



PEN/FAULKNER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, April 7, 2015

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ATTICUS LISH RECEIVES 2015 PEN/FAULKNER AWARD FOR FICTION

Washington, DC—*Preparation for the Next Life* by **Atticus Lish** has been selected as the winner of the 2015 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. The announcement was made today by the directors of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation and chairwoman Susan Richards Shreve.

The judges—Alexander Chee, Marc Fitten, and Deirdre McNamer—considered 360 novels and short story collections by American authors published in the U.S. during the 2014 calendar year. Submissions came from 142 publishing houses, including small and academic presses. There is no fee for a publisher or writer to submit a book. Access to electronic copies of submitted works was provided through NetGalley, a free online service that provides secure digital copies of books to professional readers.

The honored book, *Preparations for the Next Life*, is a document of the undocumented and an unlikely love story between a Chinese Muslim immigrant, Zou Lei, and a traumatized Iraq War veteran, Brad Skinner. Skinner comes to New York after a disastrous tour in Iraq, looking for a party, “holding to the idea that if he partied hard enough, he’d eventually succeed in having a good time and would start wanting to live again.” Zou Lei comes to New York fresh from a deportation scare in order to “stay where everybody was illegal just like her and get lost in the crowd.” When they cross paths in a derelict food court, they fall into a relationship haunted by Zou Lei’s fear of deportation and the symptoms of Skinner’s post-traumatic stress disorder. There is little, it seems, either can do to save the other.

In the words of judge Deirdre McNamer, “*Preparation for the Next Life* represents a certain kind of triumph over fiction that hedges its bets. With ferocious precision, Atticus Lish scours and illuminates the vast, traumatized America that lives, works and loves outside the castle gates. The result is an incantation, a song of ourselves, a shout.”

Judge Alexander Chee added, “*Preparation for the Next Life* is a novel that takes you on stops all the way around the world just to take you through Queens, New York. It is a novel about some of the most dehumanizing things that managed to leave me feeling more rather than less human afterward—and it did its work with great ambition for the art of the novel, and for American fiction.”

And judge Marc Fitten said, “The scale, ambition, and endurance of Atticus Lish's novel—coupled with his indelible characters—left me slack-jawed. *Preparation for the Next Life* is a powerful book that lifts bleakness into poetry and humanizes the struggles of war vets, immigrants, ex-cons, and the yearning huddled masses making their way across the American landscape.”

Atticus Lish lives in New York with his wife. He has won the Plimpton Prize for Fiction, the New York City Book Award for Fiction, and the inaugural Carla Cohen Literary Prize. *Preparation for the Next Life* is his first novel.

The PEN/Faulkner Award is America’s largest peer juried prize for fiction. As winner, Lish receives \$15,000. Each of the four finalists—Jeffery Renard Allen, Jennifer Clement, Emily St. John Mandel, and Jenny Offill—receives \$5,000.

All five authors will be honored during the **35th Annual PEN/Faulkner Award Ceremony** at the Folger Shakespeare Library, located at 201 East Capitol Street, SE, on **Saturday, May 2, 2015** at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$100, and can be purchased by phoning the Folger Box Office at (202) 544-7077, or online at: www.penfaulkner.org/award-for-fiction

The PEN/Faulkner Award was first given in 1981. Last year’s winner was Karen Joy Fowler; previous winners include Joseph O’Neill, E.L. Doctorow, Ann Patchett, Philip Roth, John Updike, Sherman Alexie, Annie Proulx and Deborah Eisenberg, among others. A full list of winners is available at: <http://www.penfaulkner.org/award-for-fiction/past-award-winners-finalists/>

The PEN/Faulkner Foundation is committed to building audiences for exceptional literature and bringing writers together with their readers. This mission is accomplished through a reading series at the Folger Shakespeare Library by distinguished writers who have won the respect of readers and writers alike; the PEN/Faulkner Award; the PEN/Malamud Award, honoring excellence in the short story; and the Writers in Schools program, which brings nationally and internationally-acclaimed authors to public and public charter high school classrooms as well as to book groups of teen parents and incarcerated youth in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, MD.

For More Information, visit www.penfaulkner.org

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