



Winners of the 2020 RSL Literature Matters Awards announced

The RSL is delighted to announce the recipients of the 2020 RSL Literature Matters Awards. The Awards aim to enable literary excellence and innovation, providing writers with financial support to undertake new literary projects that extend the reach of literature. **The judges this year are Tessa Hadley, David Morley and Roy Williams.**



£3,000 - CHARLOTTE ANSELL and JANETT PLUMMER - Chosen writing workshops, performance and pamphlet for Generation Z adopted young people. **Roy Williams** felt this project had 'precise intentions, and a brilliant chance to showcase such important overlooked voices.'

Charlotte Ansell's third poetry collection *Deluge* (Flipped Eye) was a 2019 PBS recommendation. Her poems are widely published and have won various national competitions. Charlotte also works as a Child and Adolescent psychotherapist. **Janett Plummer's** pamphlet 'Lifemarks' is published by Flipped Eye. Her first full collection *The architect of her undoing* is forthcoming. She is the founder of Inspired Word, a women survivors poetry organisation, and is the winner of four poetry slam titles. Charlotte and Janett say 'this Award gives us the opportunity to work with an often overlooked group - adopted young people - and bring their extraordinary stories to light.'



£3,000 - ALISON ARMSTRONG - The Lost Voices of Morecambe Winter Gardens

A play based on the real and fictional voices of characters that have worked and performed at Morecambe Winter Gardens. To be performed at the semi-derelict theatre. **Tessa Hadley** loved 'the idea of a place saturated in fascinating history, coming alive with a community's memories.'

Alison Armstrong won a 2017 Northern Writers' Award for fiction. More recently she has been shortlisted in Harper's Bazaar Short Fiction Prize (2019), the Bridport Prize (2019) and longlisted for the Nan Shepherd Prize 2019. Alison says 'I am absolutely thrilled. I hope the people of Morecambe will enjoy and engage with my play.'



£2,000 - ZILLAH BOWES and JONATHAN EDWARDS - Night Riders

Documenting the experiences of passengers on the Ebbw Vale to Cardiff train line in a series of poems. **David Morley** described the project as 'exhilarating, fresh, and fabulous.'

Zillah Bowes won the Wordsworth Trust Prize in 2017 and Poems on the Buses in 2018. She is writing her first collection. **Jonathan Edwards's** first collection, *My Family and Other Superheroes* (Seren, 2014), received the Costa Poetry Award. He is twice winner of the Wales Book of the Year People's Choice Award and Editor of Poetry Wales. Zillah and Jonathan say 'we hope to use this project to get poetry out there onto platforms and trains, rushing through people's lives.'





£3,800 - JUDITH BRYAN and CAROL RUSSELL - Raised Voices: recovering the voices and vision of black women playwrights over 45

A series of public script-in-hand play-readings at the Young Vic, showcasing new writing by black women playwrights over 45.

Roy Williams said this was ‘such an important mission statement, that refuses to play lip service to such an important issue. More unheard voices will have a chance to be heard.’

Judith Bryan is a Hawthornden Fellow, prize-winning novelist and playwright (Saga Prize 1997, runner-up Alfred Fagon Award 2008). Her short fiction and non-fiction is widely anthologised. She lectures in Creative Writing at Roehampton University. **Carol Russell** trained as an actor and playwright at the Jamaica School of Drama. After returning to the UK she worked in small scale theatre companies as an actor and playwright. As a screenwriter her work can also be seen on ITV, BBC and Channel 4. Carol is a BAFTA member. Judith and Carol say ‘we’re thrilled, this award will enable six playwrights to share their vision with diverse audiences – our joys, fears and preoccupations and what it means to be older, black and female in the world today.’



£2,700 - EVA EDO - A Mother’s Courage

A play project inspired by the testimonials of mothers whose sons have been victims, perpetrators and survivors of youth violent crime and incarceration, and what it means raise sons of colour in British society today. **Roy Williams** felt this project was ‘moving. Personal. Challenging. This is what great literature should be, given the chance.’

Eva Edo’s plays celebrate the unheard stories and lives of young people and women. *Looked After Children* was shortlisted for the 2015 Alfred Fagon Award. In 2019, Eva was commissioned to write a verbatim inspired piece about refugee and asylum experienced women. Eva wrote and performed *Tiger Mum* at VAULT Festival 2020. Eva says ‘I am thrilled to win a highly regarded RSL Literature Matters Award! A Mother’s Courage is an important project which gives a voice to mothers of sons who have been caught up in youth violent crime.’



£2,500 - JENNIFER JOHNSTONE and ANNIE MACDONALD - Radical Mountain Women

A podcast series exploring the beauty, strength and resilience of the relationship between women and the environment in rural Scotland. It will be published on the established podcast Stories of Scotland. **David Morley** said ‘this is a project as refreshing as Scottish mountain air, with a wonderfully long historical view into the lives and stories of women and nature writing.’

Jennifer Johnstone is an environmental scientist and cartographer with a deep love for Scottish nature and long distance hiking. **Annie MacDonald** is a historian and archivist who loves hillwalking and wild swimming. Together Annie and Jenny make Stories of Scotland podcast from the Highlands. Jennifer and Annie say ‘this award is enabling us to tell some incredibly precious stories of the unique and often hidden experiences of rural women, in a time that it feels urgent to be examining relationships between people and the environment.’





£3,000 - REBECCA SHARP - Rough currency: the poetics of oil and the imagination

A hybrid poetic text for publication, exploring the imaginative properties of crude oil and its role in the world of ideas. Sound artist Philip Jeck has been invited to compose a soundscape in response to the text, which will be available digitally. Public events and school workshops will accompany the release of the publication, opening the ideas out for other voices to respond. **Tessa Hadley** said it is 'exciting to imagine this meeting point where poetry mingles with oil and makes us think; we need more complex literary explorations of our relationship with our mineral planet.'

Rebecca Sharp is a writer whose work spans poetry, plays and prose, with a specialism in interdisciplinary practice. Plays include *The Air That Carries The Weight* (Traverse Theatre) and *The Wakeful Chamber* (The Lemon Tree; Òran Mór); poetry includes *Unmapped* (with artist Anna King) and *Five Charms for the Pottingair* (poems and essential oil scent-blends). Rebecca says 'to be afforded time to focus on research and writing is rare and enormously valuable. To be supported in the delivery of events and workshops opens the ideas out even further – connecting with others adds another dimension both to the life of the work and for me as a writer.'

Notes to Editors

Now in their third year, the **RSL Literature Matters Awards** aim to reward and enable literary excellence and innovation. The Awards are 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. Priority is 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, and by the support of our Literature Matters Supporters' Circle.

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. The RSL's long-term aspiration is to become a significant instigator and financial supporter of literary endeavour across the UK.

A call for applications for the 2021 Awards will be announced in September 2020.

Founded in 1820, the **Royal Society of Literature** is Britain's national charity for the advancement of literature. We act as a national voice for the value of literature, engage people in appreciating literature and encourage and honour writers. The RSL's other annual awards are the RSL Ondaatje Prize, the RSL Christopher Bland Prize, the RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards, the Encore Award and the V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize. rsliterature.org

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