

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release



**The Royal Society
of Literature**



Photograph: Carolina Mazzolari

Royal Society of Literature elects Marina Warner as its first female President

Following Colin Thubron's hugely successful presidency Marina Warner has been elected the RSL's 19th President. She will be President Elect until the election is ratified at the RSL's AGM of Fellows on 19 June 2017.

Marina Warner says:

'It is a huge honour and a great surprise to become President of the RSL. Literature has been my life – reading, writing, listening. I believe it matters to all of us, as individuals and in our relations with one another, now and stretching back into the past.

Literature is storytelling and argument, thinking and remembering, entertainment and consolation; it's a memory bank and a tool kit for discoveries of all kinds. Novels, plays, poems - writing in every genre - multiply the places where inquiry, dissent, passion, dream, hope, laughter, reflection, surprises and visions can happen.

These are strange, uneasy times. Ursula LeGuin is right when she says, 'Resistance and change often begin in art. Very often in *our* art, the art of words.' The RSL has been committed ever since it was founded in 1820 to furthering the making, reading, discussion and enjoyment of literature in all its variety. I am proud - and touched - to become the first woman to be entrusted with the Presidency. Literature matters, now more than ever.'

**For further information please contact
Annette Brook, Communications Manager
annette@rsliterature.org; 020 7845 4680**

Notes to editors

Chair of the RSL, Lisa Appignanesi, comments:

'It is both an honour and a delight to have the great Marina Warner take on the mantle of the RSL Presidency. She is a woman of resonant imagination and intelligence, as well as a writer of the highest distinction. I know she will guide the RSL to new heights as we move towards our bicentenary in 2020.'

Marina Warner DBE FBA FRSL (born 1946) is a novelist, short-story writer, historian and mythographer. She is known for her many non-fiction books relating to feminism, myth and fairy tales. Her award-winning books include *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (1976), *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (1982), *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1994), *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (2011), and *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tale* (2014). In 1994 she gave the BBC Reith Lectures on the theme of 'Six Myths of Our Time'. Her third novel, *The Lost Father* (1988), was shortlisted for the Booker prize, and in 2000 *The Leto Bundle* was longlisted. She has curated exhibitions, including 'The Inner Eye' (1996), 'Metamorphosing' (2002-3), and 'Only Make-Believe: Ways of Playing' (2005). She was Chair of the Man Booker International Prize for 2015. Marina has written for many publications and is a contributing editor to *The London Review of Books*. She is Professor of English and Creative Writing at Birkbeck College, University of London, and a Quondam Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. Marina was elected a Fellow of the RSL in 1984, made CBE in 2008 and DBE in 2015.

The Royal Society of Literature is Britain's national charity for the advancement of literature. Founded in 1820, it is governed by its Fellowship of around 500 distinguished writers. It honours and encourages great writing through Fellowships and literary awards, engages the public in literature through events, publications and outreach to schools, and acts as a voice for the value of literature. In March 2017, the RSL published the report *Literature in Britain Today*, presenting an Ipsos MORI poll which found that 75% of the British public reads literature. This will feed into a new programme of activities under the title *Literature Matters*, leading up to the Society's bicentenary in 2020.

RSL Presidents 1820 to present

1820–1832 Bishop Thomas Burgess
1832–1833 The Lord Dover PC FRS
1834–1845 The Earl of Ripon PC
1845–1849 Henry Hallam FRS
1849–1851 The Marquess of Northampton FGS
1851–1856 The Earl of Carlisle FGS
1856–1876 The Rt Rev. Connop Thirlwall
1876–1884 The Prince Leopold (Duke of Albany from 1881) KG KT
1885–1893 Sir Patrick Colquhoun QC
1893–1920 The Earl of Halsbury PC KC FRS
1921–1945 The Marquess of Crewe KG PC
1946–1947 The Earl of Lytton KG PC
1948–1950 Field Marshall Rt Hon Earl Wavell PC MC
1950–1982 The Lord Butler of Saffron Walden KG CH PC
1982–1988 Sir Angus Wilson CBE
1988–2003 The Lord Jenkins of Hillhead OM PC
2003–2008 Sir Michael Holroyd CBE FRHistS
2008–2017 Colin Thubron CBE