



JULY 16, 2013 | 101-13

## Shortlist announced for the 2013 Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction

WATERLOO – Three books have been shortlisted for the 2013 Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction. The \$10,000 award, administered by Wilfrid Laurier University, encourages and recognizes Canadian writers for a first or second work of creative non-fiction that includes a Canadian locale and/or significance.

Award juror and Laurier Professor Ute Lischke said this year's submissions represent an interesting cross section of topics in creative non-fiction, a genre that has become exceedingly popular.

"As always, the jury found it difficult to make a decision, but after many hours of deliberation, came up with a shortlist," said Lischke. "The three books, ranging from memoirs set against shifting Middle Eastern politics and age-old conflicts to a gripping reconstruction of a 1984 plane crash in northern Alberta, are worthy to be short-listed for the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction."

The books on the 2013 shortlist are:

***Intolerable: A Memoir of Extremes* by Kamal Al-Solaylee (HarperCollins, 2012)**

*Intolerable* is the fascinating story of a Yemeni family's adventures and vicissitudes over the past 50 years, after they were uprooted from a privileged life in Yemen, moving first to Beirut, then to Cairo and finally back to Yemen. The youngest of 11 children born to an illiterate shepherdess and a proud businessman, Kamal Al-Solaylee effectively explains the shifting Middle Eastern politics and culture over the 50-year period, weaving into his memoir the personal journey that set him apart from his family and eventually led him to Canada, where he could make a home for himself as an out gay man.

***A Thousand Farewells: A Reporter's Journey from Refugee Camp to the Arab Spring* by Nahlah Ayed (Viking, 2012)**

In her memoir, *A Thousand Farewells*, CBC foreign correspondent Nahlah Ayed describes how her unusual childhood influenced her eventual decision to become a journalist covering the Middle East during one of its most tumultuous periods in the modern era. As a child, Ayed lived first in Winnipeg, where her father ran a convenience store, and then in a refugee settlement camp in Jordan when her Palestinian parents decided they wanted their children to grow up immersed in the Arabic language and culture. From there, Ayed chronicles her growing interest in trying to understand the age-old conflicts of the region that led to her becoming a journalist. In spare, literary prose, she offers a unique glimpse of the people and daily life behind the headlines about war and unrest in the Middle East.

– more –

***Into the Abyss: How a Deadly Plane Crash Changed the Lives of a Pilot, a Politician, a Criminal and a Cop* by Carol Shaben (Random House Canada, 2012)**

In *Into the Abyss*, Carol Shaben reconstructs a 1984 commuter plane crash in northern Alberta that killed six passengers and wounded four others—including Shaben’s father, a prominent cabinet minister. After watching how the accident affected her father for many years, Shaben, a former CBC writer and broadcaster, decided to find out more about it. While the story is an expertly researched, detailed reconstruction of the crash and a call for better oversight of small, commuter airlines, its heart lies in the portraits she draws of the crash’s survivors: her father, the pilot, and an RCMP officer and the prisoner he was transporting. Through interviews and written documents, Shaben paints a haunting portrait of the bond created among the survivors and how the crash affected their lives.

The winner of the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction will be announced July 30, 2013. Award presentations honouring the winner will take place Nov. 13, 2013 at Laurier’s Waterloo and Brantford campuses.

**About the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction**

Established and endowed by writer and literary journalist Edna Staebler, the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction is administered by Wilfrid Laurier University, the only university in Canada to bestow a nationally recognized literary award. Staebler, who died in 2006, was an award-winning journalist and a member of the Order of Canada. Designed to encourage new Canadian talent, the award is open to authors who have published a first or second book with a Canadian locale and/or significance. Winning books are distinguished by first-hand research, well-crafted interpretive writing and a creative use of language or approach to the subject matter. The list of previous winners includes authors such as Linden MacIntyre, Wayson Choy and Elizabeth Hay. The award is celebrating its 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary this year.

- 30 -