

2009 *Sunday Times* Literary Awards celebrate SA literature

South African literature was recognised and praised at this year's *Sunday Times* Literary Awards held at the Summer Place, Hyde Park, Johannesburg earlier this month.

In a Different Time by Peter Harris (published by Umuzi), claimed the Alan Paton Award for non-fiction to mark the 20th anniversary of the prize, while Anne Landsman's *The Rowing Lesson* (published by Kwela) was awarded this year's Fiction Prize. The two authors received R75 000 each for their wins.

"Peter Harris tackles the great apartheid paradox, a period in South Africa's history when heroism and horror went hand in hand, with honesty and fortitude; while Anne Landsman paints an utterly convincing and poignant picture of a father-daughter relationship coming to an end through death," said Tymon Smith, *Sunday Times* books editor.

Peter Harris, born in Durban in 1956, practiced law for many years before playing a role in transitional government structures in the 1990s. His first work of non-fiction, *In a Different Time*, tells the story of his involvement in the trial of the Delmas Four, a paramilitary wing of the African National Congress from 1961-1990 who were highly trained and experienced in assassination. They were active in South Africa in the late 80s before being caught and tried by the apartheid state.

Harris' narrative non-fiction debut, 10 years in the writing, is a story of the lives and actions of the Delmas Four.

"Many people have said that what they enjoyed about the book was that it made them remember a time of hope and ideals and horror and heroism, a time they had forgotten in a kind of cultural amnesia. I didn't want to write a protest book about protest politics. I wanted to make it a book about ordinary people who ended up doing some horrible things; I wanted to understand what drove them to that point without casting judgment," says Harris.

Anne Landsman, Fiction Prize winner for *The Rowing Lesson*, was born and raised in Worcester in the Western Cape and received degrees from the University of Cape Town and Columbia University.

Landsman's first novel, *The Devil's Chimney*, set in Oudtshoorn, received great critical acclaim in South Africa when it came out in 1998. She has also published essays in anthologies and has written for The Washington Post. She currently lives in New York with her husband and children.

The Rowing Lesson is a vivid portrait of one man's life and that of his pregnant daughter, Betsy Klein, who is battling to come to terms with the imminent death of her father.

“Landsman has a keen eye for detail and a real ability to empathise with her characters. *The Rowing Lesson* is a well-exercised and thoughtful meditation on the difficulties presented by the death of a loved one,” said Smith.

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