



The 2022 Canadian Jewish Literary Awards Celebrates Eight Outstanding Books in a Ceremony on October 23

This has been a banner year for the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards. We received the most submissions in the history of the awards and the quality of the submissions is exemplary. The Jury made tough decisions to honour these exceptional eight books.

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

The Awards ceremony will be presented in person at York University and streamed for the public on [Zoom](#) on October 23, 2022, at 2:00 pm, and will be available for later viewing on the [Canadian Jewish Literary Awards YouTube channel](#). The winning authors in attendance will speak about their books and answer questions submitted by the audience.

The Canadian Jewish Literary Awards intends to be respectful to everybody. We are mask-friendly and want to ensure that everyone feels safe and welcome.

The Honourees

Fiction

Great Adventures for the Faint of Heart (Freehand Books) by **Cary Fagan** is a delightful collection of ten short stories with a diverse range of seemingly ordinary people who take a chance on life and discover that they can, if the occasion arrives, be extraordinary. The characters convey an essentially Jewish urban sensibility: A young woman given a painting by Picasso by her stepfather must acquire a wall to hang it on. A hippie family picks up a cello-playing hitchhiker who convinces them to get a television. A man takes his girlfriend's son on a road trip. The book demonstrates Fagan's wonderful sense of what makes us human, what makes us laugh and cry and leaves us wanting more Fagan stories.

Biography

But I Live: Three Stories of Child Survivors of the Holocaust (New Jewish Press) edited by **Charlotte Schallié** arose from encounters between Holocaust survivors and artists born later. It exemplifies the power of the non-fiction graphic novel to convey the experience and aftereffects of the Shoah. Along with the stories of the past that the illustrations and texts powerfully capture, the book probes the impact of the encounters on the artists. The historical essays, an illustrated postscript from the artists, and personal words from each of the survivors offer a profound meditation on the past and its reach into the present.

Poetry

Broken Dawn Blessings (ECW Press) by **Adam Sol** is an astonishing and powerful new collection of poems and roughly follows *Birkhot haShachar* (Blessings of the Dawn), a series of prayers recited by observant Jews immediately upon waking each morning. This is a masterful work searching personal and public pain and moments of blessing, joy, and wonder. It showcases Adam Sol's deep understanding of Jewish traditions and culture while its lyric virtuosity connects us in an appreciation of our shared humanity. With this volume, he again proves himself to be an important voice in Canada's literary scene and one of its most significant poets.

Children and Youth

Sorry for Your Loss (Orca Book Publishers) by **Joanne Levy** is a beautifully written book that deals with the Jewish rituals surrounding death while immersing the reader in a heartwarming story about love, loss, family, and the healing power of friendship. Twelve-year-old Evie's family runs a Jewish funeral home. Evie's classmates call her "Corpse Girl," but Evie has grown up understanding the importance of helping families who have lost a loved one. When her parents ask her to befriend Oren, a classmate whose parents were tragically killed in an auto accident, Evie takes it upon herself to help him deal with his grief.

Scholarship

Wealth, Poverty, and Charity in Jewish Antiquity (University of California Press) by **Gregg E. Gardner**, the founding chair of the Jewish Studies program at the University of British Columbia, is full of surprises. We have perceptions about how central wealth, poverty and charity are to Judaism. The book explores the origins of these concepts — how the earliest rabbis from the time of Talmud reflected on these notions, and how their interpretations differed from and informed how Jews approach those concepts today. Prof. Gardner also shows how Christian attitudes towards wealth, poverty and charity evolved from the ideas of the ancient rabbis and where they diverged. The scholarship is sophisticated and yet is superbly readable by anybody with an interest in Jewish ethical thought.

Holocaust

Kingdom of Night: Witnesses to The Holocaust (University of Toronto Press) by **Mark Celinscak** compiles stark and moving personal accounts by Canadians engaged in the liberation of one of the most notorious sites in Hitler's camp system. The Canadian presence at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after its liberation in 1945 has been largely overlooked for more than seventy-five years. As a result, very little attention has been devoted to the impact it had on the Canadians who were involved, and the echo in Canada. This book fills a gap in the history of the atrocities and its effect on those who saw it first-hand.

History

In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The Pogroms of 1918–1921 and the Onset of the Holocaust (HarperCollins Canada) by **Jeffrey Veidlinger** masterfully reclaims an almost forgotten period of modern Jewish history. The mass murder of Jews of Ukraine in the years immediately following the First World War has been overshadowed by the brutality of the Nazi era. More than 100,000 Jews were murdered in Ukraine by peasants, townspeople and soldiers who blamed them for the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. Using a range of archival sources that reveal the events through the eyes of its survivor-victims, its perpetrators, government officials, and other witnesses, Prof. Veidlinger traces the link between that earlier wave of violence and the Nazi genocide.

Yiddish

From The Vilna Ghetto to Nuremberg: Memoir and Testimony (McGill-Queens University Press) by Abraham Sutzkever, translated by **Justin D. Cammy** provides the first full English translation of Sutzkever's memoirs seventy-five years after they first appeared in Yiddish in 1946. Sutzkever has been called the greatest poet of the Holocaust by the New York Times. Following the brutal Nazi occupation of Vilna, Sutzkever and his wife were incarcerated in the Vilna Ghetto. In 1943, he escaped to the forests, and fought the occupying forces as a

partisan. He kept a meticulous diary, and after the war he wrote a memoir of those years that documented the destruction of the city known throughout the Jewish world as the Jerusalem of Lithuania. With the voice of a poet, Sutzkever recounts the scale of the Holocaust and what daily life, resistance, and death was like in the ghetto. The book's final section includes Sutzkever's testimony at the Nuremberg trials where he was the only Jewish writer to testify. He called his testimony a *kaddish* for the annihilated Jewish community of Vilna, as is this memoir. It's especially worthwhile to read the afterword, which reveals in detail the complicated process of editing and translating this remarkable book, an exemplary scholarly feat.

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.

We are proud that the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards welcomes everybody to attend the Awards ceremony without payment. As an independent, volunteer-based organization, we rely on community support for ensuring that the Canadian Jewish Literary Awards will thrive and continue to honour the best Canadian books on Jewish themes. We welcome donations of any size. The Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University will provide a tax receipt for your contribution and acknowledge your generosity. [Please visit our donation page here.](#)

The 2022 Canadian Jewish Literary Awards Jury:

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

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

Miriam Borden: Doctoral student in Yiddish at the University of Toronto, Oral History Fellow at the Yiddish Book Center, President of the Board of Directors of the Ashkenaz Foundation.

Rita Davies: Chair of the Ontario Arts Council's board of directors. Previously, head of Culture for the City of Toronto. Rita is a Member of the Order of Canada.

Alain Goldschläger: Director of the Holocaust Literature Research Institute and Professor of French at Western University. Former Chair of The National Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. Chevalier de l'Ordre des Palmes académiques.

Sara R. Horowitz: Professor of Comparative Literature and Jewish Studies at the Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University. Senior founding editor, the Azrieli Holocaust Memoirs Series. Author, editor, or co-editor of many prize-winning books.

Anna Porter: one of Canada's most notable book publishers and editors. Co-founder of Key Porter Books. Author of four novels and five non-fiction books, including *Kasztner's Train: The True Story of Rezső Kasztner*, *Unknown Hero of the Holocaust*, which won a Canadian Jewish Book Award. *The Ghosts of Europe* won the Writers' Trust Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing. Officer of the Order of Canada and a Member of the Order of Ontario.

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