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PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

Netflix screenwriter, cosmology graduate and TV and film journalist feature on list of successful writers to win a place on the coveted Escalator fiction writing scheme

Writers' Centre Norwich (WCN) is thrilled to reveal the 10 winners of this year's Escalator Talent Development scheme - singled out from hundreds of entries as the most exciting short story and novel writers to emerge from the East of England this year.

The impressive list includes a Netflix screenwriter, cosmology graduate and former TV and film writer for NME, who each seek support and advice to help them take the next step on their professional writing journey.

In alphabetical order, the winners are:

- Terri Armstrong (Norfolk)
- Dane Buckley (Essex)
- Sarah Courtauld (Suffolk)
- Sally Craythorne (Norfolk)
- Alex Ivey (Norfolk)
- Ingrid Jendrzewski (Cambridgeshire)
- Ellie Khojinian (Norfolk)
- Owen Nicholls (Norfolk)
- Rebecca Sollom (Cambridgeshire)
- Sunitha Webster (Suffolk)

Six further shortlisted writers were highly commended by the judging panel: Eva Cheek, Claire Wade, Sophie Sellars, Adam Keogh, Samantha Allen and Claudia Lambert.

Over the next 10 months, each writer will receive a package of support including one-to-one mentoring from established writers, a residential retreat with tailored development workshops, peer support and a final showcase to agents and publishers.

This year's mentors are award-winning, critically-acclaimed writers Tahmima Anam, Yvette Edwards, Benjamin Johncock, Cathy Rentzenbrink and Nikesh Shukla.

The winners met their mentors, and each other, for the first time at the inaugural Escalator event hosted at Writers' Centre Norwich, Dragon Hall, on Saturday 20 May.

Novelist Rebecca Sollom from Cambridgeshire said:

'It was a great day in great company at Dragon Hall, which is spectacular. It's hugely exciting that I'll have one-on-one support from Tahmima Anam, my mentor, as I tackle this challenging project.'

For the past decade, Escalator has supported over 90 writers in their creative projects, with many going on to sign with agents, publish and receive awards for their writing.

Past winners include Megan Bradbury, author of the acclaimed novel *Everyone is Watching*; Guy Saville, author of international bestseller *The Afrika Reich*; Nicola Upson, Tim Clare, Susan Sellers, Kate Worsley, Ruth Dugdall and Padrika Tarrant.

It is a unique opportunity offered exclusively to short story and novel writers living in the Eastern region of England (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk).

Chris Gribble, chief executive of WCN said:

'The remarkable quality and scope of applications received for Escalator this year demonstrates once again that literature is really thriving in the East of England. We are very pleased to welcome our new Escalatees to the scheme, and to Norwich as a UNESCO City of Literature, and look forward to working with them over the coming year.'

The Escalator Talent Development Scheme is supported by Arts Council England and the Leverhulme Trust.

Further information can be found at <http://www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk/main-events/escalator/> or by calling 01603 877177.

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Notes to Editors

1. Press enquiries to: Andrew Burton, Director of Communications, Writers' Centre Norwich at andrew.burton@writerscentrenorwich.org.uk or 01603 877177
2. Writers' Centre Norwich's mission is to put literature at the heart of contemporary culture. Through pioneering and collaborative projects it explores the artistic and social power of creative writing and literary translation. www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk
3. Writers' Centre Norwich's key stakeholder funders are Arts Council England, the University of East Anglia, Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council.

4. Writers' biographies

Terri Armstrong

Australian-born Terri studied politics and sociology at UEA. Her first novel, *Standing Water*, won the 2010 Yeovil Literary Prize and was published in 2012. Terri works in housing and homelessness. She is interested in the mental health benefits of writing creatively and delivers Writing for Wellbeing workshops.

All cities harbour a wealth of lives deliberately hidden or wilfully unseen — even Norwich. In *Clothing for the Soul*, Terri's novel, some of these possible lives are exposed through the curiosity and determination of a newly-recruited police woman — despite her own problems and the limitations of a resource-starved service — including that of a young Syrian boy trafficked illegally with his mother and sister.

Dane Buckley

Dane Buckley has an MA in Creative Writing from Birkbeck. He has read his stories at Writer's Hub, had work performed at Liars' League, edited the short story anthology, *Mechanics' Institute Review*, and written for *Gay Times*. You may recognise him from pages 5 and 17 of the Spring/Summer 1985 Mothercare catalogue. [@daneacle](#)

Dane's short story collection is about the colourful minorities on the fringes of society and the resilience, charm, humour and tragedy of those still trying to find their place. Music, sex, voodoo, love and rebellion take the reader from gypsies and runaways to refugees and school boys; from Camden and Calcutta to New Orleans and Greenland.

Sarah Courtauld

Sarah is a screenwriter and award-winning author of children's books. Past works include screenwriting for the children's fantasy show *Evermoor* (Disney) and coming of age comedy drama *Free Rein* (Netflix). Her short stories have been published in various magazines and broadcast on Radio 4. *The Visitor* is her first novel.

Holed up in her flat, a young woman reels from her father's death, drinking gallons of cheap red wine. Then one night, her dad turns up. He's come back, he says, to finish a couple of emails. But having a ghostly flatmate isn't ideal, even if it is the parent you desperately miss...

Sally Craythorne

Sally (S.E.) Craythorne is a graduate of MA Creative Writing at UEA. She has been published in poetry and prose. Her debut novel, *How You See Me*, was published by Myriad Editions in 2015. She lives on a smallholding in South Norfolk with her husband, twin daughters, and son.

[@secraythorne](#) | [Facebook](#)

Goat is a crime novel. The farmer is dead and the farm is dying. Ellie returns with a baby and a secret to keep. She has discovered her partner Sam is married. But, when Sam's wife dies suddenly, can Ellie be sure it was suicide, or could it be murder?

Alex Ivey

Alex Ivey is a US-born, UK-based Young Adult (YA) writer and community development worker. She is a graduate of UEA's Creative Writing MA, and four-time longlistee in Mslexia's Women's Novel and Children's Competitions. Her novels have also been longlisted for the Bath Children's Novel Award and shortlisted for David Fickling's Master of the Inkpot Award.

YA novel *The Glass Hotel* follows Effy, a damaged seventeen-year-old runaway, who believes she can forge a self-sufficient life in the woods of Portland, Oregon, along with other homeless youth. But as Effy's camp grows, painful histories, drugs, urban influences and hubris threaten their precarious lifestyle. Effy is ultimately betrayed and confronted with her own self-delusions.

Ingrid Jendrzewski

Ingrid Jendrzewski grew up in Indiana and has studied both creative writing and physics. Her work has found homes in places like *Passages North*, *Aesthetica*, *Rattle*, *Litro*, *The Conium Review*, and *The Los Angeles Review*. Her work was nominated for a Pushcart Prize, Vestal Review's VERA Award, and twice for Best Small Fictions. [Website](#) | [@LunchOnTuesday](#) | [Facebook](#)

Ingrid is working on a collection of closely linked stories set in the US Midwest as the high school students prepare for their graduation and senior prom. As a whole, the work explores various ways in which the different generations in this community connect – and fail to connect – with each other.

Ellie Khojinian

Ellie Khojinian grew up in Norwich then read French and Arabic at the University of Leeds, followed by an MA in Francophone Studies, before taking jobs as a TV subtitler, ESOL teacher and guidance worker. She met her Iranian husband in the UK and they came back to raise their young family in lovely liberal and literary Norwich. [Facebook](#)

Ellie is writing a novel set in present-day Iran that centres around a group of elderly Iranian men who come together during a family crisis. It is about love, friendship and growing older. Ellie wants her characters to do justice to the Iran and Iranian people that she has come to know and to love.

Owen Nicholls

Owen is a former projectionist and film journalist who has written for *NME* and *EMPIRE*. He studied Film at the University of Kent and earned an MA in Scriptwriting from the University of East Anglia. In 2016, Owen had his first screenplay optioned to Bedlam Productions. *Reel Love* will be his first novel. He lives in Hempnall with his partner and their two sons. [@OwenNicholls](#)

Reel Love explores relationships in their many varied forms - from the ecstasy of a first connection, through to the normality of everyday life, to the agony of a break up. *Reel Love* also looks at our relationship with cinema, showing the influence storytelling can have on how we connect with others, for better or for worse.

Rebecca Sollom

After some writerly success as a teenager in Australia – publication in a student story anthology - Rebecca fell in love with physics, eventually taking up a Gates Cambridge Scholarship to study cosmology. When she and physics broke up, she began to write again. She lives in Grantchester.
[@rebeccasollom](#)

Rebecca's novel *New Seattle* tells the story of Kal, a young deafblind man who journeys across the USA in search of love and language, going viral along the way.

Sunitha Webster

Sunitha Webster is a graduate of the UEA Creative Writing - Scriptwriting MA and was also selected as Skillset Bursary Award winner that year. The most recent anthology including her work is *Preserving Hidden Histories* by New City Community Press. Her writing explores the interface between science and the imagination.

Faders will be a novel set in the near future, consisting of a series of stories spanning the globe and charting a select cohort of subjects undergoing a new drug and conditioning programme, designed to alleviate grief. Connecting them is Maya, whose attempts to overcome loss threatens the programme's success.