



# BRAGGING RIGHTS!

BY SARAH LOLLEY

THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU WIN THE QUEBEC WRITING COMPETITION. AND DID WE MENTION THE \$1,500 IN PRIZE MONEY, OR THE CRITICAL RESPECT? OR THE POSSIBILITY OF DISCOVERING THE NUGGET FOR A PRIZE-WINNING BOOK?

**O**n May 1st of this year, hundreds of hopeful writers across the province will breathe a shaky sigh of relief. After weeks of edits and re-edits, fretting over this metaphor and that turn of phrase, the deadline of the Quebec Writing Competition will finally arrive: time to print a final copy, drop it into the mail (or for the first time this year, submit online), and hope for the best.

Now in its thirteenth year, the Quebec Writing Competition offers established and emerging writers alike the opportunity to take a shot at fame and fortune with an entry of either fiction or non-fiction that weighs in at a maximum of just 1,200 words. A newly increased prize of \$1500 awaits the winner, plus publication in the print edition of *Maisonneuve* magazine, and the honour of having the story read on CBC radio. All finalists are also published in the Véhicule Press anthology, which comes out every three years (the latest, entitled *Minority Report*, just hit the shelves).



**DEADLINE:** MAY 1, 2012  
**GENRE:** FICTION AND NON-FICTION  
**MAXIMUM WORD LENGTH:** 1,200  
**COST PER ENTRY:** \$15  
**MAXIMUM NUMBER OF ENTRIES PER PERSON:** NO LIMIT  
**TOP PRIZE:** \$1500, PUBLICATION IN *MAISONNEUVE* MAGAZINE, *VEHICULE* ANTHOLOGY, BROADCAST ON CBC RADIO ONE, AND MORE  
**TOTAL NUMBER OF ENTRIES TYPICALLY RECEIVED:** 300  
**RULES AND ADDITIONAL INFO AT:** [WWW.CBC.CA/QWC](http://www.cbc.ca/qwc)  
**ONLINE SUBMISSIONS VIA SUBMISHMASH:**  
[HTTP://QWF.SUBMISHMASH.COM/SUBMIT](http://qwf.submishmash.com/submit)

Quebec  
 Writing  
 Competition  
 2012

*Just write it!* (You know you want to)

QWF PRESIDENT

*Elise Moser*

# It's the time

of year when, as the season advances, every minute of daylight gained feels like a small victory. It's also the time of year for grant-writing, with deadlines looming in every direction. QWF gets most of its core funding—money that pays for all the ongoing expenses that support our operations, including rent, staff salaries, the phone bill—from CALQ, Quebec's provincial arts council. CALQ works in four-year cycles, which is terrific because it means we don't have to do this very labour- and time-intensive process every year, but it's also a little nerve-wracking, because it means a great deal rides on every four-year grant.

One of the benefits of writing the big grant every four years is that the application requires us to look back over our last four years, and forward to envision the next four years. We're always engaged in this process on a smaller scale, in particular at the board's annual retreat. But while giving us a bigger picture, the four-year analysis also helps us to assess how the environment has changed. Since the last four-year-cycle began, both the economic and the political environments have worsened considerably; fortunately QWF has been working hard to increase our fundraising capacity and also our community partnerships (in number and in scope), so we are in a good position to protect ourselves from the worst effects



MONIQUE DYKSTRA

of those changes. Our membership has continued to expand, although at a slower rate this year. We accomplished many of the things QWF members asked for in our 2009 member survey, and we are looking ahead to the next survey to help us understand what members need now.

We have also entered the first phases of development of an idea we think will be of great benefit to members and the community at large: a mentorship exchange project, which would see a QWF mentor travel to another province to meet a protégé/e and initiate a mentorship. While "abroad" the mentor would engage in readings, workshops, or other activities intended to raise his or her profile in the rest of Canada. A mentor from that province would, similarly, come here to work with a QWF protégé/e. This would expand our popular mentorship program and bring accomplished Canadian writers into our community for readings or workshops. Both parts of the program would help create links between writing peers and sister organizations across the country.

And speaking of the advancing season, in only a couple of months, on March 26, our next AGM will take place. You are cordially invited to join us to hear our news, approve the budget, elect the next board, and meet your fellow QWF members over a glass of wine. I'll see you there. ¶



MONIQUE DYKSTRA

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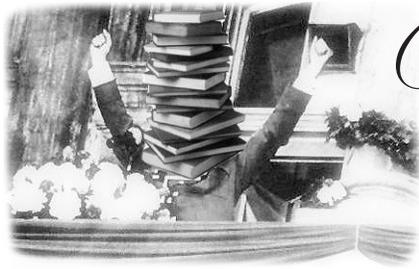
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La Quebec Writers' Federation remercie le Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, et le Conseil des arts de Montréal, de leur appui financier. The QWF also thanks the Canada Council for the Arts for its financial support, as well as QWF members and sponsors for their generosity.





# Vive le Québec Livre!

A QUEBEC BOOK WORTH A SECOND LOOK

ANNE RENAUD

TAKES ANOTHER LOOK AT FOUR BOOKS OF

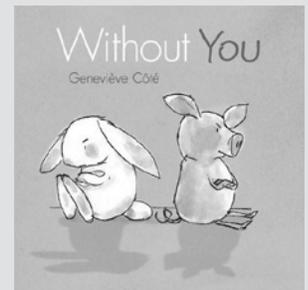
GENEVIÈVE CÔTE

COMME TOI!

SANS TOI!

ME AND YOU

WITHOUT YOU



I have <sup>illustrator</sup> envy. There, I've said it.

I deeply wish I could transfer to the page my picture book characters in a two-dimensional form. My sorry stick figure renderings, however, are testament to my lack of skill in this department. I believe this is the reason my 3-year-old niece, Emma, enjoys drawing with me so much. Our work is strikingly similar.

What I envy most of all, however, are those artists who can both write and draw for children. I know few who can do this with brilliance. Marie-Louise Gay is one. Geneviève Côté is another.

I was first introduced to Geneviève Côté's artistry when she illustrated my children's picture book Missuk's Snow Geese. In minimalist strokes of colour, Geneviève's illustrations raised my work and breathed life into the book's main character in a way I could never have imagined.

I envied Geneviève's talent then, but glowed green after reading two of her more recent works, *Me and You* and *Without You*, which she not only illustrated but also penned in English, and later translated into French under the titles *Comme toi!*, and *Sans toi!* Both books are geared to an audience of two- to six-year-olds. Approximately 100 words were used to tell each story, which features two very squeezable (perhaps "huggable") friends: a mild rabbit and an exuberant pig.

I first read the books in French when I was invited as guest lecturer to a tea-party hosted by my niece Emma and her stuffed animal friends. I was charmed by Geneviève's gentle and inventive illustrations and the playful and imaginative banter of her characters. *Comme toi!* recounts the attempts of two friends, with the help of a bit of paint and a few props, to change their appearance so they look more like the other. *Un zeste de citron serait ma queue en tire-*

*bouchon*, says Rabbit trying to emulate Pig's tail. *Cette barbe à papa serait parfaite pour moi*, Pig responds. In the end, both characters realize they like each other just the way they are. The message of the book is universal: individuality is to be celebrated.

Emma and her animal friends were in agreement.

In *Sans toi!*, Pig and Rabbit return, though this time the tone is not quite as harmonious. *Je ne veux plus jouer avec toi! Très bien! Ça ne me dérange pas!* Both friends find advantages to being alone: *Je peux lire mon livre préféré sans toi. Et moi, je peux cuisiner sans toi.* However, they soon realize that 'one' can be a lonely number: *Mais mon livre est plus drôle quand je le lis avec toi! Et mes biscuits sont meilleurs quand je les partage avec toi!* Here again the message is a simple, yet weighty one: friendship, sharing and collaboration are to be valued.

Emma and her entourage were once again in accordance.

Brevity (while still being able to engage, entertain and in many cases shape children), is the challenge writers for young children face every time we stare down at a blank page. To additionally rouse those few words into pictorial form is, in my artistically-challenged opinion, a colossal feat. The measure of an artist is her capacity to execute the work flawlessly while making it appear effortless. Geneviève does this deftly.

Having now consumed these books avidly and repeatedly, Emma and I patiently wait for Rabbit and Pig's third installment, which Geneviève is currently working on. ¶

*Anne Renaud's books for children's have been short-listed for numerous awards, including the Silver Birch Award, the Hackmatack Children's Choice Award and the Quebec Writers' Federation Prize for Children's and Young Adult Literature. Anne's next book, entitled Mouseline la sorcière et les vents tannants, will be released this summer by les Éditions Héritage.*



1. The vin d'honneur unfolds for the nominees in Au Petit Extra restaurant.

# 2011 QWF LITERARY AWARDS



NOVEMBER 22, 2011 AT THE LION D'OR AND AU PETIT EXTRA IN MONTREAL  
HOSTED BY WORD-SOUND SYSTEMIZER KAIE KELLOU



2. QWF board member and Bishop's University professor **Linda Morra** points the finger at Olympian sponsor **Richard Pound** while QWF director **Lori Schubert** referees.



4. UNEQ directeur général **Francis Farley-Chevrier**, author **Louise Desjardins** and QWF President **Elise Moser** prove that writing is not all about agony and suffering.



3. **Dimitri Nasrallah** storms the podium upon winning the Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction.



5. Children's author **Alan Silberberg** accepts the award for *Milo*.



9. Cynthia Davis shares a laugh with Lori Schubert



Kaie Kellough

8. Kaie Kellough keeps things moving.

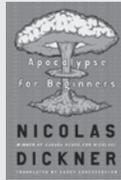


7. Mavis Gallant Prize for Non-Fiction winner Joel Yanofsky (*Bad Animals*) gets a blessing from his wife, Cynthia Davis.

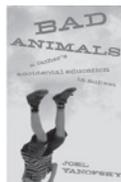


6. Community Award honouree Andre Farkas has one more thing to say.

# WINNERS



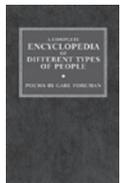
Cole Foundation Prize for Translation – French-English  
Sponsored by the Cole Foundation  
• **Lazer Lederhendler, Apocalypse for Beginners**  
Knopf/Vintage Canada  
(Nicolas Dickner, *Tarmac*, Éditions Alto)



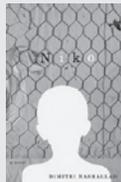
Mavis Gallant Prize for Non-Fiction  
Sponsored by Champlain, Dawson, Heritage, John Abbott, and Vanier Colleges  
• **Joel Yanofsky, Bad Animals: A Father's Accidental Education in Autism**  
Viking Canada



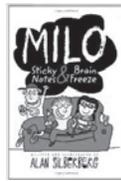
Concordia University First Book Prize  
Sponsored by Concordia University  
• **Ann Scowcroft, The Truth of Houses**  
Brick Books



A. M. Klein Prize for Poetry  
Sponsored by Richard Pound in memory of his brother Robert  
• **Gabe Foreman, A Complete Encyclopedia of Different Types of People**  
Coach House Books



Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction  
Sponsored by Paragraphe Bookstore  
• **Dimitri Nasrallah, Niko**  
Véhicule/Esplanade Books



QWF Prize for Children's and Young Adult Literature  
Sponsored by Babar Books  
• **Alan Silberberg, Milo**  
Simon & Schuster

# P L U S

COMMUNITY AWARD  
ENDRE FARKAS

3 MACS CARTE BLANCHE PRIZE  
GILLIAN SZE  
"LIKE THIS TOGETHER"

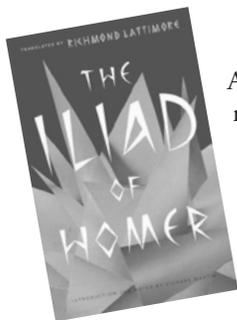
QUEBEC WRITING  
COMPETITION PRIZES  
KASPER HARTMAN - FIRST PRIZE, FOR  
"SOMEONE HAS TO SAVE US FROM THIS"

GARY LECLERC - SECOND PRIZE,  
FOR "KINGERS"  
TIJANA STOJKOVIC - SECOND PRIZE,  
FOR "A PHOTO EXAMINATION"

HONOURABLE MENTIONS:  
DEN COUPAL, PETER RICHARDSON,  
CLAIRE SHERWOOD, CAROLINA ECHEVERRIA,  
STEVEN MANNERS, B. A. MARKUS,  
SHAUN PETT, ISRAEL MONTPLAISIR  
BENEDICT, GUILLAUME MORISSETTE

# Member News

Send your news to [info@qwf.org](mailto:info@qwf.org) (please keep to a 60-word limit) with “Member News” in the subject line—and you’ll be entered in a draw to win a beautiful book.



This issue: *The Iliad of Homer*

A new edition of a timeless translation by Richmond Lattimore, with a new introduction and notes by Richard Martin. Published by The University of Chicago Press Books.

This issue’s winner is:  
**Sharon Callaghan**

*Members of the Qwrite Editorial Board and staff are not eligible for the quarterly prizes.*

**Bassel Atallah’s** short story “Mouhaya Learns to Skate” will appear in the upcoming issue of *The Dalhousie Review*. The story is part of the collection Bassel worked on during QWF’s 2010 mentorship program.

**Ami Sands Brodoff** was awarded a residency fellowship from Fundacion Valparaiso in Spain. She will work on her novel-in-progress, *Faraway Nearby*, in Mojacar, Spain during February and early March, along with seven other writers and artists from around the world. Several readings and cultural evenings are planned by the Foundation to allow for presentation of new work to the public. Ami will continue her usual winter sports: writing, reading, hiking and—with luck—swimming.

Website <http://amisandsbrodoff.com>

Blogsite <http://chez-ami.blogspot.com/>

Correction: **James (Jim) Little’s** short story “Train Ride” was not merely entered in the 2011 Quebec Writing Competition; it was on the short list, which can be viewed at [www.qwf.org/awards/forms/2011\\_qwc-shortlist.pdf](http://www.qwf.org/awards/forms/2011_qwc-shortlist.pdf). You can hear Jim reading the story at <http://soundcloud.com/james-jim-little>. The story is included in his collection, **Could Be: New Fiction** (Mezzoforte).

**Dale Matthews** won first prize in The Golden Grassroots Chapbook Award from the Ontario Poetry Society. They published the poems in a chapbook, *A Puzzle Map of the World*.

**Sharon Callaghan** was in Ottawa to speak to the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa about the research she undertook for her historical nonfiction, *Paths of Opportunity*. As a prelude to the talk, she gave an on-air interview on The Gaelic Hour of Ottawa’s FM 97.9 CHIN radio station.

**Kelly Norah Drukker’s** poem “Night on the Dark Earth” was longlisted for the Montreal International Poetry Prize, and appears on page 128 of the Longlist Anthology: <http://montrealprize.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/2011-Montreal-Prize-Longlist-Poetry-Anthology.pdf>. She also has work forthcoming in *CV2*.

*Bullet to the Heart, One to the Brain - a Psychodrama Played on the Page* by **Elaine Sernovitz Zimbel** is now available as an eBook for under \$4.00. It’s “A compelling story of family fights told with heartbreak and humour...”

*Le Livre des Lecteurs - A Book of Readers* by **George S. Zimbel**, Texts by Vicki Goldberg, Dany LaFerrière and Elaine Sernovitz Zimbel, was published by Les éditions du passage in Montreal and Lieux dits in Lyons, France last month. George has photographed people reading in many countries for sixty years. Texts are in French and English.

**Alice Zorn’s** short story “Frida Walks” won first prize in *Prairie Fire’s* 2011 fiction contest. The story will be published in the upcoming July issue. ¶

**THE WORDS AND MUSIC SHOW HAS A NEW WEB SITE: [WWW.WORDSANDMUSICSHOW.COM](http://WWW.WORDSANDMUSICSHOW.COM). WITH AUDIO LINKS TO PAST SHOWS AND ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO CATCH NEW ONES!**

## Annual General Meeting

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE QUEBEC WRITERS’ FEDERATION WILL BE HELD

DATE/TIME: Tuesday, March 26, 2012  
7:00 p.m. Refreshments  
7:30 p.m. Business meeting

PLACE: Auditorium - Atwater  
Library, 1200 Atwater,  
Westmount

### ON THE AGENDA:

- i) the year’s activities presented by the President
- ii) financial report by the Treasurer
- iii) election of the 2012 Board of Directors.

To put your name forward, or to nominate someone else for a position on the Board, send in a completed nomination form (form available from the QWF office) by Monday, March 12.

You must be a member in good standing to be eligible to run for the board, nominate someone for the board or vote at the AGM.

RSVP: (514) 933-0878, or [admin@qwf.org](mailto:admin@qwf.org)

## ...BRAGGING RIGHTS, CONTINUED



Joel Yanofsky, a Montreal-based biographer and memoirist who won the competition in 2007, says that the real prize for him was the motivation to start writing a longer work. “I had been trying to write a sample chapter for about a month and I couldn’t do it,” he explains.

Thinking that a concrete word count and deadline might make it easier to focus, he set out to capture the desired tone in a personal essay, and succeeded. “It gave me a template for how I was going to write the book,” he says (his memoir *Bad Animals* was published in 2011 and won the Mavis Gallant Prize for Non-Fiction). But ironically, when he entered the essay in the 2006 Quebec Writing Competition, he failed to receive even an honourable mention. Not until the following year, when he “recycled” the exact same essay, did he snag the top prize. “These things are really crap shoots; it depends on who the judge is and what their taste is,” he explains. And he should know: when Yanofsky was a judge for the competition some years earlier, none of the three judges chose any of the same top ten finalists.

“It is hard to be a judge,” says Giller Prize winner Johanna Skibsrud who, together with novelist Jaspreet Singh and *Maisonnette* editor-in-chief Drew Nelles, was a juror for the 2011 competition. “What you are being asked to do—arrive at an objective measure of creative projects whose greatest strength will always be their subjective appeal—is pretty much an impossible task.” The Writing Competition guidelines encourage judges to look for originality of voice, structure and idea, and to consider which pieces moved them the most, but there are no formal criteria for selecting winning pieces. Skibsrud says she was looking for “something that would jump out as a well-crafted, well thought-out piece of writing that was doing something different; that was opening up a particular moment in a way that would offer, somehow, a new angle.” Nelles’ process was far less structured: “I just select what my gut tells me is best,” he says.

For the 2011 judges, at least, prize-winning writing wasn’t hard to identify. Though the three had different writing styles and had never met before, Skibsrud says, “there wasn’t much disagreement between us in arriving at the winners of the contest.” But Nelles, who has judged several past competitions, says that’s not always the way. “One year there was a story that was the absolute standout in my mind—the story that I really thought was a guaranteed first-place winner—but none of the other judges picked it as one of their top choices. I was pretty shocked, but it just speaks to the highly personal nature of reading and evaluating fiction.”

Like Yanofsky, Tijana Stojkovic, a CEGEP teacher and aspiring writer who finished in second place in 2011, had gone unrecognized in previous years: she did not place in the 2008 or 2009 competitions, then received an honourable mention in 2010. But far from feeling discouraged by those competitions, she discovered that submitting was a reward unto itself. “[Writing contests] are an excellent source of motivation and persistence in terms

of actually finishing something you’ve started writing,” she says. “They provide a reasonable and concrete goal which goes beyond that first artistic instinct.”

Yanofsky’s advice to aspiring contest entrants is to remember that competitions are subjective. “If you don’t get nominated or win, realize that it doesn’t mean that much because it’s very dependent on who’s judging that year.” Stojkovic adds that what matters most is making the decision to enter. “Whatever happens in the end, the mere fact of having worked on a piece and having sent it off will strengthen your self-definition as a writer.” ¶

## THE 2011 QWF SPRING WORKSHOPS: JOIN UP NOW!

[WWW.QWF.ORG/WORKSHOPS](http://WWW.QWF.ORG/WORKSHOPS)

## HOW JOE'S WRITING BROUGHT HIM FAME INSTEAD OF SHAME



