

November's Column

Late fall is a comforting time of year because the chilly days drive us indoors toward quieter pursuits, which often includes one of our favorites...reading. Canadian fiction was at one time given a bad rap but our authors are now recognized internationally. In the past few years, some really good Canadian fiction has come to light. Watch for the Canadian flag on the spine of our library books to find plenty of these new Canadian novels.

Canadian – born Nancy Huston, who now lives in France, is one of our recommendations. She has written several good novels, most recently, “Fault Lines.” This is a story told from the perspective of a six-year old and follows four generations of their family history. The interesting thing about this book, aside from being a good story, is that it is told backwards. Each section is narrated by a different 6 year-old from the previous generation.

In 2006 Sara Gruen released the incredibly popular “Water for elephants”. This is the story of Jacob, a 90 something-year old, who tells the story of his younger days when he joined the circus during the Great Depression and meets the lovely horse trainer, Marlena who unfortunately is already spoken for. This novel is a drama, mystery, historical fiction and love story poured into one great book.

Judy Fong Bates came to Canada from China as a young girl and currently lives in Toronto. Her book “Midnight at the Dragon Café” is set in a small town in Ontario in the 1960’s. This is the story of Su-Jen, her hard-working father and her beautiful, but resentful mother and the life they lead running the Dragon-Café. Life for Su-Jen changes when her older half-brother arrives and begins to form an alliance with Su-Jen’s mother. It turns into a summer that no one living in the apartments above the Dragon Café will soon forget. This fascinating story of a young girl divided between two cultures is one the reader will not soon forget either.

Another young Canadian author to watch for is Ami McKay, who wrote the novel “The birth house”. Dora Rare lives in a small fishing village in Nova Scotia, when she becomes the apprentice to the gifted mid-wife Miss Babineau. Dora eventually fills Miss Babineau’s shoes but problems arise when a medical doctor arrives and promises painless, sterile births. This novel is a great debut for Ami McKay.

If you are looking for a story set in far away lands, Camilla Gibb has written “Sweetness in the Belly” which begins when Lilly is orphaned at eight years old and is placed in the care of a Muslim disciple where she learns the teachings of Islam. When Lilly moves to Ethiopia and becomes a nurse she meets a medical student named Asiz and the two begin to meet each Saturday. This novel weaves a wonderful tapestry of love, loss, and survival.

C.S. Richardson has worked in the publishing business for twenty years, but only recently wrote his first book which is a gem. It is called “The end of the alphabet” and it begins when an alphabet-obsessed man finds out he has less than a month to live. He takes his wife Zappora on a trip around the world starting with the letter A in Amsterdam. This book is funny, sad, and cleverly written.

One of Indigo’s bestsellers and our most popular title is “The Book of Negroes” by Lawrence Hill. This book begins in Sierra Leone where an 11 year-old girl, named Amanita is captured by slave traders and forced to walk for months overland to the sea where a slave ship awaits. Amanita Diallo is sent to live as a slave in South Carolina where she is abused. After a great deal of suffering and hardship she finally becomes part of an exodus of black loyalists who are promised freedom and property in Nova Scotia by the British. The “Book of Negroes” is based on an actual historic document, and Amanita is one of most powerful and unforgettable characters to be brought to life in a novel. The Library is pleased

to have the author Lawrence Hill as our guest at the Library on Tuesday, February 3rd 2009 to sign copies of his novel in the afternoon, and speak at B.C.I. in the evening at 7:00 p.m.

These are just a few of our favorite Canadian authors. Other authors that are strongly recommended are Giles Blunt, Peter Robinson, Kate Jacobs, Rohinton Mistry, Joy Fielding, Francis Itani, Gail Anderson-Dargatz and Douglas Coupland to name just a few.

If you select “Adult Fiction” under location, and enter Canadian as a document type in our on-line catalogue you will find that there are 1,233 books of this type in our collection. You can place these titles on hold from home. So look some up and enjoy.

Written by Margie Bentley