



NEW LITERARY PROJECT

Oakland, CA, April 18, 2023—Manuel Muñoz, the acclaimed author of *The Consequences* (Graywolf Press; 2022) and three other fervently cherished works of fiction, has been chosen Recipient of the 2023 Joyce Carol Oates Prize sponsored by New Literary Project (NewLit). The annual Prize honors a mid-career author of fiction who has earned a distinguished following and the heartfelt admiration of readers and other writers. The Prize stands not only as testament to momentous accomplishment, but also as encouragement and support for work to come.

The JCO Prize recognizes emerged and continually emerging fiction authors at the midpoint of a burgeoning career. Prize winners receive \$50,000. The winner of the 2023 Prize will be in brief residence at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Bay Area during October 2023 (dates to be determined), when they will teach students and give public readings.

Manuel Muñoz has been the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts. He has also been recognized with a Whiting Writer's Award, three O. Henry Awards, and an appearance in *Best American Short Stories*. A native of Dinuba, California, he currently lives in Tucson, Arizona, where he directs the MFA Program at the University of Arizona.

You can read more about Manuel on the New Literary Project website [here](#).

The [Joyce Carol Oates Prize](#) is named for the eminent author, an honorary member of New Literary Project's Board of Directors. NewLit gratefully acknowledges her generational impact as a peerless teacher and writer, beloved for generations by students, writers, and readers around the world.

Manuel Muñoz is the seventh recipient of the Prize. Previous winners of the Prize: T. Geronimo Johnson (2017), Anthony Marra (2018), Laila Lalami (2019), Daniel Mason (2020), Danielle Evans (2021), and Lauren Groff (2022). Manuel Muñoz was chosen after consideration of a longlist of thirty-two nationally recognized authors, and eventually a shortlist that included four other masterful artists: Rabih Alameddine, Clare Beams, James Hanaham, and David Means. In appreciation of their gracious participation, each receives \$1,000. The jury that selected finalists consisted of Laura Cogan, Mark Danner, Joseph Di Prisco, Donna Jones, and David Wood. The Board of Directors of NewLit judged and selected the Recipient.

I was struck immediately by the beauty, poise & effortless empathy of The Consequences. The title was intriguing—eventually I saw the collection as a kind of novel in which “consequences” are explored. The moral intelligence of the author seemed to shine forth. The work is suffused with information, exposition very artfully blended in with the narration. The characters are utterly convincing, women as well as young men, most of them embarked upon quests of a kind, and the author holds up a mirror to his subjects, or rather a window of transparency. He is never intruding into the narrative as if out of respect for the humanity of his characters. Living far away on the East Coast, I am not much familiar with the world of Mexican-American farm workers & their families, but Manuel has made them feel like kin to me. I would place this deceptively modest collection of stories with Sherwood Anderson’s Winesburg, Ohio as an example of how a novel might be created out of thematically linked stories that accumulate force and meaning. Much seemed to come together in the final story, “What Kind of Fool Am I?,” in which a young woman is at last freed of a familial burden; though, given the nuances of the situation, perhaps she will return to her consequential familial duty, as a caretaker of a difficult younger brother. As one who much appreciates the art of the short story, I was filled with admiration for a writer who creates an entire world within the space of a few pages, with seeming effortlessness.

—Joyce Carol Oates

Once in an interview, Manuel Muñoz reflected movingly on a “deep love of literature and a belief that it is of use,” and how “that’s the transformative possibility.” He himself is an agent of imaginative transformation. He writes of

transformational characters whose lives are altering before their eyes or being altered by forces out of their control, sometimes subtly, sometimes ineluctably, sometimes cruelly and mysteriously, but seemingly forever in the Central Valley of California. How enormous are the small towns he inhabits. He is also a valedictory writer, bidding farewell to people and to the past even while bravely facing the risks and riddling prospects on the horizon. His work plumbs depths a reader cannot resist exploring, sometimes at the expense of heartbreak, sometimes in thrall to wonder, and sometimes simultaneously in both. New Literary Project speaks of its purpose to nurture writers and writing across generations, communities, divides. Manuel Muñoz unforgettably brings that purposefulness to life in one beautiful story after another. We are indeed beyond fortunate to have him in our midst, believing that his writing is, to invoke his words, of profound transformational use to every one of us.

—Joseph Di Prisco, Founder & Chair

*It is both thrilling and gratifying to learn that Manuel Muñoz is the latest recipient of the Joyce Carol Oates Prize for a mid-career writer. For years now, Muñoz's exquisite stories have quietly been earning laurel after laurel—O. Henry Awards, appearances in Best American Short Stories—and *The Consequences* gathers many of his brilliantly constructed stories. Manuel is above all a gifted portraitist, and through his indelible characters he portrays class conflict, profound betrayals, the weight of family obligations, the brutality of the immigrant experience, and so much more. The stories in *The Consequences* are set in a particular place and time, but they speak powerfully about what it is to be human, what it is to love, to struggle, to exist in a family or a community. Thank you to the New Literary Project for their recognition of his important body of work.*

—Ethan Nosowsky, Editorial Director, Graywolf Press

For any writer to reach midcareer is a kind of miracle and it is one that happens because of the engagement made possible by readers, librarians, booksellers, teachers, fellow writers, and everyone in the wide circle that is our literature. I am deeply grateful to receive the Joyce Carol Oates Prize and doubly so because I was eleven years between books and without a publisher for a time. My thanks to

the many people, near and far, both friends and strangers, who kept encouraging me in my writing so that I could find myself here, stunned and yet elated by this recognition. Gracias to Stuart Bernstein, my literary agent, for his sustaining belief in my work and his persistence in seeing it to light. Gracias to my editor Ethan Nosowsky and everyone at Graywolf Press, who have worked so hard to get me in front of new audiences, and to Susie Nicklin and The Indigo Press in the UK, who so enthusiastically shared my stories. To the literary journals and the editors who have supported my work: my gratitude for your belief in my stories. Profound gracias to New Literary Project and its Board of Directors, the University of California, Berkeley, and their partners for their important work in promoting access and participation in our art for all communities. To Joyce Carol Oates, an everlasting gracias for lending her name and legacy to honor writers at such a crucial stage in our careers. I look forward to the autumn residency and working within the community being fostered by New Literary Project and, as a former high school teacher, send special congratulations to the newly named Jack Hazard Fellows. I am urged onward in my love of the short story and in my belief that it is an important mechanism in documenting my beloved Central Valley and insisting on its place in our national literature.

—Manuel Muñoz

New Literary Project came into existence in 2016 in a private/public partnership with the University of California, Berkeley, English Department, family foundations, and local arts leaders. NewLit is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 that is bolstered by sustaining support of loyal individual donors, altruistic business leaders, and philanthropies, and its purpose is to drive social change by unleashing artistic power in order to lift up a literate, democratic society. It encourages writers, in the words of Joyce Carol Oates, to “write their hearts out,” and it invests in writing across generations, communities, and divides.

New Literary Project’s range of influence is unique, generative, and far-reaching, and extends beyond the JCO Prize.

- NewLit offers high-school age writers free-of-charge workshops, led by Simpson Fellows from the Berkeley English Department and Starn Fellows from Saint Mary’s College of California. Similar to years past, seven creative writing workshops are taking place this spring at Contra Costa County

Juvenile Hall, Girls Inc. of Alameda County (2), Cal Prep, Northgate High School, and Emery High School (2).

- *Simpsonistas: Tales from New Literary Project. Vol. 4*, a nationally distributed anthology of Project-related artists, including Joyce Carol Oates, Prize Winners such as Lauren Groff, and younger writers, appeared in 2022 (Rare Bird Books); Vol. 5 is expected to be released in October 2023.
- NewLit also annually awards \$5,000 Jack Hazard Fellowships to creative writers who teach high school. Fourteen of these artists from around the country—from Honolulu to Miami to Boston to L.A. to Chicago—are freed in Summer 2023 to pursue their creative projects.

Join Manuel Muñoz and Joyce Carol Oates in live, virtual conversation on Tuesday, 16 May, 4:00 pm Pacific. Details forthcoming from New Literary Project and Graywolf Press.

For more information, please contact:

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