



PRESS RELEASE
STRICTLY EMBARGOED until 14.30 hrs, Sunday 6 June 2010

Wales Book of the Year 2010 shortlists announced

Shortlisted for this year's £10,000 Prize:

- A groundbreaking new study of the Mabinogi – Wales' oldest prose work
- The remarkable pin-hole camera influenced poet
- A 'powerful' debut novel set in America's Deep South

The shortlists for Wales Book of the Year 2010 – Wales's premier award for literature - were announced today, Sunday 6 June, at the Guardian Hay Festival.

From a longlist which was notable for its diversity, the judges have chosen award-winning poet **Philip Gross** for his poems inspired by images of electricity pylons taken with a pin-hole camera; Anglo-Russian historian **Nikolai Tolstoy** for his re-examination of the origins of the tales of the Mabinogi and **Terri Wiltshire** for her debut novel about racism in America's Deep South.

The awards, worth £10,000 to the winners, are presented to the best books of the year in the English and Welsh language.

The shortlist is:

Philip Gross	<i>I Spy Pinhole Eye</i>	Cinnamon Press
Nikolai Tolstoy	<i>The Oldest Prose Literature: The Compilation of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi</i>	Edward Mellen Press
Terri Wiltshire	<i>Carry Me Home</i>	Macmillan New Writing

The English and Welsh-language winners will be announced on Wednesday 30 June at a gala dinner at St David's Hotel, Cardiff where each winner will receive a cheque for £10,000 and the four runners-up will receive £1,000.

For the second year running English-language readers can vote online for the Media Wales People's Choice prize which will also be presented that evening.

The English language judges are poet and lecturer at the University of Wales, **Ian Gregson** (chair); fiction writer, **James Hawes** and broadcaster **Sara Edwards**.

Ian Gregson said:

'This very diverse list contains a novel, a book of poems and a work of criticism: together they constitute an excitingly challenging set of texts which illustrates the powerfully innovative writing which is currently emerging in Wales.'

Peter Finch, Academi Chief Executive commented:

'The annual Wales Book of the Year Award draws attention world-wide to the strength of our native creativity. For a small nation Wales consistently punches well above its literary weight. This year's short-listed titles prove the point admirably.'

Nick Capaldi, Chief Executive, Arts Council of Wales said:

'Wales Book of the Year is one of the most eagerly awaited events in the cultural calendar. The quality and range of work in this year's shortlist demonstrates that original and imaginative writing in Wales is alive and well.'

The shortlist for the Welsh-language Award is *Cymru: Y 100 lle i'w gweid cyn marw* by **John Davies**; *Banerog* by **Hywel Griffiths** and *Naw Mis* by **Caryl Lewis**.

The Welsh-language judges are **John Gwilym Jones**, **Aled Lewis Evans** and **Branwen Gwyn**.

The awards ceremony will be presented by BBC Wales Political Editor, **Betsan Powys**, and the prizes will be presented by Minister for Heritage, **Alun Ffred Jones**. Welsh actor **Steffan Rhodri**, best known for his role in the hit TV series *Gavin & Stacey*, will also speak after the ceremony.

The Wales Book of the Year is administered by Academi, and funded by the Arts Council of Wales through its income from the Welsh Assembly Government.

Wales Book of the Year 2010 – The Shortlist

Philip Gross

Photographs by Simon Denison | **I Spy Pinhole Eye** | **Cinnamon Press**



Simon Denison uses a pinhole camera to transform that most mundane of objects – the footings of electricity pylons - while Philip Gross's poems explore the act of seeing and interpretation in a collaborative work that is meditative, playful and profound. **Philip Gross** is the author of twelve poetry collections, including *The Water Table* which won the T S Eliot Prize 2010, as well as a fiction writer, dramatist and Professor of Creative Writing at Glamorgan University. He lives in Cardiff. **Simon Denison** is a lecturer in the history and interpretation of photography at Birmingham City University's Institute of Art and Design and the author of two photographic books, *The Human Landscape* (2002) and *Quarry Land* (2005).

Nikolai Tolstoy The Oldest British Prose Literature: *The Compilation of The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* Mellen Press

'If Tolstoy's conclusion on the Mabinogi's dating is of interest to the scholar, this charming book is also a page-turner for the lay reader.'
Trevor Mostyn, *Times Literary Supplement*

This book seeks to establish the chronology and provenance of the early medieval tales known today as the Mabinogi. Although they have been described as the stories of the old Brittonic gods from whom the leading Welsh dynasties claimed descent, Tolstoy shows that often seemingly incongruous and contradictory passages reflect details of historical events in Britain and Ireland during the first two decades of the eleventh century. **Nikolai Tolstoy** was born in 1935 and educated at Wellington College and Trinity College Dublin where he developed a life-long passion for Celtic studies. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and Adjunct Professor at Utah Valley State College. He is head of the Tolstoy family, and holds Russian and British citizenship. He lives near Abingdon, Berkshire.



Terri Wiltshire Carry Me Home



'Good novels lead you by the nose into involvement with the characters and resonate after you put the book down. This is a powerful debut.'

Western Mail

Lander, Alabama in 1904 is a dangerous place for outsiders. When young Emma Scott claims she's been attacked by a 'black hobo', a chain of events is triggered that will affect generations to come. In modern-day Alabama, having fled an abusive marriage, Canaan Phillips has returned to her childhood home and, with the help of her eccentric great uncle Luke, is coming to terms with her past and learning to love again. *Carry Me Home* is a luminous story about loyalty and belonging. **Terri Wiltshire** was raised on a small farm in Alabama until the age of ten. For the last twenty years she has lived and worked in the UK, where she runs a corporate role-play company. A former journalist and NBC News presenter, she is also an actor and director and the author of six children's books. *Carry Me Home* is her first novel. She lives in Newport, South Wales.

Notes to editors:

Wales Book of the Year Award

- The Wales Book of the Year prizes are awarded annually to the best Welsh language and English language works in the fields of creative writing and literary criticism. They are administered by the Academi with funding from the Arts Council of Wales.
- Prizes are awarded for the best books published in the previous calendar year, with £10,000 each awarded to the two winning titles. The two runners up in each category also receive £1,000.
- Readers can vote online for the Media Wales People's Choice Prize by visiting walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle.

- The award began in 1992. Previous English-language award winners include **Dannie Abse** (*The Presence*, 2008), **Lloyd Jones** (*Mr Cassini*, 2007), **Robert Minhinnick** (*To Babel and Back*, 2006), **Owen Sheers** (*The Dust Diaries*, 2005) and **Niall Griffiths** (*Stump*, 2004).
- The 2009 winners were **Deborah Kay Davies** for *Grace, Tamar and Laszlo the Beautiful* (Parthian) and **Wiliam Owen Roberts** for *Petrograd* (Barddas).

Academi

- Yr Academi Gymreig is the Welsh National Literature Development Agency and Society for Authors. It was established in 1959, following discussions between Bobi Jones and Waldo Williams.
- In 1998 the Society's role increased greatly when it won the Arts Council of Wales franchise to become Wales' National Literature Promotion Agency.
- The Academi works in partnership with Tŷ Newydd Writing Centre in Llanystumdwy. The Academi works with the support of the Arts Council of Wales.
- The Academi is responsible for organising the Wales Book of the Year award, literary events (conferences, dinners, poetry tours, lectures), writers' bursaries, Writing Squads and various support schemes.
- Chief Executive is the writer and literary entrepreneur Peter Finch.
- The Academi has joined the Urdd, Diversions, Welsh National Opera and other organisations at the Wales Millennium Centre where it runs the Glyn Jones Centre.

For further information, please contact:

The Welsh Academi
Peter Finch, Chief Executive
Meleri Mair Thomas, Literature Officer (and Welsh language award)
 Mount Stuart House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FQ
 Tel: 029 2047 2266
 email: post@academi.org
www.academi.org/book-of-the-year

Midas Public Relations (English language award)
 Margot Weale, Tel: 0207 361 7881
 Mobile: 07759 054 727
 email: margot.weale@midaspr.co.uk

Review copies, author photos and jacket images are available on request.