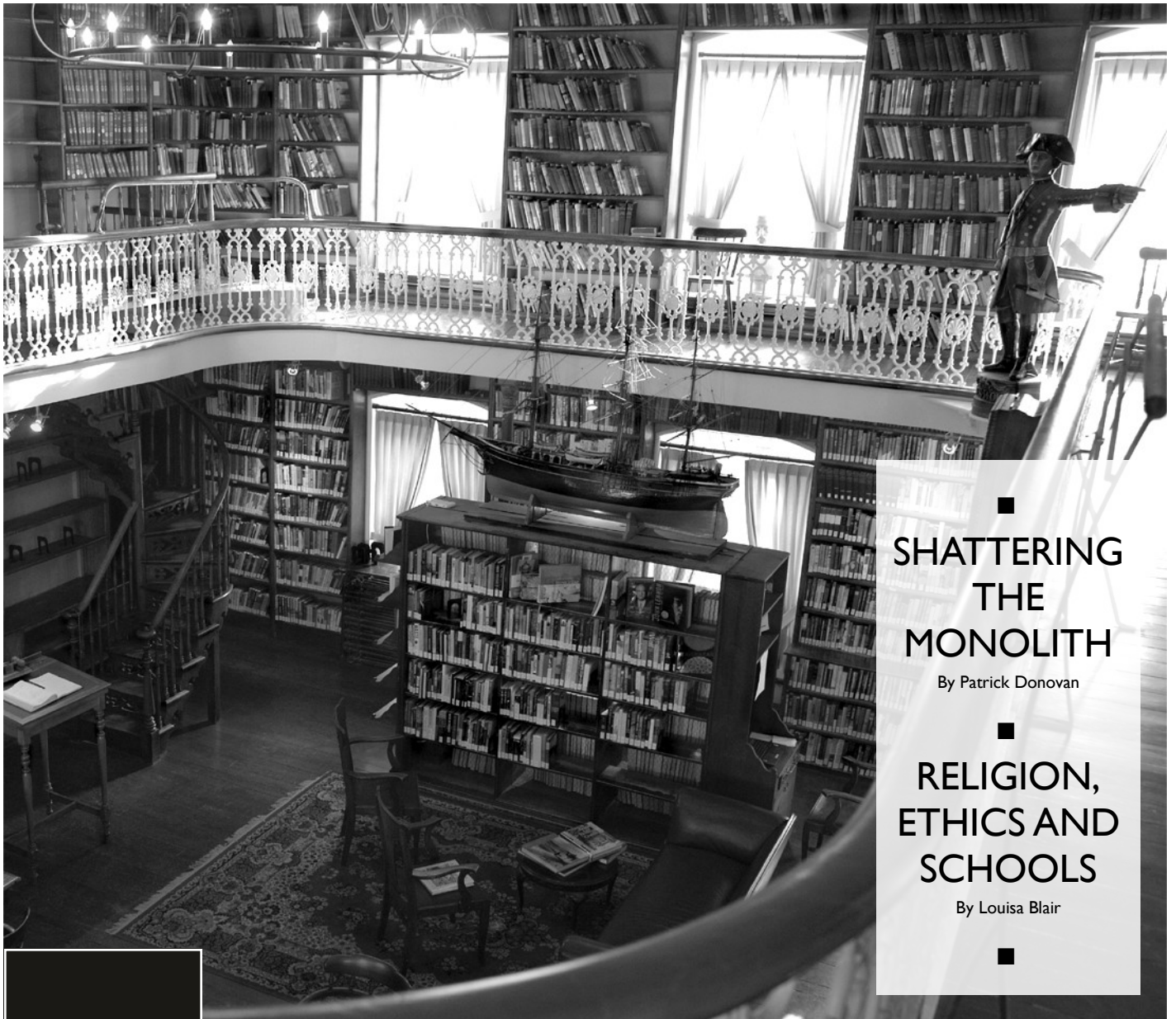


# SOCIETY PAGES

NUMBER 27 ■ SPRING 2010 ■ \$2.00



■  
**SHATTERING  
THE  
MONOLITH**

By Patrick Donovan

■  
**RELIGION,  
ETHICS AND  
SCHOOLS**

By Louisa Blair

**morrin**

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NUMBER 27 ■ SPRING 2010

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The mission of the **Morrin Centre** is to share and foster English-language culture in the Quebec City region. The Morrin Centre is administered by the Literary & Historical Society of Quebec.

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

## A NEW BEGINNING

Dear Members and Friends,

Following the recent AGM, the Literary and Historical Society embarks upon its 187<sup>th</sup> year of existence, a year with opportunities and challenges as we continue to build on the success and the reputation of the Morrin Centre, while undertaking the completion of the restoration work in the building.

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome those new Members who you elected to represent the interests of the Society on Council and to thank those who have stepped down.

New Members are Barbara Salomon de Friedberg (Honourary Librarian), Gina Farnell, Nathaniel B. Findlay, Lisa Kennedy and Tariq Qureshi who joined David F. Blair (President) Sovita Chander (Vice-President), James Haberlin (Treasurer), Peter Black, Louisa Blair (Secretary), William GK Boden, Steve Cameron, Judith Dunn, Ladd Johnson, Rob Lemon, Lorraine O'Donnell and H  l  ne Thibault to form the Council for the new term.

Members of council who stepped down at the recent AGM are James Donovan and Marie Tremblay, who was also the Honourary Librarian and a long standing Member of the Executive Committee. Diane Kameen also stepped down during the course of the last year as Council Member, Secretary and long standing Executive Committee Member. Thank you for your contribution to the Society

I would like to pay particular tribute to both Marie and Diane, who over the course of the past many years, consistently put their heart

and soul into the good governance of the Society. As Honourary Librarian, an ancient office created in the early days of the Society, Marie was in charge of the library's book selection committee. She ran all matters relating to the library with a fair and even hand and the quality of our collections and the workings of the library have benefited very much from Marie's touch. I wish her and her husband every best wish as they move to a new life of retirement in Ottawa near their grandchildren. I would also like to mention Diane Kameen who, although she stepped down during the course of the last year, occupied a pivotal role in the evolution of the Society over the last 15 years and has contributed a huge amount to the present circumstances of the Morrin Centre and the Society. I would also like to thank Steve Cameron who has stepped down as Vice-President and Member of the Executive Committee, but as he consolingly reminds me, remains an active Member of Council. Steve has contributed and continues to contribute above and beyond the call of duty to the well being of the Society and brings his many talents and insightful vision to the management of its affairs.

Finally, I would like to thank all Members of the Society for your continued confidence in me as your President and I say welcome and thank you to all Council Members, new and old, for your continued commitment to our charming and venerable Society, the unique Lit. & Hist.

Best wishes,



David F. Blair  
President



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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our 186th Annual General Meeting took place on March 22nd, 2010, at the LHSQ library. About 50 members attended the meeting and were informed of last year's achievements. Different reports submitted by Council members and by the Executive Director were read. The formal part of the meeting was followed by a wine & cheese and our famous magazine auction, with Louisa Blair as the auctioneer. Judging from the laughter this AGM ended with, quite an enjoyable and entertaining evening was had by all.

You will find the list of the 2010/2011 Council members on the inside cover of this edition of the Society Pages.

Our Annual Report is posted online at [www.morrin.org](http://www.morrin.org).

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

Since assuming the role of Executive Director, I have been waiting for that time when the frantic pace would abate. After the flurry of writing funding proposals in the fall, I was sure that things would get quieter but then we had to start writing the applications for summer students. Now there is the writers' festival just around the corner and I hope you will be able to attend at least one of the eight events!

We are also trying to find the funding to be able to complete all the restoration needed on this building, once and for all. This has proved to be quite tricky, as multiple funding partners are required and quite often what one gives is dependant on what the other gives. I am proud to say that we have received solid support from our private donors, namely the Jeffery Hale Foundation, the Howard Webster Foundation and La Maison Simons. Without their financial support we would not have started the ball rolling. As you may know, we re-

ceived funding from Parks Canada to restore one of the jail blocks. We had also obtained \$165,000 from the *Entente de partenariat régionale en tourisme de Québec* toward the restoration of the cell blocks, the chemistry lab on the fourth floor and some of the safety concerns. We are still waiting for a decision from the City of Quebec and Parks Canada in regards to funding applications. Let's keep our fingers crossed!

I look forward to the day everything falls into place and we will be able to better concentrate on our priorities: providing excellent historical interpretation services to groups and individuals, providing the best possible library services to our members and presenting outstanding cultural activities, be it literary events, historical conferences, pre-concert lectures and much more. To this end we are undertaking a survey and would be delighted if you returned it to us along with any suggestions you may have.

All the best,



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## SHATTERING THE MONOLITH

SHOWCASING THE DIVERSITY OF QUEBEC CITY'S ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

by Patrick Donovan

In the past few decades, the English-speaking community in Quebec City has moved from a perspective of mere survival to take on a more proactive role. A poignant example is the transformation of the then struggling 180-year-old Literary and Historical Society of Quebec into the vibrant new Morrin Centre. Before this revitalization, a yellowed sign printed in neat gothic calligraphy over the donation box in the Society's library said "With your help we can survive." Soon, through the leadership of energetic board members and determined staff, the goal was not mere survival but raising five million dollars to restore the building and set up a new cultural centre. Personnel grew from a few underpaid part-time community members aided by dedicated volunteers to nearly a dozen full-time staff.

I joined this new growing team in 2004. At that point, Quebec City's English-speaking community had secured its health, social service, community advocacy, and educational organizations. The Morrin Centre had the potential to become a culture/heritage magnet but the wonderful old building, situated in the heart of the old city, was in desperate need of restoration. Originally built as the city jail, it served this purpose from 1808 to 1868. After this date the building was transformed into Morrin College, a Presbyterian-run educational institution affiliated with McGill University that closed around 1900. One wing housed the library of the aforementioned Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, Canada's oldest learned society. In addition to preserving this history, our new mission involved presenting the culture and heritage of the English-speaking community. Where to start?

"The good thing," I said to then executive director France Cliche, "is that we're independent, not under any pressure to present a vision of French and English working hand-in-hand as 'founding peoples.' We can tell the story of Anglophones like it is, without any controversial political agenda."

"But we want to be controversial," countered France. "We want to challenge prevailing myths."

After several discussions, we found that we were on the same wavelength – challenging prevailing myths, being controversial, and "telling it like it is" were one and the same. But the challenge of presenting the community in the face of so many different visions remained. And what prevailing myths should we challenge? Not the one about "founding peoples" because, let's face it, nobody really buys it, especially not when the First Nations are welcomed into to the discussion. No, the prevailing myth was the idea of Quebec's Anglophones as a self-assured ethnic monolith, "les Anglais," with their heritage of privilege and wealth amassed through exploitation of Francophone "porteurs d'eau." A caricature, to be sure, but one that still holds sway to varying degrees, even among Anglophones themselves who are not always

aware of their own history. We needed to show the underlying diversity, the complexity beneath all the simplistic definitions.

**The Underlying Diversity**

This myth of a single Anglophone "bloc monolithique" that spans the province is revived at almost each election (or referendum). Commentators point to quasi-monolithic voting behaviours in a few Montreal West End English-speaking enclaves, and then break off into broader generalizations about Anglophones in Quebec. But is it fair to liken Montreal Anglophones garrisoned off in English-speaking municipalities to those thinly spread out in overwhelmingly Francophone Quebec City, along the Gaspé peninsula, etc.? If anything, many Anglophones outside Montreal have tried to affirm their difference, and not just in terms of voting behaviour. The most striking public manifestation of this involved the disassociation of many community organizations from the increasingly sectarian Montreal-based Alliance Quebec before the turn of the millennium. When the Morrin Centre carried out oral history interviews among Quebec City Anglophones in 2008, this idea of a community seeking to emphasize its integration and differentiate itself from the shadow of Montreal recurred frequently. This also came out in Louisa Blair's research for her history of Quebec City's Anglophone population, leading her to conclude that the population was "more likely to be bilingual, more integrated into the French-speaking majority and more likely to see the collective aspirations of French speakers." This integration is seen in the city's English schools, where French is, more often than not, the language spoken in the schoolyard. Is all this solely a result of demographics, or do other factors contribute to these differences? This remains a question to be studied. What matters is the fact that a great regional diversity within English-speaking Quebec exists and is often unacknowledged.

Another way to shatter the monolith is to look at ethnic and cultural diversity within the community. This is perhaps more obvious in Montreal than in Quebec City. According to the 2006 Census, 16.5% of the population of Montreal is made up of visible minorities compared to only 2.3% in Quebec City. However, a closer look at Quebec City's English-speaking population still reveals that "les anglais" is a wholly inaccurate label. For one, the English-speaking population has historically been largely Irish, more so than elsewhere in the province – 69% of Quebec City's English-speaking population was Irish in 1871, representing a little over a quarter of the total city population. Most were Irish Catholic, forming their own Churches, schools, and community institutions. In light of the struggles for Home Rule and independence for Ireland back in Europe, they would probably have resented the idea of being confounded with the English. Never mind the fact that "les anglais" leaves out the Scottish, Welsh, Jewish, Greek,

Chinese and American populations that spoke English in Quebec City who, until the revision of educational laws in the 1970s, were forced into the English-language Protestant school system because Catholic French-language schools excluded them. More recently, this diversity has increased through immigration from former British or American colonies such as India and the Philippines, where English is commonly taught. However, the cultural ancestry that most Quebec City Anglophones have in common today is probably French Canadian, a result of centuries of intercultural marriages with the Francophone majority. On the one hand, older cultural identities live on in varying degrees, some people still affirming their Irishness after four generations in Quebec. On the other, integration fosters affinity with Francophone culture, leading to an Anglophone community far too complex and diverse to be reduced to a monolith.

The third form of diversity worth mentioning is socio-economic diversity. Raising this issue strikes at the heart of one of the most enduring myths, namely that Anglophones have a heritage steeped in wealth. Some people have a more subtle view, aware of the thousands of underpaid Irish famine migrants who worked as longshoremen in Quebec City's port in the mid-nineteenth century. However, even this view often has the English and Scottish playing the role of wealthy bosses surveying workers from their country estates atop the heights of Sillery. In fact, 80.7% of Anglo-Protestants in the province in 1871 were farmers, artisans, servants, or common labourers compared to 89.6% of French Canadians and 82% of Irish Catholics. Sure, these statistics show that Anglophones were more likely to earn more and be in positions of power, but those positions were few and far between. It makes little sense to imagine the Scots and English as wealthy bosses when over 80% were quite far removed from the upper echelons of power.

What we're left with after this brief exploration is a diverse community: socio-economically diverse, culturally diverse, and with great regional diversities as well. The fact that the English-speaking community eludes easy definition is seen as a liability to some. Why not see this diversity as an asset? Now that we know the myth-breaking message, let's get back to the Morrin Centre and see how we have tried to break through the stereotypes through concrete actions.

### Getting the message across

Being located in the heart of Old Quebec in a unique heritage building has certainly allowed the Morrin Centre to draw in visitors and get our message across. One of the main ways this is achieved is through heritage tours and educational programmes, drawing in thousands of visitors and students in the last year alone. There is so much history between the old jail cells, library and old classrooms that talking about the community as well could easily overwhelm the 45-minute attention span of most visitors to historic sites. So, instead of addressing all this separately, we work the message of diversity into the tour. Some of the English names engraved on the walls of the former jail allow people to see that Anglophones were not always "the bosses." This is also where Anglophone and Francophone political prisoners were imprisoned during the anti-colonial Patriote Rebellions of 1837-38, showing that Anglophones are not always on the

side of the English. Then it's up to the College hall, where visitors learn about the religious divide that once separated the educational system into a culturally diverse range of English-speaking communities. And so on...

The message of diversity also finds its way into our other initiatives. It is an underlying concern when planning our programme of cultural activities, notably the two-day "Roots" and "Shalom Quebec" conferences on cultural diversity in 2008 and the projected one-day conference on socio-economic diversity in 2011, not to mention our regular calendar of historical, cultural, literary, and political talks. Annual events like the Celtic Festival, which drew in 6,500 participants last September, stress the common threads running through this diversity. This festival cuts across perceived divisions by showing the shared Celtic heritage of Anglophones in the British Isles and Francophones across the channel in Brittany. Furthermore, online exhibitions, oral history projects, our Society Pages (quarterly review), and all other outreach activities are geared toward shattering simplistic monolithic visions of Anglophones to show the underlying diversity.

### Challenges

Heritage and culture organizations like the Morrin Centre play an essential role in reaching out to the broader population through tangible initiatives like the ones mentioned above. This is crucial in fostering a sense of identity, belonging, and attachment. In fact, studies by Marie-Odile Magnan in Quebec City have shown that a lack of Anglophone cultural institutions and activities is one of the reasons mentioned by youth who leave the region.

Unfortunately, the primary challenge for many of these organizations is funding. The Morrin has done better than most because of strong municipal support and the help of well-endowed local foundations. However, it still faces a high staff turnover because it cannot measure up to the wages offered elsewhere in the region. In the past few decades, the English-speaking community in the province has developed strong umbrella organizations that are well-funded and supported by the government. However, federal funding programs do not provide operational funds for the local groups working under these umbrellas. Funds for non-umbrella groups can only be obtained through project grants, which require new innovative projects every year and do not allow for the repetition of a successful project. There is a solution: greater state support for culture and heritage organizations, ensuring sustainable organizations both at the umbrella level and below. ■

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## TRANSACTIONS

## RELIGION, ETHICS AND SCHOOLS

By Louisa Blair

When I was choosing a school for my daughter in Quebec City, I visited the school closest to our house. I had no idea what questions to ask or on what I was supposed to base my decision. I decided it was the right school because I liked the smell of the staircase.

It was the oldest girls' school in North America, still run by the Ursulines, a Catholic religious order that had arrived here in 1639 with the idea of civilizing and evangelizing the children of the First Nations. Christianity and civilization were inseparable, if not synonymous, and this idea has determined the shape of the educational system in Quebec ever since.

In this section we present a debate between two people who have gone much further than their noses in looking at the Quebec education system, and specifically, at the replacement of all religious education in Quebec schools with a new mandatory course entitled "Ethics and Religious Culture." Georges Leroux is Professor Emeritus in the department of philosophy at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Gary Caldwell was a member of the États Généraux sur l'Éducation and is author of *La culture publique commune*. He is deputy mayor of Ste-Edwidge-de-Clifton, Quebec.

The new course has provoked a debate in Quebec that touches on many important issues: How does Quebec wish to relate to its religious heritage? How should people regard cultures and belief systems different from their own, and how should we live together? What kind of society do we want to be? But it goes much further than this – it touches on how we learn to distinguish between right and wrong, between good and evil. It touches, ultimately, on the nature of freedom itself.

Until ten short years ago, Quebec schoolchildren were still being sent to different schools roughly according to whether they were Protestant or Catholic. Catholics and Protestants had never been able to agree on a common public education system, so each ran their own very different institutions and, until 1964, there was no provincial education department at all. Even once the state was involved, a dual system based on denomination was maintained for another 35 years. Catholic schools were mostly French, and Protestant schools, English.

This tidy solution was upset long ago by Jews, who had to become honorary Protestants, and by Irish Catholics, who fought to establish English Catholic schools. Catholic English-language schools attracted many new immigrant groups who were not English-speaking, including Italians and Poles; while non-Catholic immigrants, including Greeks, Lebanese and Chinese, landed in Protestant schools. With the declining birthrate of the *Québécois de souche*, the language worries of the state began to outweigh denominational considerations.

When, starting in 1981, all new immigrants were forced to send their children to French schools, it was a very clear signal that language, and not religion, would be the new faultline.

In 2000, the Catholic-Protestant divide in the school system was replaced with an English-French divide. This was a move toward a more secular system (the untranslatable verb *déconfessionnaliser* gives the process a certain French revolutionary grandeur), and the notwithstanding clause was invoked to prevent minority religious groups from demanding religious education in schools. In 2005, Quebec took the final step in laicizing (another dashing republican word) the school system by definitively eliminating the choice of religious instruction in school altogether.

This required much legal and constitutional tinkering, some would say sabotage. Abolishing denominational schools had already required an amendment to the 1867 British North America Act and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. Eliminating religious instruction meant abrogating section 5 of the Public Education Act and amending the Charter again.

I moved back to Quebec City in 1996, after many years away. If the school system was supposed to be educating children in the Catholic faith, it was evidently failing to keep them in it. The Catholic churches were almost empty. People knew little about other faiths, in spite of various efforts since the 1970s to include a smattering of other faiths in the curriculum. Sometimes I was asked, "*Vous autres, les Protestants, croyez-vous en Jésus Christ?*" (Do you Protestants believe in Jesus Christ?) Protestants were almost equally ignorant about Catholicism. Most schoolchildren had a scathing contempt for their "relig" (pronounced *relish*) classes. My francophone undergraduate students at the university knew very little about Christianity, the Catholic Church or the Bible. Whatever the education system was doing about it, knowledge of religion, or even knowledge of their own Judeo-Christian heritage, was clearly not being passed on.

Starting in the fall of 2008, Quebec replaced religious instruction with the new Ethics and Religious Culture course. The program is compulsory in all Quebec schools, public and private, though private schools (which are actually state-subsidized by up to 80 per cent) can offer their own religious instruction on the side. Given the increasingly diverse nature of Quebec society, the program aims, as Georges Leroux explains, to turn out people who respect one another's differences and work together for the common good. On the basis of these goals, it teaches students about the moral equality of all human beings, about how to reflect on ethical issues using reason (as opposed to religious precepts) and

about how to engage in dialogue on these issues in ways that respect others, whatever their convictions. It also aims to educate students about Quebec's religious heritage (Aboriginal, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish) and the different religions now present in Quebec (Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism).

It is hard to argue with the need for children to know a bit more about one another, and how to engage in dialogue. But many Quebecers objected to this removal of our right to religious education in the schools, basing their arguments on democratic, legal, constitutional, religious, educational and historical grounds. Gary Caldwell maintains that the removal of this right, and the process by which the course was imposed with very little public consultation, were deeply undemocratic and ultimately dangerous for Quebec society.

There have also been objections to course content. Some claim that presenting belief systems as all equally valid cannot be acceptable to anyone who is a believer, whether atheist, Christian or Jewish. The Council on Jewish Education in Quebec placed a third-of-a-page advertisement in the Montreal Gazette saying the course should allow teachers in Jewish schools to make

a value judgment on the beliefs being studied ... Torah law requires Jews to epistemologically recognize the prophecy of Moses as absolute eternal truth, which cannot be contradicted by any other prophet. Therefore, when a Jewish school class studies a belief that is incompatible with the prophecy of Moses (e.g. atheism), the Jewish teacher is obligated to identify the incompatible belief as false.<sup>1</sup>

Others agree that ethics cannot be taught in a neutral fashion, and see in the course a statist agenda to impose a far-from-neutral, indeed fundamentalist, form of "normative pluralism" on the population – evangelizing the natives all over again. Can tolerance and a common good really be acquired through a combination of objective knowledge of others' religions and reasoned dialogue? Or is this utopianism, as Gary Caldwell argues?

As for learning ethics without religious instruction at its heart, some would agree with Pope Leo XIII, who pronounced on the Manitoba Schools Question in 1890 that "to be desirous that minds should be imbued with good and at the same time to leave them without religion is as senseless as to invite people to virtue after having taken away the foundations on which it rests."

This is not just a Catholic position. John Locke, the English political philosopher whom Georges Leroux claims as an ally, was himself a devout Protestant and believed that religious tolerance was above all an outcome of faith, as were both freedom and autonomy (he didn't believe in extending this tolerance to Catholics or atheists, however). Universal public education came about in Scotland *because* of religion:

reformers believed that everyone should be able to read the Bible for himself or herself and only then would be truly free to choose. This deeply held belief in the necessity of universal public education, which arrived in Quebec with anglophone immigrants in the 18th and 19th centuries, had a profound impact on the evolution of Quebec's education system.

Some object to having their children learn about other religions before they have had time to consolidate their own faith, and believe that this undermines the parents' religious freedom to educate their children in their own faith.

A broadside from the other direction entirely comes from humanists, such as members of the Mouvement Laïque Québécois, who criticize the course for linking ethics and religious culture at all. This movement argues that students will get the false impression that morality stems from religion, rather than from ethical philosophy. Placing too high a value on the spiritual life will undermine the supremacy of human rights which, they believe, can only be guaranteed by humanist values.<sup>2</sup> Hostility toward religion *per se* in Quebec is not at all confined to a small group of humanists. It was widely expressed during the hearings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on Reasonable Accommodation; and in a 2008 poll by *Le Devoir*, 29 per cent of respondents wanted no discussion of religions in the schools at all.

So why *does* the course combine ethics with religious culture? The answer lies in a concept called open secularism, as carefully outlined in the recommendations of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission. Open secularism is in contrast to the more rigid French version of secularism, out of which, for example, the Muslim *hijab* was banished from schools. "Secularism must serve civic integration," wrote Bouchard and Taylor, "while challenging the premise that removal of difference is a condition for integration ... dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation between the citizens of a diversified society demand, to the contrary, that their resemblances and their differences be recognized and respected."<sup>3</sup>

A new, integrated civic culture, a way of living together or *vivre ensemble*, is what the course aims to establish in Quebec. Gary Caldwell argues that the state has no business playing such a magisterial role, and that there is a public culture already in Quebec, one that was acknowledged by Bouchard and Taylor and whose Greco-Judeo-Christian foundations took 5,000 years to evolve. Georges Leroux, on the other hand, replies that Caldwell is out of touch with the modern world, and that while a common public culture may still exist in the villages of rural Quebec, the curriculum is failing Quebec youth if it does not prepare them for the globalized, pluralistic society of the future.

Among the range of reactions to the new course have been more than 1,700 demands for exemptions, demands which the Ministry of Education has instructed school boards to refuse in every case. This refusal has led to two major lawsuits. The first is by Loyola High School, a private Jesuit school that claimed it was already educating students about



other religions, the common good and recognition of others – but in a manner in keeping with the Catholic faith. The Ministry of Education denied Loyola an exemption, arguing that its course was not “even-handed” and “does not meet the religious culture requirements of the Ethics and Religious Culture program, because the study of religions seems to take place in association with the Catholic religion.”

In a letter to the Montreal Gazette, Loyola’s principal wrote, “The common good is not secular; it is COMMON. Can we not pursue these things from within our own traditions and beliefs, or do we all need to become secularists first?”

The second case was in the small city of Drummondville, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, an hour from Montreal, where parents brought a claim against the government for refusing to allow their children exemption from the course. They were unsuccessful, the Quebec Superior Court judge ruling that the course did not limit the children’s freedom of conscience and religion. Parents in Granby in the Eastern Townships also failed to get an exemption, and when they withdrew their children from the class, the children were suspended – a move Gary Caldwell compares to excommunication. He contrasts this contempt with the respect formerly given to nonreligious parents who successfully fought to have their children exempted from religious instruction in the denominational schools.

There is much questioning over whether enough teachers will be competent to teach this very demanding course. So far, teachers have had between three hours and three days of preparation. Many also question whether they can teach it with the requisite neutrality, while others question whether this should be a requirement at all.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Archbishop of Quebec, has been an outspoken critic of the program since its inception, and has complained loudly to Rome and in the international arena. His fellow bishops in the Assemblée des Évêques Catholiques du Québec, having reserved judgement until they saw the course content, have now remarked with disappointment that “Christianity’s contribution to the social and cultural life of Québec, frequently reiterated during consultations which led to the approval of the program, is barely evident and, in some cases, totally absent in the textbooks that were studied.”

Few Quebec children go to church on Sundays any more, but ironically, as one of the Quebec bishops pointed out to me, they are now being taken to church during the week as part of their ECR course. Abbots of monasteries and priests of sleepy parishes are reporting that they are suddenly finding their churches full of children for the first time in decades – children who are looking around them and asking lots of questions.

Having examined one of the textbooks in detail, I would love to have taken this course in school, and I would perhaps be less of a bigot as a consequence. I learned a lot about other religions than my own, and the section on dialogue

demonstrates various forms of dialogue (conversations, interviews, debates), giving practical advice on how and how not to engage constructively in them; the same goes for how to present an opinion or question someone else’s opinion. It lays out some useful ground rules for how to discuss important and difficult issues. In fact, it reminds me of the classical rhetoric taught in Quebec’s private religious colleges, a system deeply rooted in our Greco-Judeo-Christian tradition but abolished in 1967.

Quebec is not alone in being torn between religious and ethical education. In Berlin, where authorities banned religious education and introduced a course similar to Quebec’s in 2006, a referendum forced city officials to bring back religious education. The campaign was supported by both Jewish and Muslim groups. “It’s important that schools have enlightened Islamic lessons – and that we avoid unofficial Koran lessons in backyards,” said one representative of a Turkish Muslim group.<sup>4</sup>

I don’t believe we should or can do without religious education, not just for *vivre ensemble* but for resolving our most important, difficult and perhaps dangerous differences. Irish theologian Enda McDonagh, deeply involved in mediation in Northern Ireland, says that “even the essential and liberating moral language of human rights ... is not adequate to the subtleties of human relations in such basics as trust, friendship, marriage and political reconciliation.”

Now, if only the Ministry of Education would follow its own rules for dialogue, and allow exemptions, instead of falling into what it calls an *entrave au dialogue: argument d’autorité* (obstacle to dialogue: argument from authority), I think I could live with this course until we develop a public religious education system that works, with qualified teachers who know enough about their own religions to actually teach them.

After all, Quebecers have several centuries of experience of living side by side with people of different faiths. What we can say is that we did not kill one another over religion. May we keep talking and continue not to kill one another. ■

<sup>1</sup>Janice Arnold, “Que. Religions Course Seen Incompatible with Torah,” Canadian Jewish News, September 3, 2009, retrieved November 6, 2009, from [http://www.cjnews.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=17526&Itemid=86](http://www.cjnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17526&Itemid=86)

<sup>2</sup> See Marie-Michelle Poisson, “Le cours d’Éthique et culture religieuse: Un dispositif idéologique pour faire reculer les Lumières,” retrieved November 6, 2009, from <http://www.sceptiques.qc.ca/activites/conferences/mars-2009>

<sup>3</sup> Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation*, report (Quebec, QC: Government of Quebec, 2008), p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> “Referendum Pits Ethics against Religion,” Spiegel Online International, April 23, 2009, retrieved November 6, 2009, from <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,620817,00.html>

**Note:** This article was first published in *Inroads*, The Canadian Journal of Opinion: Issue 26

## LIBRARY PAGES

## BOOK REVIEW

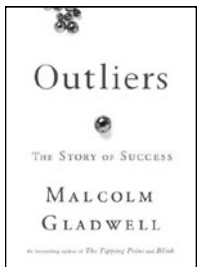
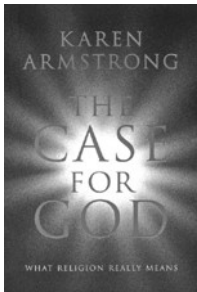
by Miriam Blair

An unexpected and unwanted revisit of an old illness, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, has given me the opportunity to catch up on my reading. I've been much helped by the Lit and His in this enterprise, although Gabrielle Roy, and the dusty shelves in our house have also provided some necessary fodder. As a member of the book committee, thus responsible for choosing a fair number of the new books each month, I am particularly motivated to read some of the new acquisitions. Having been asked to write a few lines for the Society Pages, I thought I'd comment briefly on some of the books I've enjoyed this year.



The first book, and one of the best was **THE MUSIC ROOM** by William Fiennes. This is a memoir of a childhood and a fascinating house, with a tender portrait of the author's brother who developed epilepsy, and of the parents dealing with this, while managing their medieval castle which has to be opened to the public in order to finance its upkeep. It was written so subtly and beautifully, almost like a poem. It is a book one wants to own and keep forever.

**THE CASE FOR GOD** by Karen Armstrong is a history of religion, going back to the first evidence of the worship of gods, describing its evolution up to the present day. I found this fascinating and well worth owning, in order to dip into whenever faced with a controversy on the subject, not least in my own mind.



**THE OUTLIER'S, THE STORY OF SUCCESS**, written by Malcolm Gladwell, a staff writer for the New Yorker, whose other books, *Blink* and *The Tipping Point* have almost become cult books, was another very good and entertaining read. In this he argues that the story of successful people is much more complex than their (not necessarily) high I.Q.s would indicate. He demonstrates his thesis

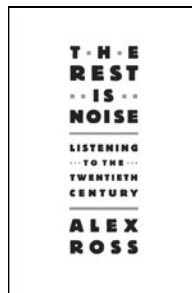
with many interesting examples among whom his own was particularly fascinating.

Always fascinated by China, I was gripped by a recent novel, **THE VAGRANTS** by Yiyun Li, set in a grim town just after the Cultural Revolution with events including the massacre in Tiananmen Square. Although it is sometimes painful to read, it was hard to put down, especially having become emotionally involved with the principal characters. I felt that it was a very honest and fascinating depiction of life at that time in that place.

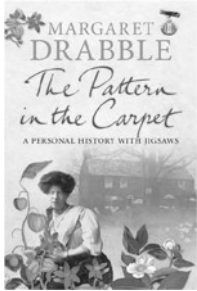


**THE ART INSTINCT** by Dennis Dutton, subtitled *Beauty, Pleasure and Evolution* was one of the most fascinating books I've read in a long time. Since I had been responsible for bringing it to the attention of the committee, I was worried to find that I was the first taker. It was published in England on Darwin's 200th birthday: Feb. 12, 2009, and is an examination of how and why our uses and appreciation of all kinds of art has evolved in the past 80,000 generations since our hominid ancestors first stood up on the African Savannah. Don't take my word for it: If you look on Google, you'll find some very glowing appreciations of this book. Not least by Margaret Atwood.

**THE REST IS NOISE, LISTENING TO THE 20TH CENTURY** by Alex Ross, who is the music critic of the New Yorker. This a large tome, but always entertainingly written, with some particularly interesting chapters on music during the Weimar republic, the Soviet treatment of composers and the CIA funding of Avant Garde music during the cold war.



## LIBRARY PAGES



Margaret Drabble's *THE PATTERN IN THE CARPET* uses the unlikely subject of Jigsaw puzzles as a basis for a very amusing autobiographical account of aspects of her own life and that of a beloved aunt. She calls it a Personal Memoir, and allows herself to go off on all sorts of intriguing tangents.



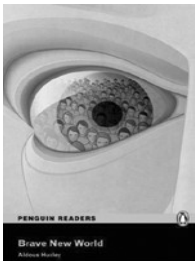
*CAN YOU HEAR THE NIGHTBIRD SING ?* by Anita Badami: this family epic starts in 1947 at the time of the partition of India and Pakistan, and takes its three engaging women heroines through the violent years which ensue, including the assassination of Indira Ghandi, and ending with the Crash of the Air India Flight from Vancouver in 1985. It was compelling reading, the characters very sympathetically drawn, with lives in India vividly portrayed as well as giving an insight into the life of an Indian immigrant in Vancouver.



Penelope Lively' latest book, *FAMILY ALBUM* is a story about a family of six children, parents, and an au pair, whose lives in a substantial Edwardian house in the 70's and 80's are brilliantly portrayed. The mother, a very domestic housewife, appears to rejoice in her happy family: but there is a secret hovering beneath the surface. The novel unfolds from the different points of view of each of the children alternating between them and the grown-ups. A very good read.

Finally, although it can't be described as a recent acquisition, I got around to reading that wonderfully amusing classic, *TOM JONES*, by Henry Fielding. Written in 1749, as well as being a great story, it's a very interesting piece of social history of those times, written with great wit and wisdom. Tom Jones must be one of the most lovable rogues in English literature. ■

### BOOK REVIEW by Simon Auclair



***Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley** is a great classic of science-fiction that is more relevant than ever. In a world where Ford and his work principles are considered sacred, human life has become nothing but a mere tool of productivity, children are socially catalogued depending on their “perfection” and a caste system has been established (Andrew Nicol’s *Gattaca* would later somewhat exploit the idea). The idea of individuality has been totally removed from the vocabulary and everyone belongs to everyone, thus making the idea of sexual competition and family obsolete. In that brave new world, we follow Bernard, an individual not feeling at ease in this society, shorter than he should be for an “Alpha”, reluctant to taking SOMA, the drug that everyone is using to relax. He will eventually visit a “Savage” reservation where people live much like today. Bernard will meet a young savage named John. In an attempt to change his world, Bernard will bring John back and show him around like some kind of weird animal. The consequences are dramatic. Huxley blended together all the ideas of his time with no distinction of origin (socialist, communist, capitalist, scientific) and pushed it to the extreme to

create a monstrous world where heart and humanity are evacuated and replaced only by ideals and progress. *Brave New World* was ranked fifth on the Modern Library’s list of best English-language novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



***Invisible: A Memoir* by Hughes de Montalembert**, a painter and photographer, was blinded many years ago when burglars attacked him in his New York City apartment. This uplifting and encouraging book tells his fight to survive the reality of discouragement and isolation. In brief chapters, never dwelling on the difficulties he encountered, but rather writing about the ways he overcame them, Montalembert reminds us of the essentials in life : courage, love and self-determination. In order to regain his independence, Montalembert travels around the world. Blind but totally conscious of his surroundings, always learning about himself, he explains to us in simple concise sentences what he “saw”: incredible landscapes, people more devastated than him, truths he found in himself and his secret desire to finally find what he is looking for : “Why do I travel? Why do I go see places? I don’t know. But I hope one day I will get tired of it.” ■

## LIBRARY PAGES

## BOOKS PURCHASED IN 2010

- Allan, Chantal  
*Bomb Canada and Other Unkind Remarks in the American Media*
- Amis, Martin  
*Pregnant Widow, The*
- Azerrad, Michael  
*Our Band Could be Your Life*
- Ball, Philip  
*Music Instinct*
- Beard, Mary  
*Pompeii : Life of a Roman Town, The*
- Begley, Louis  
*Tremendous World I Have Inside My Head, The : Franz Kafka, a Biographical Essay*
- Boyd, William  
*Ordinary Thunderstorms*
- Burdett, John  
*Godfather of Kathmandu*
- Chabon, Michael  
*Manhood for Amateurs*
- Clarke, George Elliot  
*Illuminated Verses*
- Colfer, Eoin  
*And Another Thing*
- Connelly, Karen  
*Brighter Prison, This*
- Connelly, Karen  
*One Room in a Castle*
- Connelly, Karen  
*Border Surrounds Us, The*
- Connelly, Michael  
*Nine Dragons*
- Davis, Wade  
*Wayfinders, The*
- De Lint, Charles  
*Muse and Reverie*
- Dee, Jonathan  
*Privileges, The*
- Doctorow, E.L  
*Homer and Langley*
- Ehrenreich, Barbara  
*Smile or Die*
- Elliot, Jason  
*Mirrors of the Unseen : Journeys in Iran*
- Esfandiari, Haleh  
*My Prison, My Home*
- Forster, Margaret  
*Isa and May*
- Godwin, Gail  
*Unfinished Desires*
- Goldstone, Nancy  
*Lady Queen, The*
- Gorokhova, Elena  
*Mountain of Crumbs, A*
- Grafton, Sue  
*U is for Undertow*
- Griggs, Terry  
*Thought You Were Dead*
- Grisham, John  
*Ford County*
- Harrison, Robert Pogue  
*Gardens : An Essay on the Human Condition*
- Heinlein, Robert  
*Moon is a Harsh Mistress, The*
- Hemingway, Ernest  
*Islands in the Stream*
- Hill, Lawrence and Joshua Key  
*Deserter's Tale, The*
- Hill, Lawrence  
*Someone Knows My Name*
- Hill, Lawrence  
*Some Great Thing*
- Hill, Reginald  
*Midnight Fugue*
- Huston, Charlie  
*Sleepless*
- Huxley, Aldous  
*Devils of Loudun, The*
- Huxley, Aldous  
*Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited*
- James, P.D  
*Talking About Detective Fiction*
- Jansson, Tove  
*Summer Book, The*
- Jansson, Tove  
*True Deceiver, The*
- Krog, Antjie  
*Country of My Skull*
- Lanchester, John  
*I.O.U. : Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay*

## LIBRARY PAGES

- Larsen, Wayne  
*A.Y. Jackson : Life of a Landscape Painter*
- Larsson, Stieg  
*Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest, The*
- Lemire, Jeff  
*Complete Essex County, The*
- Lermontov, Mikhail  
*Hero of Our Time, A*
- Levy, Andrea  
*Long Song*
- MacKey, Frank  
*Done With Slavery*
- Macleod, Alistair  
*Never Die Wondering*
- MacLeod, Alistair  
*As Birds Bring Forth the Sun and Other Stories*
- Maltin, Leonard  
*Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide : 2010 Edition*
- Mankell, Henning  
*Man From Beijing, The*
- Marchant Ian  
*Parallel Lines*
- McCall Smith, Alexander  
*Unbearable Lightness of Scones, The*
- Mieville, China  
*City and the City, The*
- Montalembert, Hugues de  
*Invisible : A Memoir*
- Mortenson, Greg  
*Stones into Schools*
- Müller, Herta  
*Appointment, The*
- O'Neill, Heather  
*Two Eyes Are You Sleeping*
- Pakula, Hannah  
*Last Empress, The*
- Peace, David  
*Occupied City*
- Powning, Beth  
*Sea Captain's Wife, The*
- Putnam, Robert D  
*Bowling Alone*
- Remnick, David  
*Secret Ingredients - The New Yorker Book of Food and Drink*
- Ross, Eric  
*Full of Hope and Promise : The Canadas in 1841*
- Simmons, Deidre  
*Keepers of the Record : the History of the Hudson Bay's Company Archives*
- Simonson, Helen  
*Major Pettigrew's Last Stand*
- Smith, Zadie  
*Changing My Mind*
- Steinberger, Michael  
*Au Revoir To All That : Food, Wine and the Decline of France*
- Tolstoy, Sofia  
*Diaries of Sofia Tolstoy*
- Tyler, Anne  
*Noah's Compass*
- Watson, James D  
*Double Helix, The*
- Waverman, Lucy  
*Year in Lucy's Kitchen, A*

## WISHLIST

Here is a list of classics we are still looking for. You might have some of them!

*Fictions*, Jorge Luis Borges  
*Poems*, Paul Celan  
*Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Alfred Döblin  
*Absalom Absalom*, William Faulkner  
*Gypsy Ballads*, Federico García Lorca  
*The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*, João Guimarães Rosa  
*Hunger*, Knut Hamsun

*The Zorba the Greek*, Nikos Kazantzakis  
*Complete Poems*, Giacomo Leopardi  
*The Golden Notebook*, Doris Lessing  
*Diary of a Madman*, Lu Xun  
*Children of Gebelawi*, Maguib Mahfouz  
*The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki Shikibu  
*Metamorphoses*, Ovid  
*The Book of Disquiet*, Fernando Pessoa  
*Pedro Paramo*, Juan Rulfo  
*Confessions of Zeno*, Italo Svevo  
*Sound of the Mountain*, Yasunari Kawabata

## EVENTS &amp; ACTIVITIES

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**Neil Bissoondath**, Honourary President  
Neil Bissoondath won the Gordon Montador Award for his work *Selling Illusions* (Penguin Books, Canada, 1994). Bissoondath was awarded the McClelland and Stewart Award for fiction in 1986 and the 1986 National Magazine award for his short story *Dancing*, part of the collection *Digging up the Mountains* (Toronto, Macmillan, 1985 and New York, Viking, 1986). He also won the 1993 Canadian Authors Association Award for Fiction for his novel *The Innocence of Age* (Random House Canada, 1992). His novel, *Doing the Heart Good* (Comorant Books, 2002), won the Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction in 2002.



**George Elliott Clarke** is a poet, playwright, literary critic and professor at the University of Toronto. He won the 2001 Governor General's Award for Poetry for his poetry collection *Execution Poems* (Gaspereau Press, 2001). He has won a variety of awards, among them the Portia White Prize for Artistic Achievement (1988), the National Magazine Gold Medal for Poetry (2001), the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Achievement Award (2004) and the prestigious Trudeau Fellow Prize (2005). He has received honorary doctorates from a number of Canadian universities. In 2008, he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada.

**Karen Connelly** is the author of seven books of non-fiction, fiction and poetry, including *The Lizard Cage* (Random House, Toronto, 2005, New York, 2007). It was nominated for the Kiriyaama Prize and long-listed for the IMPAC Dublin Award.

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The book also won Connelly Britain's Orange Broadband Prize for New Writers. Connelly won the 1993 Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction for her novel *Touch the Dragon* (Turnstone Press, 1992) and the Pat Lowther Award for poetry for *The Small Words in my Body* (Kalmalka Press, 1990).



**Guy Delisle** is best known for his graphic novel, *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea* (L'Association, 2004 and Farrar Straus & Giroux 2005), which documents his stay in North Korea. It was named among the best books of the year by Amazon.com, TIME.com, CBC Radio One Talking Books, San Antonio Current, Vancouver Courier, Edmonton Journal, The Comics

Journal, Young Adult Library Services Association and the Pennsylvania School Librarian's Association. He also wrote *Shenzhen* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2006) while working in Southern China. His latest book, the *Burma Chronicles* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2008), follows in the same first-hand reporting style.



**Camilla Gibb's** first two novels, *Mouthing the Words* (Pedlar Press, 1999) and *The Petty Details of So-and-so's Life*, (Doubleday Canada, 2002) were selected as the "Best Book of the Year" by the Globe and Mail. *Mouthing the Words* won the City of Toronto Book Award. In 2001, Gibb was named to the "Orange Futures List", a list of writers to watch compiled by the jury of the Orange Prize. Gibb's latest novel, *Sweetness in the Belly* (Thomson Gale, 2006) was short-listed for the 2005 Giller Prize and long-listed for the 2007 IMPAC Literary Award. It won the 2006 Trillium Award.



**Lawrence Hill** is best known for his novel *The Book of Negroes* (HarperCollins Canada, 2007), winner of the overall Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Book, the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, the Ontario Library Association's Evergreen Award and the 2009 CBC Canada Reads Contest. Hill is also the author of *Any Known Blood* (William Morrow, New York, 1999 and HarperCollins Canada, 1997) and *Some*



*Great Thing* (Turnstone Press, Winnipeg, 1992). Hill's most recent non-fiction book is *The Deserter's Tale: the Story of an Ordinary Soldier Who Walked Away from the War in Iraq* (written with Joshua Key).



**Mireille Levert**, an illustrator of children's books, won the 1993 Governor General's Award for her illustrations in *Sleep Tight, Mrs. Ming* (Annick Press, 1993), the third in a series of books that have garnered her critical acclaim. She was awarded a Diploma of Honor from the Fourth Premi Internacional Catalonia d'illustración in Barcelona, Spain, and a Merit Award from Studio magazine for these illustrations. The other two books in the series, *Jeremiah and Mrs. Ming* (Annick Press, 1990) and *When Jeremiah Found Mrs. Ming* (Annick Press, 1992), were finalists for the Governor General's Award and the Mr. Christie Book Award.



**Alistair MacLeod** has published two internationally acclaimed collections of short stories: *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* (1976) and *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun* (1986). In 2000, these two books, accompanied by two new stories, were published in a single-volume edition entitled *Island: The Collected Stories of Alistair MacLeod*. In 1999, MacLeod's first novel, *No Great Mischief*, was published to great critical acclaim, and was on national bestseller lists for more than a year. The novel won the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, the Dartmouth Book Award for Fiction, the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award, The Trillium Award for Fiction, the CAA-MOSAID Technologies Inc. Award for Fiction, and at the Canadian Booksellers Association Libris Awards, MacLeod won for Fiction Book of the Year and Author of the Year.

**Jeffery Moore** is a freelance translator and lecturer in translation at the Université de Montréal. He works for museums, theatres, dance companies and film festivals around the world. *Prisoner in a Red-Rose Chain* (Thistledown Press, 1999) was a finalist for the QSPELL Literary Awards and winner of the regional and international Commonwealth Writers' Prize



in 2000. His second novel, *The Memory Artists* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, UK, 2006, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2004 and Penguin Canada, 2004) won the Canadian Authors Association Award for Best Novel and was short-listed for numerous prizes, among them the Rogers' Writers Trust Award.



**Heather O'Neill's** debut novel, *Lullabies for Little Criminals* (Harper Collins Toronto, New York, 2006), won the 2007 CBC Canada Reads competition and went on to become an international bestseller. This novel won the Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction in 2007, and was short-listed for a number of awards, including the 2007 Governor General's Award for Fiction and the Orange Prize for Fiction 2008. She has also been selected by Barnes & Noble for their "Discover Great New Writers Campaign". She appears regularly on the radio show "This American Life" and her work has appeared in the New York Times magazine.



**Karolyn Smardz Frost** is an archaeologist, historian, university professor, and a bestselling author. Frost has conducted important archaeological research, written a variety of books and in 1985 founded the Toronto Board of Education's Archaeological Resource Centre. Her book, *I've Got a Home in Glory Land: a Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad* (Thomas Allen Publishers, Toronto, 2007 and Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2007) won the 2007 Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction, the Heritage Toronto Award of Merit and is on MacLeod's bestseller list. Frost is currently the Research Associate for the York University Centre for Education and Community.

#### MEXICAN AUTHORS

In collaboration with the *Salon international du livre de Québec*, a Mexican delegation will be presenting their most recent works: **Monica Brozon, Francisco Hinojosa, Rafaël Lemus, Fabio Morabito and Eduardo Antonio Parra.** ■



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