



Canadian Jewish Literary Awards 2017 Winners To Be Celebrated October 15

Toronto — Nine outstanding books have been chosen to receive the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards for 2017. Now in its third year, the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards is a non-profit organization that annually recognizes and rewards the finest Canadian Jewish writing.

Over 60 works on Jewish themes by Canadian writers were submitted for consideration. Winners have been declared in the following categories: fiction, memoir/biography, poetry, history, scholarship, Jewish thought and culture, Holocaust literature, Yiddish, and children and youth fiction.

“The depth and breadth of the submissions shows the vibrancy of the culture and the appeal of Jewish themes for fiction and non-fiction writers, both Jewish and non-Jewish,” says Jury Co-chair, Edward Trapunski.

The awards ceremony will be held on October 15, 2017 at 2 pm in the Tribute Communities Recital Hall, Accolade East Building, York University, 4700 Keele St. A dessert reception will follow. Award-winning books will be available for purchase. The winning authors will be present to speak and to autograph their books. All are invited and admission and parking are free. A free shuttle bus will be available to/from downtown Toronto (tickets required).

The Honourees

Fiction

A rollicking, tongue-twisting *tour de force*, Gary Barwin's *Yiddish for Pirates* (Vintage Canada) is told by a Yiddish-speaking parrot, and follows the story of Moishe, a Jewish Candide, through his wild and often harrowing adventures during the period of the Spanish Inquisition and Columbus' voyage to the New World.

Memoir/Biography

In *Pumpkinflowers: A Soldier's Story* (Signal/McClelland & Stewart), Matti Friedman has written a powerful and compelling war memoir. *Pumpkinflowers* divides into four elegantly written accounts of the under-analyzed 1990s conflict between Israel and Lebanon. Recounting Mr. Friedman's personal war stories, they document experiences of battle often at odds with the official record of this war.

Poetry

The wit and irreverent wisdom of Stuart Ross has been a mainstay of Canadian poetry for years, but in *A Sparrow Came Down Resplendent* (Wolsak & Wynn) we also see him at his most vulnerable: grieving for lost loved ones, remembering childhood in Jewish Toronto, and grappling with our mystifying world with his trademark affection and fury.

Jewish Thought and Culture

Leonard Cohen, one of the greatest poets and songwriters of the contemporary era, has touched people throughout the world. But moreover, he was both a Montrealer and a Jew. *Les révolutions de Leonard Cohen* (Presses de l'Université du Québec), a collection of essays in French edited by academics Chantal Ringuet and Gérard Rabinovitch, presents his work as the soul of the Jewish world deeply rooted in Quebec culture.

Yiddish

Between the wars, Berlin was a cosmopolitan hub in which German-Jewish writers crossed paths with migrant Hebrew and Yiddish writers. Working against the tendency to view German and East European Jewish cultures as separate fields of study, *Strangers in Berlin: Modern Jewish Literature Between East and West 1919-1933* (University of Michigan Press) by Rachel Seelig presents Jewish literature in the Weimar Republic as the product of a dynamic encounter between East and West. Jewish writers responded to their exclusion from rising nationalist movements by cultivating their own images of homeland in verse, and they did so in three languages: German, Hebrew, and especially Yiddish.

Scholarship

The central text of the Jewish mystical tradition, *The Zohar* has been a closed book to all but mystical initiates and the small group of scholars who have studied their traditions. Over the last two decades,

The Zohar: Pritzker Edition (Stanford University Press) has been appearing, volume by volume, and through its translations and commentary has opened the esoteric world of *The Zohar* to a broader audience. The latest volume to appear, *Volume Eleven* by Joel Hecker, is a magisterial translation of and commentary on *The Zohar's* commentary on the Song of Songs and various apocryphal works, making them accessible to a broader audience for the first time ever.

History

In *Not In My Family: German Memory and Responsibility After the Holocaust* (Oxford University Press) Roger Frie uses his own family history to examine what is involved in understanding the Nazi past and responsibility for the Holocaust. He deals with difficult and painful subject matter by using autobiographical tools that include personal and intellectual reflection, psychology and history.

Holocaust Literature

Before All Memory Is Lost: Women's Voices from the Holocaust (Azrieli Foundation), edited by Myrna Goldenberg, is the first anthology ever published by the Azrieli Foundation. Twenty-five women reflect on their experiences of survival. Each account is woven together by a common thread: women resisted and, ultimately, triumphed against the brutality they faced during the Holocaust. The book features a wide variety of narrative styles, including prose, poetry and diary excerpts.

Children and Youth Fiction

Set in 14th century Strasbourg, France, *Another Me* (Tundra Books) by Eva Wiseman deals with a horrifying and little-known paroxysm of anti-Semitism, when the Jews were blamed for poisoning the well-water and thereby causing the bubonic plague that ravaged Europe. As victims of one of the first pogroms in history, Jews were put to death as scapegoats for an incomprehensible disease. It is within this social climate that we find young Natan and Elena. Natan is determined to disprove what people are saying about the well water. But his quest to share the truth and his blossoming relationship with Elena both take a sharp turn.

The Canadian Jewish Literary Awards was founded by a group of prominent writers, editors and scholars to celebrate the vibrancy of Jewish literature and culture in Canada. The Awards are hosted and sponsored by the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University. The Canadian Jewish Literary Awards would like to express its gratitude for the support of its generous donors. We thank all the members of the community who have contributed to the sustenance of Jewish literature and thought in Canada.

To register for the Awards Ceremony and obtain shuttle tickets, please go to <https://cjla2017.eventbrite.ca>. For more information, please visit www.cjlawards.ca

Needless to say – if you have any questions, do not hesitate to get in touch. Media may contact the chair of the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards jury, Edward Trapunski, at 416-720-4700 or info@cjlawards.ca.