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CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE ANNOUNCES SHORTLIST

Chapel Hill, North Carolina – The [Crook's Corner Book Prize](#), awarded annually for the best debut novel set in the American South, has announced its Shortlist today. The winner will be chosen from the Shortlist by award-winning author, [Monique Truong](#). The \$5,000 prize, inspired by the prestigious book awards given by famous Parisian literary cafés, is awarded by the Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation and is co-sponsored by the iconic Southern restaurant, Crook's Corner, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Although eligible books must be set predominantly in the South, the prize is open to writers from anywhere.

In this year of the COVID-19 crisis, writers, booksellers, and publishers have all suffered from the disruptions of quarantines and social distancing. “With bookstore readings canceled and all book launch activities impacted, no one has suffered more than debut novelists, who always have a tough time gaining recognition, even in the best of circumstances,” says Foundation president Anna Hayes. “We are therefore especially glad this year to shine the spotlight on these exciting new authors.”

The Shortlist is:

- [*As a River*](#) by Sion Dayson (Jaded Ibis Press)
Written in spare and lyrical prose and set in Georgia, *As a River* moves back and forth across decades, evoking the mysterious play of memory as it touches upon shame and redemption, despair and connection. At its heart it's a novel about our struggles to understand each other, and the stories we tell ourselves in order to survive. Sion Dayson grew up in North Carolina and earned an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her work has appeared in *Electric Literature*, *Utne Reader*, and more.
- [*Confessions of an Innocent Man*](#) by David R. Dow (Dutton)
A man wrongfully convicted of murder will stop at nothing to deliver justice to those who stole everything from him. This suspenseful novel, set in Texas, is a fierce howl of rage that questions the true meaning of justice. David R. Dow is the Cullen Professor at the University of Houston Law Center and the Rorschach Visiting Professor of History at Rice University. Working with students in his death penalty clinic, Dow has represented more than one hundred death-row inmates during their state and federal appeals. He is also the founder and director of the Texas Innocence Network.

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- *Valentine* by Elizabeth Wetmore (Harper Collins)
A brutal rape in the Texas oil country of the mid-1970s reverberates through the lives of five women, whose different perspectives reveal the many faces of pain, resilience, and comfort. Deeply rooted in the implacable Texas landscape, the gripping narrative finds surprising pockets of empathy engendered by anger, fear, and evil. Author Elizabeth Wetmore is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her fiction has appeared in *Epoch*, *Kenyon Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Baltimore Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Iowa Review*, and other literary journals.

The winner will be announced on January 11, 2021. For more information on the Prize and submission guidelines, please visit www.crookscornerbookprize.com or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

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