



**NEWS RELEASE**  
**For immediate release**

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**Finalists Announced for the 24th Neustadt International Prize for Literature**

*Neustadt Prize is known as "America's Nobel" for literature; finalists are selected by an international jury of their peers with the winner to receive \$50,000 cash prize*

**NORMAN, Okla. (May 27, 2015)** – *World Literature Today*, the University of Oklahoma's award-winning magazine of international literature and culture, today announced the finalists for the 2016 [Neustadt International Prize for Literature](#). The Neustadt Prize is the most prestigious international literary award given in the United States, often cited as "America's Nobel" for its reputation as a lead-up to the Swedish Academy's annual selection. An international, nine-member jury of accomplished writers selected the shortlist, with their sole criterion for nominating finalists being distinguished and continuing literary achievement. Any living author in the world writing in any genre is eligible to be nominated.

The Neustadt Prize is celebrated for its exclusive focus on literary merit, being recognized as one of the most truly international literary awards given in the world. This year's nominees are from around the globe, and, notably for the first time, female authors make up the majority of the finalists. Seven of the nine 2016 finalists are women; previously, the highest number of women nominees in a single year was four.

The finalists for the 2016 Neustadt Prize for International Literature\* are:

- Can Xue, China
- Caryl Churchill, England
- Carolyn Forché, United States
- Aminatta Forna, Scotland/Sierra Leone
- Ann-Marie MacDonald, Canada
- Guadalupe Nettel, Mexico
- Don Paterson, Scotland
- Dubravka Ugresic, Croatia/The Netherlands
- Ghassan Zaqtan, Palestine

Jury members will convene at the annual Neustadt Festival in October at the University of Oklahoma, where they will discuss the merits of each finalist and vote for the winner.

The 2016 laureate, who will be announced at the festival's closing banquet, will receive \$50,000, a replica of an eagle feather cast in silver, a certificate of recognition and the next year's Neustadt Festival hosted in his or her honor.

The Neustadt Prize was first given in 1970 to Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti. Notable winners have included Nobel Prize in Literature recipients Gabriel García Márquez (1972), Czeslaw Milosz (1978), Octavio Paz (1982) and Tomas Tranströmer (1990) as well as many well-known novelists, poets and playwrights. The 2014 Neustadt laureate was Mia Couto of Mozambique, who was recently shortlisted for the highly regarded Man Booker International Prize.

*\*Full finalist bios are attached to this release.*

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### **About the Neustadt International Prize for Literature**

The Neustadt International Prize for Literature is a \$50,000 biennial prize funded by a generous endowment from the Neustadt family of Ardmore, Oklahoma, and Dallas. The Neustadt Prize is the first international literary award of its scope to originate in the United States and is one of the very few international prizes for which poets, novelists and playwrights are equally eligible. The charter of the award stipulates that the Neustadt Prize be conferred solely on the basis of literary merit, and each laureate is chosen by a jury of writers that *World Literature Today* convenes on the University of Oklahoma campus.

### **About *World Literature Today***

Founded in 1927, *World Literature Today* is the University of Oklahoma's award-winning magazine of international literature and culture. The mission of *World Literature Today* is to serve the international, state and university communities by achieving excellence as a literary publication, a sponsor of literary prizes and a cultural center for students. Now in its ninth decade of continuous publication, *World Literature Today* has been recognized by the Nobel Prize committee as one of the "best edited and most informative literary publications" in the world, and was recently called "an excellent source of writings from around the globe by authors who write as if their lives depend on it" (*Utne Reader*).

## Finalists Biographies

### Can Xue

[Can Xue](#) (Deng Xiaohua), whose pseudonym in Chinese means both “the dirty snow that refuses to melt” and “the purest snow at the top of a high mountain,” was born in 1953 in Changsha City, Hunan Province, China. She lived in Changsha until 2001, when she and her husband relocated to Beijing. Regarded as one of the most experimental writers in the world, Can Xue describes her works as “soul literature” or “life literature.” She is the author of numerous short story collections and four novels. Seven of her works have been published in English, and she also has published books of commentary on Borges, Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, Calvino, Kafka and Bruno Schulz. Can Xue says all of her works are experiments in which she takes herself as the subject.

**Nominated by: Porochista Khakpour / Work: *Five Spice Street***

### Caryl Churchill

Playwright [Caryl Churchill](#) was born in September 1938 in London and grew up in the Lake District in Montreal. She was educated at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, where she drafted her first play. That play would be first staged in 1958, winning an award at the Sunday Times’ National Union of Students Drama Festival. Following, she would write a number of plays for BBC radio, *The Judge’s Wife* for BBC Television, and her first professional stage production, *Owners*, premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1972. She would go on to become Resident Dramatist at the Royal Court (1974–1975) before her play *Serious Money* (1987) would win the Evening Standard Award for “Best Comedy of the Year” and the Laurence Olivier / BBC Award for “Best New Play.” Churchill has authored more than a dozen plays in total and has also published translations for works such as Seneca’s *Thyestes* (2001). Her most recent work is *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* (2006), which premiered at the Royal Court Theatre. She lives in London and is often regarded as one of the most influential playwrights of the modern era.

**Nominated by: Jordan Tannahill / Work: *A Number***

### Carolyn Forché

[Carolyn Forché](#) was born in Detroit in 1950. She is the author of five books of poetry and has been distinguished with the Yale Younger Poets Award, Lamont Selection of the Academy of American Poets, *Los Angeles Times* Book Award and Robert Creeley Award. She also has been a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. In 2004, she was named a trustee of the Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry, Canada’s premier award for poetry. Her fellowships have included the National Endowment for the Arts, a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Lannan Foundation Fellowship. Beyond her writing career, Forché has dedicated herself to advancing human rights, being recognized with the Edita and Ira Morris Hiroshima Foundation Award for Peace and Culture in 1998 for her work. Forché is currently a professor of English and director of the Lannan Center for Poetics and Social Practice at Georgetown University.

**Nominated by: Valzhyna Mort / Work: Selections from *In the Lateness of the World* (forthcoming) and other poems**

**Aminatta Forna**

[Aminatta Forna](#) was born in Scotland, raised in Sierra Leone and Britain, and now lives in London. She is the award-winning author of the novels *The Hired Man*, *The Memory of Love* and *Ancestor Stones*. In 2014, she received Yale University's Donald Windham-Sandy M. Campbell Literature Prize. In addition to her novels, she has published short stories and was a finalist for the 2010 BBC National Short Story Award. Her essays and articles have appeared in *Granta*, *The Times*, *The Observer* and *Vogue* magazine. Forna is a fellow and council member of the Royal Society of Literature and sits on the board of the National Theatre of Great Britain, the general committee of the Royal Literary Fund, and the council of the Caine Prize for African Writing. She has acted as a judge for a number of literary prizes and was most recently a judge for the 2013 Man Booker International Prize. Forna is currently a professor of creative writing at Bath Spa University, and she published her memoir, *The Devil That Danced on the Water*, in 2002.

**Nominated by: Mukoma Wa Ngugi / Work: *The Memory of Love***

**Ann-Marie MacDonald**

[Ann-Marie MacDonald](#) is an author, actress and playwright. She was born in Baden Sölingen, in the former West Germany. After graduating from the National Theatre School of Canada, MacDonald moved to Toronto where she immersed herself in the vibrant alternative theatre scene. Her first solo-authored play, *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, was honored with the Chalmers Award, the Governor General's Award and the Canadian Authors' Association Award. Her later dramatic works have earned several Dora Awards, including "Outstanding New Musical" for *Anything That Moves*. In 1996, MacDonald's first novel, *Fall on Your Knees*, was shortlisted for the Giller Prize, won the People's Choice Award and was given the Canadian Booksellers Association's Libris Award for "Fiction Book of the Year." MacDonald's second novel, *The Way the Crow Flies*, became an international bestseller, finalist for the Giller Prize and a *Good Morning America* Book Club pick. Her latest novel, *Adult Onset*, was published in 2014. Also a celebrated stage actress, she is currently working with director Alisa Palmer and musician Torquil Campbell on an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for the Stratford Festival. MacDonald lives in Toronto and Montreal with her family.

**Nominated by: Padma Viswanathan / Work: *Fall on Your Knees***

**Guadalupe Nettel**

Born in Mexico City in 1973, [Guadalupe Nettel](#) is a prolific Mexican author and a regular contributor to both Spanish- and French-language magazines. In 2006, she was voted one of the 39 most important Latin American writers under the age of 39 at the Bogotá Hay Festival. She is now based in Barcelona, where she works as a translator and holds writing seminars and workshops on Potential Literature. She is the author of several acclaimed works, including novels and short stories. Her recognitions include the Premio

Antonin Artaud, the Gilbert Owen Short Story Prize and being named a finalist for the Premio Herralde, one of Spain's most famous literary awards.

**Nominated by: Valeria Luiselli / Work: *The Body Where I Was Born***

### **Don Paterson**

[Don Paterson](#) was born in Dundee, Scotland, in 1963. He moved to London in 1984 to pursue a career as a jazz musician and began writing poetry at this same time. It was in the poetry that he found his true passion, and he has published numerous collections since. His works have won several awards, including the Forward Prize for "Best First Collection," Whitbread Poetry Prize, Geoffrey Faber Memorial Award and the T. S. Eliot Prize. Most recently, he won the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 2010. He has also published two books of aphorisms, the compendium *Best Thought, Worst Thought* and has edited several anthologies. He is a fellow of both the Royal Society of Literature and the English Association. As well as poetry and aphorism, he has written drama for radio and theatre, including the melodrama *The Land of Cakes for Dundee Rep*, a collaborative work with composer Gordon McPherson. Paterson was honored by Queen Elizabeth II as an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in 2008.

**Nominated by: Amit Majmudar / Work: *Rain***

### **Dubravka Ugresic**

[Dubravka Ugresic](#) is one of Europe's most distinctive novelists and essayists, with her work marked by a combination of irony and compassion. In 1991, as war broke out in the former Yugoslavia, Ugresic took a firm antiwar stance, critically dissecting Croatian and Serbian nationalism as well as the stupidity and criminality of war. Her activism made her a target for nationalist journalists, politicians and public figures, leading to a prolonged public ostracism and persistent media harassment that would cause her to leave Croatia. In her exile that in time became her emigration, Ugresic's works – many of which detail the disintegration of her Yugoslav homeland and the fall of the Berlin Wall – rose in prominence, eventually being translated into more than 20 languages. She has been the recipient of several recognitions, most recently as a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism in 2011 and as the winner of the 2012 Jean Améry Essay Prize. Her newest collection of essays is *Europe in Sepia*. Ugresic lives in Amsterdam.

**Nominated by: Alison Anderson / Work: *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender***

### **Ghassan Zaqtan**

Born near Bethlehem, [Ghassan Zaqtan](#) is a Palestinian poet, novelist and editor. Writing in Arabic, he has authored numerous poetry collections, the novel *Describing the Past* and the play *The Narrow Sea*, which was recognized at the 1994 Cairo Festival. He has been awarded the Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry, Canada's highest poetry honor, and the National Medal of Honor in recognition of his contributions to Arabic and Palestinian literature. He has also edited the Palestine Liberation Organization's literary magazine, *Bayader*, as well as the poetry journal *Al-Sou'ra* and the literary page of the

newspaper *Al-Ayyam*. Founding director of the House of Poetry in Ramallah, Zaqtan has also served as director general of the Palestinian Ministry of Culture's Literature and Publishing Department. He was previously a finalist for the Neustadt Prize in 2014 and has been considered for the Nobel Prize for Literature.

**Nominated by: Wang Ping / Work: *Like a Straw Bird It Follows Me***