

## 2023 CALGARY AWARDS W.O. MITCHELL BOOK PRIZE RECIPIENT

### Summary

Award Categories	Selected Recipient(s)
The City of Calgary W.O. Mitchell Book Prize	Suzette Mayr <i>The Sleeping Car Porter</i>

### **W.O. Mitchell Book Prize** **Suzette Mayr** ***The Sleeping Car Porter***

Suzette Mayr takes readers on a deliriously visceral journey into the life of R.T. Baxter, a sleeping car porter, in 1929. When a mudslide strands a train, Baxter, a queer Black sleeping car porter, must contend with the perils of white passengers, ghosts, and his secret love affair.

The *Sleeping Car Porter* brings to life an important part of Black history in North America, from the perspective of a queer man living in a culture that renders him invisible in two ways. Affecting, imaginative, and visceral enough that you'll feel the rocking of the train, *The Sleeping Car Porter* is a stunning accomplishment.

Baxter's name isn't George. But it's 1929, and Baxter is lucky enough, as a Black man, to have a job as a sleeping car porter on a train that criss-crosses the country. So when the passengers call him George, he has to just smile and nod and act invisible. What he really wants is to go to dentistry school, but he'll have to save up a lot of nickel and dime tips to get there, so he puts up with "George."

On this particular trip out west, the passengers are more unruly than usual, especially when the train is stalled for two extra days; their secrets start to leak out and blur with the sleep-deprivation hallucinations Baxter is having. When he finds a naughty postcard of two queer men, Baxter's memories and longings are reawakened; keeping it puts his job in peril, but he can't part with the postcard or his thoughts of Edwin Drew, Porter Instructor.

**BIO** (From [Suzette's website](#)): **Suzette Mayr** is the author of six novels including her most recent, *The Sleeping Car Porter*, winner of the 2022 Scotiabank Giller Award, and nominee for the Republic of Consciousness Prize (US and Canada) and the inaugural Carol Shields Prize for Fiction. Mayr's other novels have won the ReLit Award and City of Calgary W.O. Mitchell Book Prize, and been nominated for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, the Commonwealth Prize for Best Book in the Canada-Caribbean Region, the Writers' Guild of Alberta's Best First Book and Best Novel Awards, and the Ferro-Grumley Award for LGBT Fiction. Mayr has done inter-disciplinary work with Calgary theatre company Theatre Junction, and visual artists Lisa Brawn and Geoff Hunter. She is a former President of the Writers' Guild of Alberta. Mayr teaches Creative Writing at the University of Calgary.