



For Immediate Release

Canadian Jewish Literary Awards 2019 Winners To Be Celebrated on October 27

Toronto, Sept. 15, 2019 — The Canadian Jewish Literary Awards is honouring eight outstanding books for 2019. Now in its fifth year, the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards recognizes and rewards the finest Canadian Jewish writing.

Winners have been declared in the following categories: fiction, memoir, biography, history, scholarship, Holocaust, Yiddish, and books for children and youth.

“Choosing just eight Award winners was a challenge this year,” says Jury chair, Edward Trapunski. “The depth and breadth and quality of the submissions show the vibrancy of the culture and the appeal of Jewish themes for fiction and non-fiction writers.”

The awards ceremony will be held on October 27, 2019, at 2:00pm in the Tribute Communities Recital Hall, Accolade East Building, York University 4700 Keele St. Everybody is invited and welcome. Admission and parking are free. The York University subway station is conveniently right outside the door of the theatre.

Meet the winning authors and hear them speak about their books. A dessert reception will follow where the award-winning books will be available for purchase and author signing.

The Honorees

Fiction

The Gown: A Novel of the Royal Wedding by Jennifer Robson (HarperCollins) is an enthralling historical novel about one of the most famous wedding dresses of the twentieth century — Princess Elizabeth’s wedding gown — and the embroiderers who made it. Told through the eyes of three women, one of them a Holocaust survivor, *The Gown* is a story of rebuilding friendship and family after the devastation of the Holocaust.

The quality of the submissions in the memoir/biography category was so rich this year that the Jury decided to give two separate awards: one for memoir and one for biography.

Memoir

The Art of Leaving by Israeli Canadian writer, Ayelet Tsabari. (HarperCollins). An intimate collection of essays, the book documents her travels around the world as she searches for her identity. As an Israeli of Yemeni descent in a country sometimes seen as devaluing her cultural traditions, Tsabari searches for a sense of belonging as she drifts from Thailand to India to Vancouver and Toronto before she rediscovers her heritage and embraces her family history.

Biography

Vasily Grossman and the Soviet Century by Alexandra Popoff (Yale University Press) is a well-researched book that introduces, or reintroduces, readers to a significant writer whose stand against totalitarian ideology has taken on new relevance and urgency. Grossman’s epic novel, *Life and Fate*, was the first Soviet work to equate Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, pairing Stalinist anti-Semitism with Hitler’s campaign to annihilate the Jews. Popoff grippingly captures the stories behind Grossman’s stories, particularly of censors’ efforts to alter and limit them

History

With **Spies of No Country: Behind Enemy Lines at the Birth of the Israeli Secret Service** (Signal/McClelland & Stewart), Canadian Israeli Journalist Matti Friedman introduces us to four unknown, young Mizrahi Jews who became the nucleus of Israel’s nascent intelligence service. The tiny, amateur unit known as the “Arab Section” consisted of Jews from Arab countries who could pass as Arabs thus allowing them to go undercover to gather intelligence and carry out sabotage and commit assassinations. More than a spy story, it sheds light on the complex nature of Israel — a country that many see as European, but where more than half of the population has Middle Eastern and North African roots and relates more to its Middle Eastern neighbours.

Children and Youth

Slavery is a recurring experience in Jewish history. In **A Cage Without Bars** (Second Story Press), Anne Dublin tells the story of Joseph and his younger sister Gracia who, along with hundreds of Jewish children, are abducted and sold into slavery in 1493 after the Expulsion from Spain. They are shipped to the island of São Tomé, off the west coast of Africa, where they are forced to work on a sugar plantation under brutal conditions.

Dublin recounts the horrors faced by these children in a way that is appropriate for her audience of young readers. This coming-of-age tale, filled with adventure, captures a little-known moment in Jewish history and fills a gap in historical fiction for young adults.

Yiddish

Confessions of a Yiddish Writer and Other Essays (McGill-Queen's University Press) by Chava Rosenfarb. Chava is one of the most celebrated Yiddish novelists who survived the Holocaust and settled in Montreal. Newly translated by her daughter, Goldie Morgentaler, these thirteen essays offer personal accounts of a childhood imbued with Yiddish. They chronicle her experiences before and during the Holocaust as she strives to preserve the Yiddish literary canon from destruction by the Nazis. Later essays showcase the vibrancy of the post-Holocaust Yiddish literary milieu in Montreal. This collection marks the first time that Rosenfarb's non-fiction essays have been presented together in English.

Scholarship

Culture in Nazi Germany by Michael Kater (Yale University Press). This book by a Distinguished Research Emeritus of history at York University examines the fate of the arts under Nazi rule. Modernism in music, Expressionism in film, and the Bauhaus in architecture were all manifestations of the arts and culture of Germany's Weimar Republic before the Nazis came to power. For the Nazis, the arts were only useful as political propaganda. They attacked the artistic movements that they felt were dominated by the Jews and leftist groups. Kater's book examines how cultural life, including architecture, journalism, film, music, opera, theatre, and the visual arts became the means to control the minds of the people, and the fate of the Jewish artists caught up in the social madness.

Holocaust

Choices Under Duress of the Holocaust: Benjamin Marmorstein and the Fate of Viennese Jewry Volume I: Vienna (Texas Tech University Press). A culmination of more than three decades of research by Leonard and Edith Ehrlich, and edited by their son, Carl S. Ehrlich, Director of the Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University, it chronicles the harrowing decisions Jewish communal leaders in Austria were forced to make while under Nazi occupation. It examines the decision-making process from both a historical and a philosophical

perspective and investigates the actions of the controversial Rabbi Dr. Benjamin Marmelstein, who was leader of the Jewish community of Vienna between 1938 and 1942 and later Judenältester (Chief Jewish Elder) of Theresienstadt concentration camp-ghetto.

The Canadian Jewish Literary Awards is hosted and sponsored by the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University. We're grateful for the support of its generous donors. We thank all the members of the community who have contributed to sustaining Jewish literature and ideas in Canada.

The Canadian Jewish Literary Awards Jury for 2019

Edward Trapunski: Chair, author of three books and winner of an ACTRA Award as best writer.

Rona Arato: Award-winning children's book writer and author of 15 books.

Miriam Borden: Doctoral student in Yiddish at the University of Toronto and researcher of Twentieth Century Jewish Torontonians culture in the Canadian Yiddish press. She has curated exhibitions about Yiddish language and culture at the Robarts Library and the Canadian Language Museum.

Alain Goldschläger: Director of the Holocaust Literature Research Institute and Professor of French at Western University, and former Chair of the National Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.

Sara Horowitz: Professor of Comparative Literature and Jewish Studies at York University, former Director of the Golda and Israel Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies and former President of the Association for Jewish Studies, and award-winning author and editor.

Andrea Knight: Editor and former co-publisher of the New Jewish Press, the publishing program of the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Toronto, and former managing editor of the Azrieli Series of Holocaust Survivor Memoirs.

Michael Posner: Award-winning author and playwright and former reporter for the Globe and Mail.

If you have any questions, contact Edward Trapunski, the chair of the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards jury, at 416-720-4700 or info@cjlawards.ca. For more information, please visit www.cjlawards.ca