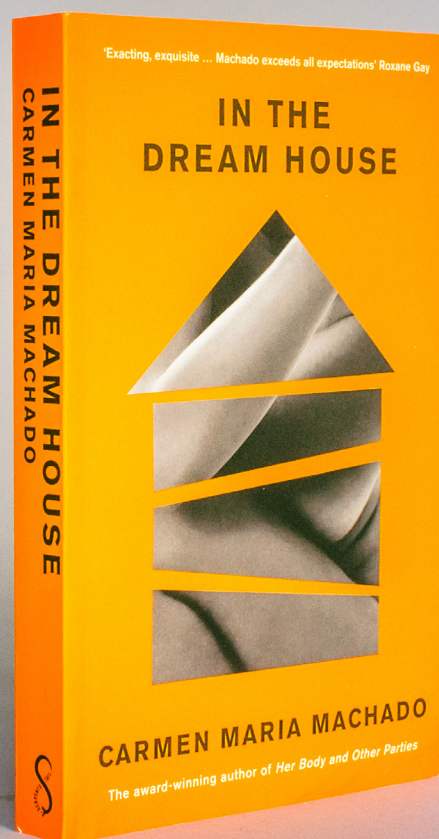


MEDIA RELEASE | **STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 19.20 GMT, WEDNESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2021**

CARMEN MARIA MACHADO WINS RATHBONES FOLIO PRIZE 2021 FOR “MULTI-GENRE MASTERPIECE” *IN THE DREAM HOUSE*

2021 WINNER



A breathtakingly inventive, unflinchingly honest examination of domestic abuse in a female relationship was tonight named winner of the Rathbones Folio Prize 2021. Carmen Maria Machado takes the £30,000 award for her memoir *In the Dream House* (Serpent's Tail/Graywolf Press). Tracing her relationship with a charismatic but volatile woman, Machado breaks down the idea of what the memoir form can do and be – and bravely approaches a subject for which literary treatment has been extremely rare.

In a unanimous decision, the judges **Roger Robinson, Sinéad Gleeson** and **Jon McGregor** deemed *In the Dream House* the best book on what was a strong and widely discussed 2021 shortlist, also containing novels, auto-fiction, poetry, and poetry with photography.

Roger Robinson made the announcement as part of tonight's prize ceremony, which was hosted from the **British Library** by **Razia Iqbal**. The Rathbones Folio Prize, also known as the Writers' Prize, rewards the best work of literature of the year, regardless of form.

Machado, who is 34 and lives in Pennsylvania, has spoken about how she hadn't encountered narratives of queer domestic abuse before and how, lacking context and precedents, she could not make sense of her own experience. **Being interviewed for the Rathbones Folio Prize she said:** *"I hope this book gives readers language and context for either experiences they have had, or experiences people they know or love have had, adding a level of nuance to conversations around things like domestic violence, queerness, and sexual violence."*

The dedication reads: *"If you need this book, it is for you".*

Each short chapter is named according to the same formula – *"Dream House as Confession," "Dream House as Noir," "Dream House as Word Problem"* – and applies its own narrative lens, approach and genre, from classic romance to ghost story, from psychological suspense feminist manifesto. Working with extreme precision and discipline, Machado weaves these elements together to create what, in the end, emerges as a linear narrative.

Roger Robinson said: *"Carmen Maria Machado documents, in great detail, the descent of lives into obsessiveness, possession and, eventually, abuse amongst the queer community in which this is not often documented in literature. This already makes this book substantial. But it is its challenging of memoir form that is even more impressive. Machado breaks it down into short, sharp vignettes, written in impeccable prose, and mixes up the timeline. As the reader, In the Dream House gives me a feeling of traumatic fragmentation, so you have that constant tension as to what might be revealed next, like a veritable house of horror ride."*

Sinéad Gleeson said: *"Carmen Maria Machado's In the Dream House is an exceptional, important book. It takes everything a reader expects from a memoir, and upends and deconstructs it, playing with the possibilities of the form. Machado explores queerness, domestic violence and bodies in a multi-genre masterpiece, told in taut, stunning prose."*

Jon McGregor said: *"In the Dream House is a compelling memoir, a striking piece of storytelling, and a work of art. This is my story, Carmen Maria Machado tells us, and it needs to be heard. I loved the way she moves through a range of forms in order to view the story from different angles, using language to hold a hidden experience up to the light. In the Dream House has changed me – expanded me – as a reader and a person, and I'm not sure how much more we can ask of the books that we choose to celebrate. I'm honoured to play a part in awarding this book the Rathbones Folio Prize 2021."*

Machado has been a finalist for the National Book Award and the winner of the Bard Fiction Prize, the Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Fiction, the Lambda Literary Award for LGBTQ Nonfiction, the Brooklyn Public Library Literature Prize, the Shirley Jackson Award, and the National Book Critics Circle's John Leonard Prize. In 2018, the *New York Times* listed *Her Body and Other Parties* as a member of "The New Vanguard," one of "15 remarkable books by women that are shaping the way we read and write fiction in the 21st century." She holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and has been awarded fellowships and residencies from the Guggenheim Foundation, Yaddo,

Hedgebrook, and the Millay Colony for the Arts. She lives in Philadelphia and is the Abrams Artist-in-Residence at the University of Pennsylvania.

Paul Stockton, CEO of Rathbones, said: *“The more we can all do to nurture and support the best writing talent out there, the better for society and for all of us, especially in recent times. At Rathbones, we are so proud to sponsor a prize that goes out of its way to discover and champion the most innovative, boundary-pushing work being produced right now. Carmen Maria Machado’s In the Dream House exemplifies everything we love about the Rathbones Folio Prize.”*

Machado was shortlisted alongside **Sara Baume** (*handiwork*), **Amina Cain** (*Indelicacy*), **Elaine Feeney** (*As You Were*), **Caleb Femi** (*Poor*), **Rachel Long** (*My Darling from the Lions*), **Doireann Ní Ghríofa** (*A Ghost in the Throat*), and **Monique Roffey** (*The Mermaid of Black Conch*).

In winning, she joins **Valeria Luiselli** (2020), **Raymond Antrobus** (2019), **Richard Lloyd Parry** (2018), **Hisham Matar** (2017), **Akhil Sharma** (2015) and **George Saunders** (2014) as previous winners of the prize – the only one governed by an international academy of distinguished writers and critics, the Folio Academy.

On judging the prize this year, Roger Robinson said: *“What a privilege it has been to judge the Rathbones Folio Prize and to get to the heart of nearly ninety books with great minds like Sinéad Gleeson and Jon McGregor. The more I read, the more important it became for books chosen for each stage to challenge literary forms and norms. A sense of craft definitely played a part in my choices; but also how much the book mattered. Did it take on new, big or important themes that could resonate with readers years after its release? Of course this is all subjective, but these contexts really helped guide my contribution to choosing an eventual winner.”*

The Rathbones Folio Prize is borderless and open to all genres – fiction, non-fiction, and poetry – which means it reflects a greater diversity and variety of voices present in our literary culture and society as a whole.

The Rathbones Folio Prize is the flagship of the Rathbones Folio Programme, which also includes the **Rathbones Folio Prize Mentorships** for aspiring young writers and Rathbones Folio Prize Sessions at literary festivals across the UK.

Join the conversation via: rathbonesfolioprize.com | [@RathbonesFolio](https://twitter.com/RathbonesFolio)

Notes to Editors

About the Rathbones Folio Prize

The Folio Prize was established in 2013 as the first major English language book prize open to writers from around the world. It is the only prize in which all the books considered for the prize are selected and judged by an academy of peers. When new sponsors, Rathbone Investment Management, came on board the prize was expanded to include all works of literature, regardless of form. Previous winners were George Saunders in 2014, Akhil Sharma in 2015, Hisham Matar in 2017, Richard Lloyd-Parry in 2018, Raymond Antrobus in 2019 and Valeria Luiselli in 2020.

www.rathbonesfolioprize.com

About The Literature/Folio Prize Foundation

The Literature/Folio Prize Foundation is a registered charity committed to bringing the most outstanding works of English language literature to public attention through the awarding of the Prize and other initiatives. Overseen by its trustees, the Foundation seeks to engage readers and writers throughout the English-speaking world in cultural debate and in the celebration and sustainment of the art of literature, which it believes has the capacity to enrich and change people's lives.

Rathbones
Look forward

About Rathbone Investment Management

Rathbone Investment Management is one of the UK's leading providers of high-quality discretionary investment management services. It manages over £54.7billion* of funds for individuals, charities and trustees, and is part of Rathbone Brothers Plc, an independently owned company with a listing on the London Stock Exchange. Investment management services are offered in Aberdeen, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Chichester, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Kendal, Liver-pool, London, Lymington, Newcastle and Winchester. Offshore investment management services are offered by subsidiary Rathbone Investment Management International in Jersey. **As of 31 December 2020, includes funds managed by Rathbone Unit Trust Management*

Rathbones
Folio Prize
MENTORSHIPS

About the Rathbones Folio Prize Mentorships

Four Rathbones Folio Academicians are selected from a pool of nearly 100 writers who put themselves forward for the annual Rathbones Folio Mentorship scheme. They are paired with one of four students who take part in First Story writing residencies in 70 different schools across the country. This year's mentors are Paul Farley, Raymond Antrobus, Rachel Long and Kathryn Maris.