



Booker Prize for Fiction

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B O O K E R P R I Z E S H O R T L I S T

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

- 'The Dressmaker' by Beryl Bainbridge (Duckworth)
- 'The Black Prince' by Iris Murdoch (Chatto)
- 'A Green Equinox' by Elizabeth Mavor (M. Joseph & Wildwood House)
- 'The Siege of Krishnapur' by J. G. Farrell (Weidenfeld)

The terms of reference for the 1973 prize are 'the best full-length novel in the opinion of the judges'. The period from which books have been judged was 1 January 1973 to 28 November 1973. The judges are

Karl Miller (Chairman)
Mary McCarthy
Edna O'Brien

Karl Miller says: 'We have made the short list shorter than it has sometimes been in the past. But, in fact, we found several strong candidates for it, and it wasn't easy to settle on these four. There were a number of interesting novels by established writers to take account of, but the judges felt that certain less familiar names did more than hold their own. The high proportion of women on the short list should not be taken as a clumsy bow in the direction of Women's Lib, nor as a reflection of the fact that two of the three judges this year were women. This is not meant to be the Year of the Authoress, and there can be little doubt that much of the best fiction in this country is currently being written by women.'

'The Dressmaker is a beautifully observed and wholly original study of the power of respectability and propriety. It deals with the lives of the two women in Liverpool during the Second World War, one of them principled and strict, the other wayward and generous, and with the effect of the family code on their niece's love-affair with a vapid American soldier. I believe that a journalist has pointed out that working-class lives were never like that. The opposite seems to be true: this is not only a gripping book but a truthful one.'

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'Iris Murdoch's novel The Black Prince needs rather less in the way of introduction. This is a further example of the vein of social comedy which has to come to the fore in her recent fiction - the manners and machinations of a certain kind of London intelligentsia with lots of characters and lots of plot - and it struck me as one of the best things she has done.

'A Green Equinox is likely to strike some readers as affected and preposterous. Those, however, who survive the discovery that the leading ladies have names like Hero Kinoull and Belle Shafto, and that there is a good deal of play with the history of the Rococo, may well decide, as I did, that this is a buoyant and witty, and rather special, book. They may even be able to live with the fact that a gardening grandmother figures among the large number of love objects which it contains. The names and amours are a bit like those of the earlier Iris Murdoch, but Elizabeth Mavor goes her own way. Her book is full of English idiosyncrasy and of English nonsense and intelligence.

'The Siege of Krishnapur is a historical novel which gives an account of how one of the communities of the British Raj stuck to their guns during the Indian Mutiny, weathering months of onslaught and attrition. The sepoys very nearly nail them and musket balls and cholera claim most of the garrison before they are bumblingly relieved. The story is at once exciting and deeply considered. It is true that there is some impression of research and reconstruction, and of tour de force, but these are real people, and the narrative shows a delightful novelistic gift and is rich in ironies. The high culture of British India's ruling élite is elegantly displayed, and is seen to be overtaken by futility as much as by force of arms. The besieged, some of whom take time off to think about poetry and phrenology, are heroic and absurd.'

Biographical details of short-listed authors attached.

The announcement of the winner will be made on the evening of 28 November, when the cheque and a trophy will be presented to the winner by Lord Butler at a Dinner at the Café Royal.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE TROPHY PLEASE CONTACT:

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BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF SHORT-LISTED AUTHORS

Beryl Bainbridge was born in Liverpool and educated in Formby and at Merchant Taylors', Crosby, Lancashire, and at Arts Educational School Ltd. She was married and has three children. She was an actress for ten years. Her occupations include painting which she exhibits, and collecting Victoriana. Her first published novel Week-end with Claude appeared in 1966 and her second Another Part of the Wood in 1968. In 1972 Duckworth published Harriet Said which in fact was the first novel she wrote.

Iris Murdoch was born in Dublin and educated at the Froebel Educational Institute, London, Badminton School, Bristol, and Somerville College. She has been a Fellow of St Anne's, Oxford, since 1948 and an Honorary Fellow since 1963. In 1956 she married John Bayley and lives in Oxford. Her previous novels include Under the Net; The Flight from the Enchanter, The Sandcastle, The Bell, A Severed Head, An Unofficial Rose, The Unicorn, The Italian Girl, The Red and the Green, The Time of the Angels, The Nice and the Good, (short-listed for the 1969 Booker Prize), Bruno's Dream (short-listed for the 1970 Booker Prize), A Fairly Honourable Defeat, An Accidental Man.

Elizabeth Mavor was born in Glasgow and educated at St Leonard's School, St Andrews Scotland and St Anne's College, Oxford. She is married to the artist Haro Hodson and has two children. One of her great pleasures is to travel round Europe. She lives near Oxford and is a Member of the local Parish Council and the Parochial Church Council as well as running the local Wolf Cubs. Her previous novels include Summer in the Greenhouse, The Temple of Flora and Redoubt.

J. G. Farrell was born in Liverpool but has spent a good deal of his life abroad. He spent two years in New York on a Harkness Fellowship and has lived for long periods in France and Ireland where he spent much of his childhood as well as travelling widely in Mexico, Morocco and the Canadian Arctic. He also spent some time in India researching the background for his novel The Siege of Krishnapur. His previous novels include A Man from Elsewhere, The Lung, A Girl in the Head and Troubles.