

Pat Lowther Memorial Award

Shortlist

The Pat Lowther Memorial Award is given for a book of poetry by a woman in Canada, and is in memory of the late Pat Lowther, whose career was cut short by her untimely death in 1975. The award carries a \$2,000 prize.



Pat Lowther Memorial Award

Shortlist

Tender by Sylvia D. Hamilton (Gaspereau Press)

Shadow Blight by Annick MacAskill (Gaspereau Press)

HARROWINGS by Cecily Nicholson (TalonBooks)

A Is for Acholi by Otoniya J. Okot Bitek (Wolsak & Wynn)

Boat by Lisa Robertson (Coach House Books)

Quiet Night Think by Gillian Sze (ECW Press)

Jurors

Jaclyn Desforges

Elee Kraljii Gardiner

Jody Chan

Pat Lowther Memorial Award Shortlist

Tender by Sylvia D. Hamilton

Gaspereau Press



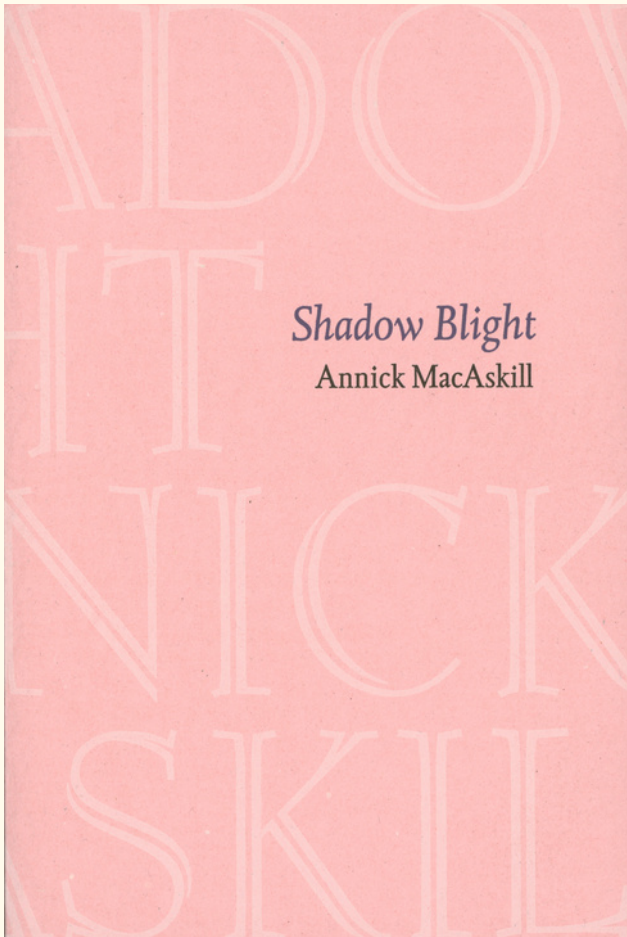
From the jurors: *Tender* converts what the author terms “historical memory” into poems centering the voices of Black people and communities in Nova Scotia. Her detailed research and attention to voice combines testimony, imagination, and compelling poetics. As the book moves forward through history, surfing the chop of racism and violence of the slave trade to current day, the conviction of the poetic voice is unrelenting. The title, tender, refers to a dinghy that tends larger vessels in the harbour, but the softer, affectionate value of the word is present throughout these poems, which raise moments of connection and sweetness out of troubled waters.

Sylvia D. Hamilton is a writer, filmmaker and artist, whose poetry collection *And I Alone Escaped to Tell You* (Gaspereau Press 2014), was a finalist for the Nova Scotia Masterworks Award and the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award. Her honours include the Portia White Prize, the 2019 Governor General’s History Award for Popular Media and the 2021 Luminary Award given by the Documentary Organization of Canada’s. She is an Inglis Professor Emeritus at the University of King’s College in Halifax.

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Shadow Blight by Annick MacAskill

Gaspereau Press



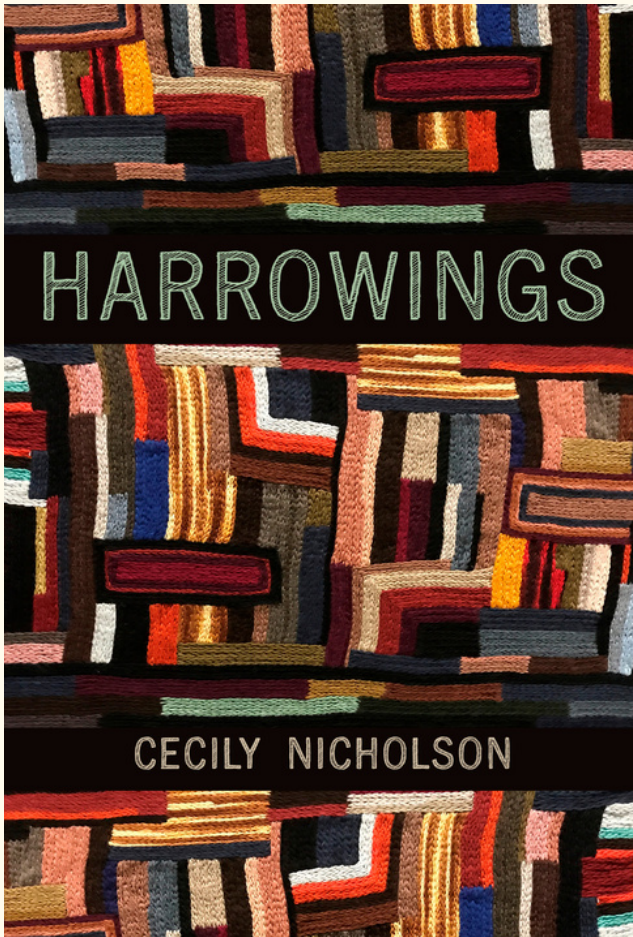
From the jurors: *Shadow Blight* (Gaspereau Press, 2022) examines the pain of pregnancy loss through the story of Niobe, whose anguish at the deaths of her children turned her to stone. Combining classical mythology with modern imagery – medicine cabinets, frenemies, sperm banks – MacAskill’s poems, much like the felt experience of grief, seem to operate outside of time. The book’s early mythological focus makes the intimacy of the final poem, Miscarriage, even more arresting – we are dropped suddenly into the present moment, the star at the centre of sorrow. “Mourning / is the externalization of grief”, MacAskill writes, “the attempt to bear it into the world”. This is the work of *Shadow Blight*, a collection that shepherds the unspeakable.

Annick MacAskill is a poet and translator. She has published three collections of poetry, *No Meeting Without Body* (Gaspereau Press, 2018), which was longlisted for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award and shortlisted for the JM Abraham Award, *Murmurations* (Gaspereau Press, 2020), and *Shadow Blight* (Gaspereau Press, 2022), which won the Governor General’s Award in 2022. Her poems have appeared in journals across Canada and abroad and in the *Best Canadian Poetry* anthology series. She is a member of *Room Magazine*’s editorial collective and served as *Arc*’s Poet-in-Residence from 2021-22. MacAskill lives in Kijipuktuk (Halifax, Nova Scotia), on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq.

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HARROWINGS by Cecily Nicholson

TalonBooks



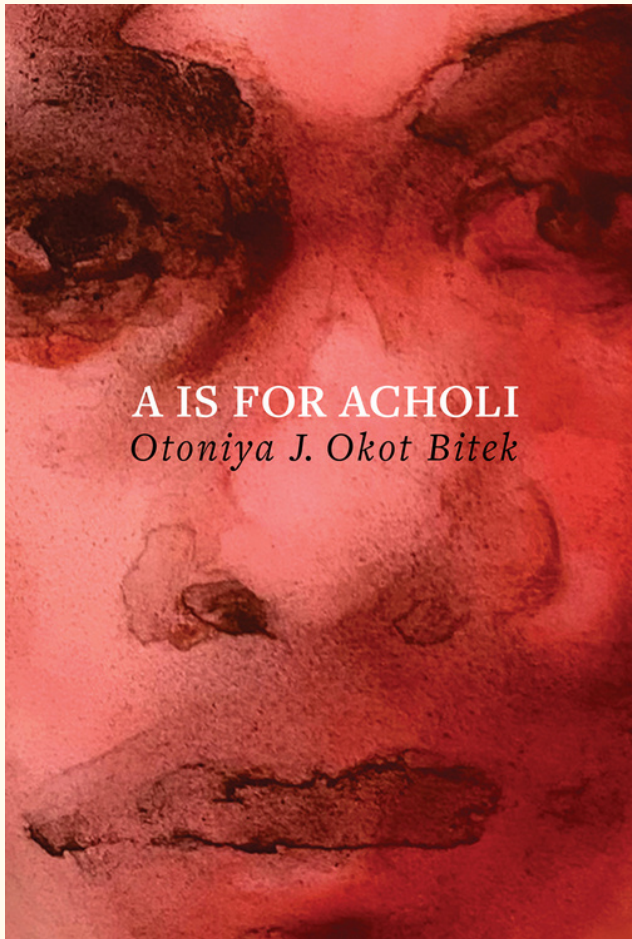
From the jurors: In lush and verdant syntax, *Harrowings* moves line by line, stitch by stitch, towards new languages for abolition, mutual aid, and relationships existing outside of colonial logics. *Harrowings* is a book grounded in citation, collaboration, and correspondence with incarcerated people and their families, with kin and community, and with the vocabulary of “land/crop/harvest”. If “happenings are a place”, these poems gesture toward a happening beyond the page — in the field, “the ditch / the brimming farm.” “we get to carry each other”, Nicholson insists, in a voice spilling over with wisdom, rhythm, rebellion, hard-earned. And so we do.

Cecily Nicholson is the author of four books, and past recipient of the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize, and the Governor General’s Literary Award for English-language poetry. She has held the Ellen and Warren Tallman Writer in Residence at Simon Fraser University, and Writer in Residence at the University of Windsor. She teaches at Emily Carr University of Art + Design and collaborates with community impacted by carcerality and food insecurity. Spring 2023, Nicholson presents the first annual Phyllis Webb Memorial Reading at SFU.

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A Is for Acholi by Otoniya J. Okot Bitek

Wolsak & Wynn



From the jurors: Opening with the line “I’ve been thinking is & is not”, *A Is for Acholi* explodes the ambivalences of diaspora, story, and memory. These poems move as works of visual art, skilfully using footnote and font, space and pattern, to rupture the silences and erasures of settler institutions, as well as the boundaries of the page. In Okot Bitek’s hands, every letter, every loss, is for Acholi. And yet, playfully, defiantly, *A Is for Acholi* prefigures an unsettled, an anti-settled, future; in the last words of this powerful, cohesive collection, a future where “we now know a world without empire.”

Otoniya J. Okot Bitek is a poet and scholar. Her collection of poetry, *100 Days* (University of Alberta, 2016), was nominated for several writing prizes including the 2017 BC Book Prize, the 2017 Pat Lowther Award, the 2017 Alberta Book Awards and the 2017 Canadian Authors Award for Poetry. It won the 2017 IndieFab Book of the Year Award for poetry and the 2017 Glenna Luschei Prize for African Poetry. From the fall of 2020 to the spring of 2021, Otoniya had the privilege of being the Ellen and Warren Tallman Writer-in-Residence and one of the SFU Jack and Doris Shadbolt Fellows. She has recently moved to Kingston, Ontario, to live on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe people. Otoniya is an Assistant Professor at Queen’s University, Kingston.

Pat Lowther Memorial Award Shortlist

Boat by Lisa Robertson

Coach House Books

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LISA ROBERTSON



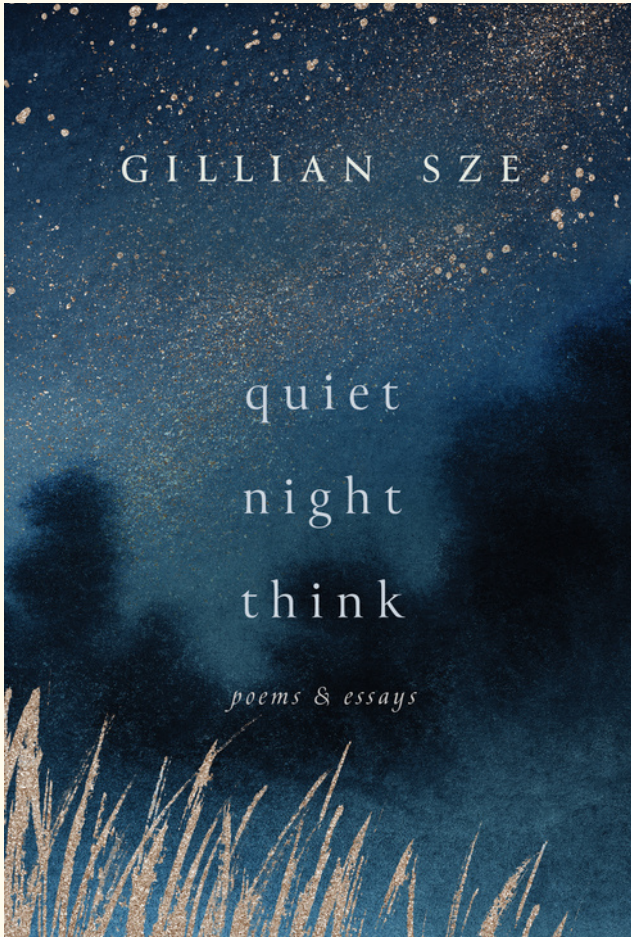
From the jurors: In *Boat*, Lisa Robertson sews lines garnered from two decades of notebooks into elegant assemblages about time, memory and womanhood. In the opening long poem “The Hut”, she parts the hair of the poem and runs a caesura down the page, creating a visually captivating channel. Such a detailed and highly-edited compilation places non sequiturs that pop like bright colour on a lapel, opening an area of parataxis that becomes a field of its own. At turns wry, incisive, and self-indicting, *Boat*’s craft is exciting, not only in the span it covers, but its specificity.

Lisa Robertson was born in Toronto, moved west at 18, and began publishing in the early 90s in Vancouver, where she participated in a network of collectives and artist-run-centres that included Artspeak Gallery, The Western Front, and Kootenay School of Writing. She studied at Simon Fraser University, was for several years an independent bookseller, and since 1995 has been a freelance writer, lecturer and teacher, holding residencies and visiting professorships at Banff Centre for the Arts, University of California at Berkeley and San Diego, Cambridge University, Princeton, and Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam. Her early books were published by New Star Books; since moving to France in 2003, Coach House Books and Book*Hug have been her publishers. She has twice been shortlisted for a Governor General’s literary Award— in 1997, for *Debbie: An Epic*, her second book of poetry, and in 2021, for *The Baudelaire Fractal*, her first novel.

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Quiet Night Think by Gillian Sze

ECW Press



From the jurors: *Quiet Night Think* is a contemplative collection about liminality, transformation, identity, and belonging. Interweaving lyric, prose poems and personal essays, Sze meditates on language, culture, the act of translation, new motherhood, and her own origins as a poet. But the true power of the book lies not in any one genre or subject, but in the spaces between them – the spaces in which Sze unearths unexpected connections and meaning. As she writes about the exhaustive haze of new motherhood, those first few weeks spent “sitting inside the moon,” Sze’s spare, unflinching lines draw our attention to the in-between moments of life, the concentric circles of becoming.

Gillian Sze is the author of five previous poetry collections, including *Peeling Rambutan*, *Redrafting Winter*, and *Panicle*, which were all finalists for the Quebec Writers’ Federation’s A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry. Her latest book, *Quiet Night Think*, was shortlisted for the same prize in 2022 and was also part of the Jury Selection for the 2022 Grand Prix du livre de Montréal. Gillian has also written books for children. Her debut picture book, *The Night Is Deep and Wide*, was listed as one of the Best Books for Kids in 2021 by the New York Public Library. Her work has attained starred reviews from *Quill & Quire*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Kirkus Reviews* and has been translated into Slovenian, French, Italian, Turkish, Hebrew, and Greek. Gillian studied Creative Writing and English Literature and received a PhD in études anglaises from Université de Montréal. Originally from Winnipeg, she now lives in Montreal.

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Established in 1966, the League of Canadian Poets is Canada's largest professional organization for established and emerging Canadian poets. The League of Canadian Poets' mandate is to enhance the status of poets and foster professional poetry communities. The League works to enlarge the audience for poetry by encouraging publication, performance, education, and recognition of Canadian poetry locally, nationally, and internationally, and supports equitable and inclusive freedom of expression in Canada.