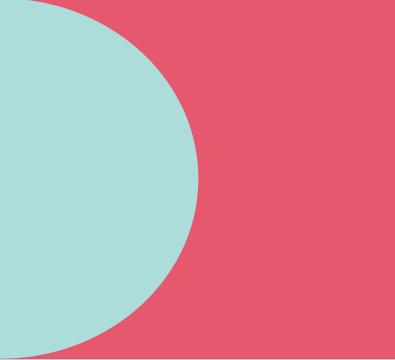
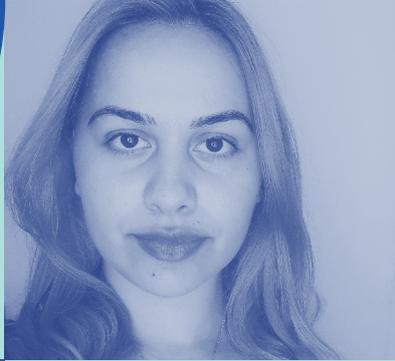
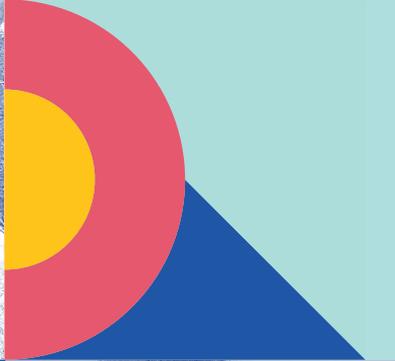


LED BURY
POETRY
FESTIVAL



THE STATE OF POETRY AND POETRY CRITICISM



RACE AND REVIEWING: THE LEDBURY POETRY CRITICS PROGRAMME

2020 marks three years since the founding of the Ledbury Poetry Critics programme by Sandeep Parmar and Sarah Howe, in association with Ledbury Poetry Festival. In 2017, 4% of poetry reviews were written by critics of colour—that number is now closer to 10%.

Eritical culture and commissioning and editorial practices have shifted undeniably towards the inclusion of non-white voices, largely thanks to the Ledbury Critics themselves and the contexts and opportunities their work has created and inspired. Ledbury Critics are now working in different parts of the US, steered by Vidyan Ravinthiran at Harvard University and with the support of Ilya Kaminsky, who hosted a Critics' residency in 2019 at Georgia Tech University. Four American Ledbury Critics are making valuable interventions and laying the groundwork for a larger, expanded programme in the years to come. Likewise Catherine Gander at Maynooth University and Poetry Ireland are working closely with Ledbury's organisers to develop an Irish critics of colour programme and to encourage diversity in reviewing among literary editors in Ireland. The following report, with Dave Coates's data analysis commissioned by the University of Liverpool's Centre for New and International Writing, sheds light on the state of poetry reviewing, publishing and prizes broadly in relation to racial diversity over the past ten years. A tumultuous year for global politics, race and health, 2020 also denotes colloquially a clarity of vision. We release this report knowing that repeated historical demands for people of colour to be seen are supported more publicly than ever before. That narratives around race must continue to be articulated in complex ways and that the language of 'diversity', 'inclusion' as well as the usefulness of terms like 'BAME' (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) or 'People of Colour' must continue to be interrogated. We also present this report knowing that how poetry is read and received by literary culture plays its own unique part in the struggle for racial equality, humanity and dignity.



Ledbury Poetry Critics (UK) and co-organisers Sandeep Parmar, Sarah Howe and research assistant Dave Coates

KEY STATISTICS FROM THE REPORT INCLUDE

Between 2009 and 2016, British and Irish poetry magazines and newspapers published review articles by non-white critics

190 times

4% of the total for those years

Between 2017-19, in the three years since the launch of the Ledbury Critics Programme, critics of colour have been published on the same platforms

201 times

9.6% of the total for those years

Of these **391** articles written by non-white critics,

155 (39.6%)

were written by fellows of **The Complete Works** mentoring programme, the **Ledbury Poetry Critics** mentoring programme, or both.

At the 2011 census, 12.9%

of the UK population **identified as non-white**. Of the twenty-four magazines in the data set which published more than 50 articles, six surpassed this figure: **Wasafiri (51%)**; **The Poetry School (24.8%)**; **Modern Poetry in Translation (23.4%)**, **The Wolf (18.9%)**; **Poetry London (15.8%)**; and **Poetry Review (14.9%)**.

The London Review of Books has published **105** articles by **39** different poetry critics. All **39** were white.

Those **105** articles reviewed **127** different books.

All 127 were by white poets

100 were by male poets.

THE STATE OF POETRY, POETRY REVIEWING AND RACE: 2009-2019

Since the 2017 launch of the Ledbury Poetry Critics programme, the poetry reviewing by critics of colour has risen dramatically.

Surveying over thirty UK poetry magazines and newspapers from 2009 to 2019, the quantitative success of Ledbury Critics is profoundly clear: although reviews by non-white critics accounts for only 5.57 per cent of all reviews over the ten-year period (6,804), over half of all these reviews by non-white critics were written since 2017 (201 of 391 total). Put another way, since the Ledbury Critics programme was founded criticism by non-white poetry reviewers has doubled. This remarkable achievement may be statistically small compared to the still considerable imbalances that persist—but this exponential increase demonstrates that there is a surfeit of highly skilled poetry critics of colour. However, implementing lasting, longer-term structural change is complex and requires a shared belief in equality among commissioning editors, critics and indeed readers of poetry and reviews. Three years on, we still find that resistance or indifference to inclusivity remains in certain reviewing platforms. At some newspapers and magazines, white writers and editors at all levels replicate and reinforce the racial power structures that keep UK and Irish poetry and its critical culture white, either by choice or by failing to interrogate their commissioning and editorial practices.

As we move towards more qualitative measures of how race and reviewing co-exist in UK and Irish poetry, we hope it is not empty optimism to start looking toward wider social and structural change in the future through an expansion of what constitutes a poetry 'review'. Many of the twelve UK-based Ledbury Critics

have begun to work on longer and more in-depth critical essays and book projects, and to ask deeper questions about poetry, regarding aesthetics and the material conditions under which poetry is produced. The Critics are in positions now (as reviewers and poets, but also as commissioning editors themselves) to challenge and shape poetry culture. And not just in terms of race and poetry. We should not forget that structural exclusion operates across many intersections of identity concurrently. As we move into thinking more broadly about the language of reviewing and race, determinations of aesthetic and cultural value, as well as poetry's traditions and forms, we remain mindful of these intersections and the work of other individuals and initiatives whose focus is on gender and class in literary culture.

In January 2020, Martin Doyle, Books Editor at the Irish Times, published an editorial condemning a report from MEAS (Measuring Equality in the Arts Sector) which found the newspaper had published no non-white critics and very few female critics between 2013-18. Doyle erroneously interprets our 2019 report data, referring to the Irish Times' record of reviewing four books by poets of colour (out of 153) a 'miracle'. Doyle only considered 'non-Irish' poets in his stats, arriving at a figure of 11.4 per cent coverage of non-white poets rather than the actual percentage (2.6), well below the average of 8.13 per cent across our data set. It is crucial to note that data is only one tool among many to confront the barriers faced by poets and critics of colour: as Doyle rightly notes, it is not merely a matter of numbers, but the quality and integrity of a critic's engagement. The

Ledbury Critics programme is attuned not just to representation but to critical language, its underlying values, and how these are applied to poets of colour. 'The absolute bedrock of literary criticism' is, according to Doyle 'selection on merit'. But as any critic knows all too well, 'merit' is not neutrally applied nor can critical judgements be unbiased.

In the March-April 2020 issue of PN Review, Michael Schmidt sympathetically echoed Doyle's sentiments, arguing poets on social media, 'develop a uniform set of political and civic opinion. They police their environment tirelessly, severely. Aberrant opinion, contrary argument, are promptly slapped down. There is always the threat of cancellation.' Here Schmidt is conflating social and cultural critique with censorship. As detailed in the fuller report online, PN Review has published no reviews by non-white critics in 2019 and none thus far in 2020: the magazine has published 124 consecutive review articles by white critics. It is however worth noting that PN Review publishes a regular column by Vahni Capildeo; indeed, for the last seven consecutive issues Capildeo has been the magazine's sole non-white critic. Although the magazine regularly publishes poems by non-white poets, and occasional letters and essays by critics of colour (Capildeo, Will Harris, Vidyan Ravinthiran, Kei Miller, among others), the substance of their critiques remain unincorporated into the magazine's editorial and commissioning practices: 81.2 per cent of PNR's essays and 73.6 per cent of its reviews are written by white men. As Harris writes in a letter to the editor printed in PNR 'A culture predicated on exclusion will create an exclusionary literary culture.'

It is precisely this still pervasive, exclusionary literary culture that Ledbury Critics (alongside other UK poetry and diversity initiatives like The Complete Works) has worked towards changing. The Times Literary Supplement's poetry editor, Alan Jenkins, who has published work by multiple Ledbury Critics and met with them to discuss TLS reviewing, writes in his essay on Creative Writing courses in December 2019 that 'diversity and inclusivity have become the official watchwords of Arts Council England. All this has helped to create the conditions in which some flamboyant talents have blazed onto the scene, on the page and in performance; it has also cast a few in a more garish light.'

Here, Jenkins directly associates 'diversity' – that is, a marked increase in the quantity of non-white, working class, queer, disabled, and other marginalised groups – with familiar tropes of unliterariness ('flamboyant [...] performance'). So often at the heart of concerns about diversity is the unfounded fear of a dwindling authority over what is seen to retain a traditional sense of cultural value and craft. Doyle, too, posits that 'painstaking discussion[s] about quality and value' cannot necessarily co-exist with diversity-driven increases in reviews of non-white poets. Attempts to address profound and long-standing inequalities in British poetry and reviewing only enhance our shared literary culture—and this is evidenced by the deeply rich and uncompromising critical work the Critics have produced over the past three years.

And yet, on the whole, the Ledbury Critics have been received with open arms by forward-thinking poetry and newspaper editors across the UK and Ireland, as attested to by the progress that has been so demonstrably made in the quantity of reviews by non-white critics published since 2017. The influential role of (largely white) poetry editors as cultural gatekeepers also makes plain the need for diversity throughout all levels of critical culture. A powerful discovery made by Arts Emergency in their 2018 study 'Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries' is the close relationship between race and class when it comes to employment in the creative industries: between 2.7 and 4.8 per cent participation for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity (BAME) workers, and between 12.6 and 18.2 per cent participation for working class workers. Gaining entry into these industries often requires unpaid internships, very often in expensive cities; it also often

requires personal, even familial, contacts with existing workers. It is a significant concern that so few BAME people hold editorial positions. Of the poetry magazines which have been in regular publication from 2009-2019, only three are currently edited by non-white staff (Oxford Poetry, Wasafiri and Ambit). Thankfully newer, exciting platforms are being steered by non-white editors, including online reviews at the Poetry School, Poetry Birmingham Literary Journal, amberflora and harana poetry. The same is true of poetry publishers in these islands, wherein only independent and recently established presses have non-white editors, such as Burning Eye, OutSpoken, Bitter Melon 苦瓜, flipped eye, and Pallina Press. It is perhaps not a coincidence that these presses tend to focus on pamphlets rather than full collections, and/or poetry in performance; such work is very often under- or unfunded and tends to be overlooked by critics.

As has been established in previous reports, the Ledbury Critics programme has spearheaded a profound change in critical culture in these islands. In terms of pure numbers, the difference the programme has made to the critical landscape is stark:

Just eight articles by non-white critics were published in 2009; but after a peak of 42 in 2014, and a trough of 13 in 2015, 75 reviews appeared in 2019, a clear record high.

It is worth noting that the eight critics of 2009 include Jane Yeh, Kit Fan, Sarah Howe and Vidyan Ravinthiran, all of whom remain important poets and critics; Yeh and Fan in particular have published critical work far more frequently in the past two years. Ravinthiran's consistency is remarkable by itself: he is the only non-white critic to have published at least one article every year since 2009. His tally of 22 is the highest of all reviewers of colour, but is greatly overshadowed by some of his white counterparts, such as Kate Kellaway (114 articles), Rory Waterman (87), David Wheatley (77), Ben Wilkinson (76), Sean O'Brien (63) and John Greening (62). This record is partly due to long-standing relationships or employment by the Guardian or the TLS, two of the country's most prolific and high-profile publishers of

One of the greatest successes of the Ledbury Critics programme has been to expose the lie that a commitment to diversity and inclusion represents a threat to literary achievement.

The twelve UK-based Ledbury critics account for 63 of the total 391 articles by critics of colour since 2009 (16.1%).

poetry criticism. All of Kellaway's reviews came as a staff writer for the Guardian/Observer, 71 of Waterman's articles were published by the TLS, 67 of Wilkinson's reviews are with the Guardian or TLS, as are 58 of Wheatley's, and 57 of O'Brien's. That not a single non-white critic has experienced this level of long-term retention or regular commissioning is striking.

How long would it take for parity to be reached, should editorial practices become more inclusive? Given that the TLS published 73 review articles last year, it could publish nothing but reviews by non-white critics for eighteen months without breaking the 12.9 per cent demographic baseline for proportionate representation. (As we have noted before, 12.9 per cent is not the end goal, as numbers cannot accurately describe culture, but it may be a helpful yardstick.) Including co-organisers Howe, Sandeep Parmar and Ravinthiran, that figure rises to 107 (27.4 per cent). Not including the twelve Ledbury critics, another twenty-eight non-white critics have published work for the first time since January 2018, while several others have returned to publication years after their most recent review. We have seen a dedicated shift in editors' commissioning policies, and in the books they see as worthy of attention. The Ledbury scheme is evidently a tide that has raised many ships.

Although we have seen tremendous change since 2017, critical culture must continue to expand to accurately reflect an increasingly inclusive poetry culture. For a granular reading of our data on a magazine-by-magazine basis see our extended online report. The disparities between each publication are, we believe, as crucial as our over-arching observations. The analysis here has begun to account also for the differences overlooked by categories such as 'BAME' and it is worth noting that within these statistics Asian critics are almost three times more likely to appear than Black critics. Removing racist structural barriers within criticism must also recognise and account for these differences. The Ledbury Critics programme is committed to further scrutinising such inequalities. We hope this data analysis is enlightening and that it encourages reviewers and poets of colour as well as editors and readers from across the UK and Ireland to act collectively and consistently, towards equality and diversity in poetry criticism.

FOR THE FULL ONLINE REPORT, VISIT:
www.liv.ac.uk/new-and-international-writing

POETRY CRITICISM

Of 6804 articles published,

391 (5.7%)

were written by non-white critics. Of these 391, 201 were published in 2017-19, more than doubling the previous total.

Of these 391 articles written by reviewers of colour

155 (39.6%)

were written by fellows of The Complete Works mentoring programme, the Ledbury Critics Programme, or both.

The London Review of Books has published 105 articles by

39 different critics

All 39 were white. Those 105 articles reviewed 127 different books. All 127 were by white poets, and 100 were by male poets.

Although The Times Literary Supplement is **one of only five** platforms to publish more than thirty articles by non-white critics, this constitutes just 3.5 per cent of their total output.

At the 2011 census,

12.9% of the UK population identified as non-white.

Of the twenty-four magazines in the data set which published more than 50 articles, six surpassed this figure: Wasafiri (51%); the Poetry School (24.8%); Modern Poetry in Translation (23.4%); The Wolf (18.9%); Poetry London (15.8%); and Poetry Review (14.9%).

Of 10,685 books reviewed in the data set,

999 (9.35%) were written by non-white poets.

This figure stayed largely fixed between 2009-16, with a peak in 2012 (7.1%) and a trough in 2013 (4.9%). In the past three years, however, there has been a substantial increase in critical attention to books by non-white poets: 13.3% of all books reviewed in 2017, 15.5% in 2018, and 15.5% again in 2019.

Of 1604 articles published,

2692 (39.5%)

were written by women or NB people. This figure has fluctuated but is rising, from 29.6% in 2009 to a high of 45.7% in 2017. This has dipped to 41.9% in 2019, however.

Of the twenty-four magazines regularly publishing throughout the data set,

only seven featured more than 50% women or non-binary critics

Twelve featured less than 40%, while six featured less than 30%: Times Literary Supplement (28.9%); Poetry Salzburg Review (24.4%); PN Review (24.1 per cent); Acumen (19.7%); London Review of Books (16.2%); and Stride (12.7%).

Though female critics are roughly as likely to

review female poets

as not, male critics review male poets 66% of the time, compared with just 29% female poets.

The number of books per article a **critic reviews differs along gender and racial intersections.** An average white male critic reviews 1.52 books per article; a white female critic reviews 1.63; a male critic of colour reviews 1.77; a female critic of colour reviews 1.81.



LRB editor Alice Spawls at a Ledbury Poetry Critics residency workshop, November 2019

POEMS

Of the 43,288 poems

19,194 (44.34%) were written by women or non-binary people. This percentage has risen year on year since the beginning of the data set, from 37.6% in 2009 to 49.6% in 2018. It has never been above 50%.

In eleven of the forty-two magazines surveyed, less than 40 per cent of contributors were female or non-binary.

in 3 of these, the figure was lower than 30%

Times Literary Supplement (27.8%); London Review of Books (27.4%); and Stride (20.1%).

Of these

43,288, 3,915 (9.04%)

were written by non-white poets. Unlike the steady progress made in publishing poems by women, this figure can be split into two relatively steady plateaus. Between 2009-15, the figure remained between 6.9% and 8.4%. Since 2016, this figure averages at 10.6%, with a high of 12.5% in 2019, and a low of 9.6% in 2018.

760 of those 3,909 (19.4%)

were published in one magazine, Modern Poetry in Translation. Without it, the figure drops to

3,149, or 7.6%

of the adjusted total.

At the 2011 census,

12.9% of the UK population identified as non-white

Of the magazines in the data set still regularly publishing, only four surpassed this figure: Wasafiri (68.9% of contributors) MPT (37.2%), Poetry Review (16.5%), and The White Review (15.8%).

EDITORS

In June 2020, we found

117 editorial staff at the 45 platforms surveyed:

34 as Editor or Editor-in-Chief; 54 in other senior editorial positions, covering editorial assistants or editorship by committee, which I have combined under 'Co-Editor'; and the remaining 29 in associate or contributing editorial positions, combined under 'Contributing Editor'. Due to the small sample size, and the wide variation in what editorship entails in a large periodical and a small blog, for example, the following figures are not as robust as those detailed above. They do, however, give an outline of how magazines are currently run.

Of the thirty-four Editors

twenty were women, and two were non-white

The two non-white editors were Malachi McIntosh at Wasafiri and Sarala Estruch at the Poetry School. The two poetry publications in the UK with non-white senior editors have the best records for publishing critics of colour, 51% and 24.8% respectively.

Of the fifty-four Co-Editors

twenty-seven were women or non-binary people, and nine were non-white. Of those nine, three were at magazines on indefinite hiatus (The Wolf, Prac Crit), and three were at Oxford Poetry, which, though an excellent publication, has published on average one issue per a year since 2015.

Of the twenty-nine Contributing Editors

sixteen were women or non-binary people, and thirteen were non-white.

While it is worth celebrating how many non-white poets and critics have begun to take up editorial positions in UK poetry magazines, it is very noticeable that the vast majority are in junior positions, and have relatively little material power to affect major policy decisions.

94% of Editors remain white, and 83% of Co-Editors

Diversity initiatives that nonetheless leave people of colour without the power to challenge majority white power structures are of limited practical value.

PRIZES

Thirteen of the seventeen

total wins by non-white poets of the T.S. Eliot, Forward Best & First Collection, Costa and Ted Hughes prizes have come since Kei Miller's Forward Best Collection win in 2014.

Forty-nine of the seventy-two

two total shortlistings for non-white poets have come since 2014.

The T.S. Eliot has been won by non-white poets

four times

in its twenty-seven year history, in 2010 (Derek Walcott), 2015 (Sarah Howe), 2017 (Ocean Vuong) and 2019 (Roger Robinson).

The Forward Prize for Best Collection has been won by non-white poets

four times

in its twenty-eight year history, in 2014 (Kei Miller), 2015 (Claudia Rankine), 2016 (Vahni Capildeo) and 2018 (Danez Smith).

The Forward Prize for Best First Collection has been won by non-white poets

six times in its twenty-seven year history

in 1994 (Kwame Dawes), 2006 (Tishani Doshi), 2007 (Daljit Nagra), 2015 (Mona Arshi), 2016 (Tiphonie Yanique) and 2017 (Ocean Vuong).

This year, the Costa Prize for Poetry was won by a poet of colour (Mary Jean Chan) for the first time in its

thirty-five year history

The Ted Hughes Award has

been won twice

by non-white poets in its ten year history, in 2017 (Jay Bernard) and 2018 (Raymond Antrobus). The prize was founded by Carol Ann Duffy in her role as Poet Laureate. Simon Armitage, the new Laureate, has founded the Laurel Prize, for collections of nature poetry. The first winners will be announced this autumn.

Three white poets

– Don Paterson (six wins), Seamus Heaney (five) and Sean O'Brien (four) – have won the Forward and T.S. Eliot Prizes as often as all poets of colour combined.

21 of the 207

shortlistees for the T.S. Eliot Prize are non-white (10.1%); 12 of those since 2014.

12 of the 138

shortlistees for the Forward Prize for Best Collection are non-white (8.7%); nine since 2014.

19 of the 135 shortlistees

for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection are non-white (14.1%); twelve since 2014.

8 of the 113

shortlistees for the Costa Prize for Poetry are non-white (7.1%); five since 2014.

44 of the 129

total wins were by female poets (34.1%), and three by non-binary poets (2.3%).

270 of the 653

shortlistees for the T.S. Eliot Prize are non-white (10.1%); 12 of those since 2014.

The average age of

T.S. Eliot Prize winners is 50

Forward Best Collection 50.9, Forward Best First Collection 36.1, Costa Prize for Poetry 49.8

Magazines and newspapers in the reviewing data set: Acumen, Ambit, Antiphon Poetry, Bare Fiction, The Compass, The Guardian, Gutter, Ink Sweat & Tears, The Interpreter's House, London Grip, The London Review of Books, Magma, Modern Poetry in Translation, Mslexia, New Statesman, The North, Oxford Poetry, PN Review, Poetry Ireland Review, Poetry London, Poetry Review, the Poetry School, Poetry Salzburg Review, Poetry Wales, Sabotage Reviews, Southword, The Stinging Fly, Stride, The Tangerine, The Telegraph, The Times Literary Supplement, Wasafiri, The White Review, and The Wolf.

Magazine and newspapers in the poetry data set: All of the above (bar the Poetry School and Sabotage Reviews), plus: And Other Poems, Butcher's Dog, The Dark Horse, The Honest Ulsterman, Lighthouse, Long Poem Magazine, Poems in Which, Prac Crit, The Rialto, Riggwelter, and tender.

BIOGRAPHIES

Ledbury Poetry Critics



DZIFA BENSON is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work intersects science, art, the body and ritual which she explores through poetry, theatre, performance, essays and journalism. She has performed her work internationally in many contexts such as: artist in residence at the Courtauld Institute of Art; producer of a poetry in performance event responding to David Hockney's work in Tate Britain; producer and host of a literature and music experience in the Dissenters Gallery of Kensal Green Cemetery and core artist in BBC Africa Beyond's cross-arts project, Translations. Her work has been published and presented in *The Poetry Review*, *the Guardian*, *the Financial Times*, *the Telegraph*, Royal Opera House, the Bush Theatre and the House of Commons. Dzifa is currently working on a commissioned play, Black Mozart, White Chevalier and has an MA in Text & Performance from Birkbeck and RADA.



VICTORIA ADUKWEI BULLEY is a poet, writer and filmmaker. Winner of a 2018 Eric Gregory Award for promising British poets under 30, her work has appeared in *The Chicago Review*, *Ambit* and *The Poetry Review*, in addition to featuring on BBC Radio 4 *Woman's Hour*. In 2016, she was shortlisted for the Brunel Prize for African Poetry, and her debut chapbook, *Girl B*, forms part of the 2017 New-Generation African Poets series, edited by Kwame Dawes and Chris Abani. Victoria is the director of *MOTHER TONGUES*, a poetry, translation and film project exploring the indigenous language heritages of poets of colour. She is a doctoral candidate at Royal Holloway, University of London, where she is the recipient of Technē scholarship for practice-based research in Creative Writing.



MARY JEAN CHAN is a London-based poet, critic and editor from Hong Kong. Her debut poetry collection, *Flèche* (Faber 2019) won the 2019 Costa Book Award for Poetry and was shortlisted for the 2020 International Dylan Thomas Prize and the 2020 Jhalak Prize. She has been shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem twice and received an Eric Gregory Award in 2019. In Spring 2020, Chan was guest co-editor at *The Poetry Review*. She is currently Lecturer in Creative Writing (Poetry) at Oxford Brookes University.



JADE CUTTLE is Arts Commissioning Editor at *The Times*, and has also written for *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *the Times Literary Supplement* and *the Telegraph*. Jade has been an editor at *Ambit* and final judge for the Costa Book Awards (2019), and commissioned to write for BBC Radio 3, BBC Contains Strong Language Festival and the BBC Proms. Fusing metaphor with melody, she released a debut eco-themed album of poem-songs 'Algal Bloom' with funding and support from the PRS foundation and Make Noise in January 2020. She previously worked at The Poetry Society and tutored at the Poetry School.



SARALA ESTRUCH is a writer, poet, and critic based in London. Her work has been short- and long-listed for several prizes, including the Wasafiri New Writing Prize and the National Poetry Competition, and she was a winner of the Primers Competition 2017. Her literary criticism has appeared in newspapers and journals including *The Poetry Review*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Wasafiri*, and *The Guardian*, and has been featured on BBC Radio 3. Sarala works part-time as Editorial Manager at the Poetry School.



MARYAM HESSAVI is a British Manchester-based poet and critic, with poems and reviews appearing in various publications. An alumnus of the University of Manchester, she holds an MA in English Literature & Creative Writing with specialisms in Modernism and Linguistics. Maryam is a Contributing Editor for *Ambit* and a member of the Manchester-based poetry reading series Poets & Players. Her reviews have been published in *Poetry London*, *Magma*, *Poetry Wales* and *The Manchester Review*, among others.



SRISHTI KRISHNAMOORTHY-CAVELL is completing a doctorate in contemporary poetry and ecopoetics at the University of Cambridge. Her essays and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, *Intercapillary Space*, *Poetry London*, *PBS*, the Poetry School, and *The Poetry Review*.



NASSER HUSSAIN is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Leeds Beckett University, and the author of two books of poetry including *SKY WRI TEI NGS*, composed entirely from IATA airport codes, published by Coach House Books (2018). He has published reviews in *Ambit*, *Poetry London*, and for the Poetry School. He also serves on the Poetry Advisory board for Coach House Books in Toronto, and on the editorial board for *Inscription: the Journal of Material Text*. He can be found on Twitter @nassershussain



JOANNA LEE is a London-based writer and critic. Her work has appeared in *The Guardian*, *The White Review* and *The Poetry Review*. She works in publishing – formerly at Faber & Faber and currently at Curtis Brown.



JENNIFER LEE TSAI is a poet, editor and critic. She was born in Bebington and grew up in Liverpool. She is a fellow of The Complete Works III. Her poems feature in numerous anthologies and magazines including *Ten: Poets of the New Generation* (Bloodaxe: 2017), *Ambit*, *Magma*, *Oxford Poetry*, *The Rialto*, *SMOKE*, *Stand*, *Soundings* and *Wild Court*. Her critical reviews have been published by *Ambit*, *The Poetry Review*, *Modern Poetry In Translation*, *Mslxia*, *Poetry Book Society Bulletin* and the *Poetry School*, London. Jennifer is a Contributing Editor to *Ambit*. Her debut poetry pamphlet *Kismet* (2019) is published by *ignitionpress*. In 2019, she was awarded an AHRC scholarship to undertake doctoral research in Creative Writing at the University of Liverpool. Jennifer is the winner of a Northern Writers Award for Poetry 2020.



STEPHANIE SY-QUIA is a freelance writer and critic based in London. Her reviews have featured in *The Guardian*, *FT Weekend Magazine*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The White Review*, *The Poetry Review*, *Poetry London*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, among others. She has a BA from Oxford University in English Language and Literature, has twice been shortlisted for the FT Bodley Head Essay Prize, and is currently working on her first work of poetry.



SARAH-JEAN ZUBAIR is a postgraduate student in English literature at University College London. She holds an MA in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University (New York), and a BA in English from the University of Victoria (Canada). Her current studies inquire into poetic and visual arts portrayals of altered consciousness in Romantic-era English literary texts. In addition to her research, she teaches on undergraduate courses in the Department of English at UCL. Her critical writing has appeared in publications such as *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, and *Poetry London*.



ABRAHAM ENCINAS is an English graduate student at UCLA. He studies 20thC. hemispheric American literature and is interested in the genre of the dictator novel specifically. He translates fiction between English and Spanish in his spare time and hosts a language and culture podcast called *Extreme Vocabulary*.



SHAMALA GALLAGHER is the author of a poetry collection, *Late Morning When the World Burns* (The Cultural Society, 2019) and a chapbook, *I Learned the Language of Barbs and Sparks No One Spoke* (Dancing Girl Press, 2015). Her poems and essays have appeared in *Poetry*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Rumpus*, *Shenandoah*, *The Missouri Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Athens, GA.



EMILY PÉREZ is the author *House of Sugar*, *House of Stone* and the chapbooks *Backyard Migration Route* and *Made and Unmade*. She graduated with honors from Stanford University and earned an MFA at the University of Houston, where she served as a poetry editor for *Gulf Coast* and taught with Writers in the Schools. A CantoMundo fellow, she has received grants and scholarships from the Washington State Artist Trust, Jack Straw Writers, Bread Loaf Writers' Workshop, Summer Literary Seminars, and Inprint, Houston, and she is also a member of the Community of Writers at Squaw Valley. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *Copper Nickel*, *Fairy Tale Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry*, and *Diode*. She is a regular reviewer for *RHINO* and her reviews have also appeared in *The Boston Review*, *Letras Latinas*, and *The Rumpus*. She teaches English and Gender Studies in Denver where she lives with her husband and sons.



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Bhanu Kapil performs at the London Review Bookshop "Race and Reviewing" event, June 2019

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