

CUPARUC CUPARUC CUPARUC

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Editor's excuses

Normally, as you well know, the Newsletter opens with a message from the President. Today, I am – for one issue only – usurping his place in order to present my excuses to Cuparuc members and explain some idioyncracies in the document.

This was supposed to be the September issue; in August, I wrote to the President and begged him to write IMMEDIATELY a message for inclusion in this Newsletter, and, of course, he did so. My intentions were good, but, as it so frequently does, life intervened. So, early September is far behind us; we have now reached the end of October; fortunately, Graham is always willing to write a new message!! But he forgot, in the newone, to announce the arrival of a new grandson this summer. Yeah!

It would certainly be inappropriate to put the President's message on page 2, so, in order that you may find it easily, I am putting it on the back page. Just flip the Bulletin and there he'll be!

Sorry about that, Graham.
Maïr

Excuses de la rédactrice

Normalement, vous le savez bien, c'est à cet endroit que l'on retrouve le message du Président. Aujourd'hui et aujourd'hui seulement, je me permets d'usurper sa place pour vous présenter mes excuses et expliquer peut-être quelques anomalies.

Ce Bulletin devait sortir au mois de septembre. Au mois d'août, j'ai donc invité le Président à me rédiger un message le plus rapidement possible. Ce qu'il fit, bien sûr. J'étais pleine de bonnes intentions mais tout ne se déroule pas toujours comme prévu. Septembre est loin derrière nous; comme la Toussaint d'ailleurs. Mais Graham est toujours plein de bonne volonté et a bien voulu refaire sa copie! En oubliant toutefois d'annonce dans celle-ci l'arrivée d'un nouveau petit-fils cet été. Félicitations !

Comment reléguer le message du Président à la 2e page ? Cela ne se fait pas. Vous le trouverez donc, bien visible, à la toute fin du Bulletin; il suffit d'y faire faire un tonneau !

Toutes mes excuses, Graham
Maïr

Delusional, you say?

Let me preface these remarks with an apology to those of you whose traditions and families make you a stalwart breed. You know the type who would never air your aches and pains publicly, let alone think that such a discussion was the lifeblood and raison d'être of friendships and meetings over bagels and coffee.

You may have guessed by now, that I am not Canadian born. Although Anglo by Quebec standards, no self-respecting Westmounter or West Islander would consider me a native. I am a New Yorker (some would say that also disqualifies me from being an American) who spent the first 21 years of my life in the Bronx. Over the years, I listened to my grandparents, aunts, uncles and parents discuss their various aches and pains in excruciating detail.

As they aged, their friends joined in the litany and the one-upmanship which had been generally confined to the accomplishments of children and grandchildren was now extended to various and sundry ailments, the number of doctor appointments and severity and discomfort of treatments each had undergone. Given the detail of their descriptions, I grew up believing that they had all been awake through their various operations. How else could they know exactly how incisions may had been made, how much blood they had lost and how expertly their surgeons, oncologists, gastroenterologists, neurologists and orthopods had sliced, diced and sewn?

My friends and I, faced with such a preoccupation with medical minutiae, vowed that our lives would be too full of meaningful activity to ever allow for such discussions. We would speak of existential things, environmental concerns, the economy and politics of the world, our artistic, intellectual and professional triumphs and perhaps, just perhaps if we found the time, our children's successes (never failures or heartaches).

Yesterday, I received an e-mail from a friend. I have known her husband since I was 13 years old. We have a long history of friendship and sharing. With apologies to Sam Levinson (an old time comedian a la Sid Cesaer), I'll tell you the short version.

After writing about her gardening and landscaping, she says, "Mike and I are doing pretty well, healthwise. Mike has a bit of congestive heart failure and his right ankle needs a lot a support (he had polio as a child), but a brace is taking care of that. He's not being very good about his blood sugar levels, so he's still on insulin. My health is pretty normal. You know I have osteoporosis, so my spine is collapsing bit by bit. There's nothing to be done until it fractures all the way. My ankle is broken again, the left one. That's the one they operated on five times because they couldn't get it to heal after it crumbled. My right foot is bothering me now, too, but I haven't told my doctor about it. I'll just add that pain the the background music and hobble along. The mesh in my stomach is still holding in my hernia, so I won't need another operation for that.

Our granddaughter Samantha was in danger of losing the vision in her left eye, but they got to it in time. They'll operate on both eyes sometime this summer. Luckily, her vision problems have not impacted her academically. She is the smartest child in her elementary school and always gets A's in creative writing.

We're down to six cats, a lab and ferret. We had nine cats, but three died. Of the six left, one has pancreatic cancer and one is going blind. So, as you can see, we're all great and hope you are doing as well. Love, Penny"

If you've read this far, I hope you are laughing as hard as I did. At 63, I never imagined this would be the substance of a communication from my friends. It rivals anything I ever heard during the coffee klatches of my youth. But it is the absolute contradiction of tone versus content that had me in stitches. I am a psychologist by profession. I am tempted to submit this missive to a professional journal or text as an example of delusional thinking, denial or the best piece of "reframing" I have ever encountered in 30 years! Better still, I think it will make an excellent script for an off-Broadway show or we could take in on the road to hospitals in NYC, Miami and San Francisco. If laughter is the best medicine, we will cure all the ills in this story.

By Dr Jane Gellert

Un peu de lecture ?

Si j'ai choisi de vous parler de Pan Bouyoucas, c'est d'abord parce que c'est un écrivain dont j'apprécie le talent mais c'est aussi parce que Pan Bouyoucas est diplômé du département d'Études françaises de l'Université Concordia.

Françoise Ligier

Pan Bouyoucas, une vie qui fait son chemin entre rêves et Histoire

«Tu devais avoir des rêves quand tu grandissais en Egypte. Des rêves que la guerre t'a empêché de poursuivre. Qu'as-tu fait d'eux?»

Les trois romans que Pan Bouyoucas situe sur l'île grecque de Léros sont des réponses à ces interrogations posées par le héros de **L'Autre**.

Une page d'Histoire avec laquelle il faudra vivre

Voici comment l'auteur dessine pour nous cette page d'Histoire dont devront s'accommoder ses personnages : «Après que l'Italie eut acheté les treize îles du Dodécanèse à la Turquie en 1912, Mussolini voulut construire à Lakki la base navale d'où il avait l'intention de reconquérir quelques rayons de l'antique gloire romaine. À cause de ce rêve, Léros fut bombardée sans pitié pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale : d'abord par la Royal Air Force, qui voulait chasser les Italiens; puis par la Luftwaffe, qui voulait chasser les Anglais; puis encore par la Royal Air Force, qui voulait en chasser les Allemands. Si bien que la plupart des habitants qui avaient survécu à cette épreuve n'avaient plus qu'une idée en tête: émigrer.»

Voici donc trois belles histoires dans lesquelles les héros et les héroïnes font face à leur destin d'enfants, d'adultes ou de sexagénaires nés à Léros, cette île à «l'identité brouillée» marquée par la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

L'Autre, Les Allusifs, Montréal, 2001

Les rêves de jeunesse

En 1943 Thomas le héros de **L'Autre** n'a pas encore seize ans. Il écoute les marins de Léros lui dire : «Le monde est beau, grand, inépuisable». Il rêve de voyages et d'aventure. Mais l'Histoire est là et à chaque pas le héros doit y faire face et décider de «prendre à droite ou à gauche». Thomas fera des pas timides pour réaliser ses rêves, il ira jusqu'à Rhodes. Mais pour lui l'Histoire prendra la forme d'une grenade oubliée par les Allemands. Il perdra une jambe, deviendra «Tripodis», l'homme aux trois pieds, et vivra à Léros avec, en tête, cette lancinante question : «Qu'aurait été ma vie si à Platanos j'avais tourné à droite plutôt qu'à gauche?».

Le héros n'est jamais mentalement devenu adulte. Il restera fasciné par la lune et les bateaux, s'intéressera aux «anecdotes» et aux récits d'aventures des autres, qui, comme dans son enfance, prennent «des allures de contes fantastiques ou d'épopées». Et comme les conteurs de son enfance quand il racontera lui-même, on ne le traitera jamais de menteur.

Anna, pourquoi ?, Les Allusifs, Montréal, 2004

La force de l'âge ; les rêves de jeunesse.

Les personnages de ce roman sont des adultes. Dans une forteresse de Léros marquée par le mauvais sort vit une religieuse qui bientôt sera rejointe par une jeune novice puis un diacre. Entre eux s'installent des relations complexes, nuancées, maternelles ou amoureuses, marquées par le poids de leur passé et l'enfermement dans ce lieu clos. Comme dans **L'Autre**, la mer et de montagne sont omniprésentes mais ici il est question de peinture, de cinéma, de solitude, d'amour, de passion, de spiritualité. Les personnages ont vécu à l'extérieur avant de se retrouver dans ce huis clos pour faire le point et revisiter leurs rêves de jeunesse. Tout est là pour une vraie tragédie grecque.

Ce livre a obtenu en 2004 le Prix des collégiens. Est-ce que cela signifie que la jeunesse fait encore des rêves d'avenir et qu'elle s'y accroche? Fort probablement et cette reconnaissance doit rendre fier le récipiendaire.

L'Homme qui voulait boire la mer, Les Allusifs, Montréal, 2005

Comment les rêves de jeunesse peuvent devenir éternels

Lukas, Grec émigré à Montréal, possède, rueavenue du Parc, un restaurant fréquenté par des célébrités. Il est marié à une femme intelligente et sensée avec laquelle ils forment un couple moderne avec ses bonheurs et ses questionnements. Mais Lukas a 58 ans et, à la veille de devenir grand-père, Lukas songe avec obsession à un amour de jeunesse jamais ouvertement déclaré et qu'il a abandonné sur une plage un soir de lune dans l'île de Léros. Pour retrouver Zéphira, maintenant au pays de Charon, notre héros est prêt à tout, y compris à «boire la mer». Dans «cette épopée jubilatoire et truculente où fourmillent les poursuites et les rencontres oniriques,» on comprend vite que ce n'est pas l'Amazone que Lukas parvenu à l'heure des bilans recherche désespérément mais plutôt sa jeunesse et cette époque de tous les possibles qu'il a vécue à Leros. Il quittera finalement ce monde du passé pour retrouver son présent à Montréal. Des rêves, il n'en a plus beaucoup, mais il les cristallise sur l'enfant que porte sa fille adorée.

La vie ne peut être sans rêve, Pan Bouyoucas le croit fermement. Il croit aussi que les femmes sont des passeuses de rêves. Grâce à Yolanda, l'épouse de Lukas, grâce à Irène, sa fille adorée, les rêves de jeunesse de notre héros seront plus forts que la mort car ils s'incarneront dans ce premier petit enfant qui sera une fille.

Pan Bouyoucas a passé tous les étés de son enfance sur l'île de Léros où vivait sa grand-mère. C'est sur cette île «à l'identité brouillée» que, comme Thomas, le héros de **L'Autre**, il a forgé ses rêves d'enfance. Après avoir quitté Beyrouth c'est à Montréal qu'il a fait face à ses rêves de jeunesse. À la sympathie qu'il semble ressentir pour Nicoletta, la nonne solitaire de **Anna, pourquoi**, on devine les préoccupations et les bonheurs de notre auteur qui, transplanté de Léros à Montréal en passant par le Liban, a lui aussi dû faire des choix pour faire son chemin dans l'Histoire. Ce que nous dit sa biographie, c'est que ni l'anglais ni le français n'ont de secret pour lui et qu'il partage avec Nicoletta sa passion pour le cinéma. Comme Lukas, **L'Homme qui voulait boire la mer**, il semble savoir que «même Charon ne possède pas le philtre de l'oubli» et c'est bien ainsi pour nous lecteurs. Mais si c'est à Montréal que Lukas «retourne au monde des vivants», cela ne signifie-t-il pas que Montréal est le lieu où Pan Bouyoucas a choisi de nous transmettre ses rêves de jeunesse afin que par la littérature ils deviennent éternels ?

Petite remarque: l'éditeur de Pan Bouyoucas a laissé passer quelques coquilles linguistiques qui sont parfois irritantes. Dommage!

General Meeting of CUPARUC April 25 2007-10-29

The Spring meeting took place on the Loyola Campus. I'm not sure it was a beautiful Spring day but it is always pleasant to meet old friends and acquaintances. I was enchanted to find Professor Gustave Labbé, formerly of the French Department, looking young and sprightly and taking an interest in current activities. Of course, as the French say: « professeur un jour, professeur toujours.»

The minutes were distributed at the October 24 Fall get-together. For those who unable to attend, I'm sure you (or a friend) will be able to find them on our website. John Hall discussed the financial statement and the benefits committee. One can only be impressed by the work and effort he puts into safeguarding our interests. Although many topics have yet to be discussed and/or improved upon, it was clear that, on April 25, we were nowhere near the headline! John also reported on the Scholarship committee; one of the recipients was actually present among us.

Peter Paquet brought us up to date with news of our website and access to e-mail; he took this opportunity to reassure members about the confidential nature of the process.

The «clou» or star event of this meeting was the talk given by Dr Dolly Dastoor, Clinical-Administrative Chief, Program for Dementia with Psychiatric Comorbidity (PDPC), Clinical Researcher, Douglas Institute; also associated with the Psychiatry Department at McGill University. Her presentation was entitled : «If I forget, is it Alzheimer's?»

The topic is not one which immediately evokes pleasure, but Dr Dastoor's approach was so interesting, clear, well prepared, and presented in such a positive manner that we all very much enjoyed the whole experience and came out with the very satisfying feeling that we all knew rather more about the illness than when we entered and also felt somewhat better equipped to deal with it in our own lives or that of our nearest and dearest.

A Power :Point version of her presentation has been transmitted to Peter Paquet for inclusion on our website.

Thank you, Dr Dastoor.

An account of the October meeting will be included in our January Newsletter.

Need a quick meal ? Warm some olive oil in a pan, add half a chopped onion, a little garlic (try «fleur d'ail» from a jar) , a handful or two of small shrimps, some thyme and parsley. After a few minutes, add a can of drained white beans. After at most 10 minutes, add salt, pepper and spices to taste. Remove from heat. Sprinkle with paprika to serve.

ANY MORE RECIPES ?

Mes ancêtres les gaulois !

What am I doing in the CUPARUC newsletter of Concordia University ?

Take a look at my portrait below. Any



resemblance to someone you know? My great-great-grandson is one of yours, le malin, the

rebel, but who is nevertheless a member of CUPA, in good standing.

Who is he you ask? Read on – there is only one like him.

As for me, I was born in 1738 in the city known at the time as “Pearl of the East”. My parents had settled there in early 1700 in these eastern lands adjacent to the Baltic Sea and on September 29th, 1729, were granted resident status in the city of Riga – the very same city that made me Mayor some fifty years later.

I started out as a trader and in 1762 became partner in a trading company . A few years later, in 1769, I founded my own company, which carried my name and soon became a leading Import and Export company, doing business with many European cities, as well as America, West Africa, Malta and Russia - my company carried on business for 167 years.

In 1781 I became Elder of the Merchant Guild and City Councilor and in 1790,

was elected Mayor. I managed to get the city out of it's financial problems by instituting solid economic and social reforms and was re-elected Mayor for two more terms. In 1796, Francis the Second, Holy Roman Emperor bestowed a patent on me and “my decedents now and in perpetuity”.

This was in keeping with the feudal society of my times, my social circles and the demands of my office as Mayor. Personally, well – my oldest son had traveled extensively and was in Paris during the French Revolution in 1789. He knew whose heads were rolling! And he had enthusiastically embraced the notion of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity". Later, my grandson witnessed the siege of our city by Napoleon's army in 1812 and was even shot at when he came too close to their camp during a cavalry patrol on a foggy night.

The patent document also stated that he, Francis the Second “granted this, by the graces of God, who had given him and his descendents this power for all eternity”. Ten years later the Holy Roman Empire expired. Fortunately I did not live to witness this demise, but enough about me – this is about my ancestors and my descendents.

My grandfather appears on tax rolls from 1664 to 1671 as a freehold landowner in northern Germany. My great-grandfather first appeared on a tax roll in the same area in the year 1653. He was said to own 56 barrels of seed, six horses, nine cattle and ten sheep.

His forefathers came from France – how and when?

The French Connection

On May 23, 1618 at Prague Castle, an assembly of Protestants led by Count Thurn, tried two imperial governors, Graf Slavata (1572-1652) and Graf Martinicz (1572-1649) for violating the Letter of Majesty, The Right to Freedom of Religion, found them guilty and threw them, together with their scribe Philip Fabricius, out of the castle windows. They fell 50 feet and landed in a large pile of manure. They all survived.

The Roman Catholic Imperial officials claimed that they survived due to the mercy of benevolent angels assisting the righteousness of the Catholic cause. The Protestants asserted that their survival had more to do with the horse manure in which they landed. This was called the “second defenestration” (‘second-throwing-out-of-the-window’) of Prague – yes it had happened once before. It’s only about religion. But what followed was the Thirty Year’s war (1618-1648).

Out of the dust, from the burnings, the killings and the ravaging during the

Le vrai génie politique réside dans l’aptitude à évaluer l’incertain, le hasardeux, les informations contradictoires.
Churchill.

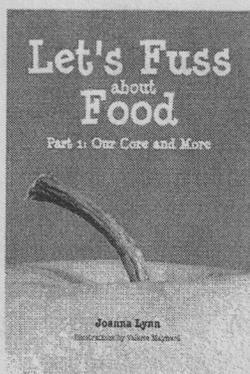
(aphorisme gracieusement fourni par notre amie, Bérengère Gaudet.

Thirty Year’s War between Protestants and Catholics, steps the one who started it all, migrates from Lorraine in France to the northern region of Germany, probably with the regrouping Swedish army. He had no idea what awaited him. His grandson, my father, makes it from there to the eastern fringes of Europe in about 1720, he has no idea what awaits him.....

Finally, my great-great-great-great-grandson, migrates west - to what my contemporary Voltaire liked to call “quelques arpents de neige” – the future greatest country in the world – Canada.

Replied our ancestor from Lorraine, during inscription on the tax rolls when asked about his origin and name: “Un village en France nommé ‘Seingbouse’”. Recorded the scribe: “Sengbusch, tax on 56 barrels of seed, six horses, nine cattle and ten sheep”..... and now you know the rest of the story.

Note: Today, this village still exists – a quiet place with about 1700 inhabitants – where nothing has changed during the last 350 years.



A little more reading?

Let's Fuss about Food

By

Joanna Lynn (www.letsfussaboutfood.com)

A review by Jane Gellert Ph.D., psychologist

Let's Fuss about Food is an extraordinary first book for author Joanna Lynn. Written for those who have a general interest in nutrition, those looking for information which will help them design a workable diet and/or those who would like information which they can share with adolescents or adults who are struggling with weight issues, the book is user friendly and easily “digestible”.

Ms. Lynn is to be congratulated on her heroic success at organizing a massive amount of information in a format which is quite accessible. While written in straight-forward jargon-free language, the book respects the intellectual level of all its readers. Make no mistake, however; it is not an “easy” read. It is meant to be read and pondered in small bites. To this end, Ms. Lynn has organized her book into clear topics and sections and provided the reader with diary pages on which they can record relevant facts and their own reflections on the material.

In fact, the book is so well organized, that it could easily be used as a textbook in high school and university settings. Each topic such as Vitamins, Minerals, Fats, or Carbohydrates is divided into smaller sections which give the reader an overview, definitions, facts about how the body uses these nutrients, why we need them and what happens when we don't get enough or get too much and then a small summary of what has been covered. Indeed, I would suggest that it is an educator's dream of how we can best access, learn and use material.

Ms. Lynn has been thorough and yet judicious in her choice of the information she presents. Knowledgeable readers will find new tidbits that are encouraging and useful. I was delighted to discover that my efforts at walking would indeed reduce that fat which collects around one's tummy more effectively than intense high activity which burns carbs! All in all, this book provides an experience far greater than its slim size would suggest.

Let's Fuss about Food by Joanna Lynn, Trafford Publishing (2007), ISBN 142511143-2, may be found in local bookstores and on-line at Amazon.com. I recommend it to you without reservation, and since this is a review written for an academic community, I would also say that Ms. Lynn deserves an honorary Ph.D. Certainly this book is the equivalent, if not superior to, most doctoral dissertations. Kudos, Ms. Lynn. I await the next book in the series.

Brief letter from Steve Scheinberg, professor emeritus, History Department, former President, B'nai Brith

I do not remember if I told you that I am contributing weekly editorials to Radio Shalom in Montreal. I don't know if anyone listens to the station. I know I don't but I await the response from the right-wing. I attach the first three editorials. I hope some of them will also be suitable for print media.

For those of you in the Montreal area, tune in 1650 on the AM dial on Monday morning at 7:15 or Wed. evening at 6:14. My editorials should be a sure cure for insomnia!
Steve Scheinberg

[Editor's note :

The «Coulon Affair», like September, is well behind us. You may recall that, during the run-up to the bye-election in Outremont this Fall, the Liberal candidate, Jocelyn Coulon, a well-respected political scientist and journalist, was denounced by B'nai Brith, a Jewish human rights organisation, for certain statements he was reported to have made and the association demanded he not be allowed to run for office. This excessive reaction caused some stir. I thought it might be interesting to read a more balance reaction from our own Steve Scheinberg, a former president and active member of B'nai Brith. So here is his editorial on the topic.]

THE COULON AFFAIR

Following Liberal leader's Stephane Dion's naming of candidate Jocelyn Coulon for the Outremont by-election, B'nai Brith immediately demanded that the candidacy be revoked. The organization was not content with sharp criticism of Coulon but deemed his past words on the Middle East worthy of an over zealous response.

Coulon is a political scientist and former journalist who has expressed himself rather vigorously on Middle East issues. The essence of B'nai Brith's case against him seems to be first that he has employed exaggerated rhetoric, linking Israel to the U.S. in "massacring Muslims", "pulverizing Palestinian cities" and "murdering men, women and children." Second, he has advocated

talking to Hamas, a terrorist organization, third he has employed anti-U.S. rhetoric and finally that he labeled Israel's actions in the second Lebanon War as "disproportionate".

The basic question is not whether Coulon was right or wrong but rather does his record merit B'nai Brith's exercise of its moral veto, which declares Coulon beyond the pale? That is, under what circumstances should a major organization of the Jewish community employ its maximum fire power, by not merely criticizing a candidate's record but demanding his withdrawal from the race.

There are precedents for taking the extreme action which B'nai Brith has opted for, but they do not apply to this event. In the case of racist white

supremacists and antisemites, both the American Anti Defamation League, the B'nai Brith and civil rights groups have acted against those bigots who have infiltrated the ranks of various parties in order to spread their vicious doctrines. Here in Quebec, Robert Libman and I, acting for B'nai Brith, made known the xenophobic record of PQ hard-liner Yves Michaud. It was not B'nai Brith but the entire National Assembly which then censured him. In other words, what I have termed the exercise of a moral veto was constrained to cases not of mere political differences but matters which impact on the very basis of a tolerant society.

Most of us in the Jewish community will take issue with Mr. Coulon on one or more of the issues that B'nai Brith has raised but they are points of debate rather than fundamental moral imperatives. I personally believe that some of Coulon's rhetoric on Israel is "over the top" but it is hardly extraordinary. One can peruse the pages of newspapers from around the world, during the period of the second Lebanon War, and find many such expressions. Let's face it, the dreadful television images of Israel's bombardment of Lebanon provoked many reactions against Israel and some were not well balanced.

Mr. Coulon characterized Hamas as being also a social welfare organization and every student of Hamas understands that is an important foundation of its power. Coulon also advocated ending the isolation of Hamas whereas B'nai Brith, along with President Bush, holds

that there should be no traffic with the axis of evil. I personally hold no brief for Coulon's position but many thoughtful individuals, including leading Israelis, believe that it is unfortunately impossible, at least over the long run, to exclude Hamas from the political discourse. As for Coulon's claim that the Israeli response in Lebanon was disproportionate, that is a matter hotly debated everywhere, including in Israel, where her own Winograd Commission has begun to voice similar sentiments.

My point, again, is not whether Coulon was right or wrong. His words show him to be a strong critic of Israel but he has maintained his support for Israel's right to exist and in favor of the two state solution embraced by all Canadian political parties. B'nai Brith's call on Dion to drop the Coulon candidacy was "disproportionate". I believe B'nai Brith undercut its own credibility by employing a weapon which had previously been reserved for the most heinous cases of racism, anti-Semitism and bigotry. It would have been far better if B'nai Brith had tried to "engage" Coulon, rather than casting him as a major enemy, to be frontally attacked. Of course all of his views are subjects for debate and his opponents may see fit to do so. But the mass of the voters of Outremont, like most Canadians, will pay more attention to issues of the environment, health care and Afghanistan, and some, perhaps, ill chosen words on the Middle East will probably have no impact on the race.

This is Professor Stephen Scheinberg for Radio Shalom.



Summer in Alaska : Ketchikan, Silver Creek, courtesy Véronique Verthuy

I will tell you all about our heat wave in Alaska when the snow lies on the ground in Montreal.

Here are some important reflexions and very interesting facts about the ancestry of «political correctness.»

Le « civiquement correct », ancêtre de la rectitude politique?

par Bérengère Gaudet

Les règles du savoir-vivre ne sont en fait que le reflet d'un ensemble d'attitudes et de comportements jugés souhaitables par la société, ou plutôt par la classe dominante d'une société, pour désamorcer la violence ou l'agressivité latentes de ses membres. Elles varient, bien sûr, avec les époques, et souvent en fonction des événements politiques. On sait, par exemple, que le XIX^{ème} siècle a marqué l'apogée de la politesse bourgeoise. Mais si l'on remonte un peu plus loin dans le temps, on découvre parfois des choses étonnantes.

Ainsi, pendant la Révolution française, lorsque les éléments les plus radicaux - les Jacobins - accèdent au pouvoir en 1793 après avoir éliminé les Girondins plus modérés,

ils vont tenter d'imposer l'antipolitesse égalitaire. Parce que, historiquement et socialement, la politesse était intimement liée à celle de la Cour et à tout l'Ancien Régime, les révolutionnaires ont voulu en abolir les règles et les usages. On interdit alors le vouvoiement, pour imposer le « tu » et le « toi ». Même si aucune loi à cet effet ne fut adoptée, le tutoiement devint officieusement obligatoire, et son usage se généralisa¹. Interdiction également d'utiliser les mots « Monsieur », « Madame », et tout autre titre qui eût rappelé les inégalités et les hiérarchies de l'Ancien Régime tant honni. Désormais, on doit s'adresser à chacun en l'appelant « Citoyen », « Citoyenne ».

Cette réforme du langage s'appliqua bientôt jusque dans le répertoire dramatique. En avril 1794, tous les directeurs de théâtre reçurent l'ordre d'expurger du texte des pièces qu'ils faisaient jouer les mots et les titres interdits, et de les remplacer par des termes « civiquement corrects »². C'est ainsi qu'on s'empressa de corriger, voire de réécrire, de larges portions des vers de Tartuffe ou du Misanthrope... Pauvre Molière, il a dû se retourner dans sa tombe!

Ces diktats révolutionnaires s'accompagnaient de la réprobation populaire à l'égard des contrevenants, et d'accusations parfois suivies de sanctions, contre ceux et celles qui étaient suspects de rester fidèles ou sympathiques à la politesse d'avant 1789. Sur le plan des rapports hiérarchiques, l'égalité était plus difficile à imposer, mais qu'à cela ne tienne, l'antipolitesse révolutionnaire tentera du moins d'amoinrir les différences. Par exemple, on devait appeler « homme de confiance » ou « femme de confiance » les bonnes, femmes de chambre, valets et gouvernantes que l'injustice de la fortune obligeait à servir leurs semblables, termes qui, en effet, n'étaient pas humiliants comme ceux de « laquais » ou de « domestique ».

Comment ne pas être tenté de tracer un parallèle avec notre rectitude politique? Celle-ci, selon les bien-pensants, vise à éviter de froisser des susceptibilités grâce à l'emploi d'euphémismes et de périphrases qui, à défaut de faire disparaître un handicap ou une infériorité sociale, les recouvrent d'un voile pudique. Cachez cette différence que je ne saurais voir...

Loin de moi l'idée de faire un fâcheux rapprochement avec le régime de la Terreur dans ce qu'il avait de plus horrible. D'ailleurs il n'est question ici que d'un aspect très limité de ce régime. Il n'en reste pas moins que, abstraction faite du contexte historique et politique, les deux phénomènes ont quand même des points communs, tant dans leur objectif que dans leurs conséquences.

Tout d'abord, l'objectif de la rectitude politique, comme celui du « civiquement correct », est de réformer les mœurs en modifiant le langage. Vaste programme! Toutefois, les révolutionnaires de jadis ont fini par se rendre compte que l'égalitarisme des manières ne signifiait rien tant qu'une véritable égalité politique n'aurait pas été instaurée. De même, de nos jours, il ne suffit pas, hélas!, d'employer des euphémismes suaves ou ingénieux à propos de la couleur de la peau ou d'un handicap physique ou

¹ Rouvillois, Frédéric. « Histoire de la Politesse de 1789 à nos jours ». Flammarion, 2006, pp. 27 et ss.

² Ibid., p. 33.

mental pour mettre fin aux préjugés et à la discrimination fondée sur la race, la religion, l'orientation sexuelle, etc., la différence en somme.

De plus, cette volonté d'imposer la « vertu » par le langage peut engendrer, aujourd'hui comme hier, des effets pervers comme la censure et l'autocensure, celles-ci étant, à la limite, une atteinte à la liberté d'expression. Censure du vocabulaire et obligation d'en adopter un autre tout à fait artificiel et souvent farfelu, réprobation et mépris à l'égard de quiconque refuse de s'y conformer. Un exemple récent illustre bien ce fait. Le philosophe Charles Taylor, dans son discours d'acceptation du prestigieux prix Templeton, a eu le malheur de déclarer, entre autres : (...) « humanities and social sciences are surprisingly blind and deaf to the spiritual dimension » (...)³. Il fut aussitôt pris à partie par un professeur de psychologie de McGill qui lui reprocha de manquer de respect envers les sourds et les aveugles⁴.

Autocensure, en outre, pour ceux et celles qui ont l'habitude d'appeler les choses par leur nom, et qui doivent constamment surveiller ce qu'ils disent, comme si les mots que l'on croyait innocents recélaient quelque sombre piège susceptible de vous attirer des ennuis... Faudrait-il désormais se méfier du langage courant, et en particulier de ces métaphores qui font partie du génie d'une langue et qui ont le mérite de rendre le français et l'anglais plus vivants et plus colorés? Ce serait bien dommage, et je crois que finalement tout le monde y perdrait.

Enfin, à la différence de l'antipolitesse égalitaire qui fut, heureusement, de courte durée, la rectitude politique d'aujourd'hui semble être un phénomène plus coriace, plus durable. Elle fait des ravages particulièrement dans les universités anglophones, surtout aux Etats-Unis où elle atteint parfois des sommets de ridicule (mais le ridicule ne tue pas, c'est bien connu...). Dieu merci, nous n'en sommes pas encore là, du moins je l'espère!

Dear Friends,

This is your Newsletter, and we would like you to be more involved with it. We are grateful to those among you who do contribute, but where is everybody else? Please pick up your laptop, your pencil or your stylus and write to us, about your new grandchild, your ancestors, a movie you enjoyed, a warm memory of the «good old days» at Concordia, Loyola, Sir George. Or, if you prefer, just write in a (publishable) comment or question about affairs that concern you. You have my e-mail address.

Mair

Chères/Chers Ami-e-s,

Votre Bulletin requiert votre attention, voire vos services. Certain-e-s d'entre vous fournissent des contributions, mais dire qu'il s'agit d'une minorité constituerait une

³ The Gazette, édition du 15 mars 2007.

⁴ Jamie C. MacDougall. « Taylor was unfair to deaf and blind people », lettre publiée dans The Gazette, le 26 mars 2007.

litote.!! Allez ! Vous savez tous et toutes écrire et vous avez tous et toutes quelque chose à dire ou à raconter. Manifestez-vous. Vous avez mon adresse courriel.

Mair

In Memoriam

It is with great regret that we announce here the names of those who are no longer with us:

TAGGART, GILBERT C
AUCLAIR, MYRA
KRANTZBERG, JULIUS
BENTLEY, DAPHNE
DUBAS S J, M STEPHEN
LOW, NORMAN M.P.
CHRETIEN, LEOPOLD
POULIN, FERNAND
HENRY, GHISLAINE
ELLIS, WILLIAM
ALLAN, RONALD
VIBRANS, DOROTHEA
DIUBALDO, RICHARD
VALASKAKIS, GAIL
BROWN, CATHERINE
DIXON, GEORGINA JANE
MACLEOD, CHARLES F
ROKAS, GEORGINA DELLOYE
MCNAMARA, VINCENT
JONES, DENNIS
BROWNE, ALEX
MACDONALD, DONALD

Many of these former colleagues were extremely well-known inside and outside the University. Others were perhaps known to only a few co-workers. They will all be equally missed. We extend our sympathy to their families and friends.

Story from Wales.

The Four Stones of Hindwell

Four stones stand in a field in the village of Evenjobb near Presteigne - originally forming a dolmen or burial site. According to local myth, the stones walk to Hindwell Pool at midnight at the full moon, returning before dawn after drinking from the river.

How about some from, say, the Maritimes? Or the Islands? Or...?

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (back to front page next time)

I don't know what's happened this Fall but it is very pleasant – summer temperatures into late October – but I suspect it won't last long! CUPA was slow during the summer. The Pension fund is still in good shape although recent events may make our discussions with the University about indexing a bit harder. Hopefully those meetings will start soon.

Our annual Fall meeting was held on October 24th. Judge Maximilien Polak was the guest speaker and gave us an excellent talk on «Elder Law.» He stressed that politicians are finally becoming aware of our voting potential; we might then expect some more favourable legislation in the future.

Our social life is picking up. A «Day at the Races» on November 13; our usual Christmas (or other winter festival) takes place on December 13. We hope to see you all there! A perfect way to have fun. We may start a bridge club.

Other suggestions for activities are always welcome!! For those of you elsewhere, how about starting a local chapter with some social activities? We can help with mailing, etc.

We have been offered access to the Alumni/Employee Car and House insurance plans (reduced rates??), and have also been invited to join several travel packages sponsored by the Alumni office. For details, see the Alumni web page at <http://alumni.concordia.ca/cuaa/benefits/index.shtml> Or call Yanick Dahan at 514-848-2424 extension 3819.

A reminder: for news of the University, go online at www.concordia.ca or check in with us at <http://cupa.concordia.ca>. More details below and remember, it's free.
Graham Martin

MESSAGE DU PRÉSIDENT (la prochaine fois. comme de Gaulle, je reviendrai.)

Je ne m'explique pas ce qui s'est produit cet automne mais un vrai deuxième été en octobre, ce n'est pas à refuser !

CUPARUC n'a pas été très active cet été. Notre fond de pension se porte bien mais les récentes fluctuations à la Bourse risquent de compromettre nos discussions au sujet de l'indexation, discussions dont nous espérons qu'elles reprendront sous peu.

L'assemblée de l'automne a eu lieu le 24 octobre. Le conférencier invité, le juge Maximilien Polak, nous a parlé du «Droit des aîné-e-s.» Les représentant-e-s politiques commencent à mesurer notre importance électorale; nous sommes donc en droit d'espérer une législation plus favorable dans les années qui viennent. (Peut-être !!!)

La vie sociale reprend. Le 18 novembre sera notre journée «hippique.» Le déjeuner de Noël (ou de toute autre fête hivernale) aura lieu le 13 décembre (non, ce n'est pas un vendredi...) Nous espérons vous y voir nombreux et nombreuses; c'est l'occasion entre autres DE S'AMUSER ENSEMBLE ! Nous envisageons de créer un cercle de bridge. Vous pouvez aussi, avec notre aide, mettre sur pied une antenne locale de CUPARUC, à Toronto, à Victoria, etc. Nous vous encourageons également à nous suggérer d'autres activités à poursuivre.

Le bureau des Diplôm-e-s nous propose de profiter de leurs tarifs réduits dans le domaine des assurances automobile ou domiciliaire. On nous propose également de participer à certaines de leurs activités. Consulter le site suivant pour plus de renseignements : <http://alumni.concordia.ca/cuaa/benefits/index.shtml>

Ou téléphoner à Yanick Dahan au 514-848-2424 poste 3819.

Graham Martin