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## Announcing the 2015 Whiting Award Winners

**On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of these prestigious \$50,000 awards, the Whiting Foundation honors ten exceptional emerging writers of fiction, nonfiction, drama and poetry**

The Whiting Foundation ([www.whiting.org](http://www.whiting.org)) is pleased to announce the names of its ten new Whiting Award winners, honored this evening at a ceremony at the New-York Historical Society with a keynote by award-winning author of *Far from the Tree* and *The Noonday Demon* Andrew Solomon.

Since 1985, the Whiting Foundation has supported creative writing through the Whiting Awards, which remain one of the most prestigious and largest monetary gifts to writers (each winner receives \$50,000), and are based on early accomplishment and the promise of great work to come. The program has awarded more than \$6 million to 300 poets, fiction and non-fiction writers, and playwrights. "The two greatest gifts to a writer are time and recognition," said Courtney Hodell, Director of Writers' Programs. "We hope this award will free our winners to focus intensely on their work and to take risks."

The list of Whiting Award recipients since 1985 includes then-emerging talent such as Jonathan Franzen, Mona Simpson, Alice McDermott, David Foster Wallace, Terrance Hayes, Ian Frazier, John Jeremiah Sullivan, Susan-Lori Parks, Jeffrey Eugenides, Tony Kushner, Deborah Eisenberg, Denis Johnson, Tracy K. Smith, August Wilson, and more recent luminaries including Adam Johnson (who won the Pulitzer for *The Orphan Master's Son* in 2012), Elif Batuman, and Anthony Marra (author of the critically-acclaimed debut *Constellation of Vital Phenomena*). For a complete list of winners, please go to [www.whiting.org/awards/winners](http://www.whiting.org/awards/winners)

### The 2015 Whiting Award winners are:

**Anthony Carelli** Poetry  
**Leopoldine Core** Fiction  
**Aracelis Girmay** Poetry  
**Lucas Hnath** Drama  
**Jenny Johnson** Poetry

**Dan Josefson** Fiction  
**Elena Passarello** Nonfiction  
**Roger Reeves** Poetry  
**Azareen Van der Vliet Oloomi** Fiction  
**Anne Washburn** Drama

Biographical information on all of the winners is attached, as is more information about the Whiting Awards.

An excerpt from the latest work of each winner is also now available on [TheParisReview.org](http://TheParisReview.org), and all ten writers will read at a free, public event introduced by former Whiting winner Salvatore Scibona tomorrow evening, Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm at BookCourt in Brooklyn, NY.

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### The 2015 Whiting Award Winners



**Anthony Carelli** holds a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and an M.F.A. from New York University. In 2011, he received a Hodder Fellowship from Princeton University. His poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, AGNI online, *Columbia*, *Memorious*, and others. His first book, *Carnations* (Princeton University Press, 2011) was a finalist for the 2011 Levis Reading Prize. Carelli teaches expository writing at New York University. He is originally from Wisconsin; he is currently based in Brooklyn.

From the Whiting Award judges: “These are poems that manage to strike a balance between the expansive impulse and meticulous precision, between the meditative mode and ecstatic proclamation. And in straddling those divides, they enact, in line after line, small miracles.”



**Leopoldine Core** attended Hunter College. In 2012, she was a Center for Fiction Emerging Writers Fellow and a fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts. *Veronica Bench*, her poetry collection, will be published this year by Coconut Books. Her story collection will be published by Penguin in 2016. She lives in New York.

From the Whiting Award judges: “There is such a powerful understatement to these stories, though the emotional register, and the stakes, are always high. The heart is ignited, kicked into gear by Core’s dialogue, and by all of the audible silences running through this work.”



**Aracelis Girmay** holds a B.A. from Connecticut College and an M.F.A. from New York University. She is the author of two poetry collections, *Teeth* (Curbstone, 2007) and *Kingdom Animalia* (BOA Editions, 2011), for which she won the Isabella Gardner Poetry Award and which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. In 2011 she was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. Girmay has received fellowships from Cave Canem, The Jerome Foundation, the Watson Foundation, and the Civitella Ranieri Foundation. She currently teaches poetry as an assistant professor at Hampshire College. Originally from Santa Ana, California, she splits her time between New York and Amherst, Massachusetts.

From the Whiting Award judges: “[Girmay’s] project seems to be our deep and ongoing subjectivity, our vulnerability to history, to one another, to desire, and to the belief in something large and lasting that we might belong to. There’s empathy, play, and fearlessness here, and both formal and emotional range. The beauty of these poems is always married to a deep, implacable pang. Their consolation is always rooted in the unifying force of remembered loss.”

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**Lucas Hnath's** *The Christians* was produced at the Actors Theatre of Louisville for the 2014 Humana Festival. It will premiere in New York at Playwrights Horizons in 2015. *A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of Walt Disney* was produced by Soho Rep in 2013. Other plays include *Red Speedo* (Studio Theatre, 2013); *nightnight* (Humana Festival, 2013); *Isaac's Eye* (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 2013); *Death Tax* (Humana Festival 2012; Royal Court Theatre, 2013). Hnath's work is published by Dramatists Play Service.

He has been a resident playwright at New Dramatists since 2011, and is a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre. He is the recipient of a Whitfield Cook Award and a Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award Citation. In 2016, his play, *Hillary and Clinton*, will premiere in Chicago. He lives in New York and holds a B.F.A. and M.F.A. from New York University's Department of Dramatic Writing.

From the Whiting Award judges: "Lucas Hnath's imagination is wide-ranging, his ear sharp. He shows us celebrity in ways we do not expect; he violates our assumptions....He's working in a form that could be static in lesser hands, but in his, the result is exceptionally dramatically dynamic."



**Jenny Johnson's** poems appear in *The Best American Poetry 2012*, *Troubling the Line: Trans & Genderqueer Poetry & Poetics*, *New England Review*, *Los Angeles Review of Books Quarterly*, and *Waxwing*, and she has just completed her first collection, *In Full Velvet*. Johnson was the recipient of the Beloit Poetry Journal's Chad Walsh Poetry Prize for her poem "Aria." She has also received awards from the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, The Pittsburgh Foundation, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. She earned an M.F.A. from Warren Wilson College. An educator as well as a poet, she taught public school for several years and spent ten summers on the staff of the University of Virginia Young Writer's Workshop. Johnson is currently a lecturer in the Writing Program at the University of Pittsburgh, and lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

From the Whiting Award judges: "The rigor and formal poise of Jenny Johnson's work – which operates in the service of a deep and ongoing preoccupation with desire, with questions about self and sexuality, with a fluid sense of gender and identity – creates an astounding emotional tension. There's a sinuous, shape-shifting quality to this work that makes her poetic explorations of sex and selfhood all the more resonant. That subtle mastery of line and rhyme is a powerful complement to the poems' very organic sense of questioning, commemorating, interrogating, searching."



**Dan Josefson** holds an M.F.A. in fiction from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and a B.A. from Williams College. He received a Fulbright Research Fellowship to Romania in 2002. He worked as a freelance writer for the *Las Vegas Mercury*, and has been Assistant Editor of the Junior Library Guild in New York since 2006. His novel, *That's Not a Feeling* (Soho, 2012), was a Barnes & Noble Discover selection and a *New York Times* Editors' Choice. He lives in Brooklyn.

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From the Whiting Award judges: “Dan Josefson’s novel *This is Not a Feeling* is funny, original, and wise, and despite its title manages to delve into some pretty complex feelings, both of the children and the adults in the experimental school where the story is set...With its poetry and compassion, its lyricism and curiosity, it reminded the judges of William Maxwell.”



**Elena Passarello** holds a B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh and an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa. Her essays have appeared in *Oxford American*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Gulf Coast*, *Slate*, *Iowa Review*, and *Normal School*. New essays are forthcoming this year in the anthologies *After Montaigne* and *Cat Is Art Spelled Wrong*. Passarello is an assistant professor of English at Oregon State University; she also worked for a decade as an actor and voice-over performer. Passarello’s first book, *Let Me Clear My Throat* (Sarabande, 2012), was a finalist for the Oregon Book Award. She is currently at work on a collection of essays, *Animals Strike Curious Poses*,

forthcoming from Sarabande in 2016. Originally from Charleston, South Carolina, she lives in Corvallis, Oregon.

From the Whiting Award judges: “Without bringing herself into the telling directly, Elena Passarello hovers above the little moment in history with wise wonder. The subject of her first book of essays, the physical experience of making sound, is fundamental to human experience, yet she is writing in ways that are unique – and fearless. There’s nobody else that sounds like her, or is doing what she’s doing. When she looks at something she finds interesting, she says, ‘Let me see what’s down that road!’ And she runs down that road as fast as she can.”



**Roger Reeves** received an M.F.A. in creative writing and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Texas, Austin. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, *Tin House*, *Best American Poetry*, and the *Indiana Review*, among other publications, and he was included in *Best New Poets 2009*. Reeves was awarded a Ruth Lilly Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation in 2008; he is also the recipient of two Bread Loaf Scholarships and a Cave Canem Fellowship. In 2012, Reeves received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and a Pushcart Prize for his poem “The Field Museum.” He is an Assistant

Professor of Poetry at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and a 2014–2015 Hodder Fellow at the Lewis Center for the Arts, Princeton University. *King Me* (Copper Canyon Press, 2013) is Reeves’s first book.

From the Whiting Award judges: “Roger Reeve’s poems are brave, expansive and remarkably ambitious, drawing from a defiantly broad range of poetic influences and traditions. Reeves seems to be building a new kind of language – one that is both lyrical and gritty, tender and subjective, and also sharp-edged, starkly honest, dangerously clear-eyed. His obsession is history: how the past makes, threatens, reinforces and casts its long shadow upon the sense of love, self and possibility available in the present. These poems are ecstatic, frightening, enlarging and utterly original.”

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**Azareen Van der Vliet Oloomi** is the author of *Fra Keeler* (Dorothy, A Publishing Project, 2012). Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *The American Reader*, *BOMB*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The Coffin Factory*, & *Now Awards 2: The Best Innovative Writing*, *Words without Borders*, and elsewhere. *Fra Keeler* has been translated into Italian and is forthcoming from Giulio Perrone Editore in 2015. From 2010 to 2011, Van der Vliet Oloomi was a Fulbright Research Fellow in Catalonia, Spain. She subsequently received a research grant from the Institució de les Lletres Catalanes in Barcelona to study the work of Catalan author Josep Pla. She holds a B.A. from the University of California, San Diego, and an M.F.A. from Brown University. She has lived in Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Spain, Italy, Singapore, and the United States, and currently teaches in the M.F.A. program in creative writing at the University of Notre Dame.

From the Whiting Award judges: “Azareen Van der Vliet Oloomi writes sentences that are crisp and formal, but the madness they depict is anything but. Her ambition, to take you inside a completely unreliable narrator, still manages to create a rare and strong narrative drive. Controlled yet bizarre, it pulls you in.”



**Anne Washburn's** work has been produced by 13P, American Repertory Theater, Cherry Lane Theatre, Clubbed Thumb, The Civilians, Dixon Place, Ensemble Studio Theater, London's Gate Theatre, Soho Rep., D.C.'s Studio Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Vineyard Theatre. Her plays have been published by *American Theatre*, *Theater Magazine*, and Playscripts. She holds a B.A. in theater and literature from Reed College and an M.F.A. from New York University. Washburn has held several MacDowell and Yaddo residencies between 2008 and 2013, and was a 2009 Guggenheim fellow. Her play *Mr. Burns* was produced at Playwrights Horizons in the fall of 2013 and at the Almeida Theatre in London in 2014; *The Internationalist* was first produced at 13P in 2004.

From the Whiting Award judges: “One of the most brilliant playwrights working today, Anne Washburn engages with theater, and also with the world. She is a master of form. Her plays can be challenging to watch: strange, original, and haunting. She fills out and opens her conceits, making them richer and deeper with inventive language and emotional weight.”



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**About the keynote speaker:**

Andrew Solomon is a writer and lecturer on politics, culture and psychology, and a Professor of Clinical Psychology at Columbia University. Solomon's newest book, *Far From the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity* won the National Book Critics Circle award for nonfiction; the Wellcome Prize; the Green Carnation prize; the J. Anthony Lukas award; the Anisfield-Wolf Award; the Dayton Literary Peace Prize; and more than twenty additional national awards. Solomon's previous book, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* (2001), won the National Book Award for Nonfiction and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. He lives with his husband and son in New York and London and is a dual national. He also has a daughter in Texas with a college friend.

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AWARDS

With the Whiting Awards, the Whiting Foundation hopes to identify exceptional new writers who have yet to make their mark in the literary culture. Though the writers may not necessarily be young (talent may emerge at any age), the grant ideally offers recipients a first opportunity to devote themselves fully to writing, and the recognition has a significant impact. Whiting winners have gone on to win numerous prestigious awards and fellowships, including the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Obie Award, and MacArthur, Guggenheim, and Lannan fellowships, and their work has shaped and advanced literature in this country over the past three decades.

No submissions are accepted; the one hundred nominators who suggest the candidates and the judges who select the winners are all invited by the Foundation, and all work anonymously. The pool of nominators changes annually, and has included writers, professors, editors, agents, critics, booksellers, artistic directors of theaters, dramaturgs, and directors of literary festivals. Winners are chosen by a small group of recognized writers, literary scholars, and editors who meet four times during the course of a year to debate the work and select the final ten.