

special occasions that punctuate daily life, offer the community a reason to dress up, step out and gossip. The bride who was forcefully carried into church on her brother's shoulders was lucky he did not slip and fall in the mud with her. The trip to see the Royal Train, hours under the sun to wave a few fleeting seconds to the King and Queen.

North reads like a novel and it also reads one poem at a time, in an undiscerning order. You read and fill in the blanks, like the lines in the book, spaced out, falling, irregular, pausing, partially incomplete. These stories are artistically reconstructed with memories, announcements, songs, entries from a diary, gossip, anecdotes, vagaries of the weather. Life just is. Contained by the immensity of the environment, each person an insignificant speck, relieved, content or silently unhappy with what is. We always had to have music, writes Frey, that was one thing we always had to have// like the birds we had to sing// against the silence

Whichever the times and however physically and culturally distant this reality may be from our own, we read these poems with silent resignation. Somewhere, at some time this was life for many women and for many more, it still is today. We may wonder what this must have been like, how these poems would metamorphosize in the flesh, how we would have reacted, how contrasted this world was from others. The material poverty and bareness of the surroundings in northern Alberta, circa 1920. The opulence and material comfort in Japan in those same years. The hopeful expectations of Irish immigrants arriving in the Americas at that time. The similarities and contrast with hopeful immigrants from Asia, Africa and the Americas of today. What a poignant contemplation to consider this country, built by immigrants, populated only by immigrants, on

land that was already inhabited, organized and holistically included in the natural cycle of life. A country that still today depends on immigration to sustain its economic and political structures. A hundred years later, how do we welcome immigrants regardless of their country of origin? What entitlement do we believe to hold as immigrants of earlier generations facing these newer waves of immigration, and what have we learnt from our errors of the past?

Philippa Jabouin is a ghostwriter and content creator living in the Ottawa/Gatineau region. In a past life she has worked as a journalist, lawyer, and communications specialist. She has published a few short stories under her own name.

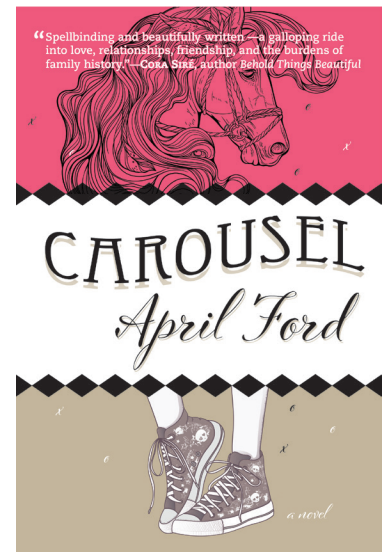
CAROUSEL: A NOVEL

April Ford
Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2020

REVIEWED BY JACK RUTTAN

Thank goodness, a book can take you on a vacation from the cares of current events. Whether you're marooned in a foreign country, hiding in a cabin in the woods, or sitting on the front deck of a second-floor apartment in a major Canadian city during a frightening epidemic, it will transport you to another world. Even your body, life history, and gender end up becoming barriers that are easily skipped over when you open the right novel.

Stories let you live inside someone else's skin for a while. A fictional character's experience can echo with your own, or you can venture into uncharted feelings, experiences, and desires. Many of these lives, up until now, haven't even broken into



the mainstream. You may only have witnessed them second-hand, read magazine articles, or wondered about them from a far remove.

Margot Anaïs Soucy-Wright-Coté is the protagonist in April Ford's new book, *Carousel*. She's coming into middle age, she's smart, stylish, and queer. She's also headed for rocky shoals, relationship-wise. Some might envy her footloose, arty lifestyle, while others (as they do in the book) will censure her and call her names.

But it's better not to describe Margot and her friends too much here. A good deal of the fun of reading *Carousel* is putting together the pieces of the story. Jumping forward and backward through time, via flashbacks and memories, it's the literary equivalent of a Quentin Tarantino movie. Portrait assemble bit by bit, emotions rise and fall, reminding the reader of the fairground rides Margot documents with her digital camera.

Carousel is ups and downs—"an emotional roller-coaster" for the protagonist. Her happiness, her relationship status, even her living situation changes from chapter to chapter. It's kind of an updated *Jane Eyre*, accelerated for the twenty-first century, with smartphones and texting.

Via the miracle of Facebook direct messaging, the author April Ford shared with me a bit of how the novel and the characters came about:

Carousel was born in November 2010, shortly after my first trip to New York City. I rode the Central Park carousel and visited the Met to see Rosa Bonheur's magnificent, gigantic painting, "The Horse Fair," while I was there, and the confluence of my excitement over visiting NYC for the first time and the stimulation of experiencing the carousel and the painting were enough to launch my creative mind into a whole new space!

Margot and Estelle were, at first, derivatives of this academic couple I knew, who were rather mean-spirited women but really cool dressers. Katy, Marianne, Étienne, Bertrand, Olivier, and the Cotés all came from god knows where, and they were all fun and freeing to write. As I never plan what I'm going to write, I always looked forward to what Katy and Bertrand would say next. These liberated characters were what Margot needed, I think, to get her head out of her ass.

Your writer here has a bit of experience with the art world, and various types of collectors of precious objects, which feature here. Ford's details ring true. Margot also has the requisite unhappy childhood, which makes for compelling reading. Though like most stories, it's much better read about than lived.

April Ford shared with me some of the challenges she encountered creating her story:

I wrote the first chapter of *Carousel* in, like, a few hours. I was high on the adrenaline from

having this whole new world unfolding in my mind, and I was also freaked out; I didn't know much at all about guns, fine art, or the history of carousels.

What I did know was this novel was going to happen no matter what. I had enough experience as a writer to recognize it would be a long-term project. I tested the graduate workshop waters with the first chapter of *Carousel* in January 2011, and my faculty mentor, Pulitzer-prize nominee Jonathan Dee, gave me the advice I needed: Don't get caught up in research (I was quite anxious at the time about not knowing enough). Write the story. The story is the point, after all. In Dee's advice, I found the freedom I needed to let *Carousel* grow and flourish in my mind.

By the time I was ready to return to the novel—a few years later!—I was able to intuit when to pause from the page and learn more about guns, art, carousels, and so forth. I enjoyed these pauses, because I couldn't predict how my findings would influence the next sentence I wrote, the next direction the novel would take. In many ways, the ship steered itself!

It's a steady course that the author steers through the shoals of city life, difficult parents, and the demands of friends, lovers and employers. If this reader had a quibble with the novel, it was that it was too short. Ford creates a world and inhabitants which leave you a little sad towards the end. Because the story was good company.

Jack Ruttan is a Montreal-based writer and illustrator, who has a distant view of La Ronde from his front balcony. Find out more about him at <http://mruttan.ca>.

BOSS BITCH: A SIMPLE 12-STEP PLAN TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR CAREER

Nicole Lapin
Toronto: Crown Business, 2017

REVIEWED BY DEBORAH HERMAN

Nicole Lapin's *Boss Bitch: A Simple 12-Step Plan to Take Charge of Your Career* is a refreshing how-to manual for the young and up-and-coming professional woman. Her modus operandi is to provide the financial advice not taught in schools in plain English. Lapin pulls no punches, using pop-cultural references alongside swear words in order to get her voice heard.

Lapin started her career at the age of eighteen on the floor of the Chicago stock exchange before spring-boarding to CNN as its youngest anchor, followed by CNBC and Bloomberg Television. A bit of a media darling, she often works as a correspondent for *The Wendy Williams Show*, *Dr. Oz*, and *The Insider*. She has also hosted *Hatched*, a kid-friendly entrepreneurial pitch show on the CW to rival *Dragons' Den* or *Shark Tank*. She compresses her years of experience into books such as *Rich Bitch: A Simple Twelve Step Plan for Getting Your Financial Life Together... Finally* (2016) and the upcoming *Becoming Superwoman: A Simple Twelve Step Plan to Go from Burnout to Balance* (2019). In her books, she describes herself as "the financial expert you don't need a dictionary to understand."

She does, however, offer a very useful glossary at the back of the book of financial terms with easy-to-understand definitions for the novice reader. She defines the Bottom