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PRESS INFORMATION FOR 10 November 2017:

**Introducing the poetry critics of the future: the Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics….**

Ledbury Poetry Festival in collaboration with award-winning poets Sandeep Parmar and Sarah Howe are delighted to announce the 8 participants selected for the innovative Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics mentoring programme.

The Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics scheme was founded this year to encourage diversity in poetry reviewing culture and support emerging critical voices. Open to budding BAME poetry critics resident in the UK, the scheme offers an intensive eight-month mentorship programme, including workshops, one-to-one mentorship and critical feedback on the writing of a poetry review which will ultimately be shared with a number of partner publications.

****The 8 Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics are: (pictured left: top-bottom)

Dzifa Benson

Mary Jean Chan

Jade Cuttle

Sarala Estruch

Maryam Hessavi

Nasser Hussain

Srishti Krishnamoorthy-Cavell

Jennifer Lee Tsai

Sandeep Parmar, co-founder of the scheme says:

“Whilst it is true that reviewing culture does not reflect the diversity of British poetry, it is also abundantly clear that there are many committed and informed voices out there that deserve a wider audience. We're delighted to have chosen eight exciting emerging reviewers to mentor through the Emerging Critics Scheme, drawn from a very strong group of critics all of whom are already thinking incisively about how reviewing opens onto a wider discussion about our shared literary culture.”

Sarah Howe, co-founder of the scheme says:

“By nurturing a new wave of critics of colour and offering them a platform, we hope to kick off a wider conversation about race within the culture of reviewing, interrogating and expanding its terms. I can think of nothing more timely.”

****The first workshop will take place in late November 2017 in Ledbury, with sessions led by poets Sarah Howe, Sandeep Parmar, Vidyan Ravinthiran, Claire Trévien and Sunday Times Poetry Critic, Jeremy Noel-Tod. The experiences of the participants will be part of a live discussion about poetry reviewing culture and diversity at Ledbury Poetry Festival in July 2018.

**For media enquiries about Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics and Ledbury Poetry Festival please contact** :  
Becky Fincham at Bigmouth Book Events & PR on becky@bigmouthpresents.com / 07545 760590 or Phillippa Slinger, Festival Manager on manager@poetryfestival.co.uk / 01531 636232

Follow us on Twitter [**@ledburyfest**](https://twitter.com/ledburyfest) or find us on [**Facebook**](https://www.facebook.com/Ledbury-Poetry-Festival-72974104051/)

**[poetry-festival.co.uk](http://www.poetry-festival.co.uk/)**

**Notes To Editors**

**THE PARTICIPANTS**

**Dzifa Benson** Born in London to Ghanaian parents, Dzifa grew up in several countries in west Africa. She has performed her work internationally in many contexts such as artist-in-residence at the Courtauld Institute of Art; disruptive element in classrooms across the 5 sites of City & Islington College; curator of a poetry performance responding to a David Hockney painting in Tate Britain; producer and host of a literary experience in the Dissenters Gallery of Kensal Green Cemetery and core artist in BBC Africa Beyond's cross-arts project, Translations. Her poetry, stories, plays, libretti, journalism and essays have been published and performed in venues and publications such as Poetry Review, Magma Poetry, Philosophy Now, Time Out, The Guardian, Southbank Centre, Tate Britain, Bristol Old Vic, The Foundling Museum, the Bush Theatre, ITV Studios, Kings Place, Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the Shakespeare & Co Bookshop in Paris among others.

As a creative producer, Dzifa curates and programmes one-off literary events and multimedia literature festivals and conferences all across the UK. Working with adults in higher education, community organisations and the creative industries and with children in primary and secondary schools, Dzifa devises and runs workshops, masterclasses, lectures and seminars specialising in Applied Theatre, collaborative practice and community engagement.

Dzifa is currently developing a transmedia project The Spit of Me, an artistic, social and biological investigation into the story that DNA can tell us about identity and migration. She is studying for a MA in Text & Performance at Birkbeck College and RADA.

**Mary Jean Chan** is a poet, editor and researcher from Hong Kong. Her poetry has been shortlisted for the 2017 Forward Prize for Best Single Poem, and is forthcoming from Carcanet New Poetries VII. Her work has appeared in The Poetry Review, PN Review, Ambit Magazine, The London Magazine, Callaloo Journal and English: Journal of the English Association. Mary Jean is currently a Research Associate in Poetics and PhD candidate in Creative Writing at Royal Holloway, University of London, and is an Editor at Oxford Poetry. She is the winner of the 2017 PSA/Journal of Postcolonial Writing Postgraduate Essay Prize.

**Jade Cuttle** read Modern & Medieval Literature at Cambridge University, graduating with a 1st. She has written for The Guardian, The Sunday Times, Observer, The Times, The Cadaverine and Poetry Book Society reviewing Next Generation Poets. Currently she is Poet-In-Residence for Ilkley Literature Festival with Daljit Nagra touring literature festivals. Her poetry has been performed on Radio 3 for BBC Proms and commissioned for BBC podcasts after winning 1st in the Proms Poetry Competition. She's also won 2nd in Ledbury Poetry Festival Competition and a Foyle Young Poet award. She is a Young Poet Networker and BBC Introducing poetic-folk songwriter with album 'Leaves & Lovers'. Twitter: @JadeCuttle [www.facebook.com/jadecuttle](http://www.facebook.com/jadecuttle)

**Sarala Estruch** was born in London in 1983 to a French mother and an Indian father. She holds degrees in English Literature and Creative Writing from Goldsmiths College and Birkbeck College, University of London. Her reviews, fiction, creative non-fiction, and poetry have appeared in Wasafiri, The North and The Jamaica Observer, among others. She blogs sporadically at estruch-notebook.co.uk, and tweets @saralaestruch

**Maryam Hessavi** is a British, Manchester-based poet of English and Iranian decent. An alumnus of the University of Manchester, Maryam was commissioned by the Irish World Heritage Centre to read her poem ‘The Sea Gulls’ at the 1916:2016 Commemoration Concert in 2016. Her work has also featured in the Peter Barlow’s Cigarette series in Manchester and she is working on various collections of poetry for publication at present. Maryam recently reviewed for The Manchester Review during the Manchester Literature Festival 2017.

**Nasser Hussain** is a poet and lecturer in Literature and Creative Writing at Leeds Beckett University. His first interest in poetry was through performance, and his first collection, Boldface, was published by Burning Eye Books in 2014. His current project is SKY WRI TEI NGS, a book of poems composed entirely from IATA airport codes, due for release in late 2018 with Coach House Books of Toronto.

**Srishti Krishnamoorthy-Cavell** is completing a PhD in English at the University of Cambridge. Her research looks at botanical tropes as sites of political labour in contemporary women's experimental poetry. Her articles on poetics and poetry reviews have appeared in publications such as The Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry, Intercapillary Space and Poetry London (forthcoming). Her research interests include contemporary poetry and cinema, gender and sexuality, ecopoetics, postcolonialism, boarding school narratives and the cultural history of chalk.

**Jennifer Lee Tsai** is a British poet of Chinese heritage. She was born in Bebington and grew up in Liverpool. A graduate of St Andrews and Liverpool University, she holds an MA in Creative Writing (Poetry) with Distinction from the University of Manchester. Jennifer is a fellow of the The Complete Works III. Her poems appear in the anthology, Ten: Poets of the New Generation (Bloodaxe, 2017) and have been published in Smoke, The Rialto and elsewhere. Jennifer works as a University Teacher in English Language. She is an Associate Editor for Smoke magazine.

**WORKSHOP FACILITATORS**

**Sarah Howe (Co-founder of the scheme)**

Sarah Howe is a British poet, academic and editor. Her first book, [*Loop of Jade*](http://www.sarahhowepoetry.com/books.html) (Chatto & Windus, 2015), won the T.S. Eliot Prize and The Sunday Times / PFD Young Writer of the Year Award, and was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection. Born in Hong Kong to an English father and Chinese mother, she moved to England as a child. Her pamphlet, [*A Certain Chinese Encyclopedia*](http://www.tall-lighthouse.co.uk/publications.html#chinese) (Tall-lighthouse, 2009), won an Eric Gregory Award from the Society of Authors. She has performed her work at festivals internationally and on BBC Radio 3 and 4. She is the founding editor of [*Prac Crit*](http://www.praccrit.com/), an online journal of poetry and criticism. Previous honours include a Hawthornden Fellowship and the Harper-Wood Studentship for English Poetry, as well as fellowships from Harvard University’s Radcliffe Institute and the Civitella Ranieri Foundation. She is a Lecturer in Poetry at King’s College London.

**Jeremy Noel-Tod**

Jeremy Noel-Tod teaches in the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia. His reviews have been published widely, and since 2013 he has been poetry critic for the Sunday Times. He is the editor of the second edition of The Oxford Companion to Modern Poetry (2013) and The Penguin Book of the Prose Poem (forthcoming, 2018).

**Sandeep Parmar (Co-founder of the scheme)**

Sandeep Parmar is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Liverpool where she co-directs Liverpool’s Centre for New and International Writing. She holds a PhD from University College London and an MA in Creative Writing from the University of East Anglia. Her books include *Reading Mina Loy’s Autobiographies: Myth of the Modern*, an edition of the *Collected Poems of Hope Mirrlees* (Carcanet, 2011)*,*and two books of her own poetry published by Shearsman: *The Marble Orchard*and *Eidolon,*winner of the Ledbury Forte Prize for Best Second Collection. Most recently she edited the *Selected Poems of Nancy Cunard* (Carcanet, 2016). Her essays and reviews have appeared in the *Guardian*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, the *Financial Times* and the *Times Literary Supplement.*She is a BBC New Generation Thinker and regularly appears on Radio 3.

**Vidyan Ravinthiran**

Vidyan's first book of poems, *Grun-tu-molani*(Bloodaxe, 2014), was shortlisted for a number of First Collection prizes, including the Forward, and poems towards his next, *The Million-Petalled Flower of Being Here*, won a Northern Writers Award in 2017. *Elizabeth Bishop’s Prosaic* (Bucknell UP, 2015), his study of that wonderfully gifted US poet, won both the University English First Book Prize and the Warren-Brooks Award for Outstanding Literary Criticism. He has written a range of literary journalism, most recently for *Poetry* (verse) and *The Telegraph*(fiction); he is the winner of *Poetry*’s Editors’ Prize for Reviewing.

He has just completed his first novel, *Reincarnation*, and is represented as an author of fiction by The Wylie Agency. Vidyan is an editor at the online magazine of poetry and poetics, *Prac Crit*, and teaches at the University of Birmingham.

**Claire Trévien**

Claire Trévien is the author of The Shipwrecked House and Astéronymes (both published by Penned in the Margins). She founded Sabotage Reviews to cater for works neglected by bigger publications (pamphlets, anthologies, spoken word and anything not fitting in a box), and runs its annual Saboteur Awards. She is currently editing an anthology of essays on spoken word cultures around  the world. [Clairetrevien.co.uk](http://clairetrevien.co.uk/)

**MENTORS**

Dave Coates

Miriam Gamble

Sarah Howe

Karen McCarthy Woolf

Jeremy Noel-Tod

Sandeep Parmar

Vidyan Ravinthiran

Sam Riviere

Claire Trévien

**ADVISORY BOARD**

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**Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics**

Recent statistics pulled together by blogger critic Dave Coates (*The State of Poetry Criticism*) show that reviewers and poets of colour are hugely underrepresented in broadsheet and journal publications, with only 4.3% reviewers and 8.1% poets from BAME backgrounds. Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics offers an intensive eight-month mentorship programme for 8 emerging BAME poetry critics that will focus specifically on redressing this imbalance in UK poetry culture.

Reviews written on the scheme, will be shared with collaborating partner publications, which include: The Guardian, TLS, Poetry Review, Poetry London, PN Review, Poetry Wales, Magma, The White Review, Sabotage, Prac Crit, Modern Poetry In Translation and Oxford Poetry.

**Ledbury Poetry Festival**

Winner of Best Community Festival in Visit Herefordshire Awards 2017

The 22nd Ledbury Poetry Festival will take place over ten days, from 29 June– 8 July 2017. It is the biggest and best poetry festival in the UK, featuring poets from all over the world. If you think you know what poetry is, come along and let the festival surprise you. There are live readings, performances, workshops, open mics, music, exhibitions, films, family events, street events, a slam and much more. 2017 is our twenty first year– come along for a celebration of poetry in the rural heartland of England.

The Festival also runs a Community Programme, a Schools Programme, and a New and Emerging Writers’ Programme all year round as well as an annual Poetry Competition. Go to [www.poetry-festival.co.uk](http://www.poetry-festival.co.uk) for full details.