

The Fiction Prize



SIMON MATHERULA

South Africans writing fiction — from crime to humour and everything in between — are bringing invigorating energy to a flourishing industry

NEWCOMERS sit easily in the company of their more established peers on the 32-title longlist for this year's fiction prize, continuing a strong and varied tradition of local fiction writing in post-apartheid South Africa that has seen the industry mushroom at an ever more surprising and encouraging pace.

As always in the past few years, crime writing continues to be a popular genre, from Sue Rabie's *Blood at Bay* to Mike Niccol's *Killer Country*. The range of crimes and periods of history covered in the crime genre are vast and there are a number of fascinating detectives and criminals being created by local crime writers.

Local women's fiction is also on the rise with Fiona Snyckers,

Cynthia Jele, Marita van der Vyver and Elise Chidley producing novels that tickle the funny bones and produce much-needed avenues for escape and reflection.

Young writers are also well represented, with Kopano Matlwa, Alastair Bruce, Zukiswa Wanner, Sifiso Mzobe, Shaida Kazie Ali, Alex Smith, Rosamund Kendal and Lauren Beukes all expressing an invigorating and topical energy that breathes new life into everything from living in the townships to dystopian futures.

It was also good to see that many writers who have had their debut novels on previous longlists have continued to produce work and are now into their second and third

novels, improving and expanding their range and voices.

History will always be a topic of exploration for authors in South Africa and this year was no exception, with Julian de Wetten, Chris Marnewick and James Cileland examining the political intrigues and

psychological trauma in the dark shadows of our recent past.

While it was felt that there may have been too few female voices present, and that in many cases editing continues to be an important but overlooked area, the judges were still encouraged by the general quality and strength of individual voices that emerged from the titles published over the last year. — *Tymon Smith*

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PRIZE

THE LONGLIST

1. *Thirteen Hours* by Deon Meyer, Hodder & Stoughton
2. *Blood at Bay* by Sue Rabie, Human & Rousseau
3. *The Unseen Leopard* by Bridgett Pitt, Human & Rousseau
4. *Deeper than Colour* by James Cileland, Jacana
5. *Spilt Milk* by Kopano Matlwa, Jacana
6. *The Angina Monologues* by Rosamund Kendal, Jacana
7. *Zoo City* by Lauren Beukes, Jacana
8. *Banquet at Brabazzani* by Patricia Schonstein, Jacana
9. *African Cookbook* by David Dinwoode Irving, Jacana
10. *Revelations* by Mongane Wally Serote, Jacana
11. *Big Dan's Sofie* by Keith Cornelis-Britz, Jacana
12. *The Fossil Artist* by Graeme Friedmann, Jacana
13. *Trinity on Air* by Fiona Snyckers, Jonathan Ball
14. *An Intimate War* by Donvé Lee, Jacana
15. *Happiness is a Four-Letter Word* by Cynthia Jele, Kwela
16. *Men of the South* by Sifiso Mzobe, Kwela
17. *Young Blood* by Sifiso Mzobe, Kwela
18. *Married With Baggage* by Elise Chidley, Orion
19. *Last Summer* by Craig Higginson, Picador Africa
20. *Just Dessert*, *Dear* by Marita van der Vyver, Tafelberg
21. *Double Negative* by Ivan Vladislavic, Umuzi
22. *Wall of Days* by Alastair Bruce, Penguin
23. *A Case of Knives* by Julian de Wetten, Umuzi
24. *Not a Fairy Tale* by Shaida Kazie Ali, Umuzi
25. *Four Drunk Beauties* by Alex Smith, Umuzi
26. *Son-in-law of the Boere* by Napé'a Motana, Umuzi
27. *The Soldier Who Said No* by Chris Marnewick, Umuzi
28. *Those Who Love Night* by Wessel Ebersohn, Umuzi
29. *Stolen Lives* by Jassy Mackenzie, Umuzi
30. *An Ordinary Day* by Trevor R Corbett, Umuzi
31. *Killer Country* by Mike Niccol, Umuzi
32. *The Ice on Mars* by Sean Badel, Wigan Pier Publishers

The Children's Day, in 2002, Michiel took retirement in March 2003 from the University of Stellenbosch, where he had been professor and some-time chairman in the Department of English. He is the author of four other novels; the latest, *Lost Ground*, was published last month. He has also translated, from Afrikaans into English, Marlene van Niekerk's *Agaat* (2006), Etienne van Heerden's *Thirty Nights in Amsterdam* (2011) and Chris Barnard's *Bundu* (forthcoming).

JENNY HOBBS

Jenny Hobbs is a South African journalist, novelist, former book reviewer and TV presenter of a series of book programmes and writer interviews. She is now the director of the Franschhoek Literary Festival, which she helped to initiate as part of a small team with the aim of bringing together a broad cross-section of South African writers, encouraging a reading culture in the Western Cape and raising funds for a community library in the Franschhoek valley. Her novels include *Thoughts in a Makeshift Mortuary*, *The Sweet-Smelling Jasmine*, *Video Dreams*, *The Telling of Angus Quain* and *Kitchen Boy*.

KARABO KGOLENG

Karabo Kgolego worked in the book-publishing industry and is now a radio journalist at SAfm, where she hosts a literature programme on Sunday afternoons as well as a week-day talk show. She is a recipient of the South African Literary Award for Journalism (2009). She also writes for various publications and sits on the board of Alliance Française Johannesburg.

MICHEL HEVNS

Michiel Hevns was born in Stellenbosch. After studying for an English Honours and an MA at Stellenbosch, he started lecturing there, which he did for the next 30-odd years, apart from two interruptions: one, in 1973-5 to do another MA at the University of Cambridge, and another year in 1988, also at Cambridge, to do research for a book on the 19th-century novel, *Expulsion and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (OUP, 2004). After the publication and favourable reception of his first novel,

THE JUDGES

