

The National Book League

7 Albemarle Street
London W1X 4BB
01-493 9001

Date

Release

EMBARGOED UNTIL 01.00 HOURS ON SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER 1972

From: The National Book League, 7 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BB

The winner of the fourth £5,000 Booker Prize for fiction will be chosen from among the following four short-listed novels:

- "The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith" by Thomas Keneally (Angus & Robertson)
- "The Bird of Night" by Susan Hill (Hamish Hamilton)
- "G" by John Berger (Weidenfeld & Nicolson)
- "Pasmore" by David Storey (Longman)

The terms of reference for the 1972 prize are 'the best full-length novel in the opinion of the judges'. The period from which books have been judged was 1 January 1972 to 23 November 1972. The judges are:

Cyril Connolly, CBE, C.Lit. (Chairman)
Elizabeth Bowen, CBE, C. Lit.
Dr George Steiner

Cyril Connolly makes the following comments:

'This year the judges numbered only three and they have settled for a shorter short-list than usual; each book in the short-list, however, is warmly endorsed by all the judges, one of whom has known what it is to be on the short-list herself.

'Some fifty novels were considered in what the judges felt to be not really a memorable year. Too many big books seemed long-winded, too many short ones rather shallow, but those chosen appealed to both head and heart.

'The judges were all impressed by The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith by Thomas Keneally (Angus & Robertson), an Australian novel in which wit and understanding are brought to bear on a violent primitive people, the Aborigines a century ago whose legendary champion, Jimmy Blacksmith, had a vein of white blood. This legendary past is treated with a simplicity and directness which is never "folksy".

'Of the remaining books on the short-list two reflect English themes, one is cosmopolitan. Susan Hill's The Bird of Night (Hamish Hamilton), set in London and Suffolk between the Wars, is a finely shaped study of the

Contact:

Director:
Martyn Goff FIAL

exceedingly difficult theme of the inner life of a major artist. It is modern in its sense of nervous terror, but almost classical in its respect for the autonomous, vital complication of the characters. The description of the countryside, of the domestic life of the artist and his faithful friend are particularly felicitous; there is a satisfying detail on every page.

'John Berger's G (Weidenfeld & Nicolson) is a most original novel of great fascination, which employs a juxtaposition-method in which pensée and vignette alternate to maintain the narrative in a drama about the career of a half-English half-Italian Don Juan during the critical years between 1880 and 1914. John Berger, himself an art critic and social historian, shows why G is what he is, and, being what he is, what is bound to happen to him.

'The title-hero of David Storey's Pasmore (Longman) is an intellegent misfit who hardly knows what's hit him. In this case it is "a depression" and its arrival and consequences are described in a wonderfully spare prose in which no word is superfluous or wasted. This is modern London from which Susan Hill's world seems astonishingly remote, yet both share the same tragic intensity.'

Biographical details of short-listed authors attached.

The announcement of the winner will be made on the evening of 23 November, when the cheque and a trophy will be presented to the winner by The Rt. Hon. Roy Jenkins MP at a Dinner at the Cafe Royal.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE TROPHY PLEASE CONTACT:

Marilyn Edwards
National Book League,
7 Albemarle Street,
London W1X 4BB.

01 493 9001 or 01 499 1805

91

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

John Berger was born in London in 1926 and studied at the Central and Chelsea Schools of Art. He started his life as a painter and teacher of drawing. He was a regular contributor of art criticism for the Tribune and a regular art critic for the New Statesman, he also has written for many other national newspapers and journals. He now writes regularly for New Society. His published works include Permanent Red (essays) (1960), Success & Failure of Picasso (1965), Art & Revolution, Ernst Neizvestny and the Role of the Artist in the USSR (1969), A Fortunate Man (essay) (1967), and his novels A Painter in Our Time (1958), The Foot of Clive (1962) and Corker's Freedom (1964).

Susan Hill was born in Scarborough in 1942 and educated in the North of England and King's College, London University. She wrote two early novels, The Enclose and Do Me A Favour. She has reviewed for the Coventry Evening Telegraph and the New Statesman, and has also had a couple of plays produced by the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry. Her novels include Gentleman and Ladies, A Change for the Better, I'm the King of the Castle, Strange Meeting and The Albatross (a collection of short stories). Her short-listed novel The Bird of Night has just been awarded the £1000 Whitbread Book Award for fiction.

Thomas Keneally was born in Australia in 1935 and educated in Sydney. He trained for several years for the Catholic Priesthood but did not take up orders. He is married and has two small daughters. His books include The Fear, Place at Whitton, Bring Larks and Heroes, Three Cheers for the Paraclete, The Survivor, A Dutiful Daughter.

David Storey was born in Yorkshire in 1933 and studied at the Slade School of Art. His novel This Sporting Life (1960) was awarded the US Macmillan Fiction Award, for which he also wrote the screenplay. Flight into Camden (1960) won the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize and the Somerset Maugham Award. In 1963 his novel Radcliffe was published. In addition to his novels he has also written five plays, The Restoration of Arnold Middleton, In Celebration, The Contractor, Home, The Changing Room for which he has also won several awards. He has also been awarded the first Writer of the Year Award given by the the Variety Club of Great Britain in 1971.