



May 2010 vol¹² no³

BY JULIE MAHFOOD

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Be a Writer-in-CEGEP!

PLUS:

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THE WORLD'S SHORTEST POEM!
AND: IS CARMINE STARNINO
STILL AN ANGRY YOUNG MAN?

8 HEART & SOUL

**ENDRE FARKAS AND
CAROLYN MARIE SOUAID**

The only way to describe the dynamic duo that is Endre Farkas and Carolyn Marie Souaid is to resort to cliché: the two poets are heart and soul. Farkas is the life force behind their partnership, the one who initiated their working together and who keeps things ticking. Souaid, on the other hand, is sensitive and introspective—the one who might become lost if left to her own devices. But that quietude permeates and enables their work.

I first met these talented poets one evening at Blue Metropolis, 2008, where they co-read their poem “Blood is Blood,” a piece that grew out of a series of emails exchanged during the 2006 war in Lebanon. It was one of the first poems I heard read in two voices and it made an impression



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QWF PRESIDENT

Elise Moser

It's spring, a season of renewal, and the perfect time for QWF's Annual General Meeting. On March 26, about 30 people gathered in the Atwater Library auditorium to review the events of the past year, look ahead, and elect a new board.

We welcomed two new board members to replace six outgoing members (most of whom will continue their work on various committees). Our new members are a distinguished pair. Gina Roitman is the author of *Tell Me a Story, Tell Me the Truth*, and her work has appeared in several publications; she's in post-production for a documentary film. Gina has been a golden member of the Qwrite editorial board and recently brought her formidable skills and experience to QWF's successful foray into fundraising.

David Homel is an award-winning novelist, translator, and journalist, and author of two novels for kids with Marie-Louise Gay. He has been on the boards of the Writers' Union of Canada and UNEQ, as well as being the class action rep for the Electronic Rights Defence Committee. Many of you will know him as a QWF workshop leader.

Among the accomplishments of the past year:

– Our member survey. As a result of the survey, the board is now working on organizing summer workshops and a writers' retreat, more West Island activities, new chairs for the office, and more proactive relations with our Francophone literary counterparts.

– A more active fundraising program. Its first fruits are already in the bank, in support of our project to promote Quebec English writing in the ROC, now in its third phase, which includes a series of ads and an online contest for readers in other provinces. Stop by the office to have a look.

– Our document on the Google Books Settlement, beautifully prepared by Claire Holden Rothman, available on the website.

– Workshops visits. These give Executive Director Lori Schubert and me an excellent opportunity to meet more of you, while giving you a couple



of faces to associate with the organization. We hope it will encourage everyone to come out to other QWF events—now that you'll know someone there for sure!

– Qwrite is now available in electronic form for those who prefer it, saving trees and postage.

– We have been working to increase our visibility in the community, with a Gazette article on our wonderful Writers in the Community Program. A series of information tables (adorned by our spiffy new banner) at the Letters from Knowlton event last summer, at Blue Met, and at the recent YES Montreal art show, has resulted in new memberships and contacts; we hope they will also increase the recognition factor when we go into the community to raise funds.

– Lori and I addressed a meeting of the ABQLA, the provincial association of English librarians. It was a small group, but a wonderful one—who can be more fun to talk to than a roomful of dedicated book lovers? We expect it to result in a range of new collaborations with library partners.

– *carte blanche*, our online journal, received a Canada Council grant this year that will allow it to improve its design, and pay contributors. In addition, it has been invited to nominate a story for the Journey Prize, Canada's foremost short story prize. They also found a sponsor for the annual *carte blanche* Prize, awarded at QWF's fabulous Gala in November. Three more great reasons to submit to *carte blanche*! (<http://www.carteblanche.org/issues/index.html>)

– In addition, Ian Ferrier addressed the AGM about the activities of Words and Music, our spoken word and music series, which has also had a wonderfully successful year. If you haven't yet been to a Words and Music event, I urge you to get out to one.

In keeping with the season, QWF is blossoming. Our roots are deep, our leaves are broad, our heads are turned toward the sun. ♡

QWRITE May 2010 vol12 no3 Go Habs Go

Editor in Chief: Byron Rempel

Issue Editors: Gina Roitman, Sarah Lolley

Qwrite Editorial Board: Kate Orland Bere, Lance Jones, Sarah Lolley, Elise Moser, Raquel Rivera, Gina Roitman, Lori Schubert, Johanna Skibsrud

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www.qwf.org
(514) 933.0878 • admin@qwf.org
1200 Atwater Avenue, Suite 3
Westmount, Quebec H3Z 1X4



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Vive le Québec Livre!

A QUEBEC BOOK WORTH A SECOND LOOK



THIS ISSUE:
KATE HALL READS

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF RED: A NOVEL IN VERSE

BY ANNE CARSON
NEW YORK: VINTAGE, 1998.

to continue we must be able to engage in the circular thinking of existence because we must presuppose a self that creates our self (a problem Descartes loved “I think therefore I am”).

What strikes me is that this ability of self to create self is as much a saving grace as a type of circular containment. And this is why the paradoxes in *Autobiography of Red* and Carson’s other work are so important to me. As Carson says, the ability to describe “...began to undo the latches [of being].”

Metaphor goes beyond the simple process of addition and equates something with something different. It is not logical but it is in these gaps in logic that we are able to allow the properties of one thing to transfer to another and we come to understand something more, to be something more. In this way, metaphor in its very nature is paradoxical and it is in this way that Carson explains “Stesichoros released being.”

What we are left with at the end of *Autobiography of Red* is a series of photographs. These also are not really photographs but written descriptions of photographs. In fact, the narrator tells us that the final photograph was not taken at all. Therefore, it only exists in the text. It is a complete act of the imagination set down in words and it is in this photograph that Geryon uses his wings and flies.

The man who survived the metal rod passing through his brain has been studied by scientists in many different disciplines. We still don’t know how consciousness is contained or how consciousness grows and extends its box, becomes more than the body. We’re continually circling ourselves and coming back to the same point but not necessarily getting any closer to the centre of it. It’s a process of circumlocution. When we come to writing the uncertainty looms in front of us. We circle and end up chasing ourselves and if we’re lucky in the process, we create something else and give it some kind of being. In some senses we do have the power to speak things into existence: “Geryon kept/the camera in his hand and spoke little. I am disappearing, he thought/but the photographs were worth it.” ☺

Kate Hall lives in Montreal. Her first book, The Certainty Dream, was published by Coach House Books in 2009 and has been shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize.

In 1848 an explosion propelled an iron rod, 3 feet 7 inches long and one and a quarter inches in diameter, through a man’s brain and out the top of his skull. The man collapsed but minutes later he stood up and started talking. However, after this accident, his friends claimed he was no longer himself. He lived on for 12 years, himself but not himself — different, changed. I am fascinated with this story the same way I am fascinated with Anne Carson’s *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse*. I am fascinated by the philosophical questions such things raise about who we are and the relationship of identity to what we say and how we say it. In Carson’s work, everything exists in the realm of paradox.

Carson’s text is based on the Greek poet Stesichoros’ account of Herakles’ tenth labour (which involved killing the winged monster Geryon and stealing his cattle). This account only survives in fragments. While Carson’s story is told from the little red monster Geryon’s perspective, he does not really write his own autobiography but rather the story is told in third person by an unspecified narrator. Geryon cannot escape being contained in a story just as he cannot escape his own death. Geryon’s body “felt like a locked box”. He does not really have access to himself because any sense of self must be filtered through the self’s own consciousness. And here lies one of the problems with autobiography and truth. We are as contained in our own stories as we are in those told about us. Yet in order



Writers in CEGEPs

Call for Applications **2010-2011**

Deadline: June 30, 2010

WRITERS WHO HAVE ALREADY BEEN APPROVED FOR THE WRITERS IN CEGEPS PROGRAM DO NOT NEED TO RE-APPLY.

Once again this summer, a selection committee will be convened by the Quebec Writers' Federation to evaluate applications from published English-language writers to participate in the Writers-in-CEGEPs program of Quebec's Secrétariat à la politique linguistique.

To participate, writers must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- at least one book published with a recognized publisher
- at least five texts published in recognized journals (print or online)
- at least one screenplay for cinema or television produced by a producer recognized by the CALQ or SODEC
- at least one dramatic work either published by a recognized publisher or performed by a professional company during the last seven years.

Additional information about the program is on the QWF web site: www.qwf.org/programs.

Participating writers receive an honorarium of \$500 per day for a day of readings and lectures, or a day of writing workshops, and \$400 per day for a day of meetings and discussions. To participate, you must be entered in the current repertoire. If you are not currently on the list and you wish to participate, you must submit five copies of the application form and five copies of a sample of your published work to the QWF office by June 30, 2010. This work can be in the form of books, or photocopied excerpts and articles (please submit a minimum of 25 pages.) A three-person selection committee composed of writers and teachers familiar with the CEGEP milieu, will review the material. You should note that this application requires a brief outline of what activity you propose to do in the classroom.

In the fall, CEGEPs will receive information about the program. We recommend that writers who have been approved for the project make their own efforts to get bookings.

Visits will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and CEGEPs are eligible for only two visits a year.

For more information, contact the QWF office.

BIG IDEAS & GREEN TEA

HAIKU WITH EMIKO MIYASHITA

On Saturday, May 22nd, from 1-4 pm, in partnership with Haiku Canada and the McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement, QWF offers a Haiku Creativity workshop with visiting Japanese poet Emiko Miyashita. While sipping green tea and enjoying traditional Japanese sweets, learn about the world's shortest poem. Miyashita, who writes in both Japanese and English, gives a brief introduction to the origins of the form, then guides you in writing your own haiku. For writers in any genre, this three-line, Zen-inspired poem sharpens your focus and proves that when it comes to words, less is definitely more.

Miyashita was born in Fukushima, Japan and currently resides in Kawasaki. A graduate of Doshisha University in Kyoto, she began writing haiku in 1993. She has given workshops at conferences in Canada, the U.K, the U.S. and India. An award winning translator of 10 books, she has published two collections of her own haiku.

slipping ahead
of the sky blue Porsche
the coolness

crickets—
from the Russian window
ears of a cat

Space in this workshop is limited. Cost: \$35 includes green tea and sweets. To register, contact the QWF office at 514-933-0878 or admin@qwf.org.



EMIKO MIYASHITA: LESS IS MORE. EXCEPT WHEN IT COMES TO PUBLISHING

Heart & Soul ...Continued from front page

on me, the technique helping to reveal that, despite their enmity for each other, the speakers were both very human and ultimately wanted the same things from life.

The theme was of interest to me on both political and personal levels. Like Souaid, I am of Lebanese descent and still have close relatives living in Lebanon. I felt like I knew the characters in the poem whose voices are distinctive yet universal. Souaid and Farkas hit the mark in objectivity, accuracy, philosophy and community.

Recently, over croissants and coffees, Souaid and Farkas divulged that their creative partnership has grown to include partnership of a different kind—they have officially been a couple for about a year.

When they are not on stage, the two poets spend time working with their behind-the-scenes partner Elias Letelier, with whom they co-founded the online magazine *Poetry Quebec (PQ)*. Letelier, who is the only techie among the three, conceived of the magazine as a site for archiving Anglo-Quebec poetry. After a year of discussion, including two months spent finalizing the layout, the first issue was launched in June, 2009.

The magazine is a sheer labour of love; it has no financial backing and Letelier provides the magazine's only technical support. But now that they have reached the three-issue minimum, the three partners have begun applying for grants. Souaid and Farkas are clear on not wanting private support, saying they wish to retain control of *PQ* and not be influenced or compromised by advertising.

PQ includes poetry-related news, articles, essays, reviews, interviews, history and, of course, poems by Anglo-Quebec authors. It is the first publication of its kind, taking a comprehensive look at past and current Anglo poetry in Quebec. And it has been well received, achieving 64,000 hits per month and a viewership of over 5,000 people per issue.

In addition to juggling *Poetry Quebec*, Farkas and Souaid continue to host Circus of Words, a poetry/cabaret evening that is currently in its sixth year. "It's really a show...by [paid] professionals, and so the level the audience [can] expect is higher than, let's say, people going up there with one poem," Farkas says. "I like the idea...of poetry of theatre and a theatre of poetry...a concept [which] stems from...poetry as an oral tradition. In the original oral tradition, it wasn't just [that] somebody sat there and recited. They danced, they performed, they chanted." Farkas likens the Circus of Words to Cirque de Soleil; the latter reinvents the circus, whereas the Circus of Words reinvents the reading and the oral tradition. Past performers include Bill Bissett, Nicole Brossard and Lucien Francoeur.

For the first time this year, Circus of Words was presented at the Segal Centre (on May 1) instead of at Sala Rosa. The decision to change venues was taken in order to open the event up to more viewers, but there was some concern that holding the Circus in a theatre instead of a venue with wine and food would detract from the atmosphere. Farkas and Souaid say they were willing to take that risk in order to try to bring the Circus to more people. Besides, they add, everything in life evolves. "It's a lot of work for one short evening, but we have fun," Souaid says. Farkas adds, "If you ain't having fun, why do it?" ☺

Julie Mahfood hosts "Tea and Poetry" on Montreal's West Island. She won the 2009 carte blanche Quebec Prize and has work in: Literary Review of Canada, Antigonish Review, and Room, among others.



Member News



Send your news to info@qwf.org (please keep to a 60-word limit) with "Member News" in the subject line—and you'll be entered in a draw to win a great book!

THIS ISSUE:

Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens, by Wendy A. Grossman, published by International Arts and Artists

This issue's winner is: Rae Marie Taylor

Members of the Qwrite Editorial Board and staff are not eligible for the quarterly prizes.

Robert Armstrong's new book, *Broadcasting Policy in Canada*, was published by the University of Toronto Press. See utppublishing.com.

Kelly Norah Drukker's long poem "The Burning House" was recently published in issue #169 of *The Malabat Review*, and her poem "Niamh" appeared in issue 32.2 of *Room Magazine*. She was a featured guest and reader on the October 15th edition of CJAD's podcast The New Irish Show (available online at <http://www.cjad.com/node/1010541>), and read at the Yellow Door on March 18th.

Jeffrey Moore launched his new novel *The Extinction Club* (Penguin Canada, Quercus UK) in Montreal on April 15 at Paragraphe Bookstore. He also gave a reading on April 25 at the Sheraton Hotel, Montreal. Translation rights have been sold to publishers in Portugal, Spain, Holland, Denmark and Israel.

An excerpt from **Kim Thuy's** best-selling novel *RU*, getting rave reviews here and in Europe and translated by Nigel Spencer, will be published in an upcoming issue of *Words Without Borders* (Chicago).

Mary Ann Lichacz's story "Anticosti Island" was recently published in *Canadian Stories*. It's the true story of her father's arrival in Montreal in the 1920s. When he gets the opportunity to work on a new railroad on Anticosti Island, he grabs the chance to make his fortune.

Carol Katz has had two stories published in two anthologies: "The Storm in My Head," in *Mizmor L'David, vol. 1, The Shoah*, edited by Michal Margeretteh, published by Poetica Publishing; and "Zaidie and Ferdele," in *Living Legacies*, edited by Liz Pearl, published by York University. There will be a book launch of this anthology in Toronto on June 6th. She has also been accepted into the two-

week Summer Literary Seminar to be given this June at Concordia University.

Barbara Florio Graham contributes articles on publicity, public relations, crisis communications and speaking to the website for SOURCES, a searchable, deep-indexed database of Canadian experts, media spokespersons, and other sources of information. Bobbi's earlier articles are archived on the site, and a new one will appear monthly. Go to: <http://gateway.sources.com/Membership-BFG.php> to visit the site, and if you decide to sign up, put Grah01 into the Referral Code box on the web registration form.

Elise Moser's short story "Shack the Clam Girl," originally workshopped at QWF, has been accepted for publication in *Broken Pencil* this summer, and "Pearly" will appear in the *Windsor Review* in 2011. Elise appeared on the Emerging Voices in Fiction Panel at the gritLIT Festival in Hamilton and on the Reading the World from Montreal panel at Blue Met in April. Her novel, *Because I Have Loved and Hidden It*, was named a finalist for the Edmund White Debut Fiction Award, given by the Publishing Triangle.

Beverly Akerman has won the Writers' Federation of New Brunswick's 2010 Richards Prize for her unpublished fiction col-

lection, *The Meaning of Children*. The prize is to be awarded during the WordsSpring Festival in Fredericton, NB on May 15th. Watch for Beverly's upcoming stories in *The Nashwaak Review*, *The New Quarterly*, *Rampike*, and the *Windsor Review*. Follow her at <http://beverlyakermanmscwriter.blogspot.com>.

Job Patstone's book *That Blood Red Towel* was published, under the name A.J. Patstone, by publishamerica. It is the intriguing story of a father and son hunting accident that turns a religious family upside down. The book is available from the author or from publishamerica.com.

On May 12th, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, **Rae Marie Taylor** will be reading from her book, *The Land: Our Gift and Wild Hope* as part of an event celebrating the Santa Fe river.

Lp Camozzi, Montreal singer/songwriter/author for children (www.lpkids.ca) will perform at the 2010 Vancouver International Children's Festival, May 16-23. Lp will be working as a roving musical performer, Make Music Tent facilitator and children's hospital performer/reader, and has a stage show on Saturday May 22 at the main site. Lp is originally from BC and moved to Montreal in 2001 to begin writing and performing for children. ☺

TEACH ME

Want to lead a QWF WORKSHOP? Workshop leaders are established writers with professional credentials and profiles. A wide range of subjects is offered, and new ideas are always welcome. Subjects have included the short story, screenwriting, memoir, poetry, travel writing, spoken word and more; there have also been workshops on getting published, doing historical research, getting an agent, etc. Most sessions are open to all; master classes, requiring potential participants to submit writing samples, have also been offered. Most take place in the QWF office, although sessions are also occasionally given outside Montreal. To propose a workshop for the 2011 series, submit your application/proposal by June 4, 2010. Please contact QWF for an application form.

Pay Attention, Young Writers...

The Young Writers' Committee of QWF, chaired by Ami Sands Brodoff, has launched a young writer's group on Facebook called ZoundZ. It's a place for teen writers to hang out, exchange work, hear about events, and meet other teen writers. Enter "ZoundZ" in the Facebook search or use: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=110506715632998>

Ms Day rules

WHAT DO ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND YOU HAVE IN COMMON?

In Annabel Lyon's *The Golden Mean*, Alexander the Great went on to conquer the world after being mentored by Aristotle.

Have you wondered what a mentor might do for your career?

Luckily, ELAN, the English-language Arts Network, introduced their new mentorship program this March. It's a complete mentorship that not only provides the knowledge and expertise you need in your creative work, but also supports, guides and encourages you through vital business decisions. If you're an emerging artist with a demonstrated commitment to your practice, or an established artist with an Aristotelian bent, download one of ELAN's application forms at <http://quebec-elan.org/posts/830>. Next matching pairs happens this fall.

OTHER GREAT MENTOR PAIRINGS IN HISTORY:

Bach – Mozart
Sir Laurence Olivier – Anthony Hopkins
Edmond Wilson – Marie-Claire Blais
Paul Bowles – William S. Burroughs
Irving Layton – Leonard Cohen
Leon Rooke – Rohinton Mistry
Dr. Dre – Eminem

DON'T MISS OUT ON OUR BI-MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

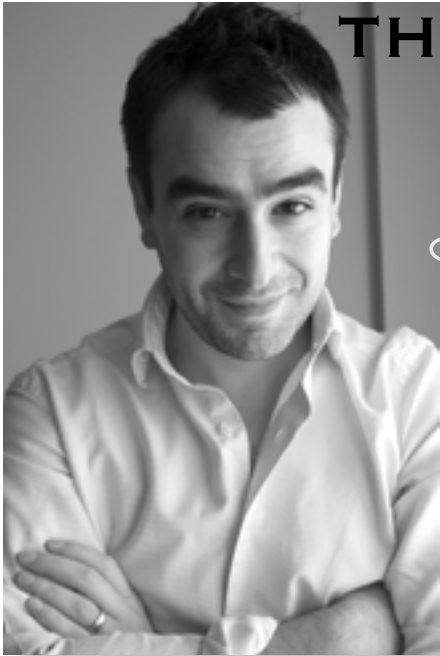
Not getting your QWF E-newsletters, jam-packed with up-to-the-minute readings, events, contests, and calls for submissions? Check that your spam filter isn't putting us in the trash. If we're not there, contact our office. Your email address may have been entered incorrectly, or we may have a defunct address. Our bi-monthly E-newsletter keeps you up to date on the essentials, so help us get you back in the e-loop!

NOW QWRITE CAN ARRIVE IN YOUR E-MAIL TOO

It's clean, it's green, and it can be on your screen ... it's Qwrite via e-mail.

Sign up today by sending a blank e-mail to julia@qwf.org with "Qwrite by E-mail" in the subject line. Funds saved by cutting paper and postage costs will be put to good use for other QWF activities.





THE QMUNITY COLUMN

BY KASPER HARTMAN

Maisonneuve or a re-imagining of the Canadian poetry canon, whether an online essay or an individual sonnet, one gets the sense that there is always shapeliness to the works that bear his name, a dedication to *les mots justes* and to the forms that best organize and hold them.

A devotion to the nuances of language, to core principles such as musicality and economy, has helped solidify Starnino's reputation as a demanding editor, a tough critic, and a very good poet. He has won numerous accolades, including the QWF A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry, the Canadian Authors Association Prize, the David McKeen Award, and most recently a Governor General's Award nomination for his fourth collection, *This Way Out*. Starnino is very aware, however, that the ultimate arbiter of poetry is the passage of time. He is deeply invested in the notion of poetry as part of a living tradition—in the countless things that need to go right for a good poem to earn its historical keep.

"It's like making a movie," he says. "With all the variables at work in any movie, the fact that they get made at all is just extraordinary. When you consider the amount of work, the million and one ways that any movie can go wrong... I feel the same way about poems. The fact that good poems get written is a small miracle given the ways in which they can go wrong. That's why I think they're scarce."

"If there's one principle that criticism is based on it's the scarcity of good poems."

And so as Starnino the poet and Starnino the editor string together an impressive list of collections, Starnino the critic continues to hold the poetry of others up to the same standards that he holds his own, and to defend and celebrate the principles by which great poems are crafted. A new book of his poetry criticism is due out from Biblioasis in 2011, and as his critical vocabulary evolves, so do his tone and approach.

"The angry young man has grown older. I don't know if he's less angry, but it does get tiresome. Now I'm much more curious about how poems work, in ways that would've been foreign to me five years ago. I realize growing older that the more difficult task is to persuade people to think the way you think rather than enrage them into some reaction."

"My hope now is to appeal to the academic sense of fair-play, and come up with a body of work so unavoidable—and not just my work—that when they say 'A' they have to say, 'on the other hand B'. I want to be on the other hand. I want to be part of the discussion."

Regardless of whether it's a discussion of poetics, the Canadian canon, or the future of publishing, whether online or at a make-shift panel in a bookstore, you can expect to find Carmine Starnino standing firm in the middle of the debate. ☺

Kasper Hartman is an editor, translator, writer working in Montreal. He is an average poet and an extraordinary poker player.

CARMINE STARNINO, KEEPING OUT OF THE WEEDS

I met with Carmine Starnino at a bustling bistro in Little Italy. Our conversation about his various roles in the literary community—as poet, critic, essayist and editor—inevitably led to a discussion about craft, and a debate about aesthetic camps and standards of judgment.

"Things are never settled," Starnino says. "A good poem is just a poem you can make a good argument for. We have to admit that."

Starnino has sharpened his arguments for over a decade now, and is known to not hold back. He's not one to retreat from a literary scrap, and seems to thrive when the dust is kicked up.

"If you have a hundred people who agree that Al Purdy is a major Canadian poet, then you have the beginnings of a canon. But if you have a hundred people who agree that Al Purdy is a major Canadian poet and you have one person who disagrees, then ... you have something that's alive and you have debate and disagreement and that's where things get interesting. I just like it when things are interesting."

The willingness to take a position and stir up opinions can likewise be observed over at *Maisonneuve* magazine, an eclectic national quarterly, of which Starnino is Editor-In-Chief.

"I try to run a magazine that displays fresh thinking. You don't want any clichés, you don't want any borrowed thinking, and you want your angles to be fresh and to surprise people."

"You can get into the weeds very quickly," he admits.

The Starnino stamp, though, is not so much a mark of provocation as it is of vigilance and craft. Whether the latest issue of