



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

Issued: Monday 20 August 2018

Literary duo join oldest book prizes' hall of fame

A biography that documents the life of HRH Princess Margaret – the Queen's sister – and a series of experimental short stories have tonight (Saturday, 18 August) won the UK's longest-running literary awards.

Acclaimed authors Craig Brown and Eley Williams join the illustrious list of authors who have won the James Tait Black Prizes, awarded annually by the University of Edinburgh.

The winners of the £10,000 prizes were announced by broadcaster Sally Magnusson at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

Craig Brown's winning book in the biography prize presents a witty and unconventional picture of royal life in the mid 20th century. *Ma'am Darling: 99 Glimpses of Princess Margaret* published by 4th Estate combines interviews, parodies and essays.

Craig Brown – a renowned satirist and journalist - is the author of several books of fiction and nonfiction. He has written for a number of publications including *Private Eye*, *the Daily Mail*, *the Daily Telegraph*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Times*, and *The Guardian*.

Eley Williams's winning book, in the fiction prize, is a series of experimental short stories centred upon the challenges people face in communicating thoughts and feelings. *Attrib. and Other Stories* is published by Influx Press. The book experiments with language and uses puns, forgotten words and hidden meanings.

Eley Williams teaches creative writing and children's literature at Royal Holloway, University of London, where she was recently awarded her doctorate.

The James Tait Black Prizes are distinctive in the way that they are judged. Books for the shortlist are nominated by academics and postgraduate students from the University's School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures the University of Edinburgh.

Two prizes are awarded annually for books published during the previous year – one for the best work of fiction and the other for the best biography.

Craig Brown's book was chosen for the £10,000 biography prize from a shortlist that featured *The Day That Went Missing* by Richard Beard (Harvill Secker); *Ali, A Life* by Jonathan Eig (Simon & Schuster); *The Dawn Watch, Joseph Conrad in a Global World* by Maya Jasanoff (William Collins).

Ranked among the top universities in the world

Eley Williams's book topped a shortlist with three other writers competing for the £10,000 fiction prize that included: *American War* by Omar El Akkad, (Picador); *White Tears* by Hari Kunzru, (Hamish Hamilton); *First Love* by Gwendoline Riley (Granta).

Biography judge Dr Jonathan Wild, of the University of Edinburgh, said of the winning entry: "Craig Brown's astonishing blend of materials work together to create a biography that is both profound and wildly entertaining."

Fiction Judge of the James Tait Black Prize Dr Alex Lawrie, of the University of Edinburgh, said of the winning book: "This is a remarkable set of short stories: experimental in the best way possible, articulating moments of intense intimacy with stunning freshness and clarity."

The James Tait Black Awards were founded in 1919 by Janet Coats, the widow of publisher James Tait Black, to commemorate her husband's love of good books.

This year's winners join the distinguished group of past winners which includes Angela Carter, Graham Greene, DH Lawrence, Muriel Spark, Lytton Strachey, E.M Forster and Martin Amis.

This year's fiction shortlist features in a free online course to help book lovers get the best out of their reading. How to Read a Novel was launched in 2017 by The University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh International Book Festival.

More than 27,000 people have signed up for the four week course via the FutureLearn website.

Each year the University also awards the James Tait Black Prize for Drama for the best original play written in English, Scots or Gaelic and first performed by a professional company in the previous year.

Participants can sign-up for the free online course at:
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/how-to-read-a-novel/3>

Twitter: @EdinUniMedia - #JamesTaitBlack

For further information on the Prizes go to: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/james-tait-black>

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