

Paul Adrian is the winner of the National Poetry Competition: out of 11,653 poems, a new poetic voice takes flight



Paul Adrian, a young, unpublished poet from Leeds has become the 34th person to win the Poetry Society's National Poetry Competition, with his philosophical poem, 'Robin in Flight'.

Let's imagine for a second that the robin
is not a contained entity moving at speed
through space, but that it is a living change,
unmaking and remaking itself over and over...

from 'Robin in Flight' by Paul Adrian (FULL TEXT OF POEM IS BELOW)

'Robin in Flight' is the first poem Adrian has entered to a competition since he won the Froebelian School (Form 4) Poetry Prize at the age of ten. At that time, as Adrian explains, he "failed to wow the critics." Not the case with his second competition success. Judges Deryn Rees-Jones, Sinéad Morrissey and George Szirtes were delighted with his elegantly crafted poem. They were also thrilled when they realised that they had discovered a new voice in poetry.

"Paul Adrian's robin is a living fragment of the universe, an aerodynamic form that takes its place among the other miracles of the universe, including our thoughts about it. It comes at us with a comprehensive freshness, both tough and exhilarating, a new voice on its own rising flight path."

– George Szirtes

Since it began in 1978 the competition has been an important milestone in the careers of some of today's leading poets such as Philip Gross, Carol Ann Duffy, Jo Shapcott and Tony Harrison. For Adrian, winning the competition has given him the confidence to take his writing to the next stage: -

"Winning the Competition has given me a lot more security in my own voice as a poet. What I write now will get sent to magazines rather than going in the waste paper basket. It's a vote of confidence."

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For further information

Telephone Lisa Roberts on 020 7420 9895
or Alan Ward on 020 7420 9886
Email: marketing@poetrysociety.org.uk

The Poetry Society,
22 Betterton Street, London WC2H 9BX
Tel: 020 7420 9880 Fax: 020 7240 4818
www.poetrysociety.org.uk

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The judges awarded a joint second prize to Josephine Haslam for her poem 'Wish' and Matthew Sweeney for his poem 'A History of Glassblowing'.

NATIONAL POETRY COMPETITION WINNERS



Paul Adrian was born in Leeds in 1984, and still live there. He studied Music Technology at Leeds Metropolitan University. He was recently the Books Editor of *Leeds Guide Magazine*, and still writes a regular politics column for them. He currently works in Waterstone's, Leeds.



Josephine Haslam has been writing and publishing poetry since the late 1980's. Her collections include *Light from the Upper Left*, *The Sign for Water* and *Lunar Moths*. Her poems have been published in leading magazines including: *The Rialto*, *The North*, *Stand*, *Ambit* and *Msllexia*. Her forthcoming collection is *Snow on the Kiso Road*.



Matthew Sweeney's many publications collections include *Black Moon*, *Sanctuary* and *The Bridal Suite*. His children's collections include *Up on the Roof* and *The Flying Spring Onion*. He is co-author, with John Hartley Williams, of *Writing Poetry* and co-editor, with Jo Shapcott, of the anthology *Emergency Kit*. His latest publication *The Night Post* came out in 2010.

The National Poetry Competition 2011 will open for entries on 7 April with judges Colette Bryce, John Glenday and Jackie Kay. Entry forms can be downloaded at www.poetrysociety.org.uk

– ENDS –

For further information and/or to interview Paul Adrian, Josephine Haslam or Matthew Sweeney contact Lisa Roberts on 020 7420 9895.

High quality images of the winners receiving their prizes at the award ceremony are available.

Notes to Editors:

NATIONAL POETRY COMPETITION JUDGES



Sinéad Morrissey is the author of four collections: *There Was Fire in Vancouver* (1995), *Between Here and There* (2002), *The State of the Prisons* (2005), and *Through the Square Window* (2009); these last three were all shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize. She was the recipient of a Lannan Literary Fellowship in 2007, and took first place in the National Poetry Competition with the poem, 'Through the Square Window', the same year. Other awards include the Patrick Kavanagh Award and the Michael Hartnett Poetry Prize. She is Lecturer in Creative Writing at the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, Queen's University, Belfast.



George Szirtes won the T.S. Eliot Prize in 2004 for *Reel* and his latest collection, *The Burning of the Books and other poems* (2009), was also shortlisted for the award. Since 1979 he has published nineteen collections, including *Short Wave* (1984), *The Photographer in Winter* (1986), *Bridge Passages* (1991, shortlisted for the Whitbread Poetry Prize) and *The Budapest File* (2000). He has collaborated often with visual artists and has also written many works for music, stage and radio. He is Reader in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia.



Deryn Rees-Jones is an award-winning poet and critic. Her poetry collections are *The Memory Tray* (1994), *Signs Round a Dead Body* (1998), *Quiver* (2004) and *Falls & Finds* (2008). She was named one of the PBS's 20 Next Generation poets in 2004 and one of *Msllexia's* 'ten notable women poets of the last decade'. She has judged numerous literary awards, including the Costa poetry prize and the T.S. Eliot Prize. She is the editor of the anthology *Modern Women Poets* and is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Liverpool. Her forthcoming collection is *Burying the Wren*.

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Notes to Editors ctd

- **The National Poetry Competition**

The National Poetry Competition was founded in 1978. The prize money this year totals £8,700. The top three prize winners' poems will be published in *Poetry Review*, Britain's leading poetry magazine. Previous winning and commended poems can be read on the Poetry Society website at www.poetrysociety.org.uk. The Ledbury Poetry Festival features an event with National Poetry Competition winners and judges every July. To enter the National Poetry Competition visit www.poetrysociety.org.uk

- **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. To find out more about the Poetry Society visit www.poetrysociety.org.uk

FIRST PRIZE NATIONAL POETRY COMPETITION

Paul Adrian
Robin In Flight

Let's imagine for a second that the robin
is not a contained entity moving at speed
through space, but that it is a living change,
unmaking and remaking itself over and over
by sheer unconscious will, and that
if we were to slow down the film enough
we would see a flying ball of chaos,
flicking particles like Othello counters,
air turning to beak in front just as tail transforms to air behind,
a living being flinging its changes at a still universe.

This would require infinite alignments. Each molecule
pry to the code of its possible settings,
the capacity of a blade of grass to become
the shadow of a falling apple by pure force
of the tree's instinct. Every speck of world with the potential
to become stone, dog's breath, light twisted through glass,
filth under fingernails, the skin's bend at the bullet's
nudge the moment before impact,
the thought of a robin in flight,
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