

The Winner of the 2017 London Hellenic Prize

This year the LHP received 102 eligible submissions from 33 publishers and authors worldwide, all published in 2017.

The Adjudicating Committee met in June, 2018 at New College, Oxford, at the invitation of its long-standing member Robin Lane Fox. Other members participating were Dr Jennifer Wallace - Chair, Dr Nick Lowe, Professor Stefanos Pasmazoglou, Dr Felix Budelman and non-voting member Michael Moschos.

The Short List included 7 books:

- Josephine Balmer, **The Paths of Survival** (Shearsman Books)
- Daniel Mendelsohn, **An Odyssey: A Father, a Son and an Epic** (Harper Collins)
- Kamila Shamsie, **Home Fire** (Bloomsbury)
- Yopie Prins, **Ladies' Greek: Victorian Translations of Tragedy** (Princeton UP)
- Colm Toibin, **House of Names** (Viking)
- David Vann, **Bright Air Black** (Windmill Books)
- Emily Wilson (trans.) **The Odyssey** (W.W.Norton)

Kamila Shamsie novel 'Home Fire' was chosen as the winner of the 2017 LHP.

The award ceremony of the 2017 Prize took place in at the Great Hall, King's College London on 26th November 2018 at the kind hospitality of Professor Gonda Van Steen, incumbent of the Koraes Chair and Director of the Centre for Hellenic Studies.

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From: MICHAEL MOSCHOS (msmoschos49@yahoo.com)

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Date: Monday, November 26, 2018, 2:31 PM GMT+2

I am honoured to be following in the steps of five prominent ladies -- after all, a man should be able to eventually stand on his own feet!

Your Eminence, your Honours, Honoured guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This prize has been awarded for the past 21 years to works that cover most if not all aspects of Hellenic civilization not just chronologically -- ancient, hellenistic, Byzantine and modern but also in terms of subject matter -- history, culture, art, social history, myth and religion, science and literature. Not to mention the stories of three cities, modern Athens -- a pioneering work by architect Eleni Bastea published almost 20 years ago --, post-byzantine to modern Thessaloniki by Mark Mazower, a best-seller both in English and in Greek --, hellenistic Alexandria by Sir Peter Stothard, a great story told with great aplomb.

Our brochure includes a list of past winners and among them, in addition to Kamila Shamsie whom we honour this evening, you will see Anne Carson's *Antigonick*, Zachary Mason's *Lost Books of the Odyssey*, David Malouf's *Ransom* -- three novels and one play inspired by classical Greece.

Recently several well-known authors and artists have been inspired by Greek myths and culture and there seems to be a trend of 'back to basics', back to the recognition of eternal human values -- a trend on which even the FT commented with a full-page article some weeks ago. This year three of our five shortlisted titles for the prize are (each in its own original way) narratives inspired by classical Greek stories, the *Odyssey*, the myth of the house of Atreus and the myth of the house of Oedipus.

We all realize these stories have been and will always be with us. They have been told and retold many times, over many generations, in many different languages. Classical Greek culture and the Hellenic civilization it has nourished

for over two thousand years remain the very core of our western European culture. We all remember how Aristotle in his Poetics warned against 'λυειν τους μυθους' ie, dissolving, deconstructing, 'watering down' the old myths that have come down to us over many generations, many tellings and retellings, always imbued with new meaning.

Kamila Shamsie was born and raised in Pakistan; Anne Carson in Canada; Zachary Mason in California; David Malouf in Australia. We read and enjoy their novels, plays and poetry and we still appreciate [thanks to them] our shared inheritance, our shared values based on Homer, classical Athens, the ideals of Hellenism. **We are all of us a little more Greek than we think we are** -- even if we have not read the Greek originals, have not visited the hallowed marbles of the Parthenon, have not taken the peripatetic walkways of Hadrian's Athens... It's just part of the human condition!

This prize has been alive and growing for 21 years. It started small and local (as our senior committee members will testify) and is now grown up and international. It has always looked out for its audience -- general readers, who read for education and pleasure, who read in English [and that means the widest possible universal audience!] and who value originality and good writing.

Publishers are very happy with our winners, whether literary, academic or artistic. The Getty Museum's magnificent book on Greek bronzes [our 2015 winner] sold many thousands all over the world.

We are most grateful to our sponsors who have kept the prize alive and kicking since 1996!

You will read our Vote of Thanks to all of them in the brochure. But let me single out our first initiator and benefactor, John D Criticos, whose work was continued by his wife Elizabeth for many years. And let me also single out our last major sponsor, the Leventis Foundation, who have joined us this year and hopefully will stay with us for years to come as the LHP grows and expands its appeal and its worldwide audience.

Grateful thanks are also due to Professor Paul Cartledge, our long-time friend and supporter, former chair of our committee, past winner of this award and Spartan par excellence -- thank you Paul!