

Berlin, 12th September 2005

Nominations for the Lettre Ulysses Award 2005

The World Prize for Reportage Literature

International Jury names seven finalists

The ten-member jury of the *Lettre Ulysses Award for the Art of Reportage* have agreed upon the seven finalists for the world prize for reportage literature, which is endowed with a total of 100,000 Euro in prize money. The nominated texts deal with the war in Iraq, survival in Bombay, the secret interrogation methods and killing practices of the Peruvian army in the fight against guerrillas in the 1980s, anarchy and lawlessness on the world's oceans, a pilgrimage to Mecca, the life of a mercenary in Africa's wars, and the experiences of a war and conflict correspondent. The seven authors come from Iraq, Germany, Great Britain, Morocco, the United States, India and Peru.

The seven final texts

- **Anonymous (Riverbend)** (Iraq): *Baghdad Burning. A Girl Blog from Iraq*, The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, New York, 2005
- **Carolyn Emcke** (Germany): *Von den Kriegen. Briefe an Freunde*, S. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 2004 [*Of Wars. Letters to Friends*]
- **Alexandra Fuller** (Great Britain): *Scribbling the Cat. Travels with an African Soldier*, Penguin Press, New York, 2004
- **Abdellah Hammoudi** (Morocco): *Une saison à la Mecque. Récit de pèlerinage*, Seuil, Paris, 2004 [*A Season in Mecca. Account of a Pilgrimage*]
- **William Langewiesche** (USA): *The Outlaw Sea. A World of Freedom, Chaos, and Crime*, North Point Press, New York, 2004. Published as *The Outlaw Sea. Chaos and Crime on the World's Oceans* by Granta Books, London, 2005.
- **Suketu Mehta** (India): *Maximum City. Bombay Lost And Found*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2004
- **Ricardo Uceda** (Peru): *Muerte en el pentagonito. Los cementerios secretos del Ejército Peruano*, Editorial Planeta, Bogotá, 2004 [*Death in the Little Pentagon. The Secret Killing Fields of the Peruvian Army*]

Short descriptions of the nominated texts

- **Anonymous / Riverbend**, a young Iraqi woman, writes an Internet diary in English using a pseudonym. Her commanding gift for observation, her intelligence and her extraordinary language skills make her account of the life of a normal Iraqi family, which has also been published in book form as *Baghdad Burning*, one of the most uniquely critical documents of life in this abused country under the conditions of the war and the US military occupation.
- In *Von den Kriegen. Briefe an Freunde* **Carolin Emcke**, a reporter with *Der Spiegel*, writes about her work as a war and conflict correspondent in various regions of the world. The personal and reflective tone of this book deeply permeates the panorama of the horrors, as well as the challenges of this job. These diagnoses about the state of the world sensitively help us to experience the every-day life and inner world of a journalist.
- In *Scribbling the Cat* Briton **Alexandra Fuller** accompanies a Rhodesian war veteran and mercenary on a journey back to the scenes of his wars in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The dramatic, violent story of decolonisation, guerrilla war, and the old and new power structures in South East Africa, form the background to this nightmarish journey into the soul of the *universal soldier*.
- At the age of 50 the Moroccan anthropologist **Abdellah Hammoudi** decides to fulfil his duty as a good Muslim and embark on the great pilgrimage to Mecca. His aim is, on the one hand to describe this impressive Islamic ritual as an ethnographer, while at the same time, as a secular Muslim, to explore the spiritual dimension of this experience. *Une saison à la Mecque* describes the strong, sensual impressions in Medina and Mecca, and impressively gives anthropological, historical, religious and social insights into Islam.
- In his book *The Outlaw Sea* the American reporter **William Langewiesche** describes the lawlessness and anarchy of the oceans. His fascinating stories deal with ship wrecks, sea pirates, disputes over an International Maritime Legislation, the conflict between the shipping companies' search for profits and ecological necessities, as well as the scrapping of redundant ocean liners.
- After years of living in New York, the Indian writer **Suketu Mehta** decides to move back to his boyhood home of Bombay/Mumbai. *Maximum City. Bombay Lost and Found* is a multifaceted portrait of the Indian mega-metropolis and describes the art of survival in the midst of urban chaos. The author meets rural migrants and street kids, gangsters and policemen, film stars and transvestites, diamond traders and those seeking redemption. His book describes the horrors and wonders of this urban behemoth that straddles the archaic and the modern.
- The Peruvian journalist **Ricardo Uceda** immerses himself in the still suppressed recent history of Peru and investigates a secret story of the Peruvian army. *Muerte en el Pentagonito* is a work of empirical research, based on many eye-witness accounts of the dirty war between the *Shining Path* revolutionary guerrilla organisation and the Peruvian army in the early 1980s. With its disturbing exposure, the book is part of the attempt in many Latin American countries to critically reconstruct the history of the past

few decades.

Prize and Award Ceremony 2005

The *Lettre Ulysses Award 2005* encompasses three money prizes of 50,000, 30,000 und 20,000 Euro, prizes in the form of working residencies, as well as valuable watches from the firm Nomos. The winners will be announced on 15th October, the Saturday before the opening of the *International Frankfurt Book Fair*, in the presence of an international audience in the Tipi-Zelt in Berlin. The keynote speech will be delivered by the Swedish reportage writer and author Sven Lindqvist.

Initiators and the Aim of Prize

The cultural journal *Lettre International* is the initiator of this, the only world prize for literary reportage. The financial support of the *Aventis Foundation* has made the award possible. The *Goethe-Institut* is a partner of the *Lettre Ulysses Award*. The intention of the initiators is to bring the art of literary reportage to worldwide attention and to support its authors materially and symbolically.

The *Lettre Ulysses Award* has been presented annually since October 2003 for texts first published within the preceding two years. This year the jury considered works that had been published after 1st January 2003.

Resonance of the Prize

The establishment of the *Lettre Ulysses Award* in 2003 found a wide resonance internationally among journalists and writers, as well as in the press, radio and television. The awarding of the prize – in 2003 to the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaja for her book on the war in Chechnya and in 2004 to the Chinese authors Wu Chuntao and Chen Guidi for their reportage on the situation of Chinese peasants – has received a great deal of international attention.

The Importance of Reportage Literature

Internationally, there has been increasing importance attached to reportage literature. Just recently in the *New York Times* of 7th August 2005 V.S. Naipaul, the 2001 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, and the journalist Rachel Donadio put forth the thesis that reportage is in some respects better suited to meeting the challenge of representing an increasingly complex, globalized world than the creative novel (cf. *Truth is Stronger Than Fiction*). And the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Cullen Murphy, as well as the editor of the *Paris Review*, Philip Gourevitch, have also emphasised the extraordinary capacity of literary reportage to describe our world.

Jury and the judging process

The *Lettre Ulysses Award* jury members are all outstanding and award-winning authors and reportage writers. The polyglot jurors represent nine of the world's largest language groups and thus guarantee that a wide range of languages and cultures are considered. The languages represented are: Arabic, Chinese, German, English, French, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. Jury members are free to nominate texts from any language in the world, and nominations are based on written reports. The working language of the jury is English.

Members of the 2005 Jury

- **Svetlana Alexievitch** (Belarus): *Journalist, Film maker, Playwright*
- **Gamal Al-Ghitany** (Egypt): *Novelist, Essayist, Journalist*
- **Mark Danner** (USA): *War reporter, Essayist, Editor*
- **Isabel Hilton** (Great Britain): *Reporter, Writer, Radio broadcaster*
- **Lung Yingtai** (Taiwan): *Literature critic, Essayist, Literature professor*
- **Pankaj Mishra** (India): *Novelist, Literature critic*
- **Anne Nivat** (France): *Reporter, Writer*
- **Sergio Ramírez** (Nicaragua): *Writer, Journalist*
- **Pedro Rosa Mendes** (Portugal): *Reporter, Writer*
- **Ilija Trojanow** (Germany): *Writer, Reporter, Publisher*

Further Information

You can find further information on the concept of the prize, the jury, the finalists and the longlist on the website: www.lettre-ulysses-award.org

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