

Press Release 05/09/10

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FOYLE
YOUNG
POETS
OF THE YEAR AWARD

Curiouser and Curiouser

Foyle Young Poets of the
Year Award 2010

Winners Announced



Fielding Ronshaugen, Foyle Winner, 17, Manchester

The Foyle Young Poets of the Year - the Poetry Society's prestigious prize for young writers - receives a record breaking 20,510 entries

Now in its 13th year, The Foyle Young Poets Award for 11 –17 year olds holds up a looking glass to a young person's experience of the world. This year's judges, **Jane Draycott** and **Luke Kennard** were astounded, not only by the numbers, but the boldness of these young voices and the daring way they go beyond the everyday.

As Kennard explains, "*Teenagers don't hold back, they are not afraid of over-reaching yet*" and that coupled with what Draycott describes as a "*faith in the imagination*" has created poems that are "*widely adventurous and show intellectual curiosity*".

It is this "faith in the imagination" that is so striking in the poems. In all of them we find ourselves in exotic, dark or surreal landscapes, often in the company of some very singular characters. For example, the inquisitive house sitter who finds herself falling in love with a half-grasped idea of the owner in Manchester-based Fielding Ronshaugen's poem 'House Sitting for Mr Brown':

Under the loose floor boards in the kitchen
She finds a box of fairy lights, labelled (neatly)
For When in Need of Cheer.
In her imagination, it is raining.

Mr Brown looks at the grey sky and
makes his ceiling full of stars.

She falls in love (with the house).

In the current time of uncertainty, many of the poems evoke a sense of being adrift or physically lost. This is the case in Sussex-based Fergus Blair's poem 'In Cerrejón', where an unfortunate tourist is lost in a swamp, with only snakes to eat and his imagination to help him survive:

I couldn't give a damn about
Natural sandpaper, I thought
As I bit the head off a snake.
Chewy, like the centre of
A muffin.
I like to pretend that
My sister writes me.
I tear up random leaves
And the lines are of pen
Telling me it'll be OK.

Some of the poems have a real sense of menace, such as in 'Him,' a poem by Mauritius-based poet Ameerah Arjaneer:

Tall mirrors enthroned in the hallways of haunted houses. I was short, short as a skinny acne-faced teenager who wanted to be Dostoevsky and found coffee too strong to be. I wanted to stand on tiptoes and look into him. But I could not touch his peppered grey hair. He had a wife who could reach down and punctuate me like a pustule with her willowy crimson nails.

These poems celebrate the power of the imagination - at a time when it is hard to imagine what the future holds. The Judges were also struck by the sheer skill and confidence in these works. The *"evidence of wide reading and technical accomplishment"* particularly impressed Kennard while Draycott admired the *"directness to the reader which any adult writer would envy."*

All 100 winning poets will attend a prize giving ceremony at Royal Festival Hall in London on Thursday 7th October (National Poetry Day) where they will meet their judges, Jane Draycott and Luke Kennard. 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. All winning poets will become Youth Members of the Poetry Society and will begin or continue a supportive and encouraging relationship with the UK's leading poetry organisation.



Ella Duffy, 15, Manchester



Dom Hale, 17, Thornton Cleveleys



Ameerah Arjaneer, 16, Mauritius

Top 15 Young Poets of the Year, and their poems

Ameerah Arjane, 16, Mauritius, *Him*
Fergus Blair, 18, Sussex, *In Cerrejón*
Kim Clark, 17, Somerset, *A Toast*
Eleanor Coy, 13, Buckinghamshire, *On the Beach*
Ella Duffy, 15, Manchester, *Night Boy*
Dom Hale, 17, Thornton-Cleveleys, *prayer in picture*
Kiera Hall, 13, Staffordshire, *First Shear*
Sara Henry, 17, Connecticut, USA, *Work Night*
Evie Cassandra Ioannidi, 16, Athens, Greece, *Don't Go with the Flow, Make the Flow go With You*

Sarah Lucas, 17, Sussex, *Dr Livingstone Writes to Stanley*
Catherine Oliver, 17, London, *Ascent of Toubkal*
Fielding Ronshaugen, 17, Manchester, *House Sitting for Mr Brown*
Daisy Syme-Taylor, 17, Wiltshire, *rivers*
Phoebe Stuckes, 15, Somerset, *Images from My Previous Dreams*
Sherrie Talgeri, 15, Berkshire, *nobody ever wins, nobody ever loses*

Editor's Notes

Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award and the Foyle Foundation

The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award is the key award for young writers 11-17 and is sponsored by the Foyle Foundation. It meets two of the Foyle Foundation's core criteria for support in Arts and Learning and in particular encourages creativity and literacy among young people at school. These are key success factors for young people to go through life. The Foundation is very keen to work with the Poetry Society to build on what has been achieved so far and to encourage young people both in and out of formal education to become involved with the scheme nationwide

Poet Ian MacMillan is the Foyle Young Poets Ambassador.

We are delighted to announce that the Foyle Foundation has committed to funding the award for a further 3 years until March 2014.

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 organizations, representing British poetry both nationally and internationally. Today it has nearly 4000 members in the UK and beyond, publishes the leading poetry magazine, *Poetry Review*, and has an extensive education programme. As well as the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award it runs the National Poetry Competition, one of the world's longest-running and most prestigious competitions.

"The Poetry Society is the heart and hands of poetry in the UK – a centre which pours out energy to all parts of the poetry-body, and a dexterous set of operations which arrange and organize poetry's various manifestations. It has a long distinguished history, and has never been so vital, or so vitalizing as it is now." Andrew Motion. To find out more visit www.poetrysociety.org.uk

Jane Draycott

Jane Draycott's latest collection *Over* was published in April 2009 by Carcanet/Oxford Poets and was shortlisted for the 2009 T S Eliot Prize. Nominated three times for the Forward Prize for Poetry, her first two full collections *Prince Rupert's Drop* and *The Night Tree* (Carcanet/Oxford) were both Poetry Society Recommendations. Other collections include, from Two Rivers Press, *Christina the Astonishing* (with Peter Hay and Lesley Saunders) and *Tideway*, a long sequence of poems about London's working river (with paintings by Peter Hay) written while poet-in-residence at the River & Rowing Museum. Her audio work with Elizabeth James has won several awards including BBC Radio 3 Poem-for-Radio and a London Sound Art Award. Winner of the Keats Shelley Poetry Prize in 2002 and nominated as one of the Poetry Book Society's Next Generation poets in 2004, she was a Stephen Spender Prize-winner in 2008 and teaches on postgraduate writing programmes at Oxford University and the University of Lancaster. Her contemporary version of the medieval dream-vision *Pearl* is forthcoming in 2010 from Carcanet/OxfordPoets and is supported by Arts Council England South East.

Luke Kennard

Luke Kennard was born in Kingston Upon Thames in 1981 and grew up in Luton. He writes and publishes poetry and short stories and has written for the stage, taking numerous productions to the Edinburgh Fringe. He holds a PhD in English from the University of Exeter and lectures in creative writing at the University of Birmingham. He won an Eric Gregory Award in 2005 and his first collection of prose poems *The Solex Brothers* was published later that year by Stride. His second collection *The Harbour Beyond the Movie* was published by Salt in 2007 and was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Collection, making him the youngest poet ever to be shortlisted. His new collection, *The Migraine Hotel* is available now from Salt and was recognised by the Guardian Review as a 'Treat in Store for 2009'. His criticism appears in Poetry London and the Times Literary Supplement.

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