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CLAUDIA RANKINE WINS \$50,000

JACKSON POETRY PRIZE

“A singular perspective, a consummate talent, and a courageous spirit”



Photo credit: John Lucas

New York, NY—April 21, 2014—Poets & Writers announced today that **Claudia Rankine** is the winner of this year’s Jackson Poetry Prize. The \$50,000 prize is given annually to an American poet of exceptional talent who deserves wider recognition. The award, which is among the most substantial given to an American poet, is designed to provide what all poets need: time and encouragement to write.

Ms. Rankine is the eighth winner of the Jackson Poetry Prize. She was selected by a panel of three judges: the poets **Tracy K. Smith**, **David St. John**, and **Mark Strand**. In selecting Rankine, the judges issued the following citation:

The moral vision of Claudia Rankine’s poetry is astounding. In a body of work that pushes the boundaries of the contemporary lyric, Rankine has managed to make space for meditation and vigorous debate upon some of the most relevant and troubling social themes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Maintaining a firm grasp upon the tools we normally associate with the lyric poet, such as associative shifts and leaps, allusion, sonic agility, elegy, and a deep and

resonant imagery, Rankine's poems also foster a quite nearly cinematic sense of suspense, striking notes of urgency, anxiety, and momentous inevitability. In particular, the collections *Don't Let Me Be Lonely* and *Citizen: An American Lyric* invite the reader to empathize with the social "other," with victims of violent aggression committed in hatred and ignorance, and with speakers subject to a more generalized American malaise. These poems do the work of art of the highest order—teaching, chastening, changing, astounding, and humanizing the reader. It was very easy to discern the value of this poet's body of work. In both vision and voice she has distinguished herself as a singular perspective, a consummate talent, and a courageous spirit. We are unanimous and enthusiastic in our decision to award her the 2014 Jackson Poetry Prize.

Claudia Rankine was born in Kingston, Jamaica, and educated at Williams College and Columbia University. She is the author of several collections of poetry: *Don't Let Me Be Lonely* (Graywolf Press, 2004), *Plot* (Grove Press, 2001), *The End of the Alphabet* (Grove Press, 1998), and *Nothing in Nature is Private* (Cleveland State University Press, 1994). Her newest collection, *Citizen: An American Lyric*, is forthcoming from Graywolf later this year.

In addition to poetry, Rankine has written plays including *The Provenance of Beauty: A South Bronx Travelogue* (commissioned by the Foundry Theater) and *Existing Conditions* (co-authored with Casey Llewellyn). She is co-editor of several anthologies including *American Poets in the Twenty-First Century: The New Poetics* (Wesleyan University Press, 2006) and *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*, forthcoming from Fence Books. She has been awarded fellowships by the Academy of American Poets, the Lannan Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2013, she was elected as a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. Among her most recent awards is the 2014 Morton Dauwen Zabel Award, presented by the American Academy of Arts & Letters. Rankine currently teaches at Pomona College, where she is the Henry G. Lee Professor of English.

Poets & Writers will host a reading and reception in Ms. Rankine's honor on June 9 in New York City. For more information about the event, contact Rachel Schuder at rschuder@pw.org. The Jackson Poetry Prize is awarded annually by Poets & Writers. The generous prize is made possible by a donation from the Liana Foundation and named for the **John and Susan Jackson** family. There is no application process; poets are nominated by a panel of their peers who remain anonymous. Previous recipients of the Jackson Poetry Prize are **Arthur Sze** (2013), **Henri Cole** (2012), **James Richardson** (2011), **Harryette Mullen** (2010), **Linda Gregg** (2009), **Tony Hoagland** (2008), and **Elizabeth Alexander** (2007).

About Poets & Writers

Founded in 1970, Poets & Writers is the nation's largest nonprofit literary organization serving poets, fiction writers, and creative nonfiction writers. Our work is rooted in the belief that literature is vital to sustaining a vibrant culture. We focus on nurturing literature's source: creative writers. Our mission is to foster the professional development of poets and writers, to promote communication throughout the literary community, and to help create an environment in which literature can be appreciated by the widest possible public. Learn more at pw.org.