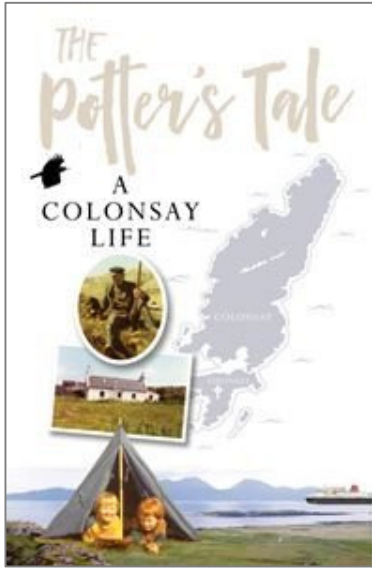


## SHORT LIST FOR HIGHLAND BOOK PRIZE

The Highland Book Prize, established in 2017, celebrates the finest published work written in or about the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. This annual prize is open to work in fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

Presented by the Highland Society of London and facilitated by the Moniack Mhor Writers' Centre, the winner of this new literary award will be announced at the Ullapool Book Festival on 12th May 2018, and will receive prize money of £1000 and a writing retreat at Moniack Mhor.



### **The Potter's Tale** by Dion Alexander (published by Birlinn)

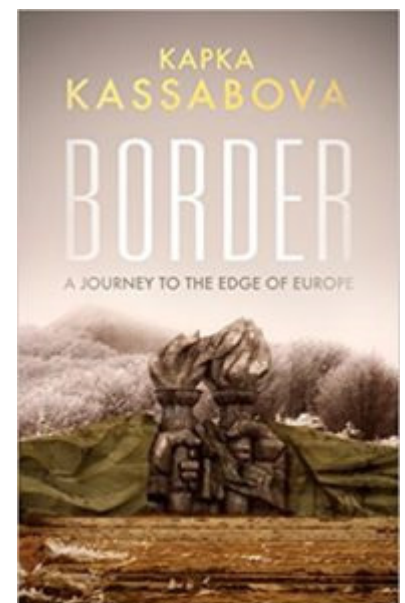
The Potter's Tale is a story of one man's journey of discovery and self-discovery on one of the most beautiful islands on the Hebrides – Colonsay. Dion Alexander was 'the Colonsay Potter' through the 1970s and his own story is interwoven with that of some of the legendary characters of the islands in that period, one of the last in which Gaelic came naturally to the community. It is also the story of beginning to think about how to keep a small remote community dominated by a landed estate alive and viable in the face of modern pressures. The book is an autobiography, a reflection of a world still close in time but in some ways very distant, and a moving account of the trials, triumphs and tribulations of a small community. Above all it is woven with a deep love of the magical place that is Colonsay.

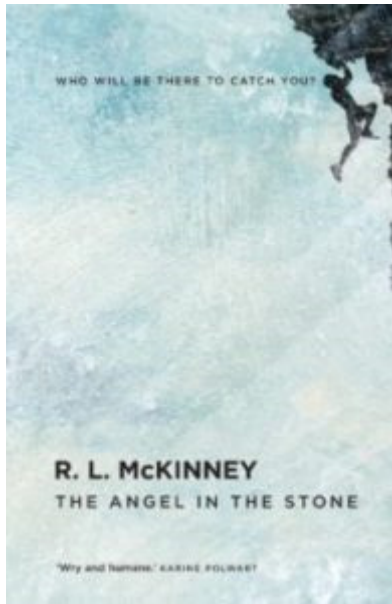
**Judges' commentary:** This book captured the light and shade of island life; the stories, the personalities, the hard – and at times, harsh – realities of island life. What might have been a domestic small-scale portrait was elevated by the author's clever distillation of the impacts of national politics on the community, bringing what might have been seen as a "remote" island centre stage.

### **Border** by Kapka Kassabova (Granta)

One of the most celebrated books of the year, *Border* is a vivid journey through the haunted borderlands that once made up the easternmost stretch of the old Iron Curtain and today mark the outer reaches of Europe. As Kapka Kassabova explores this region in the company of border guards and treasure hunters, entrepreneurs and botanists, psychic healers and ritual fire-walkers, refugees and smugglers, she traces the physical and psychological borders that criss-cross its villages and mountains, and goes in search of the stories that will unlock its secrets.

**Judges' commentary:** This timely novel shows a personal and intellectual bravery, illustrating the author's skill at engaging with individuals wherever she finds herself and being able to draw out their fascinating stories. An incredibly complex theme is explored skilfully, and in an intensely personal manner. This book is of relevance wherever you live.





**The Angel in the Stone** by R. L. McKinney (Sandstone Press)

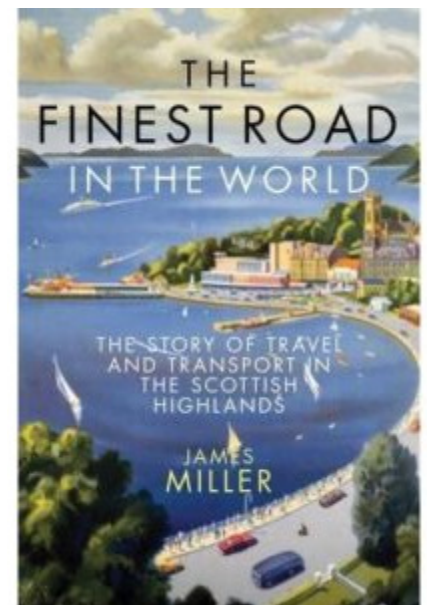
Having returned to his childhood home in the West Highlands, Calum leads a quiet life. More than two decades after his brother Finn fell to his death, he still relives the event and struggles to find peace of mind. It isn't so easy, however: his mother, Mary, has Alzheimer's Disease and his estranged daughter Catriona has arrived out of the blue.

Unexpectedly, Calum has his mother and daughter living with him and the house becomes a crucible of old resentments, disappointments, unspoken revelations and fragile but enduring love. Together and separately, Calum, Mary and Catriona retrace the events that have brought them to this point and made them who they are.

**Judges' commentary:** This book shows a huge amount of promise. Essentially, it is about modern Scotland, moving seamlessly between Lowland, Highland and Island life. The author shows real empathy and understanding of her characters, tackling some weighty current issues (such as mental health and Alzheimer's disease) with eloquence, insight and dignity.

**The Finest Road in the World** by James Miller

Trains and stagecoaches stuck in the snow, wild storms driving sailing ships off course, traffic pile-ups on so-called 'killer' highways – stories abound about the horrors of travel in the Highlands and Islands, and have done for as far as the records go back. James Miller tells the dramatic and sometimes surprisingly humorous story of travel and transport in the Highlands. Some of the figures in the story are familiar – General George Wade, Thomas Telford and Joseph Mitchell – but there are a host of others including the intrepid Lady Sarah Murray, who offered sound advice for travellers ('Provide yourself with a strong roomy carriage, and have the springs well corded'). This thought-provoking book will appeal to all who like stories of travel and transport, and are interested in how changing modes of transport have affected the ways of life in the Highlands and remain crucial to the future of the region.



**Judges' commentary:** A brilliantly researched book, intelligently drawing on a deep well of knowledge. What could have been a wide ranging, potentially rambling topic was diligently investigated by a lively, knowledgeable mind. The author cleverly draws out the contemporary relevance from history, developing a great view of modern Scotland.