

PEN South Africa newsletter / Issue 2 2016

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SOUTH AFRICA

Write!
Africa,
Write!

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The Hour of the Demagogue

What kind of nation is this
Deleting love from its curriculum
The art of poetry
The mystery of women's eyes
What kind of nation is this
Battling each rain cloud...

When he composed these lines, Nizar Tawfiq Qabbani, the Syrian poet who died in 1998,

must have been decrying a situation no different from the one facing us as writers in South Africa. As has been observed on numerous occasions, even though a writer is part of a broader society charged with the duty to chronicle the various journeys taken by the populace, he or she is bound to question the direction taken. This becomes necessary at a time of conflict, where, as happens today, demagoguery takes over every societal concern and populism becomes the order of the day. We live in an exciting time of social media and hashtags that define the agenda. In this period of clamour and hysteria, sanity and rationality take the back seat. The unintended consequence of great noise is the creation of silence.

How then do we tell the story of the fight against racism when our own language is contaminated by the poison of the exact force we wish to combat? How do we talk of love and caring and being our brothers' and sisters' keepers when, as Qabbani laments, we have deleted love from our curriculum of life?

It is the role of the writer working to scan the landscape and tease the words that create life out of the cacophonous blasphemies that come disguised as wisdom. We have to take issue with the leadership of the land when it comes to the silences about why there is so much rage on the streets; why are women and children becoming increasingly menaced, sometimes by their putative protectors? Why are the hungry and destitute becoming so commonplace that they form part of our national landscape? Where do all these fires come from, which reduce hovels, the dwellings of the dispossessed, into ash? Why are the statements from those occupying the thrones of power so full of disclaimers, denials, ambiguities, platitudes, giving grist to the mill of those who say that nothing is true until there's been an official denial?

These are questions we have to ask of others. But, much more important, these are questions which we, who are empowered to use their craft and their calling to make a difference, should ask ourselves.

It's only then that we could conceivably say that we've stepped out of the mire and are standing on steady rock.

Mandla Langa
Executive Vice-President
PEN South Africa



Call for Submissions for the PEN SA Student Writing Prize

Spread the word: we are calling on young writers to submit fiction, creative non-fiction or poetry on the topic of the recent #FeesMustFall movement and the student protests. The winning writer will receive R5000. Entrants must be under 30 years old and currently living in South Africa...[read more](#)



PEN SA and PRAESA Seminar on Transforming Children's Literature

"We as adults, with the help of books, can guide our children to treat the world with curiosity and respect" – Swedish Minister of Culture Alice Bah Kuhnke, who attended the first in a series of PEN SA and PRAESA discussions on children's literacy development and literature...[read more](#)



Ishtiyaq Shukri on the Reduced Sentence and Flogging for Ashraf Fayadh

"I can't recall feeling such relief and such dread so simultaneously and in such equal measure. In a single moment upon receiving the news of Fayadh's reduced sentence, I inhaled hope but exhaled despair at the ordeal handed down to Fayadh." [...read more](#)

NEW MEMBERS' TITLES



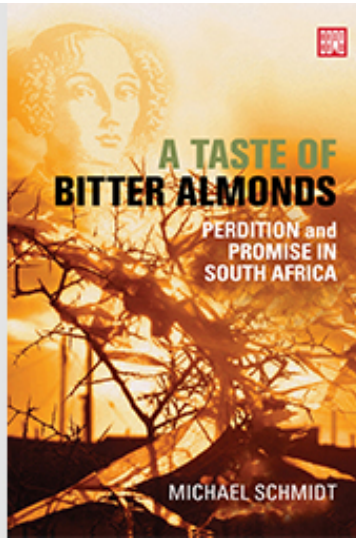
Deadline Extension for #FeesMustFall and the Media Research Proposals

The deadline for the proposals for commissioned research on the #FeesMustFall student protests in 2015 and its relationship with, and use of, the media has been extended to 20 February 2016 [...read more](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Take a look at what's still coming up in February [...read more](#)

The Knysna Literary Festival and the



New PEN SA member Michael Schmidt's latest title, *A Taste of Bitter Almonds*, came out last November and Nick Mulgrew will be launching his debut short story collection *Stations* next month...[read more](#)

WELCOME!

Welcome to new Professional members Michael Schmidt, Michèle Rowe and Bhauna Hansjee, as well as new Supporter member Noelle Koeries.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Time of the Writer Festival are coming up next month...[read more](#)

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

New Contrast Literary Journal...[read more](#)

Dinaane Debut Fiction Award...[read more](#)

Dundee International Book Prize...[read more](#)

Time of the Writer Schools Short Story Competition...[read more](#)

Maskew Miller Longman Literature Awards...[read more](#)

Writivism Short Story Prize...[read more](#)

Robin Malan's *Some School Theatre*...[read more](#)

PEN SA NEWS

Achmat Dangor, Pippa Green and Rustum Kozain announced as judges for the Sunday Times Literary Awards...[read more](#)

Mary Watson announced as one of the Caine Prize judges...[read more](#)

PEN SA Board Member Jeremy Lawrence has resigned after many years of being on the committee. PEN SA thanks him for his consistent presence and work on throughout the years.

[Send us your news](#)

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.

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