

For immediate release

## The 2012 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature

Awarded to Julia Lovell for

### *The Opium War :*

### *Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China*

**Montricher, 22nd November 2012** - the jury of the Jan Michalski Prize for Literature awarded this year's prize to Julia Lovell, British historian, translator and writer of *The Opium War : Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China*. The opium war continues to have a huge significance. The book explores how China's national myths mould its interactions with the outside world, how history is spun to serve the present ; and how delusion and prejudice have bedevilled relations between the West and China.

According to Julia Lovell, « *The subject of the opium war remains important today because of the continuing significance of this war in the public memory in contemporary China. In Britain, we've done our best to forget that we fought this war. But in China [it] could not be more different.* » Isabel Hilton, one of the judges, commented : « *The Opium War continues to influence attitudes and relations on both sides, as China struggles to define itself, and the world struggles to decide what it thinks of China.* »

Vera Michalski-Hoffmann, the President of the Jury, awarded the prize of 50,000 Swiss francs and a drawing by Martial Leiter, a Swiss artist .

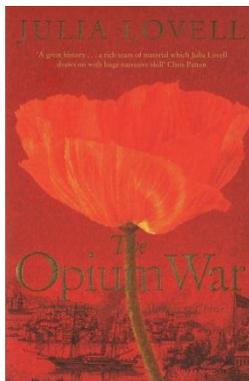
The jury shortlisted three exceptional writers : **Martin Pollack**, Austrian writer, journalist and translator for his book *Kaiser von Amerika : Die grosse Flucht aus Galizien*, the story of mass emigration from Galicia to the US at the beginning of the XXth century ; **Timothy Snyder**, professor of history at Yale University for *Bloodlands - Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, a retelling of the history of the mass murders committed by the Nazi and Stalinist regimes ; and **Julia Lovell** for *The Opium War*. All three books deal with the contemporary problem areas of national identity, displacement and memory.

Julia Lovell's book is the first non-fiction book to win the Jan Michalski Prize. The previous winners were Aleksandar Hemon in 2010 and György Dragomán in 2011 respectively for novels.

The prize is multicultural and is intended to contribute to a wide recognition of the writers. The jury, international and independent, includes Vera Michalski-Hoffmann, President of the Jury and the Foundation and publisher ; Isabel Hilton, British journalist, reporter, writer and editor of Chinadialogue.net ; Wlodzimierz Bolecki, Polish literary historian, essayist and

screenwriter ; Nuruddin Farah, somali author and essayist ; Yannick Haenel, French writer and essayist ; Georges Nivat, french Honorary Professor at the University of Geneva and a specialist of the Slavic world ; Ilija Trojanow, austrian editor and novelist ; and Fabienne Verdier, french artist and painter.

The prize is awarded by the Jan Michalski Foundation, based in Montricher Switzerland. It is open to authors of both fiction and non-fiction, from all over the world; each member of the jury nominates two works published within the last five years. The works are translated, if necessary, into a language accessible to each member of the jury. The prize was announced in the library of the Maison de l'Écriture, the new writers' centre currently under construction in Montricher. The library and the centre will be open to the public in spring 2013.



**Julia Lovell**

*The Opium War : Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China*  
Published by Picador Macmillan, 2011

### **The Jan Michalski Foundation for Writing and Literature and its activities**

The Jan Michalski Foundation for Writing and Literature was created in 2004 in memory of Jan Michalski, publisher and cofounder of les éditions Noir sur Blanc, in order to continue his work for the advancement of literature. The aim of the foundation is to provide support for writing through many activities, from granting financial assistance, and the organisation of literary encounters, to hosting writers in residence. The literary prize increases the Foundation's impact.

#### **For further information :**

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