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FIRST ANNUAL CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE (FOR AN EXCEPTIONAL DEBUT NOVEL, SET IN THE SOUTH) NAMES FINAL FOUR

The linkages between good writing and good food and drink are clear and persistent. I can't imagine a better means of celebrating their entwining than this innovative award. — John T. Edge

CHAPEL HILL, NC – The Crook's Corner Book Prize announced four finalists for the first annual Crook's Corner Book Prize, to be awarded for an exceptional debut novel set in the American South. The winner will be announced January 6th.

The four finalists are **LEAVING TUSCALOOSA**, by **Walter Bennett** (Fuze Publishing); **CODE OF THE FOREST**, by **Jon Buchan** (Juggling Board Press); **A LAND MORE KIND THAN HOME**, by **Wiley Cash** (William Morrow); and **THE ENCHANTED LIFE OF ADAM HOPE**, by **Rhonda Riley** (Ecco).

“It was exciting to find so many great books—several of them from independent publishers (even micro-publishers)—emerging from our reading,” said Anna Hayes, founder and president of the Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation.

“This grassroots effort to discover and champion books in general, Southern Literature in particular, is amazing and refreshing,” said Jamie Fiocco, owner of Flyleaf Books and president of the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance. **“The Crook's Corner Book Prize is a great example of what independent booksellers have been doing for years: finding top-quality reading experiences, regardless of the book's origin—small or large publisher.** Readers trust the rich literary history of the South to deliver a sense of place and great characters; now this Prize lets readers learn about the cream of the crop of new storytellers.”

Intended to encourage emerging writers in a publishing environment that seems to change daily, the Prize is equally open to self-published authors and traditionally published authors.

A RICH TRADITION OF EXCEPTIONAL FIRST NOVELS “Among the most memorable Southern debut novels that come to mind are **THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER**, by Carson McCullers; **TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD** by Harper Lee; **THE ORCHARD KEEPER**, by Cormac McCarthy; **LOOK HOMEWARD ANGEL**, by Thomas Wolfe; **WISE BLOOD**, by Flannery

O’Conner; LIE DOWN IN DARKNESS, by William Styron; INVISIBLE MAN, by Ralph Ellison; OTHER VOICES, OTHER ROOMS, by Truman Capote; THE BLUEST EYE, by Toni Morrison,” said Shannon Ravenel, Algonquin Books co-founder and Crook’s Corner Book Prize board member, who with Harriet Martin, organized the readers committee, 37 readers, and procedures, to find the 12 finalists.

TO RECAP, here’s the list of the **CROOK’S CORNER BOOK PRIZE’S LONGLIST of 12 top debut novels**, selected from more than 60 submissions, and announced summer 2013:

LEAVING TUSCALOOSA, by Walter Bennett (Fuze Publishing);
CODE OF THE FOREST, by Jon Buchan (Joggling Board Press);
A LAND MORE KIND THAN HOME, by Wiley Cash (William Morrow);
GREEN GOSPEL, by L.C. Fiore (Livingston Press);
BILLY LYNN’S LONG HALFTIME WALK, by Ben Fountain (Ecco);
THE SILENCE OF BONAVENTURE ARROW, by Rita Leganski (Harper Collins);
THE SECRETS OF MARY BOWSER, by Lois Leveen (William Morrow);
THE TWELVE TRIBES OF HATTIE, by Ayana Mathis (Knopf);
THE ENCHANTED LIFE OF ADAM HOPE, by Rhonda Riley (Ecco);
GLOW, by Jessica Maria Tuccelli (Viking/Penguin);
THE FAMILY FANG, by Kevin Wilson (Harper Collins);
WASH, by Margaret Wrinkle (Atlantic Monthly Press).

INSPIRATION FOR THE PRIZE: The concept of having a restaurant attach its name to a book prize] was inspired by **the famous literary cafés of Paris, with a long tradition of conferring prestigious literary awards**. Crook’s Corner Café & Bar, in Chapel Hill, NC, is a James Beard American Classic restaurant and has a rich history of supporting artists. **Crook’s Corner hopes other Southern restaurants will join in its efforts and offer their own book prizes.**

“This may be the age of the restaurant,” said Katharine Walton, Southern publicist and board member for the Prize. “Culinary arts seem to be trumping literary arts in terms of media coverage, so this is a way to join forces.”

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? From the four finalists, **Jill McCorkle**—noted author (most recently of LIFE AFTER LIFE), who shortly after graduating from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill had her first two novels published simultaneously by the newly established Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill—**will choose the first winner** of the Crook’s Corner Book Prize. **Monday, January 6th, at Crook’s Corner, the winner will be announced.**

The winning author will receive a cash prize of **\$1000 and** in a nod to the Gallic inspiration for the award, following in the tradition of cafés in Paris— **one free glass of wine at Crook’s each day of the prize year.**

“The linkages between good writing and good food and drink are clear and persistent,” said John T. Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance. “I can’t imagine a better means of celebrating their entwining than this innovative award. **The only fault I find is with the beverage that will be tendered to the winner. Bourbon seems a better choice.**”

Both the culinary and book publishing communities have been following the unfolding of the award—articles and news items published by the James Beard Foundation, Southern Foodways Alliance, *Oxford American*, *Shelf-Awareness*, and *Publishers Weekly*.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE WINNER

JANUARY 6: While anticipation builds, readers and writers—who like John T. Edge prefer a prize bourbon over wine—may want to try the Book Prize cocktail by mixologist Shannon Healy of Crook’s and Alley Twenty Six in Durham, NC. **It features the metaphorical makings of a great novel: Larceny (Bourbon), Americano (Cocchi), yes some Bitters, and, maybe, a Twist.** So writers and readers, published or unpublished, can belly up to the bar and order a Book Prize.

NOTE ON NEXT YEAR’S PRIZE: When the Crook’s Corner Book Prize winner is announced, January 6, 2014, the Foundation will begin accepting submissions for next year’s prize.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit www.crookscornerbookprize.com.
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