



PRESS RELEASE – 9 June 2015

Forward Best Collection shortlist celebrates new genre

“Transformative moment” for poetry

Forward Prizes ceremony on 28 September 2015 at Southbank Centre

The shortlists for the 2015 Forward Prizes, celebrating the best of the year’s poetry published in the British Isles, are released today. They feature an extraordinary variety of new work by fifteen poets whose voices resonate across the world: subjects treated range from the Tottenham riots of 2012 to the erotic possibilities of the male body, Chinese journeys, Irish nuns, northern history, rain and the metaphors buried in “dirty” data. Several poets make their multiple identities – Sikh, Chinese, Jamaican, American, Irish, British - a feature of their work. The Best First Collection shortlist in particular, featuring three books by first and second-generation immigrants to Britain, bears witness to a shift in the landscape of poetry publishing.

The books in the running for the Best Collection Prize (£10,000) include a bold challenge to historic definitions of poetic form. Although *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Penguin Books) by Jamaica-born American Claudia Rankine, is categorised as poetry, it has also been described as a “lyric essay”, a creative non-fiction genre that combines the essay form with poetic technique, often using juxtaposition instead of argument or narrative: the book features multi-media extracts from documentary film scripts, photo reels of Zinedine Zidane’s 2006 World Cup headbutt, President Obama’s oath of office, J M W Turner’s painting *The Slave Ship* and witness testimony to acts of everyday racism.

Writer and broadcaster A L Kennedy, chair of the 2015 Forward Prizes jury, says: “My fellow judges and I were exhilarated to read experienced writers who were extending their abilities: it’s very clear that a wonderfully vibrant new generation of poets is emerging. It was also particularly heartening to note so many different sources of material, the wide-ranging scope and radical edge of poets working today. Amongst our finest practitioners, poetry is still a medium for the discussion and exploration of anything and everything – just as it should be.”

William Sieghart, chairman of the Forward Arts Foundation, which runs the prizes, says: “The diversity and ambition seen on the shortlists bear witness to a transformative moment for poetry publishing in the UK and Ireland.”

The judging panel includes BBC producer Emma Harding and the poets Colette Bryce, Carrie Etter and Warsan Shire, the first Young Poet Laureate for London. They read 205 collections and 227 single poems.

Awards are made in three categories for poetry published between October 2014 and September 2015. The three Forward prizes are unique in honouring both the work of established poets (Best Collection £10,000) and newcomers (Best First Collection £5,000). The Best Single Poem award (£1,000) is a prize for which only award-winning poems and published works not yet collected in book form are eligible. They have been sponsored since 1992 by the content marketing agency, Forward Worldwide.

The prizes will be awarded at Southbank Centre on Monday 28 September. The 24th 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 Georgie Hopton. The event takes place just before National Poetry Day – Thursday 8 October – and marks the start of a month of nationwide poetry celebrations and the opening of Southbank Centre’s 9th annual London Literature Festival. Tickets: www.southbankcentre.co.uk/literature

www.forwardartsfoundation.org @forwardprizes #forwardprizes info@forwardartsfoundation.org

Forward Prizes for Poetry 2015 Shortlists

Winners to be announced on 28 September at the Royal Festival Hall

The Forward Prize for Best Collection (£10,000)

Ciaran Carson, *From Elsewhere* (The Gallery Press)

Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, *The Boys of Bluehill* (The Gallery Press)

Paul Muldoon, *One Thousand Things Worth Knowing* (Faber & Faber)

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Penguin Books)

Peter Riley, *Due North* (Shearsman)

The Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection (£5,000)

Mona Arshi, *Small Hands* (Liverpool University Press, Pavilion Poetry)

Sarah Howe, *Loop of Jade* (Chatto & Windus)

Andrew McMillan, *'physical'* (Cape Poetry)

Matthew Siegel, *Blood Work* (CB Editions)

Karen McCarthy Woolf, *An Aviary of Small Birds* (Carcenet)

The Forward Prize for Best Single Poem (£1,000)

Maura Dooley 'Cleaning Jim Dine's Heart' (*Poetry Review*)

Andrew Elliott 'Döppelganger' (*Sonofabook*)

Ann Gray 'My Blue Hen' (*The Moth*)

Claire Harman 'The Mighty Hudson' (*TLS*)

Kim Moore 'In That Year' (*Poetry News*)

For biographical details and extracts from the books go to www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry/

For review copies, contact info@forwardartsfoundation.org or call 020 7845 4655

For press information or photographs, contact Rebecca@thirteenways.co.uk or 07974 982435

Notes to Editors:

1. Biographies of the shortlisted poets and samples of their work can be found on www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry
2. The Forward Prizes, now in their 24th year, are the most sought after accolades in the UK and Ireland for both established and emerging poets. 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)
3. Past winners of the Forward Prize for Best Collection are: Kei Miller *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Carcenet) 2014, Michael Symmons Roberts *Drysalter* (Cape Poetry) 2013, Jorie Graham *PLACE* (Carcenet) 2012, John Burnside *Black Cat Bone* (Cape Poetry) 2011, Seamus Heaney *Human Chain* (Faber and Faber) 2010, Don Paterson *Rain* (Faber and Faber) 2009, Mick Imlah *The Lost Leader* (Faber and Faber) 2008, Sean O'Brien *The Drowned Book* (Picador Poetry) 2007, Robin Robertson *Swithering* (Cape Poetry) 2006, David Harsent *Legion* (Faber and Faber) 2005, Kathleen Jamie *The Tree House* (Picador Poetry) 2004, Ciaran Carson *Breaking News* (Gallery Press) 2003, Peter Porter *Max is Missing* (Picador Poetry) 2002, Sean O'Brien *Downriver* (Picador Poetry) 2001, Michael Donaghy *Conjure* (Picador Poetry) 2000, Jo Shapcott *My Life Asleep* (OUP) 1999, Ted Hughes *Birthday Letters* (Faber and 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 and Faber) 1992.
4. Forward Arts Foundation, which runs the Forward Prizes for Poetry and National Poetry Day, is an arts charity that 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 Forward Worldwide, Arts Council England, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Rothschild Foundation. Find it at www.forwardartsfoundation.org and @forwardprizes and @poetrydayuk.
5. Forward Worldwide, one of the UK's leading content marketing agencies, has been the sponsor and key supporter of the Forward Prizes for Poetry since they were first awarded in 1992. Forward Worldwide is based in London, Shanghai and Singapore, and creates engaging, shareable editorial in multiple languages. Clients include Patek Philippe, American Express, Standard Life, Fidelity, B & Q and Tesco. Find them at www.forwardww.com and @tweetfwd.
6. For pictures or further details please contact Rebecca Blackwood on Rebecca@thirteenways.co.uk (tel 07974 982 435) or Erica Spurrier on Erica@thirteenways.co.uk (tel 07894 443795).
7. Thirteen Ways combines curatorial and communications expertise to provide creative and strategic services for corporate brands, museums, creative and cultural organisations.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**




THE ROTHSCHILD FOUNDATION

