

Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowships for three Edinburgh writers

Edinburgh-based author Lucy Ribchester, poet and performer Rachel McCrum and journalist and non-fiction writer Claire Prentice have today been named by Scottish Book Trust as three of four recipients of a 2016 [Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowship](#), involving a month-long writing residency in France.



The Fellowship was initiated in 1994 by Franki Fewkes, a Scottish RLS enthusiast, and is supported by Creative Scotland. Intended to give writers a chance to escape the hustle and bustle of their everyday lives to devote time to their writing, it provides residencies for four writers at the Hôtel Chevillon International Arts Centre at Grez-sur-Loing. Travel and accommodation are paid for, and there is a grant of £300 per week to cover living expenses.

Grez-sur-Loing is situated at the edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau, and was chosen because of its connections with Robert Louis Stevenson who first visited in 1875. It was there, at the Hôtel Chevillon, that he met his future wife Fanny Osbourne. Stevenson found both the place, and its community of writers and artists, highly attractive and he returned to Grez-sur-Loing for three successive summers.



Author Lucy Ribchester, who lives near Haymarket, will attend the residency in July. In 2013 she won a Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award and in 2015 was shortlisted for the Costa Short Story Award. Her two novels, *The Hourglass*

Factory and The Amber Shadows are published by Simon & Schuster. During the residency she will work on her third novel, set in a different historical period to the previous two, but continuing the themes of adventure and the ways in which women set themselves free.

Commenting on the Fellowship, Lucy said: "Being awarded a Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowship has come at a hugely important time for me, as I embark on my new novel, and I am extremely grateful to Scottish Book Trust and Creative Scotland. I'm planning to use my time at Hotel Chevillon to research without distraction, and to begin to shape my first draft. I believe the peace and solitude will be invaluable for immersing myself in the world of the story and setting me on the right track to creating the book. Stevenson's adventure tales, gothic fantasies and the strong sense of place he creates have all been guiding inspirations for my own work, so to be awarded a fellowship in his name means an enormous amount."



Poet and performer Rachel McCrum, who lives in Tollcross, will attend the residency in November. Rachel has worked as a [poet](#), performer and promoter in Edinburgh since 2012, arriving via Manchester, Belfast, New Zealand, Oxford and a small seaside town in Northern Ireland. She is Broad of [Rally & Broad](#), winner of the 2012 Callum McDonald Award (for her first pamphlet 'The Glassblower Dances') and the inaugural BBC Scotland Poet in Residence in 2015. She has performed and taught poetry in Greece, South Africa, Haiti, Montreal and around the UK. Her second pamphlet 'Do Not Alight Here Again' was published in March 2015 by Stewed Rhubarb Press, and in August 2015, she wrote and performed her first solo show at the Edinburgh Fringe, as part of new spoken word collective [SHIFT/](#). In 2016, she is [CoastWord Writer In Residence](#), exploring ideas of freeing the voice, feminism and performance, in Dunbar.

During the residency Rachel will work on her first collection proper of poetry.

Commenting on the Fellowship, Rachel said: "I'm head over the moon at the prospect of the residency. I received the phone call from the Trust very early one Tuesday morning (I had texted back an unknown missed call from the day before at about 7am) and had a slightly confused and very quickly delighted conversation, before falling asleep again. If I hadn't texted my parents at the time, I might have thought it was all a dream. The thought of a solid month's time and space to work, particularly at this point when I'm hoping to pull the manuscript together and to do some concentrated work on performance practice...it's both luxury and necessity. I'm very thankful. In addition, there are some of my favourite and most fine ghosts in the place in the form of past RLS residents from Scotland, so I'm heartened by that. And I hear the ducks are marvellous."



Journalist and non-fiction writer Claire Prentice, who lives in Tollcross, will attend the residency in August. Her first book, *The Lost Tribe of Coney Island: Headhunters, Luna Park and the Man Who Pulled Off the Spectacle of the Century*, was shortlisted for the inaugural Brooklyn Eagles Literary Prize and reviewed in the *New Yorker*. She has contributed to the *Sunday Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Washington Post*, the *BBC*, the *Financial Times*, the *Times*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Smithsonian* magazine and the *Huffington Post*. As US Correspondent for the *Sunday Herald* and later for *Scotland and Sunday* she reported on three American presidential elections (2004, 2008, 2012). She has reported on a wide variety of stories – news, politics, human interest, culture and arts – from Madrid, Tokyo, Washington DC, New York and the Antarctic. She has also edited *The List*, the Scottish arts and culture magazine and website.

During the residency, she will be working on a new non-fiction book, a social history centered around a reclusive family.

Commenting on the Fellowship, Claire said: "I'm delighted and honoured to receive a Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowship. It means a great deal to have the support of Scottish Book Trust, and to have a month to devote exclusively to my new book will make a huge difference."

Caitrin Armstrong, Head of Writer Development at Scottish Book Trust, said: "This residency is a fantastic opportunity for published writers to enjoy an extended period of peace and quiet in beautiful surroundings. This year's Fellows submitted some intriguing projects and we look forward to seeing more from them."

Aly Barr, Acting Head of Literature, Languages and Publishing, at Creative Scotland, said: "The RLS Fellowship has again proved itself to be a leader in the development of talented writers based in Scotland. Here are two poets, a novelist and a non-fiction writer, all following in the footsteps of previous award winning authors and, indeed, Stevenson himself. Allowing writers the time and space to create is a rare and beautiful thing which can produce rare and beautiful results."

