

## Poets, thrillers and prizes

### *Angie Abdou's bitter love stories and readings galore*

BOOKS by MARK HOPKINS, FFWD

Angie Abdou is a busy woman.

She lives in Fernie, but works at the College of the Rockies in Cranbrook and commutes to Calgary once a week to finish her PhD at the University of Calgary. And that's just for starters. "I have a book out in September, a baby out in December and another book out in July," she laughs. "It's a big year." Lately, she's been touring with her new collection of short stories, *Anything Boys Can Do*. "It's kind of funny: eight months pregnant and toddling all over western Canada with my book."

*Anything* collects 12 short stories, contemplating marriage and gender construction. "I wrote a lot of the stories in the wake of a divorce, so at the time I thought, 'Oh, marriage is a dying institution, monogamy's impossible,' all those things people think when they're getting divorced," she says. "My favourite description of the book was when it was called 'hilariously unromantic and refreshingly bitter.' It's quite cynical and dark at times, so I knew the bitter and unromantic part, but I was relieved about the rest."

Abdou started writing the collection in 1999. "I was in a head-on collision that year and I thought I was going to die when it happened," she says. "It made me think that, well, if there's something I want to do, I'd better do it. I'd always wanted to write fiction, and I'd written everything but – academic articles, business writing, newspapers, I even used to write operational manuals for light armoured vehicles for General Motors. In the recovery period from that accident, I started to write fiction and it was easier to get my mind around a short story than a novel." She's since figured out novel-writing, and *The Bone Cage*, a novel about two Olympic athletes nearing the end of their careers, will be released in January from NeWest Press.

In the meantime, she's still glowing in the thrill of her first book. "It's so much fun, I can't even tell you," she says. "They've sold 125 copies at the bookstore in Fernie. Everybody in town has read it and they're making such a fuss. It feels like my imaginary friends have come to life and I get to find out what everybody else thinks of them." It took her a little while to adjust to being a published author, though. "I knew I wanted to write a book, I wanted to get it published and I wanted people to buy it, but when I first saw someone reading it, I was like, 'Oh my God, don't!' What I thought they were going to do with it, I'm not sure, but I suddenly felt really exposed."

She'll be reading from *Anything* at Pages Books on October 24 at 7:30 p.m. Join her for tales of barroom flirtations, polished marriages and not-so-meaningless sex.

Single Onion Poetry Night #48 is upon us, with a wild mix of poets. Hosted by Paul Marshall, the evening features experimental poet and pataphysician Christian Bök, Wakefield Brewster, freshly back from his stint in Toronto with the Calgary Slam Team and Calgary newcomer Emily Carr. (No, not the painter resurrected – this Emily Carr is a PhD candidate in the English department at U of C.) They'll be joined by musician Danielle French, who recently launched her latest CD, *Shadows*. Join the Onions at Sola Cafe & Lounge on October 19 at 7:00 p.m.

The Massey Lectures return to Calgary with *The Ethical Imagination*, where Margaret Somerville will discuss shared ethics in an interdependent world, and how advances in science and technology have created new ethical dilemmas. Somerville is the founding director of the Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law at McGill University, and she's worked with the WHO, UNESCO and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. She'll be speaking at the Jubilee Auditorium on October 19 at 8:00 p.m. Her entire Massey Lecture series will be broadcast on CBC Radio's *Ideas* from November 6 to 10.

J. Fisher launches his new book of poetry this week, *bulletin from the low light*, a collection of poems written in the glow of a borrowed laptop and posted on his blog at the Frontenac House website ([www.frontenachouse.com](http://www.frontenachouse.com)). The poetry is harsh and beer-soaked and should make for an engaging launch on October 19 at 7:30 p.m., at Pages Books

Because three choices aren't enough, there's one more October 19 event: bestselling author Michael Connelly will read from his latest thriller, *Echo Park*. In the 12th Harry Bosch detective novel, the aging detective obsesses over a cold case and engages in a battle of wills with a serial killer. Catch the action at McNally Robinson at 7:00 p.m.

If you don't get your fill of detective fiction with Connelly, you can come back to McNally Robinson the following night to hear Gail Bowen read from the 10th novel in her Joanne Kilbourn series, *The Endless Knot*. A tell-all book about the children of Canadian celebrities leads to an attack on the author and a complicated investigation. Hear more on October 20 at 7:00 p.m.

Kevin Patterson's first novel, *Consumption*, follows Victoria, born on the tundra she leads a nomadic hunting life until a case of tuberculosis sends her south, away from her family, for treatment. As an adult, she tries to

reconcile her Inuit upbringing with the culture that has adopted her. For a story of family, cultural divide and survival, head to McNally Robinson on October 24 at 7:00 p.m. Also that night, Jonathan Hanna continues his tour of Calgary libraries with Portraits of Canada: Photographic Treasures of the CPR. Hop onto his railcar at the Fish Creek Library at 7:00 p.m.

The Writers Guild of Alberta brings this year's Markin-Flanagan Writer-in-Residence, Jaspreet Singh, together with last year's, Melanie Little, for The Craft, Process and Business of Writing. The respective authors of short story collections Seventeen Tomatoes: Tales from Kashmir and Confidence, will discuss the writing life – discipline, perseverance, inspiration, and the question of why write at all? It's free for students and WGA members, \$5 for the rest of the world, at the Rose and Crown Pub on October 25 at 7:00 p.m.

Runaway Summer, in the tradition of The Outsiders, is full of hoods, villains, greasers, jocks, blockheads, piss-tanks, nancy-boys, studs, pencil-necks, pervs, dinks, rink-rats, 1960s adolescent exuberance and a botched attempt to save a drowning victim. Author Stephen W. Shawcross launches his novel at Pages Books on October 25 at 7:30 p.m.

There's one last thriller before the week is out: Michael Slade (the pen name for father-daughter writing team Jay and Rebecca Clarke) is in town to launch Kamikaze, the 12th book in the Special X series. A Hiroshima survivor travels to Vancouver to kill the last crewmember of the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb. Have your spine chilled at McNally Robinson on October 25 at 7:00 p.m.

It's been a big month for literary awards! Kiran Desai became the youngest woman to ever win the Man Booker Prize for her novel The Inheritance of Loss; Orhan Pamuk picked up the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature; Christopher Ratcliffe was awarded the 2006 Brenda Strathern Literary Prize for Late Bloomers; and the shortlist for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, Canada's highest paying literary award at \$40,000, has been announced. The nominees are Rawi Hage for De Niro's Game, Vincent Lam for Bloodletting & Miraculous Cures, Pascale Quiviger for The Perfect Circle, Gaetan Soucy for The Immaculate Conception and Carol Windley for Home Schooling. The winner will be announced on November 7.