



# McGill

School of  
**Continuing Studies**

McGill Community  
for Lifelong  
Learning

## The Newsletter

Fall 2021, Volume 33, No. 3

[www.mcgill.ca/mccl](http://www.mcgill.ca/mccl)

### MCLL has survived the challenges of the Covid pandemic thanks in part to the diligence and dedication of our Zoom hosts. Following are profiles of some of the hosts.



Claire Booth

Being reasonably at ease with online applications, it was natural for me to volunteer to be a Zoom host. I had never used Zoom before but downloaded the application, created an account and worked out how to run it. Initially Zoom was fairly basic but many new features have been added. I must admit I am starting to get lost, but I believe you learn to do something when you need it. Initially one of our greatest challenges was to train members over the phone. Some had very little computer literacy and didn't understand the basic terminology needed to navigate an online application, e.g., a tab, a drop-down menu, etc. Today I am really proud to say that our members have gained enormously in confidence in using online tools. I'm sure they themselves are surprised at their achievements.



Rick Jones

I have a **B.SC** in Geology and Physics from Carleton, an **M.SC** in Meteorology and an **M.B.A** in Finance and Accounting from McGill i.e. I have a long affinity for and connection to McGill. I worked as a Meteorologist for Environment Canada for years mostly with computer. I retired in 2007 and joined MCLL in 2008. Through work and at home I've always been comfortable with computers. At home in the early 80s I had a VIC20 followed a Commodore 64 and then IBM compatible after that. It was natural for me to work with Zoom as I had been testing remote classrooms long before Covid. I had made some tests with Ana as much as five years ago. Just

before Covid struck I was Zoom hosting in a SG in a sort of "Hybrid " class with Tim Skene at home. I was among the first Zoom hosts in Spring of last year



Married, I have two daughters in Vancouver. With Covid it's been difficult, but my wife and I visited them in August this year. The time before was in January 2020, before Covid struck. My biggest hobby is singing in choirs. I currently sing in two choirs: Anima Musica and the Saint Laurence Choir. I take this very seriously and before Covid I was in 4 choirs and up to five choirs at times. When I retired, I wanted to continue my association with McGill and continue learning. I started a graduate degree in the Continuing Education building. Unfortunately, the courses required exams. After so many years taking courses I was tired of writing exams. Then I discovered MILR on the second floor that offered "courses" with NO exams. I was "in" and have been ever since!



Krystyna Stewart

To hear Krystyna describe her happy youth, growing up in a farming community, within what was then known as Canada's tobacco belt, was a real cultural enrichment, a mix of daily life within historical times.

For anyone interested in Canadian history, interviewing Krystyna was an educative eye opener on the importance of the Ontario tobacco industry in the 20th century, and on one reality of the rural primary school system, the one-room schoolhouse.

*Continued on page 3*

## President's Message



It is my great pleasure to share with you very exciting news.

Congratulations to Ana Milic who has been officially appointed as MCLL Program Administrator. Ana with Sally Cooper, who was appointed earlier this summer as Administrator Coordinator, present a formidable and dynamic team. All of us at MCLL are so proud for both of you!

Interested in more good news? Council is fully engaged in an exciting and ambitious agenda for the 2021-22 season. Teams are working on several fronts, not the least of which is to launch the Hybrid model of learning in two of our classrooms. The Hybrid model combines both in-person and remote learning in time for the winter semester commencing in January 2022.

Training programs will be taking place this fall to ensure that this new learning environment works well for both our moderators and participants so that study groups are meaningful and enriching.

The new Hybrid learning model is only one of many initiatives that Council is engaged in to take advantage of every opportunity that secures our future. Stay tuned to upcoming newsletters as we share each one of them.

**Jeff Sidel, President**

## Editorial

Covid19 has not put a stop to MCLL's activities. You need only look at the range of topics covered by the study groups every term – from Mexican Migrants to Use of Cannabis to Role of Parents in transmitting Gender Roles to Children – and the creativity of some of the presentations. All our retired teachers, engineers, lawyers, librarians, etc. have become IT wizards, taken on the role of host or are presenting PowerPoints that are almost professional. And the general happiness at being back in class after the long summer is palpable in all the conversations I have had with members. Even on Zoom, MCLL is a great place to belong.

A sad note to mention, however, is the loss of a precious member of our editorial committee, Pamela Sachs (see page 12), We are now reduced to a team of four and decidedly in need of more collaborators. If you like writing, whether book reviews, interviews, opinions... or have ideas about life, events, people... that you want to express, please contact us and try your hand. We would particularly appreciate contributions from younger members of MCLL who will take our organization into new realms that we older folk cannot even conceive. Come stir us up!

**Lesley Régnier**

## A New Chair for the Curriculum Committee

**Sheila Mason's profile: a brief introduction**

"The pleasures arising from thinking and learning will make us think and learn all the more."

— **Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics***

Sheila Mason is the new Chair of MCLL Curriculum Committee. Four of the five years since she joined the MCLL crowd have been spent as a member of this committee. Sheila received her BA from McGill and an MA and PhD in philosophy from Purdue University. She has been a member of the Faculty at Concordia since 1969, specializing in Anglo-American Ethics with a focus on the Feminist Ethics of Care and Virtue Theory.

Sheila found MCLL to be the perfect arena for intellectual reflection and discussion after her retirement. She enjoys participating in study groups that involve fellow-members' presentations followed by stimulating discussions.

The Curriculum Committee provides support for moderators and lecturers through person-to-person liaisons with members of the committee, Moderators' Workshops, etc. In her new role, Sheila hopes to maintain the high standards set by former chairs and deeply appreciates the support of MCLL's Administrative Coordinator, Sally Cooper. In her opinion, the most interesting and defining aspect of the Curriculum Committee's mandate is to set in motion a process of reflection, inquiry and discussion.

Asked what authors and books had a major and lasting influence on her worldview, Sheila named Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and its interpretation by contemporary philosophers such as John McDowell, Martha Nussbaum and others. She's currently reading Siddhartha Mukherjee's *The Gene: An Intimate History*, as well as *Genome* by Matt Ridley and *A Brief History of Everyone Who Ever Lived* by Adam Rutherford (all recommended by John Felvinci in his fine lecture on ancient DNA).



**Continued from page 1**

Due to the production of flue-cured tobacco this area became one of the most flourishing sections of Canadian agriculture during the time Krystyna was living there with her family in the 1950s and 1960s. During the harvest season, thousands of students and unemployed young men flooded the area to work for the prosperous farmers. It is then, Krystyna says, that she first became aware of and very interested in the existence of Québec and of its French speaking population.

She ardently describes her years as a student attending one-room schoolhouses, where one single teacher would teach all subjects to 30 or more students from the first to the eighth grade, often going the extra mile teaching crochet and knitting to the latchkey children until their parents would return home from work. Krystyna remains inspired by these acts of generosity which made such a difference in their community.

These early life experiences would shape Krystyna's study choices, professional destiny and personal values. She obtained a B.Sc. in Botany from the University of Toronto and would meet at U of T her future husband, Neil, a PhD student in Computer Science. The couple later established themselves in Montréal and the rest is history: Neil, a professor of Computer science at Université de Montréal, two wonderful children (McGill alumni) and later, three grandchildren, to whom Krystyna would read Shakespeare in the car on the way to and from their frequent visits with their grandparents.

Having furthered her studies, obtaining a certificate in applied computer science from the Université de Montréal, Krystyna pursued a long career in teaching: thirty-six years, altogether, of lecturing at U de M, with stints teaching Microsoft Office at hospitals and McGill ContEd. Like the one-room school teacher of her youth, Krystyna has been a dedicated volunteer at MCLL, sharing her time and skills registering members and helping them use Zoom. It is not surprising that, in the spring of 2020, Krystyna was invited to partake in MCLL's training meetings with the administrative team in view of establishing online classes, becoming a Zoom host as well as participating in planning future Hybrid educational technology. Once on board, feeling the pressure the MCLL team was under in planning the study groups, training, and adapting people's computer skills to Zoom system requirements, Krystyna would see her summer plans for near complete retirement going out the window or at least postponed until later.

Beyond her involvement in her volunteer commitments, Krystyna enjoys attending arts events and activities. For now, while eagerly waiting for the US border to reopen to

resume the couple's favourite activity, driving to New York City to attend performances at The Metropolitan Opera, quiet weekends at the family cottage in the Laurentians will just have to do!



Susan van Gelder

I knew Susan was special when she informed us, in our study group on James Joyce's *Ulysses* that her parents (last name, Bloom) married on June 16, the very same date that Leopold Bloom took his daylong walk through the streets of Dublin. What a coincidence! But

this has nothing to do with my next study group, this time with Susan as moderator. She took us back through the ages to the earliest women composers with samples of their music and information about the eras they lived in. It was a fascinating class, to the extent that a group from that first study group has continued to meet every week (now on Zoom) to talk about women and their struggle for equality in various domains.

Susan continued to offer her study group but, with Zoom, she has acquired a new, extremely important role at MCLL. Her IT experience has made her a key member of the fleet of hosts created when moderators soon realized that they needed a technical assistant to sort out participants' problems with their connection to the internet. Not only that, they also offer their assistance to members who are not familiar with PowerPoint presentations.

Susan bought her first computer way back in 1983 and used the knowledge she picked up in the elementary school where she taught for 15 years. Later she worked with an organization hosting web events, giving workshops for teachers and providing online materials. She started writing blogs before most people had ever heard of them and joined media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, becoming part of networks for teachers around the world. She was clearly the ideal person to head the group of volunteer hosts at MCLL and we participants certainly appreciate all their help.

Just a coda. Susan plays the recorder (sopranino to great bass), specializing in early music and is learning to play the harpsichord. She can often be found in the audience of early music concerts and hopes to be able to attend many more in person.





# The Zoom Experience

A few of our members have shared their respective experiences using Zoom.



Roz Acutt

Some people hate Zoom and if you have to be on it for eight to ten hours a day it would be very tiring. But during the past 18 months I've found Zoom to be very useful and a great way to relieve the isolation that has come with Covid. Whether I've been in Montreal or in my other home in Vancouver, I've been able not only to take part in MCLL study groups but also enjoy lectures, travelogues, musical performance and other events put on by organizations in many different countries. I've even had two Zoom birthday parties with friends and family in the UK as well as different parts of Canada. I hope we'll continue to have things available on Zoom, even after the pandemic is over, because it allows us to enjoy events we wouldn't otherwise be able to take part in.



François Labonté

March 5, 2020: COVID is on the mind of everyone in Europe, but it had just started spreading in Spain where Lise and I were completing another great six weeks on the Costa del Sol, and preparing to return to Montreal to enjoy some of the spring ski season!

March 14: the Quebec Government announces a complete lock down due to the fast spreading of COVID. My Spring ski season ended abruptly that day after only three days of good skiing! After speaking with Ana (our exceptional Administration Manager) and a few MCLL members including Tony Frayne, I volunteered to offer a five-week Study Group on the Balkans (an abridged version of a ten-week SG offered in 2018) on a remote basis using the Zoom platform and assisted by a technical expert (Martin Coles agreed to help me with the technology).

First Session - D day April 14, 2020. With a full class of 24 all getting on with Zoom, the course goes very well (thanks to Martin) until I decide to show a video! I knew how to share screen, so I start the video, but oops the sound is terrible and the picture so-so! Martin tries to interrupt me, using the chat, and asking me to stop as he wanted to talk to me to suggest that I click the box "Optimize for Video Clip". By that time, I was all stressed out, so I impolitely said: "but I don't want to talk to you now", let's finish the video. To this day, Martin never reminded me of my rude answer, the gentleman that he is. Thank you Martin for your support. That was the beginning of my experience on Zoom which has allowed so many of us to communicate and learn during this pandemic.



Carol Miyamoto

One moderator of a study group I attended kept apologizing weekly for his dishevelled hair. Midway, he sported a cool haircut done by his wife after much pleading. As for me, I discovered that when my hair is over a foot long, I shed even more than our cat. For the many other MCLL study groups I attended, everyone looked spiffy. I'm guessing that those who were hair-challenged used the stop-video button! Or perhaps MCLL members are just more resourceful, willing to take on a new profession.

Who would have thought that the word Zoom would become so many parts of speech? "See you on Zoom" (noun); "Should I Zoom you?" (verb); "How was your Zoom meeting in the Zoom room?" (adjective). The old meaning for Zoom that refers to a camera's Zooming in or out is passé; so is Mazda's ad, "Zoom-Zoom", the onomatopoeic award-winning slogan.

I have learned that the most vital button on Zoom is the audio mute/unmute. Hearing sounds of popping toasters or gurgling Keurig makers or dishes hitting the dish rack is not Zoom-friendly! Neither is my offering profound insight to the group only to hear, "Unmute!" by a dozen people. I believe that only after we have mastered Zoom will we be returning to McGill in person. Hurrah!

## Editorial Team

Lesley Régnier—Editor  
Noga Emanuel Charlotte French  
Sandra Frisby  
Roger Humphrey—Layout

# How do we Attract New Members at MCLL?

It has 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 to 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.

## Parlons français

« Parlons français avait attiré mon attention dès 2018 mais je craignais de ne pas être à la hauteur ou d’être jumelée à un étudiant peu motivé. Puis la COVID 19 nous est tombée sur la tête et je n’ai eu qu’à signifier à Lorne Huston mon désir de participer au programme pour qu’il me mette en contact avec une étudiante.

L’étudiante en question se nomme Tas. Je parle d’elle au présent puisque nous poursuivons nos rencontres hebdomadaires sur Zoom bien qu’elle soit retournée chez elle à Brisbane en Australie depuis le mois de juin. Nos conversations dépassent toujours l’heure réglementaire car nous sommes devenues des amies. Tas est une jeune trentenaire dynamique qui ne manque pas de sujets de conversation et qui exprime à merveille ses opinions. Le but n’est pas de l’interrompre pour corriger quelque erreur mais de la laisser parler. Et les sujets de conversation ne manquent pas : l’actualité, la société, sa profession d’avocate, nos familles, la cuisine et j’en passe. À cause de la COVID 19 nos rencontres ont eu lieu sur Zoom la plupart du temps mais, après avoir reçu mes deux vaccins Pfizer, nous avons pu nous voir à quelques reprises en personne. C’était encore plus agréable.

En conclusion, je vous encourage à participer au programme Parlons français car c’est enrichissant pour les deux interlocuteurs qui s’ouvrent alors à quelqu’un d’une génération et d’un pays différents.

Diane Rowley

### *Parlons français : qu’est-ce que c’est?*

Parlons français a été conçu en 2013 par Mimi Caouette. À l’instar d’un programme semblable en anglais (programme SPEAK), Parlons français jumelle un bénévole du MCLL avec un étudiant de l’école d’éducation permanente de McGill. Ces étudiants inscrits dans un programme de langue et culture française, conversent une heure par semaine en français avec le membre francophone du MCLL. Ils peuvent ainsi accroître leur maîtrise du français parlé et, par la même occasion, mieux connaître les réalités du Montréal francophone. Si vous avez envie de tenter l’expérience, veuillez communiquer avec Danielle Duhamel à l’adresse suivante : [parlonsfrancaismcll.scs@mcgill.ca](mailto:parlonsfrancaismcll.scs@mcgill.ca)

# Failed Persuasion on the Rialto

*The Merchant of Venice's* claim to literary immortality stands upon two defining speeches: Portia's "The Quality of Mercy" and Shylock's "Hath not a Jew eyes". The two speeches bracket the crucial conflict that is at the core of the play. Shylock's speech, while making a plea of universal humanity, foretells its failure by ending on a note of revenge, alerting us to his fatal state of mind.

"If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. *If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction.*"

Portia's mellifluous words, rich with Christian pathos, end up with a chilly, alarming edge:

"Therefore, *Jew*,  
Though justice be thy plea, *consider this*,  
*That, in the course of justice, none of us*  
*Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;*  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. *I have spoke thus much*  
*To mitigate the justice of thy plea;*  
*Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice*  
*Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant'"* (all italics mine)

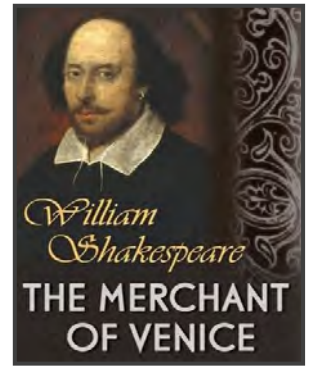
The two speeches delineate a vision of what the world should be like, of justice tempered by mercy. They do not stand in opposition to but rather, complement each other. They put forth a vision of gentler and kinder human society. Shylock speaks for the individual –an outsider- in a surrounding society, who needs to enjoy a level of dignity as a human being while his unique immutable identity remain intact and protected from gratuitous, often violent, spitefulness. Portia, the quintessential insider, speaks for society, representing the necessity for mercy as a negotiating value to reconcile the often incompatible interests of society's different and disparate members.

Neither speech succeeds in persuading the adversary to relent.

By the time Antonio manages to utter the words "Gentle Shylock" beseeching the latter to forego his bond, it is too late for Shylock to respond in kind. By the time Shylock agrees to forfeit his claim for the pound of flesh, it is too late for Portia (and the society she represents) to show, or judge, with mercy.

The failure to persuade or be persuaded is the failure to transcend emotions or even mitigate them, in favor of compromise and reason; decent commonsense fled out of that Venetian courtroom with a shriek.

When one's foundational premises about the right way the world ought to be comes into conflict with its abiding wrongness, often the path of least resistance is followed: dredging up explanations and narratives that comfort rather than solve, thus perpetuating conflicts and augmenting discord.



***Noga Emanuel***

# Ontario's Third Age Network Announces Plan to "Build Back Better"

The Ontario Third Age Network (TAN) announced new plans to reinforce its operations as a network of lifelong learning organizations in that province. "There is no question that COVID-19 and its associated restrictions have changed the way TAN's member organization had to operate," said TAN president Cathy Sparks in a recent interview. "Normal may well look different as we move forward."

Ms Sparks and the TAN executive have developed a series of discussion groups/information-sharing sessions on topics of interest to TAN members. These sessions range from more technical issues (questions of incorporation, by-laws. etc). to more substantive issues like ideas for socialization and working with volunteers in an online context.

The goal is to strengthen TAN as a network, rather than simply being a group of like-minded organizations. Recent challenges have forced TAN to define its vision of "building back better". The lifelong learning 'world' is changing rapidly. Individuals are retiring sooner, and technology provides opportunities for viewing online or streaming across multiple locations. Groups like ours should also play a future role in societal initiatives such as Age Friendly Cities, Age Friendly Universities, and Aging in Place. These will provide challenges as well as opportunities. We are finding that each TAN member wishes to not just grow in size, but to develop and to stay relevant over time. TAN, as an organization, seeks to provided them with a framework in which to do that.

The crux of this new vision lies in four main points, says Cathy Sparks:

- Developing and maintaining an effective network that reflects the needs of our members
- Collaborating with national and international third age learning groups
- Developing a strategy to address a society-wide focus on lifelong learning
- Welcoming and embracing change.

This statement may provide food for thought for the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning. MCLL works pretty much in splendid isolation. Each semester, members are called upon to put together a new program. Some people volunteer to moderate a study group or give a lecture, others work in committees or in the office to do all the necessary work behind the scenes to make things happen. On the whole, we rely mostly on our own resources and what we have collectively learned from past experience to guide our course of action.

There are signs though, that this ivory tower approach is beginning to change at MCLL. Recently, some moderators have been holding joint study groups with other Lifelong learning associations

**Lorne Huston**



**Cathy Sparks**, president of the Third Age Network in Ontario. TAN was founded in 2008 when six groups decided to start share issues and solutions to common organizational challenges. TAN now works with over thirty groups from all over the province. The mission is double: to provide help to new groups who want to get started as lifelong learning associations as well as to help existing groups enhance their activities. See <https://thirdagenetwork.ca/> for further information.

*Continued on page 8*

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## PRAISE FOR BORROWED TABLET

As you will have read in The Bulletin, MCLL has purchased a number of tablets that allow folks who do not have their own tablet or computer to participate in the Zoom sessions given at MCLL. One of our members who has availed herself of the opportunity is Kathy Lauer. She is very enthusiastic about the program and finds the tablet easy to use. She does have an iPhone, but the images are obviously much larger on the tablet. She was given a training session by Tim Skene, whom she describes as very patient and thorough, even setting up a practice session with another borrower. At home, she did add one app, but in general, she uses the tablet mostly for her MCLL connection. She has nothing but praise for the way in which MCLL has risen to the challenge during this difficult time.



## Livres en français



La Détresse et l'enchantement 3e éd. autrice: Gabrielle Roy, *Édition Boréal*, septembre 1984.

La Détresse et l'enchantement est la toute dernière oeuvre que nous ait laissée la grande romancière Gabrielle Roy. C'est un livre admirable, où l'auteur révèle, peut-être plus encore que dans ses autres oeuvres de maturité, la pleine maîtrise de son art.

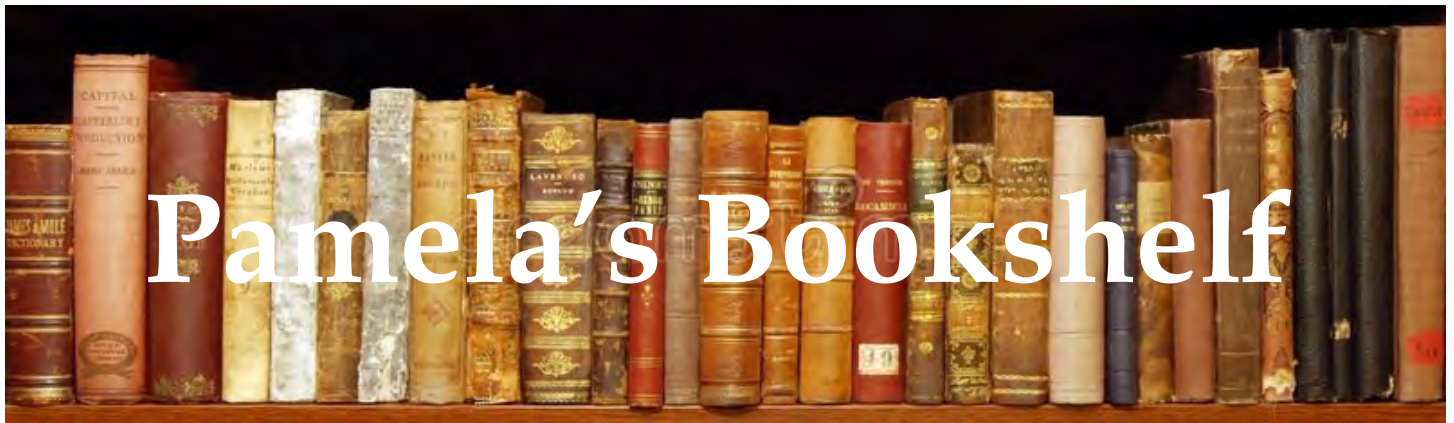
C'est l'histoire de sa jeunesse, de la découverte de son identité et de sa venue progressive à l'écriture qu'évoque ici l'autrice. Elle retrace ses années de formation, depuis son enfance manitobaine jusqu'à son retour d'Europe à la veille de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

Gabrielle Roy a reçu les plus hautes distinctions littéraires. Première Canadienne à remporter le Prix Femina de France (1947), Membre de la Société royale du Canada depuis 1947, le Prix du Gouverneur général (1947, 1957, 1978), le Prix Duvernay (1956) et le Prix David (1971), et a été nommée Compagnon de l'Ordre du Canada (1967).

*English Title: Enchantment and Sorrow: The autobiography of Gabrielle Roy, Univ of Toronto Pr; 1st ed édition (1 juin 1987)*

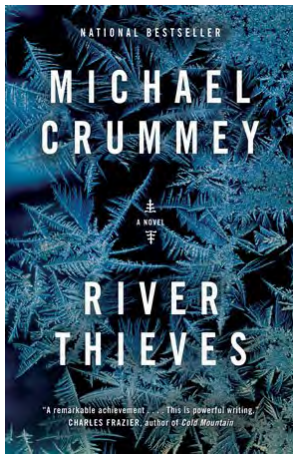
*Gabrielle Roy's work is one of the very few that has been fully translated into English. It is read and commented on in both linguistic communities and occupies a major place in the two traditions that make up Canada's literature today.*





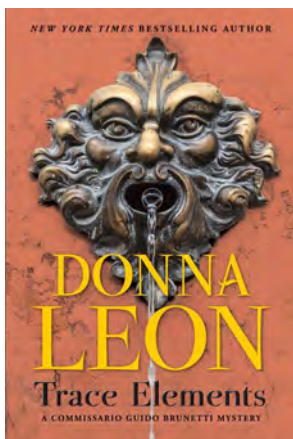
# Pamela's Bookshelf

## Fiction



***River Thieves*** by Michael Crummey (2002) hardback.

Born and raised in Newfoundland, Crummey knows its folklore, its people and its language. *River Thieves* is his first novel, written from the heart, about the decline and destruction of the Beothuk Indians. At the turn of the nineteenth century, naval officer David Buchan arrives from England with orders to establish contact with the aboriginal inhabitants of the area, the Beothuks. When Buchan approaches the white settlers there for advice, he finds himself surrounded by secrets and allegiances and brought face to face with two very different women. Crummey wants to remind us of our past mistakes so that we do not repeat them in the future.

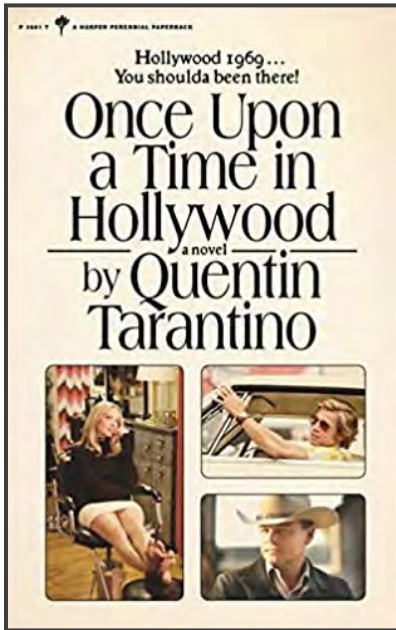


***Trace Elements*** by Donna Leon (2020) Paperback

Donna Leon's 29th novel featuring Commissario Guido Brunetti doesn't disappoint. A telephone call to the *Questura* from a dying patient sets the action in motion. A mysterious motorcycle accident had taken the life of the patient's husband, she herself is succumbing to cancer. Convinced that all is not as it seems, Signora Tosa asks the police to investigate the company that her husband worked for. The novel features all the usual characters we've come to enjoy and of course, *La Serenissima*, the city of Venice.

In a Q and A session after her appearance at McGill in 2019, Leon confirmed that she is much concerned about the environment and this is reflected in the plot here.

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## ***Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* by Quentin Tarantino (2021)**

A novelization of a film rarely achieves literary quality. Retelling the story of a film in novel form is derivative as per definition – a kind of reverse engineering. Quentin Tarantino’s novelization of his own scripted and directed film “Once upon a time in Hollywood” is a resounding exception to this rule. The novel stuns the reader with the intricacies of the Rococo narratives, unsparing wit, the strangeness of human banality for good and evil, and infinite love of the cinema.

Tarantino’s movies are best known for their depiction of extreme violence, crimes, chatty and charming ruffians. They are perceptibly less fretful about the punishment part of the equation. In Tarantino’s world integrity can still exist under the cover of all iniquities. Tarantino, however, is unforgiving to the human monster.

“Once Upon a Time in Hollywood” weaves four narrative threads, following the life and exploits of four characters:

Rick Dalton – A washed-up TV star, now demoted to being cast as the itinerant villain in Hollywood Westerns, he drowns his self-pity in whiskey.

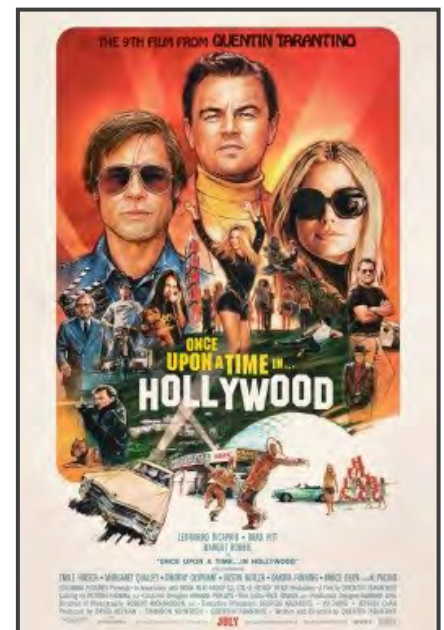
Cliff Booth – Rick’s handsome stuntman, who doubles as his driver/butler/friend, a decorated war-hero with a record of a violent past best left unexplored (though Tarantino being Tarantino does allow us a peek every now and then).

Sharon Tate – Roman Polansky’s young and wholesome wife, a rising movie star, whose comedic talent competes with her beauty and happy nature.

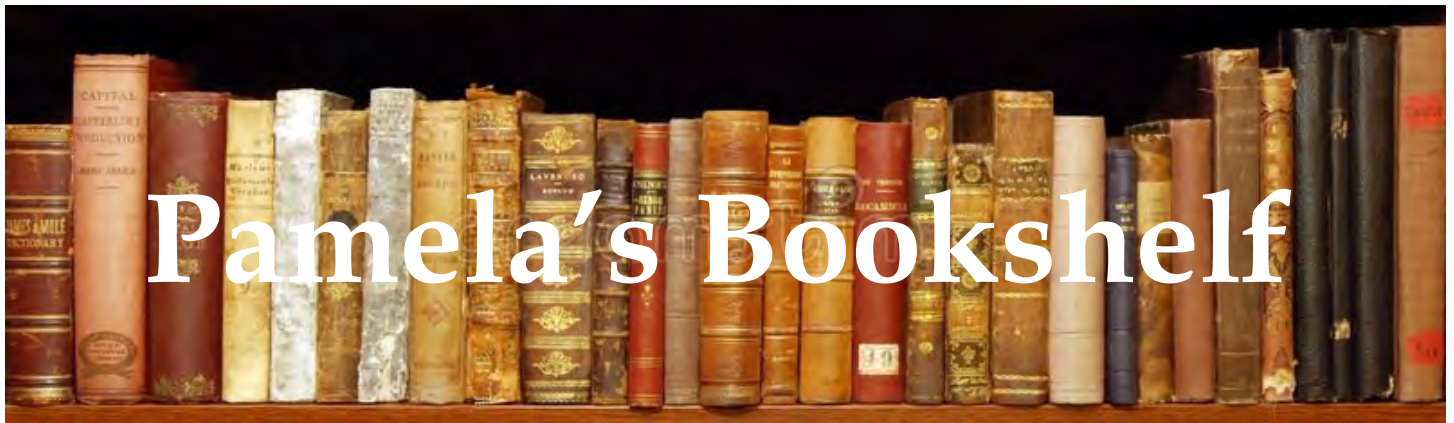
Charles Manson – A creepy megalomaniac ex-con reigning over a cult of stoned though not necessarily hapless hippies.

The four narrative strands intersect and converge in one fateful night, August 9, 1969.

Some critics suggest Tarantino’s film/novel is an exercise in a “what if” alternative history. Perhaps. But there’s more to the rage of the quasi-apocalyptic fire he unleashes on the monsters. His entire being rejects the horrors that transpired that night. Tarantino is determined to outmaneuver and vanquish the terrifying specter in that particular nightmare. How does he achieve it? By maximizing his authorial prerogative: there, I fixed it for you. But then we wake up from the dream, and the nightmare is still there.

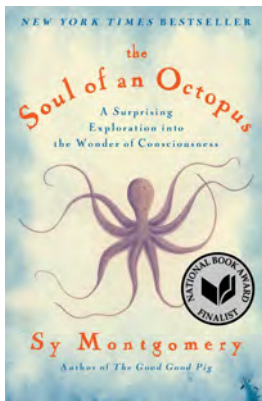






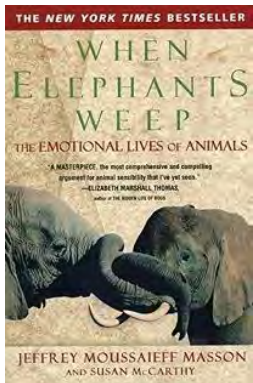
# Pamela's Bookshelf

## Nonfiction



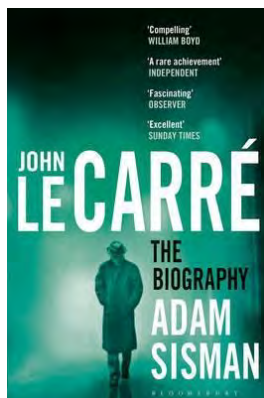
***The Soul of an Octopus*** by Sy Montgomery (2016) Atria paperback.

Traditionally, octopuses have been seen as one of the unknowable, dark denizens of the deep. In this delightful exploration of the octopus, popular naturalist Sy Montgomery introduces us to the emotional and physical world of this cephalopod. This fascinating creature is intelligent, emotional, highly individualistic and *The Soul of an Octopus* reveals what an octopus can teach us about two very distant minds, as well as giving us a behind-the-scenes peek into the workings of an aquarium and the people who fall in love with their charges.



***When Elephants Weep*** by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy. (1994) New York: Delacorte Press.

For more than 100 years, scientists have denied that animals experience emotions, yet this remarkable and ground-breaking book proves what animal-lovers have always known to be true: wolves, tigers, giraffes, elephants and many other creatures exhibit all kinds of feelings - hope, fear, shame, love, compassion. This well-researched and documented volume sheds new light on animal emotions and consciousness.



***John le Carré, a Biography*** by Adam Sisman (2002) hardback.

David Cornwell did not adopt his pseudonym until he became a writer. He spent years trying to make a living as a teacher or as an artist - painting murals, illustrating children's books. Recruited by both MI5 and MI6, he spent years as an agent for British Intelligence during the Cold War, eventually emerging as the master of the espionage novel. Sisman's biography is a fascinating read, whether describing the activities of the writer's father, a serial-seducer and con-man, or the life of young English boarding-school boys.

# Remembering



**Pamela Sachs**

I had only joined MCLL for a term before I met Pamela. We chatted once or twice about literary matters. Unexpectedly she asked me if I'd co-moderate a study group on Doris Lessing. I did not know much about MCLL. Although a former professor, I had never co-moderated. And I did not know Pamela. But I quickly fell under her spell. And so followed twelve joyful years of mutual exploration, argument and affection. We designed study groups around authors, around genres, around eclectic works on a single theme, and around Pamela's luncheon table of smoked salmon and salads.

Pamela was simply the best literary critic I have known. Her passionate and independent readings of texts, her perceptive observations, were wonderful. What most impressed me was her ability to get to the heart of a book, to what was important.

And in life as well she knew what was most important: her beloved family. When I stayed with her in the United States, she daily spent most of the morning networking with her children (and the evenings working on her MCLL book column).

Pamela was an amazing and courageous woman. I shall miss her deeply but I am fortunate to have known and loved her.

***Katherine Waters***

MCLL will be the poorer without Pamela Sachs. For many years, her study groups on literature were a popular contribution, and her deep ability to bring out the special qualities of a book were phenomenal. I was a member of several of her groups and they inspired me. I also very much appreciated the list of books she provided for the MCLL Newsletter. I often found delightful surprises when I took advantage of her choices. On a personal basis, I got to know her better when I was often able to give her a lift home after class, and occasionally join a gathering at her lovely home with friends, where she was the perfect hostess. We will miss her in many ways.

***Miriam Tees***

Pamela was a member of the Newsletter Committee long before I joined. Harold Entwhistle in those days, Miriam Tees was a contributor, Charlotte French too and it is Charlotte who took over the editor's chair in the footsteps of retiring Harold Entwhistle. And Pamela was always there, quietly reading and reviewing books for The Bookshelf. So many members counted on her list to plan their own reading for the next three or four months. She even had half a dozen recommendations in our last issue!

She always had a word of wisdom to offer at our meetings to discuss the content and future of the **Newsletter** and I knew I could consult her on any matter when I took over after Charlotte. I will miss her loyalty and professionalism.

***Lesley Regnier***