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National Book 
Foundation *Presenter of the*
National Book Awards

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2018 NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS LONGLIST FOR POETRY

The ten contenders for the National Book Award for Poetry

New York City, September 13, 2018: The National Book Foundation today announced the Longlist for the 2018 National Book Award for Poetry. Finalists will be revealed on October 10.

The 2018 Poetry Longlist includes a previous National Book Award Finalist, Rae Armantrout, and one Winner, Terrance Hayes, who was also a Finalist in 2015. This group of poets includes two Pulitzer Prize winners, a former U.S. Poet Laureate, and multiple Walt Whitman Award winners and Whiting Award recipients. Their work has been supported by fellowships and grants from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Cave Canem, the Academy of American Poets, Poets & Writers, and the Rockefeller Foundation, among others. From California, Colorado, Mississippi, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and more, these ten poets represent a wide swath of American geography and experience. Two of the Longlist titles, *feeld* and *Museum of the Americas*, came to publication with the help of the 2017 National Poetry Series Competition, and Diana Khoi Nguyen's *Ghost Of* was the winner of the Omnidawn 2016/17 Open Poetry Book Prize, selected by Terrance Hayes, a fellow 2018 Longlister. The ten titles include one debut collection, and seven are published by independent presses.

New collections by three well-known poets turn a critical eye to the past, present, and future of the country. Teetering on the edge of the American Dream, Pulitzer Prize winner **Rae Armantrout's** *Wobble* seeks to both playfully and forcefully evoke the devastation of a chaotic, unstoppable culture. In *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*, National Book Award Winner **Terrance Hayes** works through fear, bewilderment, and ambivalence as he grapples with a moment in American history both new and entirely too familiar. In former U.S. Poet Laureate **Nathasha Trethewey's** *Monument: Poems New and Selected*, the Pulitzer Prize winner serves as a witness to neglected figures from the past, celebrating their lives and pushing back against white supremacy and a culture that erases the stories of the marginalized.

2018 NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS LONGLIST FOR POETRY

Questions of systemic hostility and the struggle against oppressive institutions live at the heart of **Justin Phillip Reed's** *Indecency*, which seeks to intimately confront issues of masculinity, sexuality, racism, and more, working to both critique and lament a culture of exploitation.

Eschewing traditional rules of form and language, two titles were published with the help of the 2017 National Poetry Series Competition. **Jos Charles's** second collection, *feeld*, builds a language of its own, working to deconstruct the speech and vocabulary of gender while reckoning with the histories and violence of a world that has never yielded to its narrator. Using a blend of images, verse, and creative nonfiction, *Museum of the Americas* by **J. Michael Martinez** probes the relationship of the corporeal form with deeply rooted imperialistic histories, interrogating the values assigned to the subjugated human body by dominant cultures.

Another collection confronts the language and history of colonialism. In a bilingual edition, **Raquel Salas Rivera's** *lo terciario / the tertiary* reconsiders the work of Marx while working to process the ravages of colonization in the poet's birthplace of Puerto Rico.

Collections from two Longlisted poets concern themselves with the experience of loss and mourning. **Forrest Gander's** *Be With* wanders across a landscape of grief, charting its own path through loss and language and drawing from his experiences as a translator. In her debut collection, *Ghost Of*, **Diana Khoi Nguyen** explores the liminality of mourning, reaching out toward the memories and voids left behind by a lost loved one.

Interiority and restlessness permeate **Jenny Xie's** *Eye Level*, which meditates on the itinerant body and identity, examining shifting and rarely solidifying experiences of solitude, estrangement, and belonging.

Publishers submitted a total of 256 books for the 2018 National Book Award for Poetry. The judges for Poetry are Mary Jo Bang (Chair), Ken Chen, Elise Paschen, Danez Smith, and Stephen Sparks. These distinguished judges were given the charge of selecting what they deem to be the best books of the year. Their decisions are made independently of the National Book Foundation staff and Board of Directors; deliberations are strictly confidential.

The National Book Award Finalists will be announced on October 10, and the Winners announced at the invitation-only National Book Awards Ceremony and Benefit Dinner on November 14 in New York City.

2018 Longlist for the National Book Award for Poetry:

Rae Armantrout, *Wobble*
Wesleyan University Press

Jos Charles, *feeld*
Milkweed Editions

Forrest Gander, *Be With*
New Directions

2018 NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS LONGLIST FOR POETRY

Terrance Hayes, *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*

Penguin Books / Penguin Random House

J. Michael Martinez, *Museum of the Americas*

Penguin Books / Penguin Random House

Diana Khoi Nguyen, *Ghost Of*

Omnidawn Publishing

Justin Phillip Reed, *Indecency*

Coffee House Press

Raquel Salas Rivera, *lo terciario / the tertiary*

Timeless, Infinite Light

Natasha Trethewey, *Monument: Poems New and Selected*

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Jenny Xie, *Eye Level*

Graywolf Press

Poetry Biographies:

Rae Armantrout is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of fourteen books of poetry. She has published nine books with Wesleyan University Press, including *Entanglements*, *Partly*, and *Versed*, which was a Finalist for the National Book Award.

Jos Charles is a trans poet, editor, and author of *feeld*, a winner of the 2017 National Poetry Series, selected by Fady Joudah, and *Safe Space*, a finalist for the 2016 Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Poetry. Her poetry and writing have appeared in *Poetry*, *PEN*, *Washington Square Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *GLAAD*, *Action Yes*, *Lambda Literary Review*, and elsewhere. She is the recipient of the 2016 Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Fellowship and the 2015 Monique Wittig Writer's Scholarship. She received an MFA from the University of Arizona and currently resides in Long Beach, California.

Forrest Gander was born in the Mojave Desert and grew up, for the most part, in Virginia. Trenchant periods of his life were spent in San Francisco, Dolores Hidalgo (Mexico), and Eureka Springs, Arkansas. With degrees in both geology and English literature, Gander is the author of numerous books of poetry, translation, fiction, and essays. He is the A.K. Seaver Professor of Literary Arts and Comparative Literature at Brown University. A U.S. Artists Rockefeller fellow, Gander has been recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim,

2018 NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS LONGLIST FOR POETRY

Howard, Witter Bynner, and Whiting Foundations. His 2011 collection *Core Samples from the World* was an NBCC and Pulitzer Prize finalist for poetry.

Terrance Hayes is the author of *Lighthouse*, Winner of the 2010 National Book Award and finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His other books are *Wind In a Box*, *Hip Logic*, and *Muscular Music*. His honors include a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a 2014 MacArthur Fellowship. *How To Be Drawn*, his most recent collection of poems, was a Finalist for the 2015 National Book Award and received the 2016 NAACP Image Award for Poetry.

J. Michael Martinez received the Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets for his first collection, *Heredities*. His second, *In the Garden of the Bridehouse*, was published by the University of Arizona Press. He is the poetry editor of Noemi Press, and his writings have been widely anthologized. He lives in Denver, Colorado.

Diana Khoi Nguyen was born in Los Angeles, and is a poet and multimedia artist whose work has appeared widely in literary journals such as *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, *PEN America*, and *The Iowa Review*. A winner of the 92Y's Discovery / *Boston Review* 2017 Poetry Contest, she is a PhD candidate in creative writing at the University of Denver.

Justin Phillip Reed is an American poet living in St. Louis. His work appears in *African American Review*, *Best American Essays*, *Callaloo*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Obsidian*, and elsewhere. He holds a BA in creative writing from Tusculum College and an MFA in poetry from Washington University in St. Louis. The author of the chapbook *A History of Flamboyance* (YesYes Books 2016), he has received fellowships from the Cave Canem Foundation and the Conversation Literary Festival. Reed currently organizes the St. Louis community-based poetry workshop series Most Folks At Work. He was born and raised in South Carolina.

Raquel Salas Rivera is the 2018–19 Poet Laureate of Philadelphia. Their work has appeared in journals such as the *Revista del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña*, *Apogee*, *BOAAT*, *Círculo de Poesía*, *Cosmonauts Ave*, *Waxwing*, *Dreginald*, and the *Boston Review*. They are the author of *Caneca de anhelos turbios* (Editora Educación Emergente), *oropel/tinsel* (Lark Books), *tierra intermitente* (Ediciones Alayubia), and *lo terciario / the tertiary* (Timeless, Infinite Light). Currently, they are Co-Editor of *The Wanderer*, and Co-Editor of Puerto Rico *en mi corazón*, a collection of bilingual broadsides of contemporary Puerto Rican poets.

Natasha Trethewey, two-term U.S. Poet Laureate, Pulitzer Prize winner, and 2017 Heinz Award recipient, has written four collections of poetry and one book of nonfiction. An American Academy of Arts and Sciences Fellow, she is currently Board of Trustees Professor of English at Northwestern University. She lives in Evanston, Illinois.

Jenny Xie is the author of *Nowhere to Arrive*, recipient of the Drinking Gourd Chapbook Prize, and her poems have appeared in the *American Poetry Review*, *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, *Tin House*, and elsewhere. She lives in New York and teaches at New York University. *Eye Level* is her most recent collection.

2018 National Book Awards Judges for Poetry:

2018 NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS LONGLIST FOR POETRY

Mary Jo Bang (Chair) is the author of eight books of poems, including *A Doll For Throwing*, *Louise in Love*, *The Bride of E*, *The Last Two Seconds*, and *Elegy*, which received the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her translation of Dante's *Inferno*, illustrated by Henrik Drescher, was published by Graywolf Press. She has received a Hodder Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Berlin Prize Fellowship. She teaches creative writing at Washington University in St. Louis.

Ken Chen is the Executive Director of the Asian American Writers' Workshop. He received the Yale Younger Poets Award for his book *Juvenilia*. An NEA, NYFA, and Bread Loaf fellow, Chen co-founded the cultural website Arts & Letters Daily and CultureStrike, a national arts organization dedicated to migrant justice. A graduate of Yale Law School, he successfully defended the asylum application of an undocumented Muslim high school student from Guinea detained by Homeland Security.

Elise Paschen is the author of *The Nightlife*, *Bestiary*, *Infidelities* and *Houses: Coasts*. She has edited and co-edited numerous anthologies, including *Poetry Speaks*. Former Executive Director of the Poetry Society of America, she is a co-founder of the *Poetry in Motion* program. A graduate of Harvard University and Oxford University, Paschen teaches in the MFA Writing Program at the School of the Art Institute and lives in Chicago with her family.

Danez Smith is the author of *Don't Call Us Dead*, Finalist for the 2017 National Book Award, and *[insert] boy*, winner of the Kate Tufts Discovery Award and the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Poetry. A Black, Queer, Poz writer and performer from St. Paul, MN, Danez's work has been featured widely, including in the *New York Times*, *Guardian*, *Best American Poetry*, and on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*.

Stephen Sparks is co-owner of Point Reyes Books, an independent bookstore in Point Reyes Station, California. He is a board member of the Northern California Booksellers Association, a contributing editor at LitHub, and has served as a juror for the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Booksellers Association Indies Choice Book Awards, and other awards. His first book, *Fog: an Object Lesson*, is scheduled to be published by Bloomsbury in 2019.

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The mission of the **National Book Foundation** is to celebrate the best literature in America, expand its audience, and ensure that books have a prominent place in American culture. In addition to the **National Book Awards**, for which it is best known, the Foundation's programs include **5 Under 35**, a celebration of emerging fiction writers selected by former National Book Award Finalists and Winners; **NBF Presents**, which brings NBA authors to universities, libraries, festivals, and conferences across the country; **Literature for Justice**, a project that uses literature to contextualize and humanize the issue of mass incarceration in America; **Author in Focus**, a series comprised of panels, lectures, and film screenings designed to connect a broad audience with the works of seminal NBF-honored authors, beginning with James Baldwin in 2018; the **Innovations in Reading Prize**, awarded to individuals and institutions that have developed innovative means of creating and sustaining a lifelong love of reading; the **Why Reading Matters** conference, an opportunity for writers, activists, educators, librarians, and nonprofit leaders to explore innovative ways to celebrate literature and expand its influence; **Book Rich**

2018 NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS LONGLIST FOR POETRY

Environments, a partnership with HUD, the US Department of Education, the Urban Libraries Council, and the National Center for Families Learning, which has provided nearly 700,000 books to children and families in public housing authorities around the country; the **Teen Press Conference**, an opportunity for students to interview the current National Book Award Finalists in Young People's Literature; **Raising Readers**, an adult-focused reading initiative to empower adults who work with and raise children to expand their own love of books and reading; and **BookUp**, a writer-led, after-school reading club for middle-school students.

The National Book Awards is one of the nation's most prestigious literary prizes and has a stellar record of identifying and rewarding quality writing. In 1950, William Carlos Williams was the first Winner in Poetry, the following year William Faulkner was honored in Fiction, and so on through the years. Many previous Winners of the National Book Award are now firmly established in the canon of American literature, including Ralph Ellison, Louise Erdrich, Jonathan Franzen, Denis Johnson, Flannery O'Connor, Adrienne Rich, and Jesmyn Ward.