

The Encore Award



The Royal Society
of Literature



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2022 ENCORE AWARD SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED



The Royal Society of Literature (RSL), the voice for the value of literature in the UK, has today unveiled the shortlist for the 2022 Encore Award.

An annual Award of £10,000 celebrating outstanding achievements in second novels, the Encore Award fills a niche in the catalogue of literary prizes. This year's judges are **Sian Cain**, **Nikesh Shukla** and **Paul Muldoon** and the five shortlisted novels are:

***The High House* Jessie Greengrass** (Swift Press)
***Maxwell's Demon* Steven Hall** (Canongate)
***The Giant Dark* Sarvat Hasin** (Little Brown)
***Light Perpetual* Francis Spufford** (Faber & Faber)
***Asylum Road* Olivia Sudjic** (Bloomsbury)

First presented in 1990, the RSL has been administering the Award since 2016.

The judges commented: *'To write a novel and see it published in normal times is a feat; to do so during a global pandemic is truly worth celebrating. It is a testament to the skill of all*

five nominated writers that this year's shortlist is so strong, all bold and tender in the ways they examine the forces that shape us all - war, trauma, climate change, love. We were moved and thrilled by all of these books and hope readers will be too.'

The High House: 'Set in a flooded England in the near-future, this is a novel that confronts our collective failure to act in the face of the greatest existential crisis humanity has ever seen: the climate crisis. But with such bleak subject matter, Greengrass shows how moments of joy and love can still be found despite such terror, in this understatedly powerful novel.'

Maxwell's Demon: 'Arriving 14 years after his debut *The Raw Shark Texts*, Hall's second novel is just as playful, daring and metafictional as his first. *Maxwell's Demon* is a dizzying experience that toys with its own existence and blurs the lines between creator and creation. Truly exhilarating to the last pages.'

The Giant Dark: 'An impressive contemporary retelling of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, all about muses and art and why we make things, all against the backdrop of a tragic love story and a musician who is descending into the darkest part of themselves. It's a confident, lyrical sometimes surreal and original novel.'

Light Perpetual: 'If the defining characteristic of fiction is "making it up," Francis Spufford's *Light Perpetual* is a triumph in the form. Spufford imagines the lives of a group of children, many of them actual victims of a V-2 attack on the New Cross Road branch of Woolworths in 1944, and invents their alternative histories through the 20th century. This version of "what might have been" affords us memorable and moving insights into what we have come to think of as our own reality.'

Asylum Road: 'Its fragmentary style manages to interweave the personal and the political in this tale of trauma and regret. Managing to blend elements of taut thriller and road trip saga, this keeps the gaze on our lead character close and gives us a glimpse into someone slowly falling apart. Written with grace and humanity, this is a brilliant stylish book.'

Previous recipients of the Award have included **Sally Rooney, Ali Smith, Sunjeev Sahota, Neil Mukherjee, A. L. Kennedy, Colm Tóibín**, and last year's winner **Caoilinn Hughes**.

The five shortlisted writers commented

'I am absolutely delighted to be on the shortlist for this year's Encore Award. Writing a second novel has felt like a very different, and in many ways a much harder task than writing the first, and comes with a much greater awareness of all the very many things it's possible to get wrong, so to have this recognition is a joy - and a great spur as well to keep on working on a third!' **Jessie Greengrass**

'Second novels, like second albums, are notoriously challenging projects and *The Encore Award* is so important for the visibility of second time novelists like myself, so I'm absolutely delighted that mine has been included on this year's shortlist.' **Steven Hall**

'I'm so thrilled to be shortlisted for the Encore Award. Writing a second novel is daunting and putting one out in a year like 2021 was doubly so. *The Giant Dark* is a love letter to making

art, I am honoured for it to be recognised among other exceptional sophomore novels.'

Sarvat Hasin

'When you write a first novel, you only learn how to write one book: that one. It's as you try to do it again, and to grapple with the very different shape of the second novel, that you really begin to see what the art is that you've wandered naively into, how rich it is and how plural - and there couldn't be a better time for the encouragement and the vote of confidence represented by the Encore Award. I'm flattered and honoured to be shortlisted.'

Francis Spufford

'Before writing a first novel, you hear that 'everyone has a novel in them', and this news is extremely encouraging. But once your allotted novel has emerged and you begin to try a second (supposedly with greater confidence but really minus the blissful ignorance), the indefinite article in that sentence begins to sound less hopeful. A single novel may be a confidence trick an author can perform on themselves, but sustaining a writing career over the years is much easier and more rewarding with this kind of generous recognition, and I'm deeply grateful for it.' **Olivia Sudjic**

The Encore Award is one of 10 annual awards and prizes presented by the RSL, which bring the widest possible community of writers and readers together in celebration of the breadth of literature today. From debut works and unpublished short stories, through to the notoriously challenging second novel and outstanding contributions to literature, the RSL's awards and prizes celebrate the value of writing in all its forms, whilst supporting emerging and established writers at some of the most challenging moments of their careers. The RSL's other annual awards and prizes are: **RSL International Writers awards, Companions of Literature, the RSL Ondaatje Prize, the RSL Christopher Bland Prize, the RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for Non-Fiction, the V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize, the RSL Literature Matters Awards, the Sky Arts RSL Writers Awards and the Benson Medal.**

The 2022 Encore Award winner will be announced on Thursday 24 May.

**For further information and press enquiries relating to the Encore Award please contact Clair Chamberlain at Bread and Butter PR
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Notes to Editors

The Royal Society of Literature (RSL)

Founded in 1820, the RSL acts as a voice for the value of literature, honouring and supporting emerging and established writers whilst creating a bridge between authors and audiences to engage as many people as possible with the breadth of UK literature. <https://rsliterature.org/>

The Encore Award is an annual award of £10,000 for best second novel of the year and each of the other four books on the shortlist are awarded £500.

2022 Encore Award Shortlist Author Biographies

Jessie Greengrass spent her childhood in London and Devon. She studied philosophy in Cambridge and London and now lives in Berwick-upon Tweed with her partner and children. Her collection of

short stories, *An Account of the Decline of the Great Auk, According to One Who Saw It*, won the Edge Hill Prize 2016 and a Somerset Maugham Award. Her critically-acclaimed debut novel, *Sight*, was shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction 2018, and her second novel, *The High House*, was shortlisted for the Costa Novel Award 2021.

Steven Hall is the author of *The Raw Shark Texts*, his debut novel which won the Somerset Maugham Award and was shortlisted for the Arthur C. Clarke Award. It has been translated into over thirty languages. In 2013, Hall was named as one of Granta's Best of Young British Novelists.

Sarvat Hasin is from Pakistan. She has a Masters in Creative Writing from the University of Oxford. Her first novel, *This Wide Night*, was published by Penguin India and longlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. She won the Mo Siewcharan Prize for *The Giant Dark* which came out in 2021. Her essays and poetry have appeared in publications such as *Outsiders*, *The Mays Anthology*,

Francis Spufford is the author of five highly-praised works of non-fiction. His debut novel *Golden Hill* won the Costa First Novel Award, the RSL Ondaatje Prize and the Desmond Elliott Prize. *Light Perpetual* was longlisted for the 2021 Booker Prize. In 2007 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He teaches writing at Goldsmiths College, University of London, and lives near Cambridge.

Olivia Sudjic is a writer living in London. Her work has appeared in publications including the *New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *Guardian* and the *Paris Review*. She is the author of *Exposure*, a personal essay, and *Sympathy*, her debut novel, which was a finalist for the Salerno European Book Award, the Collyer Bristow Prize and has been translated into five languages.

Past Winners

- 2021 Caoilinn Hughes *The Wild Laughter*
- 2020 Patrick McGuinness *Throw Me to the Wolves*
- 2019 Sally Rooney *Normal People*
- 2018* Andrew Michael Hurley *Devil's Day*
Lisa McLnerney *The Blood Miracles*
- 2017 Ian McGuire *The North Water*
- 2015 Sunjeev Sahota *The Year of the Runaways*
- 2014 Neel Mukherjee *The Lives of Others*
- 2013 Evie Wyld *All the Birds, Singing*
- 2012 Ned Beauman *The Teleportation Accident*
- 2011 Joe Dunthorne *Wild Abandon*
- 2010 Adam Foulds *The Quickening Maze*
- 2009 Julia Leigh *Disquiet*
- 2007 M.J. Hyland *Carry Me Down*
- 2005 Nadeem Aslam *Maps for Lost Lovers*
- 2004 Michelle de Kretser *The Hamilton Case*
- 2003 Jeremy Gavron *The Book of Israel*
- 2002 Ali Smith *Hotel World*
- 2001 Anne Enright *What Are You Like?*
- 2000* John Burnside *The Mercy Boys*
Claire Messud *The Last Life*
Matt Thorne *Eight Minutes Idle*
Phil Whitaker *Triangulation*
- 1999 Christina Koning *Undiscovered Country*
- 1998* Alan Warner *These Demented Lands*
Timothy O'Grady *I Could Read the Sky*
- 1997 David Flusfeder *Like Plastic*
- 1996 A.L. Kennedy *So I Am Glad*

1995 Dermot Healy *A Goat's Song*
1994 Amit Chaudhuri *Afternoon Raag*
1993 Colm Tóibín *The Heather Blazing*
1992 Iain Sinclair *Downriver*
1991 Carey Harrison *Richard's Feet*
1990* Paul Watkins *Calm at Sunset, Calm at Dawn*
Peter Benson *A Lesser Dependency*