



Strictly Embargoed – not to be released until 16:00 Saturday 15 August 2020

The Edwin Morgan Trust, in association with the Edinburgh International Book Festival, this afternoon announced the winner of the Edwin Morgan Poetry Award 2020. With a prize of £20,000, the biennial Edwin Morgan Poetry Award is one of the largest in the UK. Never forgetting his difficulties in his early years as a poet, Scotland's first modern Makar (national poet) wanted to lend a helping hand to promising poets at what can be a discouraging period in their career.

The 2020 winner is Alycia Pirmohamed, who has recently completed her PhD at the University of Edinburgh, and is co-founder of the Scottish BAME Writers Network. Her second pamphlet, *Hinge* (ignition press) is due out next month, and is this season's Poetry Book Society pamphlet Choice.

Her award was announced in an event on the opening day of the EIBF's online festival programme, with a live recording of Alycia's astonished and delighted reaction to the news. She has since said:

Winning the Edwin Morgan Poetry Award is such a surreal and amazing experience. I'm so honoured that the judges, Kathleen Jamie and John Glenday, selected my work, and I'm extremely grateful to everyone who has ever read and supported it along the way. It means a lot to have found a poetry community in Scotland, because I tend to spend a lot of time thinking about where and how I fit in. I'm beyond excited to continue my journey as an artist long into the future!

This year's judges remarked that her collection 'The Ghosts that Visit Us as We Dream'

stood out immediately, not only because the work is so compelling but because it seemed to be opening up a new front in Scottish poetry [...] these varied, tender poems respond to Alycia's experience of her cultural background; their lovely specific imagery and exciting diction arises from places as diverse as Dar Es Salaam, Saskatchewan and Scotland. She controls vibrant language with a formal precision and focus, creating an original and illuminating world.

The runner-up, who receives £2,500, was Colin Bramwell, with his collection 'Jigsaw'. The judges said:

the poet's concern is with the mysterious, interlocking dynamics of life itself. Colin Bramwell manages to combine attention to craft with a love of language and a delightfully irreverent humour.

The five other shortlisted poets – Michael Grieve, Kirsten Kerr, David Linklater, Paul Malgrati and Stewart Sanderson – each receive £1,000.

Professor David Kinloch, poet and Chair of the Edwin Morgan Trust, said:



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It is not surprising how many of us have turned recently – as so often before in moments of crisis – to the healing and invigorating space of poetry. The health crisis has displaced many of the more conventional celebrations planned to mark Morgan’s centenary but he would not have been disappointed if it means that the focus on poetry itself – his poetry and that of the young poets on the shortlist – is intensified.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- The Edwin Morgan Trust is co-ordinating the celebration of Edwin Morgan’s centenary in 2020, including the Edwin Morgan Poetry Award and the Second Life grants to artists responding creatively to Morgan’s life and work. See <https://edwinmorgantrust.com/edwin-morgan-centenary/>
- The Edwin Morgan Poetry Award for a poet aged 30 or under, born or based in Scotland, gives £20,000 to the winner, £2,500 to the runner-up and £1,000 to each of the other shortlisted poets. <https://edwinmorgantrust.com/the-edwin-morgan-poetry-award/about-the-edwin-morgan-poetry-award/>
- Judges for the 2020 EMPA were the distinguished poets Kathleen Jamie and John Glenday, who selected the shortlist via an anonymous submission process of over sixty entries.
- Previous winners of the EMPA are Niall Campbell (2014), Penny Boxall (2016) and Roseanne Watt (2018). <https://edwinmorgantrust.com/category/poetry-award-archive/>

For further information, please contact the Centenary Programme Manager, Sian McIntyre:
emtmorgan100@gmail.com