

Women Poets' Prize

Evaluation Report 2018-2020

“The incredible level of diversity, high number of applications and the powerful statements reveal that the Women Poets' Prize is a ground-breaking and essential new Prize, demonstrating how important it is to provide women centred development programmes. The Rebecca Swift Foundation is to be congratulated on setting it up with such care and attention; it acts as an important model for literature organisations in the UK going forward.

Nathalie Teitler

“The standard of the entries was exceptionally high. These are sophisticated poets who have found their voices: and those voices are incredibly varied, challenging yet also often downright beautiful. Across this diverse group of poets, each one is subtle, transformative, distinctive and powerful.

Moniza Alvi, Sarah Howe, Fiona Sampson Women Poets' Prize 2018 Judging Panel



**Rebecca Swift
Foundation**

Executive Summary

- The number of applicants for the scheme, **573**, is very high for a mentoring and development scheme. In comparison The Complete Works Poetry, a national development programme for Black and Asian poets, had fewer than 200 applications for each of its 3 rounds.
- The **diversity of the applicants** is equally striking: exact numbers are hard to calculate as they are not stated on applications but the statements reveal that at least one third of applicants are women of colour.
- The diversity is equally marked in the **range of age** (18-70s), **geographic location** (every country is represented including Ireland, Scotland and Wales), **career level** (beginner poets to writers with many published collections), **disability/chronic illness** (almost half the applicants).
- This level of diversity compares favourably with the Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship and The Complete Works Poetry (note: TCW was a programme for Black and Asian poets thus all applicants were Black/Asian), both are considered to be at the forefront of promoting inclusivity within the literature sector.
- Both the high number of applicants and the level of diversity are a **major achievement**, particularly for a Prize in its first round.
- The high numbers and the applications themselves demonstrate a **clear demand for a poetry prize designed for women**, with all female tutors, a holistic approach, and focus on empowerment.
- The application statements and numbers also demonstrates how little provision there is currently for a women focused poetry development programme/courses and demonstrates a **need within the wider poetry sector**.