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THE  
NATIONAL  
POETRY  
SERIES

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*Overview*

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## PRAISE FOR THE NATIONAL POETRY SERIES

“By enabling five new volumes of poetry to appear annually over the past 35 years, the National Poetry Series has radically changed the face of American poetry. A number of poets who are now among our best-known first appeared there as beginners, and might never have been heard from were it not for the publication opportunity the Series offers.

It’s vital to our literary health as a nation that the work continue.”

—JOHN ASHBERY

“Every beginning poet depends on the word ‘yes’. It’s a word that isn’t only for the benefit of the writer, it is also for the reader, hungry for discovery, for the publisher, itching to be persuaded, and the loud, wide and deep sound we call the voice of American Poetry, waiting to add one more layer of affirmation to its shifting, never ending chorus. This is the work The National Poetry Series has been doing, and doing well, and needs to continue doing. Listen: There is always a new voice, wringing out what it’s picked up along the way, plumage out, just about to warble. You want to know what they know, yes?”

—CORNELIUS EADY

“The National Poetry Series is one of the rare prizes that automatically confers distinction. Not only that: it confers distinction on five poets each year, making it the only important prize that acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of our culture. Each year it allows the publication of five poets of unusual talent and, as has been proven, infinite potential. It must continue to thrive.”

—LOUISE GLÜCK

“Happy to say exactly what NPS means to me. The series lead me to Penguin, the publisher I have had for twenty years, and to my twenty-year friendship with my editor, Paul Slovak. NPS brought us together. The series is directly responsible for my publishing career. I don’t suppose I can be more exact than that. NPS is the North Star of all poetry competitions. Having judged it twice, I know it attracts more diverse and more gifted entries than any other contest I’ve judged these last twenty or so years.”

—TERRANCE HAYES

“The National Poetry Series is a treasure. Over four decades, this institution has given us access to poets who are brilliantly imaginative, deeply feeling, and revelatory. With a selection process that is tender and precise, you know when you pick up these books, you’ll be hit in the gut. And your mind will expand. I’m so very grateful for it.”

—IMANI PERRY

“The National Poetry Series has brought us Larry Levis’ *The Dollmaker’s Ghost*, Naomi Shihab Nye’s *Hugging the Jukebox*, Rigoberto Gonzalez’s *So Often the Pitcher Goes to Water until It Breaks*, Patricia Smith’s *Teahouse of the Almighty*, among other classic collections. I can’t imagine a world in which these works do not exist. Which is to say, I can’t and don’t want to imagine a world without NPS.”

—NICOLE SEALEY

“It’s impossible not to be dazzled by the National Poetry Series—by its continuity and vitality as a literary adventure across almost a half century, by the amazing poets it’s given us through the excellent judgment and distinction of the poets who choose them, and by the labors of love that have made the choosing possible and have kept the series alive and flourishing through decades of changes. I can’t think of an enterprise in literature—or, in fact, anywhere else in American culture—that is broader and more generous in intention, and more precise and effective and consistent in achievement.”

—VIJAY SESHADRI

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“As a reader, poet and educator invested in the ever-expanding canon of African American poetry, I am forever indebted to the National Poetry Series as a publisher of books by Sterling A. Brown, Nathaniel Mackey, Thylas Moss, Ed Roberson, Cyrus Cassels, Kevin Young, Patricia Smith, Terrance Hayes, Tyehimba Jess, Douglas Kearney and Joshua Bennett. And NPS is as much an emblem of extraordinary curatorial vision as it is a home for the most vital voices in poetry. I owe more than I can succinctly say to this series. So does American poetry.”

—**TRACY K. SMITH**

“The National Poetry Series has been the single most important means for discovering who the best young American poets are and for publishing their first books. The list of poets who have been its beneficiaries is astonishing.”

—**MARK STRAND**

“Every year I look forward to buying the five books published in the National Poetry Series. It’s like having a curator who gathers again and again the most exciting and diverse collections of poetry in the country, selections that continue to represent the breadth of American poetry. Not only is it the most distinguished series, it is also the only one I know of that consistently identifies, at an early stage in their careers, the writers we are likely to be reading for a long time.”

—**NATASHA TRETHEWEY**

“In the last 35 years, a plethora of poetry contests have sprung up, but the National Poetry Series still towers above the rest. Every year, it illuminates not just one, but a spectrum of poets from a variety of identities and approaches. As splendidly various as poetry itself, it has launched the careers of a constellation of our brightest stars.”

—**MONICA YOUN**

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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The National Poetry Series is a literary awards program which sponsors the publication of five books of poetry each year. The manuscripts, solicited through an annual Open Competition, are selected by poets of national stature and published by a distinguished group of trade, university, and small presses.

The specific purposes for which this organization is incorporated are as follows:

- ◆ To add in a meaningful way to the number of poetry books published each year, making possible books which might not otherwise be published by providing both financial support and assistance in the process of manuscript solicitation, selection, and promotion.
- ◆ To support poetry and increase the audience for poetry by heightening its visibility among readers, broadening publisher involvement with its publication, and increasing booksellers' willingness to display and promote it.
- ◆ To give American poets, of all ethnic and racial groups, gender, religion, and poetic style, access to publishing outlets not ordinarily available to them.
- ◆ To involve poets of national renown in the identification of emerging or less well-established poets.
- ◆ To provide the conditions and mechanisms for a group of trade, university, and small press publishers to work together on the promotion and marketing of five poetry books each year, thus providing a structural model for collective literary publishing ventures.

"How do today's poets, especially lesser-known ones, find an audience? How are readers, or would-be readers, introduced to new poets? Efforts to make this connection come alive deserve our gratitude and support, and the National Poetry Series is one of the most successful and long-lived. If you're familiar with it, you know the quality and quantity of books it's brought before the public. If you're not, take a look at the list of works and poets (not to mention those who've served as judges)—and decide for yourself."

—JEFFREY BROWN,  
PBS NewsHour



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## CURRENT PARTICIPATING PUBLISHERS

The winning books from the 2020 National Poetry Series competition will be published by the following presses:

- ♦ **Milkweed Editions**  
Minneapolis, Minnesota
- ♦ **Ecco**  
New York, New York
- ♦ **Beacon Press**  
Boston, Massachusetts
- ♦ **Penguin Books**  
New York, New York
- ♦ **University of Georgia Press**  
Atlanta, Georgia

“Every year I look forward to buying the five books published in the National Poetry Series. It’s like having a curator who gathers again and again the most exciting and diverse collections of poetry in the country, selections that continue to represent the breadth of American poetry. Not only is it the most distinguished series, it is also the only one I know of that consistently identifies, at an early stage in their careers, the writers we are likely to be reading for a long time.”

—NATASHA TRETHEWEY

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- ◆ Russell Banks
- ◆ James Berman
- ◆ Mariana Cook
- ◆ Andrew Foote
- ◆ Stephen Graham
- ◆ Daniel Halpern
- ◆ William Kistler
- ◆ Alan Klein
- ◆ Francine Prose
- ◆ Jeffrey Ravetch
- ◆ Glenn Schaeffer
- ◆ Lea Hillman Simonds
- ◆ Paul Slovak
- ◆ Tracy K. Smith
- ◆ Margaret B. Thornton
- ◆ Natasha Trethewey

“The National Poetry Series is a treasure. Over four decades, this institution has given us access to poets who are brilliantly imaginative, deeply feeling, and revelatory. With a selection process that is tender and precise, you know when you pick up these books, you’ll be hit in the gut. And your mind will expand. I’m so very grateful for it.”

—IMANI PERRY

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## ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Daniel Halpern first proposed The National Poetry Series (NPS) in a speech at the Library of Congress in 1975. As a teacher, poet, small press publisher and editor, Halpern was frustrated by the discrepancy between the amount of quality poetry he knew was being written and the number of poetry volumes being published. If there are so many poets in the United States, he wondered, why are there not more poetry books available? How can we help these poets to be heard at a time when the bottom line is limiting their availability, at a time when we most need to hear them?

Most major trade publishers argue, if only by their silence, that poetry is in no way cost-effective to produce. In response to the need to enhance the availability of good poetry, Halpern devised a plan whereby he could reduce cost and difficulty by facilitating the selection process and promotion of books through a nationwide contest with our most eminent and talented poets as judges. He presented this plan at the Library of Congress as an annual contest in which five winning manuscripts would be published with the help of modest subsidies, by participating trade and university presses, thus increasing the amount of quality poetry available to the public.

Although not present for the speech itself, the novelist James Michener read a transcript later published by the Library of Congress. He was so moved by the issues outlined in this speech that he immediately called Halpern and offered funding to initiate NPS. He explained his reasons for doing so in a statement released to the press:

*I thought it deplorable that... the poet was at such a disadvantage, and it occurred to me that in my education the study of poetry was of at least as much significance as the study of prose. And in the conduct of my present life I found myself reading rather more poetry than prose....*

*I did so because I needed poetry. It was an essential part of my inheritance and I would feel impoverished without it, and without constant renewal....*

*But I also suspected that while I was writing my long books of prose, there might be some gifted young woman at the University of Michigan who was saying it all in some eight-line verse, and saying it much better. There was a real chance that her verse might live a hell of a lot longer than my eight hundred pages, and I deemed it deplorable that I could get published while she could not.*

*I would not like to be a party to any publishing system which was able to publish prose but no poetry, because our nation probably needed poets a lot more than it needed novelists.*

With the help of Edward J. Piszek of The Copernicus Society, Mr. Michener's gift was increased in such a way as to allow the yearly support to be made from interest only, thus guaranteeing NPS a permanent stream of yearly assistance. Additional start-up funding was provided by The Ford Foundation,



Daniel Halpern

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and five distinguished publishing houses volunteered to participate in the program. With the efforts and assistance of these and other individuals, foundations, and corporations, The National Poetry Series was begun in 1978, leading to its first contest in 1979, and its first cycle of books published in 1980. Since those first years, NPS has received funding from the Lannan Foundation, Tiny Tiger Foundation, Exxon, the Mellon Foundation, the Mobil Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and The Witter Bynner Foundation for Poetry—as well as several generous, private contributions.

Over the last 43 years, The National Poetry Series has continued to support the annual publication of five books of poetry. More than 200 books have been sponsored by NPS, in collaboration with the accomplished poets who have served as judges and a distinguished roster of trade, university, and small press publishers.

NPS solicits and selects manuscripts through an annual open competition which gives access to all American poets, regardless of age, previous publication or poetic style. The range of judges and publishers who have worked with NPS has resulted in an eclectic collection of winning books.

NPS has sponsored the publication of poetry by an impressive array of both new and more established talent, ushering in the first books of Marie Howe, Denis Johnson, Laura Mullen, and Sherod Santos, and honoring the continuing achievements of such mature poets as Billy Collins, Stephen Dunn, Stephen Dobyns and Sterling Brown.



James A. Michener

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## RECOGNITION FOR NPS POETS

2017 NPS winner **J. Michael Martinez**' acclaimed collection of poems, *Museum of the Americas*, was longlisted for the 2018 National Book Award in Poetry.

**Jos Charles**, 2017 NPS winner for *feeld*, was nominated for the following awards:

- Finalist for the **Pulitzer Prize**
- Finalist for the **Los Angeles Times Book Prize**
- Longlisted for the **National Book Award**
- A New Yorker Best Poetry Book of 2018
- A Vulture Best Poetry Book of 2018
- A Library Journal Best Book of 2018

**Diane Louie**, 2020 NPS winner of *Fractal Shores*, was awarded the 2021 John Pollard Foundation International Poetry Prize for her debut collection of poems.

2014 MacArthur Fellow and 2010 National Book Award winner, **Terrance Hayes**, is a former NPS winner for his collection, *Hip Logic*. The most inspiring note to the success of his NPS book, is that additional printings were done by NPS participating press Penguin Books, who then went on to publish Terrance's future work.

Recently awarded a 2014 Guggenheim Fellowship, NPS-winner **Adrian Matejka**, was also named a finalist for the 2014 Pulitzer Prize and the 2013 National Book Award. (NPS winner **Martha Ronk** also was a National Book Award finalist that year.) Adrian also was nominated for a 2010 NAACP Image Award for his poetry.

**Ange Mlinko** was awarded the 2009 Randall Jarrell Award in Poetry Criticism, given by the Poetry Foundation. Ms. Mlinko's NPS-winning collection, *Starred Wire*, also was a finalist for the **James Laughlin Award**.

2008 National Book Award winner **Mark Doty** won the National Book Critics' Circle Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for his 1992 winning manuscript, *My Alexandria*.

Winner **Gabriel Spera** was awarded the 2004 PEN Center USA Award for Poetry, for his collection *The Standing Wave*.

**Sandra Alcosser** was chosen for the 1998 James Laughlin Award, honoring her second collection of poems, *Except by Nature*.

"By enabling five new volumes of poetry to appear annually over the past 35 years, the National Poetry Series has radically changed the face of American poetry. A number of poets who are now among our best-known first appeared there as beginners, and might never have been heard from were it not for the publication opportunity the Series offers. It's vital to our literary health as a nation that the work continue."

—**JOHN ASHBERY**

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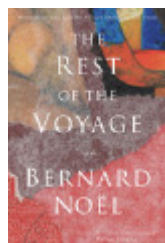
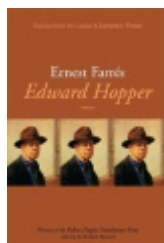
## THE ROBERT FAGLES PRIZE

The National Poetry Series established the Robert Fagles Translation Prize in 2007. This award was given every other year to a translator who has shown exceptional skill in the translation of contemporary international poetry into English.

Before his death in 2008, Mr. Fagles told National Poetry Series Director, Daniel Halpern, “When you honor the act of translation, you stand to make the act of reading what it is: an enterprise of interaction among different times and different regions of the world itself.”

NPS has awarded three translators this honor. The first winner was **Marilyn Hacker’s** work, *King of a Hundred Horsemen*, a translation of French poet Marie Etienne, chosen by judge Robert Hass and published in 2008 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

**Lawrence Venuti’s** project, *Edward Hopper*, is a translation of Catalan poet Ernest Farrés, and was published in 2009 by Graywolf Press after being chosen by acclaimed poet Richard Howard. Recently, Graywolf published *The Rest of the Voyage*, **Eléna Rivera’s** translation of French poet Bernard Noël.



The core activity of NPS continues to be the annual sponsorship of five books of poetry each year, selected by leading poets through an Open Competition and published by a group of trade, small press, and university press publishers. With the continuing generous support of foundations and patrons of the arts, NPS will continue its activities with poets, editors, booksellers, publishers and winners to promote and support the vitality of poetry.



Robert Fagles

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## THE PAZ PRIZE

The National Poetry Series and Miami Book Fair have established The Paz Prize for Poetry. This biannual award—named in the spirit of the late Nobel Prize-winning poet, Octavio Paz—honors a previously unpublished book of poetry written originally in Spanish by an American resident. An open competition is held each May, when an esteemed Spanish-speaking poet selects a winning manuscript. The book is then published in a bilingual edition by Akashic Press, and honored at the Miami Book Fair.

In 2012, **Dinapiera Di Donato** was the first winner of the Paz Prize. She has received much acclaim for her collection, *Colaterales/Collateral*.

Other winners include:

2014

*Nueva Monedas* by **Carlos Pintado**.

Chosen by Richard Blanco.

2016

*Miami Century Fox* by **Legna Rodriguez Iglesias**.

Chosen by Achy Obejas.

2018

*Ofrezco mi corazón como una diana* by **Johanny Vazquez Paz**.

Chosen by Rigoberto Gonzalez.

The 2020 Paz Prize was awarded to Mexican American poet, **Alejandro Perez-Cortes**, for his work *Ima y Coli: Arbol que nunca fue Semilla*. Perez-Cortes' work was chosen by Paz Prize judge Jose Kozer, and will be published by Akashic Books in the fall of 2021.



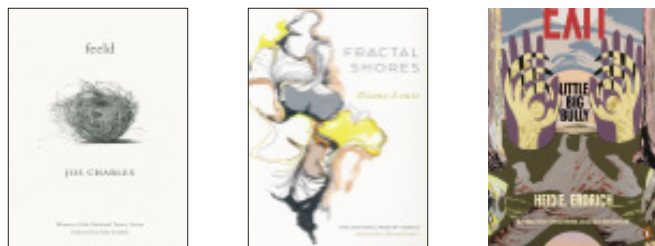
Alejandro Perez-Cortes



Octavio Paz

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## NPS WINNERS 1979–2020



### 2020

*Borderline Fortune* by Teresa K. Miller. Chosen by Carol Muske-Dukes. (Penguin Books)  
*Requeening* by Amanda Moore. Chosen by Ocean Vuong. (Ecco)  
*[WHITE]* by Trevor Ketner. Chosen by Forrest Gander. (University of Georgia Press)  
*Philomath* by Devon Walker-Figueroa. Chosen by Sally Keith. (Milkweed Editions)  
*Dear Specimen* by W.J. Herbert. Chosen by Kwame Dawes. (Beacon Press)

### 2019

*Little Big Bully* by Heid Erdrich. Chosen by Amy Gerstler. (Penguin Books)  
*Field Music* by Alexandria Hall. Chosen by Rosanna Warren. (Ecco)  
*Fractal Shores* by Diane Louie. Chosen by Sherod Santos. (University of Georgia Press)  
*Thrown in the Throat* by Benjamin Garcia. Chosen by Kazim Ali. (Milkweed Editions)  
*An Incomplete List of Names* by Michael Torres. Chosen by Raquel Salas Rivera. (Beacon Press)

### 2018

*Fear of Description* by Daniel Poppick. Chosen by Branda Shaughnessy. (Penguin Books)  
*Nervous System* by Rosalie Moffett. Chosen by Monica Youn. (Ecco)  
*Valuing* by Christopher Kondrich. Chosen by Jericho Brown. (University of Georgia Press)  
*Eyes Bottle Dark with a Mouthful of Flowers* by Jake Skeets. Chosen by Kathy Fagan. (Milkweed Editions)  
*It's Not Magic* by Jon Sands. Chosen by Richard Blanco. (Beacon Press)

### 2017

*Museum of the Americas* by J. Michael Martinez. Chosen by Cornelius Eady. (Penguin Books)  
*The Lumberjack's Dove* by GennaRose Nethercott. Chosen by Louise Gluck. (Ecco)  
*What It Doesn't Have to Do With* by Lindsay Bernal. Chosen by Paul Guest. (University of Georgia Press)  
*feeld* by Jos Charles. Chosen by Fady Joudah. (Milkweed Editions)  
*Anarcha Speaks* by Dominique Christina. Chosen by Tyehimba Jess. (Beacon Press)

### 2016

*Madness* by Sam Sax. Chosen by Terrance Hayes. (Penguin Books)  
*Civil Twilight* by Jeffrey Schultz. Chosen by David M. St. John. (Ecco)  
*Thaw* by Chelsea Dingman. Chosen by Allison Joseph. (University of Georgia Press)  
*I Know Your Kind* by William Brewer. Chosen by Ada Limon. (Milkweed Editions)  
*For Want of Water* by Sasha Pimentel. Chosen by Gregory Pardlo. (Beacon Press)

### 2015

*The Sobbing School* by Joshua Bennett. Chosen by Eugene Gloria. (Penguin Books)  
*The WUG Test* by Jennifer Kronovet. Chosen by Eliza Griswold. (Ecco)  
*Trebuchet* by Danniell Schoonebeek. Chosen by Kevin Prufer. (University of Georgia Press)  
*Not on the Last Day, But on the Very Last* by Justin Boening. Chosen by Wayne Miller. (Milkweed Editions)  
*Scriptorium* by Melissa Range. Chosen by Tracy K. Smith. (Beacon Press)





## 2014

*Monograph*, by Simeon Berry. Chosen by Denise Duhamel. (University of Georgia Press)  
*Let's Let That Are Not Yet: Inferno*, by Ed Pavli. Chosen by John Keene. (Fence Books)  
*The Regret Histories*, by Joshua Poteat. Chosen by Campbell McGrath. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*Double Jinx*, by Nancy Reddy. Chosen by Alex Lemon. (Milkweed Editions)  
*Viability*, by Sarah Vap. Chosen by Mary Jo Bang. (Penguin Books)

## 2013

*Ampersand Revisited*, by Simeon Berry. Chosen by Ariana Reines. (Fence Books)  
*Trespass*, by Thomas Dooley. Chosen by Charlie Smith. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*Bone Map*, by Sara Eliza Johnson. Chosen by Martha Collins. (Milkweed Editions)  
*Its Day Being Gone*, by Rose McLarney. Chosen by Robert Wrigley. (Penguin Books)  
*What Ridiculous Things We Could Ask of Each Other*, by Jeffrey Schultz. Chosen by Kevin Young. (University of Georgia Press)

## 2012

*the meatgirl whatever*, by Kristin Hatch. Chosen by K. Silem Mohammad. (Fence Books)  
*The Narrow Circle*, by Nathan Hoks. Chosen by Dean Young. (Penguin Books)  
*The Cloud that Contained the Lightning*, by Cynthia Lowen. Chosen by Nikky Finney. (University of Georgia Press)  
*Visiting Hours at the Color Line*, by Ed Pavli. Chosen by Dan Beachy-Quick. (Milkweed Editions)  
*Failure & I Bury the Body*, by Sasha West. Chosen by D. Nurkse. (HarperCollins Publishers)

## 2011

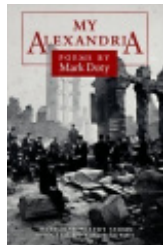
*The Apothecary's Heir*, by Julianne Buchsbaum. Chosen by Lucie Brock-Broido. (Penguin Books)  
*Your Invitation to a Modest Breakfast*, by Hannah Gamble. Chosen by Bernadette Mayer. (Fence Books)  
*Green is for World*, by Juliana Leslie. Chosen by Ange Mlinko. (Coffee House Press)  
*Exit, Civilian*, by Idra Novey. Chosen by Patricia Smith. (University of Georgia Press)  
*Maybe the Saddest Thing*, by Marcus Wicker. Chosen by D.A. Powell. (HarperCollins Publishers)

## 2010

*The Lifting Dress*, by Lauren Berry. Chosen by Terrance Hayes. (Penguin Books)  
*Stutter*, by William Billiter. Chosen by Hilda Raz. (University of Georgia Press)  
*Exhibit of Forking Paths*, by James Grinwis. Chosen by Eleni Sikelianos. (Coffee House Press)  
*The Lamp with Wings: 60 love sonnets*, by M.A. Vizsolyi. Chosen by Ilya Kaminsky. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*A Map Predetermined and Chance*, by Laura Wetherington. Chosen by C.S. Giscombe. (Fence Books)

## 2009

*Sarah—Of Fragments and Lines*, by Julie Carr. Chosen by Eileen Myles. (Coffee House Press)  
*Here Be Monsters*, by Colin Cheney. Chosen by David Wojahn. (University of Georgia Press)  
*Burn Lake*, by Carrie Fountain. Chosen by Natasha Trethewey. (Penguin Books)  
*Ideal Cities*, by Erika Meitner. Chosen by Paul Guest. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*The Network*, by Jena Osman. Chosen by Prageeta Sharma. (Fence Books)



## 2008

*If Birds Gather Your Hair for Nesting*, by Anna Journey. Chosen by Thomas Lux. (University of Georgia Press)  
*The Black Automaton*, by Douglas Kearney. Chosen by Catherine Wagner. (Fence Books)  
*Mixology*, by Adrian Matejka. Chosen by Kevin Young. (Penguin Books)  
*Bird Eating Bird*, by Kristin Naca. Chosen by Yusef Komunyakaa for The National Poetry Series mtvU Prize. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*catch light*, by Sarah O'Brien. Chosen by David Shapiro. (Coffee House Press)

## 2007

*Installations*, by Joe Bonomo. Chosen by Naomi Shihab Nye. (Penguin Books)  
*Spring*, by Oni Buchanan. Chosen by Mark Doty. (University of Illinois Press)  
*House Held Together by Winds*, by Sabra Loomis. Chosen by James Tate. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*The Cosmopolitan*, by Donna Stonecipher. Chosen by John Yau. (Coffee House Press)  
*Collapsible Poetics Theater*, by Rodrigo Toscano. Chosen by Marjorie Welish. (Fence Books)

## 2006

*The Scented Fox*, by Laynie Browne. Chosen by Alice Notley. (Wave Books)  
*Novel Pictorial Noise*, by Noah Eli Gordon. Chosen by John Ashbery. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*Veil and Burn*, by Laurie Clements Lambeth. Chosen by Maxine Kumin. (University of Illinois Press)  
*Vertigo*, by Martha Ronk. Chosen by C.D. Wright. (Coffee House Press)  
*Nervous Systems*, by William Stobb. Chosen by August Kleinzahler. (Penguin Books)

## 2005

*Michelangelo's Seizure*, by Steve Gehrke. Chosen by T.R. Hummer. (University of Illinois Press)  
*The Anatomy Theater*, by Nadine Meyer. Chosen by John Koethe. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*Teahouse of the Almighty*, by Patricia Smith. Chosen by Edward Sanders. (Coffee House Press)  
*Three, Breathing*, by S.A. Stepanek. Chosen by Mary Ruefle. (Wave Books)  
*An Almost Pure Empty Walking*, by Tryfon Tolides. Chosen by Mary Karr. (Penguin Books)

## 2004

*The Welcome*, by David Friedman. Chosen by Stephen Dunn. (University of Illinois Press)  
*Leadbelly*, by Tyehimba Jess. Chosen by Brigit Pegeen Kelly. (Verse Press)  
*PYX*, by Corinne Lee. Chosen by Pattiann Rogers. (Penguin Books)  
*Starred Wire*, by Ange Mlinko. Chosen by Bob Holman. (Coffee House Press)  
*Corruption*, by Camille Norton. Chosen by Campbell McGrath. (HarperCollins Publishers)

## 2003

*Shiva's Drum*, by Stephen Cramer. Chosen by Grace Schulman. (University of Illinois Press)  
*Citizen*, by Andrew Feld. Chosen by Ellen Bryant Voigt. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*Murder: A Violet*, by Raymond McDaniel. Chosen by Anselm Hollo. (Coffee House Press)  
*The White Train: Poems from Photographs*, by John Spaulding. Chosen by Henry Taylor. (Louisiana State University Press)  
*Unrelated Individuals Forming a Group Waiting to Cross*, by Mark Yakich. Chosen by James Galvin. (Penguin Books)



Adrian Matejka



Eleni Sikelianos



Terrance Hayes

## 2002

*Rhythm & Booze*, by Julie Kane. Chosen by Maxine Kumin. (University of Illinois Press)  
*Sanskrit of the Body*, by William Keckler. Chosen by Mary Oliver. (Viking Penguin)  
*Footnotes to the Lambs*, by Eleni Sikelianos. Chosen by Diane Ward. (Sun & Moon Press)  
*The Standing Wave*, by Gabriel Spera. Chosen by Dave Smith. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*Tenderness Shore*, by Meredith Stricker. Chosen by Fred Chappell. (Louisiana State University Press)

## 2001

*Year of Morphines*, by Betsy Brown. Chosen by George Garrett. (Louisiana State University Press)  
*Theory of Devolution*, by David Groff. Chosen by Mark Doty. (University of Illinois Press)  
*Hip Logic*, by Terrance Hayes. Chosen by Cornelius Eady. (Viking Penguin)  
*The Tunnell*, by Elizabeth Robinson. Chosen by Fanny Howe. (Sun & Moon Press)  
*Edgewater*, by Ruth L. Schwartz. Chosen by Jane Hirshfield. (HarperCollins Publishers)

## 2000

*That Kind of Sleep*, by Susan Atefat Peckham. Chosen by Victor Hernandez Cruz. (Coffee House Press)  
*Anthem*, by Jean Donnelly. Chosen by Charles Bernstein. (Sun & Moon Press)  
*Tremolo*, by Spencer Short. Chosen by Billy Collins. (HarperCollins Publishers)  
*Asunder*, by Susan Wood. Chosen by Garrett Hongo. (Viking Penguin)  
*Manderley*, by Rebecca Wolff. Chosen by Robert Pinsky. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1999

*Madame Deluxe*, by Tenaya Darlington. Chosen by Lawson Inada. (Coffee House Press)  
*Nova*, by Standard Schaefer. Chosen by Nick Piombino. (Sun & Moon Press)  
*Climbing Back*, by Dionisio Martinez. Chosen by Jorie Graham. (W.W. Norton)  
*Drivers at the Short-Time Motel*, by Eugene Gloria. Chosen by Yusef Komunyakaa. (Viking Penguin)  
*Renunciation*, by Corey Marks. Chosen by Philip Levine. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1998

*Ghost Pain*, by Harry Humes. Chosen by Pattiann Rogers. (Milkweed Editions)  
*Atmosphere Conditions*, by Ed Roberson. Chosen by Nathaniel Mackey. (Sun & Moon Press)  
*Looking for the Parade*, by Joan Murray. Chosen by Robert Bly. (W.W. Norton)  
*Heart Mountain*, by Lee Ann Roripaugh. Chosen by Ishmael Reed. (Viking Penguin)  
*So Often the Pitcher Goes to Water Until It Breaks*, by Rigoberto Gonzalez. Chosen by Ai. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1997

*Except By Nature*, by Sandra Alcosser. Chosen by Eamon Grennan. (Graywolf Press)  
*Tales of Murasaki and Other Poems*, by Martine Bellen. Chosen by Rosmarie Waldrop. (Sun & Moon Press.)  
*The Origins of Evening*, by Robert Gibb. Chosen by Eavan Boland. (W.W. Norton)  
*Silent Treatment*, by Lisa Lewis. Chosen by Stanley Plumly. (Penguin Books)  
*Lost Wax*, by Heather Ramsdell. Chosen by James Tate. (University of Illinois Press)



Mark Doty



Alice Fulton



Nathaniel Mackey

## 1996

*Red Signature*, by Mary Leader. Chosen by Deborah Digges. (Graywolf Press)  
*The Little Door Slides Back*, by Jeff Clark. Chosen by Ray DiPalma. (Sun & Moon Press)  
*Placebo Effects*, by Jeanne Marie Beaumont. Chosen by William Matthews. (W.W. Norton)  
*The New Intimacy*, by Barbara Cully. Chosen by Carolyn Forché. (Viking Penguin Press)  
*Nine Skies*, by A.V. Christie. Chosen by Sandra McPherson. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1995

*Leaving a Shadow*, by Heather Allen. Chosen by Denise Levertov. (Copper Canyon Press)  
*Response*, by Juliana Spahr. Chosen by Lyn Hejinian. (Sun & Moon Press)  
*Crash's Law*, by Karen Volkman. Chosen by Heather McHugh. (W.W. Norton)  
*Strange Relations*, by Daniel Hall. Chosen by Mark Doty. (Viking Penguin Press)  
*The Broken World*, by Marcus Cafagna. Chosen by Yusef Komunyakaa. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1994

*Infanta*, by Erin Belieu. Chosen by Hayden Carruth. (Copper Canyon Press)  
*To Give It Up*, by Pam Rehm. Chosen by Barbara Guest. (Sun & Moon Press)  
*A Hummock in the Malookas*, by Matthew Rohrer. Chosen by Mary Oliver. (W.W. Norton)  
*The Human Abstract*, by Elizabeth Willis. Chosen by Ann Lauterbach. (Penguin Books)  
*Theater of Animals*, by Samn Stockwell. Chosen by Louise Gluck. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1993

*The Other Man Was Me: A Voyage to the New World*, by Rafael Campo. Chosen by Gloria Vando. (Arte Publico Press)  
*Most Way Home*, by Kevin Young. Chosen by Lucille Clifton. (William Morrow and Co.)  
*The Landlady in Bangkok and Other Poems*, by Karen Swenson. Chosen by Maxin Kumin. (Copper Canyon Press)  
*The Other Stars*, by Rachel Wetzteon. Chosen by John Hollander. (Viking Penguin)  
*The High Road to Taos*, by Martin Edmunds. Chosen by Donald Hall. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1992

*Lost Body*, by Terry Ehret. Chosen by Carolyn Kizer. (Copper Canyon Press)  
*Shorter Poems*, by Gerald Burns. Chosen by Robert Creeley. (Dalkey Archive Press)  
*Debt*, by Mark Levine. Chosen by Jorie Graham. (William Morrow and Co.)  
*What We Don't Know About Each Other*, by Lawrence Raab. Chosen by Stephen Dunn. (Viking Penguin)  
*My Alexandria*, by Mark Doty. Chosen by Philip Levine. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1991

*A Flower Whose Name I Do Not Know*, by David Romtvedt. Chosen by John Haines. (Copper Canyon Press)  
*To Put the Mouth To*, by Judith Hall. Chosen by Richard Howard. (William Morrow and Co.)  
*As If*, by James Richardson. Chosen by Amy Clampitt. (Persea Books)  
*Good Hope Road*, by Stuart Dischell. Chosen by Thomas Lux. (Viking Penguin)  
*The Dig*, by Lynn Emmanuel. Chosen by Gerald Stern. (University of Illinois Press)





Naomi Shihab Nye



Billy Collins



Marie Howe

## 1990

*Words For My Daughter*, by John Balaban. Chosen by W.S. Merwin. (Copper Canyon Press)  
*Questions About Angels*, by Billy Collins. Chosen by Edward Hirsch. (William Morrow and Co.)  
*Rainbow Remnants in Rock Bottom Ghetto Sky*, by Thylas Moss. Chosen by Charles Simic. (Persea Books)  
*The Island Itself*, by Roger Fanning. Chosen by Michael Ryan. (Viking Penguin)  
*The Surface*, by Laura Mullen. Chosen by C.K. Williams. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1989

*Terra Firma*, by Thomas Centolella. Chosen by Denise Levertov. (Copper Canyon Press)  
*Artist and Model*, by Carol Snow. Chosen by Robert Hass. (Atlantic Monthly Press)  
*The Brother's Country*, by Tom Andrews. Chosen by Charles Wright. (Persea Books)  
*Blessings in Disguise*, by David Clewell. Chosen by Quincy Troupe. (Viking Penguin)  
*Stubborn*, by Roland Flint. Chosen by Dave Smith. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1988

*Green The Witch Hazel Wood*, by Emily Hiestand. Chosen by Jorie Graham. (Graywolf Press)  
*After We Lost Our Way*, by David Mura. Chosen by Gerald Stern. (E.P. Dutton)  
*Black Wings*, by Len Roberts. Chosen by Sharon Olds. (Persea Books)  
*No Mercy*, by Lee Upton. Chosen by James Tate. (Atlantic Monthly Press)  
*The Great Bird of Love*, by Paul Zimmer. Chosen by William Stafford. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1987

*A Guide to Forgetting*, by Jeffrey Skinner. Chosen by Tess Gallagher. (Graywolf Press)  
*The Singing Underneath*, by Jeffrey Harrison. Chosen by James Merrill. (E.P. Dutton)  
*The Good Thief*, by Marie Howe. Chosen by Margaret Atwood. (Persea Books)  
*New Math*, by Cole Swenson. Chosen by Michael Palmer. (William Morrow and Co.)  
*The Hand of God And A Few Bright Flowers*, by William Olsen. Chosen by David Wagoner. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1986

*Cardinals in the Ice Age*, by John Engels. Chosen by Philip Levine. (Graywolf Press)  
*Red Roads*, by Charlie Smith. Chosen by Stanley Kunitz. (E.P. Dutton)  
*Junk City*, by Barbara Anderson. Chosen by Robert Pinsky. (Persea Books)  
*Little Star*, by Mark Halliday. Chosen by Heather McHugh. (William Morrow and Co.)  
*Cities in Motion*, by Sylvia Moss. Chosen by Derek Walcott. (University of Illinois Press)

## 1985

*As Long As You're Happy*, by Jack Myers. Chosen by Seamus Heaney. (Graywolf Press)  
*Living Gloves*, by Lynn Doyle. Chosen by Cynthia Macdonald. (E.P. Dutton)  
*Saints*, by Reginald Gibbons. Chosen by Roland Flint. (Persea Books)  
*Local Time*, by Stephen Dunn. Chosen by Dave Smith. (William Morrow and Co.)  
*Palladium*, by Alice Fulton. Chosen by Mark Strand. (University of Illinois Press)



Sterling Brown

**1984**

*Wild Onion*, by Robert L. Jones. Chosen by Carolyn Forché. (Graywolf Press)

*The Raft*, by Kathy Fagan. Chosen by Daniel Halpern. (E.P. Dutton)

*Afterwards*, by Amy Bartlett. Chosen by Galway Kinnell. (Persea Books)

*Silver & Information*, by Bruce Smith. Chosen by Hayden Carruth. (University of Georgia Press)

*Eroding Witness*, by Nathaniel Mackey. Chosen by Michael Harper. (University of Illinois Press)

**1983**

*In the Solar Wind*, by Wendy Battin. Chosen by William Matthews. (Doubleday & Co.)

*Ark 50*, by Ronald Johnson. Chosen by Charles Simic. (E.P. Dutton)

*God's Mistress*, by James Galvin. Chosen by Marvin Bell. (Harper & Row)

*The Persistence of Memory*, by Mary Fell. Chosen by Madeline deFrees. (Random House)

*Black Dog, Red Dog*, by Stephen Dobyns. Chosen by Robert Hass. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston)

**1982**

*The Greater Leisures*, by Jane Miller. Chosen by Stanley Plumly. (Doubleday & Co.)

*Selected Poems 1958-1980*, by Joanne Kyger. Chosen by Robert Creeley. (E.P. Dutton)

*From the Abandoned Cities*, by Donald Revell. Chosen by C.K. Williams. (Harper & Row)

*Hands in Exile*, by Susan Tichy. Chosen by Sandra McPherson. (Random House)

*Corpse and Mirror*, by John Yau. Chosen by John Ashbery. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston)

**1981**

*Accidental Weather*, by Sherod Santos. Chosen by Charles Wright. (Doubleday & Co.)

*Hugging the Jukebox*, by Naomi Shihab Nye. Chosen by Josephine Miles. (E.P. Dutton)

*Second Sight*, by Jonathan Aaron. Chosen by Anthony Hecht. (Harper & Row)

*The Incognito Lounge*, by Denis Johnson. Chosen by Mark Strand. (Random House)

*The Mud Actor*, by Cyrus Cassells. Chosen by Al Young. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston)

**1980**

*Gumbo*, by George Barlow. Chosen by Ishmael Reed. (Doubleday & Co.)

*The Dollmaker's Ghost*, by Larry Levis. Chosen by Stanley Kunitz. (E.P. Dutton)

*Leaving Taos*, by Robert Peterson. Chosen by Carolyn Kizer. (Harper & Row)

*So This Is the Map*, by Reg Saner. Chosen by Derek Walcott. (Random House)

*In Winter*, by Michael Ryan. Chosen by Louise Glück. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston)

**1979**

*Any Body's Song*, by Joseph Langland. Chosen by Ann Stanford. (Doubleday & Co.)

*Folly River*, by Wendy Salinger. Chosen by Donald Hall. (E.P. Dutton)

*Collected Poems*, by Sterling Brown. Chosen by Michael Harper. (Harper & Row)

*Denizens*, by Ronald Perry. Chosen by Donald Justice. (Random House)

*Silks*, by Roberta Spear. Chosen by Philip Levine. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston)

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◆  
THE  
NATIONAL  
POETRY  
SERIES  
◆

*In the News*

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# A Few Questions for Poetry

By Daniel Halpern

Dec. 30, 2016



Credit...Strick & Williams

Why Poetry? Well, yes. Most books of poetry sell a couple of thousand copies, at best. So in a quantitative sense, what's the point of supporting it? With dollars or sense? Would we make the same argument for investing in an endangered species? Like the great Indian bustard, one of the heaviest flying birds, down to a couple of hundred of its kind.

The issue is larger than the number of collections of poetry sold each year. It's about the language — our language. Is it, too, endangered? If the depleted language of emails and texts and Twitter is any indication, then there's a case to be made that it might be.

Still, a question I often ask myself is why so many people (and we're now talking about millions of people) turn to poetry for all important rites of passage — weddings, funerals, toasts, tragedies, eulogies, birthdays. . . . Why? Because the language of poetry avoids the quotidian — but the best poetry simultaneously celebrates the quotidian. Language that's focused in such a way that true meaning and emotion is redolent in the air. The poet W.S. Merwin once said: "Poetry addresses individuals in their most intimate, private, frightened and elated moments . . . because it comes closer than any other art form to addressing what cannot be said. In expressing the inexpressible, poetry remains close to the origins of language."

Why poetry? I sent out a few emails to see what various people had to say. The poet Louise Glück, on the subject of book sales, wrote back, "The books may not sell, but neither are they given away or thrown away. They tend, more than other books, to fall apart in their owners' hands. Not I suppose good news in a culture and economy built on obsolescence. But for a book to be loved this way and turned to this way for consolation and intense renewable excitement seems to me a marvel."



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The Greek poet Yiannis Ritsos, jailed for political reasons, wrote his poems on cigarette papers while in prison, stuffed them into the lining of his jacket and, when he was released, walked out wearing his collected poems. They were mostly short.

The Ukrainian poet Irina Ratushinskaya, while in prison, wrote her poems on bars of soap. When she had them memorized, she washed them away.

The novelist Richard Ford differed from the poets in his take: “The question ‘Why poetry?’ isn’t asking what makes poetry unique among art forms; poetry may indeed share its origins with other forms of privileged utterance. A somewhat more interesting question would be: “What is the nature of experience, and especially the experience of using language, that calls poetic utterance into existence? What is there about experience that’s unutterable?” You can’t generalize very usefully about poetry; you can’t reduce its nature down to a kernel that underlies all its various incarnations. I guess my internal conversation suggests that if you can’t successfully answer the question of “Why poetry?,” can’t reduce it in the way I think you can’t, then maybe that’s the strongest evidence that poetry’s doing its job; it’s creating an essential need and then satisfying it.”

When you’re looking for a poem to read at a memorial service, what is it you’re looking for? And why are you looking for a poem? Do you imagine that it is in poetry that you’ll find something you could not have said yourself? And when you find the right poem, what have you discovered? What do you hear? What’s been said? And what do you imagine the mourners are going to hear?

Why read poetry? Emily Dickinson wrote: “If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me, I know *that* is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry. These are the only way I know it. Is there any other way?”

Again, why poetry? I wrote the poet Robert Hass. His response: “‘Paradise Lost’ was printed in an edition of no more than 1,500 copies and transformed the English language. Took a while. Wordsworth had new ideas about nature: Thoreau read Wordsworth, Muir read Thoreau, Teddy Roosevelt read Muir, and we got a lot of national parks. Took a century. What poetry gives us is an archive, the fullest existent archive of what human beings have thought and felt by the kind of artists who loved language in a way that allowed them to labor over how you make a music of words to render experience exactly and fully.”

So to the question at hand: Why support poetry? Those of us who engage in the publication and sustenance of the written word do so to insure that language for our future generations remains intact, powerful and ultimately renewed, capable of its role during times of crisis and celebration.

Wallace Stevens wrote that the poet’s function was “to help people live their lives.” And because he was a financial guy as well as a poet, he wrote, “Money is a kind of poetry.” I’d reverse that and say poetry is a kind of currency. As Stevens himself put it, “The imagination is man’s power over nature.”



## National Poetry Series Ups the Ante

by Joanna Scutts

[News and Trends](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

[\[See what else is in this issue.\]](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

[January/February 2015](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

12.16.14

It has been quite a turnaround. In December 2013, the National Poetry Series (NPS), which for thirty-five years had been one of the most well-known publication prizes for emerging poets, was in danger of shutting down due to lack of funds. Then founder and organizer Daniel Halpern got a call from Camille Lannan, the director of the Lannan Foundation's literary program, which supports writers and literary organizations through grants, fellowships, events, and residencies. She not only wanted to help keep the long-running prize going, but also to increase its modest thousand-dollar honorarium tenfold. "Publication and ten thousand dollars?" says Halpern. "It's a dream." The series will continue to administer five annual awards for poetry collections, each of which includes publication by a participating press, as well as the more recently established Paz Prize, given biennially for a book of poetry originally written in Spanish.

The NPS traces its roots back to 1975, when Halpern, a poet, teacher, and publisher, gave a speech at the Library of Congress lamenting the difficulty of getting good poetry into the hands of readers. The novelist James Michener read Halpern's remarks and immediately offered to help, saying that the discrepancy between publishers' attitudes to fiction and to poetry was "deplorable." The first contest, held in 1979, placed a premium on publication rather than money. "It always seemed to me that the most important thing you could have is a book of poems published," Halpern says, "because then you get teaching jobs, you get readings, you build a reputation, and you start a career." The NPS works with five publishers—two trade houses, one university press, and two rotating small presses (recent partners have included Coffee House Press, Fence Books, and Milkweed Editions)—and covers a portion of publication costs. Many notable poets, including Billy Collins, Stephen Dunn, Mark Doty, Marie Howe, Nathaniel Mackey, Terrance Hayes, and Adrian Matejka, have published poetry collections through the NPS.

The other founding principle of the NPS is its selection system, through which five judges each choose one winner. Halpern believes this system is more effective than judging by committee, which he says has a tendency to create "a kind of planing effect.... You knock off the top and the bottom" and too often the result is an overcautious middle range that excludes riskier choices. But in such a small world, where so many poets teach and meet younger poets, individualized judging carries its own hazard of nepotism. To minimize that, a team of readers narrows down the initial pool of submissions and then sends thirty to fifty manuscripts—all anonymous—to the five judges. After that, it's a question of trust. "You hope someone's not going to pick his or her own student, because once the book comes out, it will be clear—the name of the poet who selected the book is on the front cover," Halpern says there hasn't been a problem so far, and that "you usually hear pretty quickly if something like that has happened."

The benefits for poets clearly outweigh the risks. According to 2012 winner Sasha West, "The NPS is unique for its breadth of presses and judges—and ultimately, its breadth of writers." West's debut collection, *Failure and I Bury the Body*, was published in 2013 by a major trade house, which brought her an audience beyond the poetry community. "I teach in a public-policy school, so publishing through Harper Perennial has made my book visible to my colleagues (and my non-poetry-reading relatives) in a different way."

With its newly increased monetary award, the NPS prize becomes even more of a game changer for poets. Most other poetry publication prizes offer monetary awards from one to three thousand dollars—*American Poetry Review's* coveted Honickman First Book prize, for example, offers three thousand dollars—or various nonmonetary benefits. The Yale Series of Younger Poets award doesn't offer the winner money as part of the prize, but rather a writing fellowship at the James Merrill House. Other prizes, however, are keeping pace with the NPS—the Academy of American Poets recently revamped its Whitman prize to include a six-week residency in Italy, an all-expenses-paid trip to New York City, and publication with Graywolf Press along with five thousand dollars.

For the 2015 competition, the National Poetry Series will accept submissions from January 1 through February 15. Winners will be announced next fall. In the meantime, Halpern will still be celebrating the revival of his series: "It's one of the most generous things I've seen—and I've been publishing poetry for forty years," he says of the grant. "It's great for the poetry community."

**Joanna Scutts** is a writer and critic in Queens, New York. She is on the board of the National Book Critics Circle and reviews nonfiction and literary fiction for several publications, including the *Washington Post*, the *Nation*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Her website is [joannascutts.com](http://joannascutts.com).

BOOKS

## Back From the Brink, Poetry Group Makes Cash Prizes Bigger Thanks to a Grant

By ALLAN KOZINN

September 11, 2014 1:56 pm

The National Poetry Series has upgraded the prize available to the winners of its annual Open Competition for unpublished books of poetry. The series also announced the first five winners of the beefed-up award.

Part of the prize – the part that for many poets is the most crucial – remains unchanged: the series arranges for the publication of the winning books. But the prize also includes a cash award, which has been raised to \$10,000 from \$1,000, thanks to a grant from the Lannan Foundation, which has awarded literary prizes since 1989.

The first winners of the \$10,000 prize are Simeon Berry’s “Monograph” (to be published by the University of Georgia Press); “The Regret Histories,” by Joshua Poteat (HarperCollins); Ed Pavlic’s “Let’s Let That Are Not Yet: Inferno” (Fence); Nancy Reddy’s “Double Jinx” (Milkweed Editions) and Sarah Vap’s “Viability” (Penguin).

The increase in the cash prize shows how far the organization has come since December, when Daniel Halpern, the organization’s director, said that the series could not pay its employees salaries and was in danger of closing down.

Mr. Halpern, who founded the series in 1978 with the writer James A. Michener, said that about 1,200 manuscripts are entered for the Open Competition every year.

“We raised (from December through March), enough money to continue for at least another year,” Mr. Halpern said in an email. “I think partly due to this success, Lannan wanted to create a really meaningful prize – publication and money. Overall, I was amazed by the support the series received.”



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Carlos Pintado Wins 2014 Paz Prize for Poetry, Awarded by Miami Dade College's Center for Literature & Theatre and The National Poetry Series**

**Miami, Oct. 20, 2014 – The Center for Literature & Theatre @ Miami Dade College (MDC) and The National Poetry Series have announced the winner of the 2014 Paz Prize for Poetry: *Nueve Monedas* by Carlos Pintado from Miami Beach.**

Pintado's work was chosen by esteemed Cuban-American poet Richard Blanco. This was Blanco's introduction to Pintado's work, and he shared his initial thoughts: "The urgency and presence in Pintado's poems feel as if the poet's very life depended on writing them. They are possessed by a unique, intangible quality that arrests the reader and commands attention. His work is intimate yet boundless, moving easily between form and free verse, prose poems and long poems, whether capturing the everyday streets of Miami Beach or leading us into the mythic and mystical worlds of his imagination."

Carlos Pintado is a Cuban-American writer, playwright and award-winning poet who immigrated to the United States in the early 1990s. His book *Autorretrato en azul* received the prestigious Sant Jordi's International Prize for Poetry, and his book *El azar y los tesoros* was one of the finalists for Spain's Adonais Prize in 2008. Pintado's work has been translated into numerous languages, and turned into several musical pieces performed by renowned ensembles.

Blanco also awarded Honorable Mention this year to Lourdes Vázquez of Miami, for her work *Un enigma esas muñecas*.

Named in honor of the late Nobel Prize-winning poet, Octavio Paz, this award recognizes a previously unpublished poetry book written in Spanish by a poet residing in the U.S. Pintado's book will be published in a bilingual edition by Akashic Press in the fall of 2015.

The Center @ MDC promotes reading, writing and theatre throughout South Florida.

The National Poetry Series was established in 1978 to ensure the publication of poetry books annually through participating publishers.

**Media-only contacts:** Juan Mendieta, MDC director of communications, 305-237-7611, [jmendiet@mdc.edu](mailto:jmendiet@mdc.edu), Tere Estorino, MDC media relations director, 305-237-3949, [testorin@mdc.edu](mailto:testorin@mdc.edu), Sue Arrowsmith, 305-237-3710, [sue.arrowsmith@mdc.edu](mailto:sue.arrowsmith@mdc.edu); or Roxana Romero, 305-237-3366, [rromero3@mdc.edu](mailto:rromero3@mdc.edu).

**The Center @ MDC media contact:** Maria Lanao, Levy Communications, 305-764-3370 ext. 206, [maria@levycomm.com](mailto:maria@levycomm.com).

**The National Poetry Series contact:** Stephanie Stio, [stio31@cs.com](mailto:stio31@cs.com), 609-430-0999.

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Terrance Hayes, former winner of The National Poetry Series, is named a MacArthur Fellow in 2014:

# MacArthur Foundation

## MacArthur Fellows Program

### MACARTHUR FELLOWS / MEET THE CLASS OF 2014

Terrance Hayes

**Poet**

Professor of Writing, Department of English

University of Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, PA

Age: 42

**Published September 17, 2014**



Terrance Hayes is a poet who reflects on race, gender, and family in works marked by formal dexterity and a reverence for history and the artistry of crafting verse. Employing an almost improvisational approach to writing, Hayes conjoins fluid, often humorous wordplay with references to popular culture both past and present in his subversion of canonical poetic forms.

In a series of “blue” poems for his collection *Wind in a Box* (2006), he both references and eschews the standard tropes and forms of blues poetry by speaking in the persona of such figures as Jorge Luis Borges, David Bowie, and Strom Thurmond. “The Blue Sues” is both a satiric embodiment of Seussian rhymes and styles and a condensed, heart-wrenching history of the African American experience, from the Middle Passage to contemporary urban decay. Hayes continues his exploration of the shifting nature of identity in *Lighthead* (2012), which includes a mixture of constructed and historical personages and ranges over a multitude of experiences. The imagery of “Carp Poem,” ostensibly an account of teaching a poetry workshop in a New Orleans prison, seamlessly moves back and forth from the reality of the prison to the confinement of slavery and Hayes’s personal relationship with his father, who is a prison guard. His formally daring poem “Arbor for Butch” plays off of *pecha kucha*, a Japanese business presentation format in which twenty images connected to a single theme are narrated for twenty seconds each. Using the sculptures of Martin Puryear as his images, Hayes links the visual with the sonic and the lyrical in an affecting consideration of what it means to be a father and a son. In creating works that seamlessly and meaningfully encompass both the historical and the personal, Hayes is extending the possibilities of language and pushing the art of poetry toward places altogether new.

Terrance Hayes received a B.A. (1994) from Coker College and an M.F.A. (1997) from the University of Pittsburgh. He was affiliated with Xavier University of Louisiana (1999–2001) and Carnegie Mellon University (2001–2013) before joining the faculty of the University of Pittsburgh as a professor of writing in 2013. His additional publications include *Muscular Music* (1999), *Hip Logic* (2002), and the forthcoming *How to Be Drawn* (March 2015).



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Once a year, The National Poetry Series hosts a dinner to honor our Board of Directors and generous funders. The event gathers poets, fiction writers and celebrities to share an evening of poetry and a remarkable dinner. The 2014 event received notable press:

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**  
WSJ.com



April 25, 2014, 2:06 PM ET

## Roast Pig and Poetry With the Best Writers in the World

By Barbara Chai

Mark Doty reads his poem, ‘A Display of Mackerel,’ at the National Poetry Series dinner. Daniel Halpern **Richard Ford** served us suckling pig. **Anthony Bourdain** told us to eat the tails.

“Wait,” Ford said. “You need the cracklins.”

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of “Independence Day” heaped fried pork skin onto the plates of Bourdain, **Willem Dafoe** and **Olaf Olafsson** – but not **Amy Tan**. Tan is a pescetarian.

The writers had gathered at The Breslin gastropub in New York this week not just for pig tails, but for poetry. **Daniel Halpern**, publisher of Ecco and the director of the **National Poetry Series**, had gathered friends and writers to celebrate the program, which publishes five books of poetry a year.

“If you dropped a bomb down here, you’d destroy half of American literature,” said **Russell Banks**, a guest. The evening featured poetry readings by **Natasha Trethewey**, **Charles Simic**, **Mark Doty** (all of whom read works about food), **Tom Healy**, **Mary Karr**, **William Kistler** and **Eleanor Chai**. The guests included prose writers who also write, or devour, poetry – **Michael Ondaatje**, **Joyce Carol Oates**, **Michael Cunningham**, **Mary Karr**, **Jeffrey Eugenides**, **Colum McCann** and **Colm Toibin**.

“I wanted this to be a celebration of poetry in America and all these people feel strongly about it. Many of them gave a lot of money,” Halpern said.

The National Poetry Series nearly folded in January, but raised about \$75,000 from individuals and organizations including Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Random House and HarperCollins.

HarperCollins and Ecco are both run by News Corp., which made a separate donation to the NPS. News Corp. publishes The Wall Street Journal.

“Poetry is probably the toughest form of literature to make a living out of, and the one that is extremely difficult to do well,” said Olafsson, an Icelandic novelist and supporter of NPS. “It’s an art form you don’t want to have disappear.”

**Roger Rosenblatt**, who writes both non-fiction and fiction, said the roomful of illustrious writers expressed a genuine appreciation of poets. “It’s very rare to find writers who aren’t in a fistfight,” he said.

Dafoe, a longtime friend of Banks who starred in the film adaptation of the author’s “Affliction,” sat quietly next to Ford as he ate salmon and suckling pig. Though he doesn’t call himself a serious writer, the 58-year-old actor has kept daily journals since he was 22 — Fabriano notebooks, lined up by date in his basement.

“It’s a lot of nonsense, but it’s an exercise partly to take inventory, to get in the practice of expressing myself,” he said.

The humidity in Dafoe’s basement damaged some of the journals and left many pages illegible. While some of the authors in the room would throw a fit, the actor doesn’t seem to mind. “It’s not for anything. In fact, my handwriting is so bad that I can barely read it.”



# National Poetry Series, a Promoter of Poetry in Print, Faces a Shortfall

By [JULIE BOSMAN](#) DECEMBER 4, 2013 2:08 PM

The National Poetry Series, a 35-year-old organization that facilitates the publication of five books of poetry each year, is in danger of closing.

Daniel Halpern, the director of the nonprofit organization and also the publisher of Ecco, an imprint of HarperCollins, said on Wednesday that annual fund-raising efforts have fallen short and that he was not sure that the organization could continue into 2014.

In a letter that Mr. Halpern plans to send to supporters on Wednesday evening, he says that \$25,000 is needed by the end of December to pay staff salaries and rent. The National Poetry Series has helped publish books by Mark Doty, Terrance Hayes and Nathaniel Mackey.

“Now more than ever, to have five books coming out every year is really critical,” Mr. Halpern said in an interview on Wednesday. “These are books that may or may not have ever been published. If you have a book published, you can get a teaching job, you can get readings, you establish a reputation.”

The National Poetry Series subsidizes the publication of the books, working with participating publishers. A panel of judges selects the five to be subsidized, and each poet receives a stipend. Any profits that are made from a book’s publication go to the publishing house and the author.

Only a few major publishers — among them, Knopf, Ecco, W.W. Norton and Farrar, Straus & Giroux — devote significant resources to the publication of poetry.

Mr. Halpern said the organization, which operates on an annual budget of less than \$100,000, has been unable to pay the salaries of its two employees for the last several months or pay the rent of its office in Princeton, N.J.

Billy Collins, perhaps the best-known poet in the United States, said in a statement provided by Mr. Halpern that the publication of his book “Questions About Angels,” selected by the poetry series in 1990, “marked the true beginning of my public life in poetry.”

“I know of no program more vital to the launching of a poet’s career than the National Poetry Series,” Mr. Collins said.

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