



Winners of the inaugural RSL Literature Matters Awards announced

The RSL is delighted to announce the six recipients of the 2018 RSL Literature Matters Awards. The Awards aim to enable literary excellence and innovation, providing writers with financial support to undertake a new literary project. **The judges this year are Jonathan Keates (chair), Imtiaz Dharker and Gillian Slovo.**



£2320 - MATT BRYDEN - *Lost and Found*

A pamphlet of poetry based on a residency at Bristol Temple Meads train station. **Jonathan Keates** says the judges loved the 'concept of a Railway Lost Property Office re-imagined in terms of myth and legend'.

Matt Bryden runs the Somerset Young Poets competition, and is the author of *Night Porter* (Templar Poetry, 2010), which won the Templar Pamphlet prize in 2010, and of the collection *Boxing the Compass* (Templar Poetry, 2013). Matt says his Award provides 'the boost of having my project recognised by writers I admire'.



£3000 - MICHAEL CAINES - *Brixton Review of Books*

A free literary newspaper to be published and distributed on a regular basis. **Gillian Slovo** admired the 'intention to turn the usual tired giveaways to commuters into something that could provoke and expand an appreciation of literature in London.'

Michael Caines works at the *Times Literary Supplement*. He is the author of *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2013). Michael says his Award will 'make something that might have remained a pipe dream become a reality.'



£3800 - KATE CLANCHY - *The Young Person's International Dictionary of Rare and Precious Words*

Working with schoolchildren, especially those from disadvantaged and refugee backgrounds, to collect precious words for 'dictionary' entries and an anthology. In **Imtiaz Dharker's** view, 'Kate Clanchy is someone who brings poetry out of students who often hardly speak at all, many of them migrants or refugees from war zones.'

Kate Clanchy has won literary awards for her poetry, short stories, and non-fiction. For the last nine years she has been working in her local school, Oxford Spires Academy, to create a unique Poetry Hub. Kate says, 'my work in school is always on a shoestring: this Award makes me feel much less financially pressured, and very much more valued.'



£2800 - OWEN LOWERY - R. S. Thomas for a New Generation, The Poet Prevails

A production of poetry, music and film, inspired by the poetry of R. S. Thomas, with the composer Ellen Davies, Ensemble Cymru, the Royal harpist and choristers in Bangor Cathedral. In **Jonathan Keates's**, view this 'mixed-media homage to R. S. Thomas is a tribute long overdue, celebrating one of Wales's most idiosyncratic and sharply-defined poetic voices.'

Owen Lowery is a former British Judo champion, and tetraplegic. His work has appeared in *PN Review*, *The Times*, and the *Guardian*, and he has published two major collections, *Otherwise Unchanged*, (Carcanet, 2012), and *Rego Retold* (Carcanet, 2015). Owen says, 'this will be the perfect opportunity for me to greatly extend the reach of my poetry, at the same time as raising awareness of the degree to which literature really does matter.'



£3000 - PASCALE PETIT - Tiger Girl

A sequence of poems exploring foreignness, in the context of Brexit Britain and her grandmother's Indian heritage.

Imtiaz Dharker says that 'a new collection of poems by Pascale Petit is always something to celebrate. To each one she brings images worked in the round, electrified by language to be live and sensuous.'

Pascale Petit was born in Paris. Her seventh collection, *Mama Amazonica* (Bloodaxe, 2017), was a Poetry Book Society Choice. Her sixth, *Fauverie* (Seren, 2014), was her fourth to be shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize, and five poems from it won the Manchester Poetry Prize. In 2015 she received a Cholmondeley Award. Pascale says, 'I especially appreciate having my project validated by the RSL, as a foreigner writing about Brexit and my French and Indian heritage.'



£5000 - EVAN PLACEY - Cat A

A new stage play exploring dementia and ageing in prisons.

Gillian Slovo considered this project 'a wonderful example of writing's ability to shine a light on the world we live in and, as well, to connect with diverse audiences and participants.'

Evan Placey is a Canadian-British playwright and screenwriter. His plays include *Banana Boys* (Hampstead Theatre), *How Was It For You?* (Unicorn Theatre) and *Pronoun* (National Theatre Connections). Awards include: Samuel French Canadian Play award (USA), Brian Way Award and Writers' Guild Award (UK). He is Creative Writing Fellow at the University of Southampton. Evan says, 'receiving this award from the RSL has given me huge encouragement and will allow me to work with a marginalised demographic in prison to write a story that is often hidden.'

Notes to Editors

About the Awards

The RSL's new Literature Matters Awards aim to **reward and enable literary excellence and innovation**. Each year, after an open call for proposals, the Awards will be given to individual writers or other literary creators, recognising their past achievements and providing them with financial support to undertake a proposed new piece of writing or literary project. Launched as part of the RSL's new Literature Matters programme, priority will be given to proposals which will help connect with audiences or topics outside the usual reach of literature, and/or will help generate public discussion about why literature matters.

These Awards are made possible by the generous donations and legacies of RSL Fellows. The RSL's governing Council hopes that the projects and writers funded by the Literature Matters Awards will gain the benefit of other writers' commendation as well as the financial backing of Fellows past.

It is hoped that the number and size of the Literature Matters Awards will grow in future years, as the books and other literary activities resulting from the awards inspire more donations and legacies to the endowment. Many other Royal Societies are well-known as funders of research and other initiatives in their respective fields. The RSL's long-term aspiration is to become a significant instigator and financial supporter of literary endeavour in Britain.

The recipients were presented with their Awards on Tuesday 30 January at an event held at the British Library.

A call for applications for the 2019 Awards will be announced in September 2018.

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. The RSL's other annual awards are the RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards, the RSL Ondaatje Prize, the RSL Encore Award and V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize. For more information on the RSL, visit rsliterature.org.

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