

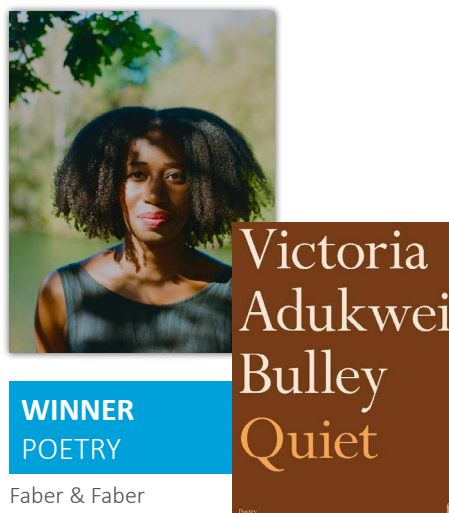


MEDIA RELEASE | **STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 7.45PM BST MONDAY 27TH MARCH**

MARGO JEFFERSON, VICTORIA ADUKWEI BULLEY AND MICHELLE DE KRETZER ANNOUNCED WINNERS OF THE 2023 RATHBONES FOLIO PRIZE



Margo Jefferson
Constructing a Nervous System



Victoria Adukwei Bulley
Quiet



Michelle de Kretzer
Scary Monsters

- **Margo Jefferson** takes the Rathbones Folio Prize Book of the Year for *Constructing a Nervous System*, as the prize introduces a new structure across three categories: Non-Fiction, Fiction and Poetry
 - **Victoria Adukwei Bulley's** debut collection *Quiet* takes the Poetry category
 - **Michelle de Kretzer** wins the Fiction category for *Scary Monsters*
- **Crossing genres and continents**, the three female category winners represent the shared creative concerns of contemporary writers, **with a razor focus on form, racial integrity, identity, and selfhood**

In its first year under a new prize structure, the Rathbones Folio Prize awarded winners across three categories: Non-Fiction, Fiction and Poetry. At a packed ceremony at the British Library, the judges **Ali Smith, Jackie Kay** and **Guy Gunaratne** first announced the category winners: **Margo Jefferson** (Non-Fiction), **Victoria Adukwei Bulley** (Poetry) and **Michelle de Kretzer** (Fiction), followed shortly by the winner presentation of the Rathbones Folio Prize Book of the Year with a total prize pot of £36,000. **Spanning three different genres and continents**, the three female category winners represent the shared creative concerns of writers today, **with a sharp focus on form, racial integrity, identity, and selfhood.**

Following the announcement of the category winners, Ali Smith, on behalf of her fellow judges proclaimed Pulitzer-prize winning author, **Margo Jefferson**, winner of the £30,000 2023 Rathbones Folio Prize Book of the Year for *Constructing a Nervous System* (Granta). The judges described the book as: "An astounding and rhapsodic book, playful and serious, throwing form brightly open as it goes, *Constructing a Nervous System* is partly a memoir, partly an adept and energising cultural study, partly a lit-up kind of lit crit, and wholly a deeply moving delight, the result of which is a book unlike any other; a thrilling, generous, spirited and surprising read that remakes culture, redresses history, renews and repurposes everything it touches, and passes on these gifts of reinvention and renewal to everyone who'll read it."

Rising star of British poetry **Victoria Adukwei Bulley** was awarded the Poetry prize for her debut collection **Quiet** (Faber) which the judges described as “*a quiet revolution of a book – subtle, supple and serious, these poems look for a language, a language that can be shared, that embraces the inner and the outer worlds. Tender and true, complex and profound, Quiet is a beautiful balancing act of a book – a debut that brings Adukwei Bulley fully-formed, starting something!*”

The Sri Lankan novelist **Michelle de Kretser** won the Fiction category for **Scary Monsters** (Allen & Unwin), described by the judges as “*a work of beautifully composed genius, two consonant stories work to disorient and entangle, disarm and fascinate, all while implicating the reader’s private experience with those of the lives in the novel. This is a book that troubles and disquiets, dazzles and delights, and with lively wit and intelligence, will also make you laugh darkly.*”

Both Margo and Michelle flew over for the ceremony and are available for interviews, along with Victoria who lives in the UK.

At the British Library, shortlisted authors were joined by publishers, agents, booksellers, and writers from the Folio Academy in one of the busiest prize ceremonies since lockdown.

Minna Fry, said: “*It always feels like the greatest possible privilege to sit in on the judging sessions for the Rathbones Folio Prize – as three writers from our Academy discuss, dissect and celebrate the work of their peers – and the deliberations of this year’s panel were thrilling to witness. We are so grateful to Ali, Jackie and Guy for the care and generosity they brought to the entire process, culminating in three amazing category winners, from which the wondrous overall winner Constructing a Nervous System was selected.*”

In winning the overall prize, **Margo Jefferson** joins **Colm Tóibín** (2022), **Carmen Maria Machado** (2021), **Valeria Luiselli** (2020), **Raymond Antrobus** (2019), **Richard Lloyd Parry** (2018), **Hisham Matar** (2017), **Akhil Sharma** (2015) and **George Saunders** (2014) as previous winners of the prize – the only one governed by an international academy of distinguished writers, the Folio Academy.

The Rathbones Folio Prize is the flagship of the Literature / Folio Prize Foundation, which also includes the Rathbones Folio Prize Mentorships for aspiring young writers and Rathbones Folio Prize Sessions at literary festivals across the UK. Awarded for literary excellence, the Rathbones Folio Prize is the only international, English-language award nominated by an academy of writers at the forefront of the literary community. The prize announced its refreshed format for 2023, to address the changing landscape of literary prizes, spotlight more authors, and offer readers and retailers a clearer, broader range of recommendations.

Join the conversation via: rathbonesfolioprize.com | [@RathbonesFolio](https://twitter.com/RathbonesFolio)

Images for media, including author headshots and winner photography are available to access [here](#).

Notes to Editors

About Margo Jefferson | Margo Jefferson was a theatre and book critic for *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*, and her writing has appeared in *Vogue*, *New York* magazine and *New Republic* among other publications. She is a professor of writing at Columbia University School of the Arts and the author of *Negroland* – which was shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize and winner of a National Book Critics Circle Award – and *On Michael Jackson*. She lives in New York City, USA. Margo will be visiting the UK in May and is available for interviews.

About Michelle de Kretser | Michelle de Kretser was born in Sri Lanka and emigrated to Australia when she was 14. She was educated in Melbourne and Paris. She is the author of five other novels: *The Rose Grower*, *The Hamilton Case*, *The Lost Dog*, which was longlisted for both the Man Booker and the Orange Prize, *Questions of Travel*, which won several prizes including the Miles Franklin Literary Award and the Prime Minister’s Literary Award, and *The Life to Come*, winner of the Miles Franklin Literary Award. She lives in Sydney.

About Victoria Adukwei Bulley | Victoria Adukwei Bulley is a poet, writer and artist. An alumna of the Barbican Young Poets and recipient of an Eric Gregory award, Victoria has held residencies in the US, Brazil and the V&A Museum in London. Her debut pamphlet, *Girl B*, was published by the African Poetry Book Fund in 2017. She is the recipient of a Techne scholarship for doctoral research at Royal Holloway, University of London. *Quiet* is her debut collection and was also shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize.

The 2023 Rathbones Folio Prize: Non-Fiction Shortlist

About the Folio Prize | Established in 2013, initially with the sponsorship of The Folio Society, **The Folio Prize** is the first major



Constructing A Nervous System
Margo Jefferson



In Love
Amy Bloom



The Escape Artist
Jonathan Freedland



The Passengers
Will Ashon



The Social Distance Between Us
Darren McGarvey

The 2023 Rathbones Folio Prize: Fiction Shortlist



Scary Monsters
Michelle de Kretser



Glory
NoViolet Bulawayo



Lucy by the Sea
Elizabeth Strout



Emergency
Daisy Hildyard



Pure Colour
Sheila Heti

The 2023 Rathbones Folio Prize: Poetry Shortlist



Quiet
Victoria Adukwei Bulley



England's Green
Zaffar Kunial



Cane, Corn & Gully
Safiya Kamaria Kinshasa



Manorism
Yomi Sode



Ephemeron
Fiona Benson

English language book prize open to writers from around the world. It is the only prize in which all contenders are selected and judged by an academy of peers: **The Folio Academy**.

This year's shortlisted authors were **Will Ashon, Amy Bloom, Jonathan Freedland, Margo Jefferson, Darren McGarvey, NoViolet Bulawayo, Sheila Heti, Daisy Hildyard, Michelle de Kretser, Elizabeth Strout, Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Fiona Benson, Safiya Kamaria Kinshasa, Zaffar Kunial** and **Yomi Sode**.

Since 2017, the prize has been sponsored by **Rathbones Investment Management**.

The Rathbones Folio Prize is open to **all works of literature, regardless of form**-- reflecting a greater diversity and variety of voices present in our literary culture and society as a whole.

In 2022, the prize **expanded its structure further** and now celebrates three distinct shortlists for **Fiction, Non-Fiction and Poetry**. Each category winner, selected from a shortlist of four, will receive a £2,000 prize and one book will then be crowned overall Rathbones Folio Prize winner, with the author receiving an additional **£30,000**.

Under the directorship of **Minna Fry**, the prize has established a year-round programme of literary events across the UK-- **The Rathbones Folio Prize Sessions**-- and enjoys a presence at festivals such as Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Chalke Valley, Jersey, Words on the Water, Aye Write, Chichester Culture Spark Festivals and others.

The **Rathbones Folio Prize Mentorships** is a unique scheme for aspiring young writers, which pairs members of the Folio Academy as mentors with First Story students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They meet face-to-face as well as online to work on a creative writing portfolio project, which is then shared at a public showcase.

Previous prize winners are **Colm Tóibín** for *The Magician* (2022), **Carmen Maria Machado** for *In the Dream House* (2021), **Valeria Luiselli** (Fiction) in 2020, **Raymond Antrobus** (Poetry) in 2019, **Richard Lloyd-Parry** (Non-Fiction) in 2018, **Hisham Matar** (Non-Fiction) in 2017, **Akhil Sharma** (Fiction) in 2015, **George Saunders** (Fiction) in 2014.

The Folio Academy is a community of 300+ writers who represent excellence in literature. Academicians include: **Margaret Atwood, Carol Ann Duffy, Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith** and **Sir Tom Stoppard**. The Academy recently recruited members including **Emily Berry, Juno Dawson, Joseph Coelho, Chris Power, Katherine Rundell**, and **Kit de Waal**.

About The Folio Academy | The Folio Academy is a community of 300+ writers, who represent excellence in literature. Academicians include: Margaret Atwood, Carol Ann Duffy, Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith and Sir Tom Stoppard. Between them, Academicians have won thousands of literary awards, including 16 Man Booker Prizes. Academicians may be called upon to comment on literature matters in the media, to appear at festivals and public events, and may volunteer to mentor young writers in the Rathbones Folio Mentorships scheme, run in association with the charity First Story, which runs creative writing residencies in secondary schools serving low-income communities.

About The Literature/Folio Prize Foundation | The Literature/Folio Prize Foundation is a registered charity committed to bringing the most outstanding works of English language literature to public attention both through the awarding of the Prize and the Rathbones Folio Mentorships scheme, as well as other initiatives. Overseen by its trustees, the Foundation seeks to engage readers and writers throughout the English-speaking world in cultural debate and in the celebration and sustainment of the art of literature, which it believes has the capacity to enrich and change people's lives.

About Rathbones Investment Management | Rathbones Investment Management is one of the UK's leading providers of high-quality discretionary investment management services. It manages over £60.2 billion* of funds for individuals, charities and trustees, and is part of Rathbones Group Plc, an independently owned company with a listing on the London Stock Exchange. Investment management services are offered in Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Chichester, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Kendal, Liverpool, London, Lymington, Newcastle and Winchester. Offshore investment management services are offered by subsidiary Rathbones Investment Management International in Jersey.

**As at 31 December 2022, includes funds managed by Rathbones Unit Trust Management*