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CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE ANNOUNCES SHORTLIST

CHAPEL HILL, NC – Three wildly various books by emerging writers will vie for the fifth Crook’s Corner Book awarded each year to the best debut novel set in the American South. This year’s Shortlist for the \$5000 prize includes books featuring: a whip-smart eleven-year-old navigating grief in a distinctly quirky family; young lovers coming of age in the crucibles of post-Katrina New Orleans and the Mexican drug cartels; the imagined relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, illuminated by primary source documents about the Founding Father's shifting views on slavery. “It would be difficult to conjure three more different books,” says Anna Hayes, president of the Crook’s Corner Book Prize Foundation, “and each one a marvel.”

The Shortlist:

Rabbit Cake, by Annie Hartnett (Tin House) - Annie Hartnett graduated from Hamilton College, the Bread Loaf School of English, and the MFA program at the University of Alabama. She currently teaches classes on the novel and the short story at Grub Street, an independent writing center in Boston.

The Infinite, by Nicholas Mainieri (HarperCollins) - Nicholas Mainieri earned his MFA from the University of New Orleans, after graduating from the University of Notre Dame. He lives in New Orleans and teaches writing and literature at Nicholls State University.

Thomas Jefferson Dreams of Sally Hemings, by Stephen O'Connor (Viking) - Stephen O'Connor has published a wide variety of short fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. This is his first novel. He teaches in the MFA program at Sarah Lawrence College.

Inspired by the prestigious book awards given by famous Parisian literary cafés, the prize is co-sponsored by the iconic Southern restaurant, Crook's Corner Café and Bar, in Chapel Hill, NC.

"No one has a tougher time getting published and gaining recognition than first novelists," Hayes says. "We thought this could offer a welcome boost to new talent." Although eligible books must be set predominantly in the South, the prize is open to writers from anywhere.

This year's winner will be chosen by author Elizabeth Cox, whose most recent novel is *A Question of Mercy*, and will be announced January 8, 2018.

For more information about the prize, visit www.crookscornerbookprize.com.

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