

## Press Release

# FORWARD PRIZES FOR POETRY 2014

## Shortlist announcement

**Embargoed until June 2nd**

The shortlist for the 2014 Forward Prizes, celebrating the best of the year's poetry, is released today.

The list features 16 voices that engage and intrigue, including a former machine-gunner, a National Health Service doctor, a Black Country "wench" set on redeeming her much-mocked dialect and a Jamaican who uses Rastafari "dread-talk" to unravel the island's colonial past.

Jeremy Paxman, chair of the judging panel, says: "What you're looking for is to be surprised: sometimes by the choice of subject, always by the quality of perception and above all by the language. There's a whole pile of really good poems here. I surrendered my personal preferences very early on in the judging process but there's nothing on the shortlist that I don't feel better for having read."

The judging panel includes the musician Cerys Matthews and three poets, Dannie Abse, Helen Mort and Vahni Capildeo, who read 170 collections and 254 single poems before arriving at the shortlist.

"I hope to go into a poem sober and come out a little drunk. And if I do then that's a real poem," says Abse, who noted that many poets published for the first time this year were inspired by conflict, whether in Iraq, Sri Lanka or Ireland. "One can see their talent."

William Sieghart, who founded the Forward Prizes in 1991, says: "The writers on this shortlist bring news that stays news, in fresh and startling language. Their voices remind readers that, in an age of shortened attention spans, good poetry can communicate insights and visions with a power other art forms can only envy."

The three Forward prizes are unique in honouring both the work of established poets (Best Collection £10,000) and the debuts of brilliant unknowns (Best First Collection £5,000). The Best Single Poem award (£1000) is a prize for which only award-winning poems and published works not yet collected in book form are eligible.

The prizes will be awarded at Southbank Centre on Tuesday 30 September, at an event described by the Financial Times as "the bardic equivalent of the Oscars". The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Forward Book of Poetry, containing the judges' choice of the year's poems will be launched on the same day, with a cover by the artist Gary Hume. The event falls in the week of National Poetry Day – Thursday 2 October – and marks the start of a month of nationwide poetry celebrations and the opening of Southbank Centre's 8th annual London Literature Festival.

Tickets for the event, directed by Samuel West and introduced by Jeremy Paxman and Cerys Matthews, are on sale to Southbank Centre members on Tuesday 3 June and to the general public from Wednesday 4 June at [www.southbankcentre.co.uk/literature](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/literature)

**National Poetry Day and the Forward Prizes for Poetry are organised by Forward Arts Foundation**

c/o The Royal Society of Literature Somerset House Strand London WC2R 1LA

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Registered Charity Number: 1037939

# Forward Prizes for Poetry 2014

[www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry/](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry/)

Shortlisted for £10,000 Forward Prize for Best Collection:

Colette Bryce	<i>The Whole &amp; Rain-domed Universe</i>	Picador Poetry
John Burnside	<i>All One Breath</i>	Cape Poetry
Louise Glück	<i>Faithful and Virtuous Night</i>	Carcenet
Kei Miller	<i>The Cartographer Tries to Map A Way to Zion</i>	Carcenet
Hugo Williams	<i>I Knew the Bride</i>	Faber & Faber

Shortlisted for the £5,000 Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection:

Liz Berry	<i>Black Country</i>	Chatto & Windus
Fiona Benson	<i>Bright Travellers</i>	Cape Poetry
Niall Campbell	<i>Moontide</i>	Bloodaxe Books
Beatrice Garland	<i>The Invention of Fireworks</i>	Templar Poetry
Kevin Powers	<i>Letter Composed During a Lull in the Fighting</i>	Sceptre
Vidyan Ravinthiran	<i>Grun-tu-molani</i>	Bloodaxe Books

Shortlisted for the £1,000 Forward Prize for Best Single Poem:

Tim Nolan	Red Wing Correctional Facility	Troubadour International Poetry Prize
Denise Riley	After La Rochefoucauld	Eggbox/UEA Poetry Series
Stephen Santus	In a Restaurant	The Bridport Prize
Jack Underwood	Thank you for your email	The White Review
Jeffrey Wainwright	An Empty Street	PN Review

For images, book covers and interview requests, please contact Rebecca Blackwood on [Rebecca@thirteenways.co.uk](mailto:Rebecca@thirteenways.co.uk) or 07974 982 435

For press queries about the Southbank Centre event and Southbank Centre's London Literature Festival, please contact Preena Gadher on [preena@riotcommunications.com](mailto:preena@riotcommunications.com) or 020 3174 0118

For all other queries, contact [info@forwardartsfoundation.org](mailto:info@forwardartsfoundation.org) or 020 7845 4655

# Forward Prizes for Poetry 2014

## Biographies

### Forward Prize for Best Collection 2014

#### Colette Bryce

Colette Bryce (1970, Derry) is an editor based in the North East of England. *The Whole & Rain-domed Universe* is her fourth collection with Picador, the previous three being *The Heel of Bernadette* (2000), winner of the Aldeburgh Prize, *The Full Indian Rope Trick* (2004), short-listed for the T S Eliot Prize, and *Self-Portrait in the Dark* (2008). From 2009 to 2013 she was Poetry Editor for *Poetry London* magazine.

#### John Burnside

John Burnside (1955, Fife) is Professor of English at the University of St Andrews. His recent books include the poetry collection *All One Breath*, the book of stories, *Something Like Happy* - Saltire Scottish Book of the Year - the novel *A Summer of Drowning*, shortlisted for the 2011 Costa Prize, and the poetry collection, *Black Cat Bone*, which won both the 2011 Forward Prize and the T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry.

#### Louise Glück

Louise Glück (1943, New York) was US Poet Laureate from 2003-2004 and has won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award for her poetry. She has published eleven books of poems and a volume of essays and currently teaches at Yale University.

#### Kei Miller

Kei Miller (1978, Jamaica) studied English at the University of the West Indies and Creative Writing at Manchester Metropolitan University and now teaches at the University of Glasgow. His first book, *The Fear of Stones*, stories for teenagers about homophobia in Jamaica, was short-listed in 2007 for the Commonwealth Writers First Book Prize. He has published four collections of poetry and edited *New Caribbean Poetry: An Anthology* for Carcanet. He has said that he "started writing poetry to become a better fiction writer" and that he "started drumming to become a better poet."

#### Hugo Williams

Hugo Williams (1942, Sussex) worked on the *London Magazine* from 1961 to 1970, since when he has earned his living as a journalist and travel writer. *Billy's Rain* won the T. S. Eliot Prize in 1999. His *Collected Poems* was published by Faber in 2002 and his most recent collections are *Dear Room* (2006) and *I Knew the Bride* (2014). He writes a freelance column for the *TLS* and lives in London.

# Forward Prizes for Poetry 2014

## Biographies

### Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection 2014

#### Liz Berry

Liz Berry (1980, West Midlands) received an Eric Gregory Award in 2009, an Arvon-Jerwood Mentorship in 2011 and won the Poetry London competition in 2012. She lives in Birmingham and works as a teacher. In her poetry, she seeks to reclaim the Black Country dialect, as “something beautiful to be treasured and celebrated”.

#### Fiona Benson

Fiona Benson won an Eric Gregory Award in 2006 and a Faber New Poets Award in 2009. She lives near Exeter with her partner and their daughter.

#### Niall Campbell

Niall Campbell (1984, South Uist) received an Eric Gregory Award in 2011 and an Arvon-Jerwood Mentorship in 2013, and won the Poetry London Competition in 2013. His work has been published in *Granta*, *The Dark Horse*, *Poetry London*, *Poetry Review*, *The Salt Book of Younger Poets* and *Best Scottish Poems 2011*. His first book-length collection, *Moontide* (Bloodaxe Books, 2014) is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. He lives in Edinburgh.

#### Beatrice Garland

Beatrice Garland has worked as a National Health Service clinician, teacher and researcher in psychological medicine. She lives and works in London and has won both the National Poetry Competition and the Stokestown International Poetry Prize. She was short-listed for the inaugural Picador Poetry Prize.

#### Kevin Powers

Kevin Powers (1980, Virginia) enlisted in the US Army aged 17 and saw active service as a machine gunner in Iraq. He draws on this experience both in his first collection of poetry and in his acclaimed novel *The Yellow Birds* – winner of the Guardian First Book Award. He holds an MFA from the University of Texas at Austin, where he was a Michener Fellow in poetry.

#### Vidyan Ravinthiran

Vidyan Ravinthiran is a research fellow at Selwyn College. He was awarded his D.Phil for his thesis on Elizabeth Bishop at Balliol College, Oxford, in 2010, and was formerly poetry editor of the *Oxonian Review*. He reviews for *Poetry Review*, *Poetry London*, *PN Review* and *The Times Literary Supplement* and is currently working on a novel, as well as a book about Elizabeth Bishop.

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# Forward Prizes for Poetry 2014

## Notes to editors:

1. The Forward Prizes, now in their 23<sup>rd</sup> year, are the most sought after accolades in the UK and Ireland for both established and emerging poets. Past winners include Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Alice Oswald, Carol Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage. With a total value of £16,000, the prizes are divided into three categories: The Forward Prize for Best Collection (£10,000), The Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection (£5,000) and the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem (£1,000)
2. This year, 170 collections published in the UK and Ireland between 1 October 2013 and 30 September 2014 were considered, and 254 poems, either published in a newspaper or magazine between 1 May 2013 and 28 March 2014 or winners of poetry prizes in the same period, were submitted for the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem.
3. The Forward Prizes event on 30 September is co-produced with Southbank Centre as part of their London Literature Festival.
4. Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 21-acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. Southbank Centre's London Literature Festival is in its 8th year and will take place across the site from 30 September to 13 October, featuring the some of the world's best writers, poets, performers and thinkers.
5. Forward Arts Foundation, which runs both the Forward Prizes for Poetry and National Poetry Day, is one of the UK's foremost supporters of the literary arts. The Foundation seeks to extend poetry's audience, raise poetry's profile and link poetry to people in new ways. Support for its activities is generously provided by Arts Council England, The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and The John Ellerman Foundation.
6. Forward Worldwide, one of the UK's leading customer publishing agencies, are sponsors and key supporters of the Forward Prizes for Poetry. Forward creates beautifully crafted, highly targeted customer communications for clients such as Patek Philippe, Bang & Olufsen, Tesco, Ford, Standard Life, Transport for London and Barclays. Forward's bespoke magazines, websites, ezines and emails are produced in 38 languages and reach customers in 172 countries. [www.forwardww.com](http://www.forwardww.com)



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