

THE 2018 JAN MICHALSKI PRIZE

Montricher, Wednesday, 21st November

The 2018 Jan Michalski Prize was awarded to Olga Tokarczuk for her novel *The Books of Jacob* (*Księgi Jakubowe*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014) translated from Polish by Maryla Laurent and published in French by Noir sur Blanc entitled *Les livres de Jakób*.

The jury praised: *“a work of immense erudition with a powerful epic sweep. The story of Jacob Frank, a fascinating character who actually existed, comes to life through the author’s sharp and poetic pen. He was the founder of a sect of Jewish heretics whose tribulations we follow through two hundred years of Polish history. The thematic richness is impressive. The story of the Frankists, rendered through a series of mythic narratives, is transformed into a universal epic tale of the struggle against rigid thinking, either religious or philosophical, that ostracize and enslave people. An extensive and prolific work that warns against our inability to embrace an environment complex in its diversity, fueling a fanatical sectarianism which ends in disaster. The Books of Jacob, by telling the past with a dazzling virtuosity, helps us to better understand the world in which we live.”*

The award ceremony will take place on Wednesday, 21st November at 11am at the Jan Michalski Foundation for Literature in Montricher, in Switzerland.



Born in 1962 in Sulechów in Poland, Olga Tokarczuk graduated from the University of Warsaw with a degree in psychology and has been writing since 1997. The author of short stories, essays, articles and a rich array of novels, she has been playing an important role in Polish literature: her texts have been adapted to screen and theatre, and awarded prizes, including the most important prize in Poland, Nike, which Olga Tokarczuk won twice. Her books are translated into twenty five languages, and won many prestigious international prizes, including the Man Booker International in 2018 for *Flights*.

Her books in English include: *House of Day, House of Night* (Granta, 2002), *Primeval and Other Times* (Twisted Spoon Press, 2010), *Flights* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2017), *Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead* (Fitzcarraldo Editions 2018).

The Books of Jacob, the winner of today's Jan Michalski Prize, has already been granted The Nike Prize and the Prix Transfuge 2018 for the best European novel. This vast novel traverses Enlightenment Europe, seven frontiers and five languages to tell the extraordinary and true story of Jakób Frank. A mystic, politician, a founder of an eccentric sect, a Jew converted to Islam and then to Christianity, a libertine, outlaw, magician, alternately poor and wealthy, he was a heretic for some and a messiah for others. Conjuring this extraordinary life through the eyes of a myriad of characters, *The Books of Jacob* echo as much the wonders of everyday life as the tragedies of time and the universal motives of otherness, oppression, emancipation, and freedom, in a kaleidoscopic structure, orchestrated with romance and erudition.

**The laureate of the 2018 Jan Michalski Prize, Olga Tokarczuk, will receive the sum of 50,000 Swiss francs as well as a work of art especially chosen for her:
The artist's book: *L'Exode. Super flumina Babylonis (extract)*
from Benjamin Fondane,
with Albert Woda's original etchings, and Frank Lalous' calligraphy
Editions de l'eau, 1997**



Olga Tokarczuk

Księgi Jakubowe, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014

English edition:

The Books of Jacob, Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2019

THE JAN MICHALSKI PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

The Jan Michalski Prize for Literature is awarded each year by the Foundation to crown a work of world literature. An original feature of the Prize is its multicultural nature. It is open to authors from all over the world and is intended to contribute to their international recognition. The Prize is awarded for a work of fiction or non-fiction, irrespective of the language in which it is written. The winner receives an 50,000 Swiss francs, offering the possibility of greater focus to her or his writing.

To make up the jury, the Foundation has invited exceptional writers who are multilingual, selected for their knowledge of various literary genres, but particularly for their cultural openness.

THE JAN MICHALSKI PRIZE FOR LITERATURE
PREVIOUS LAUREATES

	<p>The 2017 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature First edition in French Thierry Wolton, <i>Une histoire mondiale du communisme</i> 3 volumes, Grasset, 2015 and 2017</p>
	<p>The 2016 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature First edition in Bulgarian English edition: Georgi Gospodinov, <i>The Physics of Sorrow</i>, Open Letter, 2015</p>
	<p>The 2015 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature First edition in English Mark Thompson, <i>Birth Certificate: The Story of Danilo Kiš</i> Cornell University Press, 2013</p>
	<p>The 2014 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature First edition in Ukrainian English edition: Serhiy Jadan, <i>Vorochoylohrad</i>, Deep Vellum, 2016</p>
	<p>The 2013 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature First edition in German translated from Persian English edition: Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, <i>The Colonel</i>, Haus Publishing, 2011</p>
	<p>The 2012 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature First edition in English Julia Lovell, <i>The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China</i>, Picador, 2012</p>
	<p>The 2011 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature First edition in Hungarian English edition: György Dragomán, <i>The White King</i>, Black Swan, 2015</p>
	<p>The 2010 Jan Michalski Prize for Literature First edition in English Aleksandar Hemon, <i>The Lazarus Project</i>, Picador, 2009</p>

THE JURY OF THE JAN MICHALSKI PRIZE FOR LITERATURE 2018

Vera Michalski-Hoffmann, President of the jury

The publisher Vera Michalski-Hoffmann, who has always been committed to promoting literature and the written word, founded the publishing group Libella with Jan Michalski. Since 1986, numerous authors have been brought out in French and Polish at various publishing houses, including Noir sur Blanc, Buchet-Chastel, Phébus, and *Wydawnictwo Literackie*. In 2004 Vera Michalski created the Jan Michalski Foundation for Writing and Literature, whose mission is to provide support to practitioners of the written word and foster the love of reading.

Charles Dantzig

Charles Dantzig was born in 1961 in Tarbes, France. A publisher, translator, and writer, Charles Dantzig is the author of a number of novels – *Un film d'amour* (2003), *Je m'appelle François* (2007), *Dans un avion pour Caracas* (2011), *Histoire de l'amour et de la haine* (2015) – essays – *Dictionnaire égoïste de la littérature française* (2005, the Prix Décembre and the Prix de l'essai of the French Academy), *Encyclopédie capricieuse du tout et du rien* (2009), *Pourquoi lire ?* (2010), and *A propos des chefs-d'œuvre* (2013) – and poetry collections – *La diva aux longs cils* (2010) and *Les nageurs* (2010). He was awarded the Grand Prix Jean Giono in 2010 for his body of work as a whole.

Jacek Dehnel

Born in Gdańsk in 1980, Jacek Dehnel is a Polish poet, novelist, translator, literary columnist and painter. A graduate of the University of Warsaw, he is a specialist of English poetry. Hailed by the Nobel Prize Laureate Czesław Miłosz when his first collection of poems, *Żywoty równoległe* (Parallel Lives, 2004), was published, Jacek Dehnel has received numerous awards, including the prestigious Kościelski Prize in 2005. His novels *Lala* (2006) and *Saturn* (2011/2014) have been a success in Europe with both the public and critics.

Alicia Giménez Bartlett

Born in Almansa (Spain) in 1951, Alicia Giménez Bartlett holds a degree in philology and graduated from the University of Barcelona. She wrote her first novel *Exit* in 1984. Since then, her essays and novels have been rewarded with many literary prizes: *Una habitación ajena* captures the tense relations between Virginia Woolf and her handmaid (Femenino Lumen Prize, 1997), *Donde nadie te encuentre* (Nadal Prize, 2011), and *Hombres desnudos* (Planeta Prize, 2015). With her detective stories featuring Petra Delicado she became one of the most famous Spanish thriller writers, translated into sixteen languages. This female police officer's investigations have been adapted for television, and also earned her the prestigious Raymond Chandler Prize in 2008. Petra's adventures are published by Europa Editions in English.

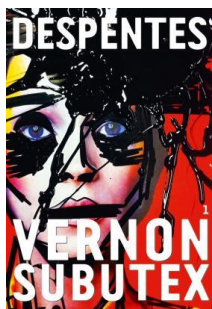
Andrey Kurkov

Andrey Kurkov (born in 1961 in Leningrad, Russia) is a Ukrainian novelist who writes in Russian. He is the author of 13 novels and five books for children. His work is currently translated into 36 languages including English, Japanese, French, Chinese and Hebrew. He has also written articles for various publications world-wide. His critically acclaimed books, including *Death and the Penguin*, *The President's Last Love*, *The Milkman in the Night*, are full of black humour, post-Soviet reality and elements of surrealism.

Shashi Tharoor

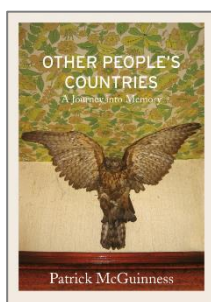
Born in 1956, Shashi Tharoor studied in both India and the United States before joining the United Nations, where he served in a number of high-level posts. He went on to pursue a successful political career in India. Shashi Tharoor is also the bestselling author of a number of books, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *Show Business* (1992), *Riot* (2001), *The Five Dollar Smile and Other Stories* (1990) and *Nehru, the Invention of India* (2003).

THE BOOKS SELECTED FOR THE 2018 JAN MICHALSKI PRIZE



Virginie Despentes
Vernon Subutex,
3 tomes,
Grasset, 2015-2017

Proposed by Alicia Giménez
Bartlett



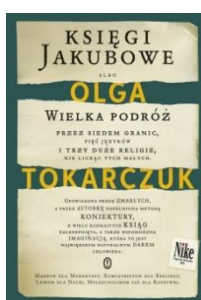
Patrick McGuinness
*Other People's Countries :
A Journey into Memory*,
Jonathan Cape, 2014

Proposed by Charles Dantzig



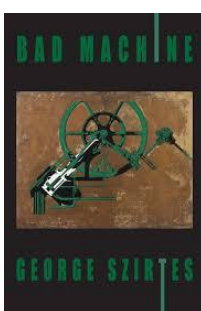
Maggie Nelson
The Argonauts,
Graywolf Press, 2016

Proposed by Charles Dantzig



Olga Tokarczuk
Księgi Jakubowe,
Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014

Proposed by Jacek Dehnel



George Szirtes
Bad Machine,
Bloodaxe Books, 2013

Proposed by Jacek Dehnel



Norman Ohler
*Der totale Rausch :
Drogen im Dritten Reich*,
Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch,
2015

Proposed by Andrey Kurkov



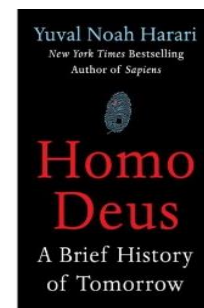
Jean Rolin
Le traquet kurde,
Editions P.O.L, 2018

Proposed by
Vera Michalski-Hoffmann



Preti Taneja
We That Are Young,
Galley Beggar Press, 2017

Proposed by Shashi Tharoor



Yuval Noah Harari
*Homo Deus:
A Brief History of Tomorrow*,
HarperCollins, 2017

Proposed by Shashi Tharoor

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