



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
For Excellence In Poetry

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Press Release

**THE GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE ANNOUNCES PRIZE AWARD
INCREASE FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000
AND THE 2010 INTERNATIONAL AND CANADIAN SHORTLIST**

TORONTO – April 6, 2010 – Scott Griffin, founder of The Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry today announced that the annual Griffin Poetry Prize will be doubled from \$100,000 to \$200,000 in recognition of the prize's tenth anniversary. The increased amount of \$100,000 will be awarded as follows: \$10,000 to each of the seven shortlisted – four international and three Canadian – for their participation in the shortlist readings. The winners, announced at the Griffin Poetry Prize Awards evening on Thursday, June 3, 2010, will be awarded \$65,000 each, for a total of \$75,000 that includes the \$10,000 awarded at the Readings the previous evening. Scott Griffin said, "the size of the prize reflects the importance the Trustees of The Griffin Trust For Excellence In Poetry place on poetry, and its influence on literature. The increased amount of the prize shared among the seven shortlisted poets underlines the importance of the poetry readings, and recognises all seven poets' books."

David Young, trustee, announced the International and Canadian shortlist for this year's prize noting that judges Anne Carson (Canada), Kathleen Jamie (Scotland) and Carl Phillips (USA) each read almost 400 books of poetry, including 12 translations, received from 12 countries around the globe. The seven finalists – three Canadian and four International – will be invited to read in Toronto at Koerner Hall at The Royal Conservatory in the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning, 273 Bloor Street West, Toronto on Wednesday, June 2, 2010.

International Shortlist

***Grain* • John Glenday**
Picador

***A Village Life* • Louise Glück**
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

***The Sun-fish* • Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin**
The Gallery Press

***Cold Spring in Winter* • Susan Wicks, translated from the French written by
Valérie Rouzeau**
Arc Publications

Canadian Shortlist

***The Certainty Dream* • Kate Hall**
Coach House Books

***Coal and Roses* • P. K. Page**
The Porcupine's Quill

***Pigeon* • Karen Solie**
House of Anansi Press



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Each year, the Griffin Poetry Prize publishes an anthology, a selection of poems from the shortlisted books, published by House of Anansi Press. Royalties from *The Griffin Poetry Prize Anthology* are donated to UNESCO's World Poetry Day.

Tickets for the Readings to be held on Wednesday, June 2, 2010, at Koerner Hall at The Royal Conservatory in the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning, 273 Bloor Street West, Toronto are available at <http://performance.rcmusic.ca> or by calling 416 408 0208.

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

NOTE TO BOOKSELLERS: Griffin Poetry Prize posters and stickers are supplied free of charge by The Griffin Trust. To view these items and access the order form, visit our Web site, at <http://www.griffinpoetryprize.com/order.php>. Winner stickers will be available after June 3, 2010.

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Links:

Shortlisted Publishers' Web sites:

Arc Publications: www.arcpublications.co.uk
Coach House Books: www.chbooks.com
Farrar, Straus and Giroux: www.fsgbooks.com
House of Anansi Press: www.anansi.ca
Picador: www.panmacmillan.com/picador
The Gallery Press: www.gallerypress.com
The Porcupine's Quill: <http://porcupinesquill.ca/>

Marketing Collateral:

<http://www.griffinpoetryprize.com/order.php>

Downloadable photographs of the 2010 shortlisted poets:

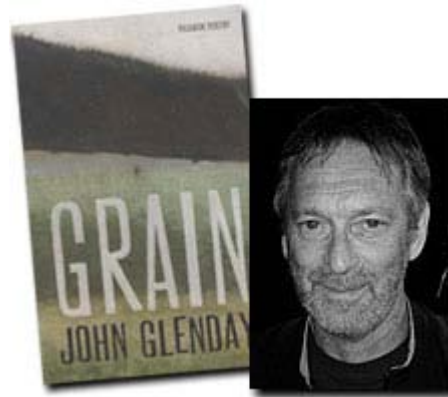
<http://www.griffinpoetryprize.com/presskit.php>



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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**THE 2010 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE SHORTLIST
CITATIONS, BIOGRAPHIES AND SUMMARIES**

International Shortlist



***Grain* • John Glenday**

Picador

Judges' Citation: "In John Glenday's work we hear a calm, confiding voice. This is a mature work, Glenday writes slowly and out of necessity, and in *Grain*, his third collection, he has achieved a work of wry spiritual authority which never preaches or instructs. Alert to Scottish landscapes and turns of phrase, these poems never send readers away bewildered or confused. We are drawn in to shared confidences. His highly crafted lyrics are like wrought iron, strong but delicate, with a care for assonance and cadence. He listens carefully to the language he works in. They're also playful: a tin can, a peculiar fish, invented translations, made-up saints all can suggest poems. It's refreshing to discover a poet whose work is earthly, full of rivers and hills and islands, but where old ideas like 'love' and 'soul' have not been banished. *Grain* is the work of an unhurried craftsman; John Glenday has made poems of understated integrity and humanity. Sun through the sea/sea in the heart/heart in its noust/nothing is lost."

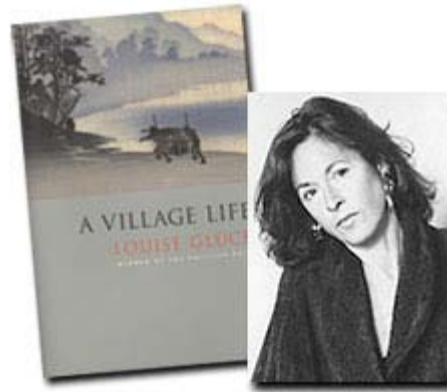
Biography: John Glenday was born in Broughty Ferry in 1952. His first collection, *The Apple Ghost*, won a Scottish Arts Council Book Award and his second, *Undark*, was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. He lives in Cawdor and works for NHS Highland as an addictions counselor.

Summary: Sometimes John Glenday's poems are forcefully direct; sometimes they are so quiet they feel as if they were composed within a capacious listening, as a form of secular prayer. In his third collection, *Grain*, Glenday's seamless lyric can also disguise some wild and surreal tales: the Beauty and the Beast told in reverse, a bizarre list of new saints, or a can of peaches waiting for the invention of the tin-opener. However, the lasting impression is of a genuinely spiritual poet, one with the ability to turn every earthly detail towards the same clear light.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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International Shortlist



***A Village Life* • Louise Glück**

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Judges' Citation: "In *A Village Life*, Louise Glück presents us with a choir of voices whose song enacts and contemplates our human quest for the very happiness that – as if instinctively – we refuse. The result is a restlessness that seems never to leave us, as Glück suggests in 'In the Café': 'It's natural to be tired of earth./When you've been dead this long, you'll probably be tired of heaven./You do what you can do in a place/but after a while you exhaust that place,/so you long for rescue.' This clarity of wisdom everywhere punctuates these poems which, even as they concern restlessness, are cast in long lines shot through with imagery of pristine, archetypal simplicity producing a cinematic stillness; one thinks of the camera in a Bergman film. The tension between that stillness and the subject of restlessness produces a resonance that builds even as it shifts like thought, like the light and dark that constantly fall across the village itself. As for the village, it seems ultimately to be the human spirit itself, replete with hopes realized and dashed, dreams without resolution, memories to which we return, often enough, to our regret, and too late. *A Village Life* is a tour-de-force of imagination and artistry, and shows Glück putting her considerable powers to new challenges."

Biography: Louise Glück is the author of eleven books of poems and a collection of essays. Her many awards include the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Bollingen Prize and the Wallace Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets. She teaches at Yale University and lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Summary: *A Village Life*, Louise Glück's eleventh collection of poems, begins in the topography of a village, a Mediterranean world of no definite time or place. Glück has been known as a lyrical and dramatic poet; here, for the first time, she speaks as "the type of describing, supervising intelligence found in novels rather than poetry," as Langdon Hammer has written of her long lines. While Glück's manner is novelistic, she focuses not on action but on pauses and intervals, moments of suspension (rather than suspense), in a dreamlike present tense in which poetic speculation and reflection are possible.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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International Shortlist



***The Sun-fish* • Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin**

The Gallery Press

Judges' Citation: "This beguiling poet opens many doors onto multiple worlds. From the outset, with the startling imagery of 'The Witch in the Wardrobe' – a 'fluent pantry', where 'the silk scarves came flying at her face like a car wash' – we are in a shifting realm, both real and otherworldly. The effect of her impressionistic style is like watching a photograph as it develops. *The Sun-fish* contains approaches to family and political history, thwarted pilgrimages in which Ní Chuilleanáin poses many questions – not always directly – and often chooses to leave the questions themselves unresolved, allowing them to resonate meaningfully past the actual poem's end. She is a truly imaginative poet, whose imagination is authoritative and transformative. She leads us into altered or emptied landscapes, such as that in 'The Polio Epidemic,' when children were kept indoors, but the poet escapes on a bicycle 'I sliced through miles of air/free as a plague angel descending/On places buses went....' Each poem is a world complete, and often they move between worlds, as in the beautiful 'A Bridge between Two Counties.' These are potent poems, with dense, captivating sound and a certain magic that proves not only to be believable but necessary, in fact, to our understanding of the world around us."

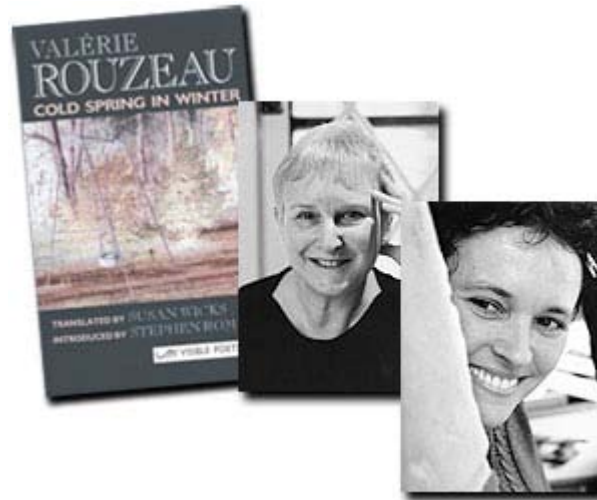
Biography: Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin was born in Cork City in 1942. She was a founder member of the literary journal *Cyphers*. She has won the Patrick Kavanagh Award, the *Irish Times* Award for Poetry, and the O'Shaughnessy Award of the Irish-American Cultural Institute. She is a Fellow and Professor of English at Trinity College, Dublin, and a member of Aosdána. She is married to Macdara Woods and they have a son, Niall.

Summary: *The Sun-fish* reinforces convictions that Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin's transforming and transporting ways of seeing are like no other: there's the "whisper of a cashmere sleeve," the nuns' "leathery kiss" and a lighthouse "scraping the sea with its beam." Poems about men and the men in her family, a "woman's story and the stories of women," elegies, homages and her family's history are developed through mist or the gap in a tale. Other poems tease out the tricks of light, at dawn or dusk, to open the lock of language.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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International Shortlist



Cold Spring in Winter • Susan Wicks, translated from the French written by Valérie Rouzeau
Arc Publications

Judges' Citation: “*Cold Spring In Winter* is a sequence of poems occasioned by the death of the author’s father. Valérie Rouzeau takes as her subject grief and the daily management of grief with its flowers, its armchairs, its special black clothes, its stupid idioms of consolation, its bundles of old *Scrap Merchant* magazines tied up with string (her father was a scrap metal dealer). The pages look like sentences of prose but they are often unpunctuated and the grammar invents itself in surprise jolts and slangy plunges. She makes the surface of the language dissolve and reform constantly as if it were aghast at itself. She pushes holes in the syntax and dives in and out of them, pulling the meaning after her. The tone seems controlled but it is the control of a shocked child. Overall a strange domestic dislocated voice and a crackling decisiveness of method. Grief is a very old room but here we walk into new air. The translation by Susan Wicks is alert, inventive and gives a real sense of the level of linguistic risk and emotional force in Rouzeau’s original.”

Biography: Susan Wicks, poet and novelist, was born in Kent, England, in 1947. She read French at the universities of Hull and Sussex, and wrote a D. Phil. Thesis on André Gide. She has lived and worked in France, Ireland and America and taught at the University of Dijon, University College Dublin and the University of Kent. Her most recent book of poems, *De-iced*, was published in 2007 and a book of short stories, *Roll Up for the Arabian Derby*, was published in 2008.

Valérie Rouzeau was born in 1967 in Burgundy, France and now lives in a small town near Paris, Saint-Ouen. She has published a dozen collections of poems and volumes translated from Sylvia Plath, William Carlos Williams, Ted Hughes and the photographer Duane Michals. She is the editor of a little review of poetry for children called *dans la lune* and lives mainly by her pen through public readings, poetry workshops in schools, radio broadcasts and translation.

Summary: Valérie Rouzeau’s *Cold Spring in Winter* is an urgent, stammered lament for her dead father, a scrap-merchant, in which the poet’s adult voice and that of the little girl she used to be combine in an extraordinary blend of baby-talk, youthful slang, coinages and puns – a breathless delivery of tremendous power. The influential poet and critic Andre Velter has described Rouzeau’s poetry as “violent in its capacity to exalt and disturb.” This quality comes to the fore in Susan Wicks’ remarkable translation, which, as Stephen Romer concludes in his introduction, “make good the transposition of this pure and singular voice into English.”



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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Canadian Shortlist



***The Certainty Dream* • Kate Hall**
Coach House Books

Judges' Citation: "We Canadians are an earnest people and we make earnest books. I have done so myself. But every so often in the midst of crafting a particularly earnest sentence I'm struck by that Oscar Wilde feeling – 'either the wallpaper goes or I do.' There should be an award, I've thought on these occasions, for a person who, from within the confines of our grand funny country, can treat the topics of life, dreams, death, winter and animals without earnestness. Kate Hall's book is called *The Certainty Dream* and it has what appear to be three homemade helicopters on the cover. The helicopters are in fact oil cans lashed to egg beaters and are held together by the good hopes of two tiny humans waving at them from the lower margin of the cover. It is a summary image of Kate Hall's method and mood. What holds a poem together, what holds a dream together, is the mind of some person working within it to make sense, using the available means. Her means include lots of philosophers' names and sparkly bits of their thought, but these are not decoratively invoked, they are woven into the sense that she makes and the mood in which she makes it. I like the feeling her poems give that as we read them we are amidst an actual process of thought. And that this process takes place, as she says, in 'the gigantic margin reserved for wrong guesses.'"

Biography: Kate Hall's poems have appeared in many journals, including *The Colorado Review*, *jubilant*, *Swerve*, *The Denver Quarterly*, *Open City*, *Verse*, *LIT* and the *Boston Review*. She has won the Irving Layton Award and the David McKeen Award and travelled on the storied Wave Books poetry bus tour in 2006. She was co-editor of the delirium Press chapbooks and co-hosted the Departure Reading Series in Montreal, where she now lives and teaches at McGill University.

Summary: In Kate Hall's bracingly immediate, insistently idiosyncratic debut collection, *The Certainty Dream*, a mynah bird perches in poems but "stands for nightingale"; the poet's antelope turns transparent; she dresses up her orange trees with bark and leaves. As the dream world and the waking world blur, the body and the dimensions it inhabits become a series of overlapping circles, all acting as containers for both knowledge and uncertainty. At times disarmingly plainspoken, at others, singing with lyric possibility, these poems make huge associative leaps. Taken together, they present the argument that to truly "know" something, one must first recognize its traces in something else.



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Canadian Shortlist



***Coal and Roses* • P. K. Page**
The Porcupine's Quill

Judges' Citation: "Though we were not to know it, *Coal and Roses* was the last book to be published by P. K. Page, appearing months before her death at the age of 93. Therefore it marks the close of a long and creative life. How heartening to be reminded that creativity, zest and curiosity can endure, even flourish, into great old age. *Coal and Roses* is wholly unusual and possibly unique. It's a collection of 21 *glosas* – a *glosa* being an intricate difficult form. Each poem begins with four lines from another poet – Anna Akhmatova, Thom Gunn, Zbigniew Herbert and Ted Hughes all feature – and those four lines are then spun and meditated upon by Page herself, to form a new poem, where every stanza closes with a line from the master. The result is a history of poetry, a kind of memoir and a *homage* from one nearing life's end, to her forebears and colleagues. It is a fully achieved project, which does what literature does best – abolishes the borders of life and death, time and culture and language, and sets all in a great conversation."

Biography: P. K. Page is the author of more than a dozen books, including poetry, a novel, short stories, essays and books for children. Awarded a Governor General's Award for poetry (*The Metal and the Flower*) in 1954, Page was also on the shortlist for the Griffin Poetry Prize (*Planet Earth*) in 2003 and awarded the BC Lieutenant Governor's Award for Literary excellence in 2004. P. K. Page died in January 2010.

Summary: P. K. Page's *Coal and Roses* is a collection of 21 intricately formal *glosas* – an early Renaissance form, first developed by the poets of the Spanish court – arranged to explore the endless possibilities of language. The use of the *glosa* form serves to emphasize both continuity and evolution, speaking to life, death, a palpable need for belonging and the inevitable passage of time. Spanning numerous centuries, movements, genres and corners of the world, Page explores the works of nineteen artists, including Ted Hughes, Wallace Stevens, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Theodore Roethke, Marilyn Bowering, Dionne Brand and Anna Akhmatova.



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Canadian Shortlist



***Pigeon* • Karen Solie**

House of Anansi Press

Judges' Citation: “‘If virtue is love ordered and controlled,/its wild enemy has made a home in me. And if/desire injures the spirit, I am afflicted,’ says Karen Solie in one of *Pigeon*’s finest poems, ‘An Acolyte Reads The Cloud of Unknowing.’ It’s this particular affliction of desire – and the corrosive effects of human desire both upon ourselves and the world we inhabit – that Solie most often meditates upon in poems as humorous, often, as they are sobering. ‘Gone are the bad old good old days. Before us,/vast unfenced acres of decline,’ she says in ‘Prayers for the Sick.’ Solie forces us to look squarely at that decline, the landscapes we’ve ruined, the vistas we’ve cluttered, in service to a longing that, as she puts it, ‘hovers like billboards/over the expressway.’ The vision here is powerful, philosophical, intelligent, especially adept at pulling great wisdom from the ordinary – as when a tractor is found to manifest ‘fate, forged/like a pearl around the grit of centuries.’ It may be, as Solie suggests, that ‘the honourable life/is like timing. One might not have the talent for it.’ Among the greatest of Solie’s talents, evident throughout the poems of *Pigeon*, is an ability to see at once into and through our daily struggle, often thwarted by our very selves, toward something like an honourable life.”

Biography: Karen Solie’s first collection of poems, *Short Haul Engine*, won the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize and was shortlisted for the 2002 Griffin Poetry Prize, the ReLit and the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award. Her second, *Modern and Normal*, was shortlisted for the Trillium Book Award for Poetry. Her poetry, fiction and non-fiction have appeared in numerous North American journals. She is a native of Saskatchewan and now lives in Toronto.

Summary: Karen Solie launched to prominence with her first collection of poems, *Short Haul Engine* (2001), finalist for the 2002 Griffin Poetry Prize and winner of many other awards and citations. She continued her upward trajectory with *Modern and Normal* (2005), and is now considered one of Canada’s best poets. *Pigeon* is yet another leap forward for this singer of existential bewilderment. These poems are X-rays of our delusions and mistaken perceptions, explorations of violence, bad luck, fate, creeping catastrophe, love and the eros of danger. Once again, Solie shows that her ear is impeccable, her poetic intelligence rare and razor-sharp.

NOTE: Summaries taken from promotional materials supplied by the publisher, unless otherwise noted.