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Howe Islander publishes second novel

By Mandy Marciniak
Reporter

Heritage News – Howe Island author R.M. Doyon always knew that he was destined to be a writer. Now, with the release of his second novel, it appears he was right. Doyon started writing when he was very young and had his first letter to the editor published in the *Globe and Mail* at the age of 20.

“That gave me a lot of encouragement,” said Doyon. “So I became a journalist. I went to the University of Western Ontario and then to Carleton for graduate school in journalism. I became a journalist with the *Ottawa Citizen* and then the *Ottawa Journal*.”

Doyon reported on many political happenings on Parliament Hill, and then after nine years he moved on to consulting for a public relations firm. He then chose to start his own communications firm, called High Road Communications, which he and his partner ran for years and eventually sold.

“We did very well,” said Doyon, “but after all that, I wanted to go back to my first true love which was writing fiction. I’ve written two screenplays, with the help of my wife, and I have written a stage play on the life and times of Pierre Trudeau called *Pirouette*.”

After these accomplishments, Doyon wrote another screenplay called *The Last Carousel*. After working with an agent in Chicago to get it to Hollywood didn’t work out, Doyon thought it could work as a novel. That screenplay became *Upcountry*, Doyon’s first novel, which was published in 2010. Now, three years later, Doyon is celebrating the release of his second novel, *Thou Torturest Me*, a sort of sequel to *Upcountry*.

“The new novel starts around Labour day of 2010, which is almost three years after the original novel. I use the same family members and many of the same characters in the new novel, but I wanted to break some new ground. If *Upcountry*’s theme was abuse, both spousal and parental abuse, then *Thou Torturest Me*’s theme is

bigotry and prejudice and adherence to principal to the detriment of many.”

The new book, which is based in upstate New York, is essentially a romance between a young Amish man and an English girl. Doyon wanted to explore how this relationship would affect the people around them and, more importantly, explore the tensions that would arise.

Portraying the Amish accurately was definitely a concern for Doyon, but after summering in upstate New York for nine years with many Amish families in the surrounding area, he felt like he had a pretty good handle on their demeanor and lifestyle.

“We’ve got to know them quite a bit,” explained Doyon. “I’ve been in their barns, I’ve been in their kitchens, I’ve been in their fields. I’ve talked to them and I think I’ve gotten to know their way of life and the way they speak and how they treat themselves and their English neighbor and they really are fine people. I wanted to know what would happen, what if, there was a romance between an English girl and an Amish man. It is all centered around the family that I introduced in *Upcountry* – the young girl is the niece of the patriarch in *Upcountry*. I wanted to make something new out of what I had explored in the previous novel but still connect it.”

This approach is beneficial to both the reader and Doyon. It allows readers to read both of his novels as singular works and it also takes away any repetition that can inevitably occur in a sequel. As for writing a third book in the series and turning the books into a trilogy, Doyon is still waiting to see if that is what is next for him.

“I do have a third story line in mind, but I want to see where my mind takes me. I have to admit, I am enjoying the characters that I have created and I keep wondering where they are now and what is happening with them so that inspires me to write a third novel and make it a trilogy of sorts. It will depend on where the wind blows and how my desires in a fictional sense manifest themselves.”