

Suzanna Fitzpatrick is named winner of the 2014 Hamish Canham Prize



Winner, Suzanna Fitzpatrick

'Conversations With my Father' by **Suzanna Fitzpatrick** has won the **2014 Hamish Canham Prize** for best Poetry Society members' poem published in **Poetry News** between summer 2013 and spring 2014.

Suzanna said "I'm currently taking a career break from my day job as a freelance academic editor to care for my son, and it's hard to find time to keep my writing going. Winning the Hamish Canham Prize is incredibly affirming, and gives me a huge push to keep it up." As this year's winner, Suzanna receives £300.

Suzanna explains, "The poem is from a sonnet sequence written for my parents and exploring the effects on the whole family of my mother's illness. I wanted the strict form to counterbalance the strong emotion in these poems and, as sonnets, they are also love poems to my parents." The judges Carole Satyamurti, Kate White, Paul McGrane and Sophie F Baker all agreed that the poem was a very well handled balance between heart and head, wearing its formal structure with a lightness of touch that gives the poem great feeling.

Conversations with my father

Sometimes you call me on your own, now Mum,
drugged up, sleeps more. I ask you how it goes;
you speak of broken nights, pain's ceaseless hum,
new side effects. But what I want to know

is how you're doing. People rarely ask
the carer how they manage all the tasks
dictated by an illness not their own;
a job for life that no-one ever chose.

You dodge my questions deftly, like the flyhalf
you once were. I shouldn't be surprised –
we're all performers now; our cheerful smiles
a non-slip legacy, parent to child.

I say that you sound tired. "No more than usual";
and my heart breaks, although no more than usual.

Continues over

"It was a great pleasure to have so many good poems to choose from, and to emerge from the judging process with a very worthy winner," said judge **Carole Satyamurti**.

Out of 1,153 poems submitted by 486 poets, the judges Daljit Nagra, Katrina Porteous, Liz Berry and David Wheatley selected 25 for publication in *Poetry News* through the year. Out of these, the Canham judges selected three poems as well as the winner for special praise. These were: 'William Bradford, Elder' by **Suzanne Batty**; 'The Ring' by **Denise Bennett**; and 'Goldfinches' by **Josh Ekroy**.

The annual prize for the best members' poem in *Poetry News* was established in 2004 by Sheena and Hugh Canham, in memory of their son, Hamish Canham (1962–2003). 'Conversations with my father' was originally published in the Winter 2013 issue of *Poetry News*, published in December 2013.

– ENDS –

For further information about the Hamish Canham Prize 2014, telephone Robyn Donaldson on 020 7420 9886 or email rdonaldson@poetrysociety.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

- **The winner: Suzanna Fitzpatrick**

Suzanna Fitzpatrick has been published in *Brittle Star*, *The Frogmore Papers*, *Fuselit*, *The Interpreter's House*, *HQ*, *Mslexia*, *The North*, *Poetry News*, *South*, and *South Bank Poetry*. She was commended in the 2013 Hippocrates Prize and the 2012 Poetry London and 2011 South Bank Poetry competitions, came second in the 2010 Buxton Competition, and has been shortlisted for the Bridport, Frogmore, and Keats-Shelley Prizes. She has poems forthcoming in the anthologies *Birdbook III* (Sidekick Books) and *Changes* (Cinnamon Press). She lives in London with her husband and young son.

- **The Poetry Society** runs a number of influential prizes recognizing excellence in poetry, including the National Poetry Competition, Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, SLAMBassadors UK, the Geoffrey Dearmer Prize, Hamish Canham Prize and the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry. Founded in 1909, the Poetry Society was set up to promote the study, use and enjoyment of poetry, and has grown to become one of the UK's most dynamic arts organisations. We organise extensive education and commissioning programmes, publish leading poetry magazine *The Poetry Review* and edit the UK domain of poetryinternationalweb.net. For further information about the Poetry Society visit www.poetrysociety.org.uk

- **Poetry News**. Every quarter *Poetry News* asks a professional poet to set a theme of his or her choice to which Poetry Society members respond. Each judge selects six poems for publication in *Poetry News*. These poets are then eligible to be considered for the Hamish Canham prize, which is awarded annually and presented by the Poetry Society on behalf of the Canham family.