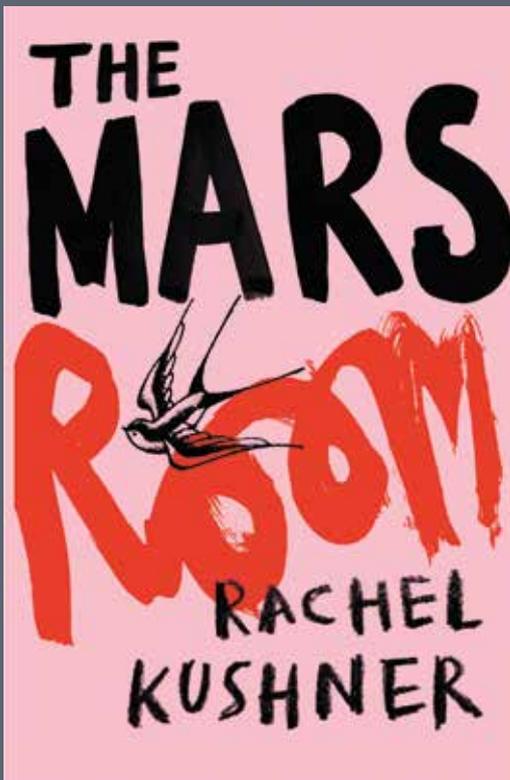




Readers' Guide



Other novels by Rachel Kushner
Telex from Cuba (2008)
The Flamethrowers (2013)

The Mars Room Rachel Kushner

Jonathan Cape

www.themanbookerprize.com
#FinestFiction #ManBooker2018

THE
READING
AGENCY

M
Man

The
Booker
Prize
Foundation

About the author	<p>Rachel Kushner was born in Oregon, USA, in 1968. Her debut novel, <i>Telex from Cuba</i>, was a finalist for the 2008 National Book Award and a <i>New York Times</i> bestseller. Her follow-up novel, <i>The Flamethrowers</i>, was also a finalist for the National Book Award and received rave reviews on both sides of the Atlantic. Her fiction has appeared in the <i>New Yorker</i>, <i>Harper's</i> and the <i>Paris Review</i>. She lives in Los Angeles.</p>
About the book	<p>Romy Hall is at the start of two consecutive life sentences, plus six years, at Stanville Women's Correctional Facility. Outside is the world from which she has been permanently severed: the San Francisco of her youth, changed almost beyond recognition. The Mars Room strip club where she once gave lap dances for a living. And her seven-year-old son, Jackson, now in the care of Romy's estranged mother.</p> <p>Inside is a new reality to adapt to: thousands of women hustling for the bare essentials needed to survive. The deadpan absurdities of institutional living, daily acts of violence by guards and prisoners alike, allegiances formed over liquor brewed in socks and stories shared through sewage pipes.</p> <p>Romy sees the future stretch out ahead of her in a long, unwavering line – until news from outside brings a ferocious urgency to her existence, challenging her to escape her own destiny. <i>The Mars Room</i> presents not just a bold and unsentimental panorama of life on the margins of contemporary America, but an excoriating attack on the prison-industrial complex.</p>
What the judges thought	<p>“A novel about gender, class and the absolute corruption of the American dream, <i>The Mars Room</i> explores the meaning of incarceration in our moment. Breezy, hardened, bleakly comic, it contains wonderfully rich dramatis personae and an extraordinary sensory vividness. It feels terrifyingly authentic.”</p>
Discussion points	<p>How do the male characters fit into such a female narrative?</p> <p>What does the book show about what it means to be a woman in poverty? Do the women have any similarities in their stories?</p> <p>What do you think about the choices Romy makes in her life? Can you understand her thinking behind them?</p> <p>Do any of the insights about how the women survive in the prison surprise you?</p>
Themed reading	<p>Piper Kerman <i>Orange is the New Black: My Time in a Women's Prison</i> Aileen Wuornos and Christopher Berry-Dee <i>Monster: My True Story</i> Linda Tirado <i>Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America</i> Bryan Stevenson <i>Just Mercy</i></p>
Useful links	<p>https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jun/20/the-mars-room-rachel-kushner-review</p> <p>https://www.spectator.co.uk/2018/06/the-mars-room-by-rachel-kushner-reviewed/</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/07/books/review/rachel-kushner-mars-room.html</p> <p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/if-you-like-despair-and-orange-is-the-new-black-youll-love-the-mars-room/2018/05/03/ca2f9b98-4f02-11e8-af46-b1d6dc0d9bfe_story.html?utm_term=.37a37bd3ca7f</p>