

# Communiqué

*For immediate release*

## **The Canada Council for the Arts announces the winners of the 2005 Governor General's Literary Awards**

*Montreal, November 16, 2005* – The Canada Council for the Arts announced today the names of the winners of the 2005 Governor General's Literary Awards, in English and in French, in the categories of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, children's literature (text and illustration) and translation.



The winners were announced by Simon Brault, Vice-Chair of the Canada Council and Melanie Rutledge, Head of the Canada Council's Writing and Publishing Section at a news conference in Montreal in celebration of that city's designation as UNESCO World Book Capital for 2005-06. They will be presented with their awards by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, at Rideau Hall next week.

The Canada Council for the Arts funds, administers and promotes the Governor General's Literary Awards. Each winner receives a cheque for \$15,000 and a specially-crafted copy of the winning book bound by Montreal bookbinder Lise Dubois. The Governor General will also present certificates to the publishers of the winning books, and the Canada Council will provide each publisher with a \$3,000 grant to support promotional activities for the winning book.

"Books are objects of knowledge, a source of pleasure...they summon us to dream and are a window for exploration, a constant companion, an expression of freedom and a permanent record of our cultural heritage," said the Governor General. "They hold a special place in my life, and I invite the people of Canada to celebrate them on the occasion of the presentation of the Governor General's Literary Awards. While writing is a solitary pursuit, that solitude is broken when readers hold a book in their hands and filter it through their own life experiences. I salute our authors and warmly congratulate this year's winners."

"It is appropriate that we are announcing this year's winners in Montreal, which UNESCO has recognized as a world leader in the promotion of literature," said Mr. Brault. "Today we are celebrating not only the work of some of our finest writers, illustrators and translators, but also Montreal's designation as World Book Capital, which is a significant honour not only for Montreal, but also for Canada as a whole."

BMO Financial Group has been the sponsor of the Governor General's Literary Awards since 1988. BMO's generous contribution has allowed, among other things, the production of material aimed at promoting the finalists and winners in bookstores, schools, libraries and at public events across Canada.

"We are pleased to support these awards which celebrate outstanding achievement in Canadian literature," said Gilles Ouellette, President and CEO, Private Client Group and Deputy Chairman, BMO Nesbitt Burns. "Our heartfelt congratulations to all the winners."

The names of the winners and titles of their works are listed below, together with jury comments for each work. Biographical information and downloadable images are posted on the Canada Council's web site at [www.canadacouncil.ca](http://www.canadacouncil.ca).

## Fiction

**David Gilmour**, Toronto, for *A Perfect Night to Go to China*

(Thomas Allen Publishers, a division of Thomas Allen & Son; distributed by the publisher)

(ISBN 0-88762-167-8)

*A Perfect Night to Go to China* is a melding of emotional power and narrative ingenuity. Written with the controlled technique of a mature artist, it is imbued with the tension of a suppressed sob.

**Aki Shimazaki**, Montreal, for *Hotaru*

(Leméac Éditeur / Actes Sud; distributed by Diffusion Prologue) (ISBN 2-7609-2430-0)

Two female figures, a young girl and her grandmother – like Russian dolls nested into one another – recount their lives in a dizzying play of generational selves. Deceptively simple, this novel, both an enigma and a story of love and betrayal, traps the reader in an account of a gripping, complex and obsessive reality. The personal story of the two women is blended with historical events to lift the veil on their family secrets and, like a fable, give meaning to life. The sober, concise and beautifully-crafted writing combines drama and symbols in forms that are spare and evocative.

## Nonfiction

**John Vaillant**, Vancouver, for *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed*

(Knopf Canada, an imprint of Random House of Canada; distributed by the publisher)

(ISBN 0-676-97645-X)

A stark and hypnotic story about a maverick logger and an iconic 300-year-old tree on the Queen Charlotte Islands, *The Golden Spruce* is a multi-layered tale that both rebukes and questions Canada's management of its forests. Meditative and powerful, this book is both a mystery and a lament about greed and the Canadian character.

**Michel Bock**, Ottawa, for *Quand la nation débordait les frontières : les minorités françaises dans la pensée de Lionel Groulx*

(Éditions Hurtubise HMH; distributed by Socadis) (ISBN 2-89428-707-0)

With forcefulness and intelligence, Michel Bock looks at the highly controversial Lionel Groulx, and returns to a subject that many thought had been exhausted: the question of French minorities in Canada. The young author analyses a neglected aspect of the philosophy of Groulx, to refute the idea that minorities should be considered a dead weight. Courageously and effectively, he dares to contradict the theses of renowned historians.

## Poetry

**Anne Compton**, Rothesay (NB), for *Processional*

(Fitzhenry & Whiteside; distributed by the publisher) (ISBN 1-55041-344-9)

Anne Compton's voice is unique – at once passionate and refined. Her poems slip into one's consciousness, a felt presence in a quiet room. *Processional* is a deft and remarkable achievement.

**Jean-Marc Desgent**, Longueuil (QC), for *Vingtièmes siècles*

(Les Écrits des Forges; distributed by Diffusion Prologue) (ISBN 2-89046-910-7)

This is a brilliant, cruel and troubling work. By adopting the first-person voice, Jean-Marc Desgent gives us an "I" that in a single movement embraces desire, childhood, past and future centuries, every act of vengeance and every act of tenderness. This enormously lucid book portrays the world and all its pain, as well as the tensions of our *twentieth centuries*.

## Drama

**John Mighton**, Toronto, for *Half Life*

(Playwrights Canada Press; distributed by the publisher) (ISBN 0-88754-816-4)

This profoundly moving love story portrays the relationship between two nursing-home residents in a way that is unique, enlightened and virtually flawless. A play about remembering, about forgetting and ultimately about hope, *Half Life* holds up a mirror to all of us, who will one day face old age. A theatrical masterpiece that is an important addition to the Canadian canon.

**Geneviève Billette**, Montreal, for *Le Pays des genoux*

(Leméac Éditeur / Actes Sud; distributed by Diffusion Prologue) (ISBN 2-7609-2429-7)

Brilliantly avoiding all of the clichés, this text full of love and hope tackles the taboos of contemporary society with a natural grace that sheds new light on old ideas. Using the metaphor of a decrepit theatre that falls into ruin so that dazzling new words of truth can rise from the ashes, Billette creates a state of grace that imbues this play for young audiences with the qualities of a universal fable.

## Children's Literature – Text

**Pamela Porter**, Sidney (BC), for *The Crazy Man*

(Groundwood Books / House of Anansi Press; distributed by HarperCollins Canada)

(ISBN 0-88899-694-2, bound / 0-88899-695-0, paper)

Written in prose-poetry that is as spare as the Saskatchewan prairie and yet rich in its yield of what matters – understanding, forgiveness, friendship and a faithful dog – Pamela Porter's *The Crazy Man* is impossible to put down

**Camille Bouchard**, Quebec City, for *Le ricanement des hyènes*

(Les éditions de la courte échelle; distributed by Diffusion du livre Mirabel) (ISBN 2-89021-767-1)

Camille Bouchard presents an original intrigue, superbly written and nicely integrated into the warm colours of Burkina Faso. *Le ricanement des hyènes* is admirably constructed, juxtaposing African tradition and western modernism. In its rich, lively and evocative language, this novel draws us into a captivating world where prejudices are swept away by the skillful writing of the author.

## Children's Literature – Illustration

**Rob Gonsalves**, Mallorytown (ON), for *Imagine a Day*, text by Sarah L. Thomson

(Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster; distributed by

Simon & Schuster Canada) (ISBN 0-689-85219-3)

Imagine a book in which anything can happen, in which a normal day can be transformed into a fantastic flight of fancy. Rob Gonsalves' remarkable surreal paintings let the imagination run wild and will have readers young and old going back again and again.

**Isabelle Arseneault**, Montreal, for *Le cœur de monsieur Gauguin*, text by Marie-Danielle Croteau

(Les éditions Les 400 coups; distributed by Diffusion Dimedia) (ISBN 2-89540-183-7)

Isabelle Arseneault's work is distinctive in the intelligent composition of the scenes. Her mixed technique features visual references that conjure the period of the story very successfully, and the emotions of the characters are evoked through sensitive attention to expression and gesture. The bond between illustration and text is constant. This is a very moving book that talks about the restorative power of art.

## Translation

**Fred A. Reed**, Montreal, for *Truth or Death: The Quest for Immortality in the Western Narrative Tradition*

(Talonbooks; distributed by Publishers Group Canada) (ISBN 0-88922-509-5)

English translation of *Raconter et mourir : aux sources narratives de l'imaginaire occidental*, by Thierry Hentsch (Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal)

This is an eminently readable translation of Thierry Hentsch's book, which awakens in us a desire to return to the great literary classics of western civilization and see them with fresh eyes. Thanks to his

breadth of knowledge and superb command of language, Fred A. Reed has demonstrated the very story-telling skills celebrated in the original text.

**Rachel Martinez**, Quebec City, for *Glenn Gould: une vie*

(Les Éditions du Boréal; distributed by Diffusion Dimedia) (ISBN 2-7646-0342-8)

French translation of *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould*, by Kevin Bazzana (McClelland and Stewart)

Overcoming the difficulties inherent in the vocabulary of music and in the biographical genre, Rachel Martinez has given us a text that is absolutely remarkable in its precision and clarity. This translation evokes all the emotion emanating from the personality of Glenn Gould, and the translator has elegantly met the enormous challenge presented by the complexity of the work.

## The juries

The winners of the Governor General's Literary Awards are chosen by independent juries in each category (seven English and seven French), appointed by the Canada Council. The juries, which meet separately, consider all eligible books published between September 1, 2004 and September 30, 2005 for English-language books and between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005 for French-language books. This year, a total of 1,488 titles, 888 in the English-language categories and 600 in the French-language categories, were submitted.

### *English-language juries*

**Fiction:** Caroline Adderson (Vancouver), Bernice Morgan (St. John's), Russell Smith (Toronto)

**Nonfiction:** Donna Bailey Nurse (Toronto), Andrew Nikiforuk (Calgary), Maria Tippett (Victoria)

**Poetry:** Dionne Brand (Toronto), Aislinn Hunter (Vancouver), Robert Kroetsch (Winnipeg)

**Drama:** Robert Chafe (St. John's), Daniel David Moses (Kingston), Judith Thompson (Toronto)

**Children's Literature – Text:** Glen Huser (Edmonton), David Jenkinson (Winnipeg),

Sharon McKay (Kilbride, ON)

**Children's Literature – Illustration:** Geoffrey Butler (Granville Ferry, NS),

Zhong-Yang Huang (Regina), Vlasta Van Kampen (Hastings, ON)

**Translation:** Robert Majzels (Bolton-Ouest, QC), Sally Ross (Tantallon, NS),

Judith Woodsworth (Sudbury, ON)

### *French-language juries*

**Fiction:** Abderrahman Beggar (Kitchener, ON), Dominique Blondeau (Montreal),

Jean Marc Dalpé (Montreal)

**Nonfiction:** Hélène de Billy (Montreal), Pierre Duchesne (L'Assomption, QC), Marcel Olscamp (Ottawa)

**Poetry:** Nicole Brossard (Montreal), Cécile Cloutier (Ottawa), Stéphane Despatie (Montreal)

**Drama:** Marcia Babineau (Grand-Barachois, NB), Normand Charette (Montreal),

Yves Sioui Durand (Montreal)

**Children's Literature – Text:** Sylvie Desrosiers (Longueuil, QC), Guy Dessureault (Trois-Rivières, QC),

Magda Tadros (Montreal)

**Children's Literature – Illustration:** Anatoli Burcev (Repentigny, QC), Suzanne Duranceau

(Longueuil, QC), Suzane Langlois (Montreal)

**Translation:** Gérard Boulad (Montreal), Jude Des Chênes (Saint-Aubert, QC), Anne Malena (Edmonton)

## Reading by the winners

A public reading by the winners of the 2005 Awards (all categories, English and French) will take place at la Grande Bibliothèque of the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 475 boulevard de Maisonneuve E., in Montreal this evening, **Wednesday, November 16 from 7- 9 p.m.** The reading will be presented by the Canada Council for the Arts and Blue Metropolis Foundation. Tickets will be sold at the door for \$8 general admission and \$5 for Blue Metropolis members.

Copies of the winning books will be on sale, and the winners will be available to sign their books immediately after the reading. For more information about the reading, contact Christopher DiRaddo, Media Relations, Blue Metropolis Foundation at (514) 842-5087 or [diraddo@videotron.ca](mailto:diraddo@videotron.ca).

## Salon du livre de Montréal

The winners of this year's Governor General's Literary Awards will be featured at the Canada Council's booth at the Salon du livre de Montréal, which will take place at Place Bonaventure in Montreal from **November 17-21**.

### Awards presentation: children's literature

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, will present the awards to the four winners of the children's literature categories (text and illustration, in English and in French), at a special ceremony and event at Rideau Hall (the residence of the Governor General in Ottawa) on **Tuesday, November 22 at 10 a.m.** (*by invitation only*).

The purpose of this special event is to highlight the important contribution made by Canada's children's book writers and illustrators, and to involve children directly in the presentation of the awards. More than 100 children will attend the event, which will also include readings and workshops by the award winners.

Media representatives wishing to cover this event should contact France Langlois at the Rideau Hall Press Office at (613) 993-8157.

### Awards presentation: fiction, nonfiction, drama, poetry and translation

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, will present the 2005 Awards in the categories of fiction, nonfiction, drama, poetry and translation (in English and in French) at Rideau Hall on **Wednesday, November 23 at 6 p.m.** Media representatives wishing to cover the ceremony should contact France Langlois at the Rideau Hall Press Office at (613) 993-8157. A reception and dinner in honour of the winners will be held that evening (*by invitation only*).

### Special recognition

The Speaker of the House of Commons, the Honourable Peter Milliken, will recognize the winners in the House of Commons on **Wednesday, November 23**, immediately following Question Period.

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