

**EXTRA! EXTRA!** This just in! Feb 23/21. **Lawrence Ferlinghetti**, publisher of Ginsberg's *Howl* and *eminent grace* of the iconic **City Lights Book Store**, died in his home in San Fran at age 101. To him, we owe our love of **Kerouac, Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs** and other fiery minds of the **Beat** generation—one of the strongest and most influential movements in American literature. Quote: *Poetry must be capable of answering the challenge of apocalyptic times, even if this means sounding apocalyptic* '...And so in America, when the sun goes down...we think of old Lawrence, we think of Ferlinghetti, we think of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the father we *had*. RIP

Extra! Extra! This just in. Feb 23/21.

WOW thank the GE's. Read is the best 4 letter word in the world

Nov is money month when it comes to literary awards in Canada. And we're talking sizable money. \$25 K for the Governor General's Award and \$100K for the Giller Prize winner with 10k for each of the four runners-up. But after the champagne flutes are drained, the banquet is over and the ecstatic screams of joy (along with grumblings from the losers) just what kind of literature have we honoured?

Taking the Giller as our clay pigeon, we read all the available excerpts (and there were a few) of the nominees' work that were posted online. We also read two complete books nominated. In both cases short fiction. So what kind of writing is it? You can bet that citations of 'achingly beautiful prose' and X, we were salivating and ready to dive in. But wait! There's no water in the pool! Huh? Instead of exciting lit with blood running riot in its veins, instead of heart wrench, instead of dirt and energy we found ourselves literary quicksand—we were drowning in an inland lake of 'designer fiction'.

The books these authors write are targeted, consciously or otherwise, to the intellectual elite (or people who think they are). They are the 'must reads' of the season, the book club choices, the five star reviews and you just aint keepin' up with the circle jerk, bruh, if you don't read them or at least pretend to have read

them. After all, they are fanatically correct politically (no cultural appropriation here!) and deal with ‘heavy’ issues like the ‘immigrant experience’ or the Indigenous ‘experience’ or the trans experience and on and on we go. That’s not to say there is anything wrong with these topics. They each offer boundless possibilities. Our chagrin (and ultimately, our disappointment) and, for sure, our beef, is with the writing itself. Far from ‘achingly beautiful prose’, much of the writing is over-crafted, over edited and under fed. What’s missing, apart from blood, dirt and energy, is ‘edge’—the ‘barbaric yawp’ that arises from the authentic voice, the authorial signature of the kind that can only be wrested from the depths. Curiously, when it came to the Giller nominees, all five authors demonstrated a similarity of style, with one exception, to such a degree that in a couple of cases you could interchange the names on the covers and not notice much difference. But then again, this is serious stuff. \$100 K ! That has the makings for celebrity culture. And every Giller Prize winner is a celebrity (at least for a year, anyway). Even if the junk puts you to sleep. But that’s to be expected. After all, once a bank sponsors your work, you’re no longer a writer.