



Donating your archives?

André Duhaime testifies

Article by Jeanne Painchaud

At 76, André Duhaime, a Quebec poet who has done so much for French haiku, was looking to donate his archives. Should they be donated to a university library? To a center (in the making) dedicated to haiku? After a few unsuccessful attempts, he consulted the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ) website. One section, the Donor's Guide, is devoted to everything you need to know about donating private archives in Quebec. He had just found a good lead!

Döstadning": the Swedish method

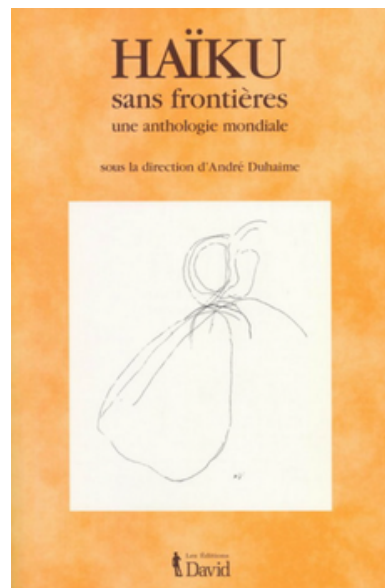
« We accumulate a lot of stuff over the course of our lives," explains André. In Swedish culture, there's this idea of not encumbering one's heirs. In a word, spring clean... before you die! The principle is quite simple: start sorting and freeing yourself from unnecessary possessions, before you die OR before you give away your archives.

It's called "döstadning".

Rest assured: our poet is still in top shape.

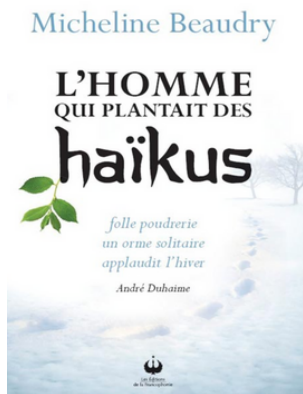
Over the course of his career, André Duhaime has written numerous collections of haiku, as well as editing or co-editing several haiku anthologies, including the essential *Haïku sans frontières : une anthologie mondiale* (Ottawa, Éditions David, 1998).

He is also interested in dream narratives, and has researched such Canadian literary greats as Anne Hébert (Prix Femina 1982), Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau and Jean-Aubert Loranger, the first to write haiku in French-Canadian literature in the 1920s.



What is an “archive”?

But what documents are considered “archives” in Quebec? The BAnQ website provides an exhaustive list: manuscripts, diaries, personal and business correspondence, administrative documents, photographs, films and videos. (Books are not considered archives in this case).



André read in details what such a donation might entail, and took the necessary steps. He was then contacted by an archivist at the Centre d'archives de Gatineau, a regional branch of BAnQ. This center is located in André's region. A dialogue ensued between the archivist and our poet.

The fact that an essay had been devoted to André's work gave weight to his request: *L'homme qui cueillait des haïkus*, by poet Micheline Beaudry (Lévis, Les Éditions de la Francophonie, 2013).

Maelstrom of emotions

At the end of the whole process, how did he feel? “Liberated!” answers André without a doubt. “My documents are no longer lying around, and everything will now be well preserved.”

But he admits it was quite an adventure. He had to do a major clean-out of his documents, then select what he felt like donating, in paper or digital form, make an exhaustive inventory, fill in a form, and so on.

“My donation was considerable, including two meters of paper documents”.

These included manuscripts and diaries dating back to his teenage years. In the latter case, he opted for a certain restriction on access: they cannot be consulted for 20 years.

"The whole process was both long
and nerve-wracking. Along the way,
I even said to myself: this is my life?!
In the end, I can now say it was a
great relief."

André Duhaime

This is all the more true as, had his archives been kept by his family, the conditions of preservation and distribution would certainly not have been the same. From now on, poets, researchers and the general public interested in André Duhaime's archives will know where to find them. An overview of André's archives will soon be available on BAnQ's "BAnQ numérique" website, and some of the documents in the collection will eventually be digitized.

And in your neck of the woods?

What would a donation of archives like André Duhaime's mean to you in your part of the world? Depending on the province (or territory) in which you live, the best thing to do is to take a few steps to find out what's involved, or refer to the federal institution known as Library and Archives Canada.

That said, in this field, just because you want to donate your archives doesn't mean that the institution you contact will want them. A number of criteria come into play: the poet's notoriety, the value of the documents, their complementarity to the institution's collections, and so on. At a certain stage in one's life, these are certainly thoughts and steps to consider.



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Jeanne Painchaud has published 5 collections of haiku and several children's books, the latest of which introduces young people to the little poem: *Mon été haïku* (2021). She has taken part in some thirty collectives, here and abroad, and has taken part in several international literary events. She won 1st prize in the international section of the Mainichi competition (2013) and 2nd prize (2021). For the past 25 years, she has been giving haiku initiation workshops in schools and libraries. She lives and works in Montreal.



André Duhaime was born in Montreal in 1948, but lives and writes in Gatineau. His literary activity is characterized by the practice of classical forms of Japanese poetry and their dissemination through books, articles and the web (*Haïku sans frontières* - <http://pages.videotron.com/haiku>). He has published some thirty works: haikus, tankas, renkus and various anthologies; thematic collective collections and illustrated albums for young people. In 2020, Haiku Canada created Le Prix André-Duhaime to pay tribute to the eponymous pioneer of French-language haiku in North America. The Prix André Duhaime is awarded every 2 years by Haiku Canada to encourage recognition of the excellence of this literary genre in French.



Interview with André Duhaime for Haiku Canada's annual meeting entitled "Haiku et les arts", Montréal 2023 available on Haiku Canada's Youtube channel. In French.



Haiku Canada also has a committee dedicated to archives and to developing a haiku collection in collaboration with the University of Victoria (Vancouver Island, BC). For further information: archives@haikucanada.org