



International literary giants vie with newcomers on shortlist for 2015 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize

First-time translations from Colombia and Equatorial Guinea join 25th anniversary lineup with Murakami, Kehlmann, Mortier and Erpenbeck

International literary giants Haruki Murakami and Erwin Mortier have made the shortlist for the 2015 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize. Murakami's bestselling *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* tells the story of a man's attempt to understand why his four best friends abandoned him sixteen years before, and Mortier's *While the Gods Were Sleeping* is a First World War novel told from the Flemish point of view.

They are joined by German authors Jenny Erpenbeck and Daniel Kehlmann, and two writers translated into English for the first time from Spanish: Colombian Tomás González and Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel from Equatorial Guinea.

The shortlist:

The End of Days by Jenny Erpenbeck translated from the German by Susan Bernofsky (Portobello Books)

In the Beginning Was the Sea by Tomás González translated from the Spanish by Frank Wynne (Pushkin Press)

F by Daniel Kehlmann, translated from the German by Carol Brown Janeway (Quercus)

By Night the Mountain Burns by Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel translated from the Spanish by Jethro Soutar (And Other Stories)

While the Gods Were Sleeping by Erwin Mortier translated from the Dutch by Paul Vincent (Pushkin Press)

Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage by Haruki Murakami translated from the Japanese by Philip Gabriel (Harvill Secker)

Now in its 25th year, the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize is managed by reading charity Book Trust and sets out to honour contemporary fiction in translation. The £10,000 prize money is divided equally between author and translator, recognising the importance of the translator in their ability to bridge the gap between languages and cultures.

Over 25 years the Prize has showcased the work of newly-translated authors. Two writers on this year's shortlist will be new to English speakers: both Spanish-language writers but both from outside Spain: Colombian Tomás González (*In the Beginning Was the Sea*) and Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel from Equatorial Guinea, Africa's only Spanish-speaking country. *By Night the Mountain Bums* is only the second novel from Equatorial Guinea ever to be translated into English from that country, and was selected by the publisher, And Other Stories, through its international reading groups programme, which invites readers to propose suitable titles for translation.

This year's longlist featured five German-language writers. As Independent literary editor Boyd Tonkin points out, it reflects how, in the 25th anniversary year of the Berlin Wall's fall, UK publishers 'paid well-deserved attention to the country's robust and vibrant literary scene'. Two of those longlisted have made it through to the shortlist. Jenny Erpenbeck was born in the former East Germany; her novel *The End of Days* is the story of the Twentieth Century seen through five alternative courses one woman's life might have taken. Daniel Kehlmann, author of *F* which tells the story of the three sons of a troubled and absconding father who try to make sense of themselves against an inheritance of lies.

Claire Shanahan, non-voting chair of judges and Head of Arts at Book Trust says:

'As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Prize, it's poignant to reflect on the consistent quality of good writing and translation being brought to readers from around the world.

'Over the past five years, we've received 595 submissions in 44 different languages, highlighting the richness and variety of fiction from across the globe.

'Books play an increasingly important role in our understanding of the world around us. They start an introduction into a wide tapestry of knowledge and culture, which can help readers understand who they are and the place they have in the world.

This shortlist encapsulates the excitement of looking outwards and discovering new and different voices.'

Kehlmann, Erpenbeck and Murakami have all been shortlisted for the prize before, as have their respective translators Carol Brown Janeway, Susan Bernofsky and Philip Gabriel. Frank Wynne who won in 2005 with his translation of *Windows on the World*, written by Frédéric Beigbeder, appears again on the shortlist for his translation of *In the Beginning Was the Sea*

Pushkin Press publishes two of the shortlist, with fellow independents Portobello and And Other Stories publishing one each. Harvill Secker and Quercus also have one title each on the list.

Two of the authors have won English PEN awards: Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel, who in 2011 went on hunger strike to protest against the corruption of Equatorial Guinea's regime, and *The End of Days* which has been endorsed as part of the English PEN Writers in Translation programme, celebrating its 10th birthday this year.

This year's shortlist was chosen by a panel of five judges from 111 titles from 28 source languages. The judges are:

- Cristina Fuentes La Roche is the Director of Hay Festival Americas, replacing Rosie Goldsmith who has sadly had to withdraw for personal reasons
- Antonia Lloyd-Jones is a full-time translator of Polish literature

- Richard Mansell is Senior Lecturer in Translation at the University of Exeter
- Helen Oyeyemi is the author of five novels, including *White is for Witching*, *Mr Fox* and *Boy, Snow, Bird*
- Boyd Tonkin is a senior writer and columnist for *The Independent*, and has been a longstanding judge of the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize since 2000.

Boyd Tonkin, senior writer and columnist for *The Independent* says:

'I'm delighted by the diversity, the originality and the reader-friendly accessibility of this year's shortlist for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize. Where else would you find both a worldwide bestseller from one of the world's most beloved novelists (Haruki Murakami) and a beautifully engrossing story from a writer and a country that most of us have yet to discover: Juan Tomas Avila Laurel from Equatorial Guinea? Daniel Kehlmann's sparkling comedy-of-ideas and Jenny Erpenbeck's lyrical history both bear witness to the strength-in-depth of German-language fiction now, while Erwin Mortier gives us a haunting First World War novel from a Flemish, and a female, perspective. From Colombia, Tomas Gonzalez's timeless fable of the quest for the good life rounds off a global feast, served up in every case in expert and appetising translations.'

The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize was launched in 1990 and ran until 1995. The Prize was revived with the support of Arts Council England in 2001 and is now managed by reading charity Book Trust. The £10,000 Prize money and associated costs are supported using public funding by Arts Council England. The Prize is also supported by *The Independent* and Champagne Taittinger.

The 2014 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize was won by Iraqi writer Hassan Blasim and translator Jonathan Wright for *The Iraqi Christ*, published by Comma Press. Previous winners of the Prize include Orhan Pamuk and translator Victoria Holbrook in 1990 for *The White Castle*; W.G. Sebald and translator Anthea Bell in 2002 for *Austerlitz*; and Per Petterson and translator Anne Born in 2006 for *Out Stealing Horses*.

Key dates:

- Shortlist event at Foyles (London Book and Screen Week) – Thursday 16th April
- All Must Have Prizes – the unstoppable rise of translated fiction – joint event with English PEN at the London Review Bookshop – 26th May
- Winner – will be announced at a special ceremony at RIBA on Wednesday 27th May
- IFFP event, Hay Festival, 28th May, 7 pm (details tbc)

More information about the Prize is available at www.booktrust.org.uk/iffp and on Twitter by following: @Booktrust and #iffp.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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