

Maggie O’Farrell and Elaine Feeney announced as winners of 2021 Dalkey Literary Awards

The winners of this year’s Dalkey Literary Awards presented by Zurich have been announced by the Dalkey Book Festival, in conjunction with Zurich Insurance plc. Best-selling author Maggie O’Farrell’s magnificent novel *Hamnet* has been announced as Novel of the Year, while Galway writer Elaine Feeney has won this year’s Emerging Writer award for her stunning debut *As You Were*. This is the second year of the Dalkey Literary Awards and with a total prize fund of €30,000 they are the biggest prize value awards solely for Irish writers. As well as the prestige of winning the awards, Maggie O’Farrell will receive €20,000 and Elaine Feeney will be awarded €10,000.

Each category had three judges who each reviewed the six shortlisted authors and selected one overall winner. The Judging Panels for this year’s Dalkey Literary Awards were: Róisín Ingle, Paschal Donohoe TD and Sinéad Gleeson for Novel of the Year, and Dearbhail McDonald, Aideen Howard and Declan Hughes for Emerging Writer. The winners were announced this evening as part of this year’s Dalkey Book Festival which takes place this weekend and is being streamed from the Martello Tower in Dalkey with an exciting line-up of Irish and international guests.

The judges commended *Hamnet* for being “incredibly moving and beautifully written.... about family, love and grief, it is a totally immersive novel. This bewitching novel brings alive the era – the smell, sight and sound of the city streets and also of the surrounding countryside. Intimate, intense, devastating.”

Commenting on her win for Novel of the Year, Maggie O’Farrell said: “It is a huge honour to be given this award. Dalkey is a place very close to my heart as my father was born and raised there; the homescreen on my phone has for years been a photograph of Dalkey Island. I’m so grateful to the festival and the judges. The shortlist was particularly strong - 2021 has been an excellent year for Irish fiction - and it was a joy to have been included. I hope it’s not too long before I’m back in Dalkey.”

Despite a diverse range of titles and genres vying for the Emerging Writer award, the judges agreed that Elaine Feeney is a worthy winner. Commenting on *As You Were*, the judges said it is “A mighty, turbulent firestorm of a book, with a pulsing, rhythmic narrative voice. A compelling cast of characters with pitch perfect dialogue, it is tender, nuanced, forensically controlled and thrillingly unrestrained.”

Commenting on her win for Emerging Writer of the Year, Elaine Feeney said: “It is a huge honour to win the Dalkey Emerging Writer Award. I was so impressed when I read the amazing, shortlisted books, and so I was thrilled to be alongside these writers. I spent five years writing *As You Were*, and though no one forces anyone to write a book, it’s often a long journey, my journey was filled with self-doubt, and at times obsession – so it’s reassuring to have my work recognised by the judges. An award like Dalkey can really help an artist buy some time to be creative, to take time to work on your art, (and not feel guilty about it) so I’m very grateful. Thanks to winning this award, I can now take some more time off the day job to write full-time. Finally, never give up - if you’ve a book burning inside you, get it out! A writer can emerge at any stage in life - it’s safe to say that I wasn’t an overnight success, but I’m very glad now that I kept going! Many thanks to my editor, agent, readers, book sellers, judges, Sian and all at Dalkey Book Festival!”

Sian Smyth, Director of the Dalkey Book Festival said: “It’s wonderful to include the Dalkey Literary Awards in this year’s Dalkey Book Festival. We were devastated having to cancel last year’s festival so it was very important for us to bring the much-loved weekend festival back to life this year, and the Awards are a key part of that. We’re proud to play a part in recognising some of the best literary

talent, and thanks to our sponsors Zurich Insurance plc and the time and dedication of our wonderful judges, it's such a joy to see Maggie O'Farrell and Elaine Feeney win these important awards."

Neil Freshwater, CEO Zurich Insurance plc said: "Our congratulations to Maggie O'Farrell and Elaine Feeney and to all the shortlisted authors this year. Zurich is proud to support writers and literature in Ireland through its longstanding partnership with the Dalkey Book Festival and we are delighted at the success of the Dalkey Literary Awards, now in their second year."

The full shortlist for Novel of the Year is:

Anne Enright - Actress

Colum McCann - Apeirogon

Donal Ryan - Strange Flowers

Hilary Fannin - The Weight of Love

Maggie O'Farrell - Hamnet

Roddy Doyle - Love

The six shortlisted authors for Emerging Writer are:

Caoilinn Hughes - The Wild Laughter

Dara McAnulty - Diary of a Young Naturalist

Elaine Feeney - As You Were

Naoise Dolan - Exciting Times

Patrick Freyne - OK Let's Do Your Stupid Idea

Seán Hewitt - Tongues of Fire