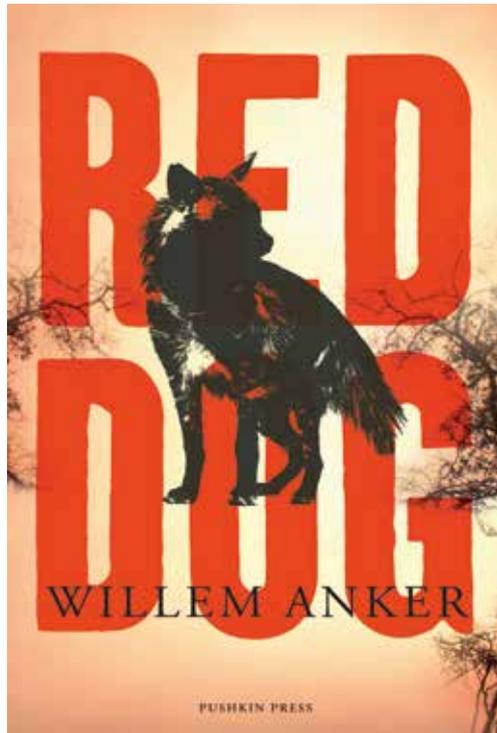


The
2020
International
Booker
Prize

Readers' Guide



Red Dog Willem Anker

Translated by Michiel Heyns

Pushkin Press

Other novels by Willem Anker
Siegfried (2007)

thebookerprizes.com

About the author

Willem Anker was born in Citrusdal in the Western Cape in February 1979. He lectures in creative writing at Stellenbosch University. His first novel, *Siegfried*, was published in 2007. *Red Dog* was published in Afrikaans in 2014 and won six major literary prizes in South Africa. It is his first novel to be translated into English. He lives in South Africa.

About the translator

Michiel Heyns was born in Stellenbosch, South Africa, in December 1943. He grew up in various towns and cities all over South Africa, and studied at the Universities of Stellenbosch and Cambridge. He lectured in English at the University of Stellenbosch until 2003, when he retired to write full-time. Apart from a study of the 19th-century novel and many critical essays, he has published nine novels, the latest of which is *A Poor Season for Whales* (Jonathan Ball, 2020). He has produced several translations, two of which, Marlene van Niekerk's *The Way of the Women* and Chris Barnard's *Bundu*, were short-listed for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize. He lives in South Africa.

About the book

In the 18th century, a giant bestrides the border of the Cape Colony frontier. Coenraad de Buys is a legend, a polygamist, a swindler and a big talker; a rebel who fights with Xhosa chieftains against the Boers and British; the fierce patriarch of a sprawling mixed-race family with a veritable tribe of followers; a savage enemy and a loyal ally. Like the wild dogs who are always at his heels, he roams the shifting landscape of southern Africa, hungry and spoiling for a fight.

Red Dog is a brilliant, fiercely powerful novel - a wild, epic tale of Africa in a time before boundaries between cultures and peoples were fixed.

What the judges thought

'A work that reminds us how translation is a creative force that destabilises linguistic conventions. A novel of serpentine, swashbuckling sentences that capture the mounting cruelty of the colonial project in South Africa.'

Discussion points

Anker does not shy away from telling the story of the violent history of South Africa. How did you feel reading some of the more graphic, brutal scenes?

The character Buys comments throughout the novel as 'Omni-Buys'. What do you think this distanced, overarching perspective adds to the narrative?

Do you think that Buys has any redeeming qualities? Do you think it's important to read books with unlikeable protagonists?

What do the dogs both within the novel, and in the title, represent?

Themed reading

Dusklands by J. M. Coetzee

You Will Be Safe Here by Damian Barr

Blood Meridian by Cormac McCarthy

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad

Useful links

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-best-new-historical-fiction-june-2019-vstq7g8tv>

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2019/07/savagery-in-the-cape-colony-red-dog-by-willem-anker-reviewed/>

<https://nbmagazine.co.uk/red-dog-by-willem-anker/>

<https://www.voices360.com/lifestyle/book-review-red-dog-by-william-anker-19004711>

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