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Press Release

League of Canadian Poets celebrates three winning titles of annual book awards

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TORONTO - The League of Canadian Poets is excited to announce the winners of three annual book awards celebrating books of poetry published in 2023. Each award carries a \$2,000 prize for the winner. Congratulations to:

Xanax Cowboy by **Hannah Green**, published by House of Anansi Press and winner of the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award.

Vixen by **Sandra Ridley**, published by Book*hug Press and winner of the Pat Lowther Memorial Award.

Sonnets from a Cell by **Bradley Peters**, published by Brick Books and winner of the Raymond Souster Award.

The Gerald Lampert Memorial Award, for a debut book of poetry, is given in the memory of Gerald Lampert, an arts administrator who organized authors' tours and took a particular interest in the work of new writers.

The Pat Lowther Memorial Award is awarded memory of the late Pat Lowther, whose career was cut short by her untimely death in 1975. As a women's prize, the Pat Lowther Memorial Award is inclusive of cis women, trans women, and non-binary writers who feel comfortable being recognized by a women's prize.

The Raymond Souster Award, which celebrates a new book of poetry by a League member, honors Raymond Souster, a founder of the League.

Jury comments and author bios follow.

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Of *Xanax Cowboy*, Gerald Lampert Memorial Award jurors Conyer Clayton, Michael V. Smith, and Shannon Webb-Campbell wrote:

Rarely does a book seamlessly blend ambitious structure, humour, and a consistently compelling voice, but *Xanax Cowboy* does just that. Guiding the reader through a visceral story of addiction and mental illness, the camera pans out at just the right moments, the narrator calls you closer, the scene repeats. This is a striving and cohesive debut book unlike any other. Cinematic, hilarious, harrowing, vulnerable, and visual, *Xanax Cowboy* lassos you in and doesn't let you go.

Of *Vixen*, Pat Lowther Memorial Award jurors Manahil Bandukwala, Jenna Butler, and Isabella Wang wrote:

Sandra Ridley's *Vixen* is a brilliant, tightly woven text that explores the paralleled devastation wrought by the fox hunt, intimate partner violence, and environmental collapse. This book-length poem weaves across the page in varying forms, dodging and looping back on itself, much as the titular vixen does in her flight from the hounds. In its carefully crafted linked narratives, *Vixen* renders us invested observers and asks complex questions about the nature of obligations of witnessing.

Of *Sonnets from a Cell*, Raymond Souster Award jurors Tara Borin, Adebe DeRango-Adem, and David Ly wrote:

In *Sonnets from a Cell*, Peters distills liberation from his experiences of incarceration through the confines of the sonnet form with remarkable vulnerability and wit. These technically refined poems upend notions of who is "free" and who is "protected" by providing a nuanced, emotional framework for why the abolition of prison systems is so urgent. In his elegant and poignant debut, Peters writes with a refreshing and immediately memorable voice, inviting us to experience his thoughtful perspective as soon as we "[e]nter the cell and whisper Here I am."

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Hannah Green is a writer and poetry editor at CV2. Her debut collection *Xanax Cowboy* won the 2023 Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry. She likes to draw sad cowboys when she isn't writing about them.

On being selected as the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award Winner, Green writes: "It is so exciting!!"

Bradley Peters grew up in the Fraser Valley, graduated from UBC's Creative Writing Program, and has since been shortlisted or named runner-up for several awards. Bradley won the Short Grain Contest, and his poems have recently appeared in *Arc*, *Geist*, *Grain*, *SubTerrain*, *The Malahat Review*, and elsewhere. Bradley's debut poetry collection, *Sonnets from a Cell*, is published with Brick Books. Since its release, *Sonnets from a Cell* was listed as one of CBC's Best Books of the Year, and Bradley has been a featured guest on Radio Q with Tom Power. The poems in Bradley Peters' debut collection mix inmate speech, prison psychology, skateboard slang, and contemporary lyricism in a way that is tough and tender, and that critiques the structures that sentence so many to lose.

Peters writes: "Never in my wildest dreams would I have anticipated such an incredible honour. My biggest hope is that being the winner of this award will help illuminate the systemic issues within our countries inherently violent penal system. I am floored and full of gratitude."

Sandra Ridley is the author of three chapbooks and five books of poetry, the most recent of which is *Vixen*, published by Book*Hug Press in the fall of 2023. Ridley has been nominated for the Ontario Arts Council's KM Hunter Artist Award for Mid-Career Writer and the Ottawa Arts Council's Mid-Career Artist Award. She lives in Ottawa.

On being chosen as the winner of the Pat Lowther Memorial Award, Ridley writes: "Given Pat Lowther's life and work, and the full context of this award, there is no higher honour for *Vixen*. I am deeply grateful."