

The Folio Prize announces inaugural shortlist

Monday 10 February 2014: The judges of THE FOLIO PRIZE 2014 have today announced the eight titles on the much anticipated inaugural shortlist. The Folio Prize is sponsored by The Folio Society, the celebrated publisher of beautiful editions of the world's greatest books.

Authors Anne Carson, Amity Gaige, Jane Gardam, Kent Haruf, Rachel Kushner, Eimear McBride, Sergio De La Pava and George Saunders are all in the running for the £40,000 prize, which will be awarded at a glittering ceremony at the St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel on Monday 10 March.

Lavinia Greenlaw, Chair of the jury - comprising international writers Michael Chabon, Sarah Hall, Nam Le and Pankaj Mishra - made the announcement at a press conference at the British Library today, alongside Toby Hartwell, MD of The Folio Society and Andrew Kidd, MD of Aitken Alexander Associates and founder of The Folio Prize. The Folio Prize aims to recognise and celebrate the best English-language fiction from around the world, published in the UK during a given year, regardless of form, genre or the author's country of origin. It is the first major English-language book prize open to writers from all over the world.

The eight books in contention for this year's prize are:

Red Doc by Anne Carson (Random House/Jonathan Cape)

Schroder by Amity Gaige (Faber & Faber)

Last Friends by Jane Gardam (Little, Brown)

Benediction by Kent Haruf (Picador)

The Flame Throwers by Rachel Kushner (Random House/Harvill Secker)

A Girl Is A Half-Formed Thing by Eimear McBride (Galley Beggar Press)

A Naked Singularity by Sergio De La Pava (Maclehose Editions)

Tenth of December by George Saunders (Bloomsbury)

Announcing the shortlist, **Lavinia Greenlaw, Chair of the judges** said:

“From its inception, the emphasis of the Folio Prize has been on the relationship between good writing and good reading. The Prize makes an unapologetic assertion about the value of experience and expertise, and the high expectations that come from spending much of your life investigating and testing language and form.

I was delighted, and also daunted, to be asked to chair the inaugural Prize. I knew none of my fellow judges before we started and yet as soon as we started it became clear that we could proceed with the confidence and understanding of those who have worked together for years.

Our experience of reading 80 books over five months was full of surprises, challenges, frustrations, provocations, regrets and delights. The shortlist we've arrived at is one of which we're proud. Our deliberations were long and intense. We forgot about the authors and focused on the books. Only when we surfaced with our chosen eight in hand did we reflect on what they collectively represent: the art of fiction at full stretch and in all its forms, and the ingenious and dazzling results of form under exquisite pressure.

Our final choice will be extremely difficult. Each one of these eight titles would be a worthy winner of a prize dedicated to celebrating the best of fiction as it is now being written."

Andrew Kidd, Founder of The Folio Prize says:

"It was my great privilege to sit in on the meetings of the inaugural Folio Prize judges. Their brief was simple: what, in their view, were the most exciting and outstanding English language books to appear in the last year? They were asked to disregard nationality, ethnicity, gender and lifetime achievement and to concentrate solely on the words on the pages in front of them. Thrillingly, that's exactly what they did.

As a result of putting together an academy of authors and critics, of people who live and breathe books, 80 works of fiction were given the most rigorous, careful and generous sounding any author could wish for. The result is a shortlist of eight amazing books that range from classical narrative to prose poetry; from a 'messy masterpiece' to a collection of effectively flawless short stories. It's a list that ticks no boxes, balances the interests of no constituencies and will no doubt stir all kinds of debate. In the end it is, quite simply, the eight books that in the collective view of five brilliant readers were the best pieces of storytelling of 2013."

Toby Hartwell, MD of The Folio Society, Sponsor of The Folio Prize says:

"At The Folio Society we are passionate champions of great books, in both content and form; the very best writing of the past presented in the most beautiful editions that will be treasured for future generations. In sponsoring The Folio Prize our hope was that we could continue this tradition of excellence and uncover the best fiction of our time, books that will be read and reread and admired for decades to come, much as great books from the past are revered. This outstanding shortlist confirms that The Folio Prize will abundantly deliver this ambition.

At The Folio Society we debate and discuss at length which novels are worthy of presentation in a Folio Society edition each year. I know that our illustrious judges have applied the same rigour and passion to narrowing down The Folio Academy's original nominations. I don't envy their task in choosing a winner of the inaugural award of The Folio Prize on March 10th."

Toby Hartwell also announced that The Folio Society will sponsor a new initiative – **The Folio Prize Fiction Festival**, in partnership with the British Library – on the weekend of the 8-9 March. The festival, taking place at the British Library, will feature The Folio Prize judges, shortlisted authors and members of the Academy. The programme is organised around the five elements that lie at the heart of great fiction and our appreciation of it: Form, Voice, Structure, Place and Context. Together the judges and their guest Academicians – who include **A.S. Byatt, Sebastian Faulks, Mark Haddon, Andrew O'Hagan** and **Ali Smith** – will examine how each element is essential to those books that stimulate and stay with us.

The full programme for the **THE FOLIO PRIZE FICTION FESTIVAL** can be viewed here: www.bl.uk/folio-festival

More information on **THE FOLIO PRIZE** can be found at www.thefolioprize.com.

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Notes to Editors:

Panel of Judges, Biographies

- **Lavinia Greenlaw (Chair)** is a poet, novelist and critic. Her awards include a NESTA Fellowship, a Wellcome Fellowship, France's Prix du Premier Roman Etranger, and the 2011 Ted Hughes Award. Her latest book is *A Double Sorrow: Troilus and Criseyde*.
- **Michael Chabon** is an acclaimed and bestselling novelist and essayist whose major works include the 2001 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*.
- **Sarah Hall** has won numerous awards for her books, including the 2003 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Novel, the 2006/07 John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, the James Tiptree Jr. Award and a Lakeland Book of the Year prize.
- **Nam Le's** first book, *The Boat*, translated into fourteen languages, received over a dozen major awards in Australia, America and Europe, and was selected as a book of the year by over thirty publications around the world.
- **Pankaj Mishra** won the LA Times Art Seidenbaum award for First Fiction for *The Romantics: A Novel*, and was shortlisted for the Orwell Prize in 2013 for *From the Ruins of Empire*. This January he was received the prestigious Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding.

The judges were drawn by lot from **THE FOLIO PRIZE ACADEMY**, a unique body of highly respected, award-winning writers and critics from across the globe. The expertise and experience of Academicians reflects The Folio Prize's aim to encourage a consistent focus on excellence. Lots were drawn by The Literature Prize Foundation, until the panel consisted of no more than three members of the same gender, with three judges based in the UK and two internationally. Writers and critics are invited to join the Academy by the Foundation, supported by The Folio Prize Advisory Committee. There are currently 187 members of the Academy. Members of the Academy can nominate up to three titles each from which the top 60 books are put forward to the judges. Publishers are then invited to write to the judges in support of up to 5 titles not selected through the nomination process and from these the judges select a further 20 titles. The judges read a total of 80 titles. Books published in the UK during the 2013 calendar year are eligible for the inaugural Prize.

For further details please see: www.thefolioprize.com/the-academy

The Winner Event

The Winner Announcement celebration will be held on Monday 10th March from 6-10.00pm, at Hansom Hall, St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, Euston Road, London NW1 2QR.

The Folio Prize Fiction Festival

The Folio Prize Fiction Festival is a two-day fiction festival featuring some of the world's finest writers and critics, all drawn from The Folio Prize Academy. It will be presented by The Folio Society and run in partnership with The British Library. For more information go to www.bl.uk/whatson

The Literature Prize Foundation

The Literature Prize Foundation is a registered charity committed to bringing the most outstanding works of English language fiction to public attention through the awarding of The Folio Prize. Overseen by its trustees, and in cooperation with The Folio Society, the Foundation will seek to engage readers and writers throughout the English-speaking world in cultural debate and in the celebration of the art of literature, which it believes has the capacity to enrich and change people's lives.

The Folio Society

For over 65 years **The Folio Society** has been publishing beautiful illustrated editions of the world's greatest books. We believe that the literary content of a book should be matched by its physical form. With specially commissioned illustrations, many of our editions are further enhanced with introductions written by leading figures in their fields: novelists, journalists, academics, scientists and artists.

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The British Library: Host and Partner for The Folio Prize Fiction festival

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