



2014 Helen & Stan Vine Canadian Jewish Book Award Winners

Presented at the ceremony on:

Tuesday, May 27, 2014 | 8 PM | The Bram and Bluma Appel Salon at the Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street

Hosted by Cynthia Good, Former President and Publisher of Penguin Books

Winning authors will be in attendance

Presented as part of the [2014 Toronto Jewish Literary Festival](#) | May 25 – June 1, 2014 | Various venues around the GTA

HOLOCAUST

Ken Setterington, *Branded by the Pink Triangle* (Second Story Press)

Jews understandably tend to commemorate the Holocaust as almost exclusively Jewish. However, Jews were not the only victims. The mentally and physically challenged, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Scinti and Roma, and gays, especially men, were also marked by the Nazis for extermination. For years, Nazi marked gay men and women by forcing them to wear a pink triangle, and their plight received little attention. In his book, *Branded by the Pink Triangle* (Second Story Press), Ken Setterington gives a succinct and moving history of the persecution of gays in the Third Reich. As well as historical context, he also provides us with personal stories of individuals and the barbaric cruelties they endured under the Nazis. Additionally disturbing is his reminder that prejudice prevented proper recognition and commemoration of their fate until many years after W.W.II. This very readable history provides a redress of this great injustice.

FICTION

Kenneth Bonert, *The Lion Seeker* (Knopf Canada)

In this extraordinarily powerful novel, Kenneth Bonert brings alive the world of South African Jewry in all its raw energy and ribald vernacular. Comedic, searing, lyrical and with a snap-perfect ear for dialogue, *The Lion Seeker* is a profoundly moral exploration of how wider social forces shape us and shatter us, echoing through history with lessons that are no less relevant today than in the crucible of its time.

YIDDISH

Frieda Forman (editor & author), *The Exile Book of Yiddish Women Writers* (Exile Editions)

This important book includes various texts never before translated into English, is the first to emphasize the work of so many Canadian-Yiddish women writers, like Chava Rosenfarb, Rachel Korn and Ida Maze. The short stories, excerpts from novels and memoirs, and several personal essays, were written at points in these women's lives when they were looking out to and at the world around them. They were facing a traditional world confronting modernity: family life during a tumultuous period when parental authority was challenged by political and social movements; sexual awakening during a profound revolutionary period in Europe; longings for independence, education, and creative, artistic expression; the conflicted entry of Yiddish-speaking women into the modern world, beyond the restrictions of traditional Jewish life; the Holocaust and its aftermath, and adjustment after immigration.

JEWISH THOUGHT AND CULTURE

Josh Lambert, *Unclean Lips* (New York University Press)

Jews have played an integral role in the history of obscenity in America. For most of the 20th century, Jewish entrepreneurs and editors led the charge against obscenity laws. Jewish lawyers battled literary censorship even when their non-Jewish counterparts refused to do so, and they won court decisions in favour of texts including *Ulysses*, *A Howl*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and *Tropic of Cancer*. Jewish literary critics have provided some of the most influential courtroom testimony on behalf of freedom of expression. The anti-Semitic stereotype of the lascivious Jew has made many historians hesitant to draw a direct link between Jewishness and obscenity. In *Unclean Lips*, Josh Lambert addresses the Jewishness of participants in obscenity controversies in the U.S. directly, exploring the transformative roles played by a host of neglected figures in the development of modern and postmodern American culture.

POETRY

Anne Michaels and Bernice Eisenstein, *Correspondences* (McClelland and Stewart)

Renowned novelist and poet Anne Michaels (author of the award-winning *Fugitive Pieces*) and acclaimed artist and writer Bernice Eisenstein have created a rare and uniquely produced book that is already causing a stir internationally. Two vibrant artistic minds and hearts have come together in this specially formatted book whose two sides interact in a fascinating and continuing conversation. Anne Michaels' vivid and stunningly crafted long poem on one side and Bernice Eisenstein's profound and luminous portraits, accompanied by quotes by great writers and thinkers on the other, come together in a unique and haunting dialogue that is both mirrored and augmented by the special interconnectedness of the accordion format.

SCHOLARSHIP

Albert Kaganovitch, *The Long Life and Swift Death of the Jewish Reschitsa* (The University of Wisconsin Press)

Located on the Dnieper River at the crossroads of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, the town of Rechitsa had one of the oldest Jewish communities in Belarus, dating back to medieval times. By the late nineteenth century, Jews constituted more than half of the town's population. Rich in tradition, Jewish Rechitsa was part of a distinctive Lithuanian-Belorussian culture full of stories, vibrant personalities, achievement, and epic struggle – gradually lost through migration, pogroms, and the Holocaust. Now, in Albert Kaganovitch's meticulously researched history, this forgotten Jewish world is brought to life. Kaganovitch also documents the evolving status of Jews in the postwar era, starting with the reconstitution of a Jewish community in Rechitsa not long after liberation in 1943 and continuing with economic, social, and political trends under Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev, and finally emigration from post-Soviet Belarus. *The Long Life and Swift Death of Jewish Rechitsa* is a major achievement.

BIOGRAPHY/MEMOIR

Renee Levine Melammed, *An Ode to Salonika: The Ladino Verses of Bouena Sarfatty* (Indiana University Press)

Through the poetry of Bouena Sarfatty (1916-1997), *An Ode to Salonika* sketches the life and demise of the Sephardi Jewish community that once flourished in this Greek crossroads city. A resident of Salonika who survived the Holocaust as a partisan and later settled in Canada, Sarfatty preserved the traditions and memories of this diverse and thriving Sephardi community in some 500 Ladino poems known as *coplas*. The *coplas* also describe the traumas the community faced under German occupation before the Nazis deported its Jewish residents to Auschwitz. The *coplas* in Ladino and in Renée Levine Melammed's English translation are framed by chapters that trace the history of the Sephardi community in Salonika and provide context for the poems. This unique and moving source provides a rare entrée into a once vibrant world now lost.

YOUTH

Carol Matas, *Dear Canada: Pieces of the Past* (Scholastic)

As Rose begins her diary, she is in her third home since coming to Winnipeg. Traumatized by her experiences in the Holocaust, she struggles to connect with others, and above all, to trust again. When her new guardian, Saul, tries to get Rose to deal with what happened to her during the war, she begins writing in her diary about how she survived the murder of the Jews in Poland by going into hiding. Memories of herself and her mother being taken in by those willing to risk sheltering Jews, moving from place to place, being constantly on the run to escape capture, begin to flood her diary pages. Recalling those harrowing days, including when they stumbled on a resistance cell deep in the forest and lived underground in filthy conditions, begins to take its toll on Rose.

HISTORY

Jeffrey Veidlinger, *In the Shadow of the Shtetl* (Indiana University Press)

The story of how the Holocaust decimated Jewish life in the shtetls of Eastern Europe is well known. Still, thousands of Jews in these small towns survived the war and returned afterward to rebuild their communities. The recollections of some 400 returnees in Ukraine provide the basis for Jeffrey Veidlinger's reappraisal of the traditional narrative of 20th-century Jewish history. These elderly Yiddish speakers relate their memories of Jewish life in the prewar shtetl, their stories of survival during the Holocaust, and their experiences living as Jews under Communism. Despite Stalinist repressions, the Holocaust, and official anti-Semitism, their individual remembrances of family life, religious observance, education, and work testify to the survival of Jewish life in the shadow of the shtetl to this day.