

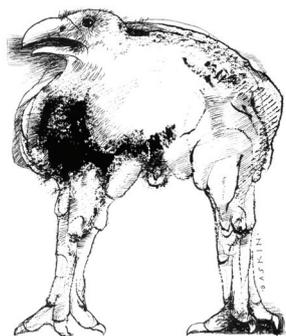
Alice Oswald wins the first Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry



Photo: Kate Mount

Alice Oswald has been named as the winner of the inaugural Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry. This new Award, run by the Poetry Society and founded by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, is awarded to the UK poet, working in any form, judged to have made the most exciting contribution to poetry in the past twelve months.

Judges Jo Shapcott, Tim Supple and Imtiaz Dharker awarded Oswald the £5,000 prize for her collection *Weeds and Wildflowers* (published Faber and Faber). Oswald offers a magical meeting of the visionary and the darkly beautiful, in poems that invent unsettling characters, inspired by plants' names which explore our "wild or wayside selves". The book shuffles her poems through with edgy botanical etchings by Jessica Greenman.



**TED HUGHES
AWARD FOR
NEW WORK
IN POETRY**

Explaining the judges' choice, Jo Shapcott said:

These poems represent fragility, test the nature of our relationship with the environment and, by implication, our responsibility to it. Etchings by Jessica Greenman join in the field of the book and make, as Oswald hopes will be the case, an effect "like shuffling cards". This is exactly what happens when you read the book: the visual images twine through the pages against the light-filled and often transcendent flower poems which shift their point of view constantly. Not a conventional poetry book: *Weeds and Wild Flowers* crosses artistic boundaries and age boundaries and is unsettling and unsettled in every good way.

The announcement was made by Carol Hughes, at a reception at the Savile Club, London, on 30 March. Oswald, who was moving house with her family that day, was unable to leave Devon to accept the prize in person. "thankyou very much and I'm really sorry not to be there," she said, as she received the news, surrounded by packing cases; before sending the following message:

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“This is a really generous and revolutionary gesture by Carol Ann Duffy. I love the way she is re-inventing the Laureateship. I am of course deeply honoured to be given an award with Ted Hughes’ name on it and I’m pleased that it’s an award that dips beyond the mainstream into some of the more unusual poetic channels. The shortlist is a brilliant one. thankyou to the judges and to all those members of the Poetry Society who put forward our names. thankyou also to Jessica Greenman, whose etchings are more than half the making of *Weeds and Wildflowers*. But the biggest thankyou – a continuous and increasing thankyou – is to Carol Ann Duffy herself.”

Shortlisted alongside Oswald were the poets Dannie Abse, Chris Agee, Paul Farley, John Glenday, Jackie Kay and Andrew Motion. Poetry collections for adults and children were considered alongside radio poems, film poems, public art inscriptions and works for the stage.

With the permission of Carol Hughes, this innovative award is named in honour of Ted Hughes and recognises the many ways poets are working today, in printed forms and beyond. The £5,000 prize money has been donated by Carol Ann Duffy, funded from the annual honorarium that the Poet Laureate traditionally receives from HM The Queen. The prize will be awarded annually throughout the ten years of Duffy’s Laureateship. This year’s award considered work which received its first public presentation in the year 1 January to 31 December 2009.

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For further information about The Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry/use of images/interviews please contact Lisa Roberts on 0207 420 9895, email: marketing@poetrysociety.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

• **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. Today it has nearly 4,000 members worldwide and publishes the leading poetry magazine, Poetry Review. With innovative education and commissioning programmes and a packed calendar of performances, readings and competitions, the Poetry Society champions poetry for all ages.

• **Poetry Society Awards & Competitions:** The winner of the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry was announced alongside the winners of the National Poetry Competition on 30 March 2010. The Poetry Society has held the National Poetry Competition since 1978. It is one of the world’s longest-running and most prestigious prizes for an individual poem and has been won by poets such as Carol Ann Duffy, Tony Harrison and Ruth Padel. This year’s first prize winner was Helen Dunmore. The Society also organises the influential Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award for poets aged 11-17, and performance poetry championship, SLAMBassadors UK.

• **Nominations for the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry 2009**

Members of the Poetry Society and Poetry Book Society were invited to nominate poets for the Award. The nominations were then judged by a panel of three judges appointed by the Poet Laureate.

• **Judges:**

Imtiaz Dharker was born in Pakistan, raised in Glasgow, and now lives between London and Mumbai. She works as a documentary film-maker in India, and is also an artist, having shown solo exhibitions in the UK, India and Hong Kong. Her most recent poetry collection is *The Terrorist at my Table*.

Tim Supple has directed, adapted and devised theatre, opera and film throughout the UK and worldwide. He has been Artistic Director of the Young Vic, and at the Royal National Theatre where he produced a co-adaptation of Ted Hughes’ translation of *Tales from Ovid*. His most recent theatre production was *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for his own company, Dash Arts. Tim is currently developing productions of *The One Thousand and One Nights* and the great Persian epic *The Shahnameh* for the National Theatre in London.

Jo Shapcott has won the National Poetry Competition twice and her collection *My Life Asleep* won the Forward prize. She has worked on many collaborative music projects and is Professor of Creative Writing at Royal Holloway, University of London. She is President of the Poetry Society.

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• **The logo for the Ted Hughes Award has been designed by David Carroll** of David Carroll & Co (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* (Faber and Faber, 1970) and is reproduced by kind permission of Lisa Baskin and the Estate of Leonard Baskin. If reproducing the logo, please credit *Crow* © Estate of Leonard Baskin.

• **Weeds and Wildflowers**

Here, everyday flora take on extraordinary life, jostling – comically at times, at times tragically – for a foothold. The book contains 24 poems, including ‘Bargeman’s Cabbage’, ‘Narcissus’, ‘Fragile Glasswort’, ‘Daisy’ and ‘Snowdrop’. In her introduction, Oswald says, “My hope is that the experience of reading and looking at the book will be a slightly unsettling pleasure, like walking through a garden at night, when the plants come right up to the edges of their names and beyond them.” *Weeds and Wildflowers*, poems by Alice Oswald, etchings by Jessica Greenman is published by Faber and Faber (2009). ISBN 978-0-571-23749-4, UK rrp £14.99, hardback.

• **Alice Oswald**

Alice Oswald (b. 1966) lives and works in Dartington, Devon. She is married with three children. Her collections include *The Thing in the Gap-Stone Stile* (1996), winner of the Forward Poetry Prize for Best First Collection; *Dart* (2002), which won the T.S. Eliot Prize; and *Woods etc.* (2005). *A Sleepwalker on the Severn*, a poem for several voices, was published in 2009.

Alice Oswald
Daisy

I will not meet that quiet child
roughly my age but match-size
I will not kneel low enough to her lashes
to look her in her open eye
or feel her hairy wiry strength
or open my mouth among her choristers
I will not lie small enough under her halo
to smell its laundered frills
or let the slightest whisperiness
find out her friendliness
because she is more
summer-like more meek
than I am I will push my nail
into her neck and make
a lovely necklace out of her green bones

From *Weeds and Wildflowers*. Poems by Alice Oswald.
Etchings by Jessica Greenman (Faber and Faber, 2009).

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