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[*The Beauty of the Husband*]

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2012 QWF Awards Shortlist



BYRON REMPEL

A NEW LAUNCH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM REACHES TO NOVA SCOTIA

BY ROWENA WOODS

The Mentorship Exchange Project

The QWF and its sister organization, the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia, are ready to launch a compelling new project that will connect both seasoned and emerging Canadian writers: they will expand their popular mentorship programs across provincial borders.

For over a decade now, the QWF has been running a highly successful mentorship program that pairs professional writers with protégés. The program takes place over a four-month period and has always been funded in part by the Canada Council for the Arts.

In the face of our current economic and political reality, which sees the arts as an increasingly low funding priority, Elise Moser, past president of the QWF, felt that it was a good time to cultivate links between provincial writing organizations. She also wondered how the QWF could address the perennial need for English Quebec writers to make connections outside our home province, and get more exposure among writers and readers in the ROC. That thinking became the seed of the idea for the Mentorship Exchange.

Elise and the QWF's executive director, Lori Schubert, surveyed writers' organizations in other provinces about the project. Many were enthusiastic, but few had the resources to immediately adopt a new program. The Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia, however, jumped at the idea. During a trip to Halifax, Elise was able to fit in a meeting with the Federation's executive director, Nate Crawford. "They already had a very successful mentorship program in place, similar to the QWF's," she says.

The WFNS's program coordinator, Sue Goyette, was excited about the prospect of linking the two federations. "We felt that it would be a wonderful opportunity for Nova Scotia writers (both as emerging writers and as mentors) to work with writers who are working in a different culture but experiencing, we think, the same challenges all writers face."

...continued on page 7

DAVID HOMEL

322 words from the president

The “Reading: un acte d’amour, / Lire: An Act of Love” panel on September 26 (part of the Festival internationale de la littérature) at La Sala Rossa in

Montreal might not have broken new ground, though it was a spirited event that more QWF members could attend in the future. As board members pointed out at their recent meeting, the true meaning of the event is our ability to cooperate with the Literary Translators’ Association and UNEQ (the Quebec Writers’ Union) to create common events. That creation of community is one of our goals.

Our next public manifestation is the QWF Awards Gala on Tuesday, November 20; you’ll be hearing more about that later. Talking about prizes, and everyone likes to, since prizes are a form of gossip, the board recently reviewed our own jurying procedures. Currently, there is no consultation within any given jury, and jurors’ opinions are supplied on a numerical basis that will reveal the winner. A number of board members and past jurors wanted to change this way of working to allow for discussions within juries. After a good deal of polling and opinion-seeking, it turned out that there was a 50-50 split between those who wanted to change the procedure and those who wanted to keep it just as it is. The board, in the absence of a compelling reason to change things, chose to

keep the jurying procedures just as they are. So hats off to the winners, whoever they may be!

Otherwise, we are a service organization, and serving our members and community is what we’re about—more than prizes. To that end, we’re happy to report that grants from different levels of governments have risen, not spectacularly, but in a satisfying manner, considering the pressure on governments to cut back on just about everything. It’s clear that our public funders see us a dedicated, ego-free group designed not only to serve, but also to create community. ¶

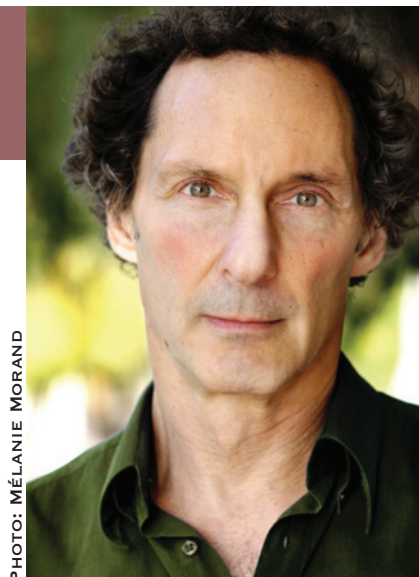


PHOTO: MÉLANIE MORAND

How are we doing?

Watch your inbox for the upcoming QWrite Readers’ Survey. We’d love to hear from you.



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www.qwf.org

(514) 933.0878 • admin@qwf.org
1200 Atwater Avenue, Suite 3
Westmount, Quebec H3Z 1X4

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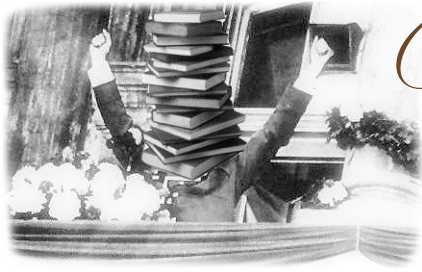


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Vive le Québec Livre!

A QUEBEC BOOK WORTH A SECOND LOOK

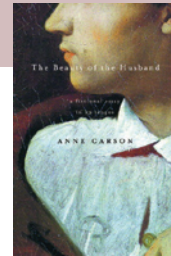
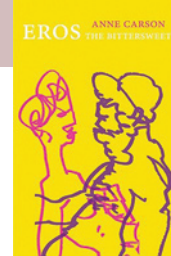
JULIJA ŠUKYS

TAKES ANOTHER LOOK AT

ANNE CARSON

EROS THE BITTERSWEET (1986)

THE BEAUTY OF THE HUSBAND (2001)



“Tongue is the smell of October to me” [*The Beauty of the Husband*]

The first book of Anne Carson’s that I read was *Eros the Bittersweet*. My then future husband gave me his slightly battered paperback while we were both graduate students at the University of Toronto and in the throes of our own sweet-bitter love affair. This gift, an intricate text about triangulation, courtship, and love as a kind of motionless dance, caused a minor earthquake in me. It was learned, erotic, poetic and true, and its writer audacious. *Who was she?* I learned that Anne Carson had been Sean’s professor of Ancient Greek at McGill.

As Sean tells it, this poet-teacher brought her enigmatic way of reading the world to even her language classes. She once gave her students an assignment to translate a number of Greek poetry lines as if they were Gertrude Stein, including in her instructions the detail that Ernest Hemingway had once described Stein as having a laugh like a beefsteak. This, I suppose, was meant to give them insight.

Anne Carson, too, was trained as an academic. So who, I wondered, had given her permission to write like this? Where had she found the courage to do so? And if she could do this, then was a different path (one that needn’t involve writing the kinds of scholarly papers that sent me into despair) possible for me as well?

I was on the cusp of my 30th birthday when I made the decision to start writing “for real.” No longer would I work only within the dry framework of literary criticism. Sean and I were married, living in Chicago, and halfway through our respective postdocs when I announced my decision: I was going to transform myself into a writer. It was now or never, I told him. I didn’t want to wake up at the age of 40 and wonder where my life had gone.

Your dreams are a mess.

They are my masterpiece. (Carson, *The Beauty* 84)

We didn’t exactly say this to each other, but perhaps it was something similar. At least that’s what I imagine.

Although the bios of *Plainwater* and *Autobiography of Red* read simply “Anne Carson lives in Canada,” it was in a rambling Plateau apartment that she wrote the works that have made her famous. Before moving on to major honours and teaching appointments elsewhere, she produced one last book in this city. *The Beauty of the Husband* is, to my mind, perhaps her best.

Like *Eros the Bittersweet*, this text is about erotic triangulation. It tells the story of a woman betrayed and of the dissolution of a marriage, “that swaying place.” But whereas *Eros* is steeped in literary analysis and reference, *The Beauty* is stripped down to a love story gone wrong. One fragment at a time, a nuanced and painful portrait of brokenness emerges.

Coward.

I know.

Betrayer.

Yes.

Opportunist.

I can see why you would think that. (83)

So, yesterday, I turned forty, that fateful age at which I told Sean I would evaluate my life and decide whether or not it had been wasted. It was a bittersweet day, as all fall birthdays are. Perhaps it won’t surprise you to read that I feel younger than I thought I would. And that life already feels shorter than I believe it should. But it was also a day of strange and beautiful gifts from my young son, of a broken cake baked by a beautiful husband, and of remembering books read long ago that started me down this desired path. I woke up at forty and found that I was a writer. For this, among other things, I thank Anne Carson. ¶

Julija Šukys is the author of Epistolophilia: Writing the Life of Ona Šimaitė and Silence is Death: The Life and Work of Tahar Djaout. Epistolophilia has just been shortlisted for QWF’s Mavis Gallant Prize for Non-fiction. You can learn more about Julija at <http://julijasukys.com>.



2012 QWF AWARDS SHORTLIST

QWF PRIZE FOR CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

Jurors: Sigmund Brouwer, Lori Joy Smith, Nick Thran

CATHERINE AUSTEN

26 Tips for Surviving Grade 6
James Lorimer & Company Ltd.

MONIQUE POLAK

Pyro
Orca Book Publishers

LORI WEBER

Yellow Mini
Fitzhenry & Whiteside

PARAGRAPHE HUGH MACLENNAN PRIZE FOR FICTION

Sponsored by Paragraphe Bookstore

Jurors: Jeff Parker, Diane Schoemperlen, H. Nigel Thomas

TOM ABRAY

Pollen
DC Books

ANITA RAU BADAMI

Tell It to the Trees
Alfred A. Knopf Canada

RAWI HAGE

Carnival
House of Anansi Press

A. M. KLEIN PRIZE FOR POETRY

Sponsored by Richard Pound in memory of his brother Robert

Jurors: Kaie Kellough, Elizabeth Philips, Bruce Taylor

OANA AVASILICHIOAEI

We, Beasts
Wolsak and Wynn Publishers

MARY DI MICHELE

*The Flower of Youth:
Pier Paolo Pasolini Poems*
ECW Press

SUSAN GILLIS

The Rapids
Brick Books

AWARDS

LIST

GALA

Tuesday, November 20, 2012

Host: Josh Freed

Music: The Vanier College Jazz Combo

Book Table: Paragraphe Bookstore

Tickets: \$15 (\$10 for full-time students),
available at Argo, Babar en ville, Bibliophile,
Clio, Paragraphe and The Word,
and at the QWF office.

7:00 p.m. – Reception
8:00 p.m. – Awards ceremony

Le Lion d'Or
1676 Ontario East, Montreal
(Papineau metro)

PRIX DE TRADUCTION FONDATION COLE – ANGLAIS-FRANÇAIS

Commandité par la Fondation Cole

Juges : Sepideh Anvar, Herménégilde
Chiasson, Ann Josée Thibeault

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY FIRST BOOK PRIZE

Sponsored by Concordia University

Jurors: Arthur Holden, Olive Senior, Amy
Shearn

MAVIS GALLANT PRIZE FOR NON-FICTION

*Sponsored by Champlain, Dawson,
Heritage, John Abbott, and Vanier Colleges*

Jurors: Gregory McCormick, Maria
Meindl, Jan Walter

ÉRIC FONTAINE

T'es con, point
Stanké

Doug Harris

YOU Comma Idiot
Goose Lane Editions

MARIE FRANKLAND

Passage de Franklin
Éditions du Noroît

David Solway

Franklin's Passage
McGill-Queen's University Press

LORI SAINT-MARTIN ET PAUL GAGNÉ

Fall
Éditions du Boréal

Colin McAdam

Fall
Hamish Hamilton Canada
(The Penguin Group)

TOM ABRAY

Pollen
DC Books

MICHAEL LITHGOW

Waking in the Treehouse
Cormorant Books

ALICE PETERSEN

All the Voices Cry
Biblioasis

TARAS GRESCOE

*Straphanger: Saving Our Cities and Ourselves
from the Automobile*
HarperCollins Canada

WILLIAM MARSDEN

*Fools Rule: Inside the Failed Politics
of Climate Change*
Alfred A. Knopf Canada

JULIJA ŠUKYS

*Epistolophilia: Writing the Life
of Ona Šimaitė*
University of Nebraska Press

READING: UN ACTE D'AMOUR/ LIRE: AN ACT OF LOVE

BY LORRIE BEAUCHAMP

On September 26, La Sala Rossa on Montreal's Boulevard Saint-Laurent hosted the third annual *Reading: un acte d'amour/Lire: An Act of Love*, a celebration of Quebec writers and books.

This year, Neil Smith, author of *Bang, Crunch*, chose to discuss the translation of *Lullabies for Little Criminals* by Heather O'Neill. Nicolas Dickner, author of *Apocalypse for Beginners*, presented the book *Du bon usage des étoiles* by Dominique Fortier, translated by Montreal's Sheila Fischman as *On the Proper Use of Stars*. Fischman was present for the discussion.

Lost in translation?

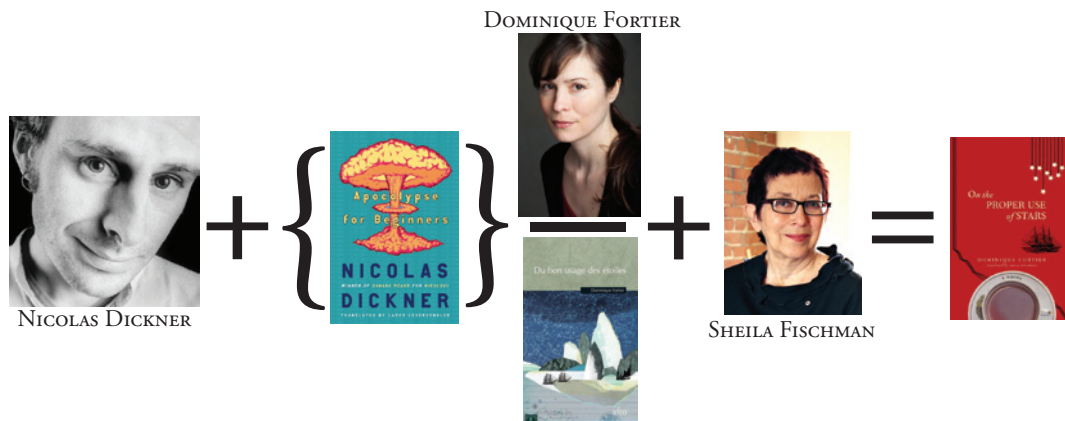
Neil Smith kicked off the evening by noting that the French version of Heather O'Neill's award-winning first novel was translated in France, in language not particularly friendly to the average Québécois reader. He wondered why the job was not given to a local translator, as the book is set in Montreal. A discussion of whether authors should have more control over translation decisions ensued. Given that France is a bigger market for French-language literature than Quebec, having a European translation may have simply been a business decision.

... or lost at sea?

Nicolas Dickner then presented *Du bon usage des étoiles*, noting that the disastrous 1845 voyage by Sir John Franklin—an attempt to navigate the Arctic's Northwest Passage—is an important tale to tell in any language. He felt the historical viewpoint of “the women left behind,” as told through Fortier's compassionate prose, is doubly effective in depicting the horrors experienced by the stranded crew. Translator Sheila Fischman said she was grateful to have had access to the author's original research material, including documents that had survived their own voyage from the mid-19th century.

The goal of the evening—to introduce readers to Quebec-authored books available in both French and English—was successfully met. Discussion flowed effortlessly from one language to the other, in a manner characteristic of Montreal. In attendance was a young writer who had arrived three months ago from Sao Paulo, Brazil. Comfortable in English and wanting very much to improve his French, he said, “I'm here to stay.” *Welcome to our bilingual writing community, Andy.*

The event was organized by the Literary Translators' Association of Canada (LTAC), the Quebec Writers' Federation (QWF) and the Union des écrivaines et des écrivains québécois (UNEQ). It was facilitated by QWF President David Homel. ¶



CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE...

THE MENTORSHIP EXCHANGE PROJECT

Within both organizations' current mentorship programs, an independent jury selects emerging writers who are deemed ready to benefit from one-on-one intensive mentoring with a professional. "Each year we get a record-breaking number of submissions," Sue explains. "The emerging writers and their mentors meet either in person or work online, usually bi-weekly, for the duration of the program. It culminates with a public reading by our emerging writers, who are introduced to the writing and reading community by their mentors."

Sue is no stranger to the benefits of such a program; an acclaimed writer and poet, she has been a member of the WFNS for over 20 years, and has participated as a mentor on several occasions. "Instructing at this level develops a confidence in writers that ends up serving their own writing by instilling a kind of courage that allows them to push that much further in their own work. For the emerging writer this is a great opportunity to be read closely and be held accountable both to their work and to the discipline they apply to their writing practice."

The fundamentals of the original program will remain the same. The exchange project will see a mentor from Nova Scotia meet with an emerging writer here in Montreal, while a mentor from Quebec will travel to Nova Scotia. The mentors will stay two days and then continue mentoring online, until they return for the public reading at the end of the project. Each host organization will also organize a workshop or reading for the visiting mentor as a way of bringing them to the writing community in the other province, an additional benefit both for the mentor and the host community.



"The exchange will create dialogue and challenge our writers to broaden their horizons while welcoming a different perspective into their craft that will be both useful, I think, and invigorating," says Sue Goyette.

With the WFNS on board, the extra funding needed for travel still remained an issue. Lori Schubert met with Kari Cullen and Don Oravec of the Writers' Trust, and they enthusiastically agreed to provide the funds to cover all travel expenses. Sue was thrilled: "It's heartening to think about the long-term effects of this project."

Non-profit writers' organizations may always be vulnerable to cuts, but they continue to survive because of something that cannot be taken away. "Organizations like ours run on fumes of passion," Sue concludes.

"And with support from friends like the Writers' Trust of Canada," adds Lori. ¶

Rowena Woods is a children's author and scriptwriter who lives and works in Montreal.

*Call for Interprovincial
Mentorships*



QWF 2013 Mentorship Program
Including our first-ever
Interprovincial Mentorship Exchange
DEADLINE: December 10, 2012
Details at qwf.org/mentorship

IN MEMORIUM

KEITHA K. MACINTOSH

Keitha K. MacIntosh was a member of Montreal's literary community in the 1970s and 1980s. She is the author of *Shattered Glass and Other Fragments* (1976), *Poems of the Chateauguay Valley* (1981) and *The Crow Sits High in the Lilac Tree* (1982). She edited and published five issues of *Montreal Poems* between 1974 and 1981. She spent the last fifteen years of her life in British Columbia, and died in August 2012.

THE Q MUNITY COLUMN

BY MICHAEL LAKE

J.P. Karwacki, Meaghan Acosta, and Jesse Eckerlin curate the time machine that is the Argo Bookshop.

When you step into Argo, one of the first things you notice is a picture of Jack Kerouac hanging on the wall. And who is that man in the hat next to him? Walt Whitman, of course, before the big white beard. The clerk is reading poetry, and the placard outside lists the writings of Nikola Tesla as a new arrival. This is clearly a different kind of bookstore.

Since 1966, Argo Bookshop has called Shaughnessy Village home. The inconspicuous store, only 200 square feet, was run by John George for 40 years until his death in 2006. Two longtime employees took over until 2009, then Chris Clarke followed suit. In 2011, when Clarke made the decision to become a Presbyterian minister, he put the store up for sale. In November it was purchased by a trio of twentysomethings, J.P. Karwacki, Meaghan Acosta, and Jesse Eckerlin.

The history and reputation of the shop is something these new owners take very seriously. “I like to think of it as though we walked into a machine that was already in motion,” says Karwacki. John George, a drawing of whom hangs on the wall at the cash register, is remembered fondly by countless booklovers who had known him and the store for decades. But even with such large shoes to fill, Karwacki, Acosta, and Eckerlin are idealistic and motivated, partly because they are more interested in literature than in profit. As an indication, one of the store’s bestsellers is Fernando Pessoa’s *The Book of Disquiet*, simply because it was beloved by each of the owners. “I don’t know why anyone would sell that thing,” Acosta says. “It’s so dense and rife with existential crises, but it ended up being our bestseller just because we all love it. I’m not sure if that would happen anywhere else.”

With the recent plans for an economic revitalization of Shaughnessy Village, Argo’s surroundings are sure to change in the very near future. Restaurateur Peter Sergakis is super-sizing his bar on St. Catherine, a slew of small businesses is closing down, and a 100 million-dollar condo project is being built just

two blocks away from the humble Argo.

“At one point there were twenty bookstores on this stretch of St. Catherine alone,” Acosta says. The Argo philosophy, however, seems to be to roll with the punches while doing as much as possible to share a passion for books. What is unique and refreshing about the owners is how much faith they have in their customers. They are of the mind that careful curation of a bookstore’s selection will draw the customers in. If you build it, they will come.

“It wasn’t long before taking over the shop,” Karwacki says, “that I had really contrasted in my mind how different this is from the larger retail scene. The fact is that it’s really important to talk to people about what they’re reading, and also just to talk to people in general a lot more.”

“We’re sort of a bizarre sitcom for nerds,” says Acosta. “It’s a really funny array of people who come through. Everyone is a misfit, sort of, but we all gel together.”

Argo’s community-oriented business model also includes a full calendar of events, hosting many writers from Montreal and abroad. Some of these have included the East Coast poet Zachariah Wells, Governor General’s award-winning Richard Greene, and local literary darlings Asa Boxer, Carmine Starnino, and



THE STACKS OF THE VENERABLE ARGO

Tess Fragoulis. Even Argo’s own Jesse Eckerlin recently launched his first chapbook of poetry at the shop. And there is the monthly open mic night, which the owners have described as a resounding success.

Not too long ago, I was browsing Argo’s shelves with a book of John Ashbery poems in my hand when a clerk at the store saw what I was holding and showed me the book he was reading. He pointed to a poem. “If you like Ashbery, you’ll probably like this poem.” He was right. I wish I’d taken the time to write down the author’s name, although I’m sure if I went back and offered some clues, the folks at Argo would be able to figure out what it was I’d read.

“There was never a worry about what we would do with the shop,” says Karwacki. “Chris knew that it would be fine in that respect. It was more about whether we could handle the work. None of us has a background in business. We’re also pretty young and idealistic, and also naïve when we first started. There was a lot of trust implicit in the handover.”

“But it’s a labour of love in every respect,” says Acosta. “We just do it.” ¶