



For immediate release, 14 July 2011

## Shortlist announced for The Forward Prizes for Poetry 2011 celebrating 20 years of promoting contemporary poetry

The shortlists for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary Forward Prizes for Poetry, one of the UK's most valuable poetry prizes, are announced today, 14 July 2011. They celebrate well-loved names from the past 20 years of the Prizes, as well as new voices who promise to make their mark in the 20 years to come.

Highlights include:

- Oxford Professor of Poetry **Geoffrey Hill** competes with past winners **David Harsent** and **Sean O'Brien** on the shortlist for Best Collection. Sean is the only person to have won the Forward Prize for Best Collection three times before
- Shortlist for Best Single Poem recognises one of the last published works of the acclaimed **R. F. Langley**, who died at the beginning of this year, and **Jo Shapcott**, shortlisted for Best Collection in 2010

The shortlists are:

### **The Forward Prize for Best Collection**

£10,000 – sponsored by the Forward Arts Foundation

John Burnside	<i>Black Cat Bone</i>	Jonathan Cape
David Harsent	<i>Night</i>	Faber & Faber
Geoffrey Hill	<i>Clavics</i>	Enitharmon
Michael Longley	<i>A Hundred Doors</i>	Jonathan Cape
D Nurkse	<i>Voices Over Water</i>	CB Editions
Sean O'Brien	<i>November</i>	Picador Poetry

### **The Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection**

£5,000 – sponsored by Felix Dennis and the Forward Arts Foundation

Rachael Boast	<i>Sidereal</i>	Picador Poetry
Judy Brown	<i>Loudness</i>	Seren
Nancy Gaffield	<i>Tokaido Road</i>	CB Editions
Ahren Warner	<i>Confer</i>	Bloodaxe
John Whale	<i>Waterloo Teeth</i>	Carcanet/Northern House
Nerys Williams	<i>Sound Archive</i>	Seren

### **The Forward Prize for Best Single Poem in memory of Michael Donaghy**

£1,000 – sponsored by the Forward Arts Foundation

R. F. Langley	<i>To a Nightingale</i>	London Review of Books
Alan Jenkins	<i>Southern Rail (The Four Students)</i>	Poetry Review
Sharon Olds	<i>Song the Breasts Sing to the Late-in-Life Boyfriend</i>	Poetry London
Jo Shapcott	<i>Bees</i>	Poetry Review

Former Poet Laureate **Sir Andrew Motion** is chair of the judges of the Forward Prizes for Poetry 2011, joined by poet and Editor of *Poetry Review* **Fiona Sampson**, poet and teacher **Leonie Rushforth**, author **Lady Antonia Fraser** and journalist **Sameer Rahim**.

**Andrew Motion** comments: "The Forward Prizes, in their twentieth year, have once again been able to provide an account of the last year's poetry publishing, which is both confirming and liberating. We're very proud of the three short lists, which contain some well-known names and also names which will be new to most readers. Clever, moving, of the moment, and also taking the long view, they combine all the paradoxes good poetry should contain. Read them all!"

**William Sieghart**, Chairman of the Forward Arts Foundation, comments: "Twenty years on from the beginnings of the Forward Prizes, we're thrilled to still be showcasing the work of established and new faces in poetry. Submissions continue to be high, both in number and in quality, and we're pleased that contemporary poetry is as strong today as when we began".

The Forward Prizes were founded by William Sieghart in 1992 to raise the profile of contemporary poetry and are sponsored by The Forward Group. Worth a total of £16,000, the Forward Prizes reward both established and up-and-coming poets. This year the Prizes celebrate their 20<sup>th</sup> year. In the last two decades poets including Seamus Heaney, Carol Ann Duffy and Ted Hughes have won the Best Collection category. Just one poet, Robin Robertson, has won all three prizes.

To mark the anniversary a special anthology, *Poems of the Decade*, will be published on National Poetry Day, 6 October, featuring a selection of the best poems from the last ten years, selected by William Sieghart. *The Forward Book of*

*Poetry 2012*, an anthology of poems from this year's Prizes highly commended by the judges, will also be published on the same day.

The winner of the Forward Prizes will be announced on Wednesday 5 October, the eve of National Poetry Day, at a ceremony in Somerset House, London.

The Forward Prize for *Best Collection*  
£10,000 – sponsored by the Forward Arts Foundation

**John Burnside**

***Black Cat Bone***

**Jonathan Cape**

John Burnside's latest collections of poetry are *Gift Songs* (2007) and *The Hunt in the Forest* (2009). His collections *The Asylum Dance* (2000) and *The Good Neighbour* (2005) were both shortlisted for the Forward Poetry Prize (Best Collection). John is also the author of a collection of short stories, *Burning Elvis* (2000), and several novels, including *The Devil's Footprints* (2007), shortlisted for the 2008 James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction). John Burnside's memoir, *A Lie About My Father*, was published in 2006, and a sequel, *Waking Up in Toytown*, in 2010. In 2008, he received a Cholmondeley Award. He is a former Writer in Residence at Dundee University and now teaches at the University of St Andrews.

For further information, please contact: Clara Womersley at Jonathan Cape on 020 7840 8578

**David Harsent**

***Night***

**Faber & Faber**

David Harsent has published nine collections of poetry. The most recent, *Legion*, won the Forward Prize for Best Collection 2005 and was shortlisted for both the Whitbread Award and the T. S. Eliot Prize. His *Selected Poems* was published in 2007 and was shortlisted for the Griffin International Poetry prize.

For further information, please contact: Kate Burton at Faber & Faber on 020 7927 3800

**Geoffrey Hill**

***Clavics***

**Enitharmon**

Geoffrey Hill was elected the Oxford Professor of Poetry in 2010. He previously taught at Leeds, Cambridge and Boston University, Massachusetts. His twelfth collection of poems, *A Treatise of Civil Power*, appeared in 2007, following *Scenes from Comus* (2005) and *Without Title* (2006). His *Collected Critical Writings* (Oxford University Press, 2008) won the Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism.

For further information, please contact: Larissa Attisso at Enitharmon on 020 7482 5967

**Michael Longley**

***A Hundred Doors***

**Jonathan Cape**

Michael Longley was born in Belfast and read Classics at Trinity College, Dublin. He has published eight collections of poems including *Gorse Fires* (1991), winner of the Whitbread Poetry Award, and *The Weather in Japan* (2000) which won the Hawthornden Prize, the T. S. Eliot Prize and the *Irish Times* Poetry Prize. His *Collected Poems* was published in 2006. In 2001 he won the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, and in 2003 the Wilfred Owen Award. He was awarded a CBE in 2010. He was Ireland Professor of Poetry, 2008-2010.

For further information, please contact: Clara Womersley at Jonathan Cape on 020 7840 8578

**D. Nurkse**                      **Voices Over Water**                      **CB Editions**

D. Nurkse lives in Brooklyn, New York. He has published nine collections of poetry, most recently *Burnt Island* (2003) and *The Border Kingdom* (2008). He has also written on human rights issues and worked with Amnesty International USA.

For further information, please contact: Charles Boyle at CB Editions on 020 8743 2467

**Sean O'Brien**                      **November**                      **Picador Poetry**

Sean O'Brien has written six previous collections of poetry, most recently *The Drowned Book* (2007), which won the Forward and T. S. Eliot prizes. *Cousin Coat: Selected Poems 1976-2001* appeared in 2002. His other work includes the book of essays *The Deregulated Muse* (1998), the verse plays *The Birds* (2002) and *Keepers of the Flame* (2003), and a verse translation of Dante's *Inferno* (2006). In 2008 his collection of short stories, *The Silence Room*, was published, followed in 2009 by his novel *Afterlife*. He is Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University.

For further information, please contact: Emma Bravo at Picador on 020 7014 6184

<p>The Felix Dennis Prize for <i>Best First Collection</i> £5,000 – sponsored by Felix Dennis and the Forward Arts Foundation</p>
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**Rachael Boast**                      **Sidereal**                      **Picador Poetry**

Rachael Boast was born in Suffolk in 1975 and recently completed a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of St Andrews. Her work has appeared in *Ambit*, *Poetry Wales*, and *The Yellow Nib*, and in the Long Lunch Press anthology, *Addicted to Brightness*.

For further information, please contact: Emma Bravo at Picador on 020 7014 6184

**Judy Brown**                      **Loudness**                      **Seren**

Judy Brown was born in Cheshire and studied English at the universities of Cambridge and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Judy's pamphlet, *Pillars of Salt*, was published by Templar Poetry in 2006. Her poems have also appeared in *Identity Parade: New British and Irish Poets* (Bloodaxe, 2010), edited by Roddy Lumsden, and *The Forward Book of Poetry 2006* as well as magazines such as *Magma*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Poetry London*, *Smiths Knoll*, *Stand*, *The North* and *The Rialto*. She won the 2010 Manchester Poetry Prize and the 2009 Poetry London Competition. In 2005 she received the Poetry Society's Hamish Canham Poetry Prize.

For further information, please contact: Simon Hicks or Victoria Humphreys at Seren on 01656 663018

**Nancy Gaffield**                      **Tokaido Road**                      **CB Editions**

Nancy Gaffield was born in the United States and lived in Japan for many years. Nancy is Senior Tutor and Director of Learning and Teaching at the Centre of English and World Languages at University of Kent. Her academic interest is post-war American poetry and poetics. *Tokaido Road* has been selected as a Poetry Book Society recommendation (2011) and her poems have appeared in various magazines and publications including *The Bow-Wow Shop*, *Magma* and *Stand*.

For further information, please contact: Charles Boyle at CB Editions on 0208 743 2467

**Ahren Warner****Confer****Bloodaxe**

Ahren Warner was born in 1986 and grew up in Lincolnshire. He has published his work widely in magazines and anthologies, including *Identity Parade* and *Voice Recognition* from Bloodaxe, and in *Re;*, a pamphlet from Donut Press. He received an Eric Gregory in 2010 and is completing a PhD in philosophy and literature at the University of London.

For further information, please contact: Rebecca Hodgkinson at Bloodaxe on 01434 240500

**John Whale****Waterloo Teeth****Northern House**

John Whale was born in Liverpool in 1956. He is Professor of Romantic Literature at Leeds University and co-edits the international literary quarterly *Stand*. He has written on a wide range of authors in the period 1780 to 1830, including John Keats, William Hazlitt and Thomas De Quincey, and on contemporary English poetry.

For further information, please contact: Eleanor Crawforth at Carcanet on 0161 834 8730

**Nerys Williams****Sound Archive****Seren**

Nerys Williams is from Carmarthenshire in West Wales. She is the recipient of a Fulbright Scholar's Award at UC Berkeley. A recent winner of the Ted McNulty Poetry Prize, she lectures in American Literature at University College, Dublin. She has published poems and critical essays widely and is the author of *A Guide to Contemporary Poetry* as well as a study of contemporary American poetry, *Reading Error*.

For further information, please contact: Simon Hicks or Victoria Humphreys at Seren on 01656 663018

The Forward Prize for *Best Single Poem* in memory of Michael Donaghy  
£1,000 – sponsored by the Forward Arts Foundation

**R. F. Langley****To a Nightingale****London Review of Books**

RF Langley, who died in January 2011, taught English and Art History in Midlands schools before retiring in 1999. His work has appeared in pamphlets, journals and anthologies including *The Harvill Book of Twentieth-Century Poetry in English* (1999). As well as several small-press publications, two collections were published by Carcanet, *Collected Poems* (2000), shortlisted for the Whitbread prize for poetry, and *The Face of It* (2007).

For further information, please contact: Eleanor Crawforth at Carcanet on 0161 834 8730

**Alan Jenkins****Southern Rail (The Four Students) Poetry Review**

Alan Jenkins was born in 1955 and brought up in London. He studied at the University of Sussex and received an Eric Gregory Award in 1981. He has worked for the *Times Literary Supplement* since 1981, as deputy editor and poetry editor. He was also a poetry critic for *The Observer* and the *Independent on Sunday* from 1985-1990.

His collections of poetry include *Harm* (Chatto, 1994), winner of the Forward Prize for Best Collection; *The Drift* (Chatto, 2000), shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize and a

Poetry Book Society Choice; *A Short History of Snakes: New and Selected Poems* (Grove Atlantic, 2001); *A Shorter Life* (Chatto, 2005), shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Collection; *The Lost World* (Clutag Press, 2010), and *Blue Days: The Sailor's Return* (Redstone Press, 2010).

**Sharon Olds**

***Song the Breasts Sing to the  
Late-in-Life Boyfriend***

**Poetry London**

Sharon Olds was born in San Francisco and lives in New York. Her first collection of poems, *Satan Says* (1980), received the inaugural San Francisco Poetry Center Award. Her other recent collections include *One Secret Thing* (Random House, 2008); *Strike Sparks: Selected Poems* (2004, Knopf); and *The Unswept Room* (2002). Olds held the position of New York State Poet from 1998 to 2000. She currently teaches poetry workshops at New York University's Graduate Creative Writing Program as well as a workshop at Goldwater Hospital on Roosevelt Island in New York. She was elected an Academy Chancellor in 2006.

**Jo Shapcott**

***Bees***

**Poetry Review**

Jo Shapcott was born in London in 1953. She is Professor of Creative Writing at Royal Holloway College, University of London. Her book *Poems 1988-1998* (2000), consists of a selection of poetry from her three earlier collections: *Electroplating the Baby* (1988), which won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for Best First Collection, *Phrase Book* (1992), and *My Life Asleep* (1998), which won the Forward Poetry Prize (Best Collection). She has also won the National Poetry Competition twice. Together with Matthew Sweeney she edited an anthology of contemporary poetry in English, but gathered from around the world, entitled *Emergency Kit: Poems for Strange Times* (1996). Her collection *Of Mutability* was shortlisted for the Forward Prize (Best Collection) 2010 and won the Costa Book of the Year 2010.

For further information, please contact: Kate Burton at Faber & Faber on 020 7927 3800

For further information about the prizes or to arrange an interview with any of the poets, please contact Kate Wright Morris or Truda Spruyt at Colman Getty on 020 7631 2666 or [kate@colmangetty.co.uk](mailto:kate@colmangetty.co.uk)

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#### Notes to editors:

1. The Forward Prizes are one of the UK's most valuable annual prizes for poetry, with a total prize 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. 137 collections published in the UK and Ireland between 1 October 2010 and 30 September 2011 were considered for this year's Prizes. 129 poems, either published in a newspaper or magazine between 1 May 2010 and 30 April 2011, or winners of poetry prizes in the same period, were submitted for the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem
3. Previous winners of the Forward Prizes are:

**Best Collection:** Seamus Heaney *Human Chain* (Faber & Faber) 2010, Don Paterson *Rain* (Faber & Faber) 2009, Mick Imlah *The Lost Leader* (Faber & Faber) 2008, Sean O'Brien *The Drowned Book* (Picador) 2007, Robin Robertson *Swithering* (Jonathan Cape) 2006, David Harsent *Legion* (Faber & Faber) 2005, Kathleen Jamie *The Tree House* (Picador) 2004, Ciaran Carson *Breaking News* (Gallery Press) 2003, Peter Porter *Max is Missing* (Picador) 2002, Sean O'Brien *Downriver* (Picador) 2001,

Michael Donaghy *Conjure* (Picador) 2000, Jo Shapcott *My Life Asleep* (OUP) 1999, Ted Hughes *Birthday Letters* (Faber & Faber) 1998, Jamie McKendrick *The Marble Fly* (OUP) 1997, John Fuller *Stones and Fires* (Chatto) 1996, Sean O'Brien *Ghost Train* (OUP) 1995, Alan Jenkins *Harm* (Chatto) 1994, Carol Ann Duffy *Mean Time* (Anvil Press) 1993 and Thom Gunn *The Man with Night Sweats* (Faber & Faber) 1992

**Best First Collection:** Hilary Menos Berg *(Seren)* 2010, Emma Jones *The Striped World* (Faber & Faber) 2009, Kathryn Simmons *Sunday at the Skin Launderette* (Seren) 2008, Daljit Nagra *Look We Have Coming To Dover* (Faber & Faber) 2007, Tishani Doshi *Countries of the Body* (Aark Arts) 2006, Helen Farish *Intimates* (Jonathan Cape) 2005, Leontia Flynn *These Days* (Jonathan Cape) 2004, A.B. Jackson *Fire Stations* (Anvil Press) 2003, Tom French *Touching the Bones* (Gallery Press) 2002, John Stammers *Panoramic Lounge-bar* (Picador) 2001, Andrew Waterhouse *In* (The Rialto) 2000, Nick Drake *The Man in the White Suit* (Bloodaxe) 1999, Paul Farley *The Boy from the Chemist is Here to See You* (Picador) 1998, Robin Robertson *A Painted Field* (Picador) 1997, Kate Clanchy *Slattern* (Chatto) 1996, Jane Duran *Breathe Now, Breathe* (Enitharmon) 1995, Kwame Dawes *Progeny of Air* (Peepal Tree) 1994, Don Paterson *Nil Nil* (Faber & Faber) 1993 and Simon Armitage *Kid* (Faber & Faber) 1992

**Best Single Poem:** Julia Copus *An Easy Passage* (Magma) 2010, Robin Robertson *At Roane Head* (London Review of Books) 2009, Don Paterson *Love Poem For Natalie 'Tusja' Beridze* (Poetry Review) 2008, Alice Oswald *Dunt* (Poetry London), 2007, Sean O'Brien *Fantasia on a Theme of James Wright* (Poetry Review) 2006, Paul Farley *Liverpool Disappears for a Billionth of a Second* (The North) 2005, Daljit Nagra *Look We Have Coming to Dover* (Poetry Review) 2004, Robert Minhinnick *The Fox in the Museum of Wales* (Poetry London) 2003, Medbh McGuckian (2002), Ian Duhig (2001), Tessa Biddington (2000), Robert Minhinnick (1999), Sheenagh Pugh (1998), Lavinia Greenlaw (1997), Kathleen Jamie (1996), Jenny Joseph (1995), Iain Crichton Smith (1994), Vicki Feaver (1993) and Jackie Kay (1992)

4. Chair of judges, Andrew Motion, and the short-listed poets may be available for interview on request. Photographs and further information on the poets is available from the individual publicists listed above
5. William Sieghart, Chairman of the Forward Arts Foundation, is the founder of National Poetry Day and the Forward Prizes, which celebrate their twentieth anniversary this year. He is available for interview through Colman Getty
6. The Forward Arts Foundation operates from Forward, one of the UK's leading customer publishing agencies. 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. For more information please visit [www.theforwardgroup.com](http://www.theforwardgroup.com)

7. The Forward Arts Foundation is the primary sponsor of the Forward Prizes for Poetry and is behind National Poetry Day and Big Arts Week
8. Copies of the short-listed books and the single poems are available on request from Colman Getty