

Spring 2023

# MCLL News



## *Ana moves on: a sad loss for MCLL*

A delightful person has recently departed from MCLL, to the regret of many. Our Program Administrator **Ana Milic** left at the end of April to take a new job as Coordinator of Student Services and Engagement at Concordia University's Loyola Campus.

For 14 years Ana was the heart and soul of MCLL, taking us through diverse challenges and deftly leading our evolution during the pandemic from a strictly in-person program, to a full gamut of online and hybrid learning. We could always count on Ana to deal with the most challenging situations. She was warm and patient in dealing with people, and skilful in negotiating with the various levels of administration.

When asked what positive memories she will take away from MCLL, Ana replied: "There are so many! MCLL made a really big deal of me becoming a Canadian citizen over 10 years ago. **Helen Forsyth** and **Mebbie Aikens** came to the citizenship ceremony with me and then we had a party in the lounge. I remember **Nola Brunelle** bringing small Serbian and Canadian flags together on a stand.

"MCLL has been with me through thick and thin — so many milestones, life events, celebrations. I will always feel part of this community and keep in touch."



Ana will continue to ride her bike to work the 15 kilometers from her home in Rosemont- Petite Patrie, at one hour twice as far as the ride to McGill.

We sent Ana off with heartfelt wishes for success in her new ventures, and no small amount of sadness to see her go. 🍁

Susan Purcell, editor

## **MCLL shines a spotlight on First Nations**

After the public hearings and report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2017, MCLL made a commitment, along with McGill University as a whole, to act on its recommendations. To this end we created an Indigenous Relations Group. Its aim is to promote understanding and encourage action to bring about change in our relationship with First Nations peoples.

Questioning the story we were taught regarding Indigenous peoples had actually begun at MCLL as early as 2015 with a study group on residential schools. Since then we have widened our knowledge of aboriginal artists, Indigenous literature, Indigenous filmmakers, Indigenous visual artists, and Inuit art.

**Continued on P.2**



**McGill**

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## *AGM recognizes an outstanding volunteer*

It will come as no surprise to many, that our hard-working **Susan van Gelder** has been named MCLL Volunteer of the Year. The recognition came at MCLL's Annual General Meeting, held online on March 31, 2023.

Presenting the award was **Rick Jones**, council vice-president and incoming president. Rick thanked Susan for her "outstanding contributions to MCLL, including her key role in organizing the hosts who play such a vital role for our Zoom and hybrid classes, as well as our lectures. In addition to being a moderator and lecturer, and online registration help guru, Susan is giving so much to so many committees and is always available and willing to help".

Susan has set up two online help sites — one integrating information useful to members, and another specifically for hosts. She is also helping reorganize an internal "cloud" or depository for MCLL files needed to serve our members for years to come. Before each semester, Susan provides vital leadership as head of a team resolving members' technical problems with registration.

A new slate of council members was voted in at the AGM, effective June 13. While several members serving two- or three-year terms remain in their positions, three new members will join the executive: **Chris Neal**, the incoming vice president, has moderated study groups on international aid and Latin American politics. **Ana Maria Klein**, the new head of the curriculum committee, has headed study groups on great scientists of the Southern Hemisphere, and favourite books. **Ginette Bazergui** leads the planning and membership committee. Ginette has volunteered as both a technical host and moderator for many study groups. 🇨🇦

### **First Nations Continued from P. 1**

Last fall we streamed the film, *Beans*, set during the 1990 Oka Crisis, a 78-day standoff between two Mohawk communities and government forces. **Susan van Gelder** interviewed director Tracy Deer after the film. (This [interview](#) is still available if you provide your McGill email address and password.) In the winter of 2021-2, we pitched in with the School of Continuing Studies to collect clothing for a day shelter for Indigenous people. In each monthly e-Bulletin, we provide information on Indigenous-related events at McGill and around the city, to encourage members to discuss issues and share reactions. 🇨🇦

Do you have ideas for future study groups, events or lectures? Share your ideas, or better yet, join our group. Contact us through [mcll.scs@mcgill.ca](mailto:mcll.scs@mcgill.ca) *Our thanks to the Indigenous Relations Group for this article.*



## *Safdie is ever refining his Habitat concept*

Guest speaker at MCLL's virtual AGM was architect **Moshe Safdie**, designer of the innovative Habitat 67 apartments at the site of Expo 67. Speaking from his Boston offices, Safdie said his daring experiment stacking modular concrete boxes into three clusters of apartment units, was an opportunity to realize his McGill undergraduate thesis on the need to reinvent the apartment. With the eyes of the world on Expo, Safdie's creation drew intense international interest. In the 50-plus years since he has continued to refine his approach of combining high-density housing with shared green space and individual gardens.

Safdie illustrated his talk with slides of striking projects he has designed, including a middle-income tower in China with 6000 units and three levels of outdoor pool and play areas, and a 65-storey luxury green tower in Colombo, Sri Lanka. More recently, he has been involved in an offbeat venture, working with a video game maker to digitize his original Habitat 67 design — combining terraced housing with underground schools and shops, which were eliminated in the final plan—as a 3D environment for use as a setting for games.—SP 🇨🇦



# *Holiday dinner was great fun for all*

About 50 MCLL members jumped at the chance to celebrate the holiday season in December, when the Special Events Committee organized a lively holiday dinner at Table 51 Restaurant on rue des Jockeys, across the street from Métro Namur. A special menu was created for us, and we had our own section of the restaurant, truly making it a private party. As their numbers were drawn near the end of the evening, everyone present stood up in turn to receive a gift bag. After food, great conversation and a little something to take home, everyone left the restaurant in a great mood.

Linda Sidel  
Special Events Coordinator



Linda Sidel





## *Never take a Zoom host for granted!*

Since we shifted to more online learning during the pandemic, the addition of hosts, or technical assistants, has ensured the smooth running of our study groups. **Claire Booth**, who has been a Zoom host for more than two years, explains why this job involves a huge commitment.

The time required is considerable. Once assigned to one or more study groups, the host contacts the moderators, works with them to prepare their material, stays in constant contact with participants, and helps them with presentations — in addition to ensuring the smooth functioning of the technical part.

The challenge is even greater for the hybrid host, Claire explains. Troubleshooting simultaneously for participants in the classroom and at home calls for someone who enjoys a technical challenge, has an eye for detail and uses problem-solving skills.

And if that's not enough, hosts must also find the time for team meetings every two weeks. These provide harried helpers with a chance to share information, and get practical and even psychological help with difficult situations.

So never take a Zoom host for granted! We are so very grateful to **Susan van Gelder**, who heads the team of 18 hosts, for her total commitment, hours spent training, endless patience, and limitless creativity in dealing with all the crises that occur in the life of a Zoom host. 🍁

Astri Thorvik

## *City colour lights up the lounge*



*Entitled “It Wasn’t Always Red”, this painting is one of a series of staircases and other images of Montreal on exhibit until June 23, 2023, in the MCLL lounge. The artist, Linda Beck Sidel explains why:*

When I was growing up in Outremont, the lanes behind our homes were our playground. Our world was one of black staircases and brick walls. For this exhibition I returned to those streets and lanes of my childhood. “It Wasn’t Always Red” was one of those staircases I played on — but it certainly wasn’t red! 🍁

## *Volunteers catch up at holiday lunch*



MCLL office volunteers work a morning or an afternoon per week, passing one another at the office door, but rarely having time for a real chat. We therefore enjoyed celebrating the season as a team in early December, 2022, with a lunch of Indian food, in the welcome company of our much-loved program administrator, Ana Milic. From left to right: **Helen Forsyth, Sue Purcell, Ana Milic, Thea Pawlikowska, Mary Corner, Sandra Baines, Anne Tittler, Susan Biggs, Laura Grunberg, Carol Wares, Christine Mutter, Nola Brunelle, Mary Bialek, Astri Thorvik**, administrative coordinator **Sally Cooper**.

# *Our moderators are precious to us*

MCLL salutes the men and women who have committed to moderating study groups in the winter and spring sessions. Finding people to do this important job has been harder than ever in recent years. Curriculum chair **Julie Wait** says this could be due to a variety of factors. Some have preferred not to venture out due to pandemic fears or masking restrictions. Health problems may limit a number who have moderated for years. Operating from home with the need for technical know-how may be daunting for certain people, though MCLL now provides trained hosts to help with that. We also encourage co-moderating — teaming up new people with an experienced moderator to share leadership.

## *David Grogan*

### *An Ocean Voyage Around the World in 140 days*

David and his wife celebrated his 68th birthday by circumnavigating the globe by ship with 930 other passengers. An American lawyer now living in Griffintown, this past winter he shared his “zillions of pics” and extensive notes on the trip with an in-person study group downtown. The five scheduled sessions went by so fast that everyone agreed to attend three more. “It was great fun”, he says. Study group members sent him off with a thank-you card signed by all.

## *Bruce Macleod*

### *How to More Deeply Appreciate Popular Music of the 50s, 60s and 70s*

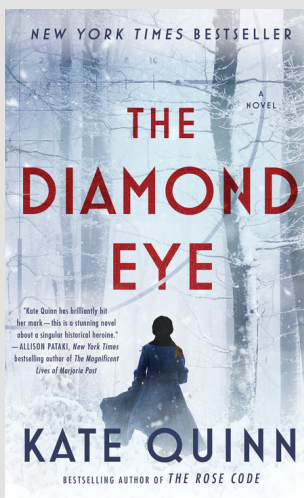
A bit like an orchestra conductor, Bruce helped each study group member “deconstruct” the pop song they chose for their presentation. He compares getting down to the basics of a piece to making soup — start with the chef and the recipe, then onto how it’s put together and what it represents, personally and culturally. A resident of Wentworth, Qc, Bruce moderated the winter six-session group from his second home in Florida.

## *Silvia San Miguel*

### *Conversational Spanish*

A few years after she offered a Spanish workshop at MCLL, Silvia is heading a spring in-person study group for intermediate Spanish-speakers. The aim is to revive rusty conversational skills. A former elementary and secondary teacher in Spain, Silvia obtained a degree in education from McGill later in life. Not having everyone in masks is a big help, she says, since participants understand better when they can watch people forming words. 

## Books



### Lady Death goes to Washington

*The Diamond Eye*  
Kate Quinn

The action of this novel by the author of the 2017 bestseller *The Alice Network*, is triggered by Hitler's invasion of Ukraine. As in the earlier book and in Quinn's other novels set during the war, *The Huntress* and *The Rose Code*, the main character is a strong heroic woman.

Quinn is a skilled writer of historical fiction. Her writing style and thorough research bring to mind the mixture of fact and fiction in the stories of James A. Michener.

Based on a true story, *The Diamond Eye* centres on Mila Pavlichenko, a Kyiv student with a young child who enlists in the Russian forces when the Nazis invade, and develops into a deadly sniper known as Lady Death. As a national heroine, she is sent to America on a goodwill tour with hopes of getting funding from President Roosevelt. Ripped from the bloody eastern front, she finds herself lonely in the glitter of Washington, D.C. but strikes up a friendship with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as a fondness for a fellow sniper who reappears in her life.

Sinister forces intervene and the plot thickens, when a plan is uncovered to kill President Roosevelt and frame Mila as the assassin. Enemy bullets fly and much drama ensues, but of course the plan goes awry. We are left breathless at the way Quinn brings us to the precipice, and then transports us back again.

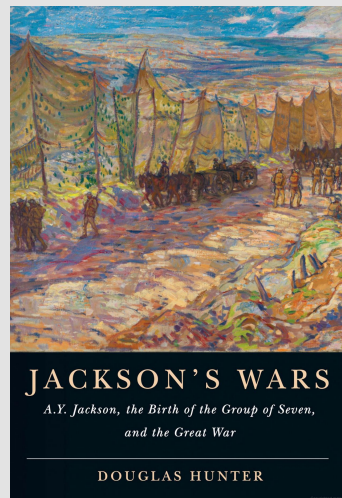
The story is followed by a series of black and white photos of the real-life heroine, her lovers and some propaganda pictures of her time in America.

*The Diamond Eye* is hard to put down. If you decide to pick up this book or any of the other three books in this series, I promise you will not be disappointed. 🍁

Mary B. Corner

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### A different side of painter shown

*Jackson's Wars - A.Y. Jackson, the birth of the Group of Seven, and the Great War*  
Doug Hunter

Montreal-born painter A.Y. Jackson (1882-1974) is best known as a member of the Group of Seven alongside artists like Lawren Harris and Arthur Lismer. What is less known is that he was a respected (if relatively penniless) artist in Montreal for decades before he left to join the Toronto-based group. When the the Group of Seven first exhibited in 1920, Jackson was almost 40 years old.

Douglas Hunter brings to life not only the family history which shaped the man, but the cultural history of Montreal, which shaped the artist. The author also tackles Jackson's experience of the First World War, first as a soldier on the battlefield in Europe and then, after being injured in combat, as a war artist.

The author avoids the trope of the "ugly duckling". So many biographies of modern artists read like a fairy tale: "At first everyone found him ugly and laughed at him. Then he triumphed over his ignorant critics."

Hunter has done his homework. He keeps an open but critical mind as he combs through a vast archive of Jackson's private papers, some only recently available to the public. He navigates gracefully through complex conceptual debates in art history, without getting bogged down in jargon. And his mastery of the historical context – the way artists were trained, the choices they faced, the career models open to them – is fascinating. At the same time, Hunter comments astutely on specific paintings, reproduced in over 40 colour plates within the book.

This book shows us another side of A.Y. Jackson, less heroic perhaps, but more human as he struggles to survive. These early years too play a part in the wars of A.Y. Jackson. 🍁

Lorne Huston



# *A fitting way to remember Pamela*

For many years **Pamela Sachs** wrote brief, incisive reviews of a wide range of books for the MCLL newsletter. Pamela's Bookshelf featured eight to ten reviews in each issue, widely read and much enjoyed. After the former CEGEP English teacher and popular moderator of literature study groups passed away in September 2021, many at MCLL missed sharing her love of reading. Meanwhile, Pamela's four children and extended family scattered around the globe were keenly missing her thoughtful and humorous comments during their monthly pandemic gatherings on Zoom. Consequently, they came up with a perfect way to honour her. They morphed their online meetings into the Lunzer Book Club, using Pamela's maiden name.

Her daughter Jane put it this way: "For mummy family was so important. So now through Zoom mummy is still keeping us connected, thanks to the Lunzer Book Club...connected to each other and connected to mummy."


**Tony**, a longtime MCLL member, counts 12 club members — "two second cousins, one in Boston and one in London, five cousins — two in California and three in London, my uncle in London — the lone surviving eldest sibling of my Mum's four siblings, and us four — me and my brother Simon in Montreal, Harriet in Toronto, and Jane in New York."

The club chooses "books she'd recommend in the newsletter, or books she liked", says Tony —including *Girl, Woman, Other*, *Exit West*, *Stoner*, *Howard's End*; and *Giving up the Ghost*.

Books have always united the Lunzer family. Tony



*Tony, Jane, Pamela, Simon and Harriet Sachs*

recalls how in his 90s, Pamela's brother Julius, now 101, was reading Thomas Mann in the original German. Simon remembers "being in Stowe with Mommy and Dorothea and Julius, and all three of them sitting reading. They were never happier than when they were reading with family." 

# *Istanbul: A city on two continents*

*MCLL members join us remotely from many parts of the world. We have heard from Jackie Yarosky in Tel Aviv; below, Canan Cili writes us from Istanbul.*

My home is in Kadikoy, on the Asian side of Istanbul, Turkiye, the world's only city located on two continents. On the European side are some of Istanbul's signature sites such as Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque and Topkapi Palace. It is also the city's commercial centre with banks, stores and corporations, and two-thirds of its population. My side is more relaxed, with its strong sense of community and streets lively with people.

The ferry ride across the Bosphorus is magical, by far the best way to see and enjoy the architecture of the city. Flocks of seagulls accompany boats taking off — a lovely sight.

But Montreal is also “my city”. I first visited in 2005 when my son began studies at McGill in electrical engineering. It was love at first sight. A few years later, I retired as an English teacher in Istanbul and had lots of free time, so I bought a condo in Griffintown to be near my son. After years flying back and forth, I moved full-time to Montreal in 2015, returning to Turkiye only in summer. Then last May I moved back to Istanbul.

The two cities have a similar mixture of cultures, interesting architecture and fine dining. In both, I go to yoga classes, the swimming pool and art classes. I love visiting art galleries and cycling. I made new friends in Montreal while volunteering at the Yellow Door, on outings with the Montreal Field Naturalists, and of course in study groups at MCLL, which I still attend online.

My son now lives in California with his Canadian wife and two sons, working at Apple. I visit Montreal on and off, as well as California. My last visit was in March.

*Special thanks to SCS student  
Pa Sallah Drammeh  
for his generous help with this issue.*



*Courtesy of Canan Cili*

Though I love it here in Istanbul, the political situation is difficult. Soldiers, journalists, lawyers and politicians are detained in prison as the pillars of Ataturk's secular republic are eroding. The earthquake disaster we recently experienced has once again revealed the poison, ugliness, and corruption in this country. 🇹🇷

By Canan Cili

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