

Press release  
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## James Shapiro's *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* wins The Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction Winner of Winners Award

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- The one-off award marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the prize by recognising the outstanding work of all previous 24 prizewinners
- Shapiro's *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* won the prize in 2006 and explores the year that Shakespeare produced some of his greatest works

Images of the winning author and book are available to download [here](#).

**This folder is being updated with images from the ceremony**

*1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* by James Shapiro is tonight, Thursday 27 April, named winner of the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction 'Winner of Winners' Award. The winner was announced by Chair of Judges, Jason Cowley, at a ceremony hosted at the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

The Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction Winner of Winners Award marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UK's premier non-fiction book prize by crowning the best work of non-fiction from the last 25 years of the prize. As the winner Shapiro will receive £25,000.

The winner was chosen by a judging panel comprising of: *New Statesman* editor-in-chief, **Jason Cowley** (chair); academic, critic and broadcaster, **Shahidha Bari**; journalist, author and academic, **Sarah Churchwell**; and biographer and critic **Frances Wilson**. Their selection was made from a shortlist of 6 books, taken from the previous 24 prizewinning books.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, the prize in collaboration with Waterstones called on booksellers who are around the same age as the prize to champion the shortlisted works.

In the course of 1599, Shakespeare completed *Henry V*, wrote *Julius Caesar* and *As You Like It* in quick succession, and produced the first draft of his greatest play, *Hamlet*. In his winning book *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, Shapiro shows how The Bard progressed from his tale of two star-crossed lovers to *Hamlet*. Shapiro finds one question the most pressing: how did Shakespeare become *Shakespeare* - one of the greatest writers who ever lived?

James Shapiro is Professor of English at Columbia University, where he teaches Shakespeare. His earlier books have received international acclaim, including *1606: The Year of Lear*, which won the James Tait Black Prize; *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, which won the Samuel Johnson Prize; and *Shakespeare in a Divided America*, selected as one of the ten best books of the year by the *New York Times*. Shapiro is also the author of *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?*, *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World's Most Famous Passion Play*, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, and *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson*, and edited the Library of America anthology, *Shakespeare in America*. His reviews have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *Times Literary Supplement*, the *London Review of Books*, and other publications. He has served on the board of directors of The Royal Shakespeare Company, and advises productions for the Public Theatre in New York and other companies. Shapiro was a collaborator on *The King and the Playwright*, a series he hosted for the BBC and also hosted the BBC *The Mysterious Mr. Webster*. In 2011 he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is currently serving as a Booker Prize judge.

**Jason Cowley, Chair of judges, says:**

*'1599 is a remarkable and compelling book. A history of four masterpieces and of so much more, it produces a life of Shakespeare, about whom so little is known, through a ingenious fusion of history, politics, and literary criticism. The result is a poised and original re-imagination of biography. Shapiro returns Shakespeare to the stage of his own world, and in so doing he transforms our understanding - not only of the great works but also of the social atmosphere of his times. Erudite, accessible and formally bold, it will appeal to anyone interested in history, politics, literature and good writing.'*

**Toby Mundy, Prize director, says:**

*'This has been an heroic, epic undertaking by our judges. They've had to grapple with some of the most brilliant non-fiction books written in English in the last quarter century and have done so with astonishing seriousness and engagement. It's wonderful to think that, thanks to these judges, a new generation of readers can discover James Shapiro's timeless classic.'*

**Peter Singlehurst, Partner at Baillie Gifford, says:**

*'The strapline for the Baillie Gifford Prize is 'all the best stories are true'. But it is not necessarily their factfulness that makes these books so special, it is the stories about people, ordinary and extraordinary. Choosing one book seems an impossible task and we thank the judges for taking on the unenviable responsibility. Many congratulation to James Shapiro.'*

**Sir Leonard Blavatnik, Head of the Blavatnik Family Foundation, says:**

*'For twenty-five years, the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction has recognized immensely talented authors. We congratulate James Shapiro on this exceptional achievement. We are proud to be the long-time sponsor of the podcasts showcasing the short-listed books and their authors, as well as the annual celebratory gala in London when the winners are announced.'*

**Eve, the 25 year-old Waterstones bookseller championing 1599, says:**

*'1599 is a truly enthralling and intimate account of a year in Shakespeare's life. Shapiro explores both the internal complexities and external stimuli that influenced four of Shakespeare's most significant works: Twelfth Night, Hamlet, Julius Caesar and As You Like It. This book is essential reading for anyone who has an interest in Shakespeare.'*

The other titles on this year's shortlist were:

<b>Author / translator (Nationality)</b>	<b>Title (Imprint) - Year of win</b>
Craig Brown (UK)	<i>One Two Three Four: The Beatles in Time</i> (4th Estate, HarperCollins) - 2020
Wade Davis (Canada)	<i>Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory and the Conquest of Everest</i> (The Bodley Head, Vintage, Penguin Random House UK) - 2012
Barbara Demick (US)	<i>Nothing to Envy: Real Lives in North Korea</i> (Granta) - 2010
Patrick Radden Keefe (US)	<i>Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty</i> (Picador, Pan Macmillan) - 2021
Margaret MacMillan (Canada)	<i>Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed The World</i> (formerly <i>Peacemakers: Six Months That Changed The World</i> ) (John Murray Press, Hachette) - 2002

**-ENDS-**

For information about the prize visit: [www.thebailliegiffordprize.co.uk](http://www.thebailliegiffordprize.co.uk)  
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**The winning book:**

***1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*** (2006 winner)

James Shapiro

Published by Faber & Faber

Publicist contact: [kate.burton@faber.co.uk](mailto:kate.burton@faber.co.uk)

Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, James Shapiro has lectured on Shakespeare and his times around the world.

In the course of 1599, Shakespeare completed *Henry V*, wrote *Julius Caesar* and *As You Like It* in quick succession, and produced the first draft of his greatest play, *Hamlet*. In his winning book *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, Shapiro shows how The Bard progressed from his tale of two star-crossed lovers to *Hamlet*. Shapiro finds one question the most pressing: how did Shakespeare become *Shakespeare* - one of the greatest writers who ever lived?

## Notes to Editors

- **Baillie Gifford** is an independent investment partnership founded in 1908. Headquartered in Edinburgh, where most of its staff live and work, the firm employs 1,820 people and has assets under management and advice of £230 billion (as at 12 November 2022). As part of its sponsorship program the firm supports a number of initiatives in the arts, academia and local good citizenship. In the literary world, Baillie Gifford sponsors a number of literary festivals, including principal sponsorship of Hay Festival and Cheltenham Literature Festival and headline sponsorship Stratford Literary Festival, Henley Literary Festival and the Edinburgh International Book Festival.
- **The Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction**, known from 1999 to 2015 as the Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction, is open to books in the areas of current affairs, history, politics, science, sport, travel, biography, autobiography and the arts. Books published in English by writers of any nationality are eligible for the 2022 prize, provided they were published in the UK between 1 November 2021 and 31 October 2022. Last year's winner, Patrick Radden Keefe's *Empire of Pain*, was a *Sunday Times* bestseller.
- The prize was first awarded in 1999, and is now worth £50,000 to the winning author, and £1,000 to each of the shortlisted authors.
- Previous winners are: *Stalingrad* by Antony Beevor (1999), *Berlioz: Servitude and Greatness* by David Cairns (2000), *The Third Reich: A New History* by Michael Burleigh (2001), *Peacemakers: The Paris Peace Conference of 1919* by Margaret Macmillan (2002), *Pushkin: A biography* by T.J. Binyon (2003), *Stasiland* by Anna Funder (2004), *Like a Fiery Elephant* by Jonathan Coe (2005), *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* by James Shapiro (2006), *Imperial Life in the Emerald City* by Rajiv Chandrasekaran (2007), *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher* by Kate Summerscale (2008), *Leviathan or The Whale* by Philip Hoare (2009), *Nothing to Envy: Real Lives in North Korea* by Barbara Demick (2010), *Mao's Great Famine* by Frank Dikötter (2011), *Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory and the conquest of Everest* by Wade Davis (2012), *The Pike*, by Lucy Hughes-Hallett (2013), *H is for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald (2014), *Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and How to Think Smarter About People Who Think Differently* by Steve Silberman (2015), *East West Street* (2016) by Philippe Sands, *How to Survive A Plague* by David France (2017) *Chernobyl: History of a Tragedy* by Serhii Plokhly (2018), *The Five* by Hallie Rubenhold (2019), *One Two Three Four: The Beatles in Time* by Craig Brown (2020), *Empire of Pain* by Patrick Radden Keefe (2021) and *Super Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne* by Katherine Rundell (2022).

- **The Blavatnik Family Foundation** supports world-renowned educational, scientific, cultural, and charitable institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and across the globe. Led by Sir Leonard Blavatnik, founder and chairman of Access Industries, the Foundation advances and promotes innovation, discovery, and creativity to benefit the whole of society. Over the past decade, the Foundation has contributed more than \$1 billion to over 250 organizations. See more at [www.blavatnikfoundation.org](http://www.blavatnikfoundation.org).
- **The Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction** is owned by The Samuel Johnson Prize Ltd, a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. It is governed by a Board of Directors and administered by Four. The Board comprises Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair (Chairman, ITV) Toby Mundy (Prize Director), Ailah Ahmed (Publishing Director, Penguin Random House), Caroline Daniel (Partner at Brunswick), Peter Florence CBE, Dotti Irving (Chief Executive, Four Culture), Rosamund McCarthy (Partner, Bates, Wells, Braithwaite), Peter Straus CBE (literary agent, Rogers, Coleridge and White) and Robert Yates (Assistant Editor, The Observer).