

## SHORTLIST FOR THE 2011 COSTA POETRY AWARD

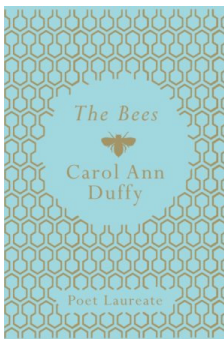
### Judges

Sarah Crown  
William Fiennes  
Sharon Murray

*Editor, [guardian.co.uk/books](http://guardian.co.uk/books)*

*Author*

*Director of Operations, Hammicks*



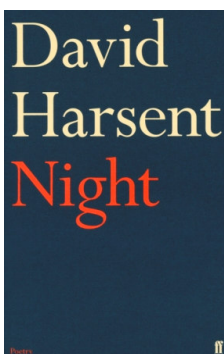
### **The Bees** by Carol Ann Duffy (*Picador*)

*The Bees* is Carol Ann Duffy's first collection of new poems as Poet Laureate and finds Duffy using her full poetic range. There are drinking songs, love poems, poems to the weather, poems of political anger - there are elegies, too, for beloved friends and most movingly, the poet's own mother. As Duffy's voice rises in this collection, her music intensifies and every poem

patterns itself into song. Weaving through the book is its presiding spirit: the bee. In the end, Duffy's point is clear: the bee symbolizes what we have left of grace in the world, and what is most precious and necessary for us to protect.

**Carol Ann Duffy** lives in Manchester, where she is Professor and Creative Director of the Writing School at Manchester Metropolitan University. She has written for both children and adults, and her poetry has received many awards including the Signal Prize for Children's Verse, the Whitbread and the Forward Prizes. She was appointed Poet Laureate in 2009.

**Judges:** "These tender, fluent, surprising poems feel at once contemporary and alive with the history of poetry."



### **Night** by David Harsent (*Faber and Faber*)

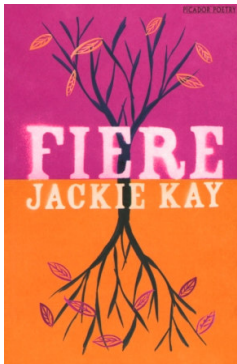
Among the poems that open *Night* is a startling sequence about a garden – but a garden unlike any other. It sets the tone for a book in which the sureties of daylight become uncertain: dark, unsettling narratives about what wakes in us when we escape our daylight selves to visit a

place where the dream-like and the nightmarish are never far apart. The book culminates in the seductive and brilliantly-sustained 'Elsenhert', a noirish, labyrinthine quest-poem in

which the protagonist is drawn ever onward through a series of encounters and reflections.

**David Harsent** has published nine collections of poetry. The most recent, *Legion*, won the Forward Prize for best collection 2005 and was shortlisted for both the Whitbread Award and the T. S. Eliot Prize. His *Selected Poems* was published in 2007 and was shortlisted for the Griffin International Poetry Prize.

**Judges:** “Harsent’s long luxuriant lines are lit by jewel-like images. Formally ambitious, complex and mysterious.”



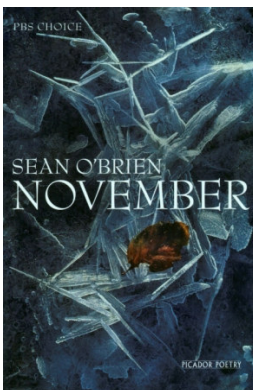
**Fiere by Jackie Kay (Picador)**

Jackie Kay's new collection is a lyric counterpart to her memoir, *Red Dust Road*, but it is also a moving book in its own right, and a deep enquiry into all forms of human friendship. *Fiere* - Scots for companion, friend, equal' - is a vivid description of the many paths our lives take, and of how those journeys are made meaningful by our companions on the road. Written with Kay's trademark wit

and flair, and infused with both Scots and Igbo speech, it is also a fascinating account of the formation of a self-identity and the discovery of a tongue that best honours it.

**Jackie Kay** was born in Edinburgh in 1961 and grew up in Glasgow. She has written all her life. Several of her adult poetry collections have won or been shortlisted for awards across the board. Her first novel *Trumpet* won the Author's Club First Novel Award and the *Guardian* Fiction Prize. Her first novel for children, *Strangirl*, a lyrical slice of magical realism, was a huge critical success. Jackie lives in Manchester with her son.

**Judges:** “These poems are open-armed and generous, warmly emotional without being sentimental. They welcome you in.”



**November by Sean O'Brien (Picador)**

*November* is haunted by the missing, the missed, the vanished, the uncounted, and the uncountable lost: lost sleep, connections, muses, books, the ghosts and gardens of childhood. Ultimately, these lead the poet to contemplate the most troubling absences:

O'Brien's elegies for his parents and friends form the heart of this book, and are the source of its pervasive note of *départ*.



**Sean O'Brien** has written six collections of poetry, most recently *The Drowned Book* (2007), which won both the Forward and T S Eliot Prizes, the only book of poetry to do so. His other work includes the book of essays, *The Deregulated Muse* (1998), the verse plays *The Birds* (2002) and *Keepers of the Flame* (2003) and a verse translation of Dante's *Inferno* (2006). In 2008 his collection of short stories, *The Silence Room*, was published, followed in 2009 by his novel *Afterlife*. He is Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University.

**Judges:** "The mythic combines with the modern in incantatory poems that thrum with verbal and intellectual energy."