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Judges announced for the 2020 International Booker Prize

#InternationalBooker2020
#FinestFiction

The judges for the 2020 International Booker Prize are announced today, 11 July 2019, as submissions for the prize open.

Chaired by **Ted Hodgkinson**, Head of Literature and Spoken Word at Southbank Centre, the panel consists of: comparative literature and translation specialist **Lucie Campos**; Man Booker International winning translator and writer **Jennifer Croft**; writer **Valeria Luiselli**; and Man Booker shortlisted writer and musician **Jeet Thayil**.

2020 will be the fifth year of the evolved International Booker Prize. The 2020 judging panel will be looking for the best work of translated fiction, selected from entries published in the UK and Ireland between 1 May 2019 and 30 April 2020.

The 2019 prize was won by the Omani author, Jokha Alharthi, and her translator, Marilyn Booth, for *Celestial Bodies*, published by Sandstone Press. The £50,000 prize was split equally between author and translator. *Celestial Bodies* showed a 30-fold increase in sales in the week following the announcement and went straight to number one in the Amazon Contemporary Fiction bestsellers.

Ted Hodgkinson, chair of the judges for 2020, comments: “It’s a great honour to chair the International Booker, a prize that recognises literature as an art rooted in dialogue, enabled by ingenuity and precision, but also by the courage of authors and translators alike to carry stories across languages and cultures. Through these miraculous and at times conspiratorial affinities we enter lives beyond our own and renew our shared sense of humanity. It’s a particular thrill to be in such stellar company, with polyglot authors, celebrated translators and champions of translated fiction joining me on what promises to be a remarkable reading odyssey.”

Fiammetta Rocco, Administrator of the International Booker Prize, adds: “Writers, readers, critics and translators, the judges of the 2020 International Booker Prize are all professional wordsmiths. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the task of choosing the coming year’s best work of translated fiction.”

The “Booker Dozen” of 12 or 13 books will be announced in March 2020 and the shortlist of six books in April. The winner will be announced in May.

About the judges

Ted Hodgkinson (chair) is a broadcaster, editor, critic, writer and Head of Literature and Spoken Word at Southbank Centre, where he oversees the seasonal literature programme as well as the prestigious annual London Literature Festival. Formerly online editor at *Granta* magazine, his essays, interviews and reviews have appeared across a range of publications and websites, including the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Literary Review*, the *New Statesman*, the *Spectator*, the *Literary Hub* and the *Independent*. He is a former British Council literature programmer for the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. He currently sits on the selection panel for the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Fellowship, the EBRD Literature Prize 2019 for the best novel in translation and the 2019 Orwell Prize for political writing and has judged a number of other awards. He co-edited, with Icelandic author and poet Sjón, the first anthology of Nordic short stories in English, *The Dark Blue Winter Overcoat and other stories from the North* (Pushkin Press, 2017), to critical acclaim. In 2018, for a second consecutive year, he was named in *The Bookseller*’s list of the 100 most influential people in publishing.

Lucie Campos was born in Dublin and raised in Paris and is a specialist in comparative literature and contemporary fiction in translation. Three times European, she reads six languages. As a lecturer in comparative literature has written about the work of writers such as Sebald, Kertész, Coetzee, Beckett and Kafka, and edited several collective volumes on fiction and history in the 20th century. She has spent the last eight years between London and Paris engaged in developing and creating projects to promote literature in translation and to bring more writers in translation into festivals, schools, and public debate, for institutions such as the Institut français global network and the Collège de France. As head of books at the French Institute in London, she created the annual Beyond Words Festival as well as projects such as the European Writers’ Tour and Franco-German Triangular Talks, while coordinating the Burgess translation fund and the South Ken Kids Festival.

Jennifer Croft won the 2018 Man Booker International Prize for her translation from Polish of Olga Tokarczuk’s *Flights*. She has also received NEA, Cullman, PEN, Fulbright and MacDowell fellowships and grants, as well as the inaugural Michael Henry Heim Prize for Translation, the 2018 Found in Translation Award. She was awarded a Tin House Scholarship for her novel *Homesick*, originally written in Spanish, which is forthcoming in English from Unnamed Press in September, in Spanish from Editorial Entropía and in Polish from Wydawnictwo Literackie in 2020.

Valeria Luiselli was born in Mexico City and now lives in New York. She is the author of the novels *Faces in the Crowd* and *The Story of My Teeth*, the latter of which won the 2016 LA Times Book Prize for Fiction; the essay collection *Sidewalks* and the essay *Tell Me How It Ends*, which won the

American Book Award in 2018. Her most recent novel, *Lost Children Archive*, which was longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction 2019, is her first to be written in English. She is widely published internationally. She judged the Pen America Literary Award in 2019 and the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2016.

Jeet Thayil was born into a Syrian Christian family in Kerala in 1959. He worked as a journalist for 23 years in Bombay, Bangalore, Hong Kong and New York. In 2006 he began to write fiction. His first novel, *Narcopolis*, was awarded the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature and was shortlisted for the Man Booker prize. His five poetry collections include *These Errors Are Correct*, which won the Sahitya Akademi Award (India's National Academy of Letters), and *English*, winner of a New York Foundation for the Arts award. As a musician his collaborations include the noise quintet *Still Dirty*, the experimental trio *HMT*, and the opera *Babur in London*. His most recent novel is *The Book of Chocolate Saints*.

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Notes to Editors

- The Administrator of the International Booker 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 2019 and 30 April 2020
- The winner of the Man Booker International Prize 2019 was *Celestial Bodies* by Jokha Alharthi, translated by Marilyn Booth. *Celestial Bodies* showed a 30-fold increase in sales in the week following the announcement and went straight to number one in the Amazon Contemporary Fiction bestsellers.
- 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 International Booker Prize website includes detailed information about all aspects of

the prize and runs regular news bulletins: www.thebookerprizes.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*; Fiammetta Rocco - chief culture writer, *The Economist* and *1843* (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 Booker Prize for Fiction, and for the 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
- Crankstart, the charitable foundation of Sir Michael Moritz KBE and his wife, Harriet Heyman, is the new supporter of The Booker Prize and The International Booker Prize. Crankstart has committed to an initial five-year exclusive funding term with an option to renew for a further five years. The new arrangement began on 1 June 2019 and saw the original prize return to being known as The Booker Prize, while the prize for literature in translation has become The International Booker Prize.
- Moritz is a British venture capitalist and author, born in Wales. He studied at the University of Oxford and was a journalist before moving into the world of technology investment. He has been a partner at Sequoia Capital since 1986. He was appointed KBE in the 2013 Birthday Honours for services to promoting British economic interests and philanthropy. Heyman is a former journalist with the *New York Times*, and a writer.
- 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