

# THE AFTERWORD

Postings from the literary world

Posted: March 13, 2010, 7:00 AM by Sarah Murdoch

## Spring book highlights: Poised for publishing

Autumn is traditionally the season for big book releases, but springtime 2010 shows every sign of being a bumper crop of good reading. Below, we comb the catalogues for the most promising-sounding books by Canadian authors of the next three months.

### March Fiction

*Curiosity*, by Joan Thomas (McClelland & Stewart). Factive-fiction set in the 19th century, about paleontologist Mary Anning. Lots of history; lots of science. The Winnipeg writer won the Commonwealth Prize for Best First Book (Canada/Caribbean) last year for *Reading by Lightning*.

*Deloume Road*, by Matthew Hooton (Knopf). The B.C. novelist's debut explores the intertwined lives of a Vancouver Island community, where the suicide of Gerard Deloume in 1899 triggers events a century later.

*In the Fabled East*, by Adam Lewis Schroeder (Douglas & McIntyre). In Paris, 1909, a tubercular young widow flees to Indonesia. Three decades later, the search for her continues in the jungles of Vietnam.

*Never Look Away*, by Lineof Barclay (Doubleday). Reviewed on WP14.

*Under Heaven*, by Guy Gavriel Kay (Penguin). The Winnipeg writer sets his latest novel in Tang Dynasty China, where Shen Tai returns to civilization after two years mourning the death of his father.

*Watch*, by Robert L. Sawyer (Penguin). The second in the *WWW* trilogy about a blind girl who can "see" digital data streams on the World Wide Web. Watch is a secret agency that monitors the Internet for threats to the U.S. By the Toronto-based author of *Flashforward*.

*The Weed That Strings the Hangman's Bag*, by Alan Bradley (Doubleday). Reviewed on WP13.

### March Nonfiction

*Blackberry: The Inside Story of Research in Motion*, by Rob McQueen (Key Porter). Reviewed on WP12.

*Curtains*, by Tom Jokinen (Random House). A CBC broadcaster quits his job to apprentice at a funeral home in Winnipeg and lives to write about what he learned. Sample: In cremation, the heart and head are the last parts to burn.

*Ethical Oil: The Case for Not Buying Oil From OPEC Nations*, by Ezra Levant (McClelland & Stewart). In his new outing, the Shakedown rabble-rouser is back with more impertinent questions. Sample: We have the Alberta Oil Sands, so is it ethical for us to be importing oil from Sudan, Russia and Mexico.

*The Ptarmigan's Dilemma: An Exploration into How Life Organizes and Supports Itself*, by John and Mary Theberge (McClelland & Stewart). The wildlife biologists marry the sciences of ecology and genetics in their examination of how evolution works.

*Sex, Bombs and Burgers*, by Peter Nowak (Penguin). The author argues that war (rage), fast food (gluttony) and pornography (lust) have created most of the major technological advances of the last 60 years.

*The Secret Life of Glenn Gould: A Genius in Love*, by Michael Clarkson (ECW Press). Did the wildly eccentric genius have a sex life? Yes, most assuredly, as this book proves.

*The Afterword is National Post's books blog.*

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[Follow our new thrice-yearly Reading Society](#) as we take on our first book: *Daniel O'Thunder* by B.C. writer Ian Weir.

Our panel – Erin Balsler, Craig Davidson, Brad Frenette, Ben Kaplan, Mark Medley and Ron Nurwisah – will convene in this space each Tuesday to discuss the book, and we encourage your comments to add to the dialogue.

If you will be in Toronto on March 9, watch The Afterword for details on how you can attend our first "Society

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*Beatrice and Virgil*, by Yann Martel (Knopf Canada). The Mann Booker Prize-winning author returns with his first novel since 2002's *The Life of Pi*. No tiger this time — but there is a howler monkey named Virgil and a donkey named Beatrice.

*Cities of Refuge*, by Michael Helm (McClelland & Stewart). The Giller-shortlisted author (*The Projectionist*) tells the story of a young woman who is attacked by an unknown assailant and the effect it has on her and her historian father.

*The Ghost Brush*, by Katherine Govier (HarperCollins). Rebecca, in modern-day Washington, encounters the ghost of O-Ei, the daughter of the great Japanese printmaker Hokusai.

*Ilustrado*, by Miguel Syjuco (Penguin/Hamish Hamilton). This first novel by the Montreal writer won the 2008 Man Asia Literary Prize before it was published.

*The Promise of Rain*, by Donna Milner (McArthur & Co.). A Canadian POW returns home silent and withdrawn.

*Therefore Choose*, by Keith Oatley (Goose Lane). Set in 1936, in England and Germany, a painful love triangle changes lives forever. Oatley won a Commonwealth Writer's Prize for *The Case of Emily V*.

*Walt Whitman's Secret*, by George Fetherling (Random House). The poet divulges his secret on his deathbed to an aide, who goes on to benefit greatly from the confidence.

### April Nonfiction

*Bennett*, by John Boyko (Key Porter). The first major biography — and a fresh perspective — on the controversial prime minister of the '30s.

*The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada*, by Marci McDonald (Knopf Random Canada). You think Canada doesn't have a religious right every bit as assertive as America's? Think again.

*The Authenticity Hoax*, by Andrew Potter (McClelland & Stewart). We live in a world of fakes but our yearning for the authentic can backfire.

*The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living Drive Post-Crash Prosperity*, by Richard Florida (Knopf Random Canada). Florida is back with an optimistic message about how we can reset our thinking about the future. (With more Canadian content this time out.)

*More Money Than Brains: Why Schools Suck, College is Crap, and Idiots Think They're Right*, by Laura Penny (McClelland & Stewart). The irreverent author of *Your Call is Important to Us* takes on education.

*Nasty, Brutish and Short: The Quirks and Quarks Guide to Animal Sex and other Weird Behaviour*, by Pat Senson (McClelland & Stewart). Bizarre hijinks from more than 100 of our fellow creatures. Quick example: Pandas, believe it or not, engage in pissing contests.

*The Year of Finding Memory*, by Judy Fong Bates (Knopf Random Canada). The memoir describes growing up in Northern Ontario, journeying to her ancestral home in middle age and reconciling what she believed and what she learned about her mother and father's life in China.

### May Fiction

*Every Lost Country*, by Steven Heighton (Knopf Random Canada). Inspired by the 2006 story of a group of mountaineers on the Nepal and Tibet border who saw Chinese border guards kill Tibetans attempting to flee into Nepal. This is Heighton's first novel since 2005's well-received *Afterlands*.

*Ghosted*, by Shaughnessy Bishop-Stall (Knopf Random Canada). Our central character finds a novel way to pay off his debts: ghostwriting suicide notes. Problem is, he wants to save his client base. The Toronto writer is one of Random House's New Faces of Fiction.

*My Other Women*, by Pauline Carey (The Porcupine's Quill). It's Toronto in the 1960s, and a young actress has a penchant for married men — and after their marriages collapse, the married men's ex-wives. A tale of friendship and feminism.

*The Penguin Book of Crime Stories, Vol. II*, by Peter Robinson (Penguin Canada). The Toronto-based author of the Inspector Banks novels weighs in with his second collection of short stories by the likes of Lee Child, Jeffrey Deaver and Sue Grafton.

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*Borderlands*, by Derek Lundy (Knopf). At 60, Lundy travelled 15,000 km on his bike along the U.S. borders with Mexico (Americans want to keep out illegals and drug dealers) and Canada (Americans want to keep out terrorists.)

*The Canadian Century*, by Brian Lee Crowley, Jason Clemens and Niels Veldhuis (Key Porter). Canada could be on the verge of huge prosperity — if we play our cards right.

*Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America*, by Shelagh D. Grant (Douglas & McIntyre). The latest offering from the prolific Trent University scholar.

*A Year of Living Generously: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Philanthropy*, by Lawrence Scanlan (Douglas & McIntyre). Scanlan spent one month in each of 12 charitable agencies over the course of a year.

*What Disturbs Our Blood: A Son's Quest To Redeem the Past*, by James Fitzgerald (Knopf Random House Canada). Fitzgerald (Old Boys) is back with a dark memoir of growing up in a family with a shameful secret.