

PRESS RELEASE



The Royal Society of Literature

Emily Ford

wins

the **£1,000**

RSL V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize 2017

for *The Hikers*



The 2017 judges of the Prize, which is awarded for the year's best unpublished short story, were **Aamer Hussein, Chibundu Onuzo** and **Michèle Roberts**.

Aamer Hussein said 'The eponymous couple set off on a journey from the urban tangle of Hong Kong towards the Chinese border, carrying with them the baggage of raw emotions and unresolved conflicts: belongings, lost roots and families, homes and abandonment. By the time they reach a place 'dark with history, frozen with ghosts', at least one of the pair is transformed when the ruined village evokes a double confrontation with present and past.

Sensuous surface textures and an elegant linearity conceal the intricacy and dexterity of the narrative's inner structure. Contrasting geographical and temporal spaces are subtly layered in this near-perfect story, with its conclusion that both surprises and compels in its quiet inevitability.'

Chibundu Onuzo noted 'I kept thinking about this story for days after I'd read it. The imagery was crisp and clear and the protagonist was so finely drawn, I felt I would recognise her in the street. Absolutely brilliant. Not enough superlatives.'

And for Michèle Roberts it is 'intensely atmospheric, this powerful and gracefully told story explores unsettling questions of social identity and cultural alienation.'

Emily Ford is a writer and translator living in London. She worked as a journalist for *The Times* in London and Shanghai, and later as a correspondent for international news agency Agence France-Presse in Hong Kong and New Delhi. She has a Master's Degree in Creative Writing from the University of East Anglia and is currently completing her first novel. In addition to her £1,000 prize, the winner also appeared at an RSL event with author Tessa Hadley on Wednesday 8 November.

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Notes to Editors

The 2017 shortlist



Hazel Atkinson, *Dark Wings*

‘Lush evocations of natural beauty are counterpointed with a moving account of grief.’ - Aamer Hussein

Hazel Atkinson is student of History and Classics at the University of Edinburgh. She hopes one day to pursue a full-time career in literature.



Grace Brown, *Hens*

‘Startling and original, with a surprising ending.’ - Chibundu Onuzo

Grace Brown is undertaking MFA Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, and working on a collection of short stories.



Gemma Reeves, *Steel*

‘The deceptively quiet tone of this story works to emphasis themes of adolescent desire, sexuality and betrayal, poignantly mapped onto a rural landscape.’ - Michèle Roberts

Gemma Reeves has completed postgraduate courses in Creative Writing and Twentieth Century Literature. She teaches English in alternative education provisions and writes non-fiction.

History of the prize

The V.S. Pritchett Memorial Prize was founded by the RSL in 1999 to commemorate the centenary of an author widely regarded as the finest English short story writer of the 20th century, and to preserve a tradition encompassing Pritchett’s mastery of narrative.

The winning story will appear in *The RSL Review* and will be published in *Prospect Magazine* online.

The Royal Society of Literature

Founded in 1820, the RSL is Britain’s national charity for the advancement of literature. We encourage and honour writers, engage people in appreciating literature, and act as a national voice for the value of literature. In addition to the V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize, the RSL awards annually the RSL Ondaatje Prize, the RSL Encore Award, the RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for Non-Fiction (for first major commissioned works), and RSL Literature Matters Awards to reward and enable literary excellence and innovation.

With around 20 events every year, the RSL presents talks and conversations from some of the most exciting writers working in the English Language. Forthcoming speakers include **Rory Bremner, Shami Chakrabati, Tracy Chevalier, Jonathan Coe, Patricia Duncker, Eimear McBride, Leone Ross, Katherine Rundell** and **Sathnam Sanghera**.