



The Royal Society
of Literature



Aida Edemariam

wins

the £10,000

RSL Ondaatje Prize

in its 15th year

for

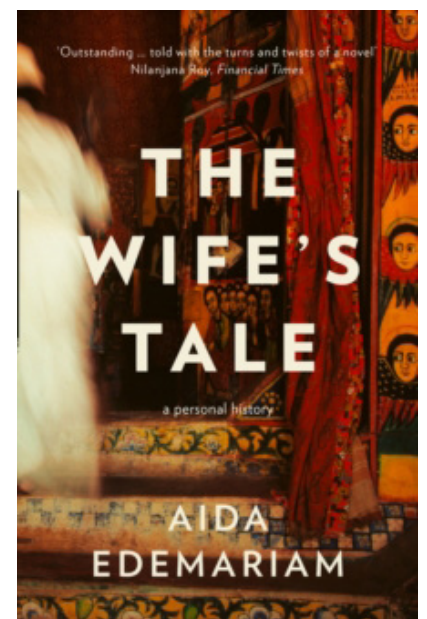
The Wife's Tale: A Personal History (4th Estate)

The 2019 judges **Sabrina Mahfouz**, **Michèle Roberts** and **Ian Thomson** commented:

'Aida Edemariam mixes memoir, oral history, fiction and snatches of prayer to compose this beautiful, complicated, sensual account of her grandmother's life. Her original form and newly-minted language create a strong, delicate structure embodying her grandmother's spirit and will to survive.' **Michèle Roberts**

'Lyrical, loving storytelling of a family history at an epic time in Ethiopia's own history. The writing pulses spectacularly with heart and soul, vividly depicting one inimitable woman centred within the swirling winds of politics, religion, patriotism and change.' **Sabrina Mahfouz**

'Aida Edemariam's is an outstanding and highly unusual memoir, that absorbs the reader from start to finish. I was moved by the book's strong poetic voice and the marvellous quality of the writing throughout.' **Ian Thomson**



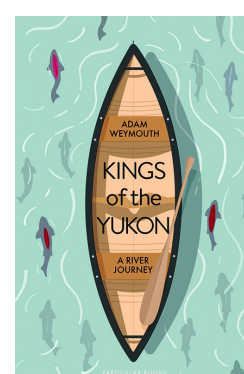
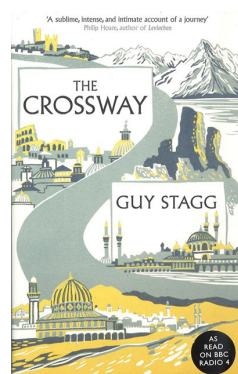
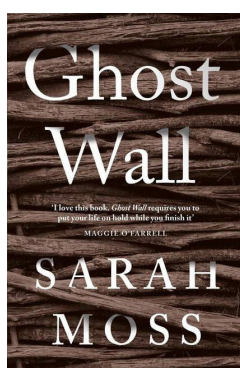
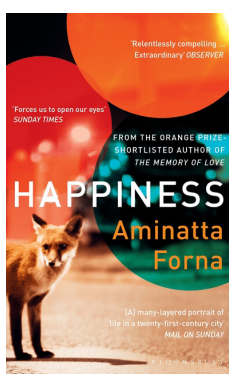
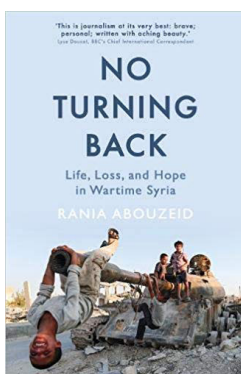
The RSL Ondaatje Prize is an annual award of £10,000 for a distinguished work of fiction, non-fiction or poetry, evoking the spirit of a place.



Aida Edemariam, who is of dual Ethiopian and Canadian heritage, grew up in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She studied English Literature at Oxford University and the University of Toronto, and has worked as a journalist in New York, Toronto and London, where she is currently a senior feature writer and editor for *The Guardian*. *The Wife's Tale* won a Royal Society of Literature Jerwood Award for a work of non-fiction in progress, and was a finalist for a Governor General's Literary Award. She lives in Oxford.

All publicity enquiries for Aida Edemariam should be directed to Patrick Hargadon
patrick.hargadon@harpercollins.co.uk

The other shortlisted books in 2019:



Rania Abouzeid

No Turning Back: Life, Loss, and Hope in Wartime Syria (Oneworld)

'Despite Syria being so much in the news, this striking, beautifully written book manages to highlight many threads that have often been ignored in favour of "covering the conflict" - those of peoples' stories from all walks of Syrian life, deftly linked into the global political landscape across decades.' **Sabrina Mahfouz**



Publicist: Margot Weale

mweale@oneworld-publications.com

Aminatta Forna

Happiness (Bloomsbury)

'Aminatta Forna charts a hidden geography, a secret topography, of city life, connecting urban landscapes with images of animal and human outsiders. She creates an unforgettable portrait of people surviving in unexpected ways, helped by each other's courage and love.' **Michèle Roberts**



Publicist: Philippa Cotton

Philippa.cotton@bloomsbury.com

Sarah Moss

Ghost Wall (Granta)

'An inventive novel, fraught with menace, which conjures darkest Northumbria as a group of archaeologists set out to recreate life as it might have been lived in the Iron Age.' **Ian Thomson**

Publicist: Natalie Shaw nshaw@granta.com



Guy Stagg

The Crossway (Picador)

'A poignant memoir describing the turning away from modern life and modern politics, to travel an ancient route of pilgrimage. A beautifully written account of an inner and outer journey.' **Michèle Roberts**

Publicist: Camilla Elworthy c.elworthy@macmillan.co.uk

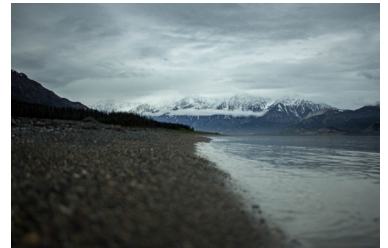


Adam Weymouth

Kings of the Yukon: A River Journey (Particular Books)

'An engagingly eccentric travelogue, fraught with an autumnal sense of elegy and sadness for the human despoliation of nature, that absorbs from start to finish.' **Ian Thomson**

Publicist: Kate Smith ksmith2@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk



Previous RSL Ondaatje Prize winners:

2018	Pascale Petit	<i>Mama Amazonica</i>
2017	Francis Spufford	<i>Golden Hill</i>
2016	Peter Pomerantsev	<i>Nothing is True and Everything is Possible</i>
2015	Justin Marozzi	<i>Baghdad: City of Peace, City of Blood</i>
2014	Alan Johnson	<i>This Boy</i>
2013	Philip Hensher	<i>Scenes from Early Life</i>
2012	Rahul Bhattacharya	<i>The Sly Company of People Who Care</i>
2011	Edmund de Waal	<i>The Hare with Amber Eyes</i>
2010	Ian Thomson	<i>The Dead Yard: Tales of Modern Jamaica</i>
2009	Adam Nicolson	<i>Sissinghurst: An Unfinished History</i>
2008	Graham Robb	<i>The Discovery of France</i>
2007	Hisham Matar	<i>In the Country of Men</i>
2006	James Meek	<i>The People's Act of Love</i>
2005	Rory Stewart	<i>The Places In Between</i>
2004	Louisa Waugh	<i>Hearing Birds Fly</i>

For further information about the RSL or the RSL Ondaatje Prize, please contact annette@rsliterature.org | 020 7845 4680 | @RSLiterature | rsliterature.org