

BARRY RONGE
FICTION PRIZE

Sunday Times
LITERARY AWARDS
in association with
PORCUPINE RIDGE

Alan Paton
AWARD

After months of evaluation and deliberation it is finally time to reveal the shortlists for South Africa's most prestigious book awards, the Alan Paton Award for non-fiction and the Barry Ronge Fiction Prize, in association with Porcupine Ridge. The winners, who will each receive R100 000, will be announced on Saturday June 24.

The Sunday Times Literary Awards Finalists



THE BARRY RONGE FICTION PRIZE

In the five shortlisted books, the judges highlighted writing of rare style and imagination, stories that chose the personal over the political, and themes that are fresh and provocative. "The words", says chairwoman Rehana Rossouw, "strike at the reader's heart".

The Printmaker, Bronwyn Law-Viljoen (Umuzi)
Law-Viljoen's quiet, finely calibrated novel is set in Johannesburg and centres on a reclusive printmaker named March, who makes his art obsessively — and alone — for decades. When he dies, a friend inherits the thousands of drawings and etchings crammed into the house and through his work sets out to understand her troubled friend. "There's not a superfluous word in it," said one judge. "March is still living in my head."

Period Pain, Kopano Matlwa (Jacana Media)
The *wunderkind* author shows she has a long career ahead with this acute, powerful book. Masechaba is a young woman trying to find meaning in contemporary South Africa, a country racked by social problems. "Where are we going," it asks, "and what have we become?" "It's a searing, brilliant read," said a judge.

Little Suns, Zakes Mda (Umuzi)
"Zakes Mda is on song with this book,"

exclaimed a judge, "it brings people from our past gorgeously to life." It is 1903. A frail Malangana searches for his beloved Mthwakazi, the woman he had loved 20 years earlier and who he was forced to leave. Based on true events in history, it is a poignant story of how love and perseverance can transcend exile and strife.

The Woman Next Door, Yewande Omotoso (Chatto & Windus/PRH)
In this story of two strong-willed women, Omotoso delicately traces the racial fault lines of the rainbow land. One of the women is black, the other white, and for decades the pair live next door to each other in an affluent estate in Cape Town. One day, an accident brings them together. "She doesn't pretend to have the answers," commented one judge, "but she forces us to examine our deeply embedded racism. It's very clever and deeply human."

The Safest Place You Know, Mark Winkler (Umuzi)
After his father's violent death one day in the drought-stricken Free State, a young man leaves the derelict family farm with no plan. Two people he meets on his way to the Cape will change his life forever. The story is set in the '80s, before everything changes. "I was blown away by the magnificent writing," said a judge, "the story went straight to my heart."

THE ALAN PATON AWARD

The shortlist reflects a diverse range of subjects and historical eras: from human origins to the Marikana of just three years ago, from Cape Town today to wartime Berlin. "These books raise critical questions about our past, present and future," says chairwoman Pippa Green. "The big question being asked is, who are we?"

Under Nelson Mandela Boulevard: Life Among the Stowaways, Sean Christie (Jonathan Ball Publishers)
This is the fascinating account of journalist Sean Christie's time spent among the Tanzanian stowaways who live rough under the Nelson Mandela Boulevard flyover in Cape Town. The judges commented on his "brilliant eye" and sympathetic treatment of this subculture. "He's something of an anti-hero, not the usual macho observer. It is heart-breaking."

Darwin's Hunch: Science, Race, and the Search for Human Origins, Christa Kuljian (Jacana Media)
Christa Kuljian of the University of the Witwatersrand studied the history of science at Harvard and has turned her eye to the search for human origins in South Africa, and the contemporary context that sullied it. She examines how ideas about race blighted science for centuries, setting up stereotypes that survive today. "This is the best science and sociology book I've read in a long time," said one judge. "It should be taught in high schools."

Murder at Small Koppie: The Real Story of the Marikana Massacre, Greg Marinovich

(Penguin Books)
The judging panel was united in its admiration of Greg Marinovich's account of the Marikana massacre. Drawing on his own investigations, witness accounts and the findings of the Marikana commission of inquiry, he reconstructs that fateful day and the events leading up to it. It is damning, gripping reportage, the best book by far, said the judges, on this diabolical event.

My Own Liberator, Dikgang Moseneke (Picador Africa)
The autobiography of South Africa's retired deputy chief justice of the Constitutional Court is an impressive book, explaining how Moseneke's life was shaped. He recounts the history of his forebears and pays homage to the many communities that played a role in his development. "He is a great figure," said one judge, "this is a very moving story."

Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa, Steven Robins (Penguin Books)
In this gutting, deeply personal book, sociologist Steven Robins chronicles his search for the members of his family who died in Germany during the war. His father had fled the Nazis and found shelter in Port Elizabeth, but never spoke a word about the family he left there. When Robins stumbles upon a hidden collection of letters he is able to "hear" those people for the first time. "What is also fascinating is that Robins writes of the Basters in Namibia and the eugenic experiments on indigenous people there which was the starting point for Nazi horrors."

{ BOOKS }

book bites



Book Buff
You Too Can Have a Body Like Mine

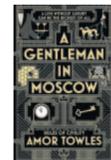
★★★★★
Alexandra Kleeman (HarperCollins, R285)
Alexandra Kleeman's debut novel is an uncomfortable read. Her exploration and critique of modern-day society's obsession with consumerism is unerring. Within the first few pages Kleeman, via the narrator, comments on the warped contemporary ideals of female beauty; the dangerous allure of advertising; and our innate need and insatiable desire to consume. It's told in the first person narrative, simply by someone known as "A" who lives with "B". They are 20-something women living in small-town America who are basically your girls next door. But "A" becomes part of a cult and their lives begin to unravel. *You Too Can Have a Body Like Mine* is unsettling as it hits so close to home. The characters in the novel are people you know, people you've met, you. Kleeman has written an existential, accessible novel reminiscent of *Requiem For a Dream* and *Fight Club* which will make you think twice before buying into any trend of any sort. — *Mila de Villiers @mila_se_kind*



Book Real
How the Hell Did This Happen? The Election of 2016

★★★★★
PJ O'Rourke (Penguin Random House, R290)
Veteran journalist/humorist PJ O'Rourke's latest work, on the US election, asks the question in its title. Unfortunately, much of the first part of the book is unfunny, college-style humour that will fail to find traction among readers outside the US. But he later gets into his stride, commenting on the two candidates: "Yet to call Hillary robotic is an insult to androids. She's more like someone trapped inside a Hillary costume, one of those dressed-up characters pestering tourists in Times Square." As for Trump: "Trump was the guy from the mailroom who somehow wound up with a job interview for the position of national sales manager. If you promote him it will be a disaster. But if you leave him in the mailroom he'll take his pants down, sit on the Xerox machine, and fax the result to all your customers." The closing chapters of the book offer an insight into the populist wave sweeping world politics, not least here in South Africa where "radical economic transformation" has become a catch-all slogan and supposed popular remedy for our economic problems. Being a libertarian and believer in small government, O'Rourke cogently expresses his disappointment with the revolt against ruling

elites in the US and around the world. Instead of pursuing a new, libertarian option, however, voters find populism more appealing. He writes: "We should be learning the value of individual dignity, individual freedom, and individual responsibility from the failure of the elites and the fiasco of their vast political power. Good things are made by free individuals in free association with other individuals. Notice that's how we make babies." He continues: "But we aren't learning lessons in individual freedom, because we're too scared. We're daunted at the pace of material change, unnerved over social configurations, fretful about economic instability, and terrified by terrorism." Yes, the elites have messed up around the world, O'Rourke says, but the answer is not populism and a narrowing of individual liberty and responsibility. And certainly not Trump. — *Patrick Bulger*



Book Thrill
A Gentleman in Moscow

★★★★★
Amor Towles (Penguin Viking, R295)
This is a splendid tale of a man making the most of the cards life has dealt him. The story begins in the 1920s, when a Bolshevik tribunal finds Count Alexander Rostov guilty of being an aristocrat. His punishment: permanent house arrest in the attic of the luxurious Hotel Metropol. Here the count embarks on the biggest adventure of his life. It's as much a tale of unlikely friendships and magnificent encounters as it is a fictionalised, wry account of Russian history. Towles is guilty of a well-wrought plot and vivid three-dimensional characters: the precocious nine-year-old, the volatile chef, the omniscient concierge, the nimble maître d' and the conniving bishop make *A Gentleman in Moscow* a stylish, charming novel that informs and delights. — *Anna Stroud @annawriter_*



Book Buff
The Golden Son

★★★★★
Shilpi Somaya Gowda (HarperCollins, R270)
Anil and Leena grow up together in the same Indian village. But the lives of the two friends diverge: Anil finds himself in the US training to become a doctor, while Leena is married to a man she doesn't know and is brought to an unfamiliar village. The reality of their lives is at odds with their dreams: encountering racism, sexism, domestic violence, the culture of privilege and inequality. *The Golden Son* is a coming-to-America tale, illustrating the cost of travelling to new places: "He was a dweller of two lands, accepted by none." — *Tiah Beautement @ms_tiahmarie*

Books LIVE most viewed

In the irreverent tradition of her best-selling *Death by Carbs*, Paige Nick rounds up a fresh herd of sacred cows in another hilarious local satire. But this time it's No 1 who gets the treatment ...

It's 2020, and ex-president Jeremiah Gejeishwebisa Muza has just been released from prison on medical parole, with a dangerously infected ingrown toenail. Now he's back home with his two

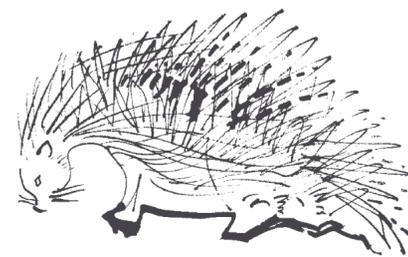


remaining wives, a skinny dog, a rapidly dwindling entourage, and a fire pool to maintain. Plus the municipality is demanding he pay a vast outstanding rates bill.

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LINK LOVE: Cult Novels
Flavorwire says it's not easy to describe what a cult novel is: "You sort of know one when you read one." Here are 50 examples of what they deem notable cult books — from the popular *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac to the more obscure *I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith. Find them at <http://bit.ly/50cultnovels>



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A WORD FROM THE HEART IS WORTH TWO FROM THE BRAIN

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