

[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[FEATURES](#)[NEWS](#)[EVENTS](#)[THE MAGAZINE](#)[WRITER IN RESIDENCE](#)[AUTHOR BLOGS](#)[LINKS](#)[ARCHIVES](#)

HOME / NEWS

YOU CAN ALSO VISIT
OPENBOOK: ONTARIO

ADVANCED SEARCH

GO

FIVE THINGS LITERARY: RONCESVALLES VILLAGE, WITH ANDREW J. BORKOWSKI

Submitted by erin on April 4, 2011 - 10:38am



0



Confirm

As part of our mapping of literary Ontario, we're highlighting five things about literary life in communities throughout the province. What do our cities, towns and villages have to offer writers, readers and the curious? Follow [Five Things Literary](#) to find out.

Today's feature on literary life in [Roncesvalles Village](#) was contributed by [Andrew Borkowski](#), who will launch his highly anticipated short fiction collection, [Copernicus Avenue](#) (Cormorant Books), tonight at 6 p.m. at Gate 403 in Roncesvalles. Visit our [Events page](#) for details.



Five Things Literary: Roncesvalles Village

Roncesvalles is the inspiration for *Copernicus Avenue*, my new book of short stories from Cormorant Books. It's the last of the old-fashioned downtown neighbourhoods wedged into the western fringe of the city core, the place where all but one of the streetcar lines end. It has always been a home to writers — including [Mazo de la Roche](#), a young [Gwendolyn MacEwen](#) and the mystical poet [Norah Holland](#), a cousin of W.B. Yeats. Lake Ontario, the northwest railway corridor and High Park have conspired to keep the area cut off from the grid, with a unique cultural environment that combines Polish immigrants, street people, artists and intellectual workers. I grew up there, and here are five reasons why I go back as often as I can.

1. [The Katyn Monument](#)

- A block, cleft in two, sitting at the root of Roncesvalles Avenue overlooking Lake Ontario sums up the experience of the Polish community that has defined the neighbourhood since World War Two. It's a memorial to 4,000 Polish officers shot one at a time by Soviet security forces into a mass grave in the spring of 1940. It symbolizes the schism between left and right that tore a country — and the world's illusions of rationality and wholeness — in two.

2. [The St. Stanislaus-St. Casimir's Polish Parishes Credit Union and John Paul II Monument](#)

- The building and the statue at its entrance represent the twin pillars that have sustained the Polish Community: frugality and faith. Polish veterans taking refuge in Canada after 1945 weren't entitled to the pensions, scholarships and loans available to Canadian vets, so the Credit Union was formed as a co-operative to help them get their start. The campaign to rebuild was conducted with the Poles' war-time determination to fight on with honour and an unbroken spirit. There's no better way to glimpse the Poles' reverence for their national and spiritual symbols than to spend an hour out front of the Credit Union building watching people lay flowers, light candles and clean up the litter around the foot of the statue of the late pontiff, whose pupils, you'll notice if you look closely, have been cast in the shape of tiny hearts.

3. [High Park Library](#)


- With its timber-frame cathedral ceiling, latticed windows and stone fireplaces, this was a magical place to acquire a love of books, from *Babar* to D.H. Lawrence. The High Park Branch of is one of three Toronto Libraries built in Scottish baronial style in 1916 with grants from the Carnegie Foundation. The old children's library was accessed by a dungeon-like side entrance and, seated around the hearth, we felt as if we'd entered the Friendly Giant's castle. Renovations have changed some of that, but they also opened up the library's upper gallery to the public, a super spot to daydream over a book and watch the street below. The branch has a Saturday morning writer's group, a book club, talks and readings, as well as children's programs. You can browse library activities by branch name at www.torontopubliclibrary.ca.

4. [Another Story Books](#)

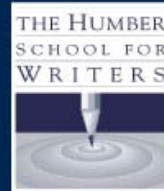
- As a young book lover, I dreamed of having a local bookshop as well stocked and committed to the community as Another Story. The store puts an emphasis on books about social justice, equity and social diversity. It has an impressive section for kids and young readers, and its literary selection is first rate. Another Story sponsors local festivals and in-store author events, runs a Breakfast Book Club for young readers and does yeoman's work in support of Canadian writing. Visit the Open Book [video archive](#) for an interview with Another Story owner [Sheila Koffman](#).

5. [The Revue Cinema](#)

- In the days of my youth this cozy art deco movie theatre, which first opened in 1912, showed German-language films for the dwindling German community centred around Roncesvalles and Howard Park. In the late 1970s it re-opened as a rep cinema. When its owners decided to close the theatre in 2006, local businesses and residents banded together to raise \$130,000 to lease it, renovate it and run it as community-based endeavour — a great testament to what today's Roncesvalles is all about. As well as its regular program of contemporary, vintage and international films it hosts special programs and festivals, including [Book Revue](#), a series about books and movies hosted by critic [Geoff Pevere](#).



HUMBER
School of Creative &
Performing Arts



**The Correspondence
Program in
Creative Writing**

**Work with a Pro
on your manuscript**

SEPTEMBER 2011
JANUARY 2012
MAY 2012

Antanas Sileika, 416-675-6622 ext. 3448
antanas.sileika@humber.ca
Ask about our Summer Workshop

creativeandperformingarts.humber.ca



Andrew J. Borkowski was born and raised in Toronto's Roncesvalles Village. He studied Journalism and English Literature at Carleton University. As a freelance journalist he has published articles in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Canadian Forum*, *Quill & Quire*, *TV Guide* and the *Los Angeles Times*. His short fiction has appeared in *Grain*, *The New Quarterly* and *Storyteller* magazine. His short story "Twelve Versions of Lech," which appears in *Copernicus Avenue* (Cormorant Books), was nominated for the 2007 Writer's Trust/McClelland and Stewart Journey Prize and published in *Journey Prize Stories 19*. Find out more at his [website](#).

For more information about *Copernicus Avenue* please visit the [Cormorant Books website](#).

Buy this book at [your local independent bookstore](#) or online at [Chapters/Indigo](#) or [Amazon](#).

Would you like to contribute five things about literary life in your community? Send an email with your ideas to erin@openbookontario.com.

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [FEATURES](#) [NEWS](#) [EVENTS](#) [THEMAGAZINE](#) [WIR](#) [AUTHORBLOGS](#) [LINKS](#) [ARCHIVES](#)

Copyright © 2007-2011 Open Book: Toronto. All rights reserved.

OPEN BOOK : TORONTO
IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY:

