

# Scottish Book Trust makes ten awards to new writers

Ten new writers receive awards from Scottish Book Trust, the national charity transforming lives through reading and writing, in an announcement made today.

These are writers who have not yet published a full length book or collection, and the award will assist them with professional guidance to make that move, along with some crucial financial support.

Marc Lambert, CEO of Scottish Book Trust, said: “Announcing our New Writer Awardees is a fantastic way to start 2022. Some of this year’s cohort have interacted with other Scottish Book Trust programmes, and we are delighted they have reached this stage of their journey. We wish all the awardees best of luck and look forward to seeing their publications in the future.”

Six of the writers are based in Edinburgh: Agata Masłowska from Poland; Helena Fornells Nada from Barcelona; Roshni Gallagher from Leeds; Armarna Forbes from Colorado; Eimear Bush from Northern Ireland and Firas Ibrahim from Syria.

The judging panel included: Jenny Colgan, Sheena Kalayil and Vicky Adams for fiction; Jen Campbell, Sean Wai Keung and Laura Fyfe for poetry; Akemi Dawn Bowman and Ross Sayers for Children’s and Young Adult fiction, alongside Scottish Book Trust staff. The Gaelic Books Council selects the Gaelic New Writer Awardee.

## **The 2022 awardees are:**

- **Poetry**
- Agata Masłowska
- Helena Fornells Nadal
- Roshni Gallagher
- **Children's and Young Adult**
- Armarna Forbes
- Lindsay Hirst
- **Fiction and Narrative Non-Fiction**
- Dougie Strang
- Eimear Bush
- Firas Ibrahim
- Rae Cowie
- **Gaelic**
- Shelagh Campbell

Each of the 10 recipients will receive a £2,000 cash award and support tailored to their needs including mentoring from writers and industry professionals, training opportunities, and the platform to showcase their work to publishers and agents.

The funding is supported by Creative Scotland and run by Scottish Book Trust.

The New Writers Showcase, a celebration of work by last year's awardees, will be held online through Scottish Book Trust's social media accounts on Wednesday 6 April. Information about tickets will be available on Scottish Book Trust's [website](#).



Agata Masłowska is a writer and a translator. She grew up in Poland and lives in Scotland. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in *Edinburgh Review*, *New Writing Scotland*, *Gutter*, *amberflora*, *Blackbox Manifold*, *Interpreter's House*, *-algia*, *Tentacular*, among others. She is the recipient of the Hawthornden Writing Fellowship and the Gillian Purvis Award for New Writing. Her submission was highly commended in the Emerging Writer Bridge Award competition. She holds a PhD in English Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Glasgow.

**Agata Masłowska said:** "I am immensely grateful to Scottish Book Trust for the award and I'm looking forward to the

opportunities it brings. The award will allow me to focus on working on the first collection. It is a great feeling to have my writing recognised in this way.”



Helena Fornells Nadal is a Catalan poet based in Edinburgh, where she works as a bookseller. Her poems have appeared in Harana Poetry, Finished Creatures, The Interpreter's house, DATABLEED, and the anthologies The Evergreen: A New Season in the North and New Writing Scotland. In 2018, she won the Oxford Brookes International Poetry Competition (EAL), judged by Kayo Chingonyi. In 2021, Helena spent a month writing at Can Serrat International Art Residency, in Catalonia, and worked on a collaborative poetry installation exhibited at Allanbank Mill Steading in the Scottish Borders.

As a poet who writes in English as a second language, Helena is interested in work that shows idiosyncratic and non-idiomatic uses of syntax and is currently working in the lyric essay form as well as poetry.

Helena Fornells Nadal said: "I've found writing very difficult throughout the pandemic. This award has given me new motivation to keep working hard at the thing I love, as well as providing a sense of community – it's such an honour to be part of this year's New Writers Awards group and I can't wait to meet everyone."



Roshni Gallagher is a poet and writer – her work is published

in Gutter, The Scotsman, Butcher's Dog, and Middleground. She has previously been commissioned by the Scottish Poetry Library and her poem 'The Whitby' was selected for the SPL's Best Scottish Poems of 2020 anthology. She has read and performed her work at various events including Edinburgh Multicultural Festival and Counterflows festival. She facilitates writing workshops and recently ran one for the Scottish BAME Writer's Network.

She graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 2019 for English Literature and History. Whilst studying she was president and editor-in-chief of Nomad Magazine. She received a special mention for UofE's Grierson Verse prize in 2019. Roshni is originally from Leeds and now lives in Edinburgh. She has Guyanese and Irish heritage.

Roshni Gallagher said: "I was amazed to hear I'd received a New Writer's Award – it's such an honour and a bit surreal! I'm so excited for all the opportunities that this award will bring and I look forward to continuing to grow as a poet."



Raised in what remains of the American Old West, Armarna Forbes has always had a taste for the grim and macabre. Her

horror short fiction has appeared in various publications, including a horror anthology called, “Too Late; Didn’t Run – Nope 2” (TL;DR Press) and Trigger Warnings.

In 2019, Armarna self-published her debut novel, *Dead Remnants* – a Young Adult dark fantasy about a teenage ghost girl traversing the Denver afterlife. This novel was then featured in the Edinburgh based publication, *Teen Titles* in May 2020. Armarna placed in 2019 Ink & Insights Master category. She was also shortlisted for the New Writers Awards in 2020. Always interested in unique world-building, her current project is a Young Adult slipstream novel merging both her American roots and her new forever-home, Scotland.

Armarna Forbes said:

“I was trembling for a good hour after receiving the call. I am incredibly honoured and grateful for this opportunity, especially considering how the competition is so very fierce. Thank you, Scottish Book Trust – I can’t wait to see what the next year brings.”



Originally from Perth, Lindsay Hirst studied Psychology and Philosophy at Edinburgh University and then, a few years later, completed a Postgraduate Degree in Primary Education at Dundee University. During the decade that Lindsay worked in Early Years, she discovered the importance of using picture books to guide and support children's learning – from developing core literacy skills, to encouraging creativity, and promoting social and emotional awareness. This work reignited her passion for writing, and she's been creating picture books ever since.

Lindsay writes books in both verse and prose, from heartfelt to humorous. She is particularly drawn to traditional tales and enjoys re-imagining these familiar stories in fun and unique ways. During 2021, Lindsay was shortlisted in the Write Mentor Children's Novel and Picture Book Awards, and she also graduated from the Golden Egg Academy Picture Book Programme. She is represented by Lucy Irvine at Peters Fraser and Dunlop.

**Lindsay Hirst said:** "I feel extremely proud to be selected as an Awardee by Scottish Book Trust. As a teacher, I've witnessed the exceptional work they do in promoting and



developing early literacy skills, and it's a great honour to be offered their support."



Dogie Strang is a writer, gardener, and storyteller who lives by the River Ae in Dumfriesshire. He writes regularly for the online journal, *Bella Caledonia*, mostly essays on nature and culture. His work has appeared in other journals and anthologies, including *Dark Mountain*, *In Other Tongues*, and *Playing for Time: Making Art as if the World Mattered*. A recent essay, 'At Diarmaid's Grave', was commissioned for *Antlers of Water*, an anthology of writing on the nature and environment of Scotland, published by Cannongate in 2020.

Dogie Strang said: "I'm honoured and excited to receive a New Writers Award, and I look forward to working with the Scottish Book Trust team and with my fellow awardees. The timing is perfect, as my aim this year is to hone the first draft of my book and prepare to send it out to agents and publishers."



Eimear Bush began writing in earnest when she moved to Edinburgh five years ago. Perhaps it was the feeling of being untethered from her homeplace that gave the distance and displacement that sometimes affords a writer new freedom. Her achievements, in that time, include the small, personal wins of maintaining a daily practice, staying dedicated to her blog, and sticking to the goal of completing a novel (then two more) even when there was no scent of a promise at the end of it. Over lockdown, Eimear maintained her sanity by channelling many days of frustrating despondency into writing, and she has amassed hundreds of short stories, nature writing, observational pieces and even poems as a result. Eimear Bush said: "Being utterly distracted by doing three things at once, as is my habit, I answered the unexpected call

with half an ear as I fired off an apology for a zoom meeting, finished a line I was writing when I answered the phone, and stretched to switch on the lamp as I suddenly realised the room was swamped in afternoon darkness. There's nothing quite like hearing you've been awarded a New Writers Award to bring one to stillness and attention."



Firas Ibrahim was born in Syria and moved to Scotland in 2001. It was love at first sight, with the people, place, and culture. He always had a passion for writing but didn't know where to start and he had a lot to learn about his new home. His bachelor's in English put him on the right track but he needed his writing 'grey' cells to mature before he could venture into fiction. Covid happened and the world seized to

exist. So, he decided to create his own world where there was no covid and where people still hugged and had coffee together. In addition to working on the draft of his first book, he started writing short stories and with each one he went on a journey with people he met or came across in the past. His first short story 'Syrian Morning Coffee' was born in September 2020.

Firas Ibrahim said: "It has been a week and the news hasn't sunk in yet! I am truly humbled to be chosen for this award and still can't believe it. It has brought so much joy to me and my lovely supportive family. I can't wait to meet my fellow awardees and start the most exciting journey in my writing life."



Rae Cowie discovered her love of writing flash fiction at the start of lockdown and has carried on the romance ever since. She is influenced by themes of mothering and belonging, interested both in folklore and magical realism. She is creating her debut flash fiction anthology, Fledgling – one flash at a time.

She has been published by the Bath Award, Cranked Anvil, Ellipsis Zine, Potluck Zine, Retreat West, Romance Matters and The Great Scottish Canvas. As well as being shortlisted for Flash 500 and the Scottish Association of Writers' competitions. Whilst her short stories have been published in the Scottish Book Trust 'Rebel' anthology, The Scottish Field Magazine, Dinna Mess Wi The Popo (An Aberdeen University, Elphinstone Institute anthology) and literary newspaper, Northwords Now. She has also been longlisted by Fish Publishing.

Rae is an active member of the Romantic Novelists' Association (RNA) New Writers' Scheme, winning the RNA Elizabeth Goudge first chapter award, in 2015. She is a proud founding member of the RNA Scottish Chapter, which welcomes writers of romantic fiction based in Scotland. She is currently editing her first novel, with a view to submitting to agents.

Rae Cowie said: "Being offered a Scottish Book Trust New Writers' Award was a dream I never imagined would come true. It's an honour to receive both recognition and support, and I look forward to a busy year, getting to know the other writers, making the most of such a valuable opportunity."



Shelagh Campbell is from Glasgow and writes fiction for adults and children in Gaelic. She started learning Gaelic in 2005 and began writing in the language a couple of years later (once she was able to string two sentences together). In 2020 she won a Gaelic Literature Award for Best Unpublished Manuscript for Children and her work has appeared in Northwords Now magazine. She runs monthly Gaelic reading and creative writing sessions through Open Book.

Shelagh is currently working on a crime novel set in St Andrews and is looking forward to developing her writing over the coming year.

Shelagh Campbell said: "I am so grateful to have received this award. It can be very difficult to know how to get started as a new writer and the development opportunities included in this year-long programme are incredibly exciting."