



**THE GRIFFIN TRUST
For Excellence In Poetry**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EILÉAN NÍ CHUILLEANÁIN'S *THE SUN-FISH*

AND

KAREN SOLIE'S *PIGEON*

EACH WIN \$65,000 FOR THE 2010 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE

TORONTO – Thursday, June 3, 2010 – Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin's *The Sun-fish* and Karen Solie's *Pigeon* are the International and Canadian winners of the tenth annual Griffin Poetry Prize.

The Griffin Poetry Prize was founded in 2000 to serve and encourage excellence in poetry. The prize is for first edition books of poetry written in, or translated into, English, and submitted from anywhere in the world. In celebration of the prize's tenth anniversary, The Griffin Trust For Excellence In Poetry doubled the annual prize money to a cumulative amount of \$200,000 (which includes \$10,000 for each of the shortlisted poets who participated in the Readings).

The awards ceremony, attended by some 400 invited guests, was held in the Fermenting Cellar at the Stone Distillery and hosted by Scott Griffin, founder of the prize, and Trustees Margaret Atwood, Carolyn Forché, Robert Haas, Michael Ondaatje, Robin Robertson and David Young.

Celebrated poet Glyn Maxwell was **the** evening's featured speaker.

Judges for the 2010 Griffin Poetry Prize are the distinguished writers and poets Anne Carson (Canada), Kathleen Jamie (Scotland) and Carl Phillips (United States). They read almost 400 books of poetry, including 12 translations, received from 12 countries around the globe.

The judges are selected on an annual basis by the Trustees of The Griffin Trust For Excellence In Poetry.

On the previous evening, the shortlisted poets read excerpts from their books at a sold-out event for more than 1,000 people at The Royal Conservatory, TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning, Koerner Hall.



The 2010 Griffin Poetry Prize shortlist features collections by three Canadian poets – Kate Hall’s *The Certainty Dream*, published by Coach House Books; *Coal and Roses* by the late P. K. Page (a selection of which was read by Toronto Poet Laureate and 2003 Griffin Poetry Prize shortlisted poet Dionne Brand), published by The Porcupine’s Quill and *Pigeon* by Karen Solie, published by House of Anansi Press; and four international poets – John Glenday’s *Grain*, published by Picador; Louise Glück’s *A Village Life*, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin’s *The Sun-fish*, published by The Gallery Press and Susan Wick’s translation of *Cold Spring in Winter* by Valérie Rouzeau, published by Arc Publications.

Also that evening, renowned **American** poet and essayist Adrienne Rich was honoured with the 2010 Lifetime Achievement Award. Trustee Carolyn Forché paid tribute to Rich and presented her with her award.

Trustee David Young presented each poet with a leather-bound edition of their book.

The Griffin Poetry Prize Anthology: A Selection of the 2010 Shortlist, edited by A. F. Moritz and published by House of Anansi Press, is now available at most retail bookstores. 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.

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INTERNATIONAL WINNER



***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.



CANADIAN WINNER



***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. In addition to the 2010 Griffin Poetry Prize, Karen Solie’s *Pigeon* is also shortlisted for the Pat Lowther Memorial Award. 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.