

Charlotte Square Gardens, Edinburgh

10 - 26 August 2019

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 Edinburgh  
International  
Book Festival

Wednesday 17 August 2019

### **Director of Edinburgh International Book Festival**

#### **awarded the Ordre National du Mérite by French Ambassador**

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, was awarded the Ordre National du Mérite yesterday evening at a ceremony in London by French Ambassador Jean-Pierre Jouyet. Leading publishers, translators and literary journalists as well as representatives of the Edinburgh Festivals and the Booker Prize Foundation gathered at the French residence in Kensington Palace Gardens to honour Nick Barley's longstanding commitment to the promotion of writers and books in translation and his contribution to the cultural dialogue between France and the UK.

During Barley's nine years at the helm of the Edinburgh International Book Festival the Festival has grown, now putting on over 900 events and welcoming a thousand writers, translators, journalists and speakers from sixty-five countries in 2019, with a footfall of 260,000 last year. Chair of the judges of the Man Booker International Prize in 2017, Barley is also a founding member of the Word Alliance, a network of international literary festivals including Étonnants Voyageurs Festival in Saint-Malo.

Jean-Pierre Jouyet thanked Nick Barley for his personal contribution to a "golden age of translated fiction", and his "strong defence of the idea that what unites us is stronger than what divides us." The Ambassador thanked Nick Barley in the name of the countless French writers he has personally invited to the Book Festival over the last decade, including Mathias Énard, Annie Ernaux, Marcus Malte, Adélaïde Bon, Mireille Gansel in 2019, and saluted his "thoughtful, active multilingualism", saying "the multilingualism which we believe in France finds a kindred spirit in Edinburgh."

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He quoted the publisher, Christopher MacLehose, saying, “The northern Athens has once more its agora, its forum. The selection, meticulously curated by M. Barley and his team, is excellent and their generous welcome is an essential cultural campaign for Britain today.” The Ambassador also quoted Fiammetta Rocco, cultural editor at The Economist, saying that Nick Barley and those who work with him are personally responsible for improving the public profile of translated literature today, and Allan Little, chair of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, who celebrated the passion and thoughtfulness with which Barley pursues the founding idea of the Edinburgh International Festival : that the arts are a bridge between people and countries.

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