

I do not know what drove her to end her life. Whatever the details surrounding the event, my guess is that her short but spectacularly productive career may have contained too many conflicting components. Her provocative claims made her the focus of considerable attention, some laudatory, some hostile, yet she remained obsessively secretive. Working in a largely English-speaking environment may have aggravated her tendency to paranoia, and caused her to over-react to real or imagined slights. Her final act may have been the logical resolution – the ultimate provocation, and the ultimate secret. She will be missed.

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The unfinished opus of Justine Sergeant

"On Tuesday April 12, a fellow neuropsychologist was found dead along with her husband. According to what is known at this point, the suicide followed an article published in the April 9 issue of this newspaper. The article reported, in part, the content of an anonymous letter received by The Gazette that shed doubt on the scientific and ethical integrity of her work. The public is in no way informed as to the veracity or motives of these allegations."

The first paragraph of the article colleagues* and I published in *The Gazette* (a Montreal newspaper) gives an idea of the climate surrounding the period that followed the announcement of the deaths of Justine and Yves Sergeant. It was simply a great shock. Most of us learned the news on the radio or in the newspaper. I became without words when our

* At the time the article was written, John Marshall and Esther Strauss were visiting Montreal.

librarian welcomed me at 8h45 with a "Did you hear about the news?" when the newspaper reported the tragedy in their April 13 morning edition. The week that followed, all my colleagues were troubled in their activities. Many of us found a way to pay tribute to Justine and Yves through active participation in the funeral ceremony that was organized by Yves Sergeant's family, the only one that could make it to Montréal in time. Still, nearly two months after the event, the shock persists.

Despite the fact that the context surrounding the tragic disappearance of Yves and Justine Sergeant was, and still is, a source of indignation, efforts were made to re-focus the attention of the public on some basic and unquestionable facts. Justine Sergeant was one of Canada's most prominent researchers in neuropsychology. I certainly considered myself privileged to count Justine among the Montréal neuropsychological community, despite the fact that Justine definitely preferred to work on her own or to collaborate with colleagues in her discipline all over the world. In Montréal, Justine was highly respected for her brilliance, her determination and the quality of her work as well as the importance of her contribution. The contribution of her husband is probably more important than anyone had suspected. Of course, many of the ideas she submitted to the field have been, or shall be challenged. But isn't that the very basis of science, to be a forum of exchange, discussion and controversies? In that global forum, Justine Sergeant probably contributed like few neuropsychologists whether in Québec, Canada or around the world. My colleagues and myself actively defended this idea against whoever would have tempted to argue to the contrary. The last two paragraphs of our article in *The Gazette* clearly expressed this conviction as well as our profound sadness.

"But over and above our sadness and our indignation, the neuropsychological community of Montreal has without a doubt lost one of its most world-renowned figures. Over the last decade or so, as a grantee of the Canadian Medical Research Council of Canada - by which she was attributed the prestigious title of Scientist - and of many other prestigious funding agencies, Dr Sergeant was certainly among the most productive and widely read neuropsychologists of Canada and one of the major figures of the international community. Dr Sergeant was highly intelligent, insightful as well as most original and creative in her work. She was totally devoted to her research activities. Her multiple contributions to the field, both in