



'BORDER' BY KAPKA KASSABOVA WINS INAUGURAL HIGHLAND BOOK PRIZE

Presented by the Highland Society of London

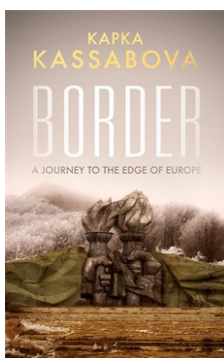
The following is an extract from the coverage of the Highland Book Prize presentation in the *Scottish Review of Books*:

Kapka Kassabova was announced as the winner of the inaugural Highland Book Prize at the Ullapool Book Festival on 12th May. Her book, *Border: A Journey to the Edge of Europe* (Granta), is an exploration of the border-zone between Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece, once a heavily guarded line between east and west. The judges praised its “personal and intellectual bravery” noting Kassabova’s especial skill in relating individual stories to broader historical narratives as she unfolds a portrait of a land rich in history, folklore, and conflict.

Speaking from New Zealand in a specially recorded video message, Kassabova said, “[The Highlands are] a place whose very mention makes people around the world acquire a dreamy look – in other words a place that is imaginatively charged, but often subjected to cultural cliché and that is why I think it is so important to encourage those dimensions of Highland culture that go beyond the cliché. *Border* would have been a very different book had I not become a resident of the Highlands seven years ago. Living in the Highlands attuned me to the precious fragility of our natural environment. The periphery is often sacrificed for the interests of the centre. Geographically remote areas have different frequencies of less told histories, less heard voices”.



Kassabova, who lives near Beaulieu, will donate half of the money she will receive from the prize to the Scottish Refugee Council. *Border* has garnered acclaim across literary prizes: it was the Saltire Society’s Scottish Book of the Year 2017 and won the Stanford Dolman Prize for Travel Book of the Year as well as being shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction and the Gordon Burn Prize.



The judges for the £1,000 prize were Jenny Niven, Head of Literature, Languages and Publishing at Creative Scotland, Alex Ogilvie, trustee of the Highland Society of London, and authors Kevin MacNeil and Chris Dolan.

MacNeil commented, “The ultimate triumph of *Border* is that it removes all our borders. It reminds every one of our innate love, decency and empathy for our near and our more distant neighbours. The reader emerges from this book a better informed, more empathetic and more worldly-wise individual. *Border* is destined to be a modern classic”.

The three other shortlisted titles were *The Potter’s Tale*, by Dion Alexander (Birlinn), a memoir of life on Colonsay in the 1970s and 80s; a novel, *The Angel in the Stone* by R.L. McKinney (Sandstone Press), which tells the story of a family confronting buried secrets; and *The Finest Road in the World* by James Miller (Birlinn), a history of transport and travel in the Highlands and Islands.

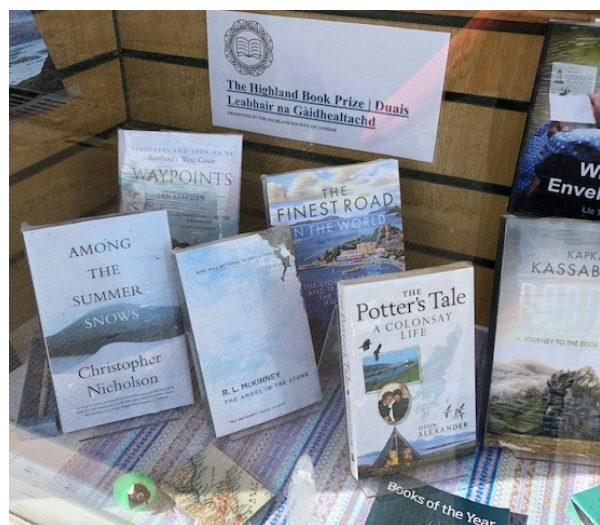
The Highland Book Prize was established in 2017 and is open to work in fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. It is presented by the Highland Society of London and facilitated by the Moniack Mhor Creative Writing Centre in partnership with the Ullapool Book Festival.

Additional press coverage of the Highland Book Prize included (to date):

West Highland Free Press
BBC Scotland
Scotsman
The Herald
Glasgow Evening Times

Publishing Scotland
Trip Advisor (Top 10 things to do in UK in May 2018)
Ross-shire Journal
North Star
East Lothian Courier

The award was supported by numerous bookshops (including Waterstones) in the Highlands and Islands and in Scotland as a whole, who used the publication of the long-list (December 2017) and the short-list (April 2018) as a way to showcase the books to customers:



The winner and the short-listed titles are also acknowledged in product descriptions and reviews for the titles on Amazon and Goodreads.com.

The inaugural competition was also welcomed by publishers, who submitted a total of 54 books (first published in 2017) for consideration – the main criteria being that either the book be written about the Highlands or the author be based in the Highlands. These 54 titles were whittled down to a long-list of 11 by a volunteer panel of 70+ readers; and the short-list of four (and the eventual winner) were then selected by a panel of judges chaired by Jenny Niven, Head of Literature at Creative Scotland.


Ullapool Book Fest @UllapoolBookFes · 21 Aug 2017
 We are so excited about the new **Highland Book Prize**. @HighlandBook. It's great to be a part of this! @moniackmhor


BBC Highlands @BBCHighlands · Jan 12
 Longlist for the inaugural **Highland Book Prize** has been published. A total of 25 publishers submitted 54 books for consideration.


The Highland Book Prize - Moniack Mhor
 The Highland Book Prize, established in 2017, celebrates the finest published work that recognises the rich landscape and cultural heritage of the Highlands. This a...
moniackmhor.org.uk


Angus Peter Campbell @aonghasphadraig · Jan 15
 'Memory and Straw' is on the long list for the **Highland Book Prize**:


Memory and Straw - The Highland Book Prize | Dual...
 Memory and Straw Angus Peter Campbell A face is nothing without its history. Gavin and Emma live in Manhattan. She's a musician. He works in Artificial Inte...
highlandbookprize.org.uk


Luath Press @LuathPress · Jan 12
 Delighted to see #MemoryandStraw by @aonghasphadraig on the longlist for the **Highland Book Prize** bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland...


Sandstone Press @sandstonepress · Jan 12
 Two of our authors have made the Long List for the **Highland Book Prize**! Congratulations to @BexMcKinney and Iain Hector Ross. twitter.com/HighlandBook/s...


Rebecca McKinney @BexMcKinney · Jan 12
 I am absolutely thrilled that The Angel in the Stone has been longlisted for the **Highland Book Prize**! highlandbookprize.org.uk


H&I Voices @HI_Voices · 16 Nov 2017
 4/10 projects I ❤️ in #highlands: @HighlandBook, I feel like the Highlands inspires amazing writing so dedicated prizes like this are excellent. **Highland Book Prize** are looking for readers so check out their website for more information! highlandbookprize.org.uk


September Publishing @septemberbooks · Jan 25
 CHRISTOPHER NICHOLSON'S CAPTIVATING AMONG THE SUMMER SNOWS LONGLISTED FOR THE **HIGHLAND BOOK PRIZE** 2017 — Blake Friedmann


CHRISTOPHER NICHOLSON'S CAPTIVATING AMO...
 Christopher Nicholson's AMONG THE SUMMER SNOWS, a contemplative journey to discover the last snows in the Scottish Highlands, has been longlisted fo...
blakefriedmann.co.uk


Prickly Thistle @tartanjourney · Jan 12
 So great to see your name on the list @marymiers_ congratulations #HighlandRetreats BBC News - Longlist announced for new **Highland Book Prize** bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland...


Literature Wales @LitWales · Apr 28
 Our friends at @moniackmhor have announced the short list for the **Highland Book Prize**. Read all about this exciting mix of work that recognises the rich landscape and cultural heritage of the Highlands here: bit.ly/2KIRLLT


Ceilidh Place Books @ceilidhbooks · Apr 27
Highland Book Prize
 Shortlist announced.


Waterstones Inverness @WatInverness · Apr 27
 The **Highland Book Prize** shortlist has been announced.
 The Potter's Tale - Dion Alexander
 Border - Kapka Kassabova
 Angel In The Stone - RL McKinney
 Finest Road In The World - James Miller


Kevin MacNeil @Kevin_MacNeil · Apr 26
 Congratulations to all authors in the final running for the inaugural **Highland Book Prize**. This is a strong, diverse and really rather wonderful shortlist. I was thrilled to be one of the judges. Please RT and share the good vibes for the authors and their publishers,


Scottish Book Trust @scottishbktrust
 @moniackmhor has revealed their four book shortlist for the inaugural #HighlandBookPrize...
highlandbookprize.org.uk


The Wee Review @theweereview · May 1
 Interview: Jim Miller: We speak to **Highland Book Prize** nominee Jim Miller ahead of his upcoming appearance at Ullapool Book Festival


Jim Miller | The Wee Review | Scotland's arts and c...
 Interview | We speak to Highland Book Prize nominee Jim Miller ahead of his upcoming appearance at Ullapool Book Festival.
theweereview.com


Birlinn Books @BirlinnBooks · Apr 27
 We are delighted to have two books shortlisted for the #HighlandBookPrize - well done to all shortlisted but special congratulations to Jim Miller, author of 'The Finest Road in the World', and @DiddlyayeDion, author of 'The Potter's Tale'


The Wee Review @theweereview · May 14
 Experience: Ullapool Book Festival: Vigorous discussions from the four shortlisted **Highland Book Prize** nominees


Ullapool Book Festival | The Wee Review | Scotland...
 Experience | Vigorous discussions from the four shortlisted Highland Book Prize nominees.
theweereview.com


BBC Highlands @BBCHighlands · May 16
 BBC News - Winner of new **Highland Book Prize** announced bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland...


Scot Refugee Council @scotrefcouncil · May 18
 Winner of new **Highland Book Prize** announced
 Proud of you @Kapka_Kassabova
 Read more: bbc.in/2rRcKwR



The prize was awarded at the Ullapool Book Festival on 12th May 2018. Earlier in the day, participants at the book festival had been given a preview of the short-listed books in a session with the respective authors. The *Wee Review* reported on this session as follows:

“It is an early start to this trip to Ullapool Book Festival, but the four short-listees for the inaugural Highland Book Prize reading from their respective works are worth the early rise. As the blue sky opens up the view onto the little whitewashed village at the mouth of Loch Broom, Ullapool’s unique selling point becomes clear once again. Scenic and compact, it is a place for meeting, for connecting, and for mingling. Despite the 9 o’clock start, people are walking towards the village hall from all directions, chatting like old friends as they file in.

“The event is opened by honorary chair of the book festival Chris Dolan before the first Highland Book Prize author takes to the stage. Dion Alexander reads from *The Potter’s Tale*, detailing his arrival on the Isle of Colonsay (and the male Gaels’ fondness for stories he encountered there) in his boathouse-turned-pottery. Intricately woven sentences reflect the rich layers of island life.

“Fellow short-listee Kapka Kassabova is unable to attend, so Eilidh Smith from Moniack Mhor steps in to read an entertaining and evocative extract on longevity from the shortlisted novel *Border* on the author’s behalf, showcasing the poet’s lyrical style. RL McKinney’s *The Angel in the Stone* explores themes of mental illness and Alzheimer’s. Rebecca McKinney’s chosen extract describes a mountaineer’s world, full of bravado and banter but also of considerable burdens.

“Next up is James Miller, who reads a chapter on drovers from his anecdote-rich history of transport in the North of Scotland, *The Finest Road in the World*. Peppered with interesting snippets and surprising statistics, it immerses us in facts but is far from dry.

“The winner won’t be announced until the evening, but the session serves as a springboard, toning the minds for the rest of the day.”



The presentation itself was held at 8pm that evening, led by Rachel Humphreys from the Moniack Mhor Creative Writing Centre, who had facilitated the competition. The guest speaker, Maree Todd MSP, the Holyrood Minister for Youth, praised the award and talked about the importance of literature in Highland schools. The winning book was announced by Alex Ogilvie from the Highland Society of London, and a short video acceptance speech from Kapka Kassabova (from New Zealand, where she was on a book tour) was played. Jenny Niven and Kevin MacNeil (two of the judges) then discussed the book and its importance to Highland literature with guest author Malachy Tallack, and took questions from the audience.

The Highland Society of London would like to thank Rachel Humphreys, Eilidh Smith and Rich Clements from Moniack Mhor; Joan Michaels and the organising committee of the Ullapool Book Festival; judges Jenny Niven, Kevin MacNeil and Chris Dolan; and guests Maree Todd MSP and Malachy Tallack.