



NEWS RELEASE

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Jury Announced for the Prestigious 2016 Neustadt International Prize for Literature *Panel of acclaimed authors to name finalists for "America's Nobel" on May 27*

NORMAN, Okla. (May 18, 2015) – *World Literature Today*, the award-winning magazine of international literature and culture, has announced the 2016 jury panel for the renowned [Neustadt International Prize for Literature](#). The biennial Neustadt Prize recognizes great accomplishments in literature and is frequently known as "America's Nobel" for its reputation as a forerunner to the Swedish Academy's annual selections.

Highly respected within the literary community for its recognition of excellence, the Neustadt Prize may be awarded to a living writer anywhere in the world, regardless of the medium in which they choose to write. The international jury is composed of highly esteemed authors, and their sole consideration is to select finalists based on the literary merit of their works. This is done so that the prize remains unaffected by special interests, such as book sales or a publisher's influence.

The jury's shortlist of finalists will be announced May 27 at a special event hosted at the Lighthouse Writers Workshop in Denver. That evening, the Lighthouse will host a launch party for the May issue of *World Literature Today* magazine, which features translations of 15 contemporary Hebrew-language writers. Honored guests include Israeli author Daniel Oz and Kathy Neustadt, representing the Neustadt family, who will announce the 2016 Neustadt Prize finalists.

The 2016 Neustadt International Prize for Literature jury panel features nine writers*:

- Alison Anderson, United States/Switzerland
- Porochista Khakpour, Iran/United States
- Valeria Luiselli, Mexico/United States
- Amit Majmudar, United States
- Valzhyna Mort, Belarus/United States
- Mukoma Wa Ngugi, Kenya/United States
- Jordan Tannahill, Canada
- Padma Viswanathan, Canada/United States
- Wang Ping, China/United States

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The jury panel will convene Oct. 21 to 23, 2015, during the annual Neustadt Festival to select a prizewinner. The Neustadt Festival, hosted at the University of Oklahoma in Norman each fall, is a three-day event featuring music, art and drama representing the keynote author's home region as well as roundtable panels examining literary trends and discussing the author's influence on his/her given genre. The prizewinner is announced at the festival's closing banquet. Neustadt winners receive \$50,000, a silver feather and a certificate of recognition.

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. Last year's Neustadt winner was Mia Couto of Mozambique, who was recently shortlisted for the highly regarded Man Booker Prize.

The Neustadt Prize is given in alternating years with the [NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature](#). The 2015 NSK Prize winner is author-illustrator Meshack Asare of Ghana, one of Africa's most influential children's writers. Asare will be recognized at the 2015 Neustadt Festival in October. NSK winners receive \$25,000, a silver medallion, a certificate of recognition, and a festival hosted in their honor.

**Full jury bios are attached to this release.*

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About the Neustadt International Prize for Literature

The Neustadt International Prize for Literature is sponsored by the University of Oklahoma and *World Literature Today*, an international bimonthly now in its eighty-ninth year of continuous publication. The prize, conferred every two years, consists of \$50,000, a replica of an eagle's feather cast in silver, and an award certificate. Funding for the prize has been ensured in perpetuity by a generous endowment from the Neustadt family of Ardmore, Oklahoma, and Dallas, Texas. 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.

About *World Literature Today*

Founded in 1927, *World Literature Today* is the University of Oklahoma's bimonthly 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 has been called "an excellent source of writings from around the globe by authors who write as if their lives depend on it" (*Utne Reader*, January 2005).

The 2016 Neustadt International Prize for Literature Jury Bios

Alison Anderson is a literary translator and writer. Growing up on the East Coast of the United States, Anderson later moved to Switzerland, where she earned her undergraduate degree in Russian and French and a master's in translation studies. After many years teaching English as a foreign language in Europe, she moved to northern California and began her career as a literary translator with a work by J.M.G. Le Clézio (who went on to win the Nobel Prize). In 2003, she received an NEA grant for her translations of lyric essays by Christian Bobin. Since then, she has returned to Switzerland and now works full time as a translator with over 30 books published, including Muriel Barbery's *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*, four novels by Amélie Nothomb, and most recently Christian Bobin's *The Lady in White*. She is also a novelist in her own right; her third novel, *The Summer Guest*, is forthcoming in 2015.

Porochista Khakpour is a novelist, essayist, journalist and professor who was born in Tehran, raised in Los Angeles and now lives in New York City. She is the author of the forthcoming memoir *Sick* (HarperPerennial, 2017) and the novels *The Last Illusion* (Bloomsbury, 2014) – named a 2014 "Best Book of the Year" by NPR, Kirkus, BuzzFeed, Popmatters, Electric Literature, and more – and *Sons and Other Flammable Objects* (Grove, 2007) – the 2007 California Book Award-winner in "First Fiction," one of the *Chicago Tribune's* "Fall's Best" and a *New York Times* editor's choice. She has received fellowships from the NEA, Yaddo, Ucross, the Sewanee Writers' Conference, Northwestern University, the University of Leipzig and many others. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in many publications around the world. She is currently contributing editor at The Offing, a channel of the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and writer in residence at Bard College.

Valeria Luiselli is a novelist and writer who was born in Mexico and grew up in South Africa. She is the author of the internationally acclaimed novel *Faces in the Crowd* and a book of essays titled *Sidewalks*, both translated into multiple languages and published in the United States in 2014 by Coffee House Press. Her most recent novel is *The Story of My Teeth* (Coffee House Press, 2015). Her writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, *Granta* and *McSweeney's*, among other publications. In 2014, *Faces in the Crowd* received the *Los Angeles Times* Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction, and she also received the National Book Foundation's "5 under 35" award. She currently lives in New York City.

Amit Majmudar is a diagnostic nuclear radiologist, poet and writer who lives in Columbus, Ohio. His poetry and prose have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Best American Poetry* anthology (2007, 2012), the *Best of the Best American Poetry 1988–2012*, *Poetry*, *Granta*, *Poetry Daily* and several other publications, including the eleventh edition of the *Norton Introduction to Literature*. His first poetry collection, *0°, 0°: Poems* (Northwestern University Press, 2009), was a finalist for the Poetry Society of America's Norma Faber First Book Award. His second poetry collection, *Heaven and Earth*, was selected for the 2011 Donald Justice Prize. He also blogs for the *Kenyon Review* and has published two critically acclaimed novels, *Partitions* (2011) and *The Abundance* (2013). His next collection of poetry, *Dothead*, is forthcoming from Knopf in 2016.

Valzhyna Mort, a Belarusian poet and translator, is the author of *Factory of Tears* (2008) and *Collected Body* (2011), published by Copper Canyon Press. She is the editor of *Something Indecent: Poems Recommended by Eastern European Poets* (Red Hen, 2013) and co-editor of *Gossip and Metaphysics: Prose and Poetry of Russian Modernist Poets* (Tupelo Press, 2014).

Her poems and translations have appeared in *Best American Poetry 2014*, *Guernica*, *New Letters*, *Poetry*, *Poetry International*, *The Common* and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. Her honors include a Lannan Foundation Fellowship, the Bess Hokin Prize from *Poetry*, the Burda Poetry Prize for Eastern European Authors (Germany) and the Crystal of Vilenica Award (Slovenia). Mort also is the recipient of a 2016 fellowship from the Amy Clampitt Residency. Born in Minsk, Belarus, she lives in the United States and currently teaches at Cornell University.

Mukoma Wa Ngugi is a Kenyan poet and author. He is an assistant professor of English at Cornell University and author of the novels *Black Star Nairobi* (2013), *Nairobi Heat* (2009) and a book of poems titled *Hurling Words at Consciousness* (2006). A novel, *Mrs. Shaw* (Ohio University/Swallow Press), and a collection of poems, *Logotherapy* (Africa Poetry Fund/University of Nebraska Press), are forthcoming in 2015 and 2016, respectively. He is co-founder of the Mabati-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature and co-director of the [Global South Cultural Dialogue Project](#) at Cornell, which facilitates public conversations among writers and scholars from Africa, Latin America and Asia as well as the West.

Jordan Tannahill is a Canadian playwright, theater director and filmmaker. He was selected as the Canadian Artist of the Year in 2014, and his plays explore themes of gender politics, youth culture and marginalized identity through the playful combination of documentary elements and magic realism. His plays have been presented across Canada, and his films have screened at such venues as the Toronto International Film Festival, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the British Film Institute. Tannahill received the 2014 Governor General's Award for Drama for his book *Age of Minority: Three Solo Plays*, the 2014 John Hirsch Prize for directing and a 2013 Dora Award for *rihannaboi95*, a play performed over Internet live-stream. His production of Sheila Heti's *All Our Happy Days Are Stupid* recently enjoyed sold-out runs at Harbourfront Centre's World Stage and The Kitchen in New York City. He teaches at the National Theatre School of Canada, and his book *Theatre of the Unimpressed* was published by Coach House Press in spring 2015.

Padma Viswanathan is a Canadian novelist and playwright. Viswanathan's first novel, *The Toss of a Lemon* (Random House, 2008), has been published in eight countries and was a finalist for the Commonwealth (Regional) First Book Prize, the Amazon.ca First Novel Prize and the PEN Center USA Fiction Prize. Her second novel, *The Ever After of Ashwin Rao* (Random House, 2014), was a national best-seller in Canada and a finalist for the Scotiabank Giller Prize. She is also known for her plays and short stories. Her short stories have been published in *Subtropics*, *New Letters*, *PRISM International*, *Boston Review* and *Malahat Review*. She now lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas, where she is an assistant professor of creative writing.

Wang Ping is a Chinese American poet, writer and artist. She was born in Shanghai and came to the United States in 1986. Her most recent works include *Flying: Life of Miracles along the Yangtze and Mississippi*, a memoir forthcoming from Calumet Press; *Ten Thousand Waves*, a poetry collection (Wings Press, 2014); and *Flash Cards: Poems by Yu Jian*, co-translated with Ron Padgett (Zephyr Press, 2010). *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China* (2000) won the Eugene Kayden Award for Best Book in the Humanities. *The Last Communist Virgin* (2007) won the 2008 Minnesota Book Award and Asian American Studies Award. She also has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Bush Artist Fellowship, Lannan Foundation Fellowship and McKnight Artist Fellowship, among many others.