

Strictly embargoed until Tuesday 21 May 2019, 9.45pm (BST)



## Jokha Alharthi and Marilyn Booth win Man Booker International Prize 2019 for *Celestial Bodies*

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- Jokha Alharthi wins with Oman's coming-of-age story
- Alharthi is first Arabic author to win the prize and the first Omani woman to have a novel translated into English
  - Please find images for the winning author, translator and book [here](#)

*Celestial Bodies*, written by Jokha Alharthi, translated by Marilyn Booth from Arabic and published by Sandstone Press, is today, Tuesday 21 May, announced as the winner of the Man Booker International Prize 2019. The £50,000 prize, which celebrates the finest works of translated fiction from around the world, has been divided equally between its author and translator. Each shortlisted author and translator also received a further £1,000 for being shortlisted. The winner was announced by Bettany Hughes at a ceremony at the Roundhouse in London.

Jokha Alharthi, the first female Omani novelist to be translated into English, is the first author from the Arabian Gulf to win the prize. The author of two other novels, two collections of short fiction and a children's book, her work has been published in English, German, Italian, Korean, and Serbian. An award-winning author, she has been shortlisted for the Sahikh Zayed Award for Young Writers and won the 2010 Best Omani Novel Award for *Celestial Bodies*.

Marilyn Booth is an American academic and translator who has translated many works of fiction from Arabic. A fellow at Magdalen College, Oxford, she holds the Khalid bin Abdallah Al Saud Chair for the Study of the Contemporary Arab World at the Oriental Institute.

*Celestial Bodies* tells of family connections and history in the coming-of-age account of three Omani sisters. It is set against the backdrop of an evolving Oman, which is slowly redefining itself after the colonial era, at the crossroads of its complex present.

*The Guardian* commented that its ‘glimpses into a culture relatively little known in the west are fascinating’ and *The National* said ‘it mark[s] the arrival of a major literary talent... a densely woven, deeply imagined tour de force.’

*Celestial Bodies* was selected by a panel of five judges, chaired by Bettany Hughes, award-winning historian, author and broadcaster, and made up of writer, translator and chair of English PEN Maureen Freely; philosopher Professor Angie Hobbs; novelist and satirist Elnathan John and essayist and novelist Pankaj Mishra.

Bettany Hughes comments:

‘A book to win over the head and the heart in equal measure, worth lingering over. Interweaving voices and timelines are beautifully served by the pacing of the novel. Its delicate artistry draws us into a richly imagined community – opening out to tackle profound questions of time and mortality and disturbing aspects of our shared history. The style is a metaphor for the subject, subtly resisting clichés of race, slavery and gender. The translation is precise and lyrical, weaving in the cadences of both poetry and everyday speech. *Celestial Bodies* evokes the forces that constrain us and those that set us free’.

Luke Ellis, CEO of Man Group, comments:

‘On behalf of Man Group, I would like to congratulate Jokha Alharthi and Marilyn Booth, as well as each of the shortlisted authors and translators. As one of the first literary awards to celebrate the work of international authors and, in recent years, to celebrate fiction in translation, the Man Booker International Prize plays an invaluable role in encouraging a diversity of voice in fiction worldwide.

‘As our sponsorship of the Booker Prizes draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the commendable work of the Booker Prize Foundation and to wish them the very best for the future. Diversity will remain an important area of focus for Man Group as we concentrate more of our resources on our Paving the Way campaign, which aims to enhance diversity and inclusion at the firm and across the investment industry, as well as continuing to support charitable initiatives that promote literacy and numeracy.’

The Man Booker International Prize was originally established thanks to the generous extension of funding given by Man Group. The 2019 prize marks the final highlight of their successful 18-year sponsorship of the prizes. The Trustees of the Booker Prize Foundation announced on 28 February that Crankstart, the charitable foundation of Michael Moritz KBE and his wife, Harriet Heyman, will be the new supporter of the Booker Prize and the International Booker Prize from 1 June 2019. Crankstart has committed to an initial five-year exclusive funding term with an option to renew for a further five years. From June

the original prize will once again be known as the Booker Prize, while the prize for literature in translation will become the International Booker Prize.

## Events

The winning author and translator will take part in two public events following the announcement:

### Waterstones Piccadilly, London

Thursday 23 May, 7pm

Join us for an evening celebrating the winner of the Man Booker International Prize 2019. A byword for the finest fiction in translation, the prize celebrates literature from all over the world.

Following the announcement of the 2019 prize winner on Tuesday 21 May, join this year's winning author and translator for an evening of readings in both English and the original language of their book. This will be followed by a discussion about writing the book and experience of winning the prize, an audience Q&A and book signing.

The event is presented in partnership with Times Literary Supplement. The event will be chaired by award-winning writer and human rights activist, academic and former Man Booker International Prize Judge, Elif Shafak.

Book your ticket [here](#)

### Hay Festival

Saturday 25 May, 11.30am

Jokha Alharthi and Marilyn Booth will be interviewed by Chair of Judges Bettany Hughes.

Book your ticket [here](#)

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- Ends -

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## The Winner

### ***Celestial Bodies***

**Jokha Alharthi**

**Translated by Marilyn Booth from Arabic**

Published by Sandstone Press

*Celestial Bodies* is set in the village of al-Awafi in Oman, where we encounter three sisters: Mayya, who marries Abdallah after a heartbreak; Asma, who marries from a sense of duty; and Khawla who rejects all offers while waiting for her beloved, who has emigrated to Canada. These three women and their families witness Oman evolve from a traditional, slave-owning society which is slowly redefining itself after the colonial era, to the crossroads of its complex present. Elegantly structured and taut, it tells of Oman's coming-of-age through the prism of one family's losses and loves.

The judges said: 'A richly imagined, engaging and poetic insight into a society in transition and into lives previously obscured.'

**Jokha Alharthi** was born in Oman in July 1978. She is the author of two previous collections of short fiction, a children's book, and three novels in Arabic. Fluent in English, she completed a PhD in Classical Arabic Poetry in Edinburgh, and teaches at Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat. She has been shortlisted for the Sahikh Zayed Award for Young Writers and her short stories have been published in English, German, Italian, Korean, and Serbian. She lives in Oman.

**Marilyn Booth** was born in Boston, USA in February 1955. She holds the Khalid bin Abdallah Al Saud Chair for the Study of the Contemporary Arab World, Oriental Institute and Magdalen College, Oxford. In addition to her academic publications, she has translated many works of fiction from Arabic, most recently, *The Penguin's Song* and *No Road to Paradise*, both by Lebanese novelist Hassan Daoud. She lives in Oxford.

## Notes to editors

Jokha Alharthi and Marilyn Booth are available for interview.

Please contact Ruth Killick [publicity@ruthkillick.co.uk](mailto:publicity@ruthkillick.co.uk)

The Man Booker International Prize 2019 winner was chosen from the following shortlist was:

<b>Author (Original Language - Country/territory)</b>	<b>Translator</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Publisher, Imprint</b>
Jokha Alharthi	Marilyn Booth	<i>Celestial Bodies</i>	Sandstone Press

(Arabic - Oman)			
Annie Ernaux (French - France)	Alison L. Strayer	<i>The Years</i>	Fitzcarraldo Editions
Marion Poschmann (German - Germany)	Jen Calleja	<i>The Pine Islands</i>	Profile Books, Serpent's Tail
Olga Tokarczuk (Polish - Poland)	Antonia Lloyd-Jones	<i>Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead</i>	Fitzcarraldo Editions
Juan Gabriel Vásquez (Spanish - Colombia)	Anne McLean	<i>The Shape Of The Ruins</i>	MacLehose Press, Quercus
Alia Trabucco Zerán (Spanish - Chile)	Sophie Hughes	<i>The Remainder</i>	And Other Stories

- The Administrator of the Man Booker International Prize is Fiammetta Rocco - chief culture writer of *The Economist* and *1843*. The Literary Director of the Booker Prize Foundation is Gaby Wood
- Books under consideration have been published in English in translation by UK publishers between 1 May 2018 and 30 April 2019
- The winner of Man Booker International Prize 2018 was *Flights* by Olga Tokarczuk, translated by Jennifer Croft. Now in its tenth printing, sales increased 692% in the month following the winner announcement. The book is by far Fitzcarraldo Editions' bestselling title of all time, and the prize win also had a knock-on effect on the publication of Olga Tokarczuk's *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* (translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones), published in September 2018, which is already on its fourth printing and shortlisted for this year's prize
- There is no restriction on the number of submissions per publisher but this will be kept under review and may change in future years
- Four Culture handles PR and event management for the prize and provides all events and administrative back-up
- The Man Booker International Prize website includes detailed information about all aspects of the prize and runs regular news bulletins: [www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)
- The Booker Prize Foundation Advisory Committee, which advises on any changes to the rules and on the selection of the judges, represents all aspects of the book world. Its members are: Jonty Claypole - Head of Arts, BBC; James Daunt - Managing Director of Waterstones; Jonathan Douglas - Director of the National Literacy Trust;

Adam Freudenheim - publisher, Pushkin Press; Peter Kemp - Chief Fiction Reviewer, The Sunday Times; Rosanna Konarzewski - Global Head of Communications and Marketing, Man Group; Fiammetta Rocco - chief culture writer, The Economist and 1843 (Man Booker International Prize Administrator); Michal Shavit - publishing director, Jonathan Cape; Eve Smith - Secretary, the Booker Prize Foundation; Boyd Tonkin - Writer and Critic; Helen Williams - Legal Counsel of Booker Group plc. It is chaired by Gaby Wood, Literary Director, Booker Prize Foundation

- The Booker Prize Foundation is a registered charity (no 1090049) established in 2002. Since then it has been responsible for the award of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction, and for the Man Booker International Prize since its inauguration in 2005. The trustees of the Booker Prize Foundation are: Baroness Kennedy QC (Chair) - former Chair of the British Council and Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University; Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival; Bidisha - writer, critic and broadcaster; Carol Lake - Managing Director Philanthropy Executive at JPMorgan Chase; James Naughtie - broadcaster; Christopher Pearce - former Finance Director of Rentokil plc; Professor Louise Richardson - Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford; the Rt Hon. Lord David Willetts - writer, ex-minister, and advocate of fairness between the generations. Jonathan Taylor CBE is President of the Foundation and Sir Ronald Harwood, Baroness Neuberger and Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne are Vice Presidents
- Man Group is a global active investment management firm, with \$112.3bn of funds under management (as at 31 March 2019) in liquid and private markets, managed by investment specialists based around the world. Man Group has five specialist investment engines, which represent the range of its capabilities: Man AHL, Man Numeric, Man GLG, Man FRM and Man GPM. The teams invest across a diverse range of strategies and asset classes with highly specialised approaches, with long only and alternative strategies run on a discretionary and quantitative basis in single and multi-manager formats. Headquartered in London, the firm has 15 international offices and operates across multiple jurisdictions. Through the Man Charitable Trust and the Man US Charitable Foundation, Man Group is committed to promoting literacy and numeracy on a global scale, and to supporting charitable causes more broadly. Man Group plc is listed on the London Stock Exchange under the ticker EMG.LN and is a constituent of the FTSE 250 Index. Further information can be found at [www.man.com](http://www.man.com)
- Booker is the UK's leading food wholesaler with 198 business centres and a national delivery network. It serves over 441,000 catering customers, 94,000 independent retailers and 641,000 small businesses