



### **CCUE Book Prize 2011**

**Winner:** William May, *Stevie Smith and Authorship* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

#### **Judges' Citation**

Our winning book, William May's *Stevie Smith and Authorship*, offers a new and subtle reading of a poet whose idiosyncrasy has regularly seemed to confound literary critics. One of the aspects of this book we particularly enjoyed was its emphasis on reading: reading as a complex negotiation between reader and text; as something Smith figures in her own work where a multitude of unreliable readers abound; but particularly, as an activity which returns us to the texts to rediscover not so much their seriousness as their playfulness. Readers of Smith's work can never be quite sure of themselves, and it takes a critic who is sufficiently open and questioning in his approach to recognise it, and not to try to tie his subject down through the adoption of a particular critical paradigm. William May's book is comprehensive and scholarly and provides a literary and cultural context for Smith as well as careful and astute close readings of the poems. But it is also unafraid of its originality, and of bringing a sharp and engaged critical language of its own to its subject. It is a book which is likely to win more readers for Smith and to return those who know her work back to her writing with renewed enthusiasm and sharpened appreciation.

David Duff  
Chair, CCUE  
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