

## **Ancient ethics resonate with author, readers alike**

### **Featured speaker Lyon witnessing sales boom thanks to book nominations**

By Richard Helm, Edmonton Journal  
December 9, 2009

Canada's newest literary star comes to Edmonton on Thursday riding the sort of high that only comes from being pulled into the spotlight by all three of the nation's major book awards.

Annabel Lyon will be the featured speaker at the latest outing of the Literary Saloon, that audacious series of monthly book bashes that local authors Marina Endicott and Lynn Coady have organized in a bid to reignite Edmonton's fiction scene. Lyon's first novel for adults, *The Golden Mean*, scored rare triple-crown honours last month as a finalist for the Giller Prize, the Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction and the Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, eventually winning the \$25,000 Writers' Trust top purse.

Much has been written about the bump in book sales that comes when you're smiled upon by one of Canada's literary juries, let alone all three, and Lyon says it's absolutely true--sales of the book are way up.

"I was briefly number one on Amazon yesterday, I think it's sitting at number two right now," Lyon said, over the phone from Vancouver Tuesday, adding with a laugh: "I was ahead of Dan Brown!"

Pretty good for a novel that falls decidedly out of any CanLit cookie cutter you care to choose. *The Golden Mean* is set 2,400 years in the past and relayed in the voice of the ancient philosopher Aristotle, who Lyon portrays as bi-polar--a supposition she bases on references within some of Aristotle's own writings to the link between melancholy and the creative temperament. The author plays further with the struggle for balance between two extremes in Aristotle's time at the court of Philip of Macedon as tutor for the young Alexander the Great.

That's a storyline that was not always the easiest pitch for her agent, Lyon acknowledges, at least not until the nominations started rolling in.

# EDMONTON JOURNAL

Division of Canwest Publishing Inc. December 9, 2009

"That's been the biggest surprise for me -- how much attention is paid outside the country. I have had foreign sales as a direct result of the prize nominations. It's sold in the U.K., U.S., France, Spain, Portugal and Brazil, all subsequent to the nominations."

## COMFORT IN ARISTOTLE

The New Westminster, B.C., writer took more than seven years to complete *The Golden Mean* and along the way had two children, now 4 and 2. She started writing *The Golden Mean* soon after the events of Sept. 11, 2001, when she turned for comfort to the writings of her old friend Aristotle. "I always find him calming in stressful times," says Lyon, 38, who holds an undergrad degree in philosophy.

"And it was about then I just very idly started thinking about how I might structure a novel about this guy's life," she says. "I thought I'd love other people to discover the pleasures in him that I get."

Lyon has two other books to her credit--one of short stories and the other a children's novel. Her next release will be a sequel to the kids' book, whereafter she'll start work on a sequel novel to *The Golden Mean* based on Aristotle's daughter, Pythias. For all the attention she's received, Lyon still regards herself as a short story writer rather than a novelist.

"I always compare it to running. You have a natural body to be a sprinter or you have a natural body to be a marathoner. I think with writing, it's the same; you naturally fall to one length or another and I really like the sort of 20-to 30-page short story, the Alice Munro-length short story. That just feels comfortable to me. I feel like I know what I'm doing and I'm in control. The novel felt pretty much out of control for much of the writing of it."

Thursday's Literary Saloon at The ARTery (9535 Jasper Ave.) will also feature Ted Bishop, discussing his new project on the history of ink; and short readings by Endicott, Coady and Greg Hollingshead from unpublished works-in-progress. Door opens at 7 p.m. and the show begins at 8 p.m. Admission is \$5.

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