



**THE GRIFFIN TRUST
For Excellence In Poetry**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**KAMAU BRATHWAITE'S *BORN TO SLOW HORSES*
AND
SYLVIA LEGRIS' *NERVE SQUALL*
WIN THE 2006 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE**

Toronto, ON (June 1, 2006) – Kamau Brathwaite and Sylvia Legris are the International and Canadian winners of the 6th annual Griffin Poetry Prize. The C\$100,000 Griffin Poetry Prize, the richest prize in the world for a single volume of poetry, is divided between the two winners. The prize is for first edition books of poetry, including translations, published in English in 2005, and submitted from anywhere in the world.

The awards event was hosted by Scott Griffin, founder of the prize. Simon Armitage, renowned poet, author and playwright assumed the role of Master of Ceremonies. Judges Lisa Robertson and Eliot Weinberger announced the International and Canadian winners for 2006.

More than 400 guests celebrated the awards, including former Governor-General, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, acclaimed Canadian actors Albert Schultz and Sarah Polley, Senator Jerry Grafstein and his wife Carol, among others. In addition, poets, publishers and other literary luminaries attended the celebration.

The evening's theme was Shangri-La and featured a silk route marketplace replete with banners of fuschia, purple and gold. Hundreds of pigmy orchids and butterflies in a dizzying array of colours adorned the room. The event, which took place at The Stone Distillery in Toronto, offered up a menu of decidedly Asian fusion cuisine. Appetizers included mango and Thai basil sushi rolls, deep-fried plantain, sweet corn tamales, crab cakes on a bed of remoulade, and a sweet potato and jicama salad. The main course featured seared strip loin of beef with a mini risotto wild rice pancake and for dessert, a chocolate fountain with assorted sweets.

The judges for the 2006 prize are the distinguished poets Lavinia Greenlaw (United Kingdom), Lisa Robertson (Canada) and Eliot Weinberger (United States of America). They accomplished an unprecedented feat, reading an extraordinary 441 eligible works of poetry from 15 countries around the globe, translated from 20 different languages. In addition, they selected poems from the shortlist to compile *The Griffin Poetry Prize Anthology: A Selection of the 2006 Shortlist*, edited by Lisa Robertson and published by House of Anansi Press. Royalties generated from the anthologies, published annually, are donated to UNESCO's World Poetry Day. As in past years, copies of the submitted poetry books are being donated to Corrections Canada.

All shortlisted poets read excerpts from their books at a sold-out event for more than 800 people at the MacMillan Theatre on May 31. That night the legendary poet Robin Blaser (Vancouver) was honoured with The Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry's first ever Lifetime Recognition Award. Trustee Robert Hass paid tribute to Robin Blaser and Scott Griffin presented him with his award.



The 2006 Griffin Poetry Prize shortlist is comprised of books by three Canadian poets – Phil Hall’s *An Oak Hunch*, published by Brick Books; Sylvia Legris’ *Nerve Squall*, published by Coach House Books; and Erin Moure’s *Little theatres*, published by House of Anansi Press; and four international poets – Kamau Brathwaite’s *Born to Slow Horses*, published by Wesleyan University Press; Durs Grünbein’s *Ashes for Breakfast: Selected Poems*, translated from the German by Michael Hofmann, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Michael Palmer’s *Company of Moths*, published by New Directions; and Dunya Mikhail’s *The War Works Hard* by, translated from the Arabic by Elizabeth Winslow, published by New Directions.

The judges are selected on an annual basis by the Griffin Poetry Prize Trustees, Margaret Atwood, Carolyn Forché, Robert Hass, Michael Ondaatje, Robin Robertson and David Young.

The Griffin Trust was created to serve and encourage excellence in poetry written in English anywhere in the world.

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Note: The publishers mentioned in our release are those who submitted the books.

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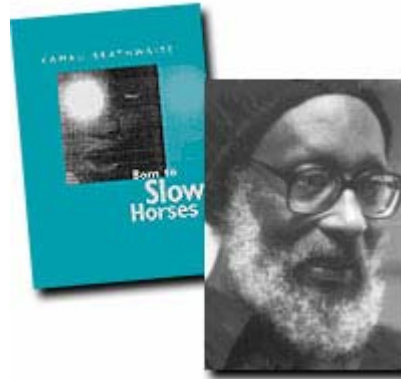
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THE GRIFFIN TRUST
For Excellence In Poetry

**The 2006 Griffin Poetry Prize
International Winner**



Born to Slow Horses
Kamau Brathwaite
Wesleyan University Press

Citation: “To read Kamau Brathwaite is to enter into an entire world of human histories and natural histories, beautiful landscapes and their destruction, children’s street songs, high lyricism, court documents, personal letters, literary criticism, sacred rites, eroticism and violence, the dead and the undead, confession and reportage. An epic of one man (containing multitudes) in the African diaspora, Brathwaite’s world even has its own orthography and typography, demanding total attention to the poem, forbidding casual glances. *Born to Slow Horses* is a major book from a major poet. Here political realities turn into musical complexities, voices overlap, history becomes mythology, spirits appear in photographs. And, in it what may well be the first enduring poem on the disaster of 9/11, Manhattan becomes another island in the poet’s personal archipelago, as the sounds of Coleman Hawkins transform into the words and witnesses and survivors. Throughout *Born to Slow Horses*, as in his earlier books, Brathwaite has invented a new linguistic music for subject matter that is all his own.”

Biography: **Kamau Brathwaite**, born in Barbados in 1930, is an internationally celebrated poet, performer, and cultural theorist. Co-founder of the Caribbean Artists Movement, he was educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge and has a PhD from the University of Sussex in the UK. He has served on the board of directors of UNESCO’s History of Mankind project since 1979, and as cultural advisor to the government of Barbados from 1975-1979 and again since 1990. Brathwaite has received numerous awards, among them the Neustadt International Prize for Literature, the Bussa Award, the Casa de las Américas Prize, and the Charity Randall Prize for Performance and Written Poetry. He has received Guggenheim and Fulbright fellowships, among many others. His book, *The Zea Mexican Diary* (1992) was *The Village Voice* Book of the Year. Brathwaite has authored many works, including *Middle Passages* (1994), *Ancestors* (2001) and *The Development of Creole Society, 1770-1820* (2005). Over the years, he has worked in the Ministry of Education in Ghana and taught at the University of the West Indies, Southern Illinois University, the University of Nairobi, Boston University, Holy Cross College, Yale University and was a visiting fellow at Harvard University. Brathwaite is currently a professor of comparative literature at New York University. He divides his time between CowPastor, Barbados and New York City.



**THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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**THE 2006 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE
Canadian Winner**



Nerve Squall
Sylvia Legris
Coach House Books

Citation: “Sylvia Legris’ high-octane poems are powered by ‘atmospheric overload’. Her eye is that of the twenty-first century – zooming from satellite to microscope – but her focus and coherence are increasingly rare in this age. In her hands, language refracts in ways which break open etymology to bring us more sense rather than less. Legris’ poems build like chords from sub- to super-sonic and, even at their most rapid and heightened point, sustain the force of poetic enquiry. There is always, as she says, ‘something on your hook, you feel it’.”

Biography: **Sylvia Legris** is originally from Winnipeg and now lives in Saskatoon. *Nerve Squall* is her third book of poetry. Her poems have been published in many journals, including *Border Crossings*, *Room of One’s Own*, and *CV2*. Her previous books are *iridium seeds* and *circuitry of veins*. Legris has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, Best of the Small Presses Series and in 2001 won the *Malahat Review’s* Long Poem Prize for *Fishblood Sky*. Legris also received an Honourable Mention in the poetry category of the 2004 National Magazine Awards.