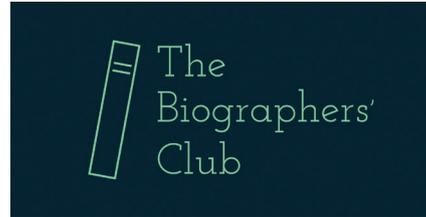


Slightly Foxed



ANNOUNCING THE WINNER OF

THE SLIGHTLY FOXED BEST FIRST BIOGRAPHY PRIZE 2021



Lea Ypi

*Free: Coming of Age at the End of History*

Lea Ypi grew up in one of the most isolated countries on earth, a place where communist ideals had officially replaced religion. Albania – the last Stalinist outpost in Europe – was almost impossible to visit, and almost impossible to leave.

It was a place of queuing and scarcity, of political executions and secret police. To Lea, it was home. People were equal, neighbours helped each other, and children were expected to build a better world. There was community and hope. Then, in December 1990, a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, everything changed. The statues of Stalin and Hoxha were toppled. Almost overnight, people could vote freely, wear what they liked and worship as they wished without fear. But factories shut, jobs disappeared and thousands fled to Italy on crowded ships, only to be sent back. Predatory pyramid

schemes eventually bankrupted the country, leading to violent conflict. As one generation's aspirations became another's disillusionment, and as her own family's secrets were revealed, Lea found herself questioning what freedom really meant.

*Free* is an engrossing coming-of-age memoir in the midst of political upheaval. With acute insight and wit, Lea Ypi traces the limits of progress and the burden of the past, illuminating the spaces between ideals and reality, and the hopes and fears of people pulled along by the sweep of history. (£20 • Allen Lane)

'Lea Ypi's memoir *Free* vividly portrays the confusions of childhood and adolescence among the lies, surreal oddity and dangers that she experienced under the strict rule of communist Albania and the chaos after 1990. Gradually understanding the behaviour of her grandmother, father, mother, neighbours and friends, she reveals the complexities of different, often incompatible ideas of freedom. Both funny and deeply serious, it is a moving personal narrative, a fascinating portrait of Albania, and a profoundly valuable analysis of what it is to be free.' **Johnny de Falbe, 2021 Prize Judge**

## THE WINNER

Lea Ypi is an Albanian author and academic. She is a professor of Political Theory at the London School of Economics. *Free* was *The Sunday Times* memoir of the year, a BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week and was shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize 2021 and the Costa 2021 Biography Award. It is being translated into nineteen languages.

## THE PRIZE

This is the eighth year of the literary quarterly and independent publisher Slightly Foxed's sponsorship of the Biographers' Club **Slightly Foxed Best First Biography Prize**, with a winner's award of £2,500.

Previous winners: Heather Clark, *Red Comet*; Jonathan Phillips, *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin*; Bart van Es, *The Cut Out Girl*; Edmund Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*; Hisham Matar, *The Return*; Alan Cumming, *Not My Father's Son*; Claudia Renton, *Those Wild Wyndhams*; Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*; Thomas Penn, *Winter King*; and Matthew Hollis, *Now All Roads Lead to France*.

## THE JUDGES

Susannah Clapp, Horatio Clare and Johnny de Falbe

## THE SHORTLIST

- Annabel Abbs, *Windswept: Walking in the Footsteps of Remarkable Women* (Two Roads)
- Eileen Atkins, *Will She Do? Act One of a Life on Stage* (Virago)
- Alex Christofi, *Dostoevsky in Love: An Intimate Life* (Bloomsbury Continuum)
- Ian Collins, *John Craxton: A Life of Gifts* (Yale University Press)
- Lea Ypi, *Free: Coming of Age at the End of History* (Allen Lane)

## SLIGHTLY FOXED

*Slightly Foxed: The Real Reader's Quarterly* and its acclaimed list of classic limited-edition memoirs have become something of an institution in the literary world. Contributors to the magazine have included: Diana Athill, Quentin Blake, Ronald Blythe, Margaret Drabble, Adam Foulds, Melissa Harrison, Michael Holroyd, Amy Liptrot, Penelope Lively, Richard Mabey, Robert Macfarlane, Dervla Murphy, Sarah Perry, Jane Ridley, Christopher Rush, Posy Simmonds, Adam Sisman, Ali Smith and Jacqueline Wilson. The Slightly Foxed series of memoirs includes works by: Edward Ardizzone, Adrian Bell, Roald Dahl, Jennie Erdal, Anne Fadiman, Graham Greene, Helene Hanff, Diana Holman-Hunt, Michael Holroyd, Laurie Lee, James Lees-Milne, Hilary Mantel, Gavin Maxwell, Jessica Mitford, Jan Morris, Eric Newby, Ernest Shepard and Rosemary Sutcliff

Single issues from £12; Subscriptions from £48; Books from £18 • Worldwide shipping • [www.foxedquarterly.com](http://www.foxedquarterly.com)

## THE BIOGRAPHERS' CLUB

Founded in 1997, the Biographers' Club is committed to supporting, promoting and connecting biographers at all levels. It offers three prizes each year: the Slightly Foxed Best First Biography Prize, the Tony Lothian Prize and the Exceptional Contribution to Biography Award. For information on the club please contact Ariane Banks or Nicholas Clee on [thebiographersclub1@gmail.com](mailto:thebiographersclub1@gmail.com) • [www.thebiographersclub.com](http://www.thebiographersclub.com)

**For a review copy of Lea Ypi, *Free*  
or for extract or interview requests, please contact:  
Corina Romonti, Allen Lane • [cromonti@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk](mailto:cromonti@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk)**

# Slightly Foxed

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