



THE GRIFFIN TRUST  
For Excellence In Poetry

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## *Press Release*

### **THE GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE ANNOUNCES CANADIAN AND INTERNATIONAL SHORTLIST FOR 2002**

**Ottawa, March 21st**— The Griffin Poetry Prize Shortlist for 2002, comprising seven books of poetry – three Canadian and four International – was announced on World Poetry Day by Scott Griffin, Chairman of The Griffin Trust. The books, published in 2001, were judged by distinguished poets, Dionne Brand (Canada), Robert Creeley (U.S.) and Michael Hofmann (U.K.).

#### The Canadian Shortlist

***Eunoia* • Christian Bök**

Coach House Books

***Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person* • Eirin Moure**

House of Anansi Press Limited

***Short Haul Engine* • Karen Solie**

Brick Books

#### The International Shortlist

***Maraca New and Selected Poems 1965-2000* • Victor Hernández Cruz**

Coffee House Press

***Homer: War Music* • Christopher Logue**

Faber and Faber Limited

***Conscious and Verbal* • Les Murray**

Farrar, Straus & Giroux

***Disobedience* • Alice Notley**

Penguin Putnam Inc.

The shortlist announcement preceded an evening of poetry reading by representatives of 15 European Union countries. The event – “Voices, Past and Present” – was held at the National Library of Canada with the support of the European Union, UNESCO, the Canada Council of Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Ottawa International Writers Festival to coincide with UNESCO’s World Poetry Day.



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UNESCO's World Poetry Day will be the beneficiary of the royalties generated from The Griffin Poetry Prize Anthology, a selection of the 2002 Shortlist, edited by Esta Spalding and published by Toronto's House of Anansi Press Limited.

Scott Griffin, with Trustees Margaret Atwood, Robert Hass, Michael Ondaatje, Robin Robertson and David Young, launched the \$80,000 Griffin Poetry Prize in September, 2000 remarked, "It's appropriate that we are announcing the Griffin Poetry Prize shortlist on UNESCO World Poetry Day – the timing is perfect!"

The shortlisted poets will be invited to give a reading in Toronto at a Harbourfront Reading Series Special event on May 29<sup>th</sup> and the two winners – one Canadian and one International – each of whom receives C\$40,000 will be announced at the second Griffin Poetry Prize awards ceremony on May 30<sup>th</sup>.

The Griffin Trust was created to serve and encourage excellence in poetry written in English anywhere in the world. Eligible collections of poetry, which includes translations, must be submitted by publishers in the calendar year of their publication. The 2002 Griffin Poetry Prize is for first edition books of poetry published in 2001.

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NOTE: The publishers mentioned in our release are those who submitted the books. See poets' biographies for publishers in other countries.

**NOTE TO BOOKSELLERS:** Griffin Poetry Prize 2002 Shortlist bookmarks and stickers are supplied free of charge by The Griffin Trust. To access the order form, look for the special Bookseller button on our website home page at [www.griffinpoetryprize.com](http://www.griffinpoetryprize.com). Winner stickers will be available after May 30<sup>th</sup>.

Please direct other inquiries as follows:

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**THE 2002 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE SHORTLIST  
CITATIONS AND BIOGRAPHIES**

The Canadian Shortlist

Book: *Eunoia*  
Poet: **Christian Bök**  
Publishers: Coach House Books

Citation: Christian Bök has made an immensely attractive work from those “corridors of the breath” we call vowels, giving each in turn its dignity and manifest, making all move to the order of his own recognition and narrative. Both he and they are led to delightfully, unexpected conclusions as though the world really were what we made of it. As we are told at the outset, “Eunoia, which means ‘beautiful thinking’, is the shortest English word to contain all five vowels.” Here each speaks with persistent, unequivocal voice, all puns indeed intended.

Biography: **Christian Bök** is the author of the acclaimed *Crystallography* (Coach House Press, 1994), a pataphysical encyclopedia nominated for the Gerald Lampert Award for Best Poetic Debut. *Pataphysics: The Poetics of an Imaginary Science* is forthcoming from Northwestern University Press. Bök’s conceptual artwork has appeared at the Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York City as part of the *Poetry Plastique* exhibit. He has also created artificial languages for the TV shows, Gene Roddenberry’s *Earth: Final Conflict* and Peter Benchley’s *Amazon*. Bök has also earned many accolades for his virtuoso performances of sound poetry (particularly the *Ursonate* by Kurt Schwitters).

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Book: *Sheep’s Vigil by a Fervent Person*  
Poet: **Eirin Moure**  
Publisher: House of Anansi Press Limited

Citation: **Eirin Moure’s** *Sheep’s Vigil by a Fervent Person* is wry, clever, playful and lyrical. It is essentially, and beautifully, a love letter to that poet of fluid identities Fernando Pessoa. And it is also a love letter to Toronto, its vanished pastoral. Pessoa’s Tejo river is Moure’s Humber river. Her language, as his, is always doubled. She translates and recreates their shared sensations of nature’s plain existence, its material absolution.



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Biography: **Eirin Moure's** earlier collection, *A Frame of the Book*, was co-published with House of Anansi Press Limited and Sun and Moon Press in the U.S. Anansi also published her *Domestic Fuel, Furious* and *Search Procedures*. Moure has won a Governor General's Award for Poetry, The Pat Lowther Memorial Award, a QSPELL and National Magazine Award for Poetry. Born in Calgary, Alberta, she attended the University of Calgary and University of British Columbia. Moure works as a translator and editor in Montreal, where she is also known as Erin Mouré.

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Book: *Short Haul Engine*  
Poet: **Karen Solie**  
Publisher: Brick Books

Citation: **Karen Solie's** first book of poems, *Short Haul Engine* – a nice phrase for poetry – stood out for its mix of physical impressions, perceptual strength, and – especially – mental grace. A kind of liveliness, agility, connectivity. In “Early in Winter”, one of her many car poems, she writes: “feet cold, heart wagging its little tail.” Grief shows: “what is not in everything/ there is; and all/ it wants to talk about/ is you.” A monstrous old fish, a sturgeon, is hauled out of the water by some teenagers, but then, “...when he began to heave and thrash over yards of rock/ to the water's edge and, unbelievably, in,/ we couldn't hold him though we were teenaged/ and bigger than everything. Could not contain/ the old current he had for a mind, its pull,/ and his body a muscle called river, called spawn.” There is toughness here, as well as grace. Often in her pages, we encounter wisdom of a severity that we would almost rather not know. A cold person is a different species; there is a dismal companionship in grief, the water stays in the fish, even when the fish is out of the water. *Short Haul Engine* is not just an exceptional debut, it is an exceptional book.

Biography: **Karen Solie's** poetry, fiction and non-fiction have appeared in numerous North American journals, including *The Fiddlehead*, *The Malahat Review*, *Event*, *Indiana Review*, *ARC*, *Other Voices*, and *The Capilano Review*. She has also had her poetry published in the anthologies *Breathing Fire* (Harbour, 1995), *Hammer and Tongs* (Smoking Lung, 1999), and *Introductions: Poets Present Poets* (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2001) and one of her short stories featured in *The Journey Prize Anthology 12*. Born in Moose Jaw, Solie grew up on the family farm in southwest Saskatchewan. Over the years, she has worked as a farm hand, an espresso jerk, a groundskeeper, a newspaper reporter/photographer, an academic research assistant, and presently, an English teacher. She lives in Victoria, British Columbia.



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The International Shortlist

Book: *Maraca New and Selected Poems 1965-2000*  
Poet: **Victor Hernández Cruz**  
Publisher: Coffee House Press

Citation: **Victor Hernández Cruz** has long been the defining poet of that complex bridge between the Latino and mainland cultures of the U.S. *Maraca New and Selected Poems 1965-2000* proves the extraordinary range of this great, enduring poet, whose articulately persuasive humor and intelligence bear persistent witness to a meld of peoples: “All the exile from broken/ South/ The horses the cows/ the chickens/ The daisies of the rural/ road/ All past tense in the urbanity/ that/ remembers/ The pace of the mountains/ The moods of the fields ...” Bringing together long out-of-print work and that most recent, *Maraca* is testament to its author’s singular genius in a world he maintains so compassionately for all who will share it with him.

Biography: **Victor Hernández Cruz** completed his first collection of verses, *Papa Got His Gun, and Other Poems* (1966), in his teens and published *Snaps* (Random House) at age 20. His other works include *Mainland* (1973), *Tropicalizations* (1976), *By Lingual Wholes* (1982), *Rhythm, Content, and Flavor: New and Selected Poems* (1989), *Red Beans: Poems* (Coffee House Press, 1991), and *Panoramas* (Coffee House Press, 1997). He edited the anthology *Paper Dance: 55 Latino Poets*. In addition, he has edited *Umbra* magazine in New York, lectured at the University of California, Berkeley and taught at San Francisco State University. Among his numerous awards are a Fulbright Scholarship, the Guggenheim Fellowship and the New York Poetry Foundation Award. Born in Aguas Buenas, Puerto Rico, Cruz, who writes in English and Spanish, moved with his family to New York City in 1954. He presently lives in Puerto Rico.

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Book: *Homer: War Music*  
Poet: **Christopher Logue**  
Publisher: Faber and Faber Limited, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Jonathan Cape

Citation: **Christopher Logue** is one of those all too rare poets whose ability to tell the story transforms each word of it to a freshness and a presence one had feared was lost. What could be more intimidating than Homer’s great epic, the *Iliad*? Yet Logue’s *War Music* (which collects the first three volumes of his brilliant adaptation) ‘makes it new’ with all the vigor and invention the old recountings could no longer carry. If ‘translation’ is literally a ‘carrying over,’ then *War Music* is a vivid and reaffirming instance of its power. First and last, Logue is a poet whose own authority here is as timeless as his master’s.



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Biography: **Christopher Logue's** *War Music: An Account of Books 16-19 of Homer's Iliad* brought him great critical acclaim when it appeared in 1988. *Kings: An Account of Books 1 to 2 of Homer's Iliad* was published in 1991 and was awarded the Bernard F. O'Connor Award by the Paris Review. *The Husbands: An Account of Books 3 and 4*, the third volume in the treatment of Homer's Iliad, was published by Faber in 1994. *Selected Poems* by Christopher Logue was published in 1996 and his autobiography, *Prince Charming*, was published by Faber in 1999. Born in England, Logue served as a Private in the Black Watch and spent 16 months in an army prison. He worked in films, appeared in Ken Russell's *Dante's Inferno* and *The Devils* in addition to writing the screenplay for Russell's *Savage Messiah*. He also appeared in John Irvin's *The Peasant's Revolt*. He published his first volume of poems in 1953 and has contributed his 'True Stories' column to Private Eye. Born in Hampshire, England, he lives in Camberwell, London, with his wife, the critic, Rosemary Hill.

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Book: *Conscious and Verbal*

Poet: **Les Murray**

Publisher: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Duffy & Snellgrove, Carcanet, distributed by Douglas & McIntyre Ltd. in Canada.

Citation: *Conscious and Verbal*, the title of the latest book – the eighth in little over a decade – by **Les Murray**, is taken from a hospital press release, informing Australians that their great national poet, after three weeks at death's door with sudden catastrophic liver failure, was on the mend. One can hear the deprecating giggle, the understatement, in the phrase once Murray adopted it as a title. It is a typically rich and varied performance. What Murray can do is to write interestingly and characteristically about anything and everything; his imagination is fired by any sort of subject: city and country, staying at home or travelling abroad, memory and history, the present or the future, satire or hymn, culture or nature. Here, as well as the poem of his survival – called "travels with John Hunter" ("I was sped down a road/ of treetops and fishing-rod lightpoles/ towards the three persons of God/ and the three persons of John Hunter/ Hospital. Who said We might lose this one." – calm and witty and inventive, there are poems in *Conscious and Verbal* on the joys of libraries and swimming pools, on poetry and oysters, and Harley Davidsons. If you had to choose a poet to save your life, you could do worse than choose Les Murray.



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Biography: Australia-born **Les Murray** is the author of 23 titles published in Australia and several in the U.S. and England, including *The Vernacular Republic* (1982), *The Daylight Moon* (1988), *The Rabbiter's Bounty: Collected Poems* (1991), *The Boys Who Stole the Funeral Sequence* (1991), *Dog Fox Field* (1992), *Translations from the Natural World* (1992), *Subhuman Redneck Poems* (1997), *Fredy Neptune: A Novel in Verse* (1999), *Learning Human* (2000), Griffin Poetry Prize Shortlisted Book in 2001, and *Conscious and Verbal* (2001), voted a Notable Book for 2001 by the American Library Association. Selected prose includes *The Quality of Sprawl* and *A Working Forest*. He has won the T.S. Eliot Prize and has been honoured by the Australian government with the Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to literature. He has been elected an Honorary Fellow by the Australian Academy of the Humanities and was awarded the prestigious Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1998. In addition, he has won numerous National Book Council Awards in Australia, the Australian National Poetry Award, and the Australian Literary Society Gold Medal (1987), among others. He lives on the coast of New South Wales.

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Book: *Disobedience*

Poet: **Alice Notley**

Publisher: Penguin Putnam Inc. (U.S.), Penguin Books Ltd. (U.K.), Penguin Books Australia Ltd., Penguin Books Canada Ltd., and Penguin Books (N.Z.) Ltd.

Citation: *Disobedience* stands in ambush at the virtual co-ordinates of our 'post-modern' inferno. Against 'decorous poetry', Alice Notley's verse has a caustic swish, the intimacy of a vivisectionist on the contemporary body politic. In an unsentimental interrogation of the will, the soul and the common being the long poem 'disses' the orthodoxies of political power, sex, and philosophy. *Disobedience* does what only the best poetry can do in times like these, surprise, denounce, dissent.

Biography: Paris-based **Alice Notley** is the author of more than 20 books of poetry including *The Descent of Alette* (1996) and *Mysteries of Small Houses* (Penguin, 1998). She was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Award for Poetry. In the spring of 2001 she received an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Poetry Society of America's Shelly Memorial Award. She edited and wrote a new introduction to her late husband Ted Berrigan's *The Sonnets* (Penguin, 2000). Born in Bisbee, Arizona, Notley grew up in Needles, California. After leading a peripatetic life during the late 60s and early 70s, she settled in New York, where, for 16 years, she was an important force in the eclectic second generation of the so-called New York school of poetry.