



The 2021 Canadian Jewish Literary Awards Celebrates Six Outstanding Books in an Online Ceremony on October 17

Winners have been selected in fiction, biography, poetry, scholarship, Holocaust and books for children and youth. Now in its seventh year, the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards recognizes and rewards the finest Canadian writing on Jewish themes and subjects.

The Awards ceremony will be presented on [Zoom](#) and will be simultaneously broadcast and available for later viewing on the [Canadian Jewish Literary Awards YouTube channel](#) on October 17, 2021, at 2:00 pm. The winning authors will speak about their books and answer questions submitted by the audience. Please note that only those attending on Zoom will be able to participate in the Q&A portion of the event.

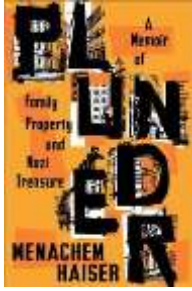
The Honorees

Fiction



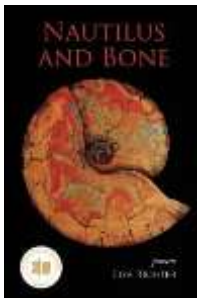
Nothing the Same, Everything Haunted: The Ballad of Motl the Cowboy by **Gary Barwin** (Random House Canada) is a work of unbounded imagination following a wannabe cowboy, Motl, as he and his mother flee Vilna and the Nazis massacre of the Jews. The phantasmagoria of ensuing events, characters and horror are met by Motl with an equally bizarre set of puns and humorous absurdity in the face of tragedy. This original and moving exploration of genocide and persecution is filled with heartbreak and the enduring quest for hope in the face of horror of the Shoah. The integration of tragedy and humour, in the Jewish tradition, is masterful.

Biography



Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) by **Menachem Kaiser** tells the story of the author’s quest to reclaim a residential building his family owned in Poland before the Shoah. He didn’t expect his journey to lead him to Polish treasure hunters, Nazi conspiracy theories, moral quandaries, and the meaning of historical truth. Through artful pacing and storytelling that is dark, thoughtful, and funny all at once, the narrative Kaiser weaves is unpredictable. Kaiser’s hunt disturbs a past so many have tried to bury, and he discovers other pasts many are still trying to (literally) dig up. Through profound moments of revelation and self-searching, through the absurd labyrinth of the Polish legal system and in the company of Polish treasure hunters obsessed with Nazi loot, this book is evidence that in modern-day Poland, there are no such things as innocent questions or simple answers. In the end, this book isn’t only about reclaiming family property. *Plunder* is as much about the Jewish relationship to place and displacement as it is about the places that get left behind.

Poetry



Nautilus and Bone (Frontenac House) by **Lisa Richter** is a poetic tour de force. It is a reclamation project of Jewish literary history as well as an act of radical empathy. A reimagining of the unconventional life of the celebrated Yiddish poet, Anna Margolin, this collection has all the ambition, romance, and ferocity of its subject, a moving exploration of how a wild spirit searches for beauty and love. We return to it with pleasure and admiration.

Children and Youth



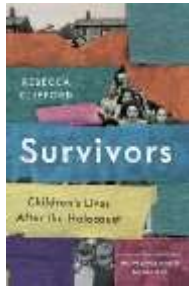
Osnat and Her Dove (Levine Querido) by **Sigal Samuel** is a mesmerizing portrait of a remarkable woman. This true story, told in lyrical language with lush illustrations by Vali Mintzi evoke a spiritual and mystical mood. Blue backgrounds and white stars give a feeling of illum-inated mystery, while interior scenes convey domestic activity. Torah study is drawn in the vibrant colors of medieval illuminated manuscripts.

Despite the fact that girls in 15th-century Mosul were told that “Reading is for boys,” Osnat convinces her rabbi father to teach her to read. “You don’t have any boys. If your daughter wants to learn,” she says, “why not teach her?” She befriends a dove, who becomes her faithful companion. As she grows older, she asks her father to seek a groom who will allow her to study Torah, and she helps run her father’s religious school while raising her own children. After her

father's death and, later, her husband's, Osnat becomes the school's leader, making her the world's first female rabbi.

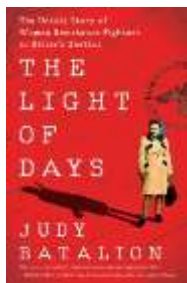
The book conveys Osnat's unusual life while addressing the truth about women's potential. Osnat proves that when women are allowed to flourish, they can change the world.

Scholarship



Survivors: Children's Lives After the Holocaust by **Rebecca Clifford** (Yale University Press) is an exceptionally rich and systematic exploration of the life trajectories of 100 children who were 10 years old or younger at the time of their liberation in 1945. Through archives found in twelve countries, including Canada, and through personal interviews, the author follows in detail the deep impact the events of the Holocaust in their young age had on their lives, and on those who educated them. The narratives extend into the adulthood of these children, and even to old age. These stories of trauma, disorientation, and survival mirror the work of other scholars, such as Anna Freud, who produced earlier descriptions of complex post-Shoah situations.

Holocaust



In *The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos* (William Morrow), **Judy Batalion** relates in detail the heroism of women during the War and in the Shoah. The book points out the seriously sad lack of recognition and the obvious misrepresentation of women's role during the war, the actions they took to fight, as well as their crucial importance. Jewish armed resistance to the Shoah has never received the attention it deserved. It was barely acknowledged until the 1970s and is always mentioned with reserve. More particularly, until this book, women's participation in these war actions remained largely ignored despite its importance and size. Written in a lively and elegant prose, *The Light of Days* humanizes the characters brilliantly and allows the reader to experience their emotions.

The Canadian Jewish Literary Awards is 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 2021

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

Pierre Anctil: Professor of history at the University of Ottawa and the author of numerous scholarly books on Canadian Jewish history. He received the 2018 Canadian Jewish Literary Award in History for *Histoire des Juifs du Québec*

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

Miriam Borden: Doctoral student in Yiddish at the University of Toronto, an Oral History Fellow at the Yiddish Book Center, and exhibition curator.

Rita Davies: Chair of the Ontario Arts Council's board of directors since 2015. She has led Toronto's cultural growth as head of Culture for the City of Toronto and previously at the Toronto Arts Council.

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.

Adam Sol: Author of four books of poetry and one book of essays, *How a Poem Moves*. He teaches at Victoria College, University of Toronto.

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