



McGill

School of
Continuing Studies

McGill Community
for Lifelong
Learning

The Newsletter

Spring -Summer 2021 Volume

www.mcgill.ca/mcill



SENIORS ACTION QUÉBEC

MCLL and Seniors Action Québec: a partnership with promise

A meeting was held recently between senior officials of Seniors Action Québec (SAQ) and MCLL to explore ways that our two organizations can cooperate in areas of mutual interest. SAQ works to maintain and enhance the vitality of English-speaking Québec seniors especially in the areas of health and social services.

<https://www.seniorsactionQuébec.ca/>

Their organization is active throughout the province, and we invited them to make proposals for lectures and/or study groups to inform our members about the activities and the challenges faced by their members in making institutions and governments more responsive to the needs of English-speaking seniors.

At the same time, we will explore the potential of our new hybrid model of participation at MCLL to solicit meaningful participation of members both on site and from afar. Starting in January 2022, we plan to offer study groups and lectures which will be held simultaneously on location and through Zoom. Our partnership with SAQ will facilitate the participation of English-speaking seniors from across Québec in these activities.

One recently completed initiative was a joint project done with an umbrella organization known as COM-Unity

(see <https://www.com-unity.ca/>) SAQ collaborated with Network (ELAN), and others to explore the notion of “belonging”. The idea was not only to encourage other English-speaking groups like the Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC), the English Language Arts discussion between various English-language community groups of different ethnic, geographical and generational environments but also to build durable links between these various organizations and to sensitize government officials to the diverse realities of English-speaking communities in Québec.

MCLL Members Volunteering in and Around the City

Many members of MCLL volunteer with different organizations across the city. Several work at the MUHC, for example, lending a hand to the busy staff by talking with anxious patients, calming worried parents or friends visiting loved ones, or acting as gofers. Others sit on boards of directors of ONGs helping with fundraising or outreach. If you are involved with any group as volunteer, let us know and we will find space for you in our Newsletter. This time we focus on **Our Harbour**, a South Shore “sister” of Abri en ville, with which a number of our members are involved in one way or another.



Our Harbour is located In St. Lambert where it offers sheltered housing for people with mental illness. Its co-founder and long-time president, Catherine Gilbert, who has been a member of MCLL for years, swears it is one of the most rewarding volunteering tasks she has ever undertaken. Volunteer Lesley Régnier agrees. “To see these happy individuals sharing an apartment with two others, joining

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President's Message



As I take on the mantle as President, I cannot help but reflect on what an incredible journey it has been since I joined MCLL in the fall of 2017 to participate in my very first study group.

I was the stranger and yet I was embraced and welcomed by the other participants as if I was family. It was at that moment that I knew MCLL was the place for me. I had no aspirations other than, as the saying goes, "to learn for the joy of it." And after registering for another seven study groups throughout 2018, boy, did I learn!

I learned from the best moderators to gain enough confidence to moderate my own study group for two years at which time, in 2020, I accepted with pride, the nomination of Vice President.

During my tenure, I marveled at the resilience of MCLL to stare down the once-in-a-lifetime pandemic and find a novel way to reach out to our members through Zoom technology. I was inspired by Sandra and Lorne, who led by example and encouraged me to create a task force mandated to explore the feasibility of a model of learning which combines both in-person and remote learning, an approach referred to as the Hybrid Model. This model is scheduled to launch in time for the winter semester commencing in January 2022 under the direction of an exceptionally talented team represented by Martin Coles, Tim Skene, Susan van Gelder and Ana Milic.

As MCLL celebrates its 31st anniversary, I assume an awesome responsibility to ensure that we never forget our traditions and, at the same time, explore and take advantage of every opportunity that secures our future. This is a task that I welcome, knowing that I am surrounded by the dedication and enthusiasm of our Council members.

Together, as beautifully stated by one of our own members, Mary Ann Mongeau, "MCLL will always find a way."

Jeff Sidel

Seniors Action Québec: portraits of who we are

Former MCLL president, Lorne Huston was one of eight people interviewed recently in a project featuring the stories of English-speaking seniors in Québec who have witnessed our province's turbulent history and who have been a crucial part of the development of our culture and community.



Lorne Huston, as a budding sociologist arrived in Montreal in 1968

Lorne came to Montreal from Alberta in 1968 and he tells the story of his encounter as a budding sociologist with Québec society at that time. Others came here from Turkey, Germany, England and South Africa, but most of those interviewed were born in Québec. Some came from the cities, others from the Laurentians, the Townships or the Magdalen Islands. We heard the story of a fifth-generation resident of Kamouraska and a war bride who settled in Rouyn in the early 1950s. Some left and returned. All have struggled to find their place and to make (and keep) Québec as their home. Together, these eight-minute videos make a powerful statement about the strength and the diversity of the commitments by English-speaking seniors to Québec society.

<https://www.seniorsactionQuébec.ca/en/media/je-me-souviens-portraits-of-who-we-are.html>



The Zoom Hosts have put together a website for MCLL members. You will find many helpful links for Registration, for Presentations and for General Computer Information.

<https://mcgillmcll.wixsite.com/memberhelp>

(Copy/paste the above address into your browser)



Catherine Gilbert (far left) with Our Harbour residents and volunteers

up in groups to go walking, swimming, painting, picking apples, etc. is a treat," she says. Each of the now eight apartments has at least two volunteers working with the residents to take them shopping, go out for a coffee, go see a movie... and activities have not stopped even during

Covid. The coordinators would take hot coffee in flasks and a batch of homemade goodies, park in front of the apartments and have an hour of fun in the street. This spring, the focus has been on gardening and every day you see a few residents digging, planting, weeding, etc. in the beds they have made in grounds of the local church where Our Harbour has its office and created a "clubhouse" for the residents. It's a great place to volunteer and rewarding for all involved.

Editorial

How to define resilience? No one can deny that MCLL has not only come through the many months of a paralyzing pandemic, but has revealed a resourcefulness that we never dared to imagine. We have a wide range of well-attended study groups on Zoom, a tantalizing choice of Wonderful Wednesday lectures and ideas for our future in profusion. If hardship spawns creativity, as during World War II, then Covid19 must be acknowledged as the nudge that led to the ideas that have enabled MCLL not only to carry on but to innovate: Study group techies, a Hybrid solution if we still cannot attend classes in September, outreach to members that do not use computers or dislike Zoom communication... We have a lot to look forward to this summer! Enjoy and take care.

How do we Attract New Members at MCLL?

It has always been a consistent concern of MCLL Council to find out how we attract new members to our organization. Several surveys have been done that have included that very question – the result is unanimously: by word of mouth.

This winter, however, the Communications Committee decided to take a more proactive approach. We were informed that 60 new members had registered for the Winter semester, giving us a wonderful opportunity to get a pretty good idea of how each new member heard of us. So the calls were divided up and the results were much as expected. The same exercise was carried out for the Spring semester, which had around 30 new members.

Predictably, the largest percentage heard through word of mouth. But the number who found out through online searches is increasing. No new members identified newsletters, newspapers or advertising, either on paper or online, as reasons to register. The challenge, therefore, is the find the ways to best advertise online and, of course, the best way to capitalize on word of mouth.

Several new members are still working full-time. Many are located across Canada, and a few overseas. Some are very happy with their choice of study groups or lectures. A few are not, but willing to try again. Most like Zoom, are comfortable with it and those outside of Montreal, grateful because it gives them the chance to participate, which they never could have in the past.

So, we are left with our future challenges – the price of the new 'normal' – how to please our members, new and old, using new technology or the more familiar in-person. MCLL is currently researching hybrid models that will hopefully accomplish this.

MCLL Elected Council Officers and Committee Chairs 2021-2022

President—Jeff Sidel

Vice-President—Robert Winters

Past President—Sandra Baines

Recording Secretary—Lorne Huston

Treasurer—Sidney Rosen

Chair Special Events—Sally Cooper

Committee Chairs

Planning—Alice Sidrow

Development—Richard Ruel

Communications—Astri Thorvik

Curriculum—Sheila Mason

Newsletter/Outreach—

Lesley Régnier

Volunteer Coordinator

Susan Biggs

Ana Milic—**Executive Officer**

Curriculum Committee - new partnerships bring new lecturers to MCLL

One of the ways that MCLL can remain a vibrant, dynamic organization of adult learners is through a policy of cooperation with other organizations, at McGill and in the community at large. This was one of the recommendations of the Potter Report¹, released in June 2020. In particular, the former dean of Continuing Studies, Judith Potter, suggested that MCLL seek out scholars from the university community who might be willing to give a lecture at MCLL in order to share some of their research results with a wider public.



The Curriculum Committee reached out to several departments at McGill and Concordia and the result was most exciting. Seven new lecturers were recruited. In the course of our Wonderful Wednesday lectures this summer, we will be hearing from **Amelia Wong-Merseureau** who just completed her MA in Fine Arts at

Concordia. She will present the work of several environmentalist feminists, including the fascinating work of Chinese artist Kong Ning who makes use of plastics found in the ocean to create beautiful sculptural art forms.

Other lecturers will be scheduled for the Fall semester including **Dr. Michel Tremblay**, Chair of Bio-chemistry and Oncology at McGill and, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada where he serves as chair of the scientific committee on cancer research will give a lecture on cancer immunotherapy. Dr Tremblay has also received prestigious awards from the Canadian Cancer Society and is a Knight of the Order of Quebec and recipient of the McLaughlin medal of the Royal Society for sustained research on cancer.

Sheila Mason, from MCLL, who made the contacts with the various scholars, enjoyed her conversations with these researchers who “were charming, witty and enthusiastic about their work. I’m sure that our members will enjoy hearing about the latest research in these diverse fields.”

¹In June 2020, Former Dean Judith Potter did a case study of MCLL which examined issues related to seniors’ learning within university contexts. Her report makes several recommendations for strengthening the relationship between MCLL and the wider university context. See https://www.mcgill.ca/mcll/files/mcll/mcll_study_report_2020-06-30_fv.pdf

PROFILES

Olivier Courteaux— Propaganda: The Power of Photography and Film

We can expect a fascinating lecture from Olivier on the power of photography and film on propaganda, looking back over the 20th century. We are inundated with so much propaganda on a daily basis that we sometimes approach film and photography in an uncritical way, and this lecture should hone our critical thinking skills – it is always interesting to look at how we are manipulated!



Olivier has taught international relations at Ryerson University and at the Royal Military College in Kingston, and more recently has joined the corporate world, where he is the head of training for the staff on areas such as risk management. Thus, he comes to us with wide experience in a variety of fields. He loves lecturing and, after speaking with him on the phone, I am sure he is very good at it. He is also interested in research related to his fields of interest, so I am sure we shall learn a lot and be well entertained at the same time.



Olivier’s lecture is August 18th, at 1PM

Tom Douglis— a storyteller

MCLL members know the value of active learning over a passive life of “taking it easy”. Accordingly, perhaps you can recognize a bit of yourself in the dynamic, ground-breaking life of Princess Ekaterina Dashkova (1744-1810), the subject of Tom’s MCLL lecture on July 21, 2021. Tom admits he is no trailblazer like Dashkova, but travelling and sharing ideas does go to the core of who he is. In fact, he has been a professional storyteller for his entire career.



For the last 25 years, he has been a corporate brand consultant for some of the premier brand firms in Toronto, New York and Denver before starting his own firm in 2014, which he continues to run today.

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His early work included stints as a sports writer and then PR Director for USA Hockey. It's a career that has enabled him to travel to nearly 100 countries, many of them with his intrepid wife of 26 years. "Throughout," he says, "the best part has always been contextualizing and packaging information and ideas into something meaningful and relevant to others." He finds it wonderful that the same sort of learning and sharing is at the core of MCLL's peer learning and active participation model. "It's a joy to blend my personal curiosity with my professional skills as a storyteller for MCLL's audiences," he concludes

Philip Harrison— shares his personal perspectives of the Beatles

Who better to talk about the Beatles than a Brit? Philip Harrison was born in London, UK, but moved to Devon when he was 13. In 1976, after graduating from the School of Pharmacy in London, he emigrated to Canada where he ran his own company (first a consulting, then a pharmaceutical company) until 2014, when they were purchased and he effectively retired. He and his wife still have a house in Devon with 14 acres where he is gradually developing a medicinal garden. "Once a chemist, always a chemist," he says.



Far from turning his back on his trade when he retired, he established another pharmaceutical company where he is a shareholder but is not involved in management. He also established a foundation to support pharmacy education in sub-Saharan Africa, where health-care resources and outcomes are poor. They are now working with the universities in Addis Ababa, Malawi, Namibia and Botswana (see www.squarealumni.org).

He chose to talk about the Beatles because they define his late teenage years and early twenties. This lecture is, at the very least, an opportunity to listen and discuss the Beatles. He warns his audience not to expect great insight or intellectual music interpretation from him, just his own thoughts (and theirs) and experience.

Philip's lecture is August 25th, at 10:00 AM

Alain Lessard on the Seigneurial regime in Quebec history

Alain Lessard broke new ground this past semester when he offered a study group on the Seigneurial regime and its influence on Quebec history. It may not be the first study group to be offered entirely in French at MCLL, but it was a rare and exciting event. The group was full. A majority were native French speakers but there were several anglophones who participated actively in French. Alain's presentations were very well organized and stimulated discussion. "I enjoyed preparing these presentations" Alain told me, "because it gives life and depth to the geography of Quebec. As I learned about the seigneuries, I could picture places differently – like the Côte de Beaupré or even Longueuil. Now, when I travel to different regions of Quebec, I can see the traces of the seigneurial system."

Several participants in his group this past semester urged him to continue to give other study groups on Quebec history. Now that his wife has also retired and the pandemic is showing signs of receding into the past, he is planning a long-postponed post-retirement trip this fall but his mind is full of new ideas for future semesters.

Alain arrive à MCLL après une carrière à la CSST (aujourd'hui connue sous le nom de la

Commission sur les normes du travail, de l'équité salariale et de la santé et sécurité au travail). Né à Québec, il a fait son baccalauréat en sociologie à l'Université Laval et sa maîtrise en sociologie du travail à l'Université Concordia. Embauché d'abord comme agent de recherche à la CSST, il a, par la suite, occupé diverses fonctions administratives. Lors de sa retraite, il y a cinq ans, il ressentait le besoin de refaire son oreille à l'anglais mais était loin d'être certain qu'il pouvait participer aux activités de MCLL. Malgré tout, il s'est inscrit à un groupe offert par Dennis Creamer. La qualité des présentations et la participation active des membres l'ont convaincu de continuer au point où il a réussi à faire une présentation – en anglais – sur la Chine! En même temps, il se sentait de plus en plus à l'aise, d'autant plus que plusieurs personnes venaient lui parler en français lors des pauses. Finalement, il a contacté Denise Lord qui l'a convaincu que c'était une bonne idée de faire le saut en tant que modérateur. Merci Denise. Et merci surtout à Alain.



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Amelia Wong-Mercereau—

Ecofeminism in Contemporary Art

Amelia comes by her interest in art honestly: her mother is a visual artist and her father was a publisher of children's books. She completed her MFA in 2020 and is currently working as the communications assistant for SBC Gallery here in Montreal. She wrote her Master's thesis on the performance artist and environmental activist Kong Nin, whose approach involves looking at the planet through art. Kong, and other artists like her, are interested in both the health of the planet and the health of sections of the planet's people who are oppressed – women, the poor, people of colour, etc. Such artists work as protesters and awareness-raisers so that we may all strive, under their guidance, to make the planet and all who depend on it healthy and strong. Amelia herself is a very engaging young woman, articulate and excited about the art she espouses, all of which will make for a very lively, informative lecture. Don't miss it!



Amelia's lecture is August 11th, at 10 AM

up and decided "to wing it" as we say in popular jargon. One might have wished that he had used the original planned lecture, which had at least the benefit of structure. He started by saying that he was not one of the fleeing refugees as pictured in Ai Wei Wei's film "Human Flow," more or less discounting that version of the Syrian refugees problem to, I imagine, the amazement of the thousands of refugees for whom this was a reality. I had assumed at the beginning of the lecture that he was from a privileged family and was thus able to escape the mass flight. But no, he later tells us that he came from a family below the poverty line, so we are left in the dark as to how he managed to get to Egypt, then Turkey, then Lebanon and subsequently to Canada. The point he seems to be making is that we see the world too much through generalities and stereotypes and that very often these generalities and stereotypes give us a warped picture of what each individual Syrian refugee is going, or has gone, through. He is right, I think, in saying that often Arabs (read "non-whites,") are portrayed as, if not innately evil, at least highly suspicious.

He goes on to talk about what it was like being a gay man in Syria. He says that before the British legal system was imposed in Syria, that is before 1861, marriage between two men was legal, and that it was the fault of the British that this changed and homophobia became common. Again, he is painting, it seems to me, with a very broad brush.

He tells us about returning to Damascus, and that it is a very different place in his head than that which we imagine from the news reports. He tells us that he was reporting for The Guardian, and that he'll never be a news reporter again. But he doesn't tell us why. He doesn't tell us how we should be seeing Damascus. In fact, there is more that he doesn't tell us than that which he does. The lecture was, in fact, one that he had "prepared" that very morning, and it showed. It left me feeling very dissatisfied. Perhaps he tried to touch on too many aspects of his life and, in doing so, failed to paint a picture of his life as a coherent being. All in all, a disappointment.



Hugh MacLennan

The Hugh MacLennan Lecture 2021 – Danny Ramadan

On April 29th, I attended, via Zoom, the 2021 Hugh MacLennan lecture, presented by the Friends of the McGill Library in partnership with Blue Metropolis International Literary Festival. The virtual event featured Danny Ramadan, the Syrian-Canadian award-winning author of *The Clothesline Swing* (2017), *Salma, the Syrian Chef* (2020), and the yet-to-be-released *The Foghorn Echoes* (2022). Danny Ramadan is also an LGBTQ+ Refugee advocate whose work focuses on immigration, identity, and belonging.



He began his lecture by saying that although he had a speech prepared, on the morning of the lecture he woke

Sandra Frisby

Bloomsday and the Mutability of Human Affairs

June 16 is Bloomsday, a celebration observed annually in cities over the world, paying homage to James Joyce, the Irish genius who authored the paradigm-shattering novel “Ulysses”.

On the real 16 June, 1904 the papers reported a war between Japan and Russia, Finland’s Governor-General’s assassination by a Finnish nationalist. The US president was Theodore Roosevelt, the UK Prime Minister was Arthur Balfour, Pope Pius X was leading the Catholic Church. Joyce’s graphically explicit letters reveal that on June 16, 1904 he and Nora Barnacle, his future wife, went on a date and wondrous things happened...

The fictional June 16, 1904 sees Leopold Bloom, the protagonist, wandering through Dublin, like Odysseus, Homer’s mythical Greek king.

In Paris, toiling over the novel, Joyce was witness to the First World War, Germany’s defeat in 1918, and the 1917 Balfour Declaration. His choice of the Jew as the modern-day Odysseus cannot have been an authorial whim. As the French say: *tout se tient*.

Leopold Bloom, born to a Catholic mother and baptized at birth, is not a Jew in any Jewish or Catholic sense, yet he is known throughout Dublin as a Jew. His father was a Jew, and Bloom is treated like one. Slings and arrows of anti-Semitic humiliation follow him everywhere he goes. When he tries to assert himself as an Irishman, he’s roundly mocked by his co-Dubliners.

In late 17th century Spinoza wrote: “*I would not hesitate to believe that [the Jews] will one day, given the opportunity – such is the mutability of human affairs – establish once more their independent state ..*”

Joyce, a Spinozist thinker himself, was listening.

The first thing Bloom does on June 16 morning is go to the butcher’s for a pork kidney. Waiting to be served, he picks up a pamphlet issued by a local Zionist organization

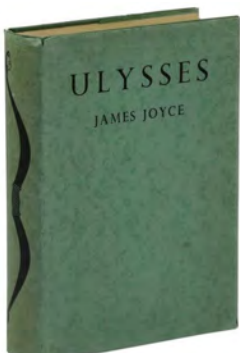
“Agendath Netaim: planter’s company. To purchase vast sandy tracts from Turkish government and plant with eucalyptus trees. [-] You pay eight marks and they plant a dunam of land for you.”

Leopold thinks: “*Nothing doing. Still an idea behind it.*”

He shudders, seeing only desolation: “*a dead land, grey and old. It bore ... The oldest people... Now it could bear no more. Dead: an old woman. grey sunken cunt of the world.*”

About *Ulysses* Christopher Hitchens once wrote: “*Joyce seems to have had the premonition that the Jewish question would be crucial to the 20th century.*”

Perhaps. The ironic imp in me wants to believe that by the time of his death in 1941, Joyce realized that Bloom’s prognostications – like those of a Delphic Oracle – were simultaneously correct and wrong.



Noga Emanuel

Remembering Fiona Clark

It was with great sadness that we learned about the death in May of Fiona Clark, MCLL's founder and life-long supporter. Here are a few memories from long-time friends of Fiona who shared other of her activities.

I first met Fiona at the Monkland Tennis Club sometime in the 1980's. She proved to be an excellent tennis player, an easy-going but serious competitor. Fiona astounded many of us with her speed on the court and determination to go for any shot. We enjoyed playing together regularly over the years until health issues forced her to stop.

For more than 30 years, Fiona was part of a regular doubles game on Thursday evenings at the club. From May 1st to Oct 31st, only steady rain or under 5C temperatures would be considered a valid excuse for not showing up and we would then finish up sharing wine and dinner. Unlike my other partners, Fiona also liked to play singles and so after we both retired, Monday afternoons was a singles match, with the same rules as our doubles games: if the courts are open, we play! I remember one October game though when we were forced to abandon the court when the clay surface, which had been frozen overnight, had become dangerously slippery.

Fiona and I stayed good friends off the court as well, sharing birthday dinners with a group of friends, enjoying the wonderful concerts put on by the choirs she sang in, as well as attending her recitals and other musical events. Fiona was always supportive and willing to help out her friends in any way she could.

Once I retired, it was understood that I would sign up for MILR classes as soon as possible. Having heard so much about this wonderful community of retirees from its creator, Fiona, I was not disappointed. I shared many study groups over the years with her and I would try to schedule the study group I was moderating (or co-moderating with Mary Ann Mongeau) to follow Fiona and Liz's group so that I could do both. We were always very pleased when Fiona also joined our study groups as any presentation she gave was always so well researched and interesting.

The past few years have been difficult, but Fiona would always smile her lovely, warm smile when the subject of tennis came up. I miss her so much and treasure the good times we had for so many years.

Audrey Speck

Fiona, my friend

Fiona's life-long connection with music began early: before leaving for university, she was a competent pianist. sang solos in her local church, and attended the Messiah every Christmas with her family. She loved the Messiah, and later performed it many times.

I first met her in the late '70s in St. Lawrence Choir (SLC). We all immersed ourselves in wonderful music, performed in Ottawa, Toronto and New York, fooled about putting on impromptu cabaret acts on choir weekends, and had a lot of laughs. Not only a well-prepared, reliable singer but also a board member, Fiona helped run the choir smoothly and head it in the right direction. SLC later became the MSO choir and participated in many MSO concerts under its own name.



In the mid-2000s, we got to sing together again when she joined Musica Orbium. Originally mainly an *capella* choir, Orbium performs everything from plainchant to great works of Monteverdi, Bach and Handel to contemporary pieces. We got to sing in a big ring round the audience in churches (with considerable effect), to become a human gamelan (that Indonesian percussive orchestra), to imitate the sound of wings in flight, and a lot more besides. Unforgettable experiences!

Fiona, of course, made a sizable extra contribution by handling the administration of all promotional materials for several years.

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On top of all this, she had singing lessons to develop her voice, and accompanied Allan, her husband, when he played the recorder, particularly at CAMMAC. We spent many hours in informal musical evenings with friends, some from MCLL, singing and playing solos, duets and madrigals. Fiona sang Bach beautifully and loved Purcell duets and Beethoven's Scottish folksong arrangements, which reminded her of home.

She was also a keen supporter of the arts, among others of the Lanaudière festival and the MSO. And you may remember several choir shows at MCLL Xmas parties a few years ago? Fiona's was the brain behind those.

Fiona's life was spent in a rhythm of rehearsals, piles of great music to learn, organizing, shows -- choir and otherwise -- and after-concert parties. She did this with competence, determination, modesty and good humour. We'll really miss her.

Janet Murphy

Fiona my Colleague

Fiona Clark's brilliant torch first ignited the imagination of lifelong learners when she invited a steering committee to create the McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement in 1989.

Introducing the concept of peer-led study groups, Fiona guided members through the university maze to secure a permanent place for life-long learners. As well as a passionate physics professor, she taught seniors about the emerging world of computers. In those early days we carried tables and stacked chairs to set up classrooms. That's when we laughed and exchanged stories together. Fiona's motto: overcrowding and heated negotiations for study groups are simply signs of success!

Honoured to sit beside Fiona at her Faculty Club tribute last November, I remembered her delightful, smiling radiant self. We are reassured knowing that her strength of vision ensures MCLL's continued prosperity. Fiona is our Angel of lifelong learning.

With love and deep gratitude, rest peacefully dearest Fiona, knowing your legacy continues.

Carolynn Rafman

Fiona Clark Bursary

Sara Karara is the second recipient of the Fiona Clark bursary. Sara is a student of the School of Continuing Studies in an English-language program: the Certificate in Proficiency in English for Professional Communication. Sara immigrated to Canada from Egypt four years ago with her husband and their two young daughters, now six and seven years of age. Having completed the French-language program offered to immigrants by the Québec government, Sara enrolled at SCS in order to establish her English-language skills. Trained as a science teacher, with a specialization in Biology, her goal is to meet the requirements for teaching here in Québec. In her thank-you letter to MCLL, she stated: "It is the first time I have received a bursary... and my goal is to help others the way you have helped me". Congratulations and very best wishes to Sara!

The Fiona Clark bursary was established just over a year ago to support a student in need at the School of Continuing Studies. The generous support of MCLL members and a significant gift from the Zellers Foundation has made it possible to establish a fund that will generate income to make an annual scholarship possible to a student of SCS. The bursary honours the legacy of the founder of MCLL, Fiona Clark who died only a few weeks ago.



Check out some great MCLL lectures on YouTube

by Robert Winters

It's been easy to feel busy, even when the pandemic has seemed to change everything in our lives. But don't worry: even if you missed some of MCLL's excellent Friday lectures, you can still catch up by watching some of this great content on MCLL's very own YouTube channel.

Below are 10 lectures covering a wide range of topics, ranging from learning about endangered tigers in India with Richard Lock, to discovering how British slave-owners were paid a fortune when slavery was abolished, with Ruth Rigby.

You can also find out how countries around the world put images of some of their finest art on postage stamps, with Harald von Cramon.

Then take a moment to reflect on how to build a fairer, greener and more equal society, with Nadia Alexan's thoughtful lecture that explores serious problems caused by inequalities. These include more violence, disease and mental health problems.

And if you've ever wondered whether the universe was made for humans, John Felvinci explores several theories about the development of life, including whether it was created by intelligent design.

After wrestling with such big questions, why not consider some train travel, perhaps with Swiss Rail? Muriel Herrington takes a look at this top-performing railway's history and development.

To find out about the role of women in the United Arab Emirates and the achievements of a Dubai psychiatrist who has achieved international recognition, Nadia Khawandanah has a fascinating lecture on this topic.

And if you've ever wondered about probability, puzzles, paradoxes and surprises, former mathematics teacher Martin Coles has just the lecture you've been waiting for.

To round out your intellectual journey, why not take a trip through the Northwest Passage with Audrey Speck?

Then go back, way back in time to learn about the world of cave and rock paintings that has been discovered over the last 150 years, with John Felvinci.

And if you're still looking for more, why not take a moment to explore the rest of MCLL's YouTube page, which is full of even more lectures and videos?

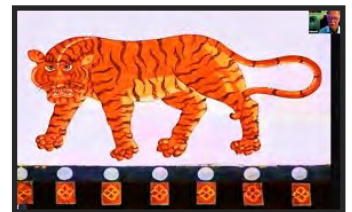
Just click on this link to find out more:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=mcll

The Tigers of Ranthambhore || Richard Lock

A recent "photo safari" to the Ranthambhore National Park of India prompted more reading and a wish to share with others the history and the current – and threatened – condition of these wonderful animals. (80 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L16gXKifFTU>



The Legacy of British Slave Ownership: Compensation Records? || Ruth Rigby

In Britain, the history of slavery has often been examined through the lens of abolition, obscuring the negative effects. Recently, University College London's Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project has undertaken to digitize an 1837 archive, the Slave Compensation Commission. This document revealed the enormous fortune paid to slave-owners for loss of property (slaves) to pass the Abolition Act of 1833. This compensation contributed in important ways to the making of modern industrial Britain. (92 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxY4QKH7YhM>



Art on Postage Stamps | Harald von Cramon

Many postal authorities issue stamps with beautiful reproductions of art treasures in their museums, or to celebrate an artist's anniversary. I will be sharing background information on the art shown on selected stamps. (82 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c96tISn9wAA>



How to Build a Fairer, Greener, More Equal Society | | Nadia Alexan

Structural inequalities affect all of us. Recent research by Thomas Piketty shows that less equal societies almost always have more violence, more disease, more mental health problems, higher infant mortality rates, reduced life expectancies, as well as less democracy. Corporate taxes are down from 56% to 15% and yet are still not paid. Canadian corporations are stashing more than \$1.6 trillion dollars in offshore tax-havens, thereby depriving government coffers of \$25 billion a year that could be used for [public services](#). We will be exploring the book, The Trouble with Billionaires, by Linda McQuaig and Neil Brooks for some answers. A database of over 21,000 of the world's most wondrous hidden places, incredible history, scientific marvels and gastronomical wonders". (117 minutes)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_osWelJtsg



Is the Universe made for Us? John Felvinci

We will survey several theories about the remarkable fact that the physical constants of our universe are just right for the development of life and that a smallest change, in any of them, would make life impossible. Some of these theories encompass ideas about our universe being part of a multiverse, or that it was created by intelligent design. (128 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOYU9ju9wyk>



Swiss Rail | | Muriel Herrington

Swiss Rail ranks #2 worldwide in infrastructure, and #1 in Europe in performance. This lecture presents the history and development of Swiss Rail and some of the present day features. It is based on a presentation Muriel Herrington gave for the Railways study group in 2019. (69 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbSnDyW2DTQ>



Dr. Rafia Ghubash: A Female Version of Uniqueness | | Nadia Khawandanah

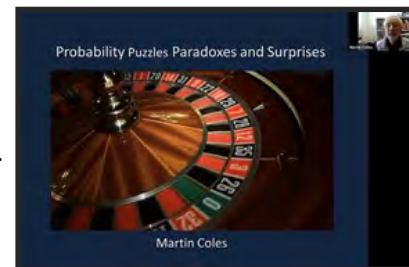
Another tale of female success from beyond the dunes of the Arabian Desert. The lecture presents Dr. Rafia Gubash, a Dubai psychiatrist and epidemiologist, and her achievements which have won her international recognition, with special emphasis on her unique museum 'House of Women' which acts as a cultural centre documenting the role of women in the United Arab Emirates. (99 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjXHPZjOKcY>



Probability: Puzzles, Paradoxes and Surprises || Martin Coles

We all have an innate sense of the likelihood of various possible events. But there are times when our sense of probability lets us down. In this lecture, former math teacher Martin Coles will elucidate a variety of puzzles and surprises from the world of probability. There's a good chance you'll enjoy this lecture, even though there might be brief moments that remind you of those high-school math lessons you dreaded so much. (187 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydc5bnbRfbM>



Into the Northwest Passage || Audrey Speck

A 17-day expedition by ship up Greenland's west coast, across to Ellesmere Island to Lancaster Sound and then down past King William Island to end at Cambridge Bay, NWT. A repeat of a presentation given in 2018. (82 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zo-8E6TOLKE>



What Do Cave Paintings Tell Us? John Felvinci

Many cave and rock paintings have been discovered over the last 150 years around the world. They range in age from 4,000 to 45,000 years. The paintings tell us much about the hunters, the animals, and the climate at the times of their creation. In this lecture we will examine many of the paintings and draw conclusions about the various artists. (112 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZMfPIzHT-0>



Fundraising

We are beginning to establish a culture of giving among our members. Over the past year, we have raised \$54,068 from some 200 donors! Three of these were foundations that gave substantial amounts: the Lindsay Memorial Foundation (\$7500), Zellers Family Foundation (\$5000) and S.M. Blair Family Foundation (\$3000). The remainder, a significant \$40,000 plus, came from individual donors. Thank you!

The response to MCLL's appeal for financial support early last summer was extremely gratifying. Our bottom line is almost entirely dependent on registration fees but, when the spring term 2020 was cancelled, it became clear that we would have to reach out to members and others in order to maintain our viability. Members of MCLL are well known to be generous in offering their time and talent to this community—volunteering in the office, serving on committees, moderating study groups, giving lectures... Our success has depended on the immeasurable hours of volunteer work that so many offer. We can now say that your response to this financial appeal demonstrated the commitment to MCLL on all fronts.

MCLL's Development Committee, chaired by Juliet Wait and supported by Ana Milic, has worked very closely and collaboratively with Lisa Tang and Maria Rivas Rivera, members of the Advancement Program at the School of Continuing Studies. Lisa and Ana planned a crowdfunding event named 'Seeds of Change' with the goal of raising funds to reduce social isolation. The message in this appeal clearly touched prospective donors on McGill's Day of Giving on March 10. MCLL was an important player, having contributed 10% of the total amount raised by the School. The funds raised are now being used to reduce social isolation among seniors through digital learning and to enlarge our membership to seniors living in Montreal and beyond. We have purchased 14 tablets that will be lent to our members who are in need of upgraded devices. We know that this support will make lifelong learning more accessible to many.

If you would like to contribute to this fundraising effort, here is the link to our Give to MCLL page:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/mcll/about-mcll/give-mcll>

Remembering Ben Sperer

March 19, 1921 - April 26, 2021

There are a few rare people who come into your life like shining stars, and, even if you haven't known them well or for a long time, they leave a lasting impression and enrich your life. Such a person was Ben Sperer. I attended those lectures he gave at MCLL that I was able to register for, as they were inevitably fully subscribed the moment registration opened. I was privileged to attend several dinner parties and the occasional luncheon with Ben, but I will leave it to those who knew him intimately to describe his life and the impact it had on them. I asked a close friend to write a sort of obituary, and she has done so, admirably describing the highlights of his life.



“Sadly, Ben Sperer left us on the 26th April 2021, before he had time to give his wonderful Spy Stories presentation which had been scheduled during the winter and was fully booked, as were all his lectures.

Ben was born exactly one hundred years ago and grew up in Istanbul. He spoke several languages fluently and during World War II worked in the British Foreign Office as a translator. Following a military coup in Turkey, he and his wife Daisy emigrated to Canada in 1960, where Ben worked for Pfizer for twenty years. He then established a medical journal publishing company called Pharmalibri, which he ran for twenty-five years.

On retirement, he started to attend a writers' circle, leading to a large collection of short stories, which were eventually published in book form, as well as a memoir of his youth entitled “Under Turkish Skies”.

Ben was blessed with an amazing memory, and he developed a love for lecturing on historical and world events. Being a wonderful raconteur, his presentations always took on a conversational tone. He never used notes, pointing to his head when he was asked where he kept his notes. He could talk on and on about the subject of the day, be it the Russian Revolution, events leading up to World War I and II, la Belle Epoque, Spy Stories, and much else. He answered questions with his usual good grace and often stayed behind after the end of the lecture to continue the discussion.

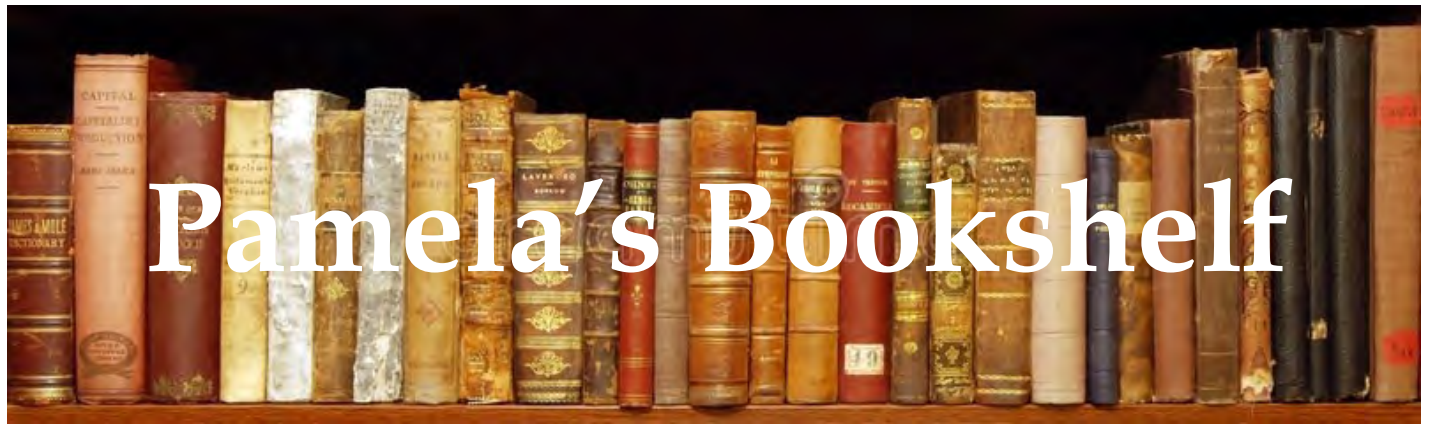
Always charming, elegant and unassuming, Ben was a true gentleman, he will be deeply missed and his absence will leave a deep hole in the lives of his family and numerous friends. Adieu Ben, your knowledge, your warmth and your humour enriched many lives and for this we are deeply grateful.”

Ben was well-known in the many organizations to which he contributed and has asked that those wishing to honour his name send their contributions to the Canadian Associates of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, (514) 937-8927, or to the Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors, (514) 734-1825.

Sandra Frisby

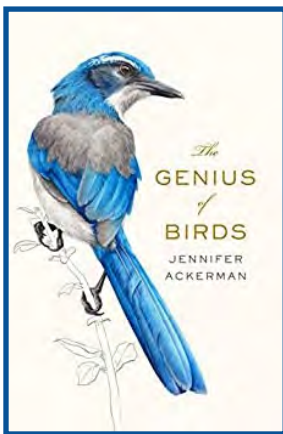
For those of you who did not get to hear Ben's wonderful lectures, and for those of you who just wish to hear them once again, here are eight of them on the MCLL YouTube channel. Enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=ben+sperer



Pamela's Bookshelf

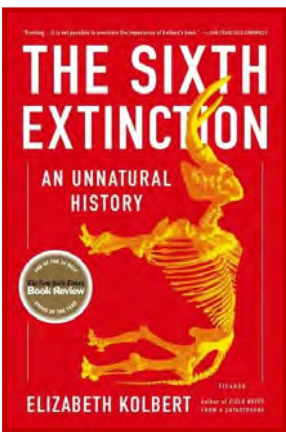
Non – Fiction



The Genius of Birds by Jennifer Ackerman (2015) paperback

You will never think about birds, or about language, the same way. As Ackerman points out in her introduction to this delightfully written book, our discourse is permeated with terms that signal our disrespect for birds. Named one of the ten best non-fiction books in 2016 by The Wall Street Journal and the Best Book of the Year by the Spectator, this book offers us a carefully re-

searched and entertaining story of birds as thinking creations capable of performing tasks that require real mental sophistication. If genius is determined by survival, birds have been around and flourished since the dinosaurs. The Great Auk was not exactly a big success, so birds have downsized, like so many of us.



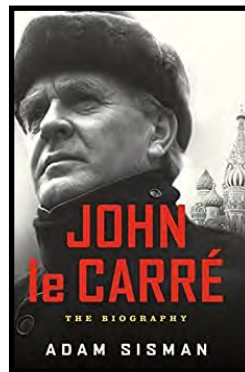
The Sixth Extinction by Elizabeth Kolbert (2014) paperback

I have only very rarely recommended a book twice. But given that in 2016 The

Guardian listed Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction* first in its list of the 100 Best Non-Fiction books ever written, I feel vindicated in doing so with this highly intelligent, entertaining and wonderfully executed work. Over the past half billion

years, so Kolbert informs us, there have been five mass extinctions on earth and now, just when the species which has had the temerity to designate itself as homo sapiens (the species that knows and understands) is coming to understand the significance of these events, we are ourselves on the verge of causing what she refers to as the

Sixth Extinction. In 13 highly readable chapters, Kolbert, a staff writer for the New Yorker, guides us through the lives and demise of extraordinary creatures like the Sumatran rhino, the Panamanian golden frog and the great auk. For the MCLL audience, many of whom are birders, the great auk is of particular interest. It was a flightless bird, related to puffins, that for thousands of years lived and thrived in huge numbers throughout the world, including off the coast of what is now Newfoundland, but was rendered extinct by humans in barely two centuries. This book is a clear and urgent warning to all of us. A must read.



John le Carré: The Biography by Adam Sisman (2015) paperback

Our audience (MCLL) likes biographies, particularly one about the author of the greatest spy story every written – “The Spy Who Came In From the Cold”. Acclaimed by Ian McEwan and others as one of the most significant novelists of the second half of the twentieth century, John le Carré, the pen name for David Cornwell, died in December of

last year. His books offer us a view of how the end of the Empire, the Cold War, and the influence of Communism in English society appeared to those who lived through that time. Adam Sisman's biography, published five years before Cornwell's death and with his cooperation, is a fascinating and nuanced portrait of a man who wrote about and was himself an expert in the art of deception. Branded by many as a spy turned writer, Cornwell regarded himself as a writer, who like so many of his kind, had done a stint in the world of the secret service. For him, the writing came first. After reading this biography, you will want to reread le Carré. When you do so you will understand his work and his dilemma so much better. Among other things, we learn that to divulge the identity of a member of the British Secret Services was a crime. I can't think of a more enjoyable summer project than rereading le Carré.



Pamela's Bookshelf

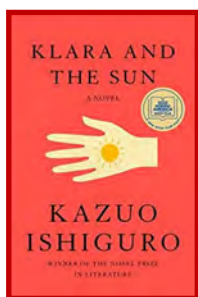
Fiction



After the Party by Cressida Connolly (2019) paperback

Cressida Connolly is a well-respected British journalist, biographer, novelist and short-story writer. *After the Party*, a wonderfully evocative interwar novel, is her first book to be published in North America. It opens in 1979 but soon flashes back to 1938, when Phyllis Forrester, a polite, kind, middle-class lady returns to Sussex, England with her husband after spending

years abroad. They move into Phyllis' sister's large house. Another sister Nina lives nearby. Phyllis soon comes to learn that both her sisters and their husbands are involved with a club or "party". The party, it turns out, is the British Union of Fascists. While not actively involved with the BUF, Phyllis' desire to please her sisters and her rivalry with them leads her to join up. Although her only real crime is complacency and a distinct lack of curiosity, her association with the "party" ultimately lands her in Holloway Prison, an experience Connolly somehow manages to portray as both harrowing and very British and genteel. (Phyllis and the other ladylike prisoners are allowed to keep their fur coats.) Throughout this immensely readable, tragicomic novel readers will find themselves thoroughly enthralled and engaged in a deeply personal and moving story of an important and troubled period in our history.



Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro (2021) paperback

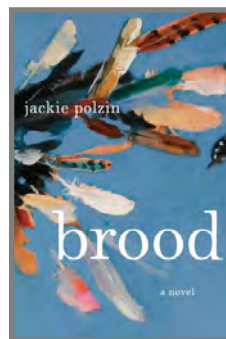
The angle of narration has always been important to Ishiguro and perhaps never more so than in this brief, but compelling story where the protagonist is an Artificial Friend, in other words, a robot called Klara. Her name means brightness and she is powered by the sun. Klara is chosen by Josie, who struggles against severe sickness and loneliness, to be her friend. Klara is the hero of this tale - empathetic, intelligent and oddly innocent. In the end Klara learns her limits and we learn something about what makes humans human.



Hamnet and Judith by Maggie O'Farrell (2020) paperback

A beautifully written, captivating and compelling novel and a winner of significant critical awards. The title refers to the twin children of the young Shakespeare (who is only known here as "the Latin tutor" and never referred to by name). In actuality, the work centers on Shakespeare's older, monied, and magical wife, Agnes. O'Farrell

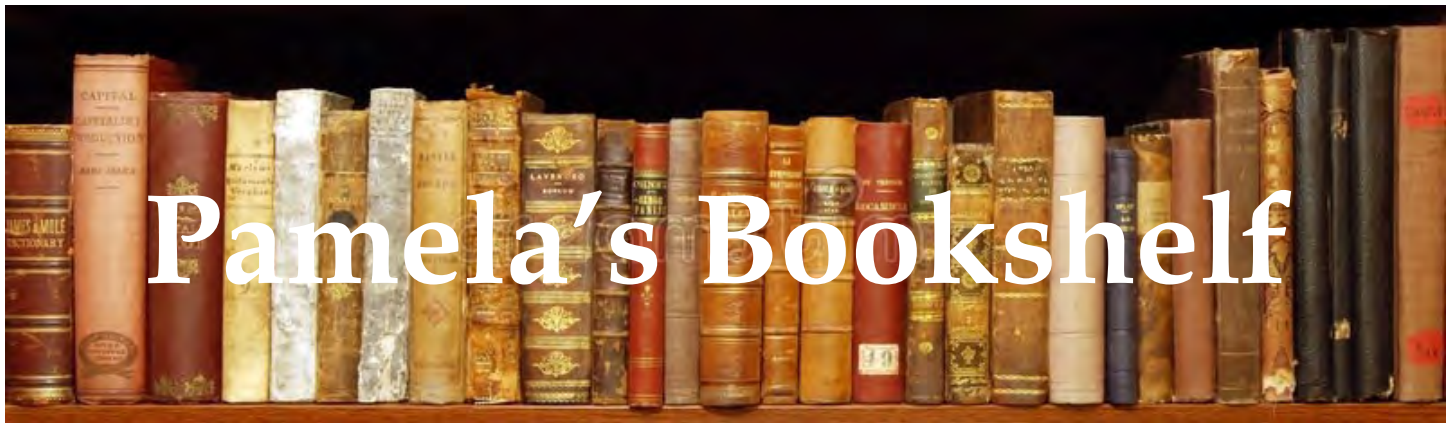
seamlessly blends fiction and reality in telling the story of Agnes' life with the playwright and of the loss of their young son to the plague. Shakespeare's will, where he left Agnes his "second best bed" is an affirmation of their relationship. Of resonance to today's reader is the bravura description of the foreboding feeling in that time of the ever-present threat of catching a potentially fatal disease. When Agnes rides on horseback to London to see Hamlet, her husband's great play, it brings them closer together and breaks down the loneliness of her grief. Perhaps this is finally a book about grief. It is not surprising that when, in our time, Covid has given us so much to grieve about, reading this novel may well make us feel less lonely.



Brood by Jackie Polzin (2021) paperback

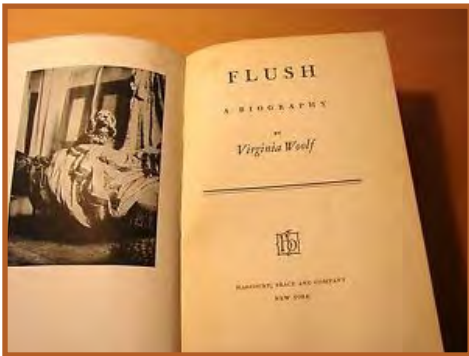
An entirely original, intimate, heartbreaking yet humorous, new literary voice. The book is about the narrator's attempt to keep her brood of four chickens - Gam Gam, Miss Hennepin County, Gloria and Darkness - alive during the course of a year. The book is about motherhood and miscarriage; it is dedicated to her own mother. Her husband, Percy, tries to calm her grief and help her sleep by reassuring her that he is excited to be spending the rest of his life with her.

Continued on page 16



Pamela's Bookshelf

Fiction



Flush: A Biography by Virginia Woolf (1933) paperback

Among her many and various writing, Virginia Woolf wrote two biographies: one of the literary critic Roger Frye and the other of Elizabeth Barrett's dog, Flush. Of the two, it is the one about the dog that is still appreciated and read today. Flush is an irresistibly entertaining and lively account of its main character's relationship to his owner and eventually to Robert Browning, and the vicissitudes of those relationships. The idea for the book came to Virginia Woolf when she wanted to distract herself from her anxiety over the upcoming reviews of her book *The Waves*. Told from the point of view of what one reviewer described as a "dog in Woolf's clothing", Flush succeeds admirably in diverting us in this highly amusing and insightful account of these literary figures, their travels and their world.

Tenth Bloomsday Montreal

Interesting? Yes! Fun? Yes! A success? Yes! Hats off to the planners behind Bloomsday Montreal 2021! This year and last were forcibly online but this did not affect the content or quality of the festival and Joycean enthusiasts were not the only ones who enjoyed this year's events. Margie Gillis fans must have been delighted to watch her interview with Dennis Trudeau and learn that she is preparing a solo dance choreography based on James Joyce while Leonard Cohen inspired painter and writer Anne Lewis to write about him and reinforce her connections to Dublin. How to bake Irish soda bread held an appeal to a wide audience too and even bread makers who have been using their own recipe for Irish soda bread for years could benefit from the expert's tips. To



read more about Bloomsday Montreal 2021 take a look at the article in Westmount Magazine at <https://www.facebook.com/703191463/posts/10157990099541464/> for an excellent account of the various events, from the variety musical concert to the annual readings from *Ulysses* on June 16th itself, culminating in the titillating soliloquy by Molly Bloom rendered by the incomparable Kathleen Fee, which always closes Bloomsday Montreal. And thanks again to MCLL members Dave and our much missed Judith Schurman, who co-founded Bloomsday Montreal ten years ago.