

2011 HELEN AND STAN VINE CANADIAN JEWISH BOOK AWARDS

AUTHOR BIOS AND BOOK DETAILS

***Cry of The Giraffe* by Judie Oron, Annick Press**

About Judie Oron:

Judie Oron is a journalist, lecturer and former Director of the 'Jerusalem Post' newspaper's charitable Funds. During the clandestine airlifts of Ethiopian Jews to Israel, Judie traveled to Ethiopia, encountered a lost child, Lewteh, and took her into her family. Two years later, she discovered that Lewteh had a sister, whom the child believed might still be alive. In 1992, Judie went alone into war-torn Ethiopia to find Wuditu and to free her from slavery. 'Cry of the Giraffe,' (Annick Press, August, 2010) is based on Wuditu's story and told in her voice.

About *Cry of the Giraffe*:

Cry of the Giraffe is an award-winning book based on the story of an Ethiopian Jewish teenager named Wuditu, who, together with her younger sister, Lewteh, was separated from her family in a violent incident in a refugee camp in Sudan. While the two young girls were being forcibly returned to Ethiopia, the rest of their family members were rescued from the refugee camp and flown via a secret airlift to Israel.

***The Jew Is Not My Enemy* by Tarek Fatah, McClelland & Stewart**

About Tarek Fatah:

Journalist and political advocate **Tarek Fatah** is the founder of the liberal Muslim organization the Muslim Canadian Congress. He is a regular contributor and guest host on the morning show on Newstalk 1010. His first book, *Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State*, was a finalist for the Donner Prize.

About *The Jew Is Not My Enemy*:

More than a decade after 9/11 and 60 years after the creation of the state of Israel, the world is no closer to solving, let alone understanding, the psychological and political divide between Jews and Muslims. In this provocative book, Tarek Fatah uses extensive research to trace the roots of this rancour, debunking the anti-Jewish writings of the Hadith literature; deconstructing the supremacist doctrines that lend fuel to the fire; and reinterpreting supposed anti-Jewish passages in the Quran. "Muslim history and heritage allow us to enter the modern era without the baggage of anti-Semitism," Fatah writes. Boldly arguing that hating Jews is against the essence of the Islamic spirit, Fatah suggests what needs to be done to eliminate the agonizing friction between the two communities.

***Far To Go* by Alison Pick, House of Anansi Press**

About Alison Pick:

Alison Pick was the 2002 Bronwen Wallace Award winner for most promising unpublished writer under thirty-five in Canada. She has published two volumes of poetry and one previous novel, *The Sweet Edge*, which appeared to rave reviews and was a Globe and Mail Top 100 Book. After living for a number of years in St. John's, Newfoundland, she now lives in Toronto, Ontario.

About *Far To Go*:

In *Far to Go*, one of our most accomplished young writers takes us inside the world of an affluent Jewish family in Prague during the lead-up to Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In 1939, Pavel and Anneliese Bauer are secular Jews whose lives are turned upside down by the arrival of Hitler. They are unable to leave the country in time to avoid deportation, but they do manage to get their six-year-old son Pepik a place on a Kindertransport. Meanwhile, a fascinating and compelling present-day strand in the story slowly reveals the unexpected fates of each of the Bauers. Through a series of surprising twists, Pick leads us to ask: What does it mean to cling to identity in the face of persecution? And what are the consequences if you attempt to change your identity?

Inspired by the harrowing five-year journey Alison Pick's own grandparents embarked upon from their native Czechoslovakia to Canada during the Second World War, *Far to Go* is an epic historical novel that traces one family's journey through these tumultuous and traumatic events. A layered, beautifully written, moving, and suspenseful story by one of our rising literary stars.

***Mordecai: The Life and Times* by Charles Foran, by Random House Canada**

About Charles Foran:

CHARLES FORAN is the author of eight previous books, including the novels *Carolyn's Farewell* and *House on Fire*, and the award-winning non-fiction work *The Last House of Ulster*. Born and raised in Toronto, he holds degrees from the University of Toronto and University College Dublin, and has taught at universities in China, Hong Kong and Canada. A former resident of Montreal, where he was a columnist for the *Montreal Gazette* and reported on Quebec for *Saturday Night* magazine, he currently resides with his family in Peterborough, Ontario. Of his most recent book, the essay collection *Join the Revolution, Comrade*, one critic wrote: "Foran takes seriously his role as a writer who's alert and engaged with the world" (*Quill & Quire*). He has made documentaries for CBC Radio and is a contributing reviewer for the *Globe and Mail*.

About *Mordecai: The Life and Times*:

Foran's book is IT: the definitive, detailed, intimate portrait of Mordecai Richler, the lion of Canadian literature, and the turbulent, changing times that nurtured him. It is also an extraordinary love story that lasted half a century. The first major biography with access to family letters and archives. Mordecai Richler was an outsized and outrageous novelist whose life reads like fiction.

Mordecai Richler won multiple Governor General's Literary Awards, the Giller Prize, the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, among others, as well as many awards for his children's books. He also wrote Oscar-nominated screenplays. His influence was larger than life in Canada and abroad. In *Mordecai*, award-winning novelist and journalist Charlie Foran brings to the page the richness of Mordecai's life as young bohemian, irreverent writer, passionate and controversial Canadian, loyal friend and deeply romantic lover. He explores Mordecai's distraught childhood, and gives us the "portrait of a marriage" — the lifelong love affair with Florence, with Mordecai as beloved father of five. The portrait is alive and intimate — warts and all.

***The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960's* by Harold Troper, University of Toronto Press**

About Harold Troper:

Harold Troper is a professor in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at the University of Toronto where he teaches on the history of immigration and ethnic relations in Canada. He has a special research interest in the history of Jews in Canada. His scholarship has been recognized with numerous honors and awards including the

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, the American Jewish Book Award, the Canadian Historical Association prize for best book in Canadian history and he is twice winner of the Joseph Tanenbaum Book Award. Professor Troper is widely published. He is author or co-author of many scholarly articles and award winning books. He is perhaps best known for *None Is Too Many*, chosen by the *Literary Review of Canada* as one of the 100 most important Canadian books of all times. Among his other books are *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience*; *Old Wounds, Friend or Foe?* and *The Ransomed of God*, reprinted in paperback under the title *The Rescuer*. In partnership with Professor Richard Menkis of the University of British Columbia, Professor Troper is currently writing a book on Canadian involvement in the 1936 Olympic Games, the 'Nazi Olympics'.

About *The Defining Decade*:

The 1960s witnessed a radical transformation in the Canadian Jewish community. The erosion of longstanding anti-Semitism resulted in increased access for Jews to the economic, political, and social mainstream. Arguing that as Canadian society became more accepting, the Jewish community became more focused on its own identity, Harold Troper examines how the 1960s redefined what it meant to be a Canadian Jew and a Jewish Canadian.

Domestic events such as the Quiet Revolution, the eruption of Neo-Nazi activity, the election of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and the promise of multiculturalism as well as international affairs such as the Six Day War, Arab rejectionism with regards to Israel, and the explosion of Soviet Jewish activism radically reshaped Canadian Jewish priorities. In tracing the rapid changes of this tumultuous decade, *The Defining Decade* draws upon a wealth of historical documentation, including more than eighty interviews, to demonstrate that the expression of Canadian Jewishness was an increasingly public – and political – commitment.

***An Italian Renaissance: Choosing Life in Canada* by Robert Eli Rubinstein, Urim Publications**

About Robert Eli Rubinstein:

Robert Eli Rubinstein the son of Holocaust survivors from Hungary, was born in Torino, Italy in 1948 while his parents were trapped in nearby refugee camp. Arriving in Canada with his parents as an infant, he was raised and educated in Toronto. Mr. Rubinstein is a real-estate developer and communal leader. He and his wife Renee have four children and eight grandchildren.

About *An Italian Renaissance*:

Having suffered horrific personal losses in the Second World War, Bela Rubinstein and Judit Schwarcz decided that there was no future in Hungary, the land of their birth. Together with a few surviving relatives, they were able to escape just before the Communists sealed the borders. Welcome nowhere in the world, they were trapped in northern Italy, in a refugee camp for homeless Jews, for almost three years. This involuntary sojourn served the unintended but beneficial purpose of preparing Bela and Judit for their gradual return to normal life.

Finally, an unforeseen opportunity arose to immigrate to Canada, which ultimately proved to be a land of great blessing. The Rubinsteins established a home, raised a family, and integrated into the community. Achieving unimagined material success, they remained warm, decent, unassuming people. Along the way, they were able to reclaim the ancestral faith that had been ravaged in the death camps, and this imbued their lives with meaning and purpose.

Yet sadly, despite this remarkable demonstration of human resilience, long-suppressed demons were to gain the upper hand as age-related infirmity eroded their painstakingly cultivated emotional fortitude.

An Italian Renaissance: Choosing Life in Canada, is touchingly written by a loving son, and its universal message of hope is sure to appeal to a broad range of readers.