



NOV 2011 vol¹⁴ no¹

INSIDE:

WELCOME TO THE PRIZE ISSUE. DID YOU WIN? SHORT LISTS, BIG HOPES; HOMEL ON LAFERRIÈRE;

AND:

FIFTY-NINE COUNTRIES. ONE POEM. FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS. ARE YOU IN?



ALAN SILBERBERG

DOES EVERYTHING CHANGE, OR DO YOU JUST GET MORE DATES?

WHAT'S IN AN AWARD?

They've won the Governor General's Award, the Giller Prize and other regional, national and international literary prizes. We can imagine the thrill: the recognition, the validation and the money. But do awards change writers' lives?

Elaine Kalman Naves has won many awards for her creative non-fiction, including QWF's Mavis Gallant Prize for Non-Fiction twice, for *Shoshana's Story* and *Putting Down Roots*. But back in 1998, in the process of a divorce, Kalman Naves was ready to accept well-meant advice to put aside her "so-called writing career." After a discouraging meeting with her lawyer ("I visualized myself on St. Catherine and Peel, selling pencils") she returned a phone call, and found out her personal essay won the CBC Literary Award. "It couldn't have come at a more wonderful time. It was a sign: Don't quit on this, you're going to be okay, somehow you're going to be okay."

Neale McDevitt's fiction writing began with a lie to impress a girl; when she wanted to read his "work," he quickly produced some stories. On her urging, he entered "Honey-Tongued Hooker" in the CBC/QWF Quebec Writing Competition of 2000 and to his amazement, won. He enjoyed the writing process and resulting stories, but that others agreed ("the jury of writers, they were real writers—you couldn't be more of a phoney writer than I was") immediately changed his view of his writing. The win, followed by an introduction to a publisher and the acceptance of other short story submissions, fuelled McDevitt's creativity. "For a couple of years afterwards, I was writing all the time."

by Raquel Rivera



On learning that she was nominated for the 2006 Amazon First Novel Award for her book *Certainty*, Madeleine Thien's experience was very different: "I was stunned. I was stunned and I was really moved." But neither the nomination nor the win changed her approach to her writing. "I think every writer knows that the number of worthy books, interesting books, resonant books, is far greater than awards can accommodate."

In what could be described as spectacular wins, Johanna Skibsrud, Miguel Syjuco and Stephanie Bolster all won high-profile book prizes as they launched their literary careers. Syjuco's 2008 Man Asian Literary Prize-winning manuscript, *Ilustrado*, was subsequently published around the world. Bolster's first collection, *White Stone: The Alice Poems*, captured the 1998 Governor General's Award. And Skibsrud only

QWF PRESIDENT

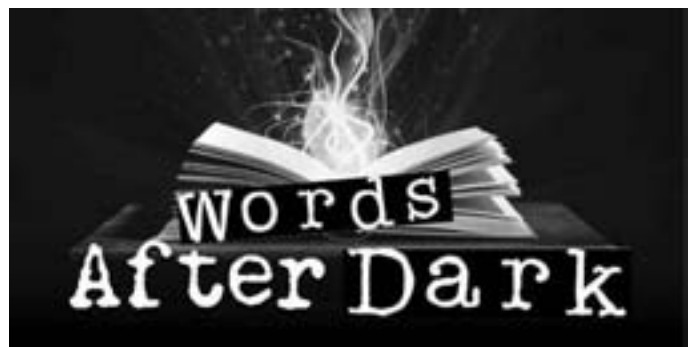
Elise Moser

The fall is a busy time at QWF. The board resumes its regular meetings, the workshop schedule goes up, the shortlists for the QWF awards are announced, the invitations and press releases go out. The board also meets for its annual retreat, a day-long discussion about our future. It's a time for everyone to break out their best pot-luck dishes and get to know each other as we work up our appetites tromping through the Laurentian forest before lunch.

Your board is a motley crew of writers and supportive members of the community. This year we have novelists and short story writers, poets and scholars, spoken word performers and creative non-fiction writers rubbing shoulders with our beloved lawyer. Some of us knew each other before we joined the board, from workshops or meetings or the 'hood; others only exchanged our first words around the meeting table in the office. The opportunity to chat about something other than QWF helps us know each other better, which helps us work together better. And the afternoon discussion allows us to think broadly about where the organization is, where it ought to be, and how to get there over the year ahead and into the future.

Under pressure of work, Linda Morra has had to step off the executive for the coming year; board member David Homel will take her place in the vice-president's chair. You may know him as a QWF fiction workshop leader. He is a novelist, filmmaker and journalist, and a kids' book writer. He is also known for his Governor General's Award-winning literary translations, not least of which have been of the work of Quebec writer Dany Laferrière. In this issue's "Vivre le Québec Livre," David considers Laferrière's memoir of the earthquake in Haiti, *Tout bouge autour de moi*.

Our theme this issue is prizes, and the effect they have—or don't have—on a writer's career. When I won the CBC/QWF Short Story Competition (as the Quebec Writing Competition was called then) for the first time in 2004, it made me feel like a real writer (at least for a few days). NDG writer Neale McDevitt had won a few years before and his win landed him a book contract. Nothing so tangible happened to me, but the morale boost was invaluable. If I hadn't won—if the judges had been different or in different moods; if there had been a bigger, better pool of entries; if the stars had been aligned otherwise—would my story have been less good? No, but maybe it would have been harder for me to find the confidence to keep writing. On the other hand, I've entered my stories in plenty of other contests that I lost, and I'm still here. Ultimately the only really good reason to write is because you want to write. The prizes, the praise—and, for most of us, the money—are all just gravy. ¶



THIS YEAR'S FINALISTS, LIVE AND FREE!

Come hear the finalists for this year's QWF Awards read from their nominated books at Paragraphe Bookstore, (2220 McGill College Avenue; 514-845-5811)

NOVEMBER 17, 2011 AT 6:00 P.M.

Admission is free. Books will be available for purchase, and most authors will be on hand to autograph them.

Tickets to the QWF Awards Gala on November 22 will be available for purchase at the cash.

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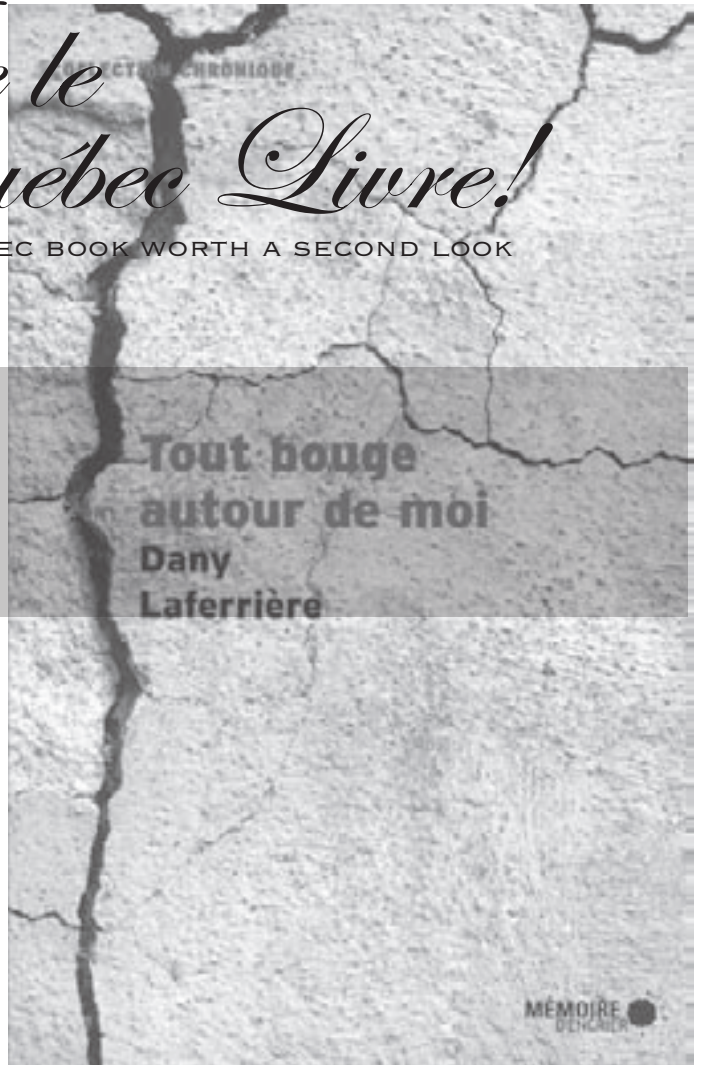
Vive le Québec Livre!

A QUEBEC BOOK WORTH A SECOND LOOK

THIS ISSUE:

DAVID HOMEL
TAKES ANOTHER LOOK AT

DANY LAFERRIÈRE'S
TOUT BOUGE AUTOUR DE MOI



Towards the end of his chronicle of the January 2010 Port-au-Prince earthquake and its aftermath called *Tout bouge autour de moi*, Dany Laferrière entitles one of his sections “La notion de l’utilité”—the idea of being useful. That’s the dilemma that illuminates this painful, personal book: what does a writer do when confronted with such a disaster?

Earlier on, he sets the tone in a short exchange with his nephew. After the first terrifying minutes of the earthquake and the astonishment of still being alive, the younger member of the Laferrière family, barely a man but with big plans, asks Dany not to write about “this”—no one has yet devised a word for what happened on January 12, 2010. Of course, Dany is a writer, continually scribbling in his notebook, and he can’t promise his nephew such a thing. But the question is raised: whom does this disaster belong to? Who gets to talk about the mess? Who has the authority and on what basis?

To his credit, Dany admits that he doesn’t have the chops to do it. First of all, nature has already scripted the entire event without asking any writers balanced precariously on the earth’s trembling crust if they have an opinion. Besides, Dany notes, the event is too classic for his pen. There is unity of time (4:53 in the afternoon), place (Port-au-Prince), and character: the two million or more inhabitants of Port-au-Prince. It would take a Tolstoy, and that’s not me, he willingly admits.

But Laferrière is Laferrière, and he does what he knows how to do best. Those telegraphic dispatches that illuminate the scenes around him often seem to be about himself but actually, they are about everyone else. When faced with a grave situation, Dany replies with gravitas. Not pathos, but respect.

He is also acutely aware of his own precarious situation. Certain commentators in the Quebec French press at the time of the earthquake wondered why this voice of Haiti decided to accept evacuation when he could have stayed in Haiti, where fate had placed him, since he was there for a literary event that of course

never took place. Laferrière answers the ambulance chasers, then extends his story through the months following January 2010 to describe his return. He remarks upon that strange phenomenon of those who are sorry they missed the cataclysm. “You don’t become Haitian simply by dying,” he notes. If it were only that easy to take on a new identity!

Through these meditations, it seems to me, Laferrière is investigating his own recent fame. Winning the 2009 Prix Médicis in France for a book he never intended to write (“fame is the result of a misunderstanding,” he points out, quoting Jean Cocteau), known in English as *The Return* and recently published by Douglas & McIntyre, has cast a light on everything he does. He’s not just a writer like many of us. He’s a writer who’s responsible for an entire country. That sort of weight would bring anyone to their knees. In *Tout bouge* (“The World is Moving Around Me”), he weighs his responsibilities and his freedom to act for himself.

And he does it with lightness and generosity, a real gift. ¶

David Homel is the author of eight novels, the latest being “Midway.” He has also translated a number of Dany Laferrière’s works.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, YOUR **2011** FINALISTS FOR THE QUEBEC WRITERS' FEDERATION **AWARDS**



SANDRA MCCROSSAN



MONIQUE DYKSTRA



SHEILA FISCHMAN

Quebec Writers Federation Annual Gala

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

7:00 reception;

8:00 awards ceremony

Le Lion d'Or

1676 Ontario East, Montreal
(Papineau metro)

Host: Kaie Kellough, word systemizer

Music: Vanier College Jazz Combo

Book Table: Paragraphe Bookstore

Tickets: \$15 (\$10 for full-time students) at Argo,

Babar en ville, Bibliophile, Clio, Paragraphe and

The Word, and at the QWF office.

Cole Foundation Prize for Translation – French-English

Sponsored by the Cole Foundation

- Judith Cowan, **Meridian Line**, Véhicule/
Signal Editions
(Paul Bélanger, **Origine des méridiens**
Éditions du Noroît)
- Lazer Lederhendler, **Apocalypse for Beginners**,
Knopf/Vintage Canada
(Nicolas Dickner, **Tarmac**, Éditions Alto)
- Donald Winkler, **Partita for Glenn Gould**,
McGill-Queen's University Press
(Georges Leroux, **Partita pour Glenn Gould**
Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal)

Jurors: Lori Saint-Martin, Mark Stout, Lee Thompson



JEAN-MARC CARISSE



CYNTHIA DAVIS



M. MORAND OPALE



BARAK SALARI

Mavis Gallant Prize for Non-Fiction

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

- Roméo Dallaire, **They Fight Like Soldiers,
They Die Like Children**, Random House Canada
- Merrily Weisbord, **The Love Queen of Malabar:
Memoir of a Friendship with Kamala Das**, McGill-
Queen's University Press
- Joel Yanofsky, **Bad Animals: A Father's Accidental
Education in Autism**, Viking Canada

Jurors: Denise Chong, Joshua Knelman, Denis Sampson

Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction

Sponsored by Paragraphe Bookstore

- David Homel, **Midway**, Cormorant Books
- Dimitri Nasrallah, **Niko**, Véhicule/Esplanade Books
- Madeleine Thien, **Dogs at the Perimeter**, McClelland
& Stewart

*Jurors: Rebecca Silver Slayter, Claire Holden Rothman, Paul
Headrick*



CLAUDE LÉGER



ALAN SILBERBERG

QWF WELCOMES 2 NEW SPONSORS

Concordia University and Richard Pound
to underwrite QWF Literary Awards

QWF Prize for Children's and Young Adult Literature

Sponsored by Babar Books

- Geneviève Côté, **Without You**, Kids Can Press
- Alex Epstein, **The Circle Cast: The Lost Years of Morgan Le Fay**, Tradewind Books
- Alan Silberberg, **Milo**, Simon & Schuster

Jurors: Shannon Babcock, Sarah Ellis, Anne Fine



SABRINA REEVES

Concordia University First Book Prize

Sponsored by Concordia University

- Gabe Foreman, **A Complete Encyclopedia of Different Types of People**, Coach House Books
- Ed Macdonald, **Spat the Dummy**, Anvil Press
- Ann Scowcroft, **The Truth of Houses**, Brick Books

Jurors: Anita Lahey, David Manicom, Dorota Kozinska



DANIEL GARCIA LORENZO

A. M. Klein Prize for Poetry

Sponsored by Richard Pound in memory of his brother Robert

- Asa Boxer, **Skullduggery**, Véhicule/Signal Editions
- Gabe Foreman, **A Complete Encyclopedia of Different Types of People**, Coach House Books
- Jack Hannan, **Some Frames**, Cormorant Books

Jurors: David O'Meara, Taqralik Partridge, Priscilla Uppal

The Quebec Writers' Federation is thrilled to welcome two new sponsors of their annual QWF literary awards. Concordia University will now sponsor the Concordia University First Book Prize, and Richard Pound will sponsor the A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry in memory of his brother Robert.

"We're truly honoured to have received multi-year commitments from these sponsors," declared Lori Schubert, executive director of the QWF. "Richard Pound is a pillar of our community—in addition to being an eminent lawyer, he has, during the course of his life, gained international renown several times over—as an athlete, an IOC member, president of the World Anti-Doping Agency and chancellor of McGill University. Amazingly, he also found time to write quite a few books."

QWF is also proud to have its first book prize sponsored by Concordia University, which offers Quebec's only English-language BA and MA in Creative Writing. "It's a welcome endorsement of the work we do," said Schubert.

Concordia University and Richard Pound now join the prestigious list of the QWF Literary Awards' other valued sponsors: **The Cole Foundation** (Cole Foundation Prize for Translation), **Paragraphe Bookstore** (Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction), **Babar Books** (QWF Prize for Children's and Young Adult Literature) and **Champlain, Dawson, Heritage, John Abbott, and Vanier Colleges** (Mavis Gallant Prize for Non-Fiction).

25 Years of Payments to Authors

At this year's Annual Awards Gala QWF will honor the 25th anniversary of the **Public Lending Right Commission (PLR)**. Working quietly behind the scenes for a quarter of a century now, the PLR tracks public library holdings and distributes payments to Canadian authors whose eligible books they find there.

Operated under the aegis of the Canada Council for the Arts, the PLR has a budget of \$9.9 million from the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council. From those funds, they make payments to over 17,000 authors each year.

QWF salutes the PLR for recognizing the value of our writers' contribution to Canadian culture.

For more information on the Public Lending Right Commission, and to learn how to register for payments, visit www.plr-dpp.ca.

Member News

Send your news to 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 (or head-crate containing various booklets).

This issue: *McSweeney’s Issue 36* including eight booklets from Michael Chabon, John Brandon, Colm Tóibín, Jack Pendarvis and Wajahat Ali plus a 40 inch roll of fortunes inside a 275-cubic-inch head-crate.



This issue’s winner is:
Rae Marie Taylor

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

Gina Roitman’s short story “Something About Loss” was selected for inclusion in *Generation H*, an anthology of writing from 2nd and 3rd Generation Holocaust Survivors, edited by NPR’s Slash Coleman. Roitman’s documentary film, *My Mother, the Nazi Midwife, and Me*, is scheduled to be ready for screen testing in Montreal and Toronto in early December.

Jocelyne Dubois’ novella, *World of Glass*, was accepted for publication by Quattro Books and will be released in the fall of 2012.

This is the 40th anniversary of Italian director Luchino Visconti’s controversial film masterpiece, *Death in Venice*. **Will Aitken’s** new book, *Luchino Visconti: Death in Venice*, part of Arsenal Pulp Press’s Queer Film Classics Series, looks at both the director—whose life was almost improbably dramatic—and the film, as well as the Thomas Mann novella. A chapter of the book will also appear in the November issue of *Brick*.

For the past year, **Vince Tinguely** has worked as the managing editor of litlive.ca, an online critical review of performance literature. With funding from the Canada Council, the webzine was launched in February 2011. Issue 2 went up in May 2011, and Issue 3 was published online in October 2011.

Iлона Martonfi’s *Black Grass*, a second book of poems forthcoming with Broken Rules Press, launches at Twigs and Leaves, Spring 2012.

Mark Lavorato (www.marklavorato.com) has a new novel out. *Believing Cedric*, published by Brindle & Glass, has received a starred review in *Quill & Quire*, as well as other extremely positive reviews.

Norman Ravvin will take part this fall in the Gaspereau Press Wayzgoose, held at Kentville Nova Scotia, with other Gaspereau writers such as poet Sean Howard. Ravvin’s recent novel, *The Joyful Child* will also be featured at the Vancouver Jewish Book Festival in November and at an event on November 7th at the Montreal Jewish Public Library.

Robyn Sarah’s *Digressions: Prose Poems, Collage Poems, and Sketches* will be published in spring 2012 by Fitzhenry and Whiteside. Spanning 35 years, this gathering of uncharacteristic or formally ambiguous pieces includes many that have not been collected in book form before.

Jeffrey Moore’s latest novel, *The Extinction Club* (Penguin, 2010), has been nominated for the 2011 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. It was also a finalist for two other awards, and has been translated into 12 languages.

Khantara: a Haanta Novel, the first stand-alone in the Haanta series, is coming out the last week of October. As well, *The Commander and the Den Asaan Rautu Vol. 2* will be out this November. The new Haanta Series novella, *Tales from Frewyn: the Opera* is out on October 6th (All books written by **Michelle Franklin** with art by **Twisk and Marcin**).

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

Beverly Akerman’s short story collection, *The Meaning Of Children*, made the Top 10 list for the CBC “Scotiabank Giller Prize Readers’ Choice Contest.” It was also the “Book of the Month” for October at the Eleanor London Côte St. Luc Public Library.

Louise Carson is pleased to announce she launched her first book *Rope: A Tale Told in Prose and Poetry* (Broken Rules Press) at Cafe Twigs in Ste-Anne-De-Bellevue this October. She also has two poems each in *Montreal Serai* and *Other Voices*.

Nick Fonda’s second book, *Principals & Other Schoolyard Bullies, Short Stories*, has been very warmly reviewed both locally (Jim Napier, Sherbrooke Record) and further afield (Barb Kundanis, Library Journal, ‘recommended’). Alistair MacLeod calls it “a fine collection.”

Michael Mirolla’s new book, *The Ballad of Martin B.* (Quattro Books, Nov. 2011), follows a young anarchist whose determination to tear down society’s complacency is guided by ghosts of past thinkers. The narrative captures the squalor of a raw underground scene and engages the reader intellectually by delving into age-old philosophical issues.

Peter Stuart’s first book, entitled *The Catholic Faith and the Social Construction of Religion: With Particular Attention to the Québec Experience* is being published by Westbow Press, a division of Thomas Nelson in the USA. The book was co-authored with Father Allan Savage, DTh, STD, Pastor of St. Patrick’s Parish in Québec City.

The Dutch-language rights to **Monique Polak’s** YA novel *What World Is Left* were purchased by Uitgeverij De Fontein. The Dutch translation will be released this spring. Courte Echelle has recently published *Poupée* and *Pris au jeu*, French translations of two of Monique’s earlier YA titles. Monique’s next YA novel with Orca Books comes out in spring 2013.

Carolyn Van Der Meer recently returned from a trip to Trim and Galway, Ireland, where she was invited to read after her poetry was published in the Trim-based literary journal, *Boyne Berries*. In addition, short fiction will be published later this fall in *Crannóg* (Galway, Ireland) and *Ars Medica* (Toronto). Carolyn is currently a student in the Graduate Program in Creative Writing at the Humber School for Writers in Toronto.

Gatineau author **Catherine Austen** released two new books this fall: a middle-grade comedy with James Lorimer & Company, *26 Tips for Surviving Grade 6*, and a teen thriller with Orca Book Publishers, *All Good Children*.

Joel Fishbane’s play *The Three Apollos* was published by Eldridge Publishing.

Brian Campbell’s poem “Pantom for a Hired Man” was selected for *Mind Your Own Business: Canadian Poetry and Prose of the White Collar World*, a Black Moss Press anthology to appear this fall. Three of his poems were published in the 2011 issue of *Saranac Review*. Brian was also

awarded a Canada Council Grant towards the completion of his third poetry collection.

Peter Richardson's poem "Abbot Flynn's Bible of Hands Miming Animals" won third prize in *The Antigonish Review's* 2011 Great Blue Heron Poetry Contest. The poem will appear in *TAR's* fall issue.

Licia Canton is the editor-in-chief of *Accenti Magazine* and president of the Association of Italian Canadian Writers. Last spring she read from her collection of stories, *Almond Wine and Fertility*, in Italy and the United Kingdom. In September she was a guest speaker at universities in Napoli and Salerno. An Italian translation of the same book is forthcoming.

Lori Weber's new young adult novel *Yellow Mini* was launched on October 27 at Babar Books in Pointe Claire. Published by Fitzhenry and Whiteside, the novel is written in verse and tells the story of five teens whose lives intertwine. It is Lori's first verse novel.

Suzanne Daningburg's first novel *The Lillivax Inheritance* was published earlier this year. This Montreal mystery is set against the backdrop of animal rights and the pharma industry; a compassionate veterinarian inherits her father's drug research company after he is killed. Suzanne reads her work at local events, loves her current QWF workshop and is at work on her second book.

Martine Svanevik recently won *Words With Jam's* "Not So Famous Last Words" competition. The end of her novel is printed in the August issue of the magazine: http://issuu.com/wordswithjam/docs/august2011_issue?

James Little's "Train Ride" was entered in the Quebec Writing Competition this summer. This sketch of Dickens on the first train in Canada will be published in an upcoming fiction chapbook, *Could Be*. Also included are "The Museum of What Could Have Been," shortlisted for a CBC literary award, and an excerpt from a forthcoming historical novel, *River Runs North*.

Set in and around a small town in modern-day Belize, *Essence & Folly* chronicles the lives of several poignant and comical residents from Santo Innocencio. This collection of humorous short stories is available for purchase at iUniverse, Barnes & Noble, Chapters, and Amazon. Montreal launch will be in early December. Author **Jorge David Awe** is a resident of Dollard-des-Ormeaux.

Lesley Trites' first book of poetry, *echoic mimic*, was published by Snare Books this fall.

Connie Barnes Rose will have her first novel, *Road to Thunder Hill*, published this month by Innana Publications and Education.

Katrina Best is the first online writer-in-residence for the newly relaunched Commonwealth Writers web site, commonwealthwriters.org.

Mark Shainblum has sold the audiobook rights to his science fiction novella *Endogamy Blues* to Montreal-based Iambik Audiobooks (www.iambik.com). The novella was originally published in the anthology *Island Dreams: Montreal Writers of the Fantastic*, edited by Claude Lalumière. Iambik also plans to produce a separate audio collection of Shainblum's other published short fiction.

The Land: Our Gift and Wild Hope, **Rae Marie Taylor's** environmental memoir focused on her homeland in the American Southwest, will be released in Albuquerque, New Mexico on November 8th at the Quivira Coalition's 10th annual conference (the Quivira is an environmental coalition of ranchers, farmers, ecologists, artists and federal agents). See Rae's webpage: <http://thelandwildhope>.

Bryan Sentes' new book, *March End Prill* (BookThug, 2011), will be released at the end of November. ¶

WHAT'S IN AN AWARD?

CONTINUED FROM COVER PAGE

published a poetry collection before her first novel, *The Sentimentalists*, won the Giller Prize last year.

Did all the attention cause them to blossom or shrink? Syjuco describes it as a "seasonal" thing: the award brought his work much-desired attention, but after a while "the same hunger, the same anger, was creeping into my life again. [The prize] is the affirmation you need, but when you sit down to write, it's still the bloody hardest thing you've done in your life—for me, at least." Like all the authors, Skibsrud is grateful to have so many new readers but, "I don't hold myself to any expectation to write another *Sentimentalists*. I'd be very disappointed if I did." Bolster's GG win actually released her from further concerns about winning awards: "It was probably good for my writing; I followed my own interest, followed the needs of the particular project I was working on."

Miguel Syjuco speculates that awards may be assuming an even bigger role. Since reviews have become commonplace on blogs and booksellers' sites, "now we look at prizes for that stamp of approval." Also, as many of the authors note, any contest or award is a kind of lottery too. "The subjective nature needs to be highlighted as we follow different awards—and that's the point. That's [literature's] tremendous strength; it evokes a personal, subjective response in the judges too," suggests Johanna Skibsrud. Madeleine Thien (whose *Dogs at the Perimeter* is nominated for QWF's Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction this year) believes awards should be just another way for "authors, publishers and readers to have a conversation." Elaine Kalman Naves concurs: "I didn't start out to write with a view that I was going to win prizes; I wanted to tell a story. It's still what I want to do when I write—I want to reach people, I want to communicate."

However imperfectly, awards do serve to draw attention to writers' work. As Neale McDevitt puts it, "so many contests identify new writers. There's something wonderful about stumbling upon a work that hits home. It's a magical experience for me as a reader when I come across someone new."

Love 'em or not, it's that time of year again; the prize-winners of 2011 are taking their places alongside those who have won before. Perhaps that's the greatest thing about literary contests and awards: nominees and winners are not so much replaced, as joined—and the group keeps growing. Stephanie Bolster noted it when she was introduced as a GG winner during a recent poetry reading: "It's odd to be singled out in that way after all this time; you get to keep it. It lasts, and that's a real gift." ¶

Raquel Rivera is writing two novels for YA readers. She is also the award-winning author of three books for children.

THE Q MUNITY COLUMN

BY CLAYTON BAILEY

Who starts a \$50,000 International Poetry Prize for a single short poem? Glad you asked:



ASA BOXER (left) is roguish, dark haired and compact, a second-generation Montreal poet whose late father was the poet Avi Boxer. **LEN EPP** (right), a former investment banker with an Oxford Doctor of Philosophy in English, is fair, rangy and manifests a chary gaze. They're both Montrealers. Third partner Peter Abramowicz lives in California.

Qwrite: Why poetry? Why such a big award?...because poets, of all writers, make the least?

Asa Boxer: That is indeed one of our messages. But it's not only that they get paid less; it's that the work that goes into writing even relatively short poems takes as much training, sketching, scrapping and reworking as any of the more monied arts.

Len Epp: We also noticed that while you can find annual national poetry anthologies, you can't go to a library or a bookstore anywhere and find an annual global poetry anthology. There are actually two parts to our project: our editors select poems for our global anthology, and from that anthology, our prize judge selects the award-winning poem. But naturally most people just see the money.

Qwrite: You are a startup non-profit. What shaped your thinking?

AB: We wanted to craft something new—first crowdsourced, grassroots, major poetry prize; and we hoped our success would be one of the early wonders of web 3.0.

LE: An important part of our project is a response to a fiscal environment in which funding may itself suffer a recession. With the advent of the web, and fantastic independent funding platforms like Kickstarter, you can build a community of many supporters, each of whom gives a little bit.

Qwrite: Speaking of community, what was the poetry community's response?

AB: The greater majority have all expressed enthusiastic support. We contacted a few people early on. Seamus Heaney, for instance, wished us the best of luck with the venture—though he said he had had enough of judging prizes in the 1980 Arvon poetry competition that he judged alongside Ted Hughes and Phillip Larkin. They received 35,000 entries... And get this, they chose a poem by Andrew Motion—our prize judge this year.

LE: I suppose what we're doing is so multi-layered, we really should have been expecting to be misunderstood. The world's first major crowdfunded poetry prize? The first major prize for one short poem? The first major literary prize awarded in a 'blind' judging process? 'Editors' for the anthology and a separate 'Prize Judge' for the prize? A global poetry anthology? 'Catalyst' funding? Hard to control the message, never mind the amount of money.

Qwrite: Your intentions were global. Did you succeed? Would you, will you, do it again?

AB: In terms of our global success, we did pretty well, receiving entries from 59 countries. We would however like to make that number still bigger in the years to come.

LE: We also managed to get great poets from all around the world to join our editorial board. Our editors come from Malawi, Guyana, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, England, India, Jamaica, Australia, the US, and of course Canada.

To make it an annual event, we need more catalyst funding. Even though our community supports us through the fee to enter, we still need to build a "prize fund," since we can't offer the prize unless we have the purse secured in advance. When we build up a big enough community of individual supporters, we should achieve our goal of becoming self-sustaining. For now we still need a push on the swings, as it were.

Asa Boxer's latest poetry collection, Skullduggery, available from Vehicule Press of Montreal, has been nominated for the A. M. Klein Prize for Poetry 2011. www.vehiculepress.com

Len Epp's review, "A Simple Story: Miriam Toews' Complicated Community" can be found in The Oxonian Review of Books, Vol. 4, Issue 3: www.oxonian-review.org/wp/a-simple-story-miriam-toews-complicated-community/

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