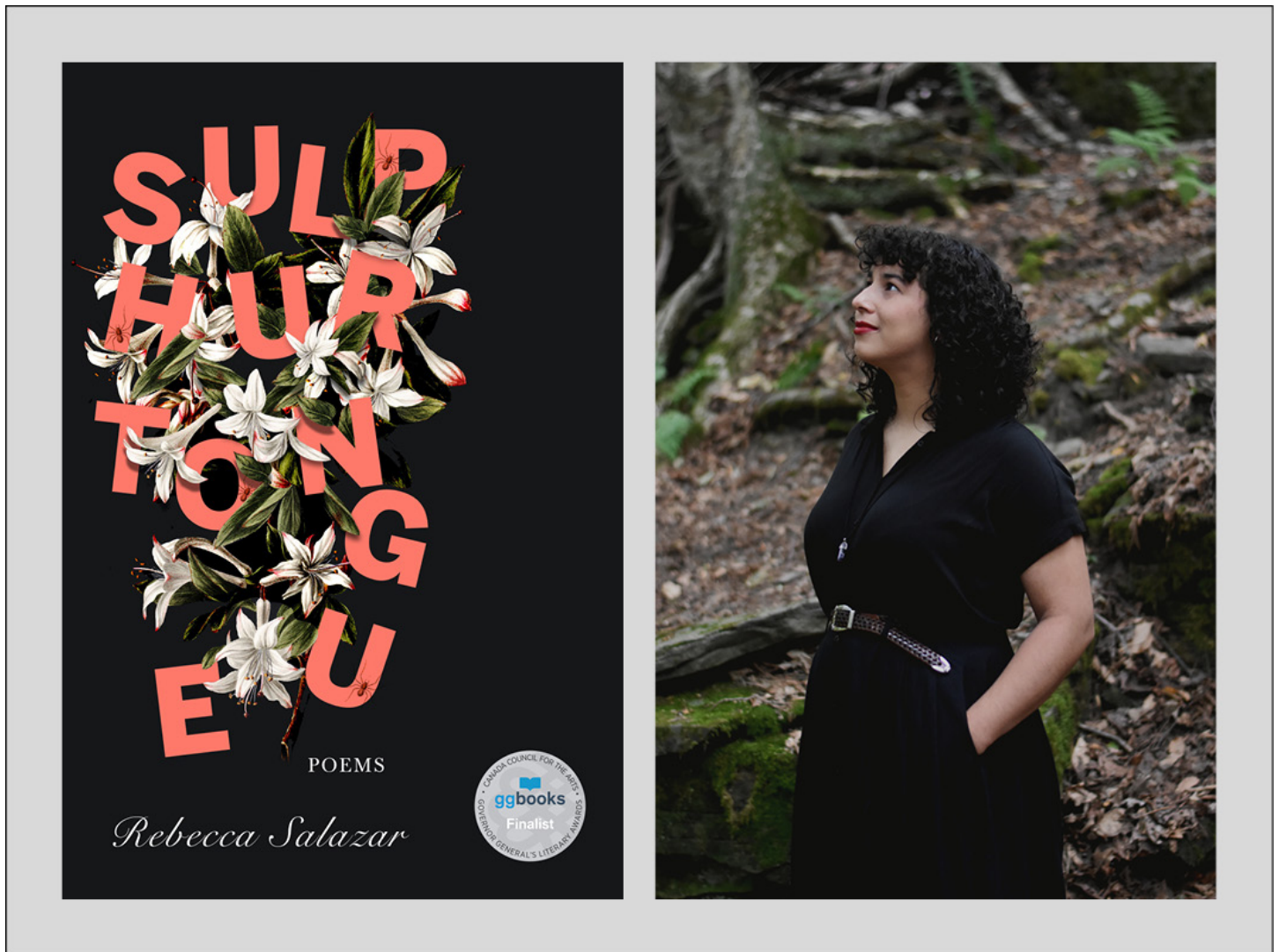


From the jurors: Nećakov’s *il virus* compels with its glorious, spinning vision of worlds, fantastical and quotidian, whirling around the centre of the writer alone in a room while *il virus* romps outside. In these pages, we glimpse Jackie Gleason, Alan Ginsberg, Georgia O’Keeffe; we reencounter *I Love Lucy* and *The Honeymooners*; we watch “well-mannered / Canada goslings in mukluks / ... / under the flicker / of northern lights.” As the kaleidoscope of allusions realized in pungent language whirls around us, we are reminded of light, image, memory, and their power over imagination.

Lillian Nećakov is the author of six books of poetry, numerous chapbooks, broadsides and leaflets. Her latest book *il virus* was published in April 2021 by Anvil Press (A Feed Dog Book). In 2016, her chapbook *The Lake Contains an Emergency Room* was shortlisted for bpNichol chapbook award. During the 1980s she ran a micro press called “The Surrealist Poets Gardening Association” and sold her books on Toronto’s Yonge Street. She ran the Boneshaker Reading series from 2010-2020. Her new book, *duck eats yeast, quacks, explodes; man loses eye*, a collaborative poem with Gary Barwin is forthcoming in 2023 from Guernica Editions. She lives in Toronto and just might be working on a new book.

Sulphurtongue by Rebecca Salazar

McClelland & Stewart



From the jurors: Salazar’s debut book of poetry transits survival - across gender, continents, and cultures with one’s memories and lapses worked and reworked in language, in spirit and in flesh. Tightly detailed lines shift across margins, rise and collide creating bitter or joyful, sometimes both, frisson on the tongue and in the ear. Playful and sensual, pungent and bloody, gritty and hot — these poems whirl readers though environmental degradation, rape, longing and lust asserting the life of a queer brown girl in and from a Canadian mining town with a clear-eyed reach back into a Columbian family’s immigration and losses.

Rebecca Salazar (she/they) is a writer, editor, and community organizer living on the unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik. Salazar is the author of two chapbooks, and her first full-length collection *sulphurtongue* (McClelland & Stewart) was a finalist for the 2021 Governor General’s Award for Poetry.