

SOCIETY PAGES

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- AGM—A NEW PRESIDENT
- VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION EVENING

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

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LETTER FROM THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT



Dear members and friends,

It is with some emotion that I write this letter, having stepped down as President of the Society at the recent Annual General Meeting after 13 years in office.

I joined the Council of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec some fifteen years ago and was honoured to be elected as President in January 1999.

At that time, there were three employees and the Society's annual budget amounted to \$45,785.00. We also received a grand total of \$1,500 in funding from all three levels of government. There was no fax machine, no computer, only a card catalogue and you were allowed to smoke a pipe in the library. Three-quarters of the building had sat empty and untouched for one hundred years.

Much has happened since that time. The Society has taken on a much larger role, becoming owner (by 100-year emphyteutic lease) of the Morrin Centre building and completing the entire restoration of this unique historic site. We have created the Morrin Centre, a vibrant cultural centre with extensive and varied programming and exhibits throughout the building. We have brought back a vocation and a life to every corner.

The Society has been an important institution within the life of this city since its creation in 1824. It has had its ups and its downs since that time. Today, however, its future is in your hands, and the hands of all the citizens of Quebec.

The Society is now thriving with a more than tenfold increase in its annual operating budget, up to 19 employees, a very busy cultural program and a very promising and bright future. But the fact remains that it is still a venerable but vulnerable institution, like a grandparent whose wisdom we need but who needs us too. We must all assume the responsibility for

ensuring her health and survival. We must participate, donate, volunteer, attend, renew, borrow books, buy unneeded magazine subscriptions, and generally and unconditionally support this remarkable institution. If we do, the rewards will be extraordinary for each of us as members and friends, for our English community, for the city of Quebec and for the entire country.

I take this opportunity to congratulate our new President Sovita Chander and wish her well as she takes on this exciting challenge. I ask you all to continue in your support of the Society and its new president and commit to ensuring that the Society's future is secure for the next century.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming ImagiNation Festival and I wish you all a very happy Easter.

Sincerely,

David F. Blair

MEET THE NEW PRESIDENT

WITH DAVID BLAIR STEPPING DOWN AS PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY, OUR EDITORS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVIEW OUR INCOMING PRESIDENT, SOVITA CHANDER.

Society Pages: How did you find out about the LHSQ?

Sovita Chander: Well, I'm a reader, and readers have some kind of built-in radar for libraries and bookstores. When we moved here in 1996, I found the Lit and His library almost right away. I remember coming here with my two sons, with the younger one still in a stroller, and hauling the whole kit and caboodle up the stairs to the library. But it was worth it. What a magical experience, walking into the library for the first time. My sons are now 17 and 20, and I couldn't have imagined when they were one and four how far this place could go.

The person who did imagine, however, is David Blair. And he didn't just imagine. David quietly and diligently made it happen, talking to city officials, working with successive mayors, canvassing for financial support. David worked tirelessly behind the scenes to take the Morrin Centre from a dream to the reality it is today.

SP: You studied history at McGill University. Did your interest in history influence your participation on Council?

SC: You've done your homework! I have to admit: I've never been a historian. Most of my career has been in marketing and technology. What I learned from history is to respect sources. History is written from sources — government archives, family documents, private diaries, account books — that historians must dive into and grapple with. Sources aren't glamorous, like first editions of the Gutenberg Bible or a Shakespeare folio. Historical sources are hidden treasures, and we ought to be proud that the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec was instrumental in establishing our national archives back over a century ago.

Something as unassuming as a pile of bills from the 1820s, for example, is a marvellous historical source.



When you look at those bills in relation to the history of the prison that is now the Morrin Centre, you can learn what people ate (lots of bread!), you can read that carpenters and masons were constantly repairing holes made by men trying to escape, you can see prisoners looking after other, sick prisoners. The same holds true in my job in marketing — history taught me to engage with sources. In my job, the sources are customers and people. Learning how to listen, interpret, and dig for hidden depths — that's what history taught me to value.

SP: In its almost 200 years of existence, there has been only one other woman president of the LHSQ, Rosemary Power Cannon Delaney. How do you see your role today, as President of Council?

SC: For the better part of the last hundred years, women have been critically important to the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec. The women who were our librarians, our Council members, and our members kept the flame alive even through some

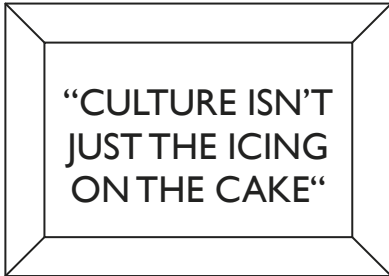
MEET THE NEW PRESIDENT-CONTINUED

fairly lean years. And in the 19th century, even if men dominated the Society, if you take a look through the archives and lending records, you'll see name after name of library patrons who were women. When you look at who actually borrowed the books and journals — which were from Boston and Philadelphia and Paris and London and Edinburgh and all over — some of the most frequent patrons were women. I would say that the library was a key intellectual connection to a wider world for them, at a time when intellect and learning were seldom open even to women of means.

I'm thrilled that we've come a long way. This year we have a Council that includes Louisa Blair, Gina Farnell, Elsbeth Tulloch, Shauneen Furlong, Barbara Salomon de Friedberg, and H el ene Thibeault, women who are engaged, accomplished, and committed to making the Society grow and thrive. What's great is that we live in a place where women are beginning to have more opportunity for leadership. I'm very pleased to be a part of a diverse team of both women and men who are leading the Society.

SP: The Morrin Centre has changed a lot during the last few years: the restoration work is completed, we have a new exhibition, a literary festival, just to name a few. How do you see the Morrin Centre's future?

SC: Isn't it wonderful? This is the kind of public programming that happens when you have funding partners who believe in your mission and who get that culture is critical to the well-being of a society, not just icing on the cake. From my very selfish business perspective — and I say selfish because I have a great deal of self-interest in seeing business thrive in Quebec City — I see culture as one of the pillars of a creative economy, where work is engaging and productive. The Morrin Centre is becoming one of those pillars in the creative economy that is developing in Quebec City.



“CULTURE ISN'T
JUST THE ICING
ON THE CAKE”

SP: You are the co-founder of Caristix, a high-tech company, and also its Vice-President. How do think this can contribute to assume your new role as President of Council?

SC: Successful companies in my field focus very hard on identifying and solving problems or serving a business need. That does sound like a truism, doesn't it? But the problem is, it's just so easy to fall into the trap of developing technology because, "oh, wouldn't that be cool to work on?" I mean, I could go on and on about semantic interoperability, and bore you to tears. Instead, it's very important to focus first on who you want to serve. You need to get to know them, and then identify their real needs and wants, and keep checking with them to be sure you've understood.

We've begun that work at the Morrin Centre. But we're always open to more input and feedback. So my role is to foster that kind of engagement and make sure we have the structures and the strategic direction in place so that we continually serve our membership and the people who walk through our doors. And that we have the funding in place to make it all work.

SP: In one word, how would you define the Morrin Centre?

SC: Communities. The Morrin Centre is about serving communities — francophones, anglophones, students, professionals, retirees — everyone who is interested in sharing in English-language culture in our city.

Sovita Chander is president of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec. She is a co-founder and the Vice-president of Marketing at Caristix, a healthcare technology company. Sovita lives in Quebec City with her husband, Donald Fyson, and their two sons. ■

FROM THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

If you attended the 188th AGM of the LHSQ, held on March 26th at the library, I won't feel offended if you skip this page, because as you may know, it is the custom at an AGM to review the activities of the year just ended. You may even have participated in a lot of these activities yourself. They are summarized in our Annual Report, which I invite you to consult online.

Looking back is important because history teaches us great lessons that must serve us for the future. One of last year's highlights certainly was our writers' festival, ImagiNation, whose honorary president Roch Carrier challenged us "to make reading as sexy as hockey." Permit me to add that we should support cultural institutions as much as we support hockey. Our support may not make them sexy, but certainly viable and dynamic.

Many of our members and partners accepted an invitation last June to celebrate with us the end of the restoration project and the official opening of our new exhibition *Doing Time*. Now that the building — the container — is completed, we need to look more closely at its content.

In order to do that, we produced a 5-year strategic plan with the help of the consulting firm Zins Beauchesne that was accepted by Council last December. The plan demonstrates the great potential of the Morrin Centre and the place it occupies in the cultural landscape of Quebec City, but it also shows the urgent need to obtain recurrent funding for its operations. In January, Council embarked on a retreat to define what it is we should be doing in the future, for whom and how. It was clearly identified that we are here to serve our membership in presenting activities and services to ELCS ... English language culture seekers ... of any native language. While it is certainly necessary, for financial reasons, to get involved in activities such as rentals, our principal raison d'être is that of a library, a learned society, a community space and a historic building in need of loving stewardship.

When outgoing president, David F. Blair, asked me if I would accept the position of Interim Executive Director, I agreed knowing full well the many challenges that the year 2012 will bring; but I have no doubt that with the support of Council members and the Morrin Centre staff we will not only meet these challenges but we will also assure the Society's place and pertinence in today's Quebec. With the building done, we must now continue to build our unique and dynamic cultural centre for ELCs while remembering, to quote Lily Tomlin, that "the road to success is always under construction."

Your participation and continued support is essential to our success and I hope to see you in a few days during the 2012 edition of ImagiNation, this year under the presidency of Paul Almond. You'll find a detailed description of the festival on page 12.

Marie Rubsteck, Interim Executive Director




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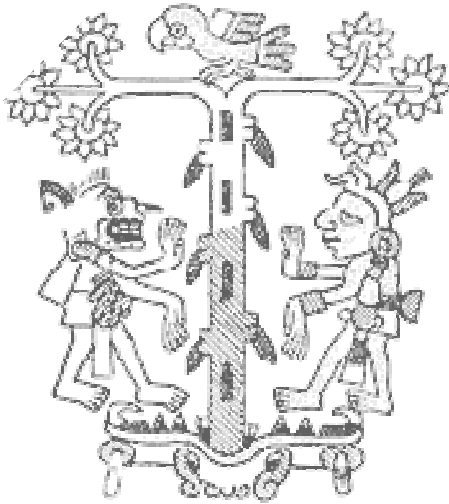
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TRANSACTIONS

A LOVE AFFAIR WITH CHOCOLATE
AN ANTI-VALENTINE'S DAY MEDITATION

By Miriam Blair



When I began reading the story of chocolate, I had no idea it would lead me through the political history of Mexico, Central and South America, the Spanish conquests, the industrial revolution in England, Quakerism, advertising, the slave trade, West Africa, and the growth of the power of multinational corporations. But mostly my reason for exploring this subject was that I love chocolate!

The earliest record of the fruits of the wild cocoa trees being used was found in what is present day Honduras and dates back to 1100 BC. Residues found in drinking vessels indicate that the white pulp surrounding cocoa beans was first used as a fermentable sugar to make alcohol. The staple diet of the Olmec, a meso-American people who were possibly predecessors of the Mayans, was maize soaked overnight in tall urns filled with wood ash and pulverized shells of snails. They fortified this with a magical substance extracted from a bean called kakawa, or as we now know it, chocolate.

The Aztecs called it Nahuatl, meaning “bitter water.” It was prepared by a servant class and only drunk by the upper classes, which would remain the case until Cadbury’s produced a more affordable chocolate during the 19th century. Then as now, chocolate was a luxury consumed by the privileged at the expense of those much less so. For thousands of years the chocolate cravings of an elite have been satisfied by the hard labour of an underclass.

This article is based on the following books in our library:
Bitter Chocolate by Carol Off
Chocolate Wars by Deborah Cadbury
The Chocolate Connoisseur by Chloé Doutre-Rousse
Oaxaca Al Gusto, an Infinite Seasoning by Diana Kennedy

The Mayans, whose civilization rivalled anything found in Classical Greece, cultivated the cocoa bean and improved the fine art of making cocoa concoctions. The beans were soaked, aerated, ground and mixed with a wide range of spices and flavours including chili pepper, flowers, vanilla and herbs. Occasionally the Mayan aristocrats added honey (the sweetening of cocoa really only became common after it arrived in Europe) but it was always mixed with corn. The key to its enjoyment was a topping of frothy bubbles made by pouring it from one jug to another from a great height.

Cocoa was also associated with religious rituals, and there are many images showing the cocoa bean being offered to the gods. A strong drink made of cocoa was given to the unfortunate victims of human sacrifice in the belief that the victim’s heart would be converted into a cocoa pod, and possibly to reduce the suffering of the victim. This sacred connection, which gradually disappeared under the Spanish influence, is still strong to this day in Mexico. In many indigenous communities of Oaxaca, drinking chocolate signifies the honouring of life, and being at one with family, neighbours, the community, the patron saints of the church, the dead, and above all, God.

A hill of beans

On Columbus’ last visit to the Americas, in 1502, some elaborate dugout canoes were intercepted off the coast of what is now Honduras, full of high class goods for trading, among which were some strange brown

TRANSACTIONS- CONTINUED

almond-shaped beans. This was the outside world's first encounter with the cocoa bean. But the outside world was less than impressed. In 1565, Girolami Benzoni wrote that "it seemed more a drink for pigs than a drink for humanity."

Montezuma, the powerful dictator of the Aztec empire, was always served cocoa throughout his sumptuous meals and his court was said to drink about 2000 cups a day. At the height of his powers he had a stash of nearly a billion cocoa beans, all extracted begrudgingly by the hard labour of his empire. Goods were priced in units of cocoa: a slave was worth 100 beans, a turkey 200. It literally had the economic clout of gold. While the Spanish conquistadors were hoarding gold, the Aztecs were hoarding cocoa beans. After the sacking of the Aztec empire by the Spanish, almost all that was left were some cocoa beans.

During the Spanish regime there were experiments made with the ancient cocoa recipes, much of it done by the Spanish clergy who were taking an interest in the culture of the aboriginals whilst trying to convert them to Christianity. The priests used it as a flavouring to spike savoury gravies and stews, they coated their turkeys with it before roasting, and the colonists modified the taste to suit their palates by adding sugar. It was around this time that the name was changed from *cacahuatl* to *chocolatl*, possibly because the old name was offensive to Spanish speakers. It was probably the priests and monks, understanding the value of cocoa as nourishment, who introduced chocolate to Europe, and by the end of the 16th century, cocoa plantations run on a form of slavery were supplying Europe with a steady supply.

The uses of chocolate were endless. Cocoa butter was used to heal burns. It was thought to have hallucinogenic properties, and even used as an aphrodisiac. It was prescribed as a pick-me-up, as a calmer-down, to relieve a fever, to help gain weight, and to stimulate digestion. The grim business of the Inquisition was lightened by the availability of cocoa for the clerics and aristocrats as they witnessed the agonies of suspected heretics.

In the mid-16th century the death rate of the aboriginal population in the Americas was enormous. It has been estimated that by the 17th century perhaps 90% of the indigenous population had been wiped out by various diseases, overwork, abuse and war. This

caused some concern in Spain, but only because of the shortage of manpower to work the cocoa plantations at a time when the consumption of cocoa was spiralling upwards, and Spain needed all the wealth it could generate in the New World to maintain its imperial position in the old one. Luckily there was a solution.

The traffic in African slaves to work in the Caribbean sugar plantations was already well established; now their labour was required to meet the growing shortages in Central America and Mexico. Hundreds of thousands of Africans were now diverted to the Spanish American cocoa plantations.

Inevitably chocolate arrived in England, where a new middle class was emerging which enjoyed many of the privileges formerly reserved for royalty. Unlike on the continent, where ladies and gentlemen of the court quaffed their cocoa out of specially designed and painted cups and saucers, in England cocoa was served in coffee houses along with coffee and tea, also just arriving in England. These were places where intellectuals, artisans and authors would gather to discuss revolutionary theories about social structures, human rights and natural justice. The arguments of philosophers such as Montaigne crossed national borders. They hotly debated the morality of slavery whilst sipping sugar-sweetened chocolate and coffee produced by the blood and sweat of slaves.

Quaking chocolate

Friends, or the Quakers. This sect was established in the 17th century, and because of their breaking with the established Church of England, they were persecuted by being excluded from most of the privileges of English society. They were barred from universities, forbidden to bear arms (they were pacifists), practise law or own land. They were imprisoned or banished to remote colonies thousands of miles away. Pennsylvania was established by the famous William Penn, a banished Quaker. By the 19th century Britain had relaxed its persecution, and Quakers were assimilated to some degree, but still remained a tightknit society, actively interested in politics and social reform, and living highly abstemious moral lives. They were industrious and successful entrepreneurs and took a particular interest in chocolate, partly because it was a non-alcoholic stimulant.

TRANSACTIONS - CONTINUED

Quaker John Cadbury began to manufacture cocoa essence powder, advertised as “Absolutely pure and therefore Best.” Being 50% fat, the powder was mixed with starchy ingredients to absorb the cocoa butter. Only one fifth of it was cocoa, the rest was potato flour, or sago and treacle. Cadburys were very early in discovering the power of advertising, and displayed a real talent for marketing; they produced the first boxes of chocolates, decorated with saccharine images of kittens and small children, and were the first to make chocolate a part of Valentine’s day in England and a symbol of romantic love. In 1875 they sold the first chocolate Easter egg, in one stroke making chocolate an integral part of the most important celebration in the Christian calendar.



Joseph Rowntree grew up in the city of York, the son of a Quaker grocer with a strong social conscience, and an interest in politics. The family had a passion for justice, and he was preoccupied for most of his life by improving the lives of his employees. He provided a library in the factory, education for workers under 17 years of age, free medical and dental services and a pension fund—all unheard of in the England of sweatshops and indentured labour.

The foundations of the welfare state were laid by socially aware Quaker companies such as Rowntree, who created a model factory for his 4000 workers.

But for all the social justice in their works and factories, there was a blind spot in how these idealistic capitalists saw their businesses. Slave workers from Angola were being used on the cocoa

plantations on the Portuguese Islands Sao Tomé and Príncipe, and the Cadburys and Rowntrees and Frys must have been aware of what was going on. Cadburys had hired someone to look into the conditions on the islands, but they insisted that he learn Portuguese first, which took several years. It was nine years before Cadburys gave up that supply of cocoa, and then only because they had found a new and better supply in a British colony, the Gold Coast, now Ghana. Even after the British companies stopped buying from Sao Tomé and Principe, forced labour was still being used there until well into the 1950s. A form of slave labour is still being used in Ivory Coast today.

Meanwhile in the United States, Milton Hershey, whose only talent

as a boy was eating candy, had somehow managed to find work with a confectioner who was improving caramels by adding fresh milk to them. Hershey worked on this process, hoping to become the Henry Ford of candy. His dream was to create a chocolate bar that sold for a nickel and that almost everyone in America could afford to buy. And he did it. On a visit to England to learn about chocolate, he became fascinated by the Cadbury Brothers’ model community, and determined to create a town of his own beside his candy factory. Money was no object, so in 1903 he built the town of Hershey, in Pennsylvania, which far surpassed anything that the Cadburys or Rowntrees had done in England. Within five years of his factory opening, his company had annual sales of over \$5 million and was employing 1200 people who worked in shifts 24 hours a day, 6 days a week, with never a complaint.

TRANSACTIONS - CONTINUED

Another success story was that of American Forrest Mars, born in 1904, who went to Switzerland to work for and spy on Toblerone, and then to Britain, with a plan to compete with the big producers there. Having recovered from their public relations disasters of the early years of the century, they were all booming. Forrest Mars set up a little operation in the town of Slough, and invented the Mars Bar. By the eve of the 2nd World War, he was the third largest candy manufacturer in Britain. During the war, the chocolate companies thrived, as chocolate became part of the soldiers' survival kit. Mars returned to the U.S. during the war, and eventually eclipsed the Hershey legacy.

The taste of sorrow

Following the war years, Cadbury merged with Schweppes, Rowntrees merged with MacIntosh the toffee manufacturer, Chocolat Menier and Laura Secord, all of which were then acquired by Nestlé. In 2009, Kraft, which had already bought out Suchard, Terry's and Toblerone, made a hostile bid for Cadbury's, and the sale went through, to the great sorrow of those in the Cadbury family still involved and most of the population of Britain (except evidently, the share holders). In recent years the dirty work of buying and selling cocoa beans has become the domain of giant food conglomerates such as Cargill and Archer Daniel Midlands—anonymous corporations exerting great pressure to keep the prices reduced, even though this creates injustice elsewhere.

Meanwhile in Africa, owing partly to the policies of the IMF and the World Bank, the small cocoa farmers slid deeper and deeper into poverty and began to look for cheaper ways to produce their beans. They turned to the same scourge that has bedevilled cocoa growing since its inception — slavery. It was easy to entice children to leave their starving families in neighbouring Mali with promises of employment in Cote d'Ivoire. A system evolved whereby young Malians were smuggled across the border and sold to cocoa farmers. They were promised pay when that debt had been paid off, but usually they were not paid, clothed, or educated, had to find food wherever they could, and were worked, sometimes literally to death, beaten if they asked for payment or food, and locked up at night to prevent their escape.

Eventually, the situation was brought to light by various documentaries and NGOs (including Canadian Save the Children), and in 2001 the big chocolate companies were warned by the U.S. and U.K. governments that their chocolate would be labelled "not produced by slave labour" unless that was proved to be incorrect. They were given a certain number of years to achieve this (until 2005). But after years of vacillation and negotiation, a very poor system was put into place which relies on voluntary cooperation by the big chocolate companies. In 2006, Carol Off found that to produce the chocolate that we buy and consume with such pleasure, to the tune of more than \$50 million in world wide sales, there are still children working in conditions that can only be described as slavery.

A great deal of mental work

We should not only be paying attention to the conditions in which chocolate is produced, but the low quality of the chocolate we routinely consume. Since 1985, however, there has been a revolution of sorts in chocolate manufacturing, e.g. some made by Valrhona, a French make, contains 70% cocoa solids, but only 1/10th of the sugar found in an ordinary bar, and in supermarkets Lindt bars are widely available. It's still advisable to read the labels carefully if you want the real chocolate experience, however: according to my connoisseur, alarm bells should go off when we read ingredients such as lactose, whey powder, cocoa powder, malt extract, butter fat and emulsifiers (other than lecithin).

I hope I haven't put you off this wonderful source of pleasure and delight, however. Brillat-Savarin wrote that there is "proof positive that carefully prepared chocolate is as healthful a food as it is pleasant; that it is nourishing and easily digested ... that it is above all helpful to people who must do a great deal of mental work."

But it was journalist Miranda Ingram who made the most far-reaching claim for the virtues of chocolate. "It's not that chocolate is a substitute for love," she wrote. "Love is a substitute for chocolate. Chocolate is, let's face it, more reliable than a man." ■

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Québec 2012

imagination

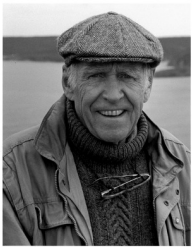
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14:00

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Paul Almond, our **Honorary President**, well known for his motion pictures, television dramas and documentaries, is also the author of *The Alford Saga*, spanning 200 years of Canadian history. Through the eyes of a settler's family, the author will take you back to World War I, the Great Depression, the development of Canada's cultural industry, and more. Join us for the first Canadian reading of his third book in the series, *The Pioneer*.



20:30

Why Fiction Matters

Author of six novels, two short-story collections, and a book-length essay, **Neil Bissoondath** will read from his fictional works, and highlight the reasons why fiction speaks to him more than non-fiction.

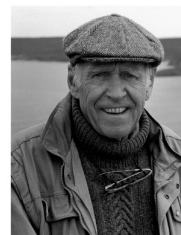
FRIDAY, APRIL 13



19:30

Keeping the Public in Public Education

Rick Salutin, a long time columnist for *The Globe & Mail* who currently writes for the *Toronto Star*, will discuss his latest book on how public schools do what no other form of education can. *Keeping the Public in Public Education* argues that public schools can teach kids about the society they live in, because public schools must let everyone in. "What's unique about public education isn't the education part, it's the public."



19:30

On Writing Films and Novels

Paul Almond and **David Homel** will discuss their experience writing novels, documentaries and motion pictures. They will share their thoughts on the research, time and talent required for these genres, and talk about the different challenges they faced on each occasion.



EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

SATURDAY, APRIL 14



14:00

Love and Loss from Montréal to Kandahar

Felicia Mihali will tell a tale of love, loss and displacement against the background of the war in Afghanistan, and of the founding of the city of Montreal. She has published no fewer than eight novels since 2002 — her latest novel, *The Darling of Kandahar*, is the first one she has written in English.



14:00

Bringing the Zombies of *Walking Dead* to Life

Charlie Adlard, illustrator of the *Walking Dead* series, which has now been made into a highly acclaimed AMC television series, will share and discuss his achievements in the “Ninth Art.”



15:00

Writers' Out Loud: There's No Place Like Home

Do the past and the roots of a character really help us understand a story, or are these elements part of superfluous descriptions? Dimitri Nasrallah and B. Glen Rotchin discuss how they use this information to build their characters' identities, and their plots.



19:30

Insiders' Information on Getting Published

Miguel Syjuco's first novel, *Illustra-*

do, won prizes and international acclaim even before it was first published in 2010. **Julie Wilson**, author of a literary blog for which she is known as the BookMadam, has a first collection of short stories coming out on April 1, 2012. The two authors will discuss the challenges met by young aspiring authors based on their extensive knowledge of the publishing world.



SUNDAY, APRIL 15



14:00

Scotland's National Bard Sung by Mary Beth Carty

Folk-singer and multi-instrumentalist Mary Beth Carty will perform the songs of Scottish bard Robert Burns. Mary Beth was nominated Traditional Singer of the Year at the 2008 Canadian Folk Music Awards for her duo CD, *Voici...Bette & Wallet*.

Information and reservation
418-694-9147

or
www.imagination.morrin.org

LIBRARY PAGES

ON THE SHELF

A THEMATIC REVIEW OF SOME INTERESTING, IMPORTANT OR JUST ENTERTAINING BOOKS IN THE LIBRARY OF THE LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

By Britta Gundersen-Bryden,

This issue's theme: Mardi Gras, Carnaval, Micareme and More

In the middle of winter many people tend to celebrate – maybe in accordance with their faith, maybe to foreshadow the coming of spring, or maybe just to keep warm. These celebrations often lead to thoughts of the places where they take place.

It would be difficult to think of mid-winter celebrations without thinking of Mardi Gras and New Orleans. With more than 20 books to his credit (many of which are in the library's collection), James Lee Burke is known for infusing his Dave Robicheaux mystery novels with the sounds, sights, smells and even tastes of New Orleans. *Last Car to Elysian Fields*, published in 2003, takes Detective Robicheaux into the French Quarter, along the bayous and into the parishes surrounding the city, in a pre-Katrina era. With prose that is fast-paced, gritty and not without violence, Burke captures a sense of the city and those who live there, from jazzmen, hit men and men of the cloth to prisoners, police chiefs and patricians.

Tennessee Williams also captures the essence of New Orleans – its hot nights, its blend of blue collars and fading gentility, its music – in his classic play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The crisp dialog and interplay among memorable characters Blanche DuBois, her sister Stella and Stella's husband Stanley Kowalski remind readers of the delight that can be found in reading drama as a literary form. For readers who may not know, there really is a street named "Desire" in New Orleans, along which the now-famous streetcar once ran.

Phillip Marchand makes a solid case for his idea that, but for a few of the lesser vagaries of history, all of North America would celebrate Mardi Gras and Carnival – and maybe even Micreme. *Ghost Empire: How the French Almost Conquered North America*, published in 2005, combines solid historical research with elements of good travel writing and reflections of self-discovery. Marchand contends that if the French explorer LaSalle

had been as successful in his final exploration of the late seventeenth century as he had been earlier – or as Champlain had been in the nearly 100 years before – all of North America would now have a different first language, a different religious heritage and a fundamentally different relationship between First Nations peoples and those who came to the continent from Europe and beyond. But *Ghost Empire* looks at the present as much as the past. Marchand traces his own family roots (francophones who moved from Quebec to Massachusetts) and describes the enduring influence and even revival of French culture, language and place names across the vast Mississippi River basin.

The very word "Carnival" (or "Carnaval" in Portuguese) evokes images of Brazil. Readers who enjoy the mystery/crime/detective genre will find that Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza is to Rio what James Lee Burke is to New Orleans. The library's collection includes four novels in the Inspector Espinosa series: *Southwesterly Wind*, *The Silence of the Rain*, *December Heat* and *A Window in Copacabana*. Like Burke, Garcia-Roza captures the sights, sounds and very feel of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's largest city.

With the unlikely title of *Borges and the Eternal Orangutans*, Brazilian author Luis Fernando Verissimo introduces readers to his main character, Vogelstein, a 50 year-old writer and teacher of English who travels to an Argentine literary conference on Edger Allen Poe, "the inventor of modern detective fiction." There Vogelstein meets his hero, author Jorge Luis Borges. Primates, typewriters, scholarly rivalries, dark humour and detective work all come together in this slim volume, published in 2000 and translated from Portuguese in 2004.

Those interested in a non-fiction selection about Brazil might try Peter Robb's travelogue, *A Death in Brazil*. Robb takes readers through 500 years of Brazilian history and culture, written in an accessible narrative style.

LIBRARY PAGES- CONTINUED

Two books that introduce children to mid-winter holidays include Let's Celebrate! Canada's Special Days by Caroline Parry and Celebrations by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley. Parry's book describes Canada's versions of Carnaval, Shrovetide, Ash Wednesday and Mid-Lent (also known Mi-Careme – a time of costumes and disguises). Celebrations was produced in association with UNICEF. It looks at holidays around the world through children's eyes, including those of a young girl in Brazil who participates in Carnaval, with its samba schools, costumes and floats.

Returning to North America and something different, readers may consider using one of the library's many cookbooks to prepare a mid-winter feast. Anita Stewart's Canada: the Food, the Recipes, the Stories is more than a collection of recipes; it includes information on the origin of the ingredients as well as how they came into use in Canada. Take a look at Chapter 2, "Maple, Honey and Molasses" for ways to satisfy a sweet tooth and keep warm while waiting for spring's arrival.

Buttermilk maple cornbread with flax should work nicely.

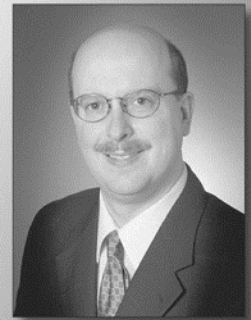
The books featured in "On the Shelf" all relate, in some small way, to a general theme. If readers would like to see a favourite book available in the Literary and Historical Society's collection featured, or have a suggestion for a specific theme, they are welcome to contact the Editor of Society Pages (418-694-9147). ■



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NEW LIBRARY HOURS



Monday : closed

Tuesday : 12 to 8 PM

Wednesday : 12 to 4 PM

Thursday : 12 to 8 PM

Friday : 12 to 4 PM

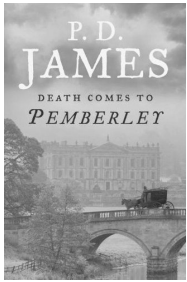
Saturday : 10 AM to 4 PM

Sunday : 12 to 4 PM

LIBRARY PAGES— CONTINUED

BOOK REVIEWS

Death Comes to Pemberley by P.D. James
Marie-Claude Tremblay, Member and Volunteer



After many contemporary murder mysteries, the skilled crime novelist P.D. James has given us a lark. In her latest novel she visits the world of Jane Austen, and more precisely, *Pride and Prejudice*.

But unlike Jane Austen, in this historical crime fiction sequel James lets us see the grimmer sides of life, such as crime and punishment, considered mostly the province of men in Austen's time. In the story we hear the crime writer's voice clearly as violence pollutes the shades of Pemberley, Mr. Darcy's celebrated family estate in Derbyshire.

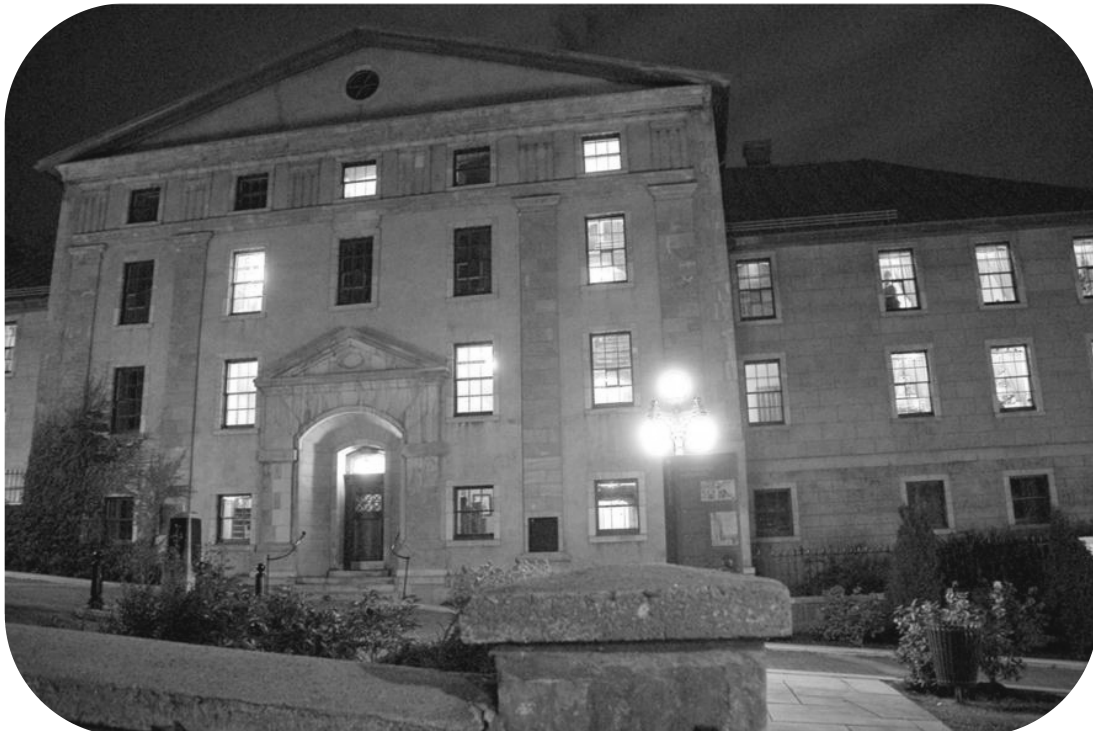
For fans of Jane Austen and particularly of Elizabeth and Darcy, it is a great pleasure for the reader to find them comfortably settled as Mr. and Mrs. Darcy. We also gain insight into the thoughts and preoccupations of the men in this drama, something Austen did not expand

upon. Many of the characters you know and love make an appearance and ring very true to Austen's creations. The mechanics of detective fiction are very apparent and sometimes make strange bedfellows with the genteel world of Jane Austen. But still, it's a pleasure to visit Pemberley once again and get lost under the expert hand of the author.

P. D. James was aware she might be offending diehard Austen fans, but explains how she couldn't resist. "It has been a joy to revisit *Pride and Prejudice*," she wrote, "and to discover, as one always does, new delights and fresh insights. I have to apologise to Jane Austen for involving her beloved Elizabeth in a murder investigation but this fusion of my two enthusiasms – for the novels of Jane Austen and for writing detective stories – has given me great pleasure which I hope will be shared by my readers."

On the topic of detective fiction, James wrote an excellent essay in 2009 entitled *Talking About Detective Fiction*, also available on the shelves of our library. ■

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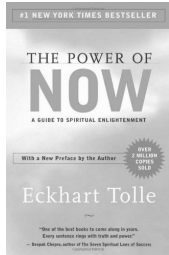


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LIBRARY PAGES— CONTINUED

The Power of NOW – A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment by Eckhart Tolle

Rosemarie Fischer, Morrin Centre staff



While climbing onto the windowsill to open the window in our stuffy office at the beginning of July, the title of this recently-donated book caught my eye. After coaxing Virginie to quickly enter it into the system, the book was mine to borrow. I read it slowly, in the evening, outside on my porch sitting in my

Muskoka chair and enjoying the late light of summer. The book is written in question and answer style, and there are many places to pause and reflect before continuing. It is not a page turner and it's not meant to be read quickly.

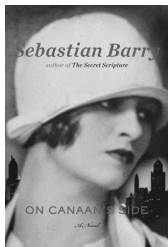
The book was somewhat of a revelation to me. I do not generally read books with the words 'spiritual' or 'enlightenment' in the title. I also have to admit that I

have never understood the act of meditation. To my surprise, after only a few pages, Mr. Tolle had managed to clearly explain what these terms meant, at least in theory. He talks about how our mind, or ego, or 'false self' is constantly distracting us from the present moment with a constant flurry of thoughts either about the past or about the future. He explains how our thoughts flutter back to the past, with which we identify and create our self image, and to the future, where we create anticipation or fear of future events. Enlightenment, or consciousness, is therefore the ability to focus our thoughts on the Now, the only reality.

Eckhart Tolle basis his teachings on a variety of sources including the Bible, Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism, which I found fascinating. Putting his teachings into practice is certainly more easily said than done, but it is well worth the effort. Finally, I would like to thank the person who donated this book so that it could be shared with others ■

On Canaan's Side by Sebastian Barry

Louisa Blair, Member and Volunteer



Author of *The Secret Scripture*, Barry has produced another of his stunning novels written in the voice of an old woman. These old

women protagonists are apparently all based on his aunts, whom he felt were not sufficiently celebrated in their lifetime

This one tells of a woman who flees Ireland at the end of the First World War with her husband, who has been in the reviled Black and Tans and is now on an assassination list. He does not escape, even in the anonymity of Chicago.

It is also the universal story of men who go to war and get killed, starting with the First World War and ending with the Gulf war, and of the women who are left behind to mourn them, women who are abandoned by the men they love who insist on going off to die for some obscure reason that the women, as often as not, have never

really understood. In Lilly Clear's case, the litany of deaths starts with her brother, then her husband, her son and finally her grandson.

It's a story of sorrow and loss and grief, but none of these are possible if there hasn't also been great love and immense beauty—otherwise what would one mourn for or sorrow for? There is a deep sensitivity to the Irish countryside, the mists and hills and farmyards, as well as to the dense traffic and smoke and people pouring through the streets of Chicago or Cleveland. There is cruelty and suffering, but there are also the kindnesses of her boss, for whom Lilly works as a cook for years, of her friend Cassie, who got her her first job, and the delicate consideration of a handful of true friends in this strange country of America that she never really gets used to. One friend comes over to visit her regularly, and tells her of small delights seen on the way – tiny details that speak of far more.

He had seen a little wren going in

and out of whole in the old roadway wall. Stretching away from it, he said, was the vast potato field ... this, he had thought, was a bird that did not know how small it was, that existed in an epic landscape and believed itself to have the dimensions of a hero. This was a bird, he thought, that only read epics.

Sebastian Barry is one of the great writers of the past few years, in my view, so skilled, lyrical and tender is his writing. Even though the story pulls you on, you still have to go back and read the sentences over and over again because they are so beautiful, and after a while you start to feel like talking in the gentle lilting dialect of the old woman telling her story. Barry writes in the story teller's language, full of intimacy with the reader, as if you are sharing a cup of tea with Lilly and she has just decided to dispense with formalities and trust you with the story of her life. It is a privilege. ■

VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION NIGHT AT THE MORRIN CENTRE

Shirley Nadeau

On January 23 the Morrin Centre held an event to thank its many volunteers during the past year.

After a social time which included a copious buffet, Sovita Chander, Vice-President of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, welcomed everyone to the Volunteer Appreciation Evening. "As a non-profit organization, we simply could not achieve what we do without the help of the dozens of volunteers who actively volunteer at the Centre. Volunteers generously donate their time to the following: the Library, Book Committee, Seniors Committee, English Conversation Group, Events and Activities, Council and all of its related committees and helping out around the office, such as our Katimavik volunteers. The time that you selflessly give to the Morrin Centre is very much appreciated by the staff, Council and members," she said.

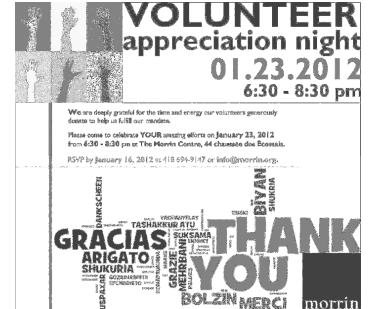


Photo by Shirley Nadeau

Dr. James Douglas and 'Dr. James Douglas' (M. Chouinard) enjoy a quiet moment in the Library of the Morrin Centre.

Maxime Chouinard, Conservation and Interpretation Consultant, dressed as Dr. James Douglas, then gave a re-enactment of what it may have been like as a newly-arrived inmate to the Quebec City Common Gaol. Before being locked up in the cells, the 'prisoners' were examined by the Prison Doctor. 'Dr. Douglas' explained how to cure the mind and body from the diseases from which many inmates suffered. Guests were invited to sample remedies from the period such as lime juice to prevent scurvy and ginger beer. The 'doctor, then proceeded to diagnose three randomly-chosen people of their diseases: tuberculosis, a septic leg wound which obviously required amputation, and lunacy!

This reenactment is part of a new one-hour tour which is offered at the Morrin Centre, by reservation for larger groups only. Recommended for groups 13 years of age and older, this visit is for groups looking for a dynamic experience, centered around the history of the prison. It also touches upon contemporary prison issues: How much has really changed in 200 years? The Morrin Centre presents an unforgettable thought-provoking experience, unlike any other in Quebec City.

Following the presentation, there were gifts and door prizes for the volunteers who attended the event. Vice-President Chander thanked the sponsors, members of the Merchants Association of rue Saint-Jean, who donated these gifts.

To close, Chander read a quote from the author Arthur Ward. "Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it." She continued saying, "Tonight is our small present to you to express our gratitude for all of the gifts you have given to us over the past year." ■

Text used with the permission of Shirley Nadeau, Copy editor of the QCT

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