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## Press Release

[Under embargo until 4th October 2012]

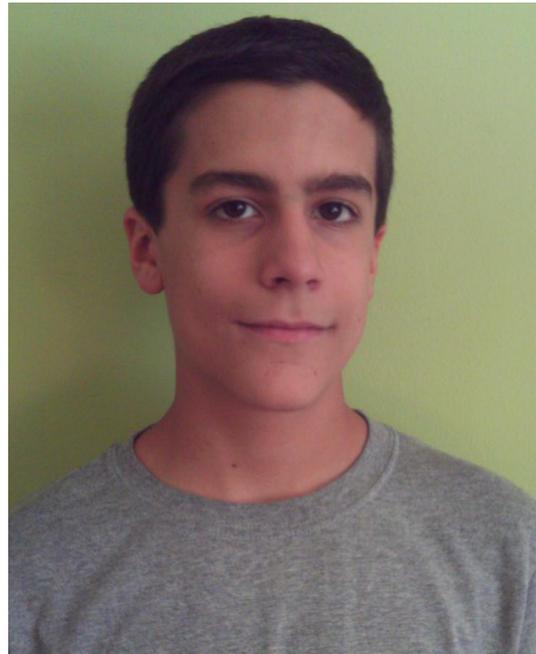
**FOYLE  
YOUNG  
POETS**  
OF THE YEAR AWARD

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# Bright new stars: Foyle Young Poets of the Year 2012 announced

National Poetry  
Day 4<sup>th</sup> October  
2012

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*Jesse Rodrigues, Foyle Winner, 13, USA*

*"It is a joy to see young minds and spirits using poetry as a means of revelation, for their own benefit and for ours – addressing the world as their elders are no longer equipped to do – which gives so much hope for the future."*

**Christopher Reid, 2012 Judge, Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award.**

Fifteen bright new stars rise out over the literary landscape with the announcement of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2012 - taking place on this year's 'Stars' themed National Poetry Day, 4th October. These young poets were chosen by judges Helen Mort and Christopher Reid from an enormous constellation of talent; a record 7,351 poets entered 15,047 poems from a total of 46 countries, making it one of the largest poetry competitions in the world. This year's winners (the 15 Top winners and 85 Commended poets) come from as far as USA, New Zealand, Nigeria and Thailand. With such fierce global competition, to be selected by the judges as one of the top 100 (15 Overall Winners and 85 Commended) is truly to shine out above the rest.

Since it began 15 years ago, the Award has kick-started the career of some of today's most exciting new voices, including this year's judge Helen Mort, who first won the award aged just 13. The Award represents a career-changing achievement for many, and it is now firmly established as the key award for young poets aged 11-17. The phrase 'Former Foyle Young Poet' is now commonly found in professional biographies as alumni continue to make their mark on the wider literary world, their names appearing on bookshelves and at festivals the world over.

The quality this year was, as ever, of an impressively high standard, and Mort talks of the 'tough choices' the judges had to make, "Many of this year's entries were eye-catching, but the winning poems were so vivid they played tricks with the light. Some of them cast strange shadows. Some of them switched on lamps... they all left the room altered, somehow."

Many of the 15 winning poems take on deeply intimate narratives of bereavement and loss, but do so with a striking maturity that relates these experiences outwards rather than inwards, speaking to a more universal human experience. Emily Burns, 17, celebrates the scope of a life in 'Minutiae':

**and you, sitting in your chair,  
cradling your Lapsang,  
bones quiet as dust, you  
who were once announced by fireworks  
on the day of your birth.**

Tallulah Hutson, 16, explores mortality in her poem 'The Accident' rendering her experience in a hospital all too familiar; '**I remember that you cannot light seven/candles in a hospital room**'.

Growing up and its attendant euphoria and anxiety is a theme which travels through many of the poems, as in 17 year old David Carey's 'The Apple Tree':

**You told me once that growing  
up was like walking up a downwards  
escalator. I think I was too you  
to understand it back then:**

or as in Sarah Fletcher's 'Brighton', which recounts a morning-after both jubilant and jumbled '**leaving bruise marks you find both/hilarious and mystifying the morning after**'. Teenage notions of beauty and celebrity are also exquisitely dismantled in 16 year old Flora de Falbe's 'Five things about the lake:'

**4. When the lake picks out her foliage she does so with impeccable taste.  
Even the fallen leaves have agreed on a colour scheme.  
5. The lake enjoys being looked at (though she wouldn't admit it).  
She likes that I'm writing this**

Darker themes of atrophy and destruction are also explored. Youngest winner, 13 year old Jesse Rodrigues examines the notion of the void in 'Fire Knows':

**Last, but not least, fire knows how to die with a flourish**

**A flame, a spark, a winking coal  
Then cold, hard, black, silence**

whilst Abigail Setchfield's poem 'Reduced' takes on the Holocaust, and Conor McKee's 'Hemingway's Thirst' grapples with the eponymous author's suicide:

**Thirty years later it was  
he who would feel the buck of the bull,  
as the shot rampaged forth  
to the last flash of the matador's cloak.**

Above all, these poems brilliantly demonstrate how in these winners, as Reid comments, "*skill, intelligence, feeling and imagination are all in abundance, together with that magic ingredient of youthful freshness*"

All 100 winning poets will attend a prize giving ceremony at the **Royal Festival Hall** in London on **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October (National Poetry Day)** where they will meet judges Helen Mort and Christopher Reid. The top 15 Foyle Young Poets of the Year will attend a residential writing week at the Hurst Arvon Centre in Shropshire or receive a poet visit to their school (age dependent). Commended Winners will receive book prizes and become Youth Members of the Poetry Society, the UK's leading poetry organisation.



2012 Foyle Judge, Helen Mort



Foyle Winners reading at Ledbury Festival 2012



2012 Foyle Judge, Christopher Reid @ Jemimah Kulfeld

## Overall Winners

Naomi Hamilton, 16, Northern Ireland, 'The Wilderness'  
 Conor Mckee, 17, Kent, 'Hemingway's Thirst'  
 Clare Carlile, 17, Sheffield, 'The Everyday Hymn'  
 Tallulah Hutson, 16, London, 'The Accident'  
 Abigail Setchfield, 18, Bedford, 'Reduced'  
 Emily Burns, 17, Pittsford New York, 'Minutiae'  
 Sarah Fletcher, 17, London, 'Brighton'  
 Jessica Kelham-Hohler, 17, London, 'Jim'  
 Phoebe Stuckes, 16, West Somerset, 'Reach/Throw/Wade/Row'  
 Sonja Moore, 16, San Diego USA, 'The Frame'  
 Jesse Rodrigues, 13, Maine USA, 'Fire Knows'  
 Flora de Falbe, 16, London, 'Five things about the lake'  
 Dillon Leet, 16, London, 'Birthday Present'  
 Phoebe Boswall, 17, Kent, 'Baking'  
 David Carey, 17, London, 'The Apple Tree'

## Editor's Notes

### The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award

Founded by the Poetry Society in 1998, the Foyle Young Poets of the Year is the largest and most prestigious award for young poets aged 11-17. The competition is free to enter and poems can be on any theme, and of any length. It receives entries from more than 7,000 young people each year. With the competition as its focus, the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award also incorporates a year-round programme of activity aimed at encouraging creativity and literacy in young people, supported by teaching resources and additional poet-led opportunities in schools. The scheme also recognises and nurtures best practice in creative writing teaching, identifying committed 'teacher trailblazers' to act as teacher mentors.

[www.foyleyoungpoets.org](http://www.foyleyoungpoets.org)

*"The Foyle Young Poets Awards are important beckoning points for younger writers. They recognise a poet's first adventures into a public space for their poetry."*

**David Morley, Professor of Writing at the University of Warwick**

### 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. 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. As well as the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, the Poetry Society runs the National Poetry Competition, one of the world's longest-running and most prestigious prizes for an

individual poem, and the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry – the prize founded by Carol Ann Duffy with honorarium the Poet Laureate traditionally received from HM the Queen. [www.poetrysociety.org.uk](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk)

## The Foyle Foundation

The Foyle Foundation is an independent grant-making trust supporting UK charities which, since its formation in 2001, has become a major funder of the arts and learning. The Foyle Foundation has invested in the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award since 2001, one of its longest partnerships. During this time it has trebled its support and enabled the competition to develop and grow to become one of the premier literary awards in the country. [www.foylefoundation.org.uk](http://www.foylefoundation.org.uk)

## Christopher Reid

Christopher Reid is a Hong Kong-born British poet, essayist, cartoonist, and writer. He has been nominated twice for the Whitbread Awards in 1996 and in 1997. He has worked as poetry editor at Faber & Faber and Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Hull. His latest collections are *The Song of Lunch* (2009), and *A Scattering* (2009), in memory of his late wife, Lucinda. A BBC adaptation of *The Song of Lunch*, starring Alan Rickman and Emma Thompson, aired in 2010. *A Scattering* was shortlisted for the 2009 Forward Poetry Prize (Best Poetry Collection of the Year) and the 2009 T. S. Eliot Prize. In January 2010 he was awarded the 2009 Costa Book Award for *A Scattering*; the work won in the poetry category, and overall Best Book of the Year, becoming the first poet to take the overall prize since Seamus Heaney in 1999.

## Helen Mort

Helen Mort was born in Sheffield in 1985. She has published two pamphlets with tall-lighthouse press, *the shape of every box* and *a pint for the ghost* (a Poetry Book Society Choice). Her first full collection, *Division Street* will be published by Chatto & Windus in 2013. A previous winner of the Foyle Young Poets Competition, Helen received an Eric Gregory Award in 2007. From 2010-11, she was Poet in Residence at The Wordsworth Trust.

## National Poetry Day Live – 4th October 2012

Join the Poetry Society and Southbank Centre for a star-studded afternoon at National Poetry Day Live 2012 celebrating this year's theme of 'Stars', with free readings from some of the most exciting poets and spoken words artists in the UK. There's a rolling programme of free readings by top poets, including Dannie Abse, Simon Barraclough, John Cooper Clarke, Karen McCarthy Woolf, Grace Nichols, Christopher Reid, Rachel Rooney and Helen Mort – compered by the Poetry Society President, Roger McGough. 1pm-6pm. Thursday 4th October, The Clore Ballroom, Royal Festival Hall, London SE1 8XX. Free entry. School groups welcome. <http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk>

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## Contacts

For further information / Use of pictures / Interviews

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## Ends

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## Websites

