



Media Release 00:00 10 June 2020

## 2020 Forward Prizes for Poetry Shortlists The year's best poems: breathing space & a chance to connect

*Caroline Bird - Natalie Diaz - Vicki Feaver - David Morley - Pascale Petit  
Ella Frears - Will Harris - Rachel Long - Nina Mingya Powles - Martha Sprackland  
Fiona Benson - Malika Booker - Regi Claire - Valzhyna Mort - Sarah Tsiang*

Poems of desire – for a voice, for breathing space, for bodies missed or missing – are among the highlights of the 2020 Forward Prizes shortlists, announced today (10 Jun), alongside a new Forward “Meet The Poet” series of online readings and interviews.

The shortlisted works celebrate a world whose inhabitants are spurred to song by the need to assert their own existence and history. They speak of flesh, “the miracle of afro hair”, muscle and all forms of touch, from the knock-out blows of boxer Tyson Fury to lovers’ kisses. Several poets follow threads of language to places as various as the Dale Farm traveller site, a palace-prison in sixteenth century Spain, an East London housing estate and the Mojave reservation of southern California, while others make vivid the stuff of everyday life: birdsong, lawnmowers, petrol stations.

The collections in the running for the £10,000 Best Collection award touch on the exhilaration of a new relationship (Caroline Bird: *The Air Year*), the strength and vulnerability of Native American bodies and language (Natalie Diaz: *Postcolonial Love Poem*), the unslakeable female ambition that connects child, housewife and mature writer (Vicki Feaver: *I Want! I Want!*), the richness of Romani speech and oral tradition, (David Morley: *FURY*) and the threatened wilderness of Indian jungles (Pascale Petit: *Tiger Girl*)

**Susannah Herbert**, director of the **Forward Arts Foundation**, the charity which runs the Forward Prizes, said:

“These shortlists show poetry’s power to break through isolation and create breathing space for a kind of speaking and hearing often drowned out by the daily cacophony. During lockdown, we have seen that sharing a poem is a chance to connect: in response, we’re changing the way we celebrate poetry and inviting all to enjoy readings from the shortlisted books in our new “Meet the Poet” online series, starting on June 30th. Circumstances may halt live poetry events, but the poetry conversation is livelier than ever. The “Meet the Poet” sessions are partly inspired by 2014 Forward Prizes judge Jeremy Paxman, who called for a “Poetry Inquisition” so the public could ‘ask poets to explain why they chose to write about the particular subject they wrote about, and why they chose the particular form and language, idiom, the rest of it’. Thanks to the pandemic, he’s finally got his way.”

Jeremy Paxman said:

“At last ! A chance to ask poets what they’re on about. It’s been too long.”

The chair of the 2020 Forward Prizes jury, writer, critic and social historian **Alexandra Harris**, said:

“The period of our judging coincided almost exactly with the first two months of lockdown in the UK. None of the books were written for a pandemic, but it was noticeable how often a strong poem would seem as true to the hour and the day as the constantly-updated news.

Our shortlisted collections are rich in energy and surprise, intellectually agile, sensuous, made to last. There are transformative leaps of connection across centuries and continents. At a time when our lives are intensely local and global at once, these poets challenge us to think on many different scales: they ask what is large and small, move between intimate individual observation and chorus.

The English language dances and fuses in these shortlisted books with Spanish, Chinese, Indonesian, Romani, Mojave. There are some terrifically bold poems of seduction here, and love poems unlike any we knew. But desire of many other kinds comes surging in: desire for work, for writing, for exploration.

It was a bit extreme to read 200 books from a single year, but almost everyone, it seemed, wanted a poem of some sort in Spring 2020. Journalists were reading their choices on the radio, shopkeepers were posting them in shuttered windows. On my street, we started to read poems together from our doorways; we tried prose but it wouldn’t do. ‘Poetry is having a moment’ announced *Vanity Fair*. Poetry had a moment that lasted through both world wars. It has a moment whenever there is pressure and threat, and whenever we want to think carefully – together or individually”.

### The Forward Prizes for Best Collection shortlist:

**Caroline Bird’s** *The Air Year* is named for the hurricane of a new relationship, the time before the first or “paper” anniversary.

In *Postcolonial Love Poem*, **Natalie Diaz** writes to resist erasure – of people, of language, of visibility - drawing on her career as a professional basketball player and her Mojave heritage.

**Vicki Feaver’s** *I Want! I Want!* is fired with female ambition. The child yearns to be a poet, the house wife “lies” that she is a poet, the pensioner is a poet at the height of her powers.

**David Morley’s** *FURY* is an exploration of silenced language, from Romani ballads to Dale Farm Travellers. The title poem includes verbatim quotes from the boxer Tyson Fury: “Nothing’s talked about in my family...we just give each other a punch”.

In *Tiger Girl*, **Pascale Petit** richly contained lyric poems explore her grandmother's Indian heritage through the flora and fauna of subcontinental jungles.

Certain themes present in the Best Collection shortlist – female ambition, the fight against extinction, the thrill of getting through to others – also crop up in the shortlist for the **Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection (£5,000)**.

**Ella Frears's** *Shine, Darling* is a book of sheer abandon, refreshingly energetic and various in scope at one moment delighted with service stations the next communing with the moon. In *RENDANG*, **Will Harris** explores his mixed-race heritage bringing humour to often difficult subject matter. **Rachel Long's** *My Darling from the Lions* shares fragments of relationships, romantic and familial, with a charged melancholy. In *Magnolia* 木蘭 **Nina Mingya Powles** writes of Disney's Mulan, and of learning the Mandarin of her grandparents. Meanwhile, in **Martha Sprackland's** *Citadel* a tin-can phone crackles across the centuries as the poem's "I" shifts between the narrator and an imprisoned 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish queen.

Each of the ten books under consideration for the Best Collection and Best First Collection prizes will be featured in the Forward Prizes' "Meet the Poet" series of online events, starting on Tuesday June 30<sup>th</sup>. Attendees will hear the poet read, and have the chance to ask questions. For more detail, visit [www.forwardartsfoundation.org](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org)

#### **The 2020 Forward Prize for Best Collection (£10,000)**

Caroline Bird – *The Air Year* (Carcanet)  
 Natalie Diaz – *Postcolonial Love Poem* (Faber & Faber)  
 Vicki Feaver – *I Want! I Want!* (Cape Poetry)  
 David Morley – *FURY* (Carcanet)  
 Pascale Petit – *Tiger Girl* (Bloodaxe Books)

#### **The 2020 Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection (£5,000)**

Ella Frears – *Shine, Darling* (Offord Road Books)  
 Will Harris – *RENDANG* (Granta Poetry)  
 Rachel Long – *My Darling from the Lions* (Picador)  
 Nina Mingya Powles – *Magnolia* 木蘭 (Nine Arches Press)  
 Martha Sprackland – *Citadel* (Pavilion Poetry)

#### **The 2020 Forward Prize for Best Single Poem (£1,000)**

Fiona Benson - *Mama Cockroach, I Love You* (Poetry London)  
 Malika Booker – *The Little Miracles* (Magma)  
 Regi Claire – *(Un)certainities* (Mslexia & PBS Women's Poetry Competition)  
 Valzhyna Mort – *Nocturne for a Moving Train* (The Poetry Review)  
 Sarah Tsiang – *Dick pics* (The Moth)

The 2020 judging panel is chaired by writer, critic and social historian **Alexandra Harris**. She is joined by poets **Kim Moore**, **Roger Robinson**, **David Wheatley** and by the journalist and novelist **Leaf Arbuthnot**. The jury read 208 collections and 205 single poems.

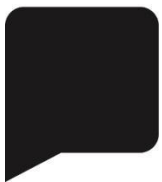
The Forward Prizes, founded by William Sieghart and sponsored since their launch in 1992 by the content marketing agency, **Bookmark** (formerly Forward Worldwide), have been won by some of the most celebrated names in poetry: Thom Gunn, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Carol Ann Duffy and Claudia Rankine. They are awarded by the Forward Arts Foundation, a charity supported by Arts Council England.

The winners of the awards will be announced on **Sunday 25 October**.

The judges' selection of shortlisted and highly commended poems will be published on 10 September 2020 as the annual *Forward Book of Poetry 2021* (Faber & Faber).

For further information, including interviews with the shortlisted poets, visit [www.forwardartsfoundation.org](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org) or join the conversation at @forwardprizes #forwardprizes.

For press enquiries, pictures and review copies, please contact Susannah Herbert on [Susannah@forwardartsfoundation.org](mailto:Susannah@forwardartsfoundation.org)



**Forward  
Arts  
Foundation**



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

## Notes to editors

1. Biographies of the shortlisted poets and samples of their work are on [www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry)
2. The Forward Prizes are the most coveted accolades in the UK and Ireland for established and emerging poets. With a total value of £16,000, the prizes are in 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. Bookmark, the world-leading content and communications company, has been the sponsor and key supporter of the Forward Prizes for Poetry since they were first awarded in 1992. Bookmark creates engaging, shareable content in multiple formats and languages: it has offices in the UK, Canada, the US, Peru, Chile and China and its clients include Patek Philippe, Air Canada, American Express, LATAM, Dyson, Lindt, Standard Life and Tesco. Until 2016, Bookmark traded as Forward Worldwide. For more information, see @BookmarkContent and [bookmarkcontent.com](http://bookmarkcontent.com).
4. Forward Arts Foundation, which runs the Forward Prizes for Poetry, celebrates excellence in poetry and widens its audience by encouraging the enjoyment, discovery and sharing of poems. An Arts Council England National Portfolio organisation, it also co-ordinates National Poetry Day, which falls this year on October 1st. [www.forwardartsfoundation.org](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org) @forwardprizes and @poetrydayuk.
5. Past winners of the Forward Prize for Best Collection are: Fiona Benson *Vertigo & Ghost* (Cape Poetry) 2019, Danez Smith *Don't Call Us Dead* (Chatto) 2018, Sinéad Morrissey *On Balance* (Carcanet) 2017, Vahni Capildeo *Measure of Expatriation* (Carcanet) 2016, Claudia Rankine *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Penguin) 2015, Kei Miller *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Carcanet) 2014, Michael Symmons Roberts *Drysalter* (Cape Poetry) 2013, Jorie Graham *PLACE* (Carcanet) 2012, John Burnside *Black Cat Bone* (Cape Poetry) 2011, 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 Poetry) 2007, Robin Robertson *Swithering* (Picador Poetry) 2006, David Harsent *Legion* (Faber & 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 & 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.

## Biographies of Shortlisted Poets

### Best Collection

**Caroline Bird** (b. 1986, Leeds) intended the title of her collection *The Air Year* to refer to the first year of a relationship, 'the anniversary prior to paper / for which ephemeral gifts are traditional'; in the year of coronavirus, it has taken on an eerie double meaning.

She writes: 'I'm fascinated with the idea that poetry is about inserting a mystery into the reader's life not clarifying one, that by the end of a poem you should know less than you did when you started, that a poem is a kind of amnesia injection that makes the immediate world strange again.'

Bird's previous collection, *In These Days of Prohibition*, was shortlisted for both the T.S. Eliot Prize and the Ted Hughes Award; she is also a playwright, whose credits include *The Trial of Dennis the Menace* and a new translation of *The Trojan Women*.

**Natalie Diaz** (b. 1978, Needles, California) is the holder of a MacArthur 'genius' award, a former professional basketball player and one of the few remaining speakers of the Mojave language. 'Where we come from, we say language has an energy, and I feel that it is a very physical energy'. Diaz's US publishers, Graywolf, describe *Postcolonial Love Poem* as 'an anthem of desire against erasure', of which the erasure of language is just one form.

'Ash can make you clean, / as alkaline as it is a grief', writes Diaz in 'That Which Cannot be Stilled'. Her new collection performs that work of cleansing and mourning, shot through with desire and celebration. 'In this book', writes Diaz, 'I demanded a different visibility, one that makes my nation uncomfortable—my speakers refused to be defined by their wounds and would instead sow them and reap light from them.'

**Vicki Feaver** (b. 1943, Nottingham) stole a copy of Blake's poems from her parents' bookshelf as a child and, reading it in bed by torchlight, developed a secret ambition to become a poet. Much of that early encounter went into *I Want! I Want!* - the title is from Blake's engraving, showing a child clambering towards the moon on a ladder, and speaks to Feaver's themes of female ambition and desire. The sections of the book are separated by ladder motifs; Feaver describes testing her editor's patience by insisting 'they were drawn with just the right degree of wobbliness'.

A new collection from Feaver is a rare event; this is only her fourth in forty years. A poem from her 1993 collection *The Handless Maiden* won the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem. She is an Emeritus Professor at University College, Chichester.

**David Morley** (b. 1964, Blackpool) writes to give a voice to the voiceless or spoken-over; the British Gypsy boxer Tyson Fury (the source of his collection's title), the midges at Innominate Tarn, the evicted traveller communities at Dale Farm. Many poems feature words of Angloromani, the mixed language spoken by British Romani; their anger is tempered by a sense of joy in the vast potentialities of speech and oral tradition. Morley grew up with a stammer, which he has described as a 'merciless muse': 'My teenage mind developed into a thesaurus of tensioned, alert possibility:

hundreds of synonyms and antonyms allowed me to find the path of least resistance through sentences.'

In 2017, Morley's Selected Poems, *The Invisible Gift*, won the Ted Hughes Award.

**Pascale Petit** (b. 1963, Paris) was converted to poetry aged 16, when her teacher recited Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale'. Her subsequent years as a sculptor and artist allowed her to develop connections between poetry and the visual and tactile, but her aim remained the same: like Keats, 'to create a forest the reader could walk into and see and hear even in the dark'.

*Tiger Girl* is a departure for Petit; her imaginative landscapes have shifted from the Amazon rainforest which characterised earlier collections including *Fauverie* and *Mama Amazonica* to the forests of Ranthambhore in Rajasthan, near her grandmother's birthplace, beautiful and full of life but threatened by poaching, deforestation and climate change. She draws attention to 'how our endangered wild is endangering all life on the planet including ourselves', while leaving room for a sense of awe and astonishment: 'how can we destroy such wonders?'

### Best First Collection

**Ella Frears** (b. 1991, Truro) has been poet-in-residence on the number 17 bus in Southampton, at Tate St. Ives, and in a university physics department, among others. She has written extensively about motorway service stations. These very different subject-matters find coherence in Frears' idiosyncratic voice, sense of humour, and strange connection-making. Poetic form, for Frears, is unstable and shifty, a way of drawing different registers of language into unexpected collisions.

The heart of *Shine, Darling* is the unsettling long piece detailing an autobiographical near-abduction experience, 'Passivity, Electricity, Acclivity', where interwoven voices and shifting time-frames build up like evidence. 'I wanted to write a long-form lyric poem the length and weight of a short story, with the suspense of a novel', writes Frears.

**Will Harris** (b. 1989, London) was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem in 2018: the poem, *SAY*, is one of the centerpieces of *RENDANG*, drawing together many of Harris's concerns: family, borders, transience, 'the need for a voice capacious enough to be both me and not-me / while always clearly being me'. (He has written elsewhere, in the long essay *Mixed-Race Superman*, that 'the mixed-race person grows up to see the self as something strange and shifting'.)

Writing on *RENDANG* in the Guardian, Joanna Lee has described how it 'leans into a vocabulary all of its own, and announces itself as an artefact that will not be dislodged'; a good metaphor for the way Harris's poems frequently build themselves around some undislodged irritation, like the grain of sand which produces a pearl. In 2019, Harris received a Poetry Fellowship from the Arts Foundation.

**Rachel Long** (b. 1988, London) is the founder of Octavia Poetry Collective for Womxn of Colour, based at the Southbank Centre. She began writing poetry after attending a workshop with Jean 'Binta' Breeze, a transformative experience she describes as 'radically intimate, and yet simultaneously expansive. I've been writing poems since I left that room.'

Long writes on love, the family, sexual politics - broad subjects, treated with a pin-sharp attention to the local and specific (an estate 'built like Tetris', the 'lit throat of a candle'). Her advice for poets starting out is to 'listen to the poems more than the noise around you; find good teachers, honour them, make good friends, create a space for yourself and for them.'

**Nina Mingya Powles** (b. 1993, Wellington, New Zealand) sees *Magnolia*, 木蘭 as 'partly a collection of love letters to Shanghai, but it's also about loneliness, and about trying to retrace your steps back towards a language you've lost'. (木蘭, 'Mùlán', is the Chinese word for magnolia, the official flower of Shanghai.)

Powles is drawn to writers who treat the boundaries of genre as fluid and permeable; she has described how she prizes the moment when 'something within the line of the poem slips, gives way, and we are pulled suddenly into a different field of language': an excellent description of the experience of reading *Magnolia*, 木蘭. She is currently working on a book of essays about bodies of water, food, migration and being mixed-race, to be published by Canongate in 2021.

**Martha Sprackland** (b. 1988, Barnstaple) was six when she met her future publisher, Deryn Rees-Jones, at a poetry workshop for children in Sefton Park. (She wrote a poem about a mouse, on purple sugar-paper, with a felt-tip pen.) She works as poetry editor at Poetry London, and in 2017 she co-founded her own small press, Offord Road Books, and so is represented in this year's shortlists in all three capacities - editor (of Fiona Benson), publisher (of Ella Frears) and poet.

The poems in *Citadel* enter into a dialogue with the sixteenth-century Queen of Spain, Juana de Castile. Sprackland, who spent a year teaching in Madrid, has described the book as 'a rupture or portal in time, through which two women separated by hundreds of years could talk.' Juana, often known as Juana La Loca, or "the mad", spent most of her life imprisoned at Tordesillas, the 'citadel' which gives the book its title: 'I wanted to create a different reality in which she could be written to, entertained by a sequence of *letrillas*, spoken to, kept company.' Sprackland's poems are simultaneously intimate and eerie, circling round motifs of teeth and blood and eggs.

### **Best Single Poem**

**Fiona Benson** (b. 1978, Wroughton) won the Forward Prize for Best Collection in 2019, with *Vertigo and Ghost*. 'Mama Cockroach, I Love You' playfully extends some of the themes which characterised the second half of that book: motherhood, acts of caring, vulnerable bodies, 'all the liquors and gravy // of the obscene world'.

The poem is part of an online 'audio pamphlet' about insects, currently in preparation, which combines interviews with scientists, Benson's poetry and innovative sound design. She is also working on some poems about school, and poems drawing on the myths of Europa, Pasiphae and Crete. 'Perhaps, for myself, I want to write more towards the light, more towards gratitude for this blessed life', she writes.



**Malika Booker** (b. 1970, London) is the founder of the writer's collective 'Malika's Kitchen'. Her first collection, *Pepper Seed*, was shortlisted for the Seamus Heaney Centre Prize; she is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Leeds' creative writing department.

'Little Miracles' takes as its departure point Tomas Tranströmer's 'Winter Night'; the raging storm of that poem is transformed into an interior storm, the poet's mother's stroke. Booker gives an uncompromising picture of the process of care and recovery: its fears, its effect on sibling relationships, its moments of false hope, its triumphs and gratitudes: 'each spoonful of pureed food / slipped into her mouth like a tender offering takes us a step away / from feeding tubes, and we are so thankful for each miniscule miracle.'

**Regi Clair** (b. 1962, Münchwilen, Switzerland) has published two collections of short stories; '(Un)certainities' is, unbelievably, not only her first published poem but the first poem she has written. An attempt to make sense of the death of her sister and sister's partner in an accident at sea and its aftermath, it takes as its form a series of multiple choice questions; although we are apparently offered a choice, the ambiguity in the title insinuates that there's little to choose between them.

Clair has described how she 'cried as I wrote '(Un)Certainties', cried as I wrote and re-wrote, cried as I read aloud. But I couldn't let my sister go unsung.'

**Valzhyna Mort** (b. 1981, Minsk, Belarus) moved to the United States in 2005 and teaches at Cornell University. 'Nocturne for a Moving Train' (set on a Belarusian night-train travelling from Minsk to Warsaw or Berlin) paints an unsettling portrait of an interior and exterior landscape; fugitive glimpses of places passed through, windows in which figures are seen to move 'as if performing surgery on tables'. Reflections multiply; signboards promise 'a possibility of words / for what flew by'; the landscape itself is on the edge of speech.

Mort has received the Crystal of Valencia Award, the Burda Prize for east European authors, and the Bess Hokin Prize from Poetry (Chicago). Her third collection, *Music for the Dead and Resurrected* - which she has described as 'a book of letters to the dead' - is forthcoming from FSG.

**Sarah Tsiang** (b. 1978, in Montreal, Canada) writes poems which deal uncompromisingly with contemporary sexual mores. 'Dick Pics' is characteristically subversive and witty, with an eye for the unexpected image: 'a graffitied cock, standing on balls / pointing to the night sky, / like a fallen constellation'.

Tsiang was initially resistant to seeing herself as a poet: 'It seemed like a weighted, pretentious word and I wondered if I could still be a poet during my fallow times when I wasn't writing? Eventually I realized that the act of reading and writing poetry was enough - to be a poet is similar to other trades (though with less pay) in that much of it is putting your head down and getting to work.'

## 6. About the Judges

**Alexandra Harris (Chair)** is a writer, teacher, literary critic and cultural historian. Her work includes *Romantic Moderns* (2010), *Weatherland: Writers and Artists Under English Skies* (2015), *Time and Place* (2019) and many essays on books, paintings, people and places; she is currently working on a study of rural history and local feeling. She reviews for the *Guardian* and has presented a range of arts programmes for BBC radio. She is a Professor of English at the University of Birmingham and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

**Leaf Arbuthnot** is a freelance journalist and poetry critic whose reviews have been published in the *Sunday Times*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Ambit* and elsewhere. She judged the 2017 Michael Marks Awards for poetry pamphlets. Her first novel, *Looking for Eliza*, was published by Orion in May, and is about a cranky poet's unlikely friendship with a young woman in Oxford.

**Kim Moore's** first collection *The Art of Falling* (Seren, 2015) won the 2016 Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. She won a Northern Writers Award in 2014, an Eric Gregory Award in 2011 and the Geoffrey Dearmer Prize in 2010. Her pamphlet *If We Could Speak Like Wolves* was a winner in the 2012 Poetry Business Pamphlet Competition. She is a PhD candidate at Manchester Metropolitan University and is working on her second collection. Along with Clare Shaw, she is Co-Director of Kendal Poetry Festival.

**Roger Robinson** is a writer who has performed worldwide and was chosen by Decibel as one of 50 writers who have influenced the black-British writing canon. He was shortlisted for The OCM Bocas Poetry Prize, The Oxford Brookes Poetry Prize, highly commended by the Forward Poetry Prize. He is an alumnus of The Complete Works. His latest book *A Portable Paradise* was chosen as a New Statesman Book Of The Year and won the T.S. Eliot Prize 2019 and RSL Ondaatje Prize 2020. He has toured extensively with the British Council and is a co-founder of both Spoke Lab and the international writing collective Malika's Kitchen.

**David Wheatley** was born in Dublin and has published five collections of poetry, most recently *The President of Planet Earth* (Carcanet, 2017). A former Forward Prize shortlistee, he has been awarded the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature and the Vincent Buckley Poetry Prize. He writes on poetry for many journals, including *The Guardian*, *Times Literary Supplement*, and *London Review of Books*, and is the author of a critical study, *Contemporary British Poetry* (Palgrave, 2015). He lectures at the University of Aberdeen.