

PEN South Africa newsletter / Issue 15 2016

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This is part of the PEN SA literary essay series. If you are interested in submitting a piece, contact us on communications@pensouthafrica.co.za.

Half-lives, Half-truths: Svetlana Alexievich and the Nuclear Imagination

By Hedley Twidle

In my twenties I worked for a while as an usher at a small cinema in Edinburgh. My job was to tear tickets, sit through the screening to make sure that projection and sound went ok, then clear up any trash. It was a beautifully pure way of absorbing film: you

never paid; you never chose. You never worried whether the person next to you was enjoying it. You were alone, dressed in black, invisible.

I watched hundreds of films in those dark winter afternoons – from Korea and Cameroon, Iran and Italy, Russia and Romania – most of which I have never seen any trace of since. It was an education. One was about a group of three young anti-capitalists who break into the homes of rich businessmen and leave messages that “The Fat Years Are Over” – this is the original German title. At some point the good-looking threesome (they are also in a love triangle) end up kidnapping some heartless industrialist. They take him to a remote cabin and try some political re-education, intent on making him see the error of his ways. (It turns out, of course, that he was once a passionate anarchist in his youth.)...[read more](#)

Responses to UCT'S Disinvitation of Flemming Rose

In the previous newsletter PEN SA President Margie Orford **commented on the** University of Cape Town's decision to rescind its invitation to Danish journalist and writer, Flemming Rose, to give the TB Davie lecture on Academic Freedom. She called for responses to the issue, which we have collected below:

- [Margie Orford's overview of the responses](#)
- [The Freedom to Rescind by Gabeba Baderoon and Nadia Davids](#)
- [Raymond Louw Comments on UCT's Decision to Disinvite Flemming Rose](#)
- [Albie Sachs: UCT Needs to be a Paragon of Tolerance](#)
- [Paul Trehwela: The Disinvitation of Flemming Rose is a Disgraceful Act of Effective Censorship](#)
- [Jacques Rousseau on UCT's Disinvitation of Flemming Rose](#)
- [Flemming Rose and Academic Freedom by Elisa Galgut](#)
- [Today's Lecture Has Been Cancelled by David Attwell](#)
- [Freedom of Speech by Gillian Godsell](#)

Please send any further responses to communications@pensouthafrica.co.za.



Abantu Book Festival Calling for Donations

"The Abantu Book Festival started as a story, a work of fiction posted on Facebook in September 2015, in which author Thando Mgqolozana imagined a decolonised book event as a healing project for black writers and readers. Now, the dream is about to become reality.

There has never been a mainstream literary festival in South Africa like Abantu. When it kicks off in December 2016 it will be a powerful counter to the status quo – where all meaningful literary activity has been the preserve of privileged readers, mostly in white suburbia.



RIP Phyllis Ntantala (1920 - 2016)

"Phyllis Ntantala, who died in the United States last week aged 96, was surely the greatest South African feminist intellectual of our lifetime." Read [Paul Trehwela's tribute to Phyllis Ntantala](#) and read her obituary [here](#).

REMINDER TO VOTE ON CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Please respond to the email sent on Wednesday 27 July calling for votes on the constitutional changes. The deadline for responses is 25 August and a number of you have yet to respond.

But to build this new reality we need your help" [...read more](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Take a look at what's still coming up in August [here](#), including The Star Soweto Literary Festival which starts tomorrow, and see which PEN SA members will be taking part in the Open Book Festival in September, [here](#). We are excited to announce that there will be a "[PEN SA Young Writers to Watch](#)" event at Open Book, featuring two of the PEN SA Student Prize winners - Koleka Putuma and Puleng Lange-Stewart - with judge Nick Mulgrew, chaired by Karina Magdalena Szczurek [...read more](#)

NEW MEMBERS' TITLES

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

African Literature Association Awards calling for nominations [...read more](#)

NoiseMedium running monthly Grand Prize [...read more](#)

KACF Poetry Festival calling for participants [...read more](#)

Type/Cast calling for submissions [...read more](#)

CONGRATULATIONS!

Christine Coates Shortlisted for The Short Story is Dead, Long Live the Short Story! Volume 2 [...read more](#)

Jim Pascual Agustin's "To be an Orc" named NoiseMedium's Grand Prize Winner [...read more](#)

ZP Dala has been selected for the International Writing Program's Fall Residency.

Jen Thorpe has been selected for the

Had a book published recently? Attended or participated in a festival? Won an award? Achieved a personal milestone of note? We welcome any news of your activities for future issues of the PEN SA newsletter.

Please email your contributions
to communications@pensouthafrica.co.za



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