

#SoAatHome | Industry Insider – Poetry awards and competitions  
Thursday 27 March 2025



1

00:00:01,000--> 00:00:03,500

Welcome, everyone, to today's event:

2

00:00:03,524--> 00:00:06,924

Industry Insider – Poetry  
awards and competitions.

3

00:00:06,948--> 00:00:09,228

My name is Lucy Macnab,

4

00:00:09,252--> 00:00:11,588

and I am Co-Executive  
Director at Forward,

5

00:00:11,612--> 00:00:14,508

which is the charity  
and development agency

6

00:00:14,532--> 00:00:16,228

for UK and Irish poetry.

7

00:00:16,252--> 00:00:20,028

#SoAatHome | Industry Insider – Poetry awards and competitions  
Thursday 27 March 2025



We run National Poetry  
Day and the Forward Prizes.

8

00:00:20,052--> 00:00:23,948

For me, I have been a  
teacher, producer,

9

00:00:24,000--> 00:00:26,548

policymaker, mainly  
working with writers

10

00:00:26,572--> 00:00:29,428

and previously I was director  
of the Ministry of Stories,

11

00:00:29,452--> 00:00:31,188

which I co-founded in 2010,

12

00:00:31,212--> 00:00:35,000

with Nick Hornby and Ben Payne.

13

00:00:35,000--> 00:00:37,028

This event is part of

14

00:00:37,052--> 00:00:42,000

the #SoAatHome

Spring/Summer 2025 programme.

15

00:00:42,000--> 00:00:44,068

It's a free event for everyone,

16

00:00:44,092--> 00:00:46,000

but if you can afford to,

17

00:00:46,000--> 00:00:49,308

please consider donating to the

Society of Authors Access Fund

18

00:00:49,332--> 00:00:53,188

which provides grants for

authors so that travel, subsistence,

19

00:00:53,212--> 00:00:55,108

childcare costs and access needs

20

00:00:55,132--> 00:00:57,228

aren't barriers to  
authors taking part

21

00:00:57,252--> 00:01:00,028

in events, residencies  
and retreats.

22

00:01:00,052--> 00:01:02,948

So we suggest a  
minimum donation of £5.

23

00:01:02,972--> 00:01:05,708

And Tilly will post the link

24

00:01:05,732--> 00:01:10,000

into the chat if you'd  
like to make a donation.

25

00:01:10,000--> 00:01:13,308

And you can also help the  
Society of Authors Access Fund

26

00:01:13,332--> 00:01:16,000

by making a purchase  
on our virtual bookstore

27

00:01:16,000--> 00:01:17,348

on bookshop.org

28

00:01:17,372--> 00:01:19,988

where you can find books but--

29

00:01:20,012--> 00:01:21,508

Where you can  
find books by writers

30

00:01:21,532--> 00:01:26,000

taking part in the Society of  
Authors at Home programme.

31

00:01:26,000--> 00:01:27,828

And Tilly is going to post

32

00:01:27,852--> 00:01:33,000

the link to the bookshop

in the chat as well.

33

00:01:33,000--> 00:01:34,948

Today's session will

last an hour and a half,

34

00:01:34,972--> 00:01:38,428

including a 20

minute Q&A at the end

35

00:01:38,452--> 00:01:43,000

and there'll be a five minute

comfort break just before the Q&A.

36

00:01:43,000--> 00:01:45,428

You can turn on the

closed captions option

37

00:01:45,452--> 00:01:49,000

if you'd like live

subtitles during the event.

38

00:01:49,000--> 00:01:50,908

And the recording of today

39

00:01:50,932--> 00:01:55,000

will be available on the Society  
of Authors website for members

40

00:01:55,000--> 00:01:57,628

which you can access by  
logging into the members area

41

00:01:57,652--> 00:02:00,000

and going to the resources page.

42

00:02:00,000--> 00:02:01,428

And for non-members,

43

00:02:01,452--> 00:02:02,988

the recording will be available

44

00:02:03,012--> 00:02:07,000

on the Society of  
Authors Vimeo channel.

45

00:02:07,000--> 00:02:11,000

Tilly will post those  
links in the chat as well.

46

00:02:11,000--> 00:02:15,000

If you have any questions,  
please post them in the Q&A box.

47

00:02:15,000--> 00:02:16,788

You can post them  
anonymously if you prefer,

48

00:02:16,812--> 00:02:21,028

but you can also post your  
general comments into the chat box.

49

00:02:22,000--> 00:02:27,000

So I'd now like to introduce  
you all to today's panel,

50

00:02:27,000--> 00:02:31,588

Malika Booker, Jack Underwood,  
and Eric Ngalle Charles.

51

00:02:31,612--> 00:02:35,828

So Malika Booker

is a British poet

52

00:02:35,852--> 00:02:39,000

of Guyanese and

Grenadian parentage.

53

00:02:39,000--> 00:02:41,348

She lectures at Manchester

Metropolitan University

54

00:02:41,372--> 00:02:44,000

and co-founded

Malika's Poetry Kitchen,

55

00:02:44,000--> 00:02:45,028

a writers collective.

56

00:02:45,052--> 00:02:49,228

The anthology Two Young,

Two Black, Too Different,

57

00:02:49,252--> 00:02:51,228

Poems from Malika's

Poetry Kitchen

58

00:02:51,252--> 00:02:56,000

celebrates Malika's Poetry

Kitchen 20 year anniversary.

59

00:02:56,000--> 00:02:59,748

Her pamphlet, Breadfruit, received

a Poetry Society recommendation

60

00:02:59,772--> 00:03:01,988

and her poetry

collection, Pepper Seed,

61

00:03:02,012--> 00:03:04,788

was shortlisted for

the OCM Bocas prize

62

00:03:04,812--> 00:03:10,000

and the Seamus Heaney Centre

2014 prize for first full collection.

63

00:03:10,000--> 00:03:12,508

She's published with the poets

Sharon Olds and Warsan Shire

64

00:03:12,532--> 00:03:17,000

in The Penguin Modern Poet

Series 3: Your Family: Your Body.

65

00:03:17,000--> 00:03:21,108

Malika was awarded the

Cholmondeley Award 2019

66

00:03:21,132--> 00:03:23,268

for outstanding

contribution to poetry

67

00:03:23,292--> 00:03:26,000

and elected a Royal

Society of Literature Fellow

68

00:03:26,000--> 00:03:27,468

in 2022.

69

00:03:27,492--> 00:03:31,948

She's the first woman to win the  
Forward Prize for Best Single Poem twice.

70

00:03:31,972--> 00:03:37,548

Jack Underwood is author  
of two poetry collections,

71

00:03:37,572--> 00:03:40,308

Happiness, published  
by Faber in 2015,

72

00:03:40,332--> 00:03:45,000

and A Year in the  
New Life by Faber in '21.

73

00:03:45,000--> 00:03:50,000

And the non-fiction work, NOT EVEN  
THIS, published by Corsair in 2021.

74

00:03:50,000--> 00:03:53,348

He co-presents and curates  
the Faber Poetry Podcast

75

00:03:53,372--> 00:04:00,000

and is Senior Lecturer in Creative  
Writing at Goldsmiths College.

76

00:04:00,000--> 00:04:04,108

Eric Ngalle Charles is a  
Cameroonian writer, poet and playwright,

77

00:04:04,132--> 00:04:07,000

and human rights  
activist based in Wales.

78

00:04:07,000--> 00:04:10,108

A PhD researcher at  
King's College London,

79

00:04:10,132--> 00:04:14,188

he was awarded a Creative  
Wales Award Fellowship in 2017

80

00:04:14,212--> 00:04:19,000

for his work on the topics of  
migration, trauma and memory.

81

00:04:19,000--> 00:04:21,708

His autobiography,  
I, Eric Ngalle:

82

00:04:21,732--> 00:04:25,188

One Man's Journey Crossing  
Continents from Africa to Europe

83

00:04:25,212--> 00:04:27,348

was published by Parthian Books

84

00:04:27,372--> 00:04:29,348

and recounts his  
journey to Europe,

85

00:04:29,372--> 00:04:34,000

spending several years in Russia  
and elsewhere seeking refuge.

86

00:04:34,000--> 00:04:38,548

He was selected as one of  
Jackie Kay's Best British BAME writers

87

00:04:38,572--> 00:04:41,000

with a unique theatrical voice.

88

00:04:41,000--> 00:04:46,000

He sits on boards at Literature  
Wales and Aberystwyth Arts Centre,

89

00:04:46,000--> 00:04:53,000

and edited Hiraeth Erzolirzoli:  
A Wales-Cameroon Anthology in 2018.

90

00:04:53,000--> 00:04:57,828

The 3 Molas, 2020, an anthology  
about Cameroon and Wales.

91

00:04:57,852--> 00:05:05,000

His poetry collection Homelands,  
published by Seren Books in '22.

92

00:05:05,000--> 00:05:06,548

2022, was published in April.

93

00:05:06,572--> 00:05:08,868

Right.

94

00:05:08,892--> 00:05:10,908

So welcome to all the panel.

95

00:05:10,932--> 00:05:15,308

It's really great to be  
with you here today

96

00:05:15,332--> 00:05:19,428

and we are here  
to talk about poetry

97

00:05:19,452--> 00:05:21,348

competitions, awards and prizes.

98

00:05:21,372--> 00:05:24,188

And I wonder if anyone would  
be brave enough to start off

99

00:05:24,212--> 00:05:25,588

just kind of outlining

100

00:05:25,612--> 00:05:28,388

the different kinds

of competitions,

101

00:05:28,412--> 00:05:30,188

awards that are out there.

102

00:05:37,000--> 00:05:38,000

Uh...

103

00:05:38,000--> 00:05:40,228

-I don't mind starting.

104

00:05:40,252--> 00:05:41,828

-Oh, thanks, Jack.

105

00:05:41,852--> 00:05:43,268

-Yeah I think...

106

00:05:43,292--> 00:05:45,708

It's interesting we

have these three terms

107

00:05:45,732--> 00:05:47,868

and you often hear them

interchangeably, don't you?

108

00:05:47,892--> 00:05:50,028

Competitions, prizes and awards.

109

00:05:50,052--> 00:05:53,708

To my mind, a competition

110

00:05:53,732--> 00:05:58,000

is like often for a single poem.

111

00:05:58,000--> 00:05:59,828

So that's the one thing there.

112

00:05:59,852--> 00:06:02,188

And usually it's  
anonymous, actually.

113

00:06:02,212--> 00:06:06,788

So you might have one  
judge or a panel of judges,

114

00:06:06,812--> 00:06:10,068

and you often  
get a lot of entries.

115

00:06:10,092--> 00:06:13,668

So the judges will be looking  
at, you know, a lot of poems.

116

00:06:13,692--> 00:06:16,428

Particularly if it's something like  
the National Poetry Competition,

117

00:06:16,452--> 00:06:19,668

which gets literally tens  
of... Tens of thousands now.

118

00:06:19,692--> 00:06:22,108

I think they broke  
the 20,000 mark

119

00:06:22,132--> 00:06:25,000

either this year or last year.

120

00:06:25,000--> 00:06:27,708

And obviously that's  
very different to a prize

121

00:06:27,732--> 00:06:34,000

which is awarded for a book,  
a published work or collection.

122

00:06:34,000--> 00:06:37,228

Obviously, within the  
Forward Prizes, Lucy,

123

00:06:37,252--> 00:06:42,828

you'll know that they have  
an individual poem prize

124

00:06:42,852--> 00:06:48,000

and have done, and you mentioned  
that Malika's won it twice which is good.

125

00:06:48,000--> 00:06:51,108

And they also have a live  
reading now, don't they?

126

00:06:51,132--> 00:06:54,000

So that's a single poem.  
So within the Forward Prizes

127

00:06:54,000--> 00:06:55,788

and within the Out-Spoken Prize,

128

00:06:55,812--> 00:07:01,000

they have individual poems  
and performances included now

129

00:07:01,000--> 00:07:02,748

within their prizes.

130

00:07:02,772--> 00:07:06,428

So competitions and  
prizes differ in that,

131

00:07:06,452--> 00:07:10,468

yeah, individual poems or books.

132

00:07:10,492--> 00:07:15,548

And then awards  
seem to be more...

133

00:07:15,572--> 00:07:17,588

They might be awarded for books

134

00:07:17,612--> 00:07:18,668

but they often...

135

00:07:18,692--> 00:07:21,908

They often have some sort of--

136

00:07:21,932--> 00:07:24,000

They sometimes have a  
theme attached to them

137

00:07:24,000--> 00:07:27,268

or they might be for, like,

138

00:07:27,292--> 00:07:29,028

a particular area.

139

00:07:29,052--> 00:07:33,108

I'm thinking about the

Eric Gregory Award,

140

00:07:33,132--> 00:07:34,828

which is a Society

of Authors, of course,

141

00:07:34,852--> 00:07:38,000

gives to poets

under the age of 30.

142

00:07:38,000--> 00:07:41,108

So there's a kind of...

There's this clearer parameter.

143

00:07:41,132--> 00:07:43,588

I think with awards,  
I might be mistaken,

144

00:07:43,612--> 00:07:48,268

but I think with awards  
the judging panel

145

00:07:48,292--> 00:07:52,228

is often slightly a  
shadowier affair.

146

00:07:52,252--> 00:07:53,388

(laughs)

147

00:07:53,412--> 00:07:57,576

They're less sort of front  
and centre of the process.

148

00:07:57,600--> 00:08:00,068

Though, of course, I think  
you can find out a lot of the time

149

00:08:00,092--> 00:08:01,908

who awarding panels are.

150

00:08:01,932--> 00:08:04,068

But yeah, and I

think the main thing,

151

00:08:04,092--> 00:08:06,468

the difference between awards

and prizes and competitions

152

00:08:06,492--> 00:08:09,000

is that awards are often shared.

153

00:08:09,000--> 00:08:13,108

So you often have a tranche

of people winning awards

154

00:08:13,132--> 00:08:17,188

rather than,

obviously, with prizes

155

00:08:17,212--> 00:08:23,000

with a single winner and competitions

with a first, second, third place.

156

00:08:23,000--> 00:08:24,028

Does that...

157

00:08:24,052--> 00:08:26,788

Does that seem to be what  
everyone else seems to think?

158

00:08:26,812--> 00:08:29,268

Like I said, they're interchangeable,  
aren't they, sometimes.

159

00:08:29,292--> 00:08:30,668

And there's some overlap.

160

00:08:30,692--> 00:08:32,508

What do you think?

161

00:08:36,000--> 00:08:37,188

-Thank you so much, Jack.

162

00:08:37,212--> 00:08:39,028

I'm just going to  
amplify what you said.

163

00:08:39,052--> 00:08:41,028

I've been fortunate enough to be

164

00:08:41,052--> 00:08:45,000

a judge for the  
Eric Gregory Award

165

00:08:45,000--> 00:08:47,708

and I've enjoyed  
reading the poems.

166

00:08:47,732--> 00:08:51,908

And, you know, it's  
always good to see writers

167

00:08:51,932--> 00:08:56,188

putting themselves forward and  
exposing themselves to the world

168

00:08:56,212--> 00:09:02,588

and it is quite difficult  
to choose the winners

169

00:09:02,612--> 00:09:05,388

because, effectively,  
you are reading poems

170

00:09:05,412--> 00:09:09,000

and you are travelling to different  
places, different time-spaces.

171

00:09:09,000--> 00:09:14,348

You are having what Iren Okojie  
will call the Curandera effect.

172

00:09:14,372--> 00:09:16,948

You know, so it is  
quite difficult to say,

173

00:09:16,972--> 00:09:19,068

okay, this is my chosen writer

174

00:09:19,092--> 00:09:20,568

and I'm going to  
give you the award.

175

00:09:20,592--> 00:09:24,776

However, being on the  
judge for Eric Gregory Award

176

00:09:24,800--> 00:09:27,108

has been an eye-opener  
and it's something that I will...

177

00:09:27,132--> 00:09:31,521

I would do again if the Society of  
Authors put in my name forward.

178

00:09:33,000--> 00:09:35,708

-When you say, Eric,  
it's been an eye-opener,

179

00:09:35,732--> 00:09:39,000

what did it... what did you  
discover in that process?

180

00:09:39,000--> 00:09:44,388

-For example, when I read

181

00:09:44,412--> 00:09:46,748

Lottie Shevchenko's poem,

182

00:09:46,772--> 00:09:49,000

Food for the Dead,

183

00:09:49,000--> 00:09:53,068

as a Russian speaker, she

kept taking me to the (inaudible)

184

00:09:53,092--> 00:09:57,000

of what her babushkas,

her doulas are doing.

185

00:09:57,000--> 00:10:00,268

So she transported me

to that kind of a world.

186

00:10:00,292--> 00:10:03,908

And the other winner, I  
think it was Francis-Xavier.

187

00:10:03,932--> 00:10:06,348

I mean, when I was  
reading his poem,

188

00:10:06,372--> 00:10:10,548

I had not thought about  
something called the Bantu Lizard.

189

00:10:10,572--> 00:10:14,988

But I came across this word  
in Xavier's poem, Bantu Lizard.

190

00:10:15,012--> 00:10:16,200

and all of a sudden, I said,

191

00:10:16,224--> 00:10:18,308

I grew up seeing  
all of these things,

192

00:10:18,332--> 00:10:20,348

but it had to take

a writer as Xavier

193

00:10:20,372--> 00:10:23,268

to make me understand

that there is such a thing as a...

194

00:10:23,292--> 00:10:25,948

as a Bantu Lizard.

195

00:10:25,972--> 00:10:29,028

So for the judges, for me,

196

00:10:29,052--> 00:10:31,000

it was... I mean,

I was reading it

197

00:10:31,000--> 00:10:33,228

and was transporting

me to this different world.

198

00:10:33,252--> 00:10:37,228

And every time a  
writer uses a word

199

00:10:37,252--> 00:10:38,548

that is familiar,

200

00:10:38,572--> 00:10:44,000

so I was talking about

Malika's poem, The Golden Grove,

201

00:10:44,000--> 00:10:45,348

I come across

the word 'veranda'.

202

00:10:45,372--> 00:10:48,000

And I had to pause

203

00:10:48,000--> 00:10:51,068

Because all of a sudden, I'm no longer  
just reading a poem for poetry's sake,

204

00:10:51,092--> 00:10:53,000

I am fully immersed in it

205

00:10:53,000--> 00:10:55,388

and I'm being transported  
to this particular place.

206

00:10:55,412--> 00:10:58,000

Yeah, so it has  
been an eye-opener.

207

00:10:58,000--> 00:10:59,588

-Thank you, Eric.

208

00:10:59,612--> 00:11:03,348

I know, Malika, I think  
you've been a judge

209

00:11:03,372--> 00:11:07,028

on a competition  
or award as well.

210

00:11:07,052--> 00:11:10,000

What was that  
experience like for you?

211

00:11:10,000--> 00:11:11,348

-Yeah, I actually...

212

00:11:11,372--> 00:11:17,000

Actually partly enjoy judging.

213

00:11:17,000--> 00:11:18,828

Sometimes until, you know,

214

00:11:18,852--> 00:11:21,508

I'm like halfway through a  
pile and think, oh my gosh,

215

00:11:21,532--> 00:11:23,908

there's a time...

There's a time...

216

00:11:23,932--> 00:11:29,268

There's a time, you  
know, kind of agency.

217

00:11:29,292--> 00:11:34,000

There's a deadline and I've  
got all this stuff to read.

218

00:11:34,000--> 00:11:37,028

I think, and I've judged the  
Manchester Poetry Prize,

219

00:11:37,052--> 00:11:41,148

which is a... which  
is a portfolio prize.

220

00:11:41,172--> 00:11:45,908

And I agree with what Jack  
says, that it's interchangeable.

221

00:11:45,932--> 00:11:49,508

I think as well,  
what I've enjoyed...

222

00:11:49,532--> 00:11:51,748

I don't enjoy being  
a solitary judge

223

00:11:51,772--> 00:11:54,548

because I find I feel like I  
second guess myself a lot.

224

00:11:54,572--> 00:11:57,028

But I enjoy when I  
judge with other people

225

00:11:57,052--> 00:12:00,000

because I feel that, one,

226

00:12:00,000--> 00:12:02,828

I'm being paid to be in  
a room to read poems.

227

00:12:02,852--> 00:12:07,868

I love reading poetry and to actually  
be able to engage and talk about

228

00:12:07,892--> 00:12:12,588

and sometimes read lines that  
we like to each other in poems.

229

00:12:12,612--> 00:12:15,828

And sometimes a judge might  
enable me to see something in a poem

230

00:12:15,852--> 00:12:19,000

or learn something about  
poetics that I haven't.

231

00:12:19,000--> 00:12:22,348

And also it's a very interesting  
act, the act of judging.

232

00:12:22,372--> 00:12:24,588

I mean, we've come  
away from the question.

233

00:12:24,612--> 00:12:29,000

I'm sorry, Lucy, we seem  
to be running down the road.

234

00:12:29,000--> 00:12:33,988

But I find that it's, for me,  
it's a very important thing.

235

00:12:34,012--> 00:12:37,828

So there's a delicacy  
in terms of really being--

236

00:12:37,852--> 00:12:40,788

for me being really committed

237

00:12:40,812--> 00:12:45,148

and have integrity in reading  
every single piece of work.

238

00:12:45,172--> 00:12:49,348

I really-- And I think you're  
judged in that moment

239

00:12:49,372--> 00:12:52,000

against the people  
who have entered.

240

00:12:52,000--> 00:12:57,868

So the people who've entered then  
that denotes the quality, you know.

241

00:12:57,892--> 00:13:01,988

So you get to someone who you go, wow, you  
read it and you forget that you're judging

242

00:13:02,012--> 00:13:05,668

and you get en-- you enjoy  
that and that, you go, oh, okay.

243

00:13:05,692--> 00:13:07,428

So this is the quality, here,

244

00:13:07,452--> 00:13:09,708

and this is what-- And  
that's when I start to know

245

00:13:09,732--> 00:13:12,228

where other people  
will sit inside that.

246

00:13:12,252--> 00:13:17,028

And also, I think it's a  
way to bring, sometimes,

247

00:13:17,052--> 00:13:23,000

different poetics that might not get  
a way into the door of the judging.

248

00:13:23,000--> 00:13:24,228

-Oh, interesting.

249

00:13:24,252--> 00:13:26,988

Jack, have you  
got anything to say?

250

00:13:27,012--> 00:13:31,948

I know you you  
have judged things

251

00:13:31,972--> 00:13:36,000

like the Foyle Young  
Poets Award, is that right?

252

00:13:36,000--> 00:13:38,428

-Yeah, I judged the  
National Poetry Competition

253

00:13:38,452--> 00:13:42,000

which is a lot of reading.

254

00:13:42,000--> 00:13:48,000

As I said, I think there's probably about  
sort of six to eight thousand poems

255

00:13:48,000--> 00:13:49,748

in quite a tight frame.

256

00:13:49,772--> 00:13:52,868

You know, when they arrive  
in these mountains of boxes,

257

00:13:52,892--> 00:13:55,188

it's imposing.

258

00:13:55,212--> 00:13:57,628

But yeah, I've also judged  
that the Foyle Young Poets

259

00:13:57,652--> 00:14:00,068

and I think...

260

00:14:00,092--> 00:14:03,868

I definitely, from the National, I  
thought that's not an experience

261

00:14:03,892--> 00:14:05,228

I ever want to repeat, you know.

262

00:14:05,252--> 00:14:10,000

I actually sort of feel  
like it's so, it's so...

263

00:14:10,000--> 00:14:12,828

Yeah, your brain  
feels so saturated.

264

00:14:12,852--> 00:14:17,228

And I feel like it's such a huge  
amount of poetry to read at one time

265

00:14:17,252--> 00:14:21,000

that you're actually reading it  
in a very unusual, unnatural way

266

00:14:21,000--> 00:14:24,628

that's far from ideal  
conditions to read a poem.

267

00:14:24,652--> 00:14:26,708

Poem after poem after poem.

268

00:14:26,732--> 00:14:28,948

Also with this  
competitive mind frame

269

00:14:28,972--> 00:14:32,348

that seems very antithetical  
to what poems are about, so...

270

00:14:32,372--> 00:14:37,548

Although, obviously, I think  
it's nice to celebrate good poems,

271

00:14:37,572--> 00:14:40,348

I don't think I'd do that again.

272

00:14:40,372--> 00:14:42,788

But with the Foyle, I

felt like I knew that they...

273

00:14:42,812--> 00:14:46,628

This was also, having

taught on the Arvon course

274

00:14:46,652--> 00:14:49,000

that's one of the prizes

275

00:14:49,000--> 00:14:52,748

of the Foyle Young Poets, I

know that the sort of end point there

276

00:14:52,772--> 00:14:56,188

is this lovely sort

of communal space

277

00:14:56,212--> 00:14:59,428

and you're kind of, you're

encouraging young poets

278

00:14:59,452--> 00:15:03,000

to sort of, who might...

279

00:15:03,000--> 00:15:06,708

Yeah, there'll be some poets  
there who really obviously show

280

00:15:06,732--> 00:15:08,548

sort of competency  
and form and stuff,

281

00:15:08,572--> 00:15:13,188

and maybe have been kind of well drilled  
at their slightly more expensive school

282

00:15:13,212--> 00:15:16,028

to sort of do well.

283

00:15:16,052--> 00:15:19,188

And you can be also an  
instrument to sort of pick out

284

00:15:19,212--> 00:15:22,000

the more unusual things.

285

00:15:22,000--> 00:15:24,908

And also, and knowing that you're  
kind of bringing young people together

286

00:15:24,932--> 00:15:26,268

into that space.

287

00:15:26,292--> 00:15:29,508

So I sort of felt like

288

00:15:29,532--> 00:15:34,028

ethically in terms of, like,  
what I think a poem is for

289

00:15:34,052--> 00:15:36,428

and what I value in poetry,

290

00:15:36,452--> 00:15:39,868

which is largely a  
communal enterprise

291

00:15:39,892--> 00:15:42,548

of reading and  
writing with each other,

292

00:15:42,572--> 00:15:44,268

I felt like, yeah,

293

00:15:44,292--> 00:15:47,108

the Foyle Young Poets is about  
sort of bringing people into that space

294

00:15:47,132--> 00:15:52,988

rather than this more  
competitive career aspect

295

00:15:53,012--> 00:15:55,000

of some prizes.

296

00:15:55,000--> 00:15:56,628

And I should say,

right from the off,

297

00:15:56,652--> 00:16:00,376

that I'm generally a  
sort of prize sceptic.

298

00:16:00,400--> 00:16:02,328

I don't necessarily think  
they're a good thing.

299

00:16:02,452--> 00:16:05,988

The poetry communities,  
I don't necessarily think

300

00:16:06,012--> 00:16:08,908

that they...

301

00:16:08,932--> 00:16:10,628

That poetry...

302

00:16:10,652--> 00:16:13,908

They just seem so at odds  
with what I think a poem is for

303

00:16:13,932--> 00:16:15,108

and what it does,

304

00:16:15,132--> 00:16:18,000

but I'm sure we'll talk about  
that a bit later on as well.

305

00:16:18,000--> 00:16:19,828

-Absolutely, and  
I think we should.

306

00:16:19,852--> 00:16:23,028

We started to talk-- You  
started to talk there a little bit

307

00:16:23,052--> 00:16:26,628

about what, um... what  
the purpose of a prize is,

308

00:16:26,652--> 00:16:28,908

particularly for those, say  
the Foyle Young Poets.

309

00:16:28,932--> 00:16:33,388

What are the aims of prizes?

310

00:16:33,412--> 00:16:36,908

And I know I've had conversations  
with Malika before today

311

00:16:36,932--> 00:16:40,868

about what the  
impact is on somebody

312

00:16:40,892--> 00:16:43,988

when they are shortlisted  
or receive a prize.

313

00:16:44,012--> 00:16:48,776

I wonder if, Malika, would you like  
to say anything about that one?

314

00:16:48,800--> 00:16:49,908

-Yes, I would.

315

00:16:49,932--> 00:16:52,308

I think prizes are  
very important.

316

00:16:52,332--> 00:16:57,388

I think, no matter what we think  
about the competitive element of them,

317

00:16:57,412--> 00:17:00,908

I think poetry is a  
really, really marginalised

318

00:17:00,932--> 00:17:05,000

kind of art form within  
the literary space.

319

00:17:05,000--> 00:17:07,748

And I think that we  
we live in a country

320

00:17:07,772--> 00:17:14,000

where the tendency in  
bookshops and in spaces

321

00:17:14,000--> 00:17:19,000

is to actually laud over all the  
poets, poets who have died.

322

00:17:19,000--> 00:17:23,988

And even within the education  
system until relatively recently,

323

00:17:24,012--> 00:17:28,000

it was teaching literature.

324

00:17:28,000--> 00:17:30,148

As in classic literature,  
as in war literature.

325

00:17:30,172--> 00:17:33,548

I feel as if..

326

00:17:33,572--> 00:17:38,828

Prizes and competitions

327

00:17:38,852--> 00:17:41,508

enable two things, for me.

328

00:17:41,532--> 00:17:43,628

I think, one, they enable

329

00:17:43,652--> 00:17:45,908

um...

330

00:17:45,932--> 00:17:48,988

people to be able to kind of  
understand, from the millions...

331

00:17:49,012--> 00:17:51,908

And I think a lot of  
poetry is published.

332

00:17:51,932--> 00:17:54,028

Hundreds of poetry  
are published,

333

00:17:54,052--> 00:17:56,676

it enables people--

334

00:17:56,700--> 00:17:58,828

For me, it's not the winner  
that's important to me.

335

00:17:58,852--> 00:18:01,000

It's the long list  
and the short list.

336

00:18:01,000--> 00:18:04,748

It's the fact that  
people are able to...

337

00:18:04,772--> 00:18:06,788

Someone has made a choice

338

00:18:06,812--> 00:18:10,000

and curated something so  
that people can go out and buy it.

339

00:18:10,000--> 00:18:13,988

And people can actually,  
like, know these people.

340

00:18:14,012--> 00:18:20,000

Particularly when the long list poets  
and the shortlisted poets get the press,

341

00:18:20,000--> 00:18:22,948

get the marketing apparatus,  
get put into bookshops.

342

00:18:22,972--> 00:18:25,828

And what that does  
for the industry, as well,

343

00:18:25,852--> 00:18:28,388

I believe in community and I  
believe in community of publishing.

344

00:18:28,412--> 00:18:31,588

What that does for the industry,  
especially small publishers.

345

00:18:31,612--> 00:18:37,000

And I think that that's

really important, one...

346

00:18:37,000--> 00:18:38,188

And now I've forgotten two.

347

00:18:38,212--> 00:18:42,908

And there was a second point I  
wanted to make that it was important...

348

00:18:42,932--> 00:18:45,188

So it's important for  
the infrastructure, I think.

349

00:18:45,212--> 00:18:47,308

And I think it's important...

350

00:18:47,332--> 00:18:50,508

Especially...

351

00:18:50,532--> 00:18:53,588

I've heard some people say  
they were going to give up writing.

352

00:18:53,612--> 00:18:57,108

They didn't understand, they  
did not know the value of it.

353

00:18:57,132--> 00:19:01,000

And they felt that because  
they've been judged

354

00:19:01,000--> 00:19:03,628

or you know kind of  
chosen by their peers,

355

00:19:03,652--> 00:19:06,108

that something  
important had happened.

356

00:19:06,132--> 00:19:10,000

I think in terms of the writing  
process for the individual writer,

357

00:19:10,000--> 00:19:14,388

writing, it gives you a  
way to finish things as well.

358

00:19:14,412--> 00:19:17,348

So that you finish,  
you complete a poem

359

00:19:17,372--> 00:19:21,000

and it makes you edit  
it really, really hard

360

00:19:21,000--> 00:19:22,708

to send it out for  
these competitions.

361

00:19:22,732--> 00:19:25,000

So even in the  
writing at your desk,

362

00:19:25,000--> 00:19:27,188

not only are you  
going for journals,

363

00:19:27,212--> 00:19:29,188

but you're going for

competitions and publishers.

364

00:19:29,212--> 00:19:33,468

So I think there's a threefold way  
that it kind of benefits, it's beneficial.

365

00:19:33,492--> 00:19:36,868

And the last thing  
I'm going to say

366

00:19:36,892--> 00:19:39,708

is that it enables  
voices that would not...

367

00:19:39,732--> 00:19:41,688

That are not, particularly  
in this British space,

368

00:19:41,712--> 00:19:44,708

that are not necessarily  
going to get noticed.

369

00:19:44,732--> 00:19:46,348

It enables the experimental,

370

00:19:46,372--> 00:19:48,388

it enables the marginalized,

371

00:19:48,412--> 00:19:51,000

it enables because

372

00:19:51,000--> 00:19:52,808

you're judging,

particularly in competitions,

373

00:19:52,832--> 00:19:57,000

you're judging anonymously

and the work has to speak

374

00:19:57,000--> 00:19:58,148

for itself, right?

375

00:19:58,172--> 00:20:00,708

So it enables that

to come through.

376

00:20:00,732--> 00:20:02,468

So that's what I would say.

377

00:20:03,975--> 00:20:05,975

-Thank you, Malika.

378

00:20:06,000--> 00:20:08,908

Eric, is there anything

you would like to say

379

00:20:08,932--> 00:20:12,428

about what the purpose of

prizes are from your perspective

380

00:20:12,452--> 00:20:17,000

and maybe the impact on

the people who are awarded.

381

00:20:17,000--> 00:20:18,788

-Yes, yes, yes. I...

382

00:20:18,812--> 00:20:21,828

I love prizes and I love  
the winners of it more.

383

00:20:21,852--> 00:20:25,668

So, like, for example,  
I think it's Fiona Larkin.

384

00:20:25,692--> 00:20:30,588

Her poem just won the  
National prize, about £5,000.

385

00:20:30,612--> 00:20:34,588

Originally, she's from Australia  
and she moved to the UK.

386

00:20:34,612--> 00:20:37,000

And the poem was very simple,

387

00:20:37,000--> 00:20:38,308

about her missing her son.

388

00:20:38,332--> 00:20:41,188

It's called Absence,

and she won it.

389

00:20:41,212--> 00:20:43,428

And Clare Potter,

Clare E. Potter,

390

00:20:43,452--> 00:20:45,708

she just brought out a

book called Healing the Pack.

391

00:20:45,732--> 00:20:48,708

And I read this poem

392

00:20:48,732--> 00:20:50,548

or I read the book and

393

00:20:50,572--> 00:20:56,000

all of a sudden I'm scared when I see my

grandmother holding an axe and she's 92.

394

00:20:56,000--> 00:20:58,068

But these are the kind

of little things that I saw.

395

00:20:58,092--> 00:20:59,468

And then Clare now has gone

396

00:20:59,492--> 00:21:03,228

and she's won the, I think,  
the Jerwood Prize for Poetry.

397

00:21:03,252--> 00:21:06,788

And all of a sudden she is  
doing things with BBC Radio 4.

398

00:21:06,812--> 00:21:09,428

So the impact is  
something that we are,

399

00:21:09,452--> 00:21:13,068

I mean, is beyond imaginable  
for the writers themselves.

400

00:21:13,092--> 00:21:14,988

And Clare was that kind of a...

401

00:21:15,012--> 00:21:17,148

an introverted writer,

402

00:21:17,172--> 00:21:19,188

so she's writing

in these isolations.

403

00:21:19,212--> 00:21:20,388

All of a sudden,

404

00:21:20,412--> 00:21:22,388

she has published

this wonderful collection

405

00:21:22,412--> 00:21:26,000

which was in incubation

for about 14 years.

406

00:21:26,000--> 00:21:29,388

She's having it reviewed and she's

winning prizes and she's just blossoming.

407

00:21:29,412--> 00:21:33,668

And I think that is one of the  
important aspects of being a winner.

408

00:21:33,692--> 00:21:35,908

However,

409

00:21:35,932--> 00:21:39,948

just having the guts to  
embrace this blank space

410

00:21:39,972--> 00:21:43,000

and writing and  
submitting your work,

411

00:21:43,000--> 00:21:49,748

but do writers simply write targeting  
competitions, targeting awards,

412

00:21:49,772--> 00:21:53,000

I think there, it  
becomes problematic.

413

00:21:53,000--> 00:21:56,148

The most important  
thing for writers is to write.

414

00:21:56,172--> 00:21:59,268

And look at your  
local newspaper.

415

00:21:59,292--> 00:22:00,788

It doesn't have to  
be a competition.

416

00:22:00,812--> 00:22:02,588

Submit your poem  
to a local newspaper

417

00:22:02,612--> 00:22:04,628

and you might be the  
only person who submits it,

418

00:22:04,652--> 00:22:07,108

and they publish it and all  
of a sudden you are a winner.

419

00:22:07,132--> 00:22:11,000

And that becomes  
the prize winning point.

420

00:22:11,000--> 00:22:14,588

-I think it's really  
great to hear

421

00:22:14,612--> 00:22:18,148

that kind of sense  
of the courage it takes

422

00:22:18,172--> 00:22:20,428

to submit and then  
the courage it takes to

423

00:22:20,452--> 00:22:24,028

kind of to sit on that stage

424

00:22:24,052--> 00:22:25,268

or be in that short list

425

00:22:25,292--> 00:22:29,000

and, Malika, something  
you said made me reflect.

426

00:22:29,000--> 00:22:33,000

I've worked at the Forward  
Prize for a couple of years now

427

00:22:33,000--> 00:22:34,988

and the prize has  
been going for 30 years,

428

00:22:35,012--> 00:22:39,228

but those, you know,  
those experiences

429

00:22:39,252--> 00:22:44,708

of somebody last year who  
was on the point of just giving up,

430

00:22:44,732--> 00:22:47,508

completely giving up, and  
put in their poem and won,

431

00:22:47,532--> 00:22:54,828

and it really kind of renewed her  
enthusiasm and energy for her poetry

432

00:22:54,852--> 00:22:57,000

as opposed to the  
other writing she does.

433

00:22:57,000--> 00:23:00,308

But also that sense of

434

00:23:00,332--> 00:23:03,908

your community, your peers,  
you're on a stage with people.

435

00:23:03,932--> 00:23:05,828

And I know, Malika,  
it meant a huge deal.

436

00:23:05,852--> 00:23:07,948

One of the people who  
was shortlisted alongside you

437

00:23:07,972--> 00:23:13,000

in 2020... '24, 2023?

438

00:23:13,000--> 00:23:14,228

For the best single poem

439

00:23:14,252--> 00:23:16,588

and said, you know, to

be on that stage with you,

440

00:23:16,612--> 00:23:19,108

who's one of her

kind of literary heroes,

441

00:23:19,132--> 00:23:21,788

was a great moment for her.

442

00:23:21,812--> 00:23:26,108

So there's something that, at all

stages of your development as a writer,

443

00:23:26,132--> 00:23:28,000

it can mean different things.

444

00:23:28,000--> 00:23:32,000

But it was really positive in  
terms of boosting her confidence.

445

00:23:32,000--> 00:23:33,988

And all of those very  
practical things about

446

00:23:34,012--> 00:23:39,588

media attention or maybe  
increasing book sales

447

00:23:39,612--> 00:23:44,428

hold true but actually I think  
what I hear back most of all

448

00:23:44,452--> 00:23:48,868

is that it has reaffirmed  
somebody's self-belief

449

00:23:48,892--> 00:23:55,000

and the drive to keep going through  
what is incredibly tough at times.

450

00:23:55,000--> 00:23:56,468

And then just to say as well,

451

00:23:56,492--> 00:23:58,748

I think the other thing that  
I found really interesting.

452

00:23:58,772--> 00:24:03,948

Andrew McMillan, who  
I think is was his best--

453

00:24:03,972--> 00:24:06,068

his collection, his first  
collection of poems

454

00:24:06,092--> 00:24:10,948

was shortlisted for Forward and he  
stayed connected with the other four poets

455

00:24:10,972--> 00:24:14,068

who were shortlisted alongside  
him for their first collection

456

00:24:14,092--> 00:24:16,000

and they've kind of...

457

00:24:16,000--> 00:24:19,388

They felt connected to each other all  
through their careers as that's progressed.

458

00:24:19,412--> 00:24:21,268

So I think, in a sense,

459

00:24:21,292--> 00:24:26,628

it can have something to add to this  
sense of community that poetry has,

460

00:24:26,652--> 00:24:30,000

you know, so much in spades.

461

00:24:30,000--> 00:24:33,776

I'm wondering if we should  
go to-- Oh, go for it, Malika.

462

00:24:33,800--> 00:24:35,188

-I was just going  
to say, as well,

463

00:24:35,212--> 00:24:38,908

that I remember one of...

464

00:24:38,932--> 00:24:41,668

I can't remember when it  
was that I was shortlisted.

465

00:24:41,692--> 00:24:43,868

So I was shortlisted for  
the Forward three times,

466

00:24:43,892--> 00:24:46,628

but in one of the times I was  
shortlisted for the Forward,

467

00:24:46,652--> 00:24:47,748

I was shortlisted with...

468

00:24:47,772--> 00:24:52,108

I judged the Myslexia poetry  
competition the year before

469

00:24:52,132--> 00:24:56,268

and there was this  
magnificent poetry poem

470

00:24:56,292--> 00:25:03,348

that I'd never seen that form before  
where this poet had blown me away.

471

00:25:03,372--> 00:25:04,908

You know, the poem...

472

00:25:04,932--> 00:25:10,000

And it was a poem written in  
the form of a multiple choice

473

00:25:10,000--> 00:25:16,508

around the death  
of her family member

474

00:25:16,532--> 00:25:18,068

who'd gone on holiday.

475

00:25:18,092--> 00:25:20,948

And then it was

really interesting

476

00:25:20,972--> 00:25:26,348

because there we were,

shortlisted for the Forwards,

477

00:25:26,372--> 00:25:31,188

and there were all these

people speaking about this poem,

478

00:25:31,212--> 00:25:34,000

this poem that I thought

was a tour de force.

479

00:25:34,000--> 00:25:40,668

And I felt so

honoured to meet her

480

00:25:40,692--> 00:25:43,788

and to be able to talk  
to her about the poem

481

00:25:43,812--> 00:25:49,428

and to talk to her about how  
transformative it was to me as a judge

482

00:25:49,452--> 00:25:51,348

and what it meant  
to me as a judge.

483

00:25:51,372--> 00:25:54,000

Because you can  
write the judge's report,

484

00:25:54,000--> 00:25:57,388

but there's so much about that poem  
and I still teach that poem to this day.

485

00:25:57,412--> 00:26:03,000

And that poem still changes  
and has an impact on people.

486

00:26:03,000--> 00:26:04,000

And, yeah.

487

00:26:04,024--> 00:26:05,988

And so some things,  
you know... And, and...

488

00:26:06,012--> 00:26:08,028

And so, yeah, I just think

489

00:26:08,052--> 00:26:11,508

that happened really early  
on in terms of me being a judge

490

00:26:11,532--> 00:26:18,000

and I think it was remarkable  
for me to kind of experience that.

491

00:26:18,000--> 00:26:20,068

-And that sense, I suppose

492

00:26:20,092--> 00:26:22,108

that it just... it's

just another way

493

00:26:22,132--> 00:26:26,000

of offering up a space for

people to connect through poetry.

494

00:26:26,000--> 00:26:32,000

I feel like Jack might have

some interesting thoughts on this?

495

00:26:32,000--> 00:26:33,108

-Yeah, thanks.

496

00:26:33,132--> 00:26:36,268

Yeah, I mean, a lot's

been said so I'll try and

497

00:26:36,292--> 00:26:39,988

think about speaking to those points.

498

00:26:40,012--> 00:26:43,248

I suppose the first thing that strikes  
me is that we're only really talking about

499

00:26:43,272--> 00:26:46,000

the experience of people who  
have actually been shortlisted.

500

00:26:46,000--> 00:26:51,868

So for everyone who benefits from the  
communal space of prize, a prize shortlist,

501

00:26:51,892--> 00:26:56,028

there's all those hundreds of  
books and poets who aren't there,

502

00:26:56,052--> 00:26:58,468

who don't benefit  
from that experience.

503

00:26:58,492--> 00:27:02,388

So we're actually selecting  
that experience for a chosen few.

504

00:27:02,412--> 00:27:05,000

Um...

505

00:27:05,000--> 00:27:06,548

And I think, yeah...

506

00:27:06,572--> 00:27:10,908

And for every poet  
who doesn't give up

507

00:27:10,932--> 00:27:13,468

because they've been  
selected for a competition,

508

00:27:13,492--> 00:27:16,876

we'll never hear about the ones  
who did give up because they weren't.

509

00:27:16,900--> 00:27:17,900

You know?

510

00:27:17,924--> 00:27:22,548

And I'm not suggesting that

we should get rid of prizes.

511

00:27:22,572--> 00:27:26,068

I don't want  
everyone out of a job.

512

00:27:26,092--> 00:27:28,988

But what I do really worry about

513

00:27:29,012--> 00:27:32,000

is the critical primacy  
that they have.

514

00:27:32,000--> 00:27:35,748

That in a world in which reviews  
and critical conversations about poetry

515

00:27:35,772--> 00:27:37,668

is kind of quite scarce

516

00:27:37,692--> 00:27:40,228

and is certainly not  
represented in the broadsheets,

517

00:27:40,252--> 00:27:42,708

that what's replaced that

518

00:27:42,732--> 00:27:45,028

or what we have instead

519

00:27:45,052--> 00:27:47,228

is this critical

mechanism of prizes

520

00:27:47,252--> 00:27:49,548

to decide which books are worthy

521

00:27:49,572--> 00:27:53,000

of that extra marketing

and that publishing boost.

522

00:27:53,000--> 00:27:55,388

Now, if we actually look at

the mechanism of what that is,

523

00:27:55,412--> 00:27:58,868

let's say it's a  
shortlist of 10 books,

524

00:27:58,892--> 00:28:00,628

which is quite  
a large shortlist.

525

00:28:00,652--> 00:28:08,000

How are we discussing quality  
when we're comparing those books?

526

00:28:08,000--> 00:28:10,068

And obviously we don't get...

527

00:28:10,092--> 00:28:12,668

We're not party to the  
judges and discussion.

528

00:28:12,692--> 00:28:15,708

But even in the sense  
that, like, is there...

529

00:28:15,732--> 00:28:18,548

What qualities in poetry  
are being discussed

530

00:28:18,572--> 00:28:21,308

or being, you know, valorized?

531

00:28:21,332--> 00:28:24,828

Either that that shortlist is going  
to have to be narrow enough

532

00:28:24,852--> 00:28:28,788

that you can have a comparable  
conversation about those qualities

533

00:28:28,812--> 00:28:33,548

within that sort of framework, within  
a framework of quality or qualities.

534

00:28:33,572--> 00:28:39,268

Or you're going to have very diverse range  
of poetries represented on that short list,

535

00:28:39,292--> 00:28:41,268

at which point how can  
you compare a book

536

00:28:41,292--> 00:28:47,548

about... A lyric book, say,  
a lyric poetry about grief

537

00:28:47,572--> 00:28:53,000

compared with an  
experimental book about...

538

00:28:53,000--> 00:28:55,088

I don't know, you know,  
that's kind of found poetry

539

00:28:55,112--> 00:28:58,000

using archival things  
in the British Museum.

540

00:28:58,000--> 00:29:00,028

How can you comp--

541

00:29:00,052--> 00:29:02,948

We never see the kind  
of critical framework

542

00:29:02,972--> 00:29:06,308

that's being applied and either  
we're encouraging a narrowness

543

00:29:06,332--> 00:29:07,908

within that critical framework

544

00:29:07,932--> 00:29:13,988

in order to have a way of adjudicating  
and arbitrating these poems.

545

00:29:14,012--> 00:29:16,068

Or we're kind of...

546

00:29:16,092--> 00:29:19,268

And I think that is what  
is happening, actually.

547

00:29:19,292--> 00:29:24,268

I mean, I understand Malika sort of  
talking about, like, experimental poetry

548

00:29:24,292--> 00:29:25,828

being represented

in certain voices

549

00:29:25,852--> 00:29:28,000

who might not... who might

be otherwise marginalised.

550

00:29:29,000--> 00:29:32,868

But I can't remember a single

instance in the last decade, really,

551

00:29:32,892--> 00:29:36,108

where like any of the sort of

more experimental modernist poets,

552

00:29:36,132--> 00:29:41,068

the inheritors of the

British poetry revival, say,

553

00:29:41,092--> 00:29:42,868

I can't, you know...

554

00:29:42,892--> 00:29:45,508

There's names that you  
would never see on a prize list.

555

00:29:45,532--> 00:29:47,588

And also, if we think  
about the judges,

556

00:29:47,612--> 00:29:48,976

the people who are judging them.

557

00:29:49,000--> 00:29:52,268

The people who are judging those prizes  
are also the people willing to judge them.

558

00:29:52,292--> 00:29:55,148

You know, the  
people who also agree

559

00:29:55,172--> 00:29:58,000

and want to participate  
in that critical mechanism.

560

00:29:58,000--> 00:29:59,828

So again, we've got--

561

00:29:59,852--> 00:30:02,908

And then you have the books that  
are actually available to be submitted

562

00:30:02,932--> 00:30:07,000

and it costs money to  
put a book into a prize.

563

00:30:07,000--> 00:30:11,828

So you've got the idea that this  
is a kind of fair and open system

564

00:30:11,852--> 00:30:15,000

that can look at all  
poetry as firstly false.

565

00:30:15,000--> 00:30:18,028

The idea that the range of poetry  
is being written in the country

566

00:30:18,052--> 00:30:20,388

are being celebrated

is also false.

567

00:30:20,412--> 00:30:22,662

And then when you actually

look at the critical mechanism

568

00:30:22,686--> 00:30:25,000

which decides who is the winner,

569

00:30:25,000--> 00:30:27,988

which to me is a bizarre idea

anyway, it's very anti-poetry for me

570

00:30:28,012--> 00:30:29,508

to have a sort of single winner.

571

00:30:29,532--> 00:30:32,988

Even if we do look at the

sort of the critical framework

572

00:30:33,012--> 00:30:34,468

which decides upon a winner,

573

00:30:34,492--> 00:30:37,748

then actually we're either kind of  
creating a narrowness of quality

574

00:30:37,772--> 00:30:42,000

in order to have a genuine  
conversation in which you compare books

575

00:30:42,000--> 00:30:44,468

or you're having a very  
strange conversation

576

00:30:44,492--> 00:30:47,388

in which one book which is  
completely different to another book

577

00:30:47,412--> 00:30:49,188

is somehow better or worse.

578

00:30:49,212--> 00:30:51,948

Neither of those for  
me feels satisfying

579

00:30:51,972--> 00:30:54,828

and neither of them,  
neither of those mechanisms

580

00:30:54,852--> 00:30:56,668

or any of this, really,

581

00:30:56,692--> 00:31:00,000

speaks to my experience  
of what poetry is for

582

00:31:00,000--> 00:31:02,468

and what I go to to read,

583

00:31:02,492--> 00:31:05,788

what are the reasons I go to  
poetry to read or indeed write it.

584

00:31:05,812--> 00:31:08,708

So, that's the  
basis really of my...

585

00:31:08,732--> 00:31:13,028

So I just think it's a very, very  
unusual thing to do to poems

586

00:31:13,052--> 00:31:15,268

and certainly books of poems.

587

00:31:15,292--> 00:31:18,028

And I also think that, as I say,

588

00:31:18,052--> 00:31:20,000

we've been talking about

589

00:31:20,000--> 00:31:25,000

the positive benefits for the poets  
who are celebrated by these prizes.

590

00:31:25,000--> 00:31:31,676

We'll never have a panel on the experiences  
of poets who haven't been shortlisted.

591

00:31:31,700--> 00:31:33,348

And that's, you know,  
and we'll never know

592

00:31:33,372--> 00:31:35,188

whether they gave  
up or, you know.

593

00:31:35,212--> 00:31:39,028

And I-- But I certainly do know that  
poets who haven't been shortlisted

594

00:31:39,052--> 00:31:42,388

do feel like, you  
know, also rans.

595

00:31:42,412--> 00:31:44,708

Do feel like people  
who've been neglected.

596

00:31:44,732--> 00:31:47,000

And that can see a  
lot of bitterness and...

597

00:31:47,000--> 00:31:49,228

And worry.

598

00:31:49,252--> 00:31:54,028

So I think there's this kind of there's  
the other kind of shadow of this, this...

599

00:31:54,052--> 00:31:55,468

This thing.

600

00:31:55,492--> 00:31:57,548

I mean... And that's really...

601

00:31:57,572--> 00:32:00,508

I don't mean to sort of like  
say it has to be one or the other.

602

00:32:00,532--> 00:32:04,000

I think that we just have

to be very careful about

603

00:32:04,000--> 00:32:07,028

and critical and actually look  
properly at what it is we're talking about

604

00:32:07,052--> 00:32:11,000

when we're talking about,  
particularly, book length prizes.

605

00:32:11,000--> 00:32:15,748

-I think... I think you've got  
some really good points, Jack,

606

00:32:15,772--> 00:32:19,000

and I think that might be true.

607

00:32:19,000--> 00:32:20,828

I think...

608

00:32:20,852--> 00:32:23,948

I think that some things  
that I want to talk about,

609

00:32:23,972--> 00:32:27,268

I think when I came  
into being a writer,

610

00:32:27,292--> 00:32:30,788

one of the... One  
of the books I read,

611

00:32:30,812--> 00:32:32,508

Stephen King's On Writing,

612

00:32:32,532--> 00:32:38,308

and one of the most phenomenal  
things that changed my ideas about writing

613

00:32:38,332--> 00:32:41,868

and everything was his  
chapter that he had on rejection.

614

00:32:41,892--> 00:32:48,188

And I remember him saying  
that he'd thrown Carrie in the bin

615

00:32:48,212--> 00:32:52,068

because he'd been  
rejected by every single...

616

00:32:52,092--> 00:32:53,948

every single publisher out there

617

00:32:53,972--> 00:32:57,000

and his partner took it  
out and said, I love it.

618

00:32:57,000--> 00:33:03,000

And Carrie went on to be one  
of the most phenomenal films and books.

619

00:33:03,000--> 00:33:09,228

Yu know, and became  
icon-- like, iconic

620

00:33:09,252--> 00:33:10,988

in terms of popular culture.

621

00:33:11,012--> 00:33:15,948

But what I learned there is that  
this writing that I do at the desk,

622

00:33:15,972--> 00:33:22,000

and I learned that actually  
rejection is part and part

623

00:33:22,000--> 00:33:23,308

of writing.

624

00:33:23,332--> 00:33:28,868

And the rejection starts when  
you're trying to get the publisher.

625

00:33:28,892--> 00:33:32,268

You know, it starts when  
you're trying to get the agent.

626

00:33:32,292--> 00:33:36,988

It starts when  
you are trying to...

627

00:33:37,012--> 00:33:39,628

And so for me,

628

00:33:39,652--> 00:33:44,708

I think about sending

off things for prizes

629

00:33:44,732--> 00:33:47,000

as part of

630

00:33:47,000--> 00:33:48,308

a kind of..

631

00:33:48,332--> 00:33:51,028

As a poet and as a writer,

632

00:33:51,052--> 00:33:55,588

in everything from

writing films to writing plays

633

00:33:55,612--> 00:34:01,188

to writing lit to writing novels, in

every one of those kind of categories,

634

00:34:01,212--> 00:34:04,428

there's this thing

about rejection,

635

00:34:04,452--> 00:34:09,468

about a select few

maybe getting attention,

636

00:34:09,492--> 00:34:12,000

and there's hundreds of

things that are published.

637

00:34:12,000--> 00:34:14,988

But I think, you know,

will that stop me writing?

638

00:34:15,012--> 00:34:17,228

You know, will

winning a prize...

639

00:34:17,252--> 00:34:22,000

Will winning a prize...

640

00:34:22,000--> 00:34:23,628

Do I write to win a prize?

641

00:34:23,652--> 00:34:25,988

No. When I'm at my desk writing,

642

00:34:26,012--> 00:34:30,000

I write to write the  
best poem possible.

643

00:34:30,000--> 00:34:31,548

-Malika, I think that's...

644

00:34:31,572--> 00:34:33,648

I mean, I agree with  
everything you said, certainly.

645

00:34:33,672--> 00:34:35,148

You know what I  
mean? I think that...

646

00:34:35,172--> 00:34:38,868

-But I do encourage  
people to kind of send out

647

00:34:38,892--> 00:34:41,028

and to move out  
of the space of...

648

00:34:41,052--> 00:34:44,428

Of... Of...

649

00:34:44,452--> 00:34:46,228

I don't know what  
I'm trying to say,

650

00:34:46,252--> 00:34:48,000

but I'm trying to say that...

651

00:34:48,000--> 00:34:52,148

That I don't  
understand why poetry

652

00:34:52,172--> 00:34:53,908

and why the nature  
of writing poetry

653

00:34:53,932--> 00:34:59,868

should be exempt as one of the  
things in literature from prize culture.

654

00:34:59,892--> 00:35:01,388

Like should we do  
that with novels?

655

00:35:01,412--> 00:35:03,000

Should we not have  
the Booker Prize?

656

00:35:03,000--> 00:35:04,628

Should we not-- You  
know what I mean?

657

00:35:04,652--> 00:35:08,000

So I'm just curious.

658

00:35:08,000--> 00:35:12,668

-Well, I'd say that, like, the fact that  
we don't sit down and write for prizes,

659

00:35:12,692--> 00:35:16,908

and I mean, I'm not sure I'd want to  
read the work of a poet who would. (laughs)

660

00:35:16,932--> 00:35:22,000

We're certainly not, like, entering  
into this in a sort of battle royale,

661

00:35:22,000--> 00:35:24,788

Hunger Games economy, you know.

662

00:35:24,812--> 00:35:28,628

We're right in conversation  
with other poets, for sure,

663

00:35:28,652--> 00:35:30,188

but not in competition.

664

00:35:30,212--> 00:35:34,868

But I think in a way that the fact  
that we do it in spite of poetry prizes

665

00:35:34,892--> 00:35:38,000

just goes to show

666

00:35:38,000--> 00:35:42,000

how, you know, it's actually just as  
much an argument for not having them.

667

00:35:42,000--> 00:35:43,000

You know?

668

00:35:43,024--> 00:35:46,708

As it would be for having them  
because, you know, we're not...

669

00:35:46,732--> 00:35:51,348

I think, I suppose my  
question is whether or not

670

00:35:51,372--> 00:35:55,188

what we could do to prizes

671

00:35:55,212--> 00:35:57,588

or how we could change  
them or tweak them.

672

00:35:57,612--> 00:36:01,388

There's a certain self-evident  
belief that we should be subjected

673

00:36:01,412--> 00:36:06,000

to this scrutiny and put in  
competition with one another

674

00:36:06,000--> 00:36:10,108

according to some very  
strange arbitrary annual circus.

675

00:36:10,132--> 00:36:12,868

I mean, that's the  
walls of the coliseum

676

00:36:12,892--> 00:36:17,000

are from one day in the year

to another day in the year.

677

00:36:17,000--> 00:36:18,388

Like, that just springs up.

678

00:36:18,412--> 00:36:20,788

That's got nothing to  
do with what you're doing

679

00:36:20,812--> 00:36:22,768

when you're sitting down  
to write a single poem.

680

00:36:22,792--> 00:36:25,000

It's just a particularly  
artificial mechanism.

681

00:36:25,000--> 00:36:28,348

Highly artificial, why should  
we be subjected to that?

682

00:36:28,372--> 00:36:32,668

And I suppose the only argument

683

00:36:32,692--> 00:36:35,748

I can think for to think about  
it is actually that it kind of...

684

00:36:35,772--> 00:36:41,000

That it does, as you say, get  
more attention on the art form.

685

00:36:41,000--> 00:36:42,868

And it does kind of...

686

00:36:42,892--> 00:36:49,268

And it does allow people to sort of  
find out about books that are happening.

687

00:36:49,292--> 00:36:51,028

My problem with that, though...

688

00:36:51,052--> 00:36:54,000

I know I've got a problem  
with everything, haven't I?

689

00:36:54,000--> 00:36:56,668

Is that I really  
worry about the idea

690

00:36:56,692--> 00:36:59,348

that what we should be  
doing as poets also should be

691

00:36:59,372--> 00:37:01,548

trying to get the  
attention of journalists

692

00:37:01,572--> 00:37:04,000

who historically treat us  
with absolute contempt.

693

00:37:04,000--> 00:37:11,148

You know, I think we write poems  
in spite of prize culture and prizes,

694

00:37:11,172--> 00:37:14,148

and we also write poems in  
spite of the attention of journalists.

695

00:37:14,172--> 00:37:20,548

So I don't feel that poetry is at a  
threat, actually, as an art form.

696

00:37:20,572--> 00:37:24,000

It certainly has been  
more read than ever.

697

00:37:24,000--> 00:37:27,548

I don't think that...

698

00:37:27,572--> 00:37:29,788

For example, what if we  
took away all the prize money?

699

00:37:29,812--> 00:37:34,000

Would we still  
have poetry prizes?

700

00:37:34,000--> 00:37:35,828

If, for example...

701

00:37:35,852--> 00:37:39,548

If we chose a short list of 10  
and had no winner, for example,

702

00:37:39,572--> 00:37:41,828

more like the National  
Book Awards in the US,

703

00:37:41,852--> 00:37:42,852

would that...

704

00:37:42,876--> 00:37:43,876

Would that mean--

705

00:37:43,900--> 00:37:48,108

Would that change the range of  
poetry that we'd be able to celebrate?

706

00:37:48,132--> 00:37:50,468

Then you really might  
have some experiment--

707

00:37:50,492--> 00:37:54,000

You'd be like, well, we've got  
10, 20 books to choose from...

708

00:37:54,000--> 00:37:55,000

-I think, Jack--

709

00:37:55,000--> 00:37:58,028

-To throw a critical light on. And  
you could have the same lovely event

710

00:37:58,052--> 00:38:01,188

at the Southbank or whatever,  
celebrating and reading from those books.

711

00:38:01,212--> 00:38:04,088

Sorry, Eric. Do you want to come  
in? I've been talking for a little bit.

712

00:38:04,112--> 00:38:06,358

-Yes, sir. I just wanted to  
comment on that point because

713

00:38:06,382--> 00:38:08,588

we did something with the  
Eric Gregory Award last year

714

00:38:08,612--> 00:38:11,428

where we had a limited  
amount of numbers.

715

00:38:11,452--> 00:38:16,068

I think we had about 10 poets  
that was selected as winners.

716

00:38:16,092--> 00:38:19,000

However, the  
poetry, it was so good

717

00:38:19,000--> 00:38:21,828

that we had to add,  
I think, an extra five.

718

00:38:21,852--> 00:38:24,588

But the question  
arises is that...

719

00:38:24,612--> 00:38:30,000

Do we run the risk of celebrating  
those established writers?

720

00:38:30,000--> 00:38:31,828

Or have these  
little competitions

721

00:38:31,852--> 00:38:36,428

where we have a pool of  
emerging voices, emerging writers,

722

00:38:36,452--> 00:38:41,188

otherwise those voices  
that exist on the periphery

723

00:38:41,212--> 00:38:45,188

will always be at the periphery  
without this competition.

724

00:38:45,212--> 00:38:49,000

So I think, from the  
point of view of a judge,

725

00:38:49,000--> 00:38:52,148

competitions are necessary  
because we discover new writers.

726

00:38:52,172--> 00:38:54,308

I would not have  
gone to the library

727

00:38:54,332--> 00:38:58,000

and picked up Xavier's  
book or Shevchenko's book.

728

00:38:58,000--> 00:39:00,228

I think this is...

729

00:39:00,252--> 00:39:03,828

This is one of the benefits of  
submitting to this competition,

730

00:39:03,852--> 00:39:08,868

otherwise we risk regurgitating  
the Shakespeare's, the Tennysons.

731

00:39:08,892--> 00:39:10,788

I mean, who's the  
next Malika Booker?

732

00:39:10,812--> 00:39:12,376

Where is she going to come from?

733

00:39:12,400--> 00:39:15,000

Who's the next Jack Underwood?  
How are we going to discover this?

734

00:39:15,000--> 00:39:16,000

-I think...

735

00:39:16,000--> 00:39:20,988

I love the idea of prizes as  
like the antidote to the algorithm.

736

00:39:22,000--> 00:39:25,668

-I think as well, we have to think  
about... about the publishing.

737

00:39:25,692--> 00:39:29,908

You know, a lot of poetry is published  
by people who put, you know...

738

00:39:29,932--> 00:39:34,388

Sometimes husband and wives and  
people who put blood, sweat and tears,

739

00:39:34,412--> 00:39:39,000

and sometimes their own finances  
into publishing those poetry, poems.

740

00:39:39,000--> 00:39:44,068

And what it means in terms of  
for that press to be recognized,

741

00:39:44,092--> 00:39:47,308

for those books to be sold  
a bit more than they're sold,

742

00:39:47,332--> 00:39:49,988

it means a lot to some  
of the small presses

743

00:39:50,012--> 00:39:54,000

that actually sometimes didn't  
get a look in on those prizes.

744

00:39:54,000--> 00:39:55,748

And I think there's...

745

00:39:55,772--> 00:39:58,788

There's this thing about thinking  
that we don't live in a capitalist system

746

00:39:58,812--> 00:40:01,348

and we don't live in  
a commercial system.

747

00:40:01,372--> 00:40:04,108

But there is something  
about the ecosystem.

748

00:40:04,132--> 00:40:09,000

And there is something about  
an ecosystem that, you know,

749

00:40:09,000--> 00:40:12,668

an ecosystem that can't  
just be sustained on love.

750

00:40:12,692--> 00:40:17,628

And we see a lot of the small  
presses who do amazing work

751

00:40:17,652--> 00:40:20,868

and actually do so much work  
of discovering those writers

752

00:40:20,892--> 00:40:23,000

to put forward and send

753

00:40:23,000--> 00:40:26,868

that are kind of are  
collapsing and sometimes...

754

00:40:26,892--> 00:40:30,468

And sometimes just, you know,

755

00:40:30,492--> 00:40:33,268

having to, you know...

756

00:40:33,292--> 00:40:35,448

There's a sense of panic  
when you realize, oh my God,

757

00:40:35,472--> 00:40:38,428

they're on the shortlist  
and we only did 500 copies

758

00:40:38,452--> 00:40:40,388

and we need to now  
print up a bit more.

759

00:40:40,412--> 00:40:43,108

But there's something  
about that poetry ecotism.

760

00:40:43,132--> 00:40:47,000

And there's all these  
other things that that does.

761

00:40:47,000--> 00:40:53,000

I celebrate everybody who  
wins a prize or who is shortlisted.

762

00:40:53,000--> 00:41:00,000

But I also... I also celebrate  
poetry, full stop, you know.

763

00:41:00,000--> 00:41:02,788

Could we not just give the  
money that goes to prizes

764

00:41:02,812--> 00:41:04,868

and their running, the  
enormous costs of running,

765

00:41:04,892--> 00:41:07,000

could we not just  
give it to the presses?

766

00:41:07,000--> 00:41:08,908

You know, I agree.

767

00:41:08,932--> 00:41:10,868

Small presses are  
wildly underfunded.

768

00:41:10,892--> 00:41:14,388

We're seeing some of  
the most exciting poetry--

769

00:41:14,412--> 00:41:16,000

As you say, they  
do all the work.

770

00:41:16,000--> 00:41:18,028

Actually, prizes,

771

00:41:18,052--> 00:41:23,148

they take the labour  
of presses and poets,

772

00:41:23,172--> 00:41:28,000

and that's what they curate  
and collect and celebrate.

773

00:41:28,000--> 00:41:31,108

But in a way, the  
mechanism is self-marketing.

774

00:41:31,132--> 00:41:34,028

The function of a prize  
might be to celebrate poetry,

775

00:41:34,052--> 00:41:36,948

but actually what it celebrates  
is its own mechanism

776

00:41:36,972--> 00:41:41,000

as a way of selecting poetry.

777

00:41:41,000--> 00:41:42,428

Give the money to small presses

778

00:41:42,452--> 00:41:44,708

and they're the ones who  
actually do the hard yards.

779

00:41:44,732--> 00:41:46,948

You do the editing.

They're the ones who do the...

780

00:41:46,972--> 00:41:51,000

You know, we're looking at someone

like Bad Betty having to crowdfund.

781

00:41:51,000--> 00:41:54,188

I also feel like the idea that poets

are going to go undiscovered...

782

00:41:54,212--> 00:41:56,388

I mean, I work in a

university and every...

783

00:41:56,412--> 00:41:59,000

Every year I have, you know,

784

00:41:59,000--> 00:42:01,348

50 poets coming through my door

785

00:42:01,372--> 00:42:07,148

and I see some fantastic work and people  
are being like nurtured and supported.

786

00:42:07,172--> 00:42:12,228

There are now more online creative  
writing and teaching spaces as well

787

00:42:12,252--> 00:42:15,308

for poets and, including  
ones with bursaries, you know,

788

00:42:15,332--> 00:42:17,708

for people who can't  
afford to go to university

789

00:42:17,732--> 00:42:19,068

to do an MA or a BA.

790

00:42:19,092--> 00:42:21,000

Or people who can't afford to

791

00:42:21,000--> 00:42:23,268

spend hundreds of pounds.

792

00:42:23,292--> 00:42:25,428

Again, I'd like to see  
more money going into that.

793

00:42:25,452--> 00:42:29,000

That sort of grassroots stuff

794

00:42:29,000--> 00:42:30,948

is precisely how we grow poetry

795

00:42:30,972--> 00:42:37,000

and enable voices who are not  
making it to the top to be seen.

796

00:42:37,000--> 00:42:39,668

And by the time  
somebody's in a prize,

797

00:42:39,692--> 00:42:44,000

they've had a book  
published, they've been edited.

798

00:42:44,000--> 00:42:45,708

They've been selected, right?

799

00:42:45,732--> 00:42:47,828

So there's already

some kind of...

800

00:42:47,852--> 00:42:53,788

Yeah, I mean, I agree that we

shouldn't just be kind of like democratic.

801

00:42:53,812--> 00:42:57,000

There has to be some

kind of critical faculty.

802

00:42:57,000--> 00:43:01,548

But as I said, the critical

faculty or mechanism of a prize

803

00:43:01,572--> 00:43:03,948

is absolutely, you

know, crocked.

804

00:43:03,972--> 00:43:07,000

It's not good poetry criticism.

805

00:43:07,000--> 00:43:08,788

-There's a whole ecosystem.

806

00:43:08,812--> 00:43:11,508

I think as a person  
who invests in writers

807

00:43:11,532--> 00:43:13,028

and invest in their development,

808

00:43:13,052--> 00:43:15,108

I feel that for me,

809

00:43:15,132--> 00:43:20,628

I feel like there's different ways of  
engaging and serving the community.

810

00:43:20,652--> 00:43:22,268

And on the grassroots level,

811

00:43:22,292--> 00:43:24,668

it's setting up

Malika's Poetry kitchen

812

00:43:24,692--> 00:43:27,708

and it's working at

spotting writers like that.

813

00:43:27,732--> 00:43:29,788

At another level it's

going into schools.

814

00:43:29,812--> 00:43:33,908

It's also... And poetry

has such a bad rap, right?

815

00:43:33,932--> 00:43:35,908

And a bad reputation.

816

00:43:35,932--> 00:43:37,988

You go into schools

and you meet teachers

817

00:43:38,012--> 00:43:39,668

who don't know how to teach it,

818

00:43:39,692--> 00:43:41,228

who are intimidated

by teaching it,

819

00:43:41,252--> 00:43:45,000

who actually like cherish

things like prizes

820

00:43:45,000--> 00:43:48,108

and competitions which

showcase them for poets.

821

00:43:48,132--> 00:43:53,588

And I think there's an ecosystem

and I think you're you're stuck, Jack,

822

00:43:53,612--> 00:43:56,148

and I love you dearly

and I really admire you,

823

00:43:56,172--> 00:43:59,212

but I think you're stuck on one aspect  
of it and you're talking about prizes,

824

00:43:59,236--> 00:44:00,808

but we're talking  
about a lot of things.

825

00:44:00,832--> 00:44:02,588

We're talking about  
competitions as well.

826

00:44:02,612--> 00:44:06,108

You know, we're talking about  
competitions that are done by magazines

827

00:44:06,132--> 00:44:08,132

small magazines by different--

828

00:44:08,156--> 00:44:11,068

-Oh, yeah, I'm fine with  
competitions, actually. I mean--

829

00:44:11,092--> 00:44:13,548

-I hope so. I wanted  
us to very clarify that

830

00:44:13,572--> 00:44:15,068

because, you  
know (cross-talking).

831

00:44:15,092--> 00:44:19,268

So it's prizes, but not the  
whole of the ecosystem

832

00:44:19,292--> 00:44:21,000

because I think...

833

00:44:21,000--> 00:44:22,088

-Yeah, yeah, totally. Look,

834

00:44:22,112--> 00:44:26,868

as I say, I feel like the  
reason that poetry is embattled

835

00:44:26,892--> 00:44:28,388

as an art form

836

00:44:28,412--> 00:44:30,028

is because people

don't know how...

837

00:44:30,052--> 00:44:32,000

That are scared of reading it.

838

00:44:32,000--> 00:44:36,408

And there's a kind of fearfulness

and an intrepidation that...

839

00:44:36,432--> 00:44:38,988

And that there's all

these special code words

840

00:44:39,012--> 00:44:40,908

and there's all this kind

of language around it

841

00:44:40,932--> 00:44:43,000

and history that  
you have to know.

842

00:44:43,000--> 00:44:48,588

And I feel like that breaking  
down that in our communities

843

00:44:48,612--> 00:44:50,908

and giving people  
access to poetry

844

00:44:50,932--> 00:44:55,188

is the way in which you  
kind of grow and excite things.

845

00:44:55,212--> 00:44:59,028

I totally agree that  
it's a broad ecosystem.

846

00:44:59,052--> 00:45:03,028

As I said, I don't expect poetry--  
Like poetry prizes to disappear.

847

00:45:03,052--> 00:45:05,000

I don't want them to disappear.

848

00:45:05,000--> 00:45:07,228

But what I do worry  
about that, actually,

849

00:45:07,252--> 00:45:10,188

they are like what people  
read out in their bios.

850

00:45:10,212--> 00:45:12,548

They are the...

851

00:45:12,572--> 00:45:15,428

This sort of supreme court.

852

00:45:15,452--> 00:45:19,308

You know, they're kind of  
like the highest court in the land

853

00:45:19,332--> 00:45:21,668

in terms of how  
people talk about...

854

00:45:21,692--> 00:45:25,428

They've replaced reading poetry

855

00:45:25,452--> 00:45:28,508

with judging poetry.

856

00:45:28,532--> 00:45:30,348

You know, and I  
feel that's... I'm...

857

00:45:30,372--> 00:45:32,548

I'm uncomfortable  
with the critical primacy

858

00:45:32,572--> 00:45:34,000

that they have, I really am.

859

00:45:34,000--> 00:45:36,348

-Yeah. Eric, you  
put your hand up.

860

00:45:36,372--> 00:45:38,788

I'd really like a moment  
before we get to...

861

00:45:38,812--> 00:45:42,000

We're already at 10 to 12 and  
we're going to take our break.

862

00:45:42,000--> 00:45:46,388

I'd love a moment just to sort of  
maybe pull back the behind the scenes,

863

00:45:46,412--> 00:45:49,668

behind Forward as one  
of these kind of prizes,

864

00:45:49,692--> 00:45:52,588

to kind of come back  
on some of those points.

865

00:45:52,612--> 00:45:56,000

But Eric, would you like to

say what was on your mind?

866

00:45:56,000--> 00:45:57,028

-I mean, this is...

867

00:45:57,052--> 00:45:58,708

It's a wonderful  
conversation we're having

868

00:45:58,732--> 00:45:59,988

but, again,

869

00:46:00,012--> 00:46:03,000

there's a progression.

870

00:46:03,000--> 00:46:06,548

There are those writers  
who just jump from the crowd

871

00:46:06,572--> 00:46:10,828

and they are not familiar with what  
is taking place in the writing scene.

872

00:46:10,852--> 00:46:13,668

So most of the winners of the  
Eric Gregory Award last year

873

00:46:13,692--> 00:46:16,000

simply submitted  
their pamphlets.

874

00:46:16,000--> 00:46:17,748

But by winning these prizes,

875

00:46:17,772--> 00:46:20,868

they've progressed then  
to have a book contract

876

00:46:20,892--> 00:46:22,948

and they are organizing  
their own events,

877

00:46:22,972--> 00:46:25,308

even as far as  
The British Library.

878

00:46:25,332--> 00:46:27,268

So there's a there's  
a progressive role.

879

00:46:27,292--> 00:46:30,228

And for those people who...  
They were not rejected,

880

00:46:30,252--> 00:46:34,668

there is a follow-up, we discuss  
with them the flaws of their writing.

881

00:46:34,692--> 00:46:38,000

And so there is this  
kind of ecosystem where

882

00:46:38,000--> 00:46:42,668

you can establish yourself  
or you can follow a path.

883

00:46:42,692--> 00:46:48,668

And we cannot underestimate  
the impact of winning

884

00:46:48,692--> 00:46:51,988

£5,000 for your  
poetry, for example,

885

00:46:52,012--> 00:46:54,628

because, for whoever, a  
writer who lives in Cardiff,

886

00:46:54,652--> 00:46:58,000

£5,000 is enough to  
pay your rent for a year.

887

00:46:58,000--> 00:46:59,068

So we cannot...

888

00:46:59,092--> 00:47:04,000

You know, these things have this  
knock-on effect and knock-on benefit, yeah.

889

00:47:04,000--> 00:47:08,428

-This, I agree, this has been  
a really great conversation

890

00:47:08,452--> 00:47:12,348

and I was lucky enough to have a  
similar kind of conversation with Jack

891

00:47:12,372--> 00:47:15,000

when we were met before,  
before the panel to prep.

892

00:47:15,000--> 00:47:17,228

And one of the things  
that we talked about

893

00:47:17,252--> 00:47:20,948

that I feel is useful,

894

00:47:20,972--> 00:47:24,748

because I think, to Malika's  
point about teachers in schools

895

00:47:24,772--> 00:47:27,028

or a kind of more  
general reader in a shop,

896

00:47:27,052--> 00:47:30,428

there is often this sense of  
like, well, where do I start?

897

00:47:30,452--> 00:47:35,000

How do I know  
where to start? And...

898

00:47:35,000--> 00:47:37,468

So the Forward Prize has  
been going for 30 years

899

00:47:37,492--> 00:47:42,628

and the reason it started was  
because William, who started it,

900

00:47:42,652--> 00:47:45,628

used to read this book called  
the Guinness Book of Poetry.

901

00:47:45,652--> 00:47:48,788

It's the same family that does

the Guinness World Records

902

00:47:48,812--> 00:47:51,348

and every two years they  
would publish an anthology

903

00:47:51,372--> 00:47:54,788

of the poetry of  
those two years.

904

00:47:54,812--> 00:47:56,028

And then they stopped.

905

00:47:56,052--> 00:48:01,000

I think the Guinness family  
didn't really want to do it any more.

906

00:48:01,000--> 00:48:03,708

And that's why he  
started the Forward Prizes

907

00:48:03,732--> 00:48:05,668

was basically to make...

to make this book,

908

00:48:05,692--> 00:48:10,788

this anthology which has  
the work of 50 poets in it.

909

00:48:10,812--> 00:48:13,628

The 20 who are on the shortlist

910

00:48:13,652--> 00:48:16,348

and further who are kind  
of, I guess, long listed.

911

00:48:16,372--> 00:48:20,000

And the whole purpose  
of Forward as...

912

00:48:20,000--> 00:48:23,948

which is a charity, is to  
kind of build a more diverse,

913

00:48:23,972--> 00:48:28,000

growing readership

and audience for poetry.

914

00:48:28,000--> 00:48:31,988

And so I suppose it's down to  
what are the aims of these prizes

915

00:48:32,012--> 00:48:34,548

and are they delivering  
them well enough.

916

00:48:34,572--> 00:48:40,000

And I think it's really useful to  
have voices that hold us to account.

917

00:48:40,000--> 00:48:42,508

That say, okay,

918

00:48:42,532--> 00:48:46,388

you say this is about building the  
confidence and careers of poets.

919

00:48:46,412--> 00:48:47,628

What are you doing to...

920

00:48:47,652--> 00:48:51,308

You know, how are you using this  
money that you fundraise every year?

921

00:48:51,332--> 00:48:53,348

There's a common  
misconception as well

922

00:48:53,372--> 00:48:58,000

that prizes are very loaded

923

00:48:58,000--> 00:49:00,828

and spend loads of money  
on champagne and, um...

924

00:49:00,852--> 00:49:05,508

Oh, my volume has gone down.

925

00:49:05,532--> 00:49:07,468

That's really strange.

926

00:49:07,492--> 00:49:10,548

Is everything okay? Has  
it gone back up again?

927

00:49:10,572--> 00:49:12,308

Yeah, okay.

928

00:49:12,332--> 00:49:15,628

Yeah, the common misconception

929

00:49:15,652--> 00:49:18,628

is that we're rolling in money and  
we're just kind of swilling champagne

930

00:49:18,652--> 00:49:21,188

and having big  
receptions all the time.

931

00:49:21,212--> 00:49:24,788

You know, it's... it's,  
certainly for us, it's not true.

932

00:49:24,812--> 00:49:26,788

We fundraise from  
scratch every year

933

00:49:26,812--> 00:49:30,268

and that also keeps us  
accountable to the purpose,

934

00:49:30,292--> 00:49:34,388

which is to try and be a  
positive part of the ecosystem.

935

00:49:34,412--> 00:49:38,000

So, for example,

936

00:49:38,000--> 00:49:43,628

you know, to your point, Jack, of us  
trying to profiting from the work of poets,

937

00:49:43,652--> 00:49:46,188

it used to be that if  
you were shortlisted,

938

00:49:46,212--> 00:49:50,828

you could come into the  
ceremony at your own expense.

939

00:49:50,852--> 00:49:55,000

And we we introduced  
that we pay people,

940

00:49:55,000--> 00:49:58,148

you know, a day rate to come and  
read at the ceremony and be part of that

941

00:49:58,172--> 00:50:01,268

because we know that, you  
know, that that is not sustainable.

942

00:50:03,612--> 00:50:06,388

So I think there were-- And  
there are things to do with welfare

943

00:50:06,412--> 00:50:07,828

and how it affects  
your confidence

944

00:50:07,852--> 00:50:10,788

to perhaps to be shortlisted  
and not to be the winner,

945

00:50:10,812--> 00:50:13,188

and so we've put a  
lot of thought and care

946

00:50:13,212--> 00:50:17,028

into how we look  
after all of the poets

947

00:50:17,052--> 00:50:19,000

that we come into contact with.

948

00:50:19,000--> 00:50:22,948

And then someone's put in the  
chat about performance poetry,

949

00:50:22,972--> 00:50:24,628

about slam competitions,

950

00:50:24,652--> 00:50:28,868

and I think that's a really interesting  
part of this kind of ecosystem

951

00:50:28,892--> 00:50:32,000

that we haven't

talked about so much.

952

00:50:32,000--> 00:50:35,508

Is poetry that is spoken

and spoken word performed,

953

00:50:35,532--> 00:50:41,000

and the role of kind of

awards and competitions in that.

954

00:50:41,000--> 00:50:44,868

So, I know that we've

got a few more minutes left

955

00:50:44,892--> 00:50:47,000

before we have a little break.

956

00:50:47,000--> 00:50:50,148

Any more thoughts from  
the panel on any of the things

957

00:50:50,172--> 00:50:51,428  
that we've kind of talked about

958

00:50:51,452--> 00:50:54,948  
or anything that we haven't  
covered in our panel so far?

959

00:50:58,000--> 00:50:59,948  
-I would just say  
that I think, yeah,

960

00:50:59,972--> 00:51:04,588  
I agree that one of the good things  
about having conversations like this

961

00:51:04,612--> 00:51:09,000  
is not so that we're ever going  
to come up with an answer

962

00:51:09,000--> 00:51:10,988

or design our own prize.

963

00:51:11,012--> 00:51:14,868

But I think when things  
become, like you say,

964

00:51:14,892--> 00:51:17,508

the Forward Prize has been  
around for 30 years now.

965

00:51:17,532--> 00:51:21,268

It's part of the landscape and  
for two generations of poets,

966

00:51:21,292--> 00:51:25,000

you'd imagine now,  
it's always been there.

967

00:51:25,000--> 00:51:26,468

And it's something that,

968

00:51:26,492--> 00:51:28,628

you know, is kind of, like...

969

00:51:28,652--> 00:51:32,668

We can quite quickly get  
into this kind of like fossilization

970

00:51:32,692--> 00:51:36,188

where we think like that's...  
this is the only way it can be.

971

00:51:36,212--> 00:51:39,788

And to have conversations  
that, like, applies scrutiny

972

00:51:39,812--> 00:51:42,628

and consider possible  
revisions and things,

973

00:51:42,652--> 00:51:46,388

and also like the question  
that the function of these things

974

00:51:46,412--> 00:51:48,000

and how they impact our...

975

00:51:48,000--> 00:51:50,388

our communities  
as poets and writers.

976

00:51:50,412--> 00:51:52,148

Those are really  
necessary things.

977

00:51:52,172--> 00:51:57,000

I mean, if anything, I just  
kind of like want more scrutiny.

978

00:51:57,000--> 00:51:59,308

As I say, I'm a  
prize sceptic not a...

979

00:51:59,332--> 00:52:02,388

not a prize, I don't  
know, whatever it is.

980

00:52:02,412--> 00:52:05,352

I'm not ready to sort of storm

The Winter Palace, you know,

981

00:52:05,376--> 00:52:06,376

(laughs)

982

00:52:06,400--> 00:52:09,308

and overthrow it all.

983

00:52:09,332--> 00:52:11,828

For me, it's that these precisely  
having these conversations

984

00:52:11,852--> 00:52:12,868

because I think we don't.

985

00:52:12,892--> 00:52:15,000

I honestly think  
there's a lot of

986

00:52:15,000--> 00:52:17,268

time where we just  
accept that this is how it is

987

00:52:17,292--> 00:52:22,108

and we don't... and we don't think  
about the ramifications culturally,

988

00:52:22,132--> 00:52:24,988

and also like what  
it does for poetry

989

00:52:25,012--> 00:52:27,308

and how we think about  
good poetry and bad poetry,

990

00:52:27,332--> 00:52:32,000

and how these  
things inflect massively

991

00:52:32,000--> 00:52:33,828

on the conversations  
that we have

992

00:52:33,852--> 00:52:38,948

and the idealizations we have  
about what good poetry looks like,

993

00:52:38,972--> 00:52:42,000

or indeed what

poetry looks like at all.

994

00:52:42,000--> 00:52:43,000

-I think it...

995

00:52:43,024--> 00:52:45,708

I think it brings up as well,

996

00:52:45,732--> 00:52:50,428

it brings up very big gaps in  
the British literary ecosystem.

997

00:52:50,452--> 00:52:52,668

And I think one of the  
big gaps that we have

998

00:52:52,692--> 00:52:55,548

that our American  
compatriots don't have

999

00:52:55,572--> 00:53:00,000

is we don't have people  
who are just... who are critics.

1000

00:53:00,000--> 00:53:05,388

So most of the people who are  
writing critique for newspapers

1001

00:53:05,412--> 00:53:07,028

are actually poets themselves.

1002

00:53:07,052--> 00:53:11,868

So we don't have, you  
know, people whose jobs it is

1003

00:53:11,892--> 00:53:14,268

to be critics  
and to be critical.

1004

00:53:14,292--> 00:53:17,908

And so with that  
hole in the margin,

1005

00:53:17,932--> 00:53:21,000

it feels like prizes  
are taking up that gap.

1006

00:53:21,000--> 00:53:24,508

But actually, that gap  
needs to be filled, right?

1007

00:53:24,532--> 00:53:27,748

Reviewers, and we  
need to have, you know...

1008

00:53:27,772--> 00:53:34,268

That we don't have a  
critical kind of body of people

1009

00:53:34,292--> 00:53:38,668

and body of critics who  
are 'this is my job. I'm a critic.

1010

00:53:38,692--> 00:53:43,000

I critically appraise  
people's work.'

1011

00:53:43,000--> 00:53:45,708

So some of the  
animosity, sometimes,

1012

00:53:45,732--> 00:53:49,000

comes from the fact that...

1013

00:53:49,000--> 00:53:53,068

That poets are writing  
about other poets work

1014

00:53:53,092--> 00:53:55,748

and that's having--  
That's a problem in itself.

1015

00:53:55,772--> 00:53:58,188

I'm writing from it in,  
you know... And so, so...

1016

00:53:58,212--> 00:54:01,588

So also when the prizes...

1017

00:54:01,612--> 00:54:06,000

When the prizes are  
actually announced,

1018

00:54:06,000--> 00:54:09,188

some of-- You  
know, like this year,

1019

00:54:09,212--> 00:54:11,108

I was appalled by  
some of the writing

1020

00:54:11,132--> 00:54:18,028

by the so-called reporters and  
critics about the winners of the prizes.

1021

00:54:18,052--> 00:54:21,508

You know, they were taking  
pot shots at people's personality,

1022

00:54:21,532--> 00:54:26,308

instead of writing  
critically about the judging.

1023

00:54:26,332--> 00:54:28,000

And I think we need  
to speak about that.

1024

00:54:28,000--> 00:54:29,988

You know, in terms  
of the ecosystem.

1025

00:54:30,012--> 00:54:32,348

Because that's very  
problematic, right?

1026

00:54:32,372--> 00:54:35,188

We need you to, you know...

1027

00:54:35,212--> 00:54:38,068

As someone who's  
reporting on people's poetry,

1028

00:54:38,092--> 00:54:40,108

you can critique the poems,

1029

00:54:40,132--> 00:54:41,132

you can critique the...

1030

00:54:41,156--> 00:54:42,156

(music plays)

1031

00:54:42,180--> 00:54:44,948

Oh, that's my... That's

my London kind of alarm.

1032

00:54:44,972--> 00:54:46,588

It's five o'clock in the morning

1033

00:54:46,612--> 00:54:51,000

in the USA, where I am.

1034

00:54:51,000--> 00:54:54,988

And so... And so I

think that's problematic.

1035

00:54:55,012--> 00:54:59,000

And I think that that then puts

all this weight on the prizes.

1036

00:54:59,000--> 00:55:00,000

Right?

1037

00:55:00,024--> 00:55:02,948

And we don't think about...

For me, I think, you know,

1038

00:55:02,972--> 00:55:06,388

the critical landscape

has to improve

1039

00:55:06,412--> 00:55:11,508

where you talk about and

you critique the poems.

1040

00:55:11,532--> 00:55:15,068

You can critique the poems and say, you

know, the judges didn't do really great.

1041

00:55:15,092--> 00:55:19,000

The poems are this

or the poems are that.

1042

00:55:19,000--> 00:55:22,988

And so I think that's a  
really big, big problem.

1043

00:55:23,012--> 00:55:27,108

And that for me leads  
to some of what we get

1044

00:55:27,132--> 00:55:30,868

in terms of the animosity  
and all of that that happens,

1045

00:55:30,892--> 00:55:35,828

because the reporting is not  
done from a critical standpoint

1046

00:55:35,852--> 00:55:39,948

and very much done from

1047

00:55:39,972--> 00:55:43,908

a kind of personal annihilation

1048

00:55:43,932--> 00:55:47,348

or lauding of the  
personality of the poet.

1049

00:55:47,372--> 00:55:51,000

And that's not how  
poetry is judged.

1050

00:55:51,000--> 00:55:54,628

And a missed opportunity, actually, within  
the context of what happens with awards.

1051

00:55:54,652--> 00:55:57,988

The last couple of  
years we've had a youth...

1052

00:55:58,012--> 00:56:02,588

Like, a young poets summit take  
place as part of the Forward Prizes

1053

00:56:02,612--> 00:56:03,828

who... who also...

1054

00:56:03,852--> 00:56:06,988

Young poets who also  
put their own judge--

1055

00:56:07,012--> 00:56:10,000

They take the short list and  
judge their own winners, and that,

1056

00:56:10,000--> 00:56:13,248

you know, that kind of panel discussion  
is incredibly enlightening and interesting

1057

00:56:13,272--> 00:56:15,112

because you're getting  
readers and their views,

1058

00:56:15,136--> 00:56:18,000

their critical views  
on the works.

1059

00:56:18,000--> 00:56:21,908

I think it's time for

us to take a break.

1060

00:56:21,932--> 00:56:24,268

I know we have some time  
for questions and answers,

1061

00:56:24,292--> 00:56:28,000

and to carry on this really,  
really great conversation.

1062

00:56:28,000--> 00:56:32,268

So I'm just looking at the  
Society of Authors host

1063

00:56:32,292--> 00:56:37,988

to give us a little bit of  
instructions what to do.

1064

00:56:38,012--> 00:56:40,708

We just have a  
five minute break.

1065

00:56:40,732--> 00:56:45,000

So I would say let's come  
back at seven minutes past 12.

1066

00:56:45,000--> 00:56:48,548

But for now, please feel free  
to kind of turn your cameras off,

1067

00:56:48,572--> 00:56:51,228

your microphones  
off and just take five.

1068

00:58:04,812--> 00:58:06,388

Welcome back.

1069

00:58:08,052--> 00:58:09,788

Hi, everybody. Welcome back.

1070

00:58:09,812--> 00:58:15,948

We now have until half past 12  
for some questions and answers.

1071

00:58:15,972--> 00:58:19,308

Thank you for putting

them in the box.

1072

00:58:19,332--> 00:58:24,908

The first question which we  
could answer live is from David,

1073

00:58:24,932--> 00:58:26,828

who asks,

1074

00:58:26,852--> 00:58:31,000

'do you feel that competitions and prizes  
help to connect poets to a community?

1075

00:58:31,000--> 00:58:35,748

One of the difficult aspects of  
being a writer can be how solitary it is.

1076

00:58:35,772--> 00:58:41,000

Poem goes out into the world and it feels  
like nothing happens after publication.'

1077

00:58:41,000--> 00:58:44,068

We have-- We've kind

of spoken a little bit to this

1078

00:58:44,092--> 00:58:46,868

during the the panel before,

1079

00:58:46,892--> 00:58:48,788

but do you think

competitions do a good job

1080

00:58:48,812--> 00:58:52,388

of helping emerging or new

poets break out of that isolation?

1081

00:58:56,000--> 00:58:58,228

Anyone like to offer a view?

1082

00:58:58,252--> 00:59:00,228

I mean we did-- we

talked a little bit, didn't we,

1083

00:59:00,252--> 00:59:03,000

about the opportunity, Jack?

1084

00:59:03,000--> 00:59:05,628

-One of the things  
that I would really...

1085

00:59:05,652--> 00:59:08,868

That I really prize as an  
emerging poet or a young poet was

1086

00:59:08,892--> 00:59:14,000

I wasn't even aware of  
prizes happening at that point.

1087

00:59:14,000--> 00:59:17,188

But it was meeting up  
with other young poets

1088

00:59:17,212--> 00:59:20,628

and talking about our work  
and being critically rigorous

1089

00:59:20,652--> 00:59:23,468

and having those  
difficult conversations,

1090

00:59:23,492--> 00:59:27,000

learning that  
feedback was respect.

1091

00:59:27,000--> 00:59:30,788

That that was a way that you  
could honour each other's seriousness

1092

00:59:30,812--> 00:59:33,000

in your art form by  
taking each other seriously.

1093

00:59:33,000--> 00:59:37,028

And taking the social risk of  
saying something not particularly,

1094

00:59:37,052--> 00:59:41,108

you know, positive about  
somebody else's poems.

1095

00:59:41,132--> 00:59:43,908

I feel like that's a

really brilliant space.

1096

00:59:43,932--> 00:59:46,108

Of course, like it gives a  
young person to talk about.

1097

00:59:46,132--> 00:59:49,000

You know, if they look  
at the shortlist and think..

1098

00:59:49,000--> 00:59:51,548

You know, or they read some of  
them or they go to the readings,

1099

00:59:51,572--> 00:59:55,508

they're one of the ways in which,  
as an emerging poet in particular,

1100

00:59:55,532--> 00:59:59,000

you cut your teeth and  
become critically sharper.

1101

00:59:59,000--> 01:00:01,588

Is as much by saying,  
oh, I don't like that at all,

1102

01:00:01,612--> 01:00:03,028

or I found that boring.

1103

01:00:03,052--> 01:00:05,068

As long as you're  
prepared to then answer

1104

01:00:05,092--> 01:00:07,348

to why he found that  
boring or didn't like it.

1105

01:00:07,372--> 01:00:09,776

And you have to do  
some deep thinking there.

1106

01:00:09,800--> 01:00:11,328

And thinking about  
whether that's you

1107

01:00:11,352--> 01:00:13,308

or whether that's somebody else

1108

01:00:13,332--> 01:00:15,348

or whether it's the  
poems themselves

1109

01:00:15,372--> 01:00:17,388

that don't exhibit some  
quality you're looking for.

1110

01:00:17,412--> 01:00:19,668

So I think it can  
be a way of starting

1111

01:00:19,692--> 01:00:22,708

critical conversations  
within a community

1112

01:00:22,732--> 01:00:25,988

but, yeah, I think...

1113

01:00:26,012--> 01:00:29,508

To be honest, I feel

like the kind of, um...

1114

01:00:29,532--> 01:00:34,828

I feel like, and there are obviously  
things like prize giving and competitions,

1115

01:00:34,852--> 01:00:39,108

you can go and meet  
other poets at those,

1116

01:00:39,132--> 01:00:42,948

but you can meet other poets at  
any reading event, magazine launches.

1117

01:00:42,972--> 01:00:45,000

People-- Magazines  
need people to

1118

01:00:45,000--> 01:00:46,268

buy their magazines.

1119

01:00:46,292--> 01:00:48,868

They're just as good places

to go to and find other people.

1120

01:00:48,892--> 01:00:52,428

Readings, there's a whole  
range of stuff happening.

1121

01:00:52,452--> 01:00:55,668

I feel like for young  
poets in particular,

1122

01:00:55,692--> 01:00:59,268

the best form of like communal

1123

01:00:59,292--> 01:01:03,188

and feeling kinship  
and getting-- and...

1124

01:01:03,212--> 01:01:05,000

and, kind of

1125

01:01:05,000--> 01:01:07,388

feeling that you are  
a poet that's worth it

1126

01:01:07,412--> 01:01:11,948

is to talk about your work and  
talk about other people's work

1127

01:01:11,972--> 01:01:14,948

and really get into  
the the hard yards

1128

01:01:14,972--> 01:01:18,000

of critical thinking around it.

1129

01:01:18,000--> 01:01:19,388

Yeah, which is fun.

1130

01:01:19,412--> 01:01:24,000

You know, do it somewhere  
nice with a delicious drink on hand.

1131

01:01:24,000--> 01:01:27,188

Do it in Malika's  
Kitchen, you know.

1132

01:01:27,212--> 01:01:28,708

(laughs)

1133

01:01:28,732--> 01:01:31,588

-Lucy, sorry, I

missed the question

1134

01:01:31,612--> 01:01:33,828

because I actually,

during the break,

1135

01:01:33,852--> 01:01:35,428

shut my eyes for a minute.

1136

01:01:35,452--> 01:01:39,628

And I jumped back

up a little bit too late.

1137

01:01:39,652--> 01:01:43,308

I came in just not

orientated enough.

1138

01:01:43,332--> 01:01:44,691

So, sorry.

1139

01:01:44,715--> 01:01:47,268

-I don't know if people know

it's 4 a.m. where you are.

1140

01:01:47,292--> 01:01:50,000

-5:11 now, but yes.

1141

01:01:50,000--> 01:01:51,000

But yeah, so--

1142

01:01:51,000--> 01:01:52,628

-We're all very impressed.

1143

01:01:52,652--> 01:01:54,268

-Yeah, what was the question?

1144

01:01:54,292--> 01:01:57,228

-The question was about

the sense of community

1145

01:01:57,252--> 01:01:58,948

that you can get from prizes

1146

01:01:58,972--> 01:02:02,348

and that they can be part  
of an answer to how solitary

1147

01:02:02,372--> 01:02:04,000

it can be as a writer

1148

01:02:04,000--> 01:02:06,468

when you put your work  
out there into the world.

1149

01:02:06,492--> 01:02:10,828

And I've got another  
question to follow,

1150

01:02:10,852--> 01:02:14,000

unless there's anything  
burning on that one?

1151

01:02:14,000--> 01:02:16,948

The next question asks

1152

01:02:16,972--> 01:02:21,000

if we could speak to the  
factor of anonymity in the prizes.

1153

01:02:21,000--> 01:02:26,000

So how does anonymity work or  
doesn't work for embodied poetics?

1154

01:02:26,000--> 01:02:29,348

Like spoken word competitions  
or slams or video submissions

1155

01:02:29,372--> 01:02:32,000

where a poet's body  
is visible and audible.

1156

01:02:32,000--> 01:02:34,308

Is there a way the  
judging guidance

1157

01:02:34,332--> 01:02:38,108

can still encourage the principles  
of anonymity and objectivity

1158

01:02:38,132--> 01:02:42,028

in contexts where it's  
not practically possible?

1159

01:02:43,000--> 01:02:44,948

It's an interesting one.

1160

01:02:47,000--> 01:02:49,468

-I know that when  
you're judging the...

1161

01:02:49,492--> 01:02:52,628

In a lot of places,

1162

01:02:52,652--> 01:02:54,628

most of the things  
that you judge,

1163

01:02:54,652--> 01:02:59,028

it is an honour except when you're  
judging things like the T.S. Eliot

1164

01:02:59,052--> 01:03:01,108

or the Forward Prizes

1165

01:03:01,132--> 01:03:06,000

because you actually get in the  
books of the people that are involved.

1166

01:03:06,000--> 01:03:09,868

And the thing is...

1167

01:03:09,892--> 01:03:14,588

Actually, I think it's really  
good that in those spaces

1168

01:03:14,612--> 01:03:18,000

there's a committee of writers  
and it's not just one writer

1169

01:03:18,000--> 01:03:24,308

because actually the long

list from each of the judges

1170

01:03:24,332--> 01:03:26,188

that the public don't see

1171

01:03:26,212--> 01:03:28,948

is where the discussion starts

1172

01:03:28,972--> 01:03:30,708

because you have

different tastes,

1173

01:03:30,732--> 01:03:33,148

you have different eyes.

1174

01:03:33,172--> 01:03:35,468

You know, it always

astonishes me

1175

01:03:35,492--> 01:03:37,668

when someone brings

something into the room

1176

01:03:37,692--> 01:03:40,000

that I had overlooked.

1177

01:03:40,000--> 01:03:41,988

And actually, when

you are reading

1178

01:03:42,012--> 01:03:43,828

a whole heap of work,

1179

01:03:43,852--> 01:03:48,828

you know, when you have

to read 300 or 500 collections

1180

01:03:48,852--> 01:03:51,908

you know, you...

1181

01:03:51,932--> 01:03:54,000

after a while,

1182

01:03:54,000--> 01:03:57,108

the poet doesn't

matter, actually,

1183

01:03:57,132--> 01:04:01,068

because you are just, you're  
reading the poems and the collection.

1184

01:04:01,092--> 01:04:02,868

For me, anyway, that's  
what happens with me.

1185

01:04:02,892--> 01:04:05,708

I'm just reading.

1186

01:04:05,732--> 01:04:10,828

And for me it's  
when something...

1187

01:04:10,852--> 01:04:13,268

I haven't judged any  
spoken word poetry.

1188

01:04:13,292--> 01:04:17,028

I haven't judged any poetry

where the body is, you know...

1189

01:04:17,052--> 01:04:19,428

I've haven't judged

videos or anything like that.

1190

01:04:19,452--> 01:04:20,628

I've really just--

1191

01:04:20,652--> 01:04:22,388

Just mostly judge text

1192

01:04:22,412--> 01:04:26,948

or if I've judged spoken word

things, it's been in a slam capacity

1193

01:04:26,972--> 01:04:31,588

where the judging merit, it's a

slam, and there's a mechanism

1194

01:04:31,612--> 01:04:34,568

in terms of slam judging where you

have the criteria and stuff like that.

1195

01:04:34,592--> 01:04:36,828

But for me, after a while,

1196

01:04:36,852--> 01:04:39,000

I'm reading and putting into my

1197

01:04:39,000--> 01:04:43,028

yes, no, maybe and I'm writing  
my notes on it on that book.

1198

01:04:43,052--> 01:04:47,668

And I'm blown away  
when I'm carried away

1199

01:04:47,692--> 01:04:51,148

where I forget that I'm judging and I  
think, wow, something's happened here.

1200

01:04:51,172--> 01:04:54,000

Sometimes I'm  
shocked by who it is.

1201

01:04:54,000--> 01:04:55,188

Sometimes, yeah...

1202

01:04:55,212--> 01:04:57,228

So I think when

you're reading a lot...

1203

01:04:57,252--> 01:04:59,908

I don't know about you, Jack,

1204

01:04:59,932--> 01:05:02,308

but when you're reading

a large body of work,

1205

01:05:02,332--> 01:05:05,788

yeah,

1206

01:05:05,812--> 01:05:11,000

that starts to go out the

window pretty quickly.

1207

01:05:11,000--> 01:05:13,388

-Yeah, I think it is really...

1208

01:05:13,412--> 01:05:17,108

You do start thinking of  
returning back to the poems

1209

01:05:17,132--> 01:05:20,000

and the speakers of the  
poems that you're meeting.

1210

01:05:20,000--> 01:05:24,068

And the way that the poems kind  
of create their own kind of space

1211

01:05:24,092--> 01:05:28,000

and predicament because you're  
having to go into that so often.

1212

01:05:28,000--> 01:05:30,348

I think to speak to  
the part of the question

1213

01:05:30,372--> 01:05:31,988

which was about, like, yeah,

1214

01:05:32,012--> 01:05:34,068

how might, what

kind of could be done

1215

01:05:34,092--> 01:05:39,988

for sort of anonymity

in an embodied poetics.

1216

01:05:41,900--> 01:05:43,348

I mean, that's

difficult, isn't it?

1217

01:05:43,372--> 01:05:46,108

I mean, in a way, I feel like

with an embodied poetics,

1218

01:05:46,132--> 01:05:49,828

it has a rich tradition of like

actually the person being there,

1219

01:05:49,852--> 01:05:53,028

being part of the  
experience of the poem.

1220

01:05:53,052--> 01:05:55,948

I think it would be quite unusual

1221

01:05:55,972--> 01:06:01,000

to then, sort of, to then  
disembody the poem somehow.

1222

01:06:01,000--> 01:06:04,188

Yeah, you could have like...  
You could have not their name.

1223

01:06:04,212--> 01:06:07,548

You could watch somebody and  
not know who they were or something.

1224

01:06:07,572--> 01:06:09,668

But you don't  
want to have that...

1225

01:06:09,692--> 01:06:11,508

I wouldn't want to  
have, like, that kind of...

1226

01:06:11,532--> 01:06:15,000

What is that that game show with  
the singer? The anonymous singer?

1227

01:06:15,000--> 01:06:16,000

-The Masked Singer.

1228

01:06:16,000--> 01:06:19,000

-The Masked Singer. You wouldn't  
want to have that sort of thing going on.

1229

01:06:19,024--> 01:06:22,948

And I think, actually, like with what I  
really enjoy about like spoken word

1230

01:06:22,972--> 01:06:25,428

or embodied poetics  
is precisely the way

1231

01:06:25,452--> 01:06:30,000

in which that person is part  
of their poem in that moment

1232

01:06:30,000--> 01:06:31,908

which is very different  
to the experience

1233

01:06:31,932--> 01:06:35,588

of a speaker rising up through  
the page in a literary form.

1234

01:06:37,000--> 01:06:41,388

-When we introduced  
that performance category,

1235

01:06:41,412--> 01:06:45,748

there's been some really, really,  
like, fascinating ongoing conversations

1236

01:06:45,772--> 01:06:47,708

between all of the  
judging panel about

1237

01:06:47,732--> 01:06:50,548

how do you...

1238

01:06:50,572--> 01:06:53,228

how do you assess or

how do you kind of engage

1239

01:06:53,252--> 01:06:57,000

with a poem that is meant to

be live when there's no audience.

1240

01:06:57,000--> 01:07:00,228

How... You know,

what kind of, uh...

1241

01:07:00,252--> 01:07:04,908

kind of restrictions do you put on so that

you can judge on a level playing field.

1242

01:07:04,932--> 01:07:08,468

But the other thing that I think

is probably worth mentioning

1243

01:07:08,492--> 01:07:13,388

is that the poetry talked about  
as a community, as an ecosystem.

1244

01:07:13,412--> 01:07:14,948

It's a small world.

1245

01:07:14,972--> 01:07:18,000

Many of the people  
judging will know

1246

01:07:18,000--> 01:07:20,228

the poets

1247

01:07:20,252--> 01:07:24,000

that are up for consideration.

1248

01:07:24,000--> 01:07:26,868

I'm sure it's the  
same in other panels,

1249

01:07:26,892--> 01:07:28,388

but we always just have a...

1250

01:07:28,412--> 01:07:31,948

You know, you can step  
out of a decision about a work

1251

01:07:31,972--> 01:07:33,248

if it's someone that you know,

1252

01:07:33,272--> 01:07:35,568

someone that you know or  
someone that you're friends with.

1253

01:07:35,592--> 01:07:38,548

Or someone, you know, that you  
kind of want to declare an interest on

1254

01:07:38,572--> 01:07:41,268

because I think that's  
also been a criticism

1255

01:07:41,292--> 01:07:46,028

that's been levelled at prizes is that it's  
just people awarding it to their friends.

1256

01:07:47,000--> 01:07:50,388

The next question...

1257

01:07:50,412--> 01:07:53,468

Do you think a proportion  
of the non-winning poems

1258

01:07:53,492--> 01:07:56,908

could be published with  
permissions, etcetera?

1259

01:07:59,000--> 01:08:01,000

-Will you guys  
do that in... in...?

1260

01:08:01,000--> 01:08:04,388

-Yeah, I mean, we do...  
Certainly the book is an attempt

1261

01:08:04,412--> 01:08:08,000

to kind of

1262

01:08:08,000--> 01:08:16,000

bring a broader kind of range  
of poems to the public eye.

1263

01:08:16,000--> 01:08:20,228

But it falls into that  
category of the things

1264

01:08:20,252--> 01:08:22,348

that we started to talk  
about before the break

1265

01:08:22,372--> 01:08:23,748

but what if..

1266

01:08:23,772--> 01:08:26,348

You know, what if a  
poetry award was like 'this'?

1267

01:08:26,372--> 01:08:27,988

What if a poetry  
award was different?

1268

01:08:28,012--> 01:08:30,000

What if there wasn't  
money? What if..

1269

01:08:30,000--> 01:08:34,948

And I think all of those are really  
useful things for us to think about.

1270

01:08:34,972--> 01:08:39,428

And I would also kind of  
welcome, if anyone after this has

1271

01:08:39,452--> 01:08:42,308

strong feelings, ideas,  
questions, challenges.

1272

01:08:42,332--> 01:08:45,000

Please, like, send  
them our way.

1273

01:08:45,000--> 01:08:47,748

-One of the answers to why  
there has to be a winner,

1274

01:08:47,772--> 01:08:51,000

which to me is the most sort of  
contentious thing about this, you know.

1275

01:08:51,000--> 01:08:53,228

That in a way, like...

1276

01:08:53,252--> 01:08:57,988

I was shortlisted for  
the T.S. Eliot Prize

1277

01:08:58,012--> 01:09:01,508

and, you know, all the poets,

1278

01:09:01,532--> 01:09:03,188

all the other poets

I knew and liked.

1279

01:09:03,212--> 01:09:08,588

You know, and it felt very cruel, really,  
to have to sort of be in competition.

1280

01:09:08,612--> 01:09:12,000

And of course, I toyed with  
the idea of creating a syndicate

1281

01:09:12,000--> 01:09:14,188

and saying, why don't we  
all just share the money?

1282

01:09:14,212--> 01:09:17,348

But then of course like people are  
in very different financial situations

1283

01:09:17,372--> 01:09:20,828

and money means a  
lot like different things.

1284

01:09:20,852--> 01:09:26,000

So that, in a way, that would be very  
unfair to sort of impose that, but...

1285

01:09:26,000--> 01:09:29,388

Yeah, I think that  
removing a winner

1286

01:09:29,412--> 01:09:32,876

would be a really  
interesting thing to do.

1287

01:09:32,900--> 01:09:34,308

But of course,  
what people say is,

1288

01:09:34,332--> 01:09:36,468

oh, well, we must have a  
winner because otherwise

1289

01:09:36,492--> 01:09:39,108

the newspapers won't  
pick it up, you know.

1290

01:09:39,132--> 01:09:42,468

But, again, I'm like, I  
don't really care about that.

1291

01:09:42,492--> 01:09:45,668

I quite-- The newspapers

don't tend to say

1292

01:09:45,692--> 01:09:48,000

very interesting or

kind things about poets,

1293

01:09:48,000--> 01:09:53,000

you know, any of the

times. So why bother?

1294

01:09:53,000--> 01:09:56,748

-It's interesting to think about the

next 30 years of where prizes might go

1295

01:09:56,772--> 01:10:01,868

in a world where perhaps newspapers

don't sort of exist in their current form.

1296

01:10:01,892--> 01:10:03,508

That would be nice.

1297

01:10:03,532--> 01:10:05,748

The next question is from Shona.

1298

01:10:05,772--> 01:10:11,000

'Would you kindly say a little bit  
more about collections or pamphlets

1299

01:10:11,000--> 01:10:12,988

beyond this idea  
of single poems.

1300

01:10:13,012--> 01:10:14,868

And especially  
the sort of factors

1301

01:10:14,892--> 01:10:18,388

that makes a collection or  
pamphlet attractively cohesive

1302

01:10:18,412--> 01:10:22,000

in comparison to a great  
collection of single poems in a book,

1303

01:10:22,000--> 01:10:23,668

but the book

doesn't sing together.

1304

01:10:23,692--> 01:10:27,108

Surely, as writers, we are  
engaged in a process of writing

1305

01:10:27,132--> 01:10:31,000

and not a single poem or two.'

1306

01:10:31,000--> 01:10:35,228

Perhaps any of you who've been  
immersed in this world of judging

1307

01:10:35,252--> 01:10:38,000

by reading a lot of work  
would like to say something

1308

01:10:38,000--> 01:10:41,000

about what makes a great  
collection or pamphlet.

1309

01:10:41,000--> 01:10:47,988

It's not necessarily what makes

a great collection or pamphlet.

1310

01:10:48,012--> 01:10:50,828

I think it's... it's...

1311

01:10:50,852--> 01:10:55,028

A collection can be a project,

1312

01:10:55,052--> 01:10:57,000

linked bodies of work.

1313

01:10:57,000--> 01:11:01,108

A collection can be a  
culmination of a person's work.

1314

01:11:01,132--> 01:11:03,000

Some people don't  
write to projects.

1315

01:11:03,000--> 01:11:04,308

Right?

1316

01:11:04,332--> 01:11:06,048

It can be a culmination  
of someone's work,

1317

01:11:06,072--> 01:11:10,188

but in the process of  
actually curating those poems

1318

01:11:10,212--> 01:11:14,188

because that's what a  
collection is, a curation of poems.

1319

01:11:14,212--> 01:11:15,588

When you're curating it,

1320

01:11:15,612--> 01:11:19,108

you're curating it around  
some kind of logic,

1321

01:11:19,132--> 01:11:21,000

just like you're  
doing with the poems,

1322

01:11:21,000--> 01:11:23,428

with the poem itself  
when you're writing it.

1323

01:11:23,452--> 01:11:26,468

So how do those  
poems talk to each other?

1324

01:11:26,492--> 01:11:28,628

When you open those  
poems, what happens?

1325

01:11:28,652--> 01:11:31,000

How does that progress?

1326

01:11:31,000--> 01:11:32,488

You know, what  
happens in the middle?

1327

01:11:32,512--> 01:11:35,000

What happens in the end?

1328

01:11:35,000--> 01:11:37,128

When you finish it, does  
it feel like you complete it?

1329

01:11:37,152--> 01:11:41,000

Does it feel like, the poems at  
the end, you've landed on them?

1330

01:11:41,000--> 01:11:42,000

Right?

1331

01:11:42,024--> 01:11:43,948

Because it doesn't--

1332

01:11:43,972--> 01:11:47,348

You know, some people think that they have  
to do narrative and have a narrative curve

1333

01:11:47,372--> 01:11:48,748

but you can be a lyric poet.

1334

01:11:48,772--> 01:11:51,188

You know, you can be  
an experimental poet.

1335

01:11:51,212--> 01:11:52,348

But it's actually the--

1336

01:11:52,372--> 01:11:56,588

And sometimes, actually,  
it's the curation of the poems.

1337

01:11:56,612--> 01:11:58,908

You can see that this  
had the potential to be

1338

01:11:58,932--> 01:12:03,000

a really, really good  
collection but actually

1339

01:12:03,000--> 01:12:06,908

the people who publish the book,

1340

01:12:06,932--> 01:12:08,788

the poet did not get editing...

1341

01:12:08,812--> 01:12:12,148

you know, kind of  
editorial support,

1342

01:12:12,172--> 01:12:14,428

which is very, very important.

1343

01:12:14,452--> 01:12:17,228

And so, you know,

1344

01:12:17,252--> 01:12:19,228

couldn't see that  
there's this motif

1345

01:12:19,252--> 01:12:21,708

that carries throughout the book

1346

01:12:21,732--> 01:12:26,000

and how to put it in a way  
that can kind of deal with that.

1347

01:12:26,000--> 01:12:30,668

Or, you know, or how to

see that this this book speaks

1348

01:12:30,692--> 01:12:32,748

to each other in

sections, right?

1349

01:12:32,772--> 01:12:35,588

So I think a collection

you're looking at

1350

01:12:35,612--> 01:12:40,000

not only the work, but

the curation of the work

1351

01:12:40,000--> 01:12:44,668

and how the work speaks to each other

and how it works from beginning to end

1352

01:12:44,692--> 01:12:47,428

just in the same way

1353

01:12:47,452--> 01:12:49,668

you think about the logic

progression of the poem.

1354

01:12:49,692--> 01:12:52,548

Where's the turn?

Where is the vault?

1355

01:12:52,572--> 01:12:55,748

Well, where is the vault, in a  
way, in the collection as well?

1356

01:12:55,772--> 01:12:58,668

So it's stuff like that

1357

01:12:58,692--> 01:13:01,000

because no two  
collections are the same.

1358

01:13:01,000--> 01:13:03,108

I hope that answers  
some of the question.

1359

01:13:03,132--> 01:13:06,021

And I'm sure Jack and Eric

will be able to answer more.

1360

01:13:07,000--> 01:13:09,988

-I think the poet or the writer

1361

01:13:10,012--> 01:13:12,548

has to make that

conscious decision.

1362

01:13:12,572--> 01:13:17,988

Do you wanna publish a

pamphlet or a poetry book?

1363

01:13:18,012--> 01:13:22,668

So the poet and writer Clare

Potter's recent collection,

1364

01:13:22,692--> 01:13:26,000

Healing the Pack, it was in

incubation for 12 years.

1365

01:13:26,000--> 01:13:30,828

Grahame Davies, one of the

finest writers from Wales,

1366

01:13:30,852--> 01:13:33,348

his collection, which  
came out last year,

1367

01:13:33,372--> 01:13:35,548

was in incubation for 15 years.

1368

01:13:35,572--> 01:13:38,108

So the writer has  
to make that decision

1369

01:13:38,132--> 01:13:40,188

as to where you  
want to go with it.

1370

01:13:40,212--> 01:13:42,200

But if you look at these  
two collections, you see

1371

01:13:42,224--> 01:13:45,468

the poems kind of

interweave with one another

1372

01:13:45,492--> 01:13:47,108

and it's a progression.

1373

01:13:47,132--> 01:13:49,548

Yeah, so the writer,

1374

01:13:49,572--> 01:13:51,308

you need to make that decision

1375

01:13:51,332--> 01:13:54,468

before you put  
your work out there.

1376

01:13:55,000--> 01:13:56,908

-I think that the, um...

1377

01:13:56,932--> 01:13:59,628

I really agree with  
what Malika was saying.

1378

01:13:59,652--> 01:14:02,148

I think with a  
collection, though,

1379

01:14:02,172--> 01:14:05,748

like we should be a bit careful  
about how prosaic we are being

1380

01:14:05,772--> 01:14:09,000

about how poems connect  
and speak to one another.

1381

01:14:09,000--> 01:14:11,688

Two very different poems or like  
they might not be the same subject,

1382

01:14:11,712--> 01:14:16,000

but they might have some  
other kind of connective element.

1383

01:14:16,000--> 01:14:18,068

And often that can  
just be a poet's voice.

1384

01:14:18,092--> 01:14:19,831

And you might be just  
collecting a period...

1385

01:14:19,855--> 01:14:23,308

You know, a work  
from a certain period

1386

01:14:23,332--> 01:14:26,428

and that poet's just thinking, well,  
these are my best poems that I've written

1387

01:14:26,452--> 01:14:28,228

in the last five years.

1388

01:14:28,252--> 01:14:32,000

And when you do start going  
into that sort of curatorial collating

1389

01:14:32,000--> 01:14:33,948

phase with a book,

1390

01:14:33,972--> 01:14:38,148

you'll find all kinds of things  
that might kind of, like...

1391

01:14:38,172--> 01:14:40,428

That might connect poems.

1392

01:14:40,452--> 01:14:42,628

And it's like a bit more  
like a mix-tape for me.

1393

01:14:42,652--> 01:14:44,428

I feel like that's  
more, you know, like...

1394

01:14:44,452--> 01:14:48,000

You might put on a  
kind of like slow jam

1395

01:14:48,000--> 01:14:50,028

or a kind of like romantic one,

1396

01:14:50,052--> 01:14:52,428

but you might want something  
a bit more upbeat later on.

1397

01:14:52,452--> 01:14:56,068

So I think I think it's  
absolutely fine to have poems--

1398

01:14:56,092--> 01:14:59,000

I mean, I don't sit down  
and write five poems.

1399

01:14:59,000--> 01:15:01,868

I will sit down and write one  
line and then the next line.

1400

01:15:01,892--> 01:15:04,000

You know, you're in the poem.

1401

01:15:04,000--> 01:15:09,188

And I like actually books that have a range  
of kind of different versions of speakers.

1402

01:15:09,212--> 01:15:10,948

It might be the same poet,

1403

01:15:10,972--> 01:15:13,148

there might be some kind  
of voice carrying through.

1404

01:15:13,172--> 01:15:18,000

The poets that have almost  
sort of haunts the collection,

1405

01:15:18,000--> 01:15:21,108

rather than it being the sort of  
wellspring from which everything comes.

1406

01:15:21,132--> 01:15:23,588

And instead you're meeting  
these different situations,

1407

01:15:23,612--> 01:15:26,000

these speakers,  
this kind of speaking.

1408

01:15:26,000--> 01:15:28,028

And that can be just as dynamic

1409

01:15:28,052--> 01:15:33,988

and feel as kind of like holistically

considered and holistically built

1410

01:15:34,012--> 01:15:36,388

as a book that has

a continual theme.

1411

01:15:36,412--> 01:15:38,468

And actually we should

also be careful, you know,

1412

01:15:38,492--> 01:15:43,000

sometimes if you have a

like just sustaining a subject

1413

01:15:43,000--> 01:15:49,000

or a narrative in poetry for 46 pages

or whatever it is that a collection makes,

1414

01:15:49,000--> 01:15:50,628

it would be very difficult.

1415

01:15:50,652--> 01:15:55,000

You know, you've got to sustain your  
own interest in a project for that long.

1416

01:15:55,000--> 01:15:57,588

And it needs to warrant  
that amount of length,

1417

01:15:57,612--> 01:15:59,788

you know, or that  
sustained looking.

1418

01:15:59,812--> 01:16:02,508

So I think, yeah, there's  
lots of different ways

1419

01:16:02,532--> 01:16:06,508

of getting up to that  
book length thing

1420

01:16:06,532--> 01:16:10,628

and some projects might  
require a bit more length.

1421

01:16:10,652--> 01:16:13,000

There might be  
some through lines, but...

1422

01:16:13,000--> 01:16:15,548

I think we should be, just,  
yeah, try and avoid being prosaic

1423

01:16:15,572--> 01:16:19,108

about what we mean by kind of

1424

01:16:19,132--> 01:16:24,068

a big, like, you know,  
an idea, a cohesive idea

1425

01:16:24,092--> 01:16:25,748

because cohesion can happen

1426

01:16:25,772--> 01:16:31,708

through very nebulous synaptic

little strange connections.

1427

01:16:33,000--> 01:16:34,188

-Thank you.

1428

01:16:34,212--> 01:16:35,948

There's a really lovely--

1429

01:16:35,972--> 01:16:39,028

I know we might not have time to  
get through all the questions.

1430

01:16:39,052--> 01:16:45,000

There's a really lovely question  
that I think we might end on

1431

01:16:45,000--> 01:16:46,588

from Liz who asks

1432

01:16:46,612--> 01:16:50,428

'what do the panel think about the  
themes given by poetry competitions

1433

01:16:50,452--> 01:16:53,000

and the poetry challenges  
from small publishers?

1434

01:16:53,000--> 01:16:55,868

I've found that these  
have improved my work,

1435

01:16:55,892--> 01:16:59,000

making me more responsive  
and flexible in what I write.

1436

01:16:59,000--> 01:17:02,788

It's not about anticipating  
either reward or rejection,

1437

01:17:02,812--> 01:17:06,348

but about staying curious  
about what we might create.'

1438

01:17:07,000--> 01:17:09,228

I mean, I feel like  
that's just a great point.

1439

01:17:09,252--> 01:17:10,868

(laughs)

1440

01:17:10,892--> 01:17:13,268

I'm not sure if anyone  
would like to respond to that,

1441

01:17:13,292--> 01:17:17,108

but I just think that's a really a lovely  
point to kind of bring into the room,

1442

01:17:17,132--> 01:17:20,108

which we haven't  
kind of covered.

1443

01:17:20,132--> 01:17:22,668

-I think it's like a prompt that  
takes you out-- That... that...

1444

01:17:22,692--> 01:17:26,468

If you are involved  
in an obsession,

1445

01:17:26,492--> 01:17:29,508

you might get stuck in writing  
the same thing over and over.

1446

01:17:29,532--> 01:17:32,000

But that prompt  
enables you to kind of

1447

01:17:32,000--> 01:17:33,268

come into that.

1448

01:17:33,292--> 01:17:37,188

You're writing sideways,  
it kind of surprises you,

1449

01:17:37,212--> 01:17:40,268

because you're still going to have your  
obsession of what you're dealing with

1450

01:17:40,292--> 01:17:44,108

but then this this this  
prompt is going to enable you

1451

01:17:44,132--> 01:17:46,000

to kind of stretch and to move

1452

01:17:46,000--> 01:17:48,628

outside of the parameters

1453

01:17:48,652--> 01:17:50,948

that you don't even know

that you've locked yourself in.

1454

01:17:50,972--> 01:17:52,548

I find that's a wonderful...

1455

01:17:52,572--> 01:17:54,628

That's a wonderful thing.

1456

01:17:54,652--> 01:17:57,668

And also because you're

writing it to send it out,

1457

01:17:57,692--> 01:18:00,000

it also enables you to finish  
a piece of work, sometimes.

1458

01:18:00,000--> 01:18:03,268

It enables you to go,  
I have got to get in.

1459

01:18:03,292--> 01:18:06,068

And sometimes, you know,  
sometimes some of my work,

1460

01:18:06,092--> 01:18:08,028

it's come back,  
it's been rejected

1461

01:18:08,052--> 01:18:11,748

and then you look at it  
and you sharpen it again.

1462

01:18:11,772--> 01:18:16,388

So sometimes there's, you know,  
that kind of happens with work.

1463

01:18:16,412--> 01:18:19,000

And as someone  
who works solitarily

1464

01:18:19,000--> 01:18:22,188

and has to set my own  
kind of deadlines for myself,

1465

01:18:22,212--> 01:18:25,000

sometimes those deadlines  
help me to kind of complete.

1466

01:18:25,000--> 01:18:27,388

-Mm, mm. Thank you.

1467

01:18:27,412--> 01:18:31,268

So I think we've come  
to the end of our time

1468

01:18:31,292--> 01:18:33,908

and what a great way to finish,

1469

01:18:33,932--> 01:18:36,548

talking at taking us  
right back into that,

1470

01:18:36,572--> 01:18:39,148

with that kind of  
writing, the process.

1471

01:18:39,172--> 01:18:44,108

I'd like to say a really big thank you to  
Malika, to Jack and Eric for today's event,

1472

01:18:44,132--> 01:18:47,000

and thank you all  
for joining us today.

1473

01:18:47,000--> 01:18:49,708

The next Society of  
Authors at Home event

1474

01:18:49,732--> 01:18:53,348

takes place this  
evening from 7 p.m.

1475

01:18:53,372--> 01:18:55,388

with an Industry

Insider panel discussion

1476

01:18:55,412--> 01:18:59,000

on creative responses

to the climate emergency.

1477

01:18:59,000--> 01:19:03,828

For more, you can head to

[societyofauthors.org/events](https://societyofauthors.org/events)

1478

01:19:03,852--> 01:19:07,000

to book or check out

our events programme.

1479

01:19:07,000--> 01:19:08,868

I think Tilly will

post the link in--

1480

01:19:08,892--> 01:19:10,228

Oh, she already

has, in the chat.

1481

01:19:10,252--> 01:19:15,388

So just a reminder, today's  
event is free for everyone,

1482

01:19:15,412--> 01:19:17,000

but if you can afford to,

1483

01:19:17,000--> 01:19:20,748

please consider donating to the  
Society of Authors Access Fund

1484

01:19:20,772--> 01:19:25,000

where we suggest a  
minimum donation of £5.

1485

01:19:25,000--> 01:19:28,548

You can also help the  
Society of Authors Access Fund

1486

01:19:28,572--> 01:19:32,068

by making a purchase on our  
virtual bookstore on [bookshop.org](http://bookshop.org),

1487

01:19:32,092--> 01:19:34,228

where you can find

books by writers taking part

1488

01:19:34,252--> 01:19:39,000

in the Society of Authors

at Home events programme.

1489

01:19:39,000--> 01:19:41,988

So another great big thank

you to Malika, Jack and Eric,

1490

01:19:42,012--> 01:19:44,268

and all of you who

joined us for today's event.

1491

01:19:44,292--> 01:19:46,000

And let's continue this

conversation on--

1492

01:19:46,000--> 01:19:49,000

-Thank you, Jack. Thank

you, Malika. Thank you, Lucy.

1493

01:19:49,000--> 01:19:52,000

-Yeah, thanks, everyone. It's  
great to see you. Thanks. Thank you.

1494

01:19:52,000--> 01:19:54,308

-Great to have this conversation.

1495

01:19:54,332--> 01:19:56,848

Jack, it's good to see you. I haven't  
seen you for a long time.

1496

01:19:59,212--> 01:20:02,400

-Thanks, everyone. Goodbye.