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Irish author wins 2017 Drue Heinz Literature Prize, first European to earn this honor

PITTSBURGH—William Wall of Cork, Ireland, is the 2017 winner of the Drue Heinz Literature Prize, one of the nation's most prestigious awards for a book of short stories. His manuscript *The Islands* was selected by acclaimed author David Gates from a field of over 300 entries. *The Islands* will be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press later this year. The DHLP also includes a cash prize of \$15,000.

"*The Islands* is evocative, moving yet tough-minded, written with marvelous style and authority," Gates said. "After just the first few sentences, we trust absolutely that this writer is in control and knows what he's doing. The narratives move expeditiously, even when they're thick with description, and the characters' voices are distinct and convincing. It was a pleasure to read."

The related short stories in *The Islands* trace the lives of two sisters and some of the people that surround them. Dominated by the tragic loss of a third sister at a young age, the family spirals out of control. The stories follow the sisters through three stages of their lives, each stage taking place on an island: in south-west Ireland, southern England, and the Bay of Naples. Beautifully written, the stories are evocative of landscape and character and suffused with Wall's trademark eye for detail and metaphor.

Wall is the first European writer to win the prize since it was first awarded in 1981. The 61-year-old is a native of Cork, Ireland. He is the author of four novels, three collections of poetry and two volumes of short fiction. His work has won many honors including The Virginia Faulkner Award, The Patrick Kavanagh Award, and The Sean O'Faolain Prize, among others. Wall has been short- or longlisted for several awards, including The Man Booker Prize, Irish Book Award, the Raymond Carver Prize, and The Manchester Fiction Prize.

Wall's first novel, *Alice Falling*, published by Sceptre, London, was also released in the United States by W.W. Norton & Co. His work has been translated into many languages and he translates from Italian.

On winning the DHLP, Wall said, "It's fantastic news. I'm really delighted to have won this award. It came at a good time for me, though it would be welcome at any time! I've never been to the USA and I can't think of a better way to make my first trip. I'm hoping it brings my writing to a wider audience."

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