

Liberal Arts College Concordia
Alumni Magazine

Minerva

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Design by Maria Chabelnik

Opening Remarks

As this edition of *Minerva* goes to press, we find ourselves in the midst of exceptional circumstances due to the Covid pandemic. The situation is particularly difficult for the LAC, as in-person teaching, exchange, and fellowship constitute our very essence. Learning is a cooperative endeavour at the College; our program is about conversation – in class, in the lounge, at coffee hour, during theme weekend, on our annual trip to New York – conversation that informs, challenges, excites, and inspires. While not impossible, it is difficult to sustain such dynamic exchange via a computer screen.

As importantly, the LAC is a close-knit community which is facilitated and nurtured by a physical space that feels like home to our students. It is both an intellectual and physical meeting place of creative endeavour. Strangely, the seminar rooms, lounge, library, and corridors, normally full of voices and buzzing with activity, have fallen eerily silent. In addition to this, our annual trip to New York, which was planned for October 2020, had to be cancelled. The trip is a high-point for many of the students in our program and is fondly remembered as such by our alumni.

And yet, despite considerable challenges, the College has quickly and successfully adapted to the new reality and made sure its work continues. Our full- and part-time faculty members have transitioned to teaching online and have devoted themselves, as always, to supporting our

students and our program. We also have the integral support of our staff. And, as usual, our students continue to be very active, especially through the Liberal Arts Society. In this way, we have not only continued to teach, learn, discuss, and debate, but have maintained our spirited collegiality. We even organized a Zoom graduation at the end of last academic year.

The College also has the satisfaction of looking back on a very active and successful academic year in 2019–20. In September 2019, we celebrated our fortieth anniversary with events culminating in a gala dinner–dance. Other notable events from last year include the very successful staging of *The Heidi Chronicles* by the Liberal Arts Theatre Society and the incredible transformation of our student lounge by Thalia Stefaniuk. Yet we also mourn the loss of Stan Tucker who passed away in his one hundredth year on 3 April 2020. Along with his wife Lois, Stan was a generous supporter of the College for many years and always enjoyed attending our annual orientation gathering. The LAC library, which began with his generous donation, is named after his first wife, Rita Mary Tucker. A life-long advocate of education, Stan supported many of our students with scholarships over many decades, something for which we are truly grateful.

There are still many uncertainties with respect to Covid. Nonetheless, we look forward to returning to the College in the coming academic year. In the meantime, we hope everyone in the LAC community remains safe and well!

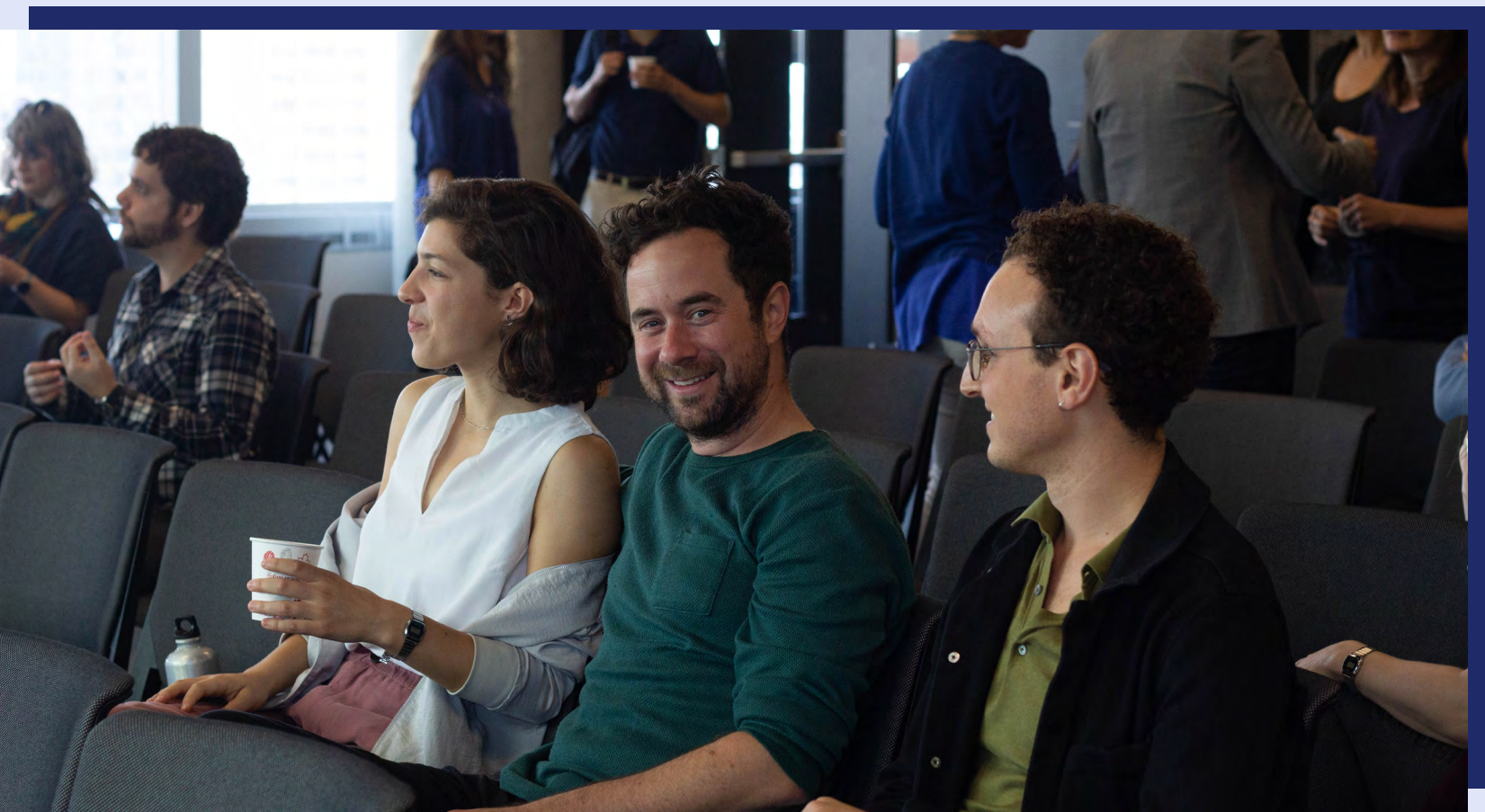
Professor Mark A. Russell

Reunion

The LAC celebrated its fortieth anniversary with alumni events and a gala dinner on 20 and 21 September 2019. This was a major milestone for the College. Founded by Professors Harvey Shulman and Frederick Krantz, the College admitted its first class of students in 1978. Over four decades, the LAC has sought to engender intellectual autonomy, inquiry, and creativity in its students and to establish the foundation for a life of learning. Our alumni are a testament to the fact that we have achieved a great deal and have much to celebrate!

The first day was devoted to panel discussions by LAC graduates. These focused on how a liberal arts education helped shape their careers. Grouped into three panels entitled “Liberal Arts and the World,” “Liberal Arts and the Arts,” and “Liberal Arts and Academia,” our alumni discussed their careers in politics, the arts, public service, academia, and the tech industry. It was inspiring to hear about the many and various paths they had followed since graduation, their impressive achievements, and how the LAC had shaped their career paths. The event received an enthusiastic response from our students who were eager to hear just this. We are truly grateful to all those who so readily participated in this event.

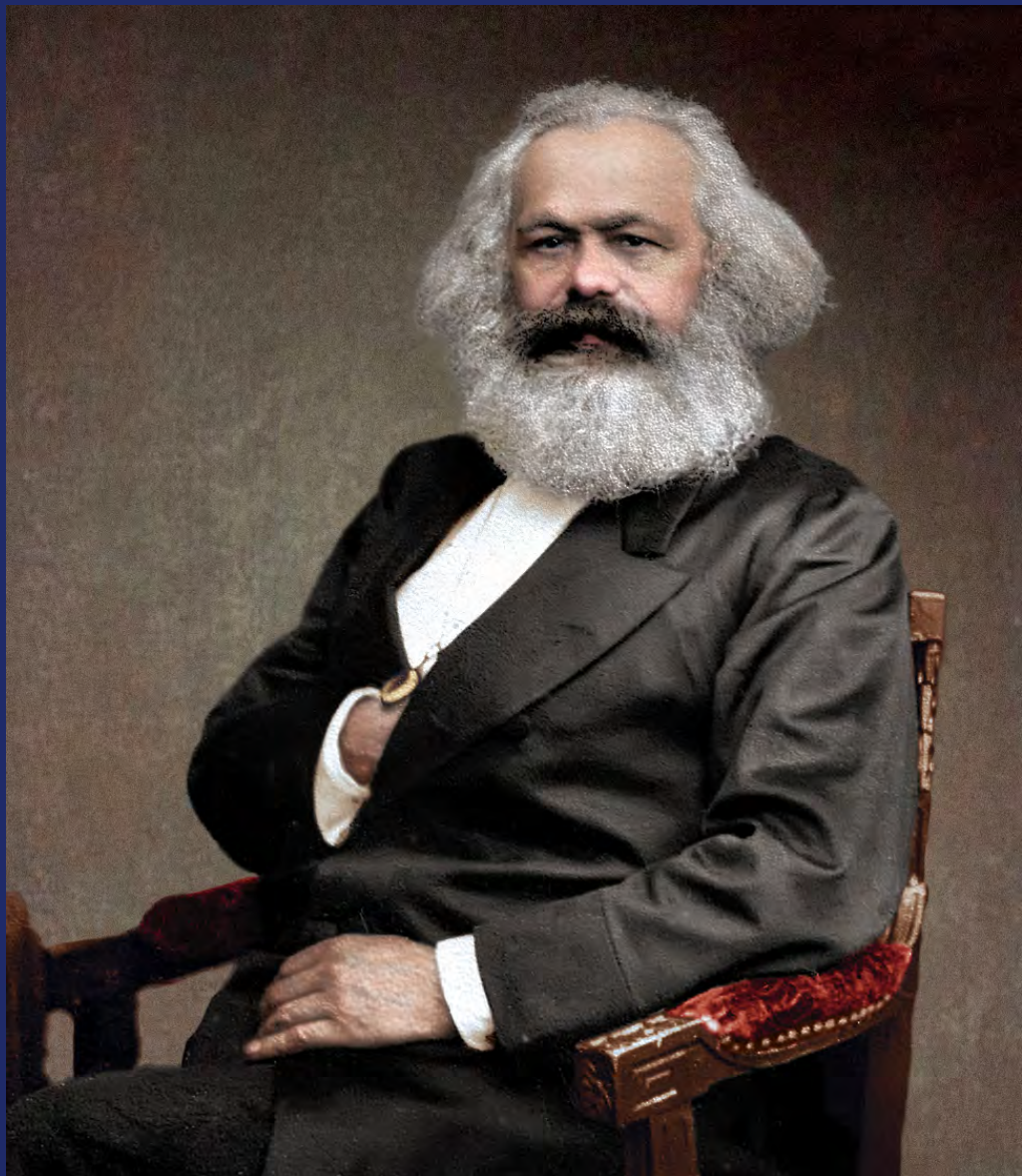
The reunion also afforded the opportunity for a productive meeting of our alumni association which enabled us to renew links with graduates and to think about ways to improve and sustain these in the future. The celebrations concluded with a gala dinner-dance on Saturday evening at the Hotel EVO. This included tributes to faculty and staff, past and present, and gave us the chance to reconnect with old friends and classmates, to reminisce, and to reinforce the collegiate culture and bonds that dissipate over the years. It was wonderful to see so many of you!





Of course, none of this could have happened without the generous participation of our alumni. We are very grateful for your continued support of LAC. Once again, our heart-felt thanks for your participation! We look forward to many more chances to celebrate our achievements and to continue building a vital and sustainable College.





Honours Seminar:

I had the privilege of teaching an Honours seminar again this year at the LAC. After focusing last year on the 18th century most famous maverick, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, we turned this year on the 19th century's foremost critical thinker, Karl Marx. One would be hard-pressed to find a writer who has had a greater impact on the modern world. One would also be hard-pressed to find a more

Marx

controversial one. Perhaps the only thing as immense as Marx's intellectual legacy is the political weight his thought still carries to this day. Amidst the controversies, misunderstandings, and political claims made in the name of "Marxism," an intellectual challenge lied before us in the seminar to go back to Marx's texts and look at this colossal intellectual edifice with fresh, untainted eyes. Along with scholarly exegesis and historical understanding, the seminar also aimed to assess Marx's relevancy for us today. Could his theories, especially his critical theory of capitalism, help us understand our globalized, unequal, and warming world? If so, how? The seminar engaged in a close reading of some of Marx's most important texts, analyzing the manifold and polyphonic layers of historical and contemporary meanings they carry. As is the case when teaching at the LAC, it is the formidable students who end up teaching me more than I teach them. Their commitment and amazing reading and interpretative skills brought us much further and deeper in the analysis than I would have suspected, and revealed a plurality of ways in which Marx can still help us think. I was taken aback reading amazing papers on Marx and gender, Marx's thought on ecology and nature, the theory of value, labour, technology, and much more. Once more, LAC students demonstrated both the historical value of great thinkers of the past, and how they can help us understand the present.

Professor Jonathan Martineau

Darragh Mondoux-Kilkenny

Creating an original piece of theatre that adapted an iconic text from the Western canon was the perfect way to cap my time at the college. I used “A Hunger Artist” by Franz Kafka as a narrative map to explore how the act of not eating can be one of larger implications beyond the body. This examination of hunger as a tool, as a weapon, and as a kind of artistic medium in the case of Kafka’s hero, was given a feminist take by my decision to write the role of the hunger artist as an Irish woman. Incorporating considerations of the special relationship that the Irish have to hunger meant that Kafka’s short story was expanded into a 45-minute one-woman show with a new gendered as well as cultural context, fleshing out the bones of his story with my own interests as a pupil of Irish studies and as an actress. One day, the world will see the nightmarish wraith and hear her story of running away with the circus to resist all but her own will. Coming to the Montreal Fringe festival 2021!

Holly Schweitzer

There has been a recent genealogical movement that has democratized the process of people wanting to know and understand more about their own family histories. Oral history is part of that movement. In the fall of 2019, I decided to conduct an oral history project with my grandmother about her life as a Cambodian woman and survivor of the Khmer Rouge regime. However, during the actual interview, my mother would contribute with her own stories, creating a dialogue of common memory between her and my grandmother. In the transcription, my role granddaughter and daughter of the interviewees illustrates the intergenerational voices that are currently embodying the Cambodian diaspora.

My thesis applies the interview transcription for an exploration of generational memory. To

contextualize my family’s experience, I explore the testimonies of other survivors in Khatharya Um’s *From the Land of the Shadows* and Patricia McCormick’s *Never Fall Down*, and how both Um and McCormick use oral history as a resource. I provide an explanation of oral history by defining oral history and its function, concluding with an explication of the production of my own oral history project, and how I interpreted the role and dynamic of interviewing my family members as survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime.

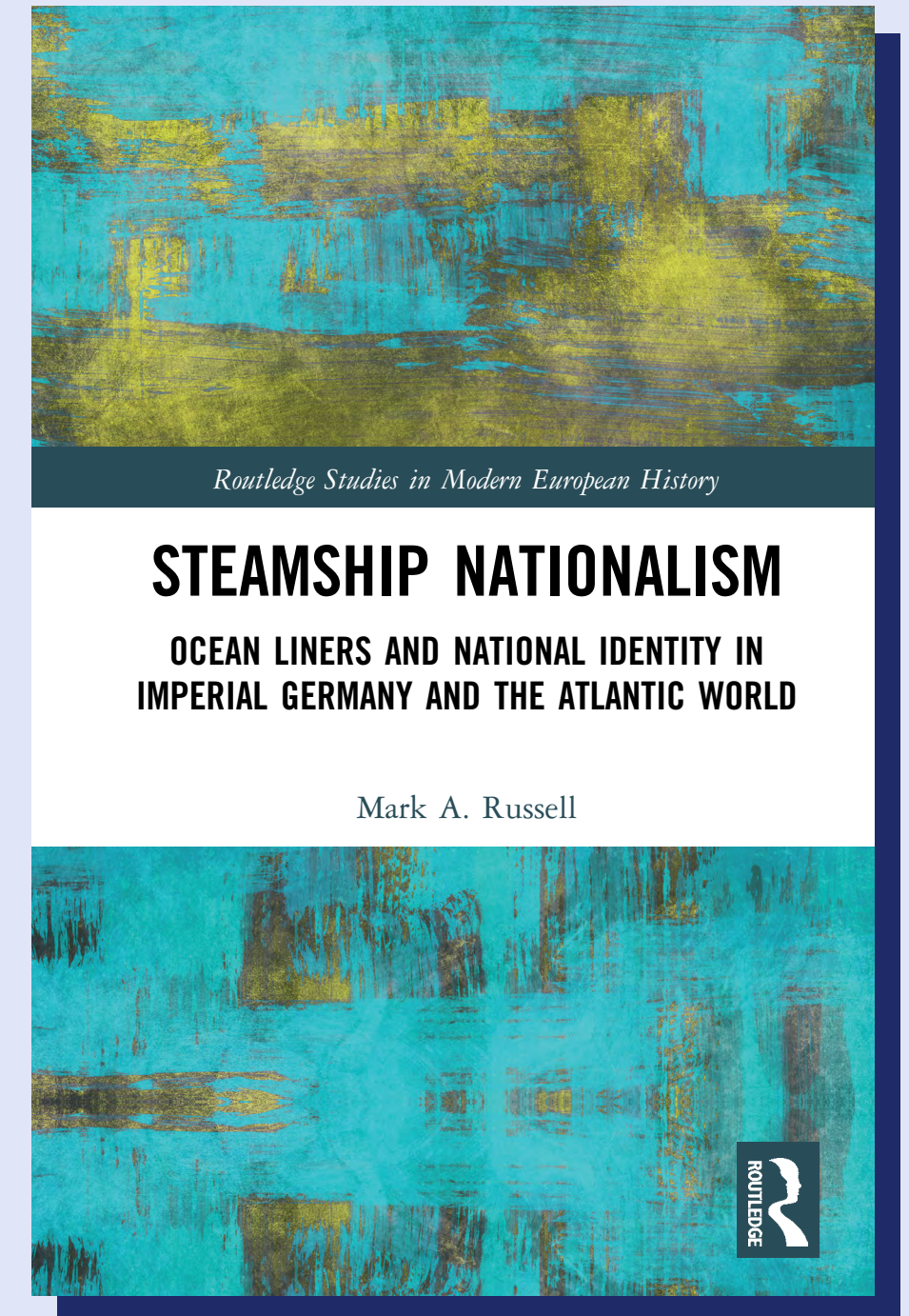
My grandmother’s and mother’s “autobiographical memory” depicted in the interview implicitly connects the present with the past; conducting a family oral history was through and through an authentic human experience that has strengthened my identity’s linkage to the Cambodian diaspora.

Steamship National Identity

Faculty Research Update

After several years of research and writing, *Steamship Nationalism: Ocean Liners and National Identity in Imperial Germany and the Atlantic World* was published this past summer. The book is a cultural, social, and political history of the S.S. *Imperator*, *Vaterland*, and *Bismarck*. Transatlantic passenger steamships launched by the *Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Aktien-Gesellschaft* (HAPAG) between 1912 and 1914, they do not enjoy the international fame of their British counterparts, most notably the *Titanic*. Yet the *Imperator*-class liners were the largest, most luxurious passenger vessels built before the First

World War. In keeping with the often-overlooked history of its merchant marine as a whole, they reveal much about Imperial Germany in its national and international dimensions. As products of business decisions shaped by global dynamics and the imperatives of international travel, immigration, and trade, HAPAG's giant liners bear witness to Germany's involvement in the processes of globalization prior to 1914. Yet this book focuses not on their physical, but on their cultural construction in a variety of contemporaneous media, including the press and advertising, on both sides of the Atlantic. At home, they



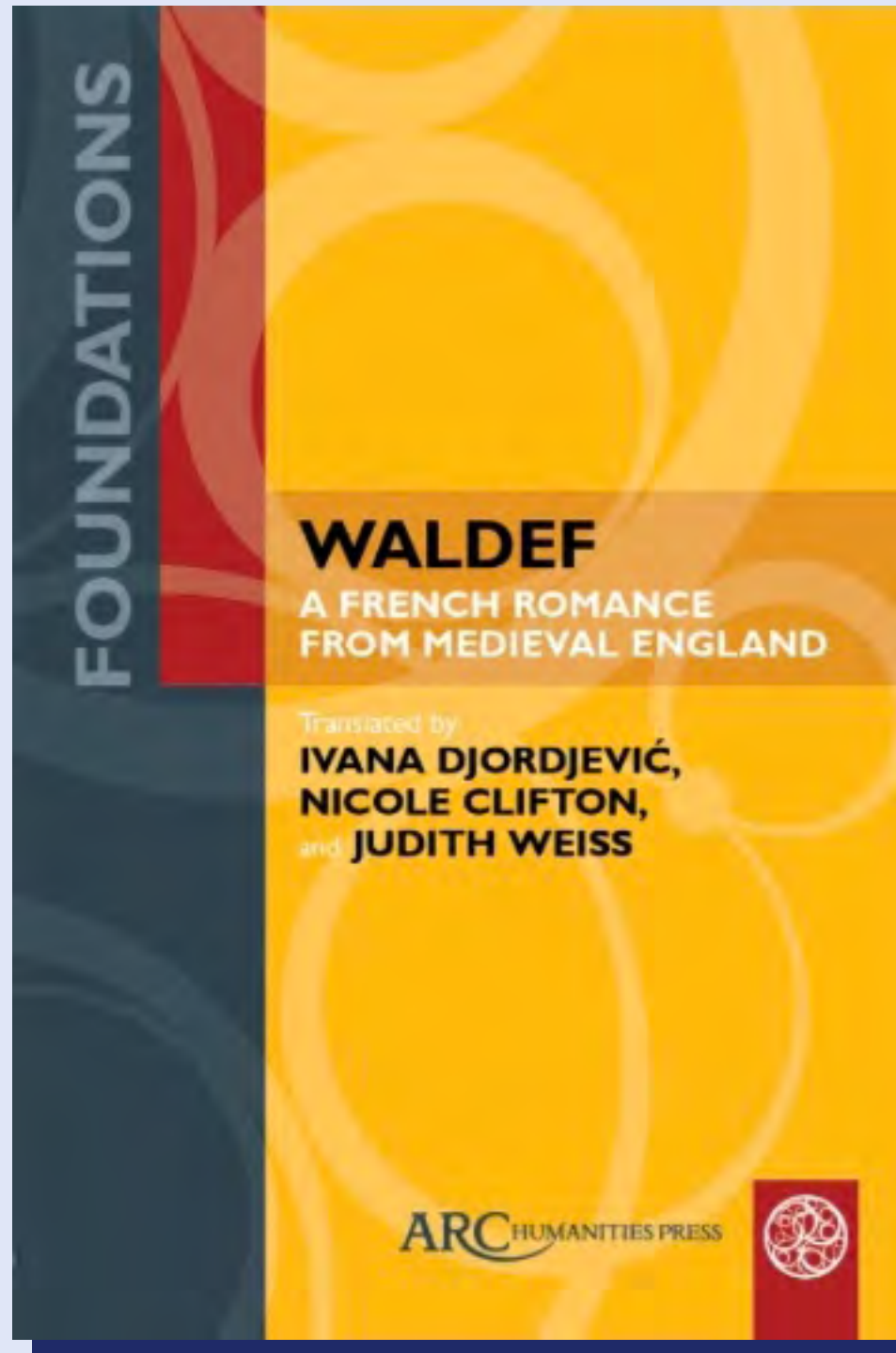
were presented to the public as symbolic of the nation's achievements and ambitions in ways that emphasize the complex nature of German national identity at the time. Abroad, they were often construed as floating national monuments and, as such, facilitated important encounters with Germany, both virtual and real, for the populations of Britain and America. Their overseas reception highlights the multi-faceted image of the European superpower that was constructed in the Anglo-American world in these years. More generally, it is a pointed indicator of the complex relationship between Britain, the United States, and Imperial Germany.

Professor Mark A. Russell

Translating Waldef

Faculty Research Update

A book always takes longer than you expect. The timeline of a collective effort is even more unpredictable, but if you're working with good friends who think in complementary ways you can cheer each other on throughout the lengthy process and have much more fun than if your laptop is your only companion. At least that was my experience as I spent nearly ten years sharing the translation of Waldef, an enormously long (22,304 lines in its unfinished state) Anglo-Norman romance, with Drs Judith Weiss (Cambridge) and Nicole Clifton (Norther Illinois). It helped that, while long, Waldef is never boring. To quote the publisher's blurb, "the fast-moving romance plot of this early thirteenth-century tale recounts the ancestry and exploits of Waldef and his two sons, set against a history of pre-Conquest England. ... Waldef's scope, interest in battle, and political stratagems bear reading alongside medieval chronicles, while secret love affairs connect it with other romance literature of the period, and adventures across a wide area of the known



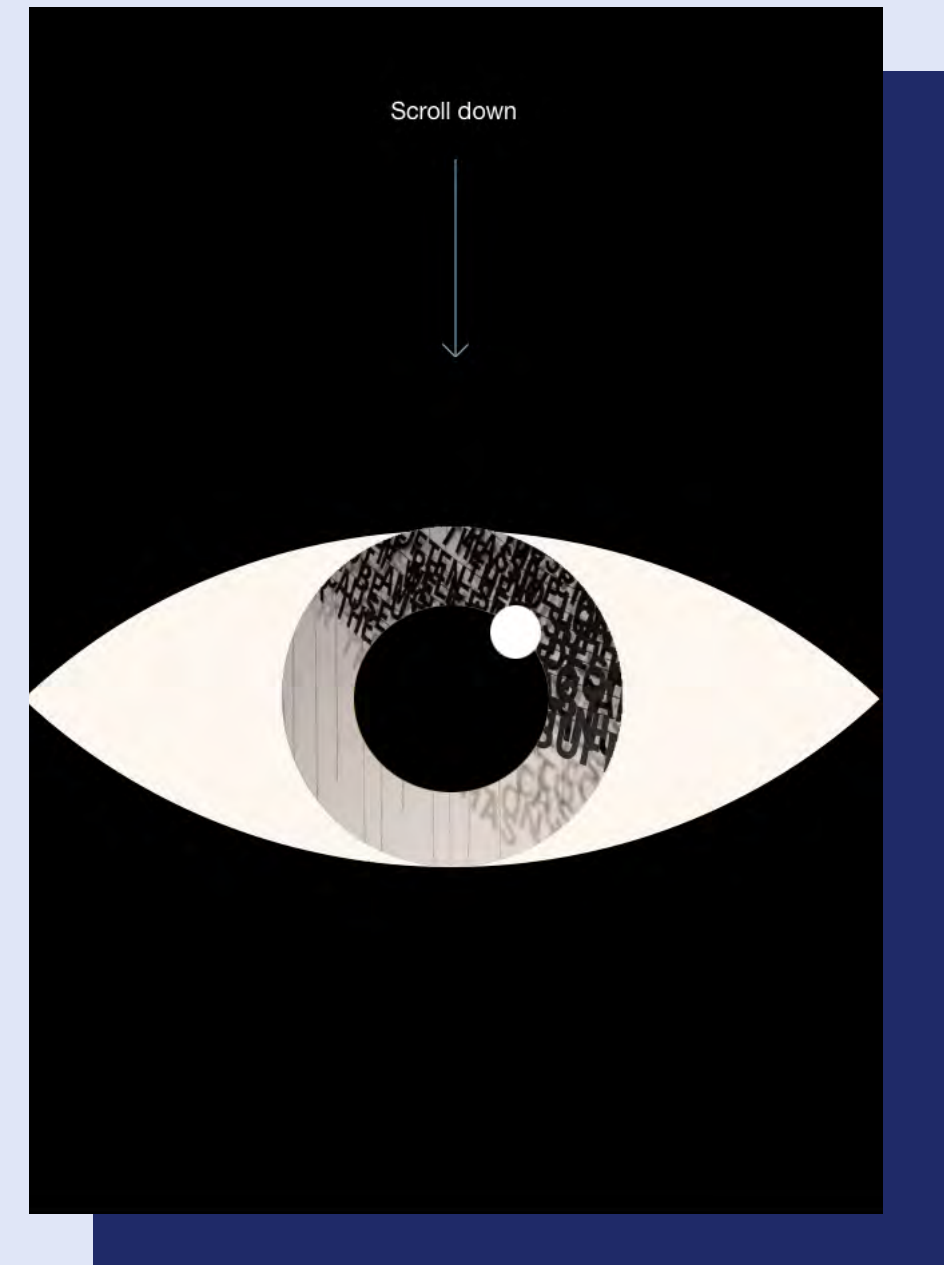
world provide affinities with medieval travel narrative.” My colleagues and I embarked on the translation in the hope of rescuing this highly interesting narrative from undeserved neglect by making it more accessible both to undergraduates and to seasoned scholars untrained in Old French. Because each of us balked at the magnitude of the undertaking, pooling our resources was the obvious solution. Since the project was first proposed, in the spring of 2011, our only regret has been that we’ve had few opportunities to meet in person: an initial get-together over lunch to discuss general principles, a break between conference sessions a year later, which we used to review a draft translation of some sections of the text together, and, several years after that, a blissful week when all three of us were able to sit around the same table, putting the finishing touches to our first complete draft. In between, e-mail, cloud-based data sharing, and electronic video-conferencing allowed us to bridge the Atlantic and ignore, for the most part, differences in time zones. The book will be out in late August, but I will be with Waldef for a long time to come, as I pursue related research projects. And, missing the intellectual stimulation and long-distance camaraderie, I’m already looking for the next impossibly long text to translate with a good friend or two.

Professor Ivana Djordjević

Representations of Pain

Professor Ariela Freedman and Liberal Arts alumna Thalia Stefaniuk recently launched “Representations of Pain,” an interactive online installation that interrogates representations and expands definitions of pain through a variety of mediums, from fine arts to the sciences. Curated by Thalia, designed by Michael Ferrier, and based on Professor Freedman’s research on pain in graphic novels, this digital exhibition explores the many ways in which artists imagine and explore pain, grief, and suffering. You can check it out at representationsofpain.com

Professor Ariela Freedman



The Heidi Chronicles

Liberal Arts College Theatre Society

Building on the momentum of last year's *Antigone*, *The Heidi Chronicles* had much to live up to. From Thalia Stefaniuk's inspired stage design, to the exceptional performance of the cast, so much of what made *Antigone* possible was in many parts due to the abilities of those around me. I learned then that directing is so much more than an authorial activity. It is, in large part, a removed role that acts as a mere channel for others.

Producing *The Heidi Chronicles* was, from the outset, a more orderly and deliberate process. I was incredibly blessed to have Thalia involved in the project from the beginning. She brought years of experience to the table and was a big part of what made the play such a great production. We were gifted with an incredible cast, once again highlighting the

exceptional talent and dedication that exists in the LAC student body. I am extremely fortunate to finish my directorial career in this fashion, and I am forever grateful for the experience of having done it.

Departing from the typical LAC plays that the LACTS has often produced, *The Heidi Chronicles*

is situated in that Goldilocks zone between canonicity and contemporaneity. A Pulitzer-Prize-winning drama, the play traces the coming-of-age story of Heidi Holland as she tries to find her place in a rapidly changing world. Occurring over three decades, the story deals with perennial questions regarding maturity, idealism, and social change by approaching the more contemporary subjects of feminism and materialism. Although the decision to stage it was unexpected, *The Heidi Chronicles* ended up reflecting much of what it means to be a student in the Liberal Arts College. An interplay between the

“foundational” and the “new”, the play is one among many examples of how both the old and new are intermingled, rather than being neatly separated.

The LACTS, throughout its years, has also embodied this fact. It is both a continued legacy from our past, and a constantly renewed project by different individuals. I am honored to be a part of its history, and I must thank Darragh Kilkenny-Mondoux, the previous director, and the alumni prior to her for keeping the torch lit. It has made my job of passing it along much easier.

Bryan Lee

Lounges

My honors thesis started very broadly under the supervision of Professor Katharine Streip with the question: what makes a creative community? I had the idea of creating a contemporary creative space that enticed people to start their own collectives and projects.

I sketched out very detailed designs, schedules and budgets, gathered an incredible team, was granted funding from the CSU, and got permission from Concordia to paint and renovate the room over the reading week with a team of amazing volunteers. I was really inspired by old school artist salons, like the one at Gertrude Stein's home. The other big inspiration was the Dadaists' Cabaret Voltaire. The aesthetic here is all about mixing different tastes and classes. it's a little grungy, a little punk rock and, most importantly, filled with a sense of humor.

Getting the funding was by far the hardest part. I made preliminary designs on photoshop that mapped out exactly how I foresaw the renovation and created the curatorial committee with Elizabeth Robinson and Hannah Kaya. I discovered that CSU has funding specific to student spaces (Student Space, Accessible Education, and Legal Contingency Fund) and met with Desiree Blizzard, who really walked me through the process.

I had to give a big presentation in front of the CSU and it was a very mixed experience. It felt a lot like Shark Tank except there were 20 sharks! The brilliant part was that over 30 members of the LAC community came out to support me.

I planned to do the renovation reading week so we could have the place to ourselves but it meant we only had seven days to physically finish everything. I'm used to working with crazy deadlines in film and TV but even on the smallest productions you have a group of professionals. Instead, we were a group of volunteers. It was really thanks to all of them that this happened, namely, Elizabeth Robinson, Hannah Kaya, Juliette Apergis Rollande, Béatrice Dedaulin, Bryan Lee, Fred Gagnon, Daphne Lamarque-Dufetel, Jessica Fragias, my supervisor Katharine Streip and so many more.





One of the biggest design inspirations was the LAC itself. I wanted the design to reflect the eclectic nature of the college, a merging of multiple ideas and people that find a place to coexist.

The last important inspiration was my mother, the artist Pamela Mingo. She came for the renovation week to help with painting and the renovation. Not only did she do the whimsical murals in the space, she was a constant reminder not to take ourselves too seriously and was always injecting pops of colour and fun into the room.

Since the pandemic, so much has changed. We opened a week before the University closed. Our whole focus was on gathering people in public space and now

we're not even allowed in the room. Bryan Lee is the new curator at the college and he and the new curatorial committee has been focusing on webinar events that engage with students outside the classroom and help recapture the sense of community lost due to the pandemic. Still, we can't wait to explore the new forms of gathering and community that lie on the other side of this pandemic!

Thalia Stefaniuk



The Curatorial Committee

Elizabeth Robinson
 Juliette Rolland Apergis
 Hannah Kaya
 Jessica Fragias
 Daphne Dufetel-Lamarque
 Fred Gagnon
 Beatrice Daudelin

Our dedicated team of volunteers

Bryan Lee
 Timothy Down
 Yannick Cheng
 Joelle Guédon
 Nelson Duchastel
 Darragh Kilkenny-Mondoux
 Theo Tremblay
 Callum Bogg
 Elie Saade
 Helen Yu
 Aaron Dicaprio
 Lori Isbister



We were just about to start Foucault when the world shut down in March, and *Discipline and Punish* felt like an uncanny text to be reading as we entered into the new disciplinary regimens of the pandemic. Foucault argues that the panoptic schema originates in epidemiological models for containing plague through classification, containment, surveillance, and the micro-disciplines of the body. As we discussed the temporal elaboration of physical gestures, I showed handwashing charts accompanied by twenty-second songs; as we talked about architectures of visibility I showed pictures of the new field hospital in Central Park. I'd never before had as strong a feeling of teaching what Foucault calls a history of the present.

Books and Pandemic

Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice" has been off the syllabus for a few years, but it is back this Fall, as we prepare for virtual teaching. Gustav Von Aschenbach dies of cholera, or is it passion? As Venice sickens, rumours spread about the origin and movement of the plague, and the city empties out in a strange prefiguration of the scenes we have ourselves witnessed this spring and summer. The plague is both disease and metaphor (isn't every plague?) and one of the complexities of reading the novella is tracking the ways the sickness seems to expose Aschenbach's own passivity and pathology, and the ills of the society in which he lives.

Often in these last months I wished we had an Italian estate like the one in the Decameron, where we could have all gone to tell stories and eat good food, or a tower where we could hide out like Montaigne. We don't have that.

But we do have the books.

Chaucer Plague

Geoffrey Chaucer lived in the aftermath of the most catastrophic pandemic in history: the Black Death (or plague), which swept through England in 1348–1349. But don't go looking for dramatic depictions of it in his works.

England lost up to half its population to the plague, while the survivors' situation changed in ways no one could have predicted. As they dealt with unprecedented grief and bereavement, at the same time they found their economic prospects improved. Already affluent families like Chaucer's were enriched by inheritances, but labour shortages gave even poor labourers more clout in negotiating wages; standards of living generally improved and social mobility increased. Though these were relatively modest changes, the government tried hard to return to the way things were before the plague. This led to popular unrest, including the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

Chaucer may have been six or seven when the plague hit, just old enough to remember its impact on his family, if not any details. Unlike Boccaccio, who evoked the plague in Florence almost in real time, Chaucer wrote several decades later. By then he was a courtier and civil servant, part of the machinery of government. Perhaps this is why, though far from apolitical in general, he avoids topical references. So carefully A brief simile in the "Nun's Priest's Tale" slyly refers to the Peasant's Revolt; the epidemic itself is the muted backdrop to the three revelers' misguided quest to kill Death in the "Pardoner's Tale;" elsewhere in the Canterbury Tales, a fortune amassed and carefully preserved during the pestilence contributes to the Physician's ambiguous characterization in the General Prologue. That's pretty much it.

Chaucer may have been more cautious than some of his overtly political contemporaries, but the plague still marked his work profoundly. The lightness of touch characteristic of his writings may blind us to a deep preoccupation with mutability, instability, and unpredictability. The perplexed, questioning human beings who populate his world cannot figure out why things happen the way they do, yet they cannot give up trying to make sense of their place in an irreversibly destabilized world. Perfect pandemic reading, in short!

Professor Ivana Djordjević



I have been to many Concordia graduations at Place des Arts, and I have a confession to make: they have their limitations. The speeches are variable, the five seconds delegated for each student to walk across the stage makes for a relatively anonymous experience, there is too much pomp and ceremony, and it's hard to spot any individual faces in the crowd. When graduation was cancelled this year, we decided, with some trepidation, to have a Zoom graduation. Thalia Stefaniuk organized a slide show of photos of students in their first and last years, and each student took turns speaking about their education when their picture came up. It was awkward and odd and extremely moving, and served as an opportunity for students to reflect on their studies and their development over the years. This year didn't end up the way any of us expected, but still, this graduation did what it was supposed to do: put the spotlight on a group of extraordinary people, who will now go out into this altered world, where they are the hope for change. Congratulations to all of you!

Zoom Graduation

In Memoriam

Stanley Tucker passed away in his hundredth year on April 3rd, 2020. He was a longstanding friend and supporter of the Liberal Arts College. The Liberal Arts College library, named for his first wife, Rita Mary Tucker, began with his generous donation. When he remarried after his first wife's death, he and his wife, Lois Issenman Tucker, asked guests to make donations to the Liberal Arts College scholarship fund in lieu of gifts. Over the years, he supported dozens of students, and was an annual presence at Liberal Arts College orientations, where he would speak about the influence of his own studies in Liberal Arts at Queens University. A life-long supporter of education, Stan Tucker embodied devotion to books and ideas, and through his generosity helped generations of students thrive and learn at the Liberal Arts College.



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