



L-R: Patience Agbabi © Lyndon Douglas, Imtiaz Dharker, Carrie Etter, Andrew Motion and Alice Oswald

## Love and loss – the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry 2014 shortlist is announced

**PRESS  
RELEASE**

*Strictly embargoed until  
11am, 3 March 2015*

Patience Agbabi, Imtiaz Dharker, Carrie Etter, Andrew Motion and Alice Oswald are today announced as the shortlisted poets for the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry 2014

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**The Poetry Society's Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry seeks to recognise excellence in new poetry. The Award acknowledges poetry that goes beyond just the page, highlighting exciting and outstanding contributions made by poets to our cultural life in 2014. This year the cultural and the everyday converge to create a thrilling shortlist.**

Selected from a wide range of work across all media, this richly diverse shortlist looks at the effects of the mundane and the momentous, retelling myths and reimagining tales to make them relevant again. From examining conflict to confronting the effect of putting a child up for adoption, this year's shortlisted poets have poured something personal into each of the works and the result is a series of voices that speak to, and for, all of us.

Julia Copus said of the judging process:

“This year's energetic and varied consignment of entries for the Ted Hughes Award was, as ever, delivered into our hands by members of the Poetry Society and the Poetry Book Society; it is, in that sense, a peculiarly democratic prize. A great deal of lively debate ensued as we discussed the merits of the work – performances, books, radio pieces, and all manner of collaborations. We were looking, above all, for work that surprised and moved us; work that was innovative, but not for innovation's sake; work that was vital and relevant enough to connect with a wide readership and that took account of the world around it. In some cases, the crucial element of surprise arose from the spark that flies when two or more artists work together; in others, from the poet's own imaginative resources. Our shortlist of five reflects that divergence of approach.”

Established in 2009 by Poet Laureate and Vice President of the Poetry Society, Carol Ann Duffy, the £5,000 prize is funded with the annual honorarium the Poet Laureate traditionally receives from HM The Queen. The award is one of the only prizes to acknowledge the wide range of work being produced by poets – not just in books, but beyond. Previous winners of the £5,000 prize include Maggie Sawkins in 2013 for *Zones of Avoidance* and Kate Tempest in 2012 for *Brand New Ancients*.

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**The final winner will be revealed at an awards ceremony at the Savile Club, Mayfair, London on Thursday 2nd April 2015. The winners of The Poetry Society's National Poetry Competition will also be announced at the ceremony.**

### Ted Hughes Award shortlist

Carrie Etter's *Imagined Sons* (Seren) interweaves two kinds of poems to produce a deepening sense of a birthmother's consciousness. In the 'birthmother's catechisms', the same question – How did you let him go?, for one – evokes different answers over time, while the 'imagined sons' are prose poems in which the birthmother encounters her son once he's come of age. His guises include a pilot, a criminal, even an olive. Through these two forms, *Imagined Sons* takes a non-confessional approach to what might otherwise be considered a confessional subject.

In *Telling Tales* award-winning poet Patience Agbabi presents an inspired 21st-Century remix of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, retelling all of the stories, from the Miller's Tale to the Wife of Bath's, in her own critically-acclaimed poetic style. Celebrating Chaucer's Middle-English masterwork for its performance element as well as its poetry and pilgrims, Agbabi's newest collection is utterly unique. Boisterous, funky, foul-mouthed, sublimely lyrical and bursting at the seams, *Telling Tales* takes one of Britain's most significant works of literature and gives it thrilling new life. *Telling Tales* is published by Canongate.

*Over the Moon* is Imtiaz Dharker's fifth book of poems and drawings from Bloodaxe. Her main themes are drawn from a life of transitions: childhood, exile, journeying, home, displacement, religious strife and terror, and latterly, grief. These are poems of joy and sadness, of mourning and celebration: poems about music and feet, church bells, beds, café tables, bad language and sudden silence. In contrast with her previous work written amidst the hubbub of India, these new poems are mostly set in London, where she has built a new life with – and since the death of – her husband Simon Powell. Imtiaz Dharker is also an accomplished filmmaker and artist, and all her collections are illustrated with her drawings, which form an integral part of her books. She is possibly the only British poet-artist who always publishes her poetry and art together.

*Coming Home* is a series of poems (of which *One Tourniquet* forms a part) that Andrew Motion wrote about the last (or almost the last) British soldiers to leave Afghanistan. He spent time at the British Army camp in Bad Fallingbostel, in northern Germany, interviewing these soldiers. He then wrote poems based on transcripts of the conversations they shared – and, in one further case, with the London-based mother of a British soldier who had been killed in the fighting. In quite fundamental ways these poems are therefore collaborations, in which Motion's editing, intervening, selecting, guiding and writing is combined with the soldiers' acts of witness. *Coming Home* was originally aired on BBC Radio 4, and produced by Melissa Fitzgerald.

*Tithonus* is a poem and performance by Alice Oswald that was commissioned by London's Southbank Centre and staged there on midsummer's night, 21st June 2014. It is said that the dawn fell in love with Tithonus and asked Zeus to make him immortal, but forgot to ask that he should not grow old. Unable to die, he grew older and older until at last the dawn locked him in a room where he still sits babbling to himself and waiting night after night for her appearance. This poem is the voice of Tithonus meeting the dawn at midsummer. It starts at 4.17am, when the sun is six degrees below the horizon, and stops 46 minutes later, at sunrise. Oswald collaborated with *nykkelharpa* player Griselda Sanderson who produced accompanying, haunting sounds for the performance. BBC Radio 4's *The Echo Chamber* broadcast a shortened version of the piece on midwinter's evening, 21st December 2014, and the text is available from The Letterpress as a pamphlet.

– ENDS –

**For further information or to arrange interviews please contact Robyn Donaldson on 020 7420 9886  
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## Notes to Editors

### Ted Hughes Award judges



Julia Copus

**Julia Copus** is an award-winning poet and children's writer. Her debut poetry collection, *The Shattered Eye*, appeared from Bloodaxe in 1995. It contained the first of several 'specular' poems, a form

in which the second half of the poem is an exact mirror of the first. In 2012, Faber published her third collection, *The World's Two Smallest Humans*, which was short-listed for both the Costa poetry award and the T.S. Eliot Prize. Other awards include first prize in the National Poetry Competition and the Forward Prize for best single poem (2010). Julia's radio work includes *Ghost Lines*, a cycle of poems and biographical interludes about the experience of IVF, which was short-listed for the 2012 Ted Hughes award. She is currently working on a biography of the poet Charlotte Mew.



Kei Miller

**Kei Miller** was born in Jamaica in 1978. Kei writes across a range of genres: novels, books of short stories, essays and poetry. His 2014 collection, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Carcenet), won the

Forward Prize for Best Collection. His poetry has also been shortlisted for awards such as the Jonathan Llewelyn Ryhs Prize, the Dylan Thomas Prize and the Scottish Book of the Year. In 2010, the Institute of Jamaica awarded him the Silver Musgrave medal for his contributions to literature. Kei has an MA in Creative Writing from Manchester Metropolitan University and a PhD in English Literature from the University of Glasgow. In 2013 the Caribbean Rhodes Trust named him the Rex Nettleford Fellow in Cultural Studies.



Grayson Perry

Winner of the 2003 Turner prize, **Grayson Perry** is one of Britain's best-known contemporary artists. He works with traditional media – ceramics, cast iron, bronze, printmaking and tapestry – and is interested in how each historic category of object accrues intellectual and emotional baggage over time. Perry is a great chronicler of contemporary life, drawing viewers in with beauty, wit, affecting sentiment and nostalgia as well as fear and anger. His hard-hitting and exquisitely crafted works reference his own childhood and life as a transvestite while also engaging with wider social issues from class and politics to sex and religion.

### Ted Hughes Award shortlisted poets

#### Patience Agbabi

Patience Agbabi was born in London in 1965 and educated at Oxford and Sussex Universities. She has performed her poetry live, on TV and radio all over the world. Her work has also appeared on the London Underground and human skin. She has lectured in Creative Writing at several UK universities, including Greenwich, Cardiff and Kent, and is currently Fellow in Creative Writing at Oxford Brookes University. She was Canterbury Laureate from 2009 to 2010. *Telling Tales* (Canongate, 2014) is her fourth poetry collection. She lives in Kent with her husband and two children.

#### Imtiaz Dharker

Born in Pakistan, Imtiaz Dharker grew up a Muslim Calvinist in a Lahori household in Glasgow, was adopted by India and married into Wales. She is an accomplished artist and documentary filmmaker, and has published five collections of poems and drawings with Bloodaxe: *Postcards from god* (including *Purdah*) (1997), *I Speak for the Devil* (2001), *The terrorist at my table* (2006), *Leaving Fingerprints* (2009) and *Over the Moon* (2014). She received the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry 2014.

#### Carrie Etter

Originally from Normal, Illinois, Carrie Etter has lived in England since 2001 and taught creative writing at Bath Spa University since 2004. She has published three collections of poetry: *The Tethers* (Seren, 2009), winner of the London New Poetry Prize, *Divining for Starters* (Shearsman, 2011) and *Imagined Sons* (Seren, 2014); additionally, she edited the anthology *Infinite Difference: Other Poetries by UK Women Poets* (Shearsman, 2010). She also publishes short stories, reviews and the occasional essay.

#### Andrew Motion

Andrew Motion was Poet Laureate from 1999 to 2009; he is Professor of Creative Writing at Royal Holloway College, University of London, and co-founder of the online Poetry Archive. He has received numerous awards for his poetry, and has published four celebrated biographies, a novella, *The Invention of Dr Cake* (Faber, 2003) and a memoir, *In the Blood* (David R Godine, 2006). A new collection, *Peace Talks* (Faber), is forthcoming in 2015. Andrew Motion was knighted for his services to poetry in 2009.

#### Alice Oswald

Alice Oswald has published six collections, including *Dart* (Faber & Faber, 2002), which won the T. S. Eliot Prize and *Memorial* (Faber, 2012), which won the Warwick Prize for Writing in 2014. She is married and lives in Devon with three children.

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### Ted Hughes Award Logo

The logo for the Ted Hughes Award was designed by David Carroll of David Carroll & Co ([www.davidcarrollandco.com](http://www.davidcarrollandco.com)) and uses the iconic image of Crow by Leonard Baskin. The image was used originally on the cover of *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow* by Ted Hughes (Faber & Faber, 1970) and is reproduced by kind permission of Lisa Baskin and the Estate of Leonard Baskin, © Estate of Leonard Baskin.



### The National Poetry Competition

Established in 1978, the Poetry Society's National Poetry Competition is one of the world's biggest and most prestigious poetry contests. There are three winners and seven commendations annually. Winners include both established and emerging poets, and for many the prize has proved an important career milestone. Previous winners include the current UK Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, Tony Harrison, Ruth Padel, Philip Gross and Jo Shapcott.

### The Poetry Society

The Poetry Society was founded in 1909 to promote a "more general recognition and appreciation of poetry". Since then, it has grown into one of Britain's most dynamic arts organisations, representing British poetry both nationally and internationally. With innovative education and commissioning programmes and a packed calendar of performances, readings and competitions, the Poetry Society champions poetry for all ages. It publishes the magazine *The Poetry Review*, runs the National Poetry Competition, the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award and the youth performance poetry championship SLAMBassadors UK. [www.poetrysociety.org.uk](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk)

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