

# Slightly Foxed



The Biographers' Club  
Supporting, promoting and connecting  
biographers at all levels

## Slightly Foxed and The Biographers' Club are delighted to announce the shortlist for the **Slightly Foxed Best First Biography Prize 2023**

This is the 10th year that Slightly Foxed – publishers of the literary journal *Slightly Foxed: The Real Reader's Quarterly* and an acclaimed list of limited-edition cloth-bound memoirs, and producers of the well-loved literary podcast – has sponsored the Prize.

The Prize awards **£2,500** to the judges' choice of the best first biography published each year. The winner will be announced at a prize-giving celebration on Tuesday 19th March 2024 at Maggs Bros Ltd, 48 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3BR.

### SHORTLIST

#### ***Quartet: How Four Women Changed the Musical World* by Leah Broad (Faber)**

When do four soloists become a quartet? When they are female composers collected together in creative tension by Leah Broad in this captivating group biography. Ethel Smyth, Rebecca Clark, Dorothy Howell and Doreen Carwithen were all trailblazers in a musical world largely dominated by the works of dead white men, and Broad's study of these remarkable composers, while full of amusing anecdotes, is quietly devastating in its portrayal of their treatment by the male establishment, then and now.

#### ***Messalina: The Life and Times of Rome's Most Scandalous Empress* by Honor Cargill-Martin (Head of Zeus)**

In this accomplished historical debut, Emperor Claudius's third wife Messalina is set free from the notoriety that has dogged her reputation. Looking beyond the salacious anecdotes, Cargill-Martin reveals a woman battling to assert herself in the overwhelmingly male world of Imperial Rome. Intelligent, passionate and sometimes ruthless, Messalina's story often reads like a thriller, but it captures her humanity with wit and precision.

#### ***Hitler, Stalin, Mum and Dad* by Daniel Finkelstein (William Collins)**

From a leading political commentator, a powerful memoir of his family's extraordinary fate at the hands of both the Nazis and the Soviets – as an outcome of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939. A deeply personal, moving and horrifying account of persecution and almost miraculous survival in the midst of two genocidal regimes, showing how the unusual bravery of two families shone and ultimately won through all that was ranged against them.

#### ***A Pebble in the Throat: Growing up between Two Continents* by Aasmah Mir (Headline)**

This bittersweet memoir of growing up in Glasgow is interwoven with the story of Aasmah's mother, and her journey from Pakistan to Scotland in the 1960s. Unravelling the immigrant experience, it shows how the wheels of progress could often stick, and how much courage and humour are needed to find one's place in the world.

#### ***Go the Way Your Blood Beats* by Emmett de Monterey (Viking)**

When Emmett de Monterey is 18 months old, he is diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Growing up in south-east London, he is spat at on the street, and prayed over at church. At his sixth-form college for disabled students, he is told he will be expelled if the rumours are true, that he is gay. Supposedly life-changing surgery on his legs in America failed to change his life, and in this vivid, affecting memoir he faces with clear-eyed intensity what it is to live the only life you have, even when it falls short of expectations.

For more information about the prize or the shortlisted authors

Contact Stephanie Allen/Jennie Harrison-Bunning at Slightly Foxed [press@foxedquarterly.com](mailto:press@foxedquarterly.com)

Contact Ariane Bankes/Nick Clee at The Biographers' Club [thebiographersclub1@gmail.com](mailto:thebiographersclub1@gmail.com)

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## 2023 JUDGES

**Philip Eade** is the author of three biographies, *Sylvia, Queen of the Headhunters* (2007), *Young Prince Philip* (2011) and *Evelyn Waugh: A Life Revisited* (2016), all of which appeared in *The Sunday Times*'s ten best biographies of the year; the last two were also Book of the Week on BBC Radio 4.

**Sue Gaisford** reviewed non-fiction for the *Economist* for twenty years before moving to *The Independent*. She now reviews for the *Financial Times* and the *Tablet*, where she became Literary Editor.

**Clare Mulley** is an award-winning author and broadcaster. Her three books, *The Woman Who Saved the Children*, *The Spy Who Loved* and *The Women Who Flew for Hitler*, are all under option and widely translated. Clare writes and reviews for various papers including the *Spectator* and the *TLS*, and has twice been chair of the judges for the Historical Writers Association non-fiction prize.

## About Slightly Foxed

**The Magazine:** Founded in 2004 by former John Murray editors Gail Pirkis and Hazel Wood, *Slightly Foxed* is the highly acclaimed yet good-humoured and unstuffy literary magazine that introduces its readers to good books from both the past and the present. It has a readership of approximately 18,000 booklovers in around 80 countries worldwide. Contributors have included Penelope Lively, Robert Macfarlane, Olivia Potts, Alexandra Pringle, Mick Herron, Kate Young, Quentin Blake, Melissa Harrison, Michael Holroyd and Adam Sisman, Sarah Perry, Daisy Hay, Tim Pears, Justin Marozzi and Margaret Drabble. The 80<sup>th</sup> issue was published in December and in March 2024 *Slightly Foxed* will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**The Books:** Slightly Foxed's non-fiction list of cloth-bound limited-editions was launched in 2008 and encompasses some of the twentieth century's best memoirs, biographies and classic children's fiction, with works by Edward Ardizzone, 'BB', Gerald Durrell, Graham Greene, Helene Hanff, Luke Jennings, Michael Holroyd, Hilary Mantel, Gavin Maxwell, V. S. Pritchett, Dodie Smith and Rosemary Sutcliff, among others.

**The Podcast:** The Slightly Foxed podcast was launched five years ago and has around 15,000 listens to each episode. Relaxed, conversational, and beautifully produced, the podcast is an audio version of the magazine, full of interesting discussion and book recommendations. Recent episodes include a life in writing with Margaret Drabble, the shocking story of Charles and Mary Lamb, a feast of food writing with Olivia Potts, the Golden Age of crime writing, the works of Barbara Pym with her biographer Paula Byrne and much more besides. With 48 episodes released to date the podcast has had 600,000+ all-time listens. You can hear all available episodes on the website or by searching for 'Slightly Foxed' on iTunes, Spotify or other podcast platforms.

<https://foxedquarterly.com/the-slightly-foxed-podcast-all-episodes>

**Produced in England:** Slightly Foxed magazine and all of the company's books are printed and bound in the UK by traditional printers and book-binders. Watch a short film here: 'Birth of a Book'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuFV5196dYQ> For more visit: <https://foxedquarterly.com>

## About The Biographers' Club

The Biographers' Club, founded in 1997, is committed to supporting, promoting and connecting biographers at all levels. It administers three prestigious annual prizes: The Slightly Foxed Best First Biography Prize, The Elizabeth Buccleuch Prize and The Exceptional Contribution to Biography Award. Membership gives access to Club talks, prize-givings and other networking opportunities.

**The Prize:** This is the tenth year of Slightly Foxed's sponsorship of the Prize for the best first biography or literary memoir published each year, with a winner's award of £2,500. Previous winners include: joint winners, **Katherine Rundell**, *Super-Infinite* and **Osman Yousefzada**, *The Go-Between*; **Lea Ypi**, *Free*; **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*.

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