

## The British Academy Book Prize

The judges for the 2001 British Academy Book Prize were Sir Anthony Kenny FBA, former President of the British Academy and Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Oxford, Bamber Gascoigne (author and broadcaster), Professor Peter Hennessy (Atlee Professor of Contemporary History, Queen Mary, University of London), Lord Quinton FBA (author and former Chairman of the British Library Board), and Dame Marilyn Strathern FBA (William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge).

Professor Ian Kershaw FBA and Professor Rees Davies FBA were named joint winners of the inaugural British Academy Book Prize. Professor Kershaw's book, *Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis* (Allen Lane) and Professor Davies' *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093–1343* (Oxford University Press), were chosen from six shortlisted books to win the £2,500 Prize, which aims to celebrate the best of accessible scholarly writing within the humanities and social sciences.

Sir Anthony Kenny, chairman of the judging panel announced the winners at an awards evening held at the British Academy in December 2001. Commenting on the judges' decision, he said: 'We were presented with a very impressive shortlist, and there were two books, each of which the judges felt truly deserved to win the prize outright. We decided to divide the prize between R.R. Davies' *The First English Empire* and Ian Kershaw's second volume of *Hitler*. In the one case we have a relatively arcane subject made accessible to the wider public and in the other we have a subject attractive to a general audience treated with academic brilliance.'

The book prize was set up as part of the Academy's public understanding programme. The British Academy does, of course, award a number of other prizes and medals (such as the Rose Mary

Crawshay Prize for women authors on English Literature) but they focus on exceptional academic distinction. This prize is unique because it champions scholarly books that advance the public understanding of the humanities and social sciences. Eligible books must significantly contribute to scholarly debate. By being lucidly written, free of inappropriate jargon and academic insularity, the work will also be accessible to non-specialists. The winning book might well be a challenging read but it should be intelligible to a general reader.

A five-strong judging panel decides the shortlist and winner. It includes Fellows of the British Academy and non-Fellows. The non-Fellows are chosen for their strong reputation for increasing dialogue between academia and the wider world.

The consideration of nominations from publishers for the 2002 prize will begin in March 2002.

### The shortlisted books were:

#### Nicholas Boyle

*Goethe: the Poet and the Age/Vol 2: Revolution and Renunciation (1790–1803)*

Clarendon Press

In this second volume of the highly acclaimed *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*, Nicholas Boyle gives a vivid and detailed account of the central years in Goethe's life. The principle themes are: Goethe's harrowing experience of the French Revolutionary Wars; his involvement in the philosophical and literary upheaval of early Romanticism; the personal drama of his life with his mistress Christiana Vulpius; and his difficult but productive collaboration with his fellow-poet Schiller.

The transition into modernity is the theme of this volume: Goethe's experiences of the Revolutionary Wars; the explosion of new ideas in philosophy and literature which he absorbed and adapted and which, for ten years, made Jena the intellectual capital of Europe; the political upheaval initiated by Napoleon which destroyed the Holy Roman Empire in which Goethe had grown up, and with it the cultural role he had envisaged for Jena and Weimar. Boyle vividly narrates both the large-scale events and the personal dramas of this exciting time, to give lucid accounts of important thinkers whom English readers have hitherto found inaccessible, and to analyse in new ways Goethe's works of the period, notably *Wilhelm Meister*, *The Natural Daughter*, and *Faust*.

The six shortlisted authors (L–R): Nicholas Boyle, David Lowenthal, Ian Kershaw, Rees Davies, Lisa Tickner, Roy Porter.



**Nicholas Boyle** is Reader in German Literary and Intellectual History, and Head of the Department of German, University of Cambridge.

**What the Judges said:** 'A rich and remarkable work, which places Goethe's genius in its familial, national and philosophical context in an age of both political and individual revolution.'

### R.R. Davies

*The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093–1343*

Oxford University Press

This is a compelling study of the medieval English empire that began the creation of the United Kingdom. It examines the development of an English national identity and how it shaped relations between the different parts of the British Isles.

The future of the United Kingdom is an increasingly vexed question. This book traces the roots of the issue to the middle ages, when English power and control came to extend to the whole of the British Isles. By 1300 it looked as if Edward I was in control of virtually the whole of the British Isles. Ireland, Scotland, and Wales had, in different degrees, been subjugated to his authority; contemporaries were even comparing him with King Arthur. This was the culmination of a remarkable English advance into the outer zones of the British Isles in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The advance was not only a matter of military power, political control, and governmental and legal institutions; it also involved extensive colonization and the absorption of these outer zones into the economic and cultural orbit of an England-dominated world.

What remained to be seen was how stable (especially in Scotland and Ireland) was this English 'empire'; how far the northern and western parts of the British Isles could be absorbed into an English-centred polity and society; and to what extent did the early and self-confident development of English identity determine the relationships between England and the rest of the British Isles. The answers to those questions would be shaped by the past of the country that was England; the answers would also cast their shadow over the future of the British Isles for centuries to come.

**R.R. Davies** is Chichele Professor of Medieval History at All Souls College, Oxford. He is currently Chairman of the Modern History Faculty, University of Oxford, and a former President of the Royal Historical Society. The book is based on his Ford Lectures.

**What the Judges said:** 'At a time when the United Kingdom is breaking up into its component parts, Rees Davies, with magisterial authority, tells the story of how the Normans and their successors first put it together.'

### Ian Kershaw

*Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis*

Allen Lane

More than half a century after his suicide and the destruction of his entire movement, Hitler continues to prey on the modern mind to a degree that is unique. Ian



The joint winners:  
Ian Kershaw and Rees Davies,  
with their books.

Kershaw's *Hitler* allows us to come closer than ever before to an understanding of the man and of the catastrophic sequence of events that allowed a bizarre misfit to climb from a Viennese doss-house to leadership of one of Europe's most sophisticated countries. As Hitler's seemingly pitiful fantasy of being Germany's saviour attracted more and more support, Kershaw conveys why so many Germans adored him, connived with him or felt powerless to resist him. The adored object of the vast majority of Germans, Hitler was also perceived to be a handy malleable puppet by the ruling classes. By 1937, all seemed to be going well, as an apparently stable country had been created, but by 1945, Europe had borne witness to the most atrocious force ever unleashed, which took the levels of inhumanity to the most hideous, unimaginable depths.

The result of a lifetime's study, Ian Kershaw's *Hitler* is the last word on the man who has in a uniquely poisonous way done more to shape the twentieth century than anybody else.

**Ian Kershaw** is Professor of Modern History at the University of Sheffield and one of the world's leading authorities on Hitler. *Hitler 1936–45: Nemesis* was shortlisted for the 2000 Whitbread Biography Award, and was awarded the Bruno Kreisky Prize in Austria for the Political Book of the Year and the Wolfson Literary Award for History 2000.

**What the Judges said:** 'This work of original and impeccable scholarship weaves events of daunting range and complexity into an orderly and compelling narrative. It refutes the popular wisdom that it is impossible to write biography unless one is in sympathy with its subject.'

### David Lowenthal

*George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation*

University of Washington Press

George Perkins Marsh was the first to reveal the menace of environmental misuse, to explain its causes, and to prescribe reforms. Like Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Marsh's seminal book *Man and Nature* marked the inception of a truly modern way of looking at the

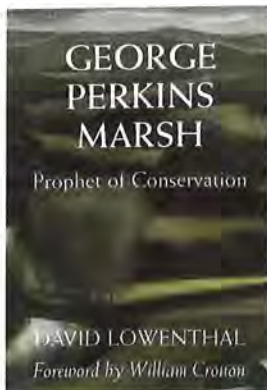
## Goethe

*The Poet and the Age*



Volume II  
Revolution and Renunciation, 1790–1803  
Nicholas Boyle



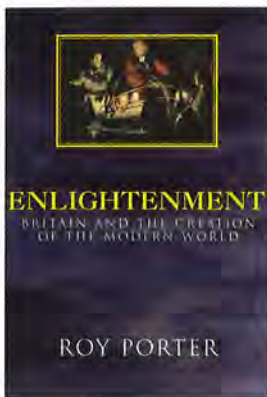


world. His ominous warnings inspired reforestation, watershed management, soil conservation, and nature protection in his day and ours. An acclaimed linguist, lawyer, congressman, and diplomat, Marsh served 25 years as US envoy to Turkey and to Italy. He helped found and guide the Smithsonian Institution, penned potent tracts on fisheries and on irrigation, spearheaded public science, art, and architecture. He wrote on camels and corporate corruption, Icelandic grammar and Alpine glaciers. His pungent and provocative letters illuminate life on both sides of the Atlantic.

David Lowenthal offers fresh insights into Marsh's career and shows his relevance today, in a book that has its roots in but wholly supersedes Lowenthal's earlier biography published in 1958.

**David Lowenthal**, an American Professor Emeritus of Geography at University College London, edited the centenary reprint of Marsh's *Man and Nature*. His books include *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, and *West Indian Societies*.

**What the Judges said:** 'A fascinating biography of a little known nineteenth-century American, whose activities ranged from pioneering campaigns on ecological issues to indulgence in the social tittle-tattle of Istanbul and Rome. Lowenthal's authoritative monograph brings back into focus a forgotten figure of relevance to contemporary environmental concerns.'



### Roy Porter

*Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*

Allen Lane

Roy Porter argues that the study of the Enlightenment is one of the biggest blind spots in modern history. He asserts that it is time it was acknowledged that Britain led the world in the eighteenth century – in ideas, in science, in trade, in commerce and in literature. Porter shows how historians acclaim the Scottish Enlightenment while ignoring the activity south of the border. He argues that the inherited Romantic view of an age under the tutelage of reason, ignores the real spirit of the age – a time when communication flourished, the media expanded, ideas replaced superstition, and the modern era came into being. It was also a time of radical shifts in political power from the church and the court towards the newly prosperous middle classes and the fourth estate. And what really drove the Enlightenment? Prosperity, trade, the media were all crucial, but central to this period was the much-maligned figure: the intellectual. There were luminaries such as Dr Johnson, John Locke, David Hume – but also

those tens of thousands of individuals who eagerly took up their ideas. This was the first time that professional people had found the time to debate ideas and thus the 'chattering classes' were born.

**Roy Porter** was the author of over 80 books, including *London: A Social History* (reissued by Penguin to coincide with the publication of *Enlightenment*). He was Professor in the Social History of Medicine at the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at University College, London.

**What the Judges said:** 'Roy Porter's thesis is that the British contribution to the Enlightenment is much greater than is commonly suggested and he presents it with great verve and in richly satisfying detail.'

The Academy was greatly saddened to learn of Roy Porter's death early in 2002.

### Lisa Tickner

*Modern Life and Modern Subjects: British Art in the Early Twentieth Century*

Yale University Press

In May 1914, the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London opened its exhibition of 'Twentieth-Century Art'. The Catalogue identified four main strands in modern painting but included a fifth group of Jewish artists, hung in the 'Small Gallery'. In this illuminating book art historian Lisa Tickner takes a fresh look at the work of artists from each of these strands. In a series of innovative case studies, combining analysis with substantial new research, she examines the artists' radical approaches to the process of painting and their resources in the defining conditions of modern life.

Among the case studies Tickner discusses Walter Sickert's 'Camden Town Murder' and 'L'Affaire de Camden Town' in the context of tabloid crime; the studies for Wyndham Lewis's lost 'Kermesse' are connected to popular dance and to his sense of the 'wild body'; and Vanessa Bell's 'Studland Beach' is related to the emergence of the beach as a social and psychic space. In an extended afterword, Tickner considers the interplay between modernism and modernity in British art before 1914.

**Lisa Tickner** is Professor of Art History at Middlesex University, London, and author of *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907–1914*.

**What the Judges said:** 'An extraordinary and captivating work. An engagement with the twentieth century on its own terrain. The self-consciousness of art that is 'modern' continues to challenge.'

