



**The Royal Society  
of Literature**

## **RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for first commissioned works of Non-Fiction 2019 Winners announced**

This year's Awards were judged by **Fiona St Aubyn** (Chair), **Rachel Hewitt** and **Kenan Malik**.



**£10,000 - HARRY DAVIES - *Operation Information*** (The Bodley Head, 2021) is a modern history of covert British propaganda, revealing Britain's long but little-known tradition of waging information warfare from the Second World War to the present day. Using recently declassified and previously untapped archives, the book investigates how the British government, often in league with the US, has used secret propaganda to interfere in political affairs. **Kenan Malik** says this book 'takes a subject at the heart of much contemporary debate – fake news and disinformation – but delves into an area about which there has been little public discussion. It's also a book that's as much a page-turner as it is a thought-provoker.'

**Harry Davies** is a writer and journalist based in London. Alongside this book, he is working on investigations for *The Guardian* and writing for the theatre. Harry says 'I'm deeply grateful to the RSL and the panel of judges for this generous award. Not only is it a great honour, it will make a real difference to my circumstances, affording me the time to continue my research and press on with writing.'



**£5,000 - OLIVE HEFFERNAN- *The High Seas: The Race to Save the Earth's Last Wilderness*** (Profile Books, 2021) explores the two-thirds of our ocean that lie beyond national waters, which have, for most of history, been out of sight. Despite their isolation, the High Seas have long been the backdrop of unending battles over territory and resources. The ocean produces half of the oxygen we breathe. That's every second breath you take and unless we protect the High Seas, we'll be facing a mass extinction of marine life in just over a decade. For **Rachel Hewitt**, the book 'sounds a rallying cry towards better protection of the High Seas through improvements in law, surveillance, and public awareness.' **Olive Heffernan** is

a freelance journalist, and former marine biologist, who writes about oceans and climate change for international publications. Olive says 'I am utterly thrilled that the RSL judges were excited enough by my book to give me this Award. Their support means the world to me, and it could not have come at a better time in the project.'



**Judges' Special Commendation** - is awarded to **REBECCA FOGG** for her work in progress ***Beautiful Trauma*** (Granta, 2022) which describes how she saved her own life following the partial amputation of her hand and navigated through the resulting emotional trauma by studying her injury and its treatment. **Fiona St Aubyn** commented that the book 'is a powerful and moving testament to resilience and fortitude.' **Rebecca Fogg** researches, writes and consults on innovation in healthcare delivery. Originally from New York, she relishes London's diversity, creative community and running paths. Rebecca says 'It's a great honour and pleasure to be recognised by the RSL and judges for my work in progress. My deepest thanks for their very meaningful support of new authors.'

# Notes to Editors

The Awards were presented on Thursday 28 November 2019 at an event held at 50 Albemarle Street, London, W1.

## History of the Prize

In 2017, the Royal Society of Literature established the annual RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for first-time writers of non-fiction – in perpetuity – thanks to a significant bequest from author and RSL Fellow **Giles St Aubyn**. These Awards build on the RSL's experience of a previous set of non-fiction awards, generously supported by **Jerwood Charitable Foundation** from 2004 to 2016.

## The Hon. Giles Rowan St Aubyn LVO FRSL

**(1925-2015)** was the author of 14 works of non-fiction, on subjects including Lord Macaulay, Edward VII, Queen Victoria, religion, science and 19th century poisoners. He was elected a Fellow in 1964. In leaving his bequest to the RSL, Giles St Aubyn wrote:

“I wish to help aspiring authors to get their works published, particularly authors of works of non-fiction which require a good deal of preliminary research. The sort of authors I have in mind would be those who have not already been published and who are struggling to get their feet on the first rung of the ladder.”



## Previous Winners of the RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards:

**2018**

**£10,000 LAURENCE BLAIR**

*Lost Countries of South America: Travels in a Continent's Past and Present* (The Bodley Head, 2020)

**£5,000 LILY LE BRUN**

*Looking to Sea: Britain Through the Eyes of its Artists* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2020)

**Judges' Special Commendation - PAUL CRADDOCK**

*Dragon in a Suitcase: A Cultural History of the Art of Transplant* (Fig Tree, 2020)

**2017**

**£10,000 DAVID FARRIER**

*Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils* (4th Estate, 2019)

**£5,000 LISA WOOLLETT**

*Rag and Bone* (John Murray, 2019)

**Judges' Special Commendation - JOANNA JOLLY**

*Red River Girl: A Journey into the Dark Heart of Canada* (Virago, 2019).

Founded in 1820, the **Royal Society of Literature** is the UK's charity for the advancement of literature. In addition to the RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards, the RSL awards annually the RSL Christopher Bland Prize for debut writers over 50, the RSL Ondaatje Prize for books best evoking the spirit of a place, the Encore Award for best second novel of the year, the V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize and the RSL Literature Matters Awards to reward and enable literary innovation.

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