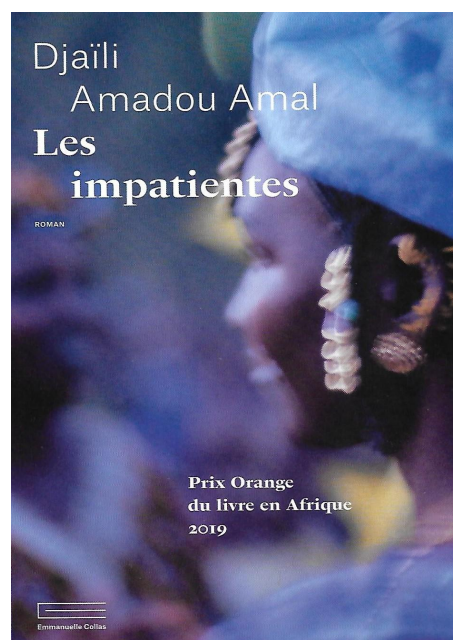


Press Release

19 March 2021

**Djaïli Amadou Amal has been awarded the Choix Goncourt UK prize for her novel
*Les Impatientes***

“For me literature can help improve women’s rights. For African women, literature can be their #metoo.” Djaïli Amadou Amal



From Oxford to Belfast, from Bath to Aberdeen, students from 12 universities have chosen their winner among the shortlisted authors of the Prix Goncourt 2020: Djaïli Amadou Amal for *Les Impatientes* (éd. Emmanuelle Collas, 2020). The award was announced on 18 March as part of an online ceremony opened by **French Ambassador Catherine Colonna and live streamed from the French Institute in London.**

***Les Impatientes* is about three women in Cameroon who are enjoined to remain in their place, to accept their fate with submission: forced marriage, marital rape and polygamy. The novel, inspired by Djaïli Amadou Amal’s own life, breaks down taboos by disclosing the issue of violence against women, an issue university representatives wanted to emphasise with their choice. “My greatest reward was to have been able to interest young Europeans in the plight of women in the Sahel through my book”.**

Chaired by **Prof. Catriona Seth** (University of Oxford), the ceremony featured addresses by **Camille Laurens**, member of the Académie Goncourt, and **David Campbell**, President of the Choix Goncourt UK jury as well as presentations of the shortlisted novels by **universities delegates** and readings by actress **Anne de Peuffelhoux**.

Both Camille Laurens and David Campbell welcomed the presence of a **French-speaking Cameroonian writer** in the latest selection of the Goncourt Prize. French is spoken by 300 million people worldwide and two thirds of French speakers live in Africa. Djaïli Amadou Amal's novel had already received the Prix Goncourt des lycéens, another younger sibling of the Goncourt Prize, awarded by French highschool pupils.

The other authors in competition were: Maël Renouard (*L'historiographe du Royaume*), Camille de Toledo (*Thésée, sa vie nouvelle*) and the winner of the prize in France, Hervé Le Tellier (*L'Anomalie*).

This is the second edition of The Choix Goncourt UK, a joint initiative of the Higher Education, Research and Innovation Department of the French Embassy and the French Institute in London, in partnership with the Académie Goncourt, the Maison française d'Oxford, the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie en Europe de l'Ouest and the bookshop Librairie La Page.

This year, more than **100 students from UK based universities** (King's College London, Royal Holloway University of London, Oxford, Cambridge, Warwick, Leeds, Southampton, Bath, Aberdeen, St Andrews, Queen's Belfast and Open University) were invited to discuss the shortlisted books from the Académie Goncourt and award their Choix Goncourt UK.

The Prix Goncourt, France's oldest and most coveted literary prize, named after the Goncourt brothers, who were both writers, has set the pace of French publishing life since 1903. Famous awardees include Marcel Proust, Romain Gary (twice! the second time under the pseudonym Emile Ajar), Marguerite Duras and Michel Houellebecq, to name but a few.

The rights for the English translation of *Les Impatientes* have already been sold. Last year the first Choix Goncourt UK was awarded to Jean-Paul Dubois for his book *Tous les hommes n'habitent pas le monde de la même façon*, to be published in English translation by MacLeHose Press.

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