



# Book Awards 2021

Raymond Souster Award  
*for a book of poetry by a League member*

## *Shortlist*

The Raymond Souster Award was started in 2013 to honour Raymond Souster, an early founder of the League of Canadian Poets. The award is presented annually for a book of poetry by a League member published in the preceding year. The award carries a \$2000 prize, and is sponsored by the LCP.

**Thank you to the jurors for the 2021 Raymond Souster Award:  
Cheryl Antao-Xavier, Jacob MacArthur Mooney and David Martin**

**The Outer Wards** by Sadiqa de Meijer

Véhicule Press/Signal Poetry



*From the jurors:* Sadiqa de Meijer's impeccably personal second collection *The Outer Wards* turns at its midpoint on a long descriptive poem set in Kingston's infamous "Skeleton Park." Its first half, comprising an exacting portrayal of new parenthood and its intimate world-building, slides into a distressing second act as the speaker's health begins rearranging borders both within and beyond her family. Consistently surprising with a haunting finale, it is a book of terror, wit, and (many, many) skeletons.

Sadiqa de Meijer's most recent books are the poetry collection *The Outer Wards* (Vehicule Press, 2020) and the language memoir *alfabet / alphabet* (Palimpsest Press, 2020). Her poetry, essays, and short fiction have appeared in journals internationally, and been awarded the CBC Poetry Prize, Arc's Poem of the Year award, and other honours. Her first book of poems, *Leaving Howe Island* (Oolichan Press) was a finalist for the Governor General's Award for Literature and the Pat Lowther Memorial Award. Her poems appear in several editions of *The Best of Canadian Poetry*, in the Montreal Prize Anthology, and in *The Next Wave: An Anthology of 21st Century Canadian Poetry*.

**Hell Light Flesh** by Klara du Plessis

Palimpsest Press



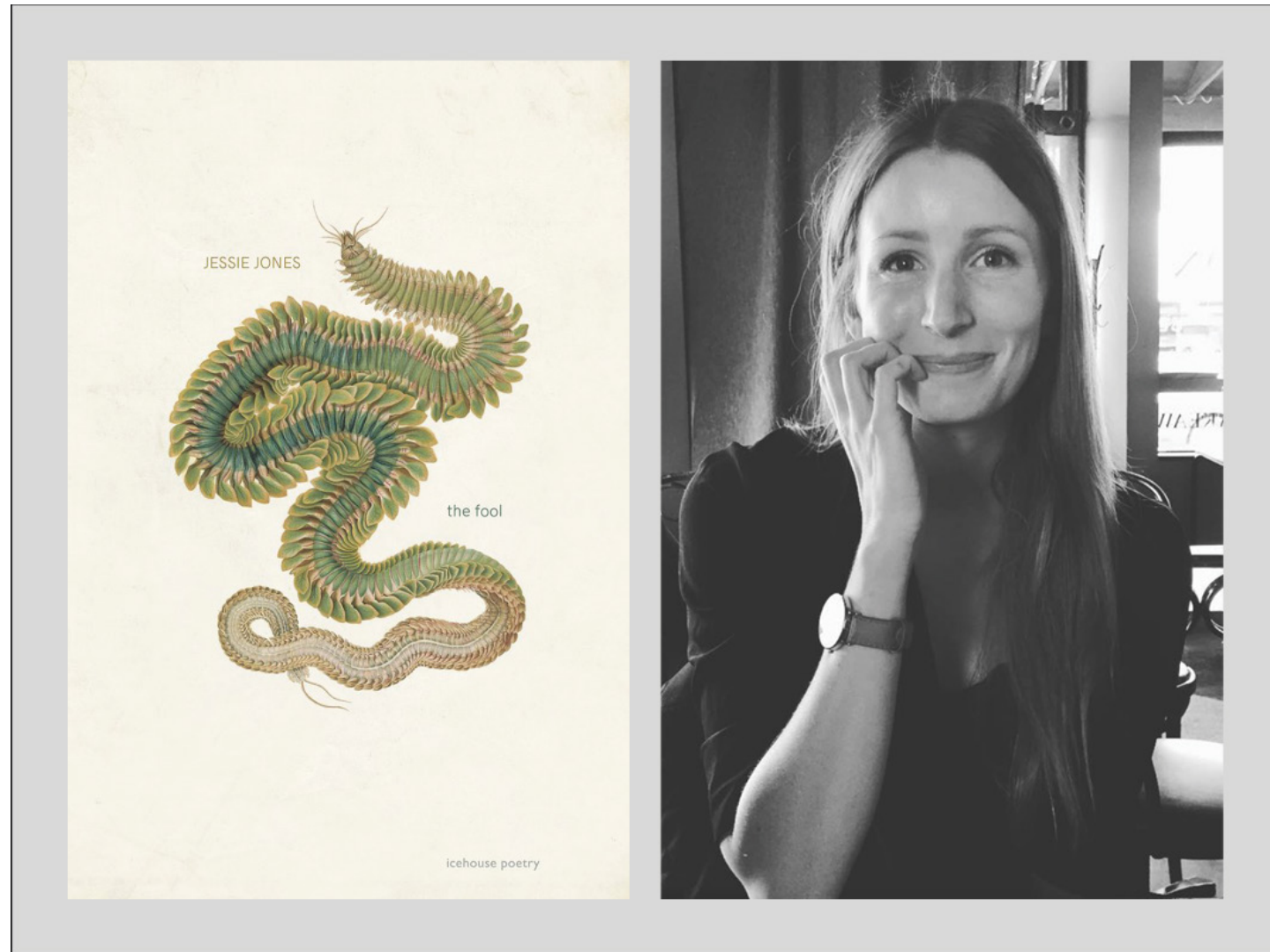
*From the jurors:* Too often it is a cloaked criticism to describe a work that takes violence and trauma as its subject matter as "cerebral," but in many ways Klara du Plessis's second collection *Hell Light Flesh* is emblematic of the expansive potential of such an approach to aggression and its victims. In three long poems, she speaks from the perspective of victims who are open and unshy: willing to show themselves to us, but just as eager to discover themselves in the telling. This book is structurally complex and psychologically insightful.

Winner of the 2019 Pat Lowther Memorial Award and shortlisted for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award, **Klara du Plessis'** debut collection, *Ekke*, was published to critical acclaim. Also the author of *Unfurl* from Gaspereau Press, her newest book is *Hell Light Flesh*, released Fall 2020 from Palimpsest Press. Klara is a PhD English Literature candidate at Concordia University, a researcher for SpokenWeb, and currently expanding her curatorial practice to include experimental Deep Curation poetry reading events, an approach which places poets' work in deliberate dialogue with each other and heightens the curator's agency toward the poetic product. She has recently been nominated for the Leon E. and Ann M. Pavlick Poetry Prize for contributions to the Canadian literary community, and is currently working on a video-poem in collaboration with Qirou Yang for Le Festival de la Poésie de Montréal, among other projects. Klara writes in English, Afrikaans, and translingually, and lives in Montreal.



**The Fool** by Jessie Jones

Goose Lane Editions



*From the jurors:* Jessie Jones's debut, *The Fool*, is a deep and varied bag of tricks from an exceptional new poet. Jones's voice is direct and confident, and she carries a knack for understatement that feels all the more uncanny for how surprising her poems can be at the level of the idea. Truly, this collection contains almost no lines whose endings are easily predicted by their beginnings. One immediately wants to line up for Jones's next ten books. She is a technical talent with gravitas and whimsy equal to her skills.

**Jessie Jones** is a writer living in Montreal. Her work has appeared in publications across Canada, the US and UK. Her first poetry collection, *The Fool*, was published by icehouse poetry in Fall 2020.

**Burning Province** by Michael Prior

McClelland &amp; Stewart



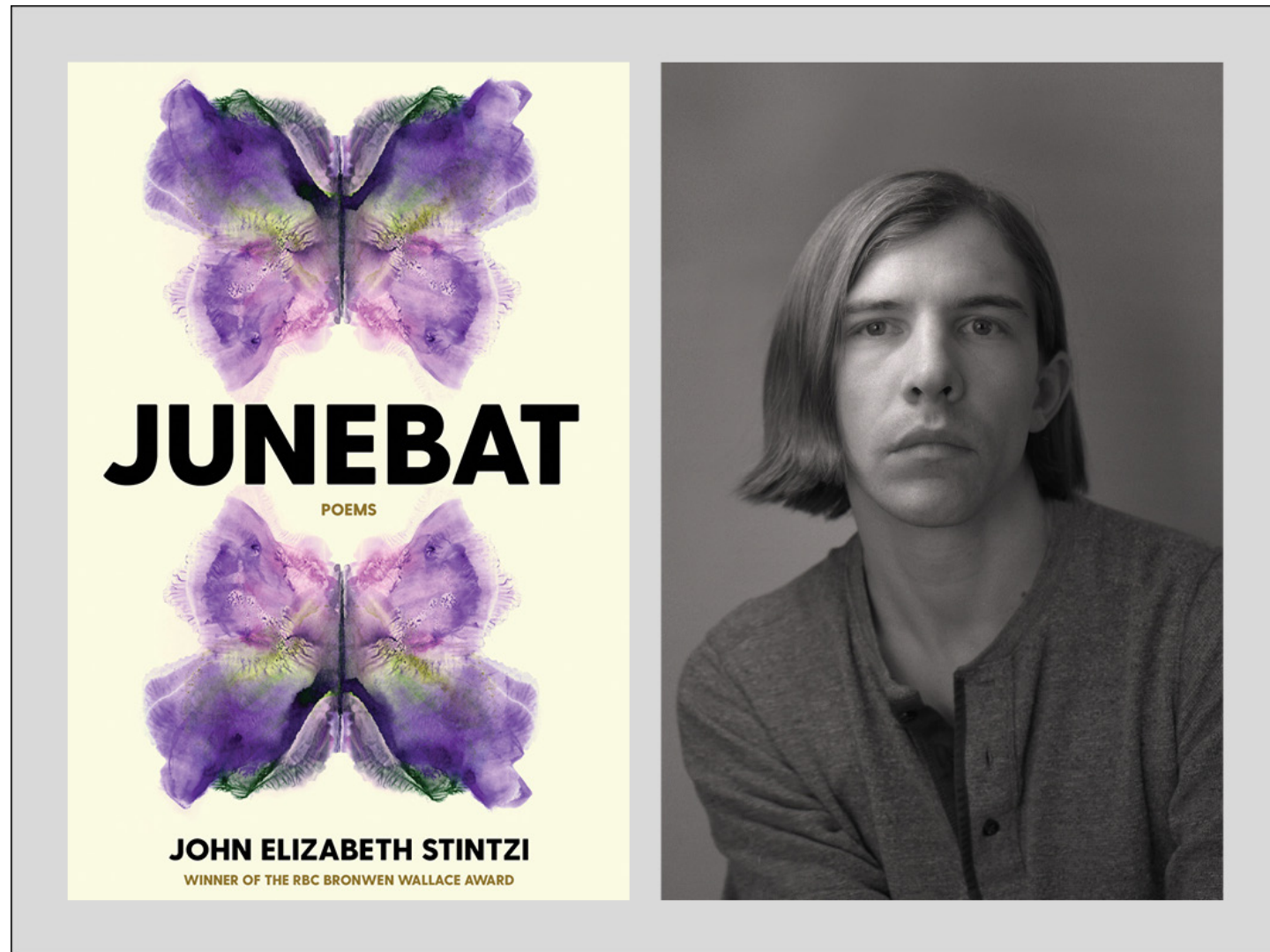
*From the jurors:* Extremely adept in his control of sound and image within free verse lyric form, Michael Prior leads the reader through shifts in location and time to contend with themes of history, identity, and belonging. *Burning Province* attempts to unravel memories of the poet's grandparents' time spent in a World War II internment camp for Japanese-Canadians, connect with a loved one who is drifting away cognitively at the end of life, and face questions of family and race when confronted by a border guard. Precise and stunning details captivate the reader and reveal connections that are unexpected, painful, and full of life.

**Michael Prior** is the author of *Burning Province* (McClelland & Stewart, 2020), winner of the English-language 2020 Canada-Japan Literary Award, and *Model Disciple* (Véhicule Press, 2016), which was named one of the best books of the year by CBC. He is a past winner of *Magma Poetry's* Editors' Prize, *The Walrus's* Poetry Prize, and *Matrix Magazine's* Lit POP Award for Poetry. He is the recipient of fellowships from the Jerome Hill Foundation, the Cullman Center for Writers and Scholars, and Hawthornden International Retreat for Writers. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *Narrative Magazine*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *PN Review*, the Academy of American Poets' Poem-A-Day series, and elsewhere.



**Junebat** by John Elizabeth Stintzi

House of Anansi Press



*From the jurors:* In their striking debut, John Elizabeth Stintzi posits an amorphous entity—the Junebat—as an identity-space seeker rooting for place within shifting gender divides. They belie the façade of self-assurance, intimating at a skin and body that feel strange to inhabit. Junebat is a fearless addition to gender identity poetics, but Stintzi’s connections extrapolate across the spectrum of the disenfranchised.

**John Elizabeth Stintzi** is a non-binary writer who grew up on a cattle farm in northwestern Ontario. JES’s work has been awarded the 2019 RBC Bronwen Wallace Award for Emerging Writers, *The Malahat Review*’s 2019 Long Poem Prize, and the inaugural Sator New Works Award. Their writing has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Kenyon Review*, *Fiddlehead*, *The Malahat Review*, *Best Canadian Poetry*, and many others. JES is the author of the novel *Vanishing Monuments* and the poetry collection *Junebat*. Their newest novel—*My Volcano*—is forthcoming from Two Dollar Radio (US) and Arsenal Pulp Press (Canada) in the spring of 2022.

**Word Problems** by Ian Williams

Coach House Books



*From the jurors:* In *Word Problems*, Ian Williams experiments with poetic form, syntax, and lineation to movingly consider experiences of race and racism in Canada. He engages with a number of interesting procedures, such as bisecting found texts, whirling lines in infinite loops, and setting impossible questions. These inventive methods are linked with suppositional narratives that wind through the collection. Williams’s imaginative use of craft, which is always centered on critical social issues, displays how language can both dissemble and unmask the complexities of relationships, mental health, and identity.

**Ian Williams** writes poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. He is the author of *Word Problems*, a poetry collection that considers the ethical and political issues of our time as math and grammar problems. His previous collection, *Personals*, was shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize. His novel, *Reproduction*, won the 2019 Scotiabank Giller Prize, and his short story collection, *Not Anyone’s Anything*, won the Danuta Gleed Literary Award for the best first collection of short fiction in Canada. He is currently an English professor at the University of Toronto after several years at UBC. A book of essays on race, *Disorientation*, is coming this fall.  
www.ianwilliams.ca