

New Poets Prize winners

The 2020 New Poets Prize Judged by Luke Kennard

Gboyega Odubanjo – *Auntie Uncle Poems*

Deep, funny, thought-provoking – a powerful evocation of culture and family with the most assured phrasing and imagery and confident formal innovation. 'Blessed Princess Lady' is as beautifully strange as it is genuinely moving. 'Drake Equations' is fantastic. I could go on at length about every poem here. This was so exciting to read and I'd expect a major full collection from Odubanjo in the near future. – Luke Kennard

Lauren Hollingsworth-Smith – *Ugly Bird*

Hollingsworth--Smith's poems are immediately and joyfully readable even at their darkest, and Ugly Bird is full of masterful juxtapositions, emotional swerves and perfect details (the angle of an OHP, the plastic tiara prongs). It's such a skill to navigate these waters with such attentiveness; defiant, ecstatic powers of observation transfiguring the ordinary with wit and self-awareness. – Luke Kennard

Lucy Holt – *Empathy Creature*

Holt draws the reader's fascination and engagement from such unexpected quarters through the most judicious deployment of detail: eye-lash curlers, dual carriageways, real-life encounters with Coronation Street actors. The juxtapositions are superior and considered and I was captivated by the shrewd, clever voice throughout. – Luke Kennard

Georgie Woodhead – *Takeaway*

Takeaway is a vivid and powerful collection. Expansive but precise lines and stanzas give Woodhead the space to explore the lives and scenes she depicts. So many of the images here are breathtaking and will really stay with me. 'Harry Collins' is such a vivid, poignant and angry character study and the title poem alone was enough to convince me that I was in the presence of a significant and urgent new voice. Uncompromising in its depiction of brutalities without ever sacrificing the humanity and compassion of the poet's vision. – Luke Kennard

The 2018/19 New Poets Prize Judged by Mary Jean Chan

Abbie Neale – *Threadbare*

This is a powerful collection that trains a keen eye on the realities of toxic masculinity, misogyny and sexual violence. Neale approaches her subject through a combination of confessional, documentary and surrealist modes: "When I fell, the trees and houses were geometric shapes / and I didn't hit the ground, I tore through it." – **Mary Jean Chan**

Ben Ray – *The Kindness of the Eel*

This is a wonderfully eclectic collection that draws its inspiration from sources at once historical and contemporary. Dramatic monologues, knee plays and intertextual responses to other poets are juxtaposed with lyric poems that constantly surprise and delight like "a surreal fruit". – **Mary Jean Chan**

Callan Waldron-Hall – *Learning to be Very Soft*

This is a collection suffused with vivid imagery, with various forms of water ("the pool", "the floods", "the river" and "the sea") occurring throughout the text. I admired Waldron-Hall's ability to hone in on the complexity of relationships through verse at once startling and tender. – **Mary Jean Chan**

Jay G Ying – *Scheherazade*

Taking its cue from Scheherazade, the storyteller in One Thousand and One Nights, this collection is one to be savoured repeatedly. Apart from its formal experimentation, its lyric epiphanies are also a delight: "where every / near thing seemed one lost island away, as unplaceable / as an accent, as unmoored as the passing season." – **Mary Jean Chan**

**The 2017/18 New Poets Prize
Judged by Kayo Chingonyi**

Joe Carrick-Varty – *Somewhere Far*
Tristram Fane Saunders – *Woodsong*
Emma Jeremy – *Safety Behaviour*
Warda Yassin – *Tea with Cardamom*

**The 2016/17 New Poets Prize
Judged by Andrew McMillan**

Ian Burnette – *Wax*
Sarah Fletcher – *Typhoid August*
Lizzi Hawkins – *Osteology*
Stefan Kielbasiewicz – *Stealing Shadow*

The 2015/16 New Poets Prize
Judged by Helen Mort

Imogen Cassels – *The Fire Manifesto*
Jenny Danes – *Gaps*
Phoebe Stuckes – *Gin and Tonic*
Theophilus Kwek – *The First Five Storms*