

# GILLER: Literary culture 'vibrant'

## FROM EI

The nominees for this year's Giller Prize are:

■ Bezmogis for *The Free World*, the story of a Soviet-Jewish family trying to start a new life in Rome as they wait to immigrate to the United States.

■ Coady for *The Antagonist*, an epistolary novel about a former hockey enforcer chronicling his life story to his former best friend.

■ deWitt for *The Sisters Brothers*, a dark comedy about a pair of hitmen brothers in Gold Rush-era California.

■ Edugyan for *Half-Blood Blues*, about the disappearance of a black German trumpet player in Paris during the Second World War.

■ Gartner for *Better Living Through Plastic Explosives*, an eccentric short-story collection set mostly in Vancouver; and

■ Michael Ondaatje for *The Cat's Table*, a semi-autobiographical novel about an 11-year-old boy making a journey by ship from Sri Lanka to England.

The winner of the Giller Prize receives \$50,000, while the finalists each receive \$5,000.

"I'm thrilled by the diversity on this list," said juror Annabel Lyon.

"We have three men, three women, we've got Western Canada, we've got the Maritimes, we've got historical fiction, we've got contemporary, we've got short fiction, we've got long fiction. I think it says that literary culture in Canada is vibrant, is young, is flourishing. It really is."

This year's jury — Howard Norman, Andrew O'Hagan and Lyon, a former Giller Prize finalist — considered 143 books submitted by 55 publishers across Canada, the most books a jury has ever received.

"I've learned something very clear from my reading of 143 of the submitted books: among the strongest literatures in the world at the moment must be Canadian literature," said O'Hagan. "I don't think, having judged prizes in Europe and elsewhere, I've ever seen as strong a longlist as what this was."

The last time six books were named to the shortlist was 2004, when Alice Munro won the Giller Prize for *Runaway*.

Six books were also named to the shortlist in 1998, the year Munro won for *The Love of a Good*

Woman. As well, six books were named to the shortlist in 2001, when Richard B. Wright won for Clara Callan, and six books were named to the shortlist in 2000, the year when, infamously, Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and David Adams Richards' *Mercy Among the Children* tied for the award.

There will be no ties this year, according to Lyon.

The winner of this year's Giller Prize will be announced Nov. 8 at a ceremony in Toronto. Johanna Skibsrud won last year's prize for her debut novel *The Sentimentalists*.