

*Cultural Crossroads:  
Print and Reading in Eighteenth-  
and Nineteenth-Century  
French-Speaking Montreal*

YVAN LAMONDE

Perchance the time will come when every house even will have not only its sleeping-rooms, and dining room, and talking-room or parlor, but its thinking-room, also, and the architects will put it into their plans. Let it be furnished and ornamented with whatever conduces to serious and creative thought.

Thoreau, *A Yankee in Canada*, 1866 (journey of 1850)

**A**T YOUR INVITATION, I have left my Montreal thinking-room to come to your talking-room and exchange ideas with you, hoping that I can furnish and decorate it with elements that will lead to serious and creative thought on the subject of print and reading in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Montreal.

This essay, translated by Jane Brierley, was delivered as part of the twentieth annual James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American Culture at the American Antiquarian Society on September 27, 2002.

Yvan Lamonde and Patricia Lockhart Fleming were invited to be co-presenters of the twentieth annual Wiggins Lecture as representatives of the History of the Book in Canada/Histoire du livre et de l'imprimé au Canada, which will define Canada's place within an international network of book history studies. This five-year project will culminate in the publication of six volumes (three in English, three in French) in conjunction with the University of Toronto Press and Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.

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In a way, my interest in the subject began with three books: Herbert W. Schneider's *History of American Philosophy* (1946; 1963), which led me to Henry David Thoreau's *Yankee in Canada*, and Carl Bode's seminal work, *The American Lyceum: The Town Meeting of the Mind* (1956). I read Schneider after completing my master's thesis in philosophy on the Yale philosopher John Wild and after deciding to do a doctoral thesis on the history of philosophy and its teaching in what is now Quebec between 1665 and 1920. It was Schneider who made me see that New World philosophy came about in unexpected ways, and that in order to trace its history, one would have to look for it in unlikely places and in a variety of cultural forms. His work made it clear that I should see Quebec as part of North America, rather than trying to present either Quebec City or Montreal as a Paris of the New World. In Thoreau I found the embodiment of a New World thinker, whether he was meditating on 'the country for waterfalls' and its inhabitants (who seemed 'to be suffering between two fires,—the soldiery and the priesthood') or ruminating on the world of Concord, which became a universal metaphor in *Walden*. I glimpsed the cultural world of the Americas on the day that I came across Bode's work while browsing in the university bookstore at Princeton. I realized then how specific were the cultural forms and institutions of the Americas and that, from the analytical standpoint, they should be viewed differently from European and especially French forms. Furthermore, thanks to Bode, who takes over where de Tocqueville left off regarding the importance of 'associative life' in American democracy, I intuitively felt that the libraries of such voluntary associations as the lyceum or athenaeum also fostered the goal of civic 'mutual improvement,' as did the public debates and lectures. This spirit of concern for the common good was to become the *raison d'être* of the developing 'public' library.

My interest continued while I was at the Université Laval. Here Claude Galarneau was carrying out pioneer studies on print in Quebec City, encouraged by the writings of French scholars Henri-Jean Martin, Robert Mandrou (a frequent guest at Laval),

and Roger Chartier, who knew the province of Quebec well.<sup>1</sup> Because Montreal is a crossroads of French and American scholarly approaches, I chose this city as the focus for my research. Around 1850–51 it had a population of 57,715. It was more populous than Quebec City (42,052), Toronto (30,755), and Chicago (30,000), but smaller than Boston (136,888), Philadelphia (408,000), and New York (515,547).<sup>2</sup> Between 1835 and 1865, the majority of Montrealers were English-speaking. The city stood at the crossroads of British North America and the United States. The armies of the Continental Congress of 1775 had occupied the city, and the War of 1812, as manifested in Lower Canada, was played out in the Montreal region. Moreover, the great democratic republic to the south was admired by the Canadian rebels of 1837, who were demanding greater autonomy and, in some cases, independence. They sought refuge in the United States and left it to attempt a new liberation in 1838. In 1849, a decade later, both English- and French-speaking Montrealers, for various reasons, proposed that Canada be annexed to the United States. Montreal businessmen supported the signing of a commercial reciprocity treaty between the two countries in 1854, and Canadian railway development ran north-south before it began operating on an east-west axis. Thus, evidence of the American connection is abundant.

Montreal was also a crossroads of Canadian activity. It was the country's economic capital until the end of the nineteenth century. Because of the financial power of its English-speaking community, it was also the cultural capital—to the point where a study of print culture in Montreal during the nineteenth century is valid for Canada as a whole in this period.

I had always realized that, when researching the history of philosophy and its teaching, one would have to throw the net wide

1. Yvan Lamonde and Gilles Gallichan, eds., *L'histoire de la culture et de l'imprimé. Hommages à Claude Galarneau* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1996).

2. Lamonde and Raymond Montpetit, *Le parc Sobmer de Montréal, 1889–1919. Un lieu populaire de culture urbaine* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1986), 30.

to be able to find evidence of philosophy in unusual forms in a colonial setting. This was especially true of research that would precede a social history of ideas that included print culture as an essential component as demonstrated in works by Mandrou, Chartier, Robert A. Gross, and Robert Darnton.<sup>3</sup> From the outset, histories of print, libraries, booksellers, reading, and iconography were considered the building blocks of an intellectual history of Quebec. This overall approach was to influence my working method. I would analyze the various phenomena from the medium- and long-term perspectives, with all that this implied as to the specificity of the New World. To do so, however, I had to find the means and the sources that would provide a certain invariability over time, thereby allowing me to make valid generalizations. From the economic works of France's *Annales* school, I imported both a concern for quantification as a means of analysis, and the notion of 'series,' which I not only adopted as numerical or quantitative but adapted as documentary and qualitative. It is precisely such documentary 'series' that make it possible to quantify and compare data over periods of varying lengths.<sup>4</sup>

To begin with, I had to take into account the state of bibliographical control for Quebec's nineteenth-century print culture. There is, in fact, an excellent and systematic retrospective bibliography of this material for the period 1764 to 1820, thanks to the work of Marie Tremaine, John Hare, and Jean-Pierre Wallot, and particularly Milada Vlach and Yolande Bueno. The ongoing work of Patricia Fleming and Gilles Gallichan, within the project known as the History of the Book in Canada/*Histoire du livre et de l'imprimé au Canada*, gives a good idea of print culture in Lower Canada between 1821 and 1840. The period from the

3. Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec*, 2 vols. (Montreal: Fides, 2004): 1:572.

4. Lamonde and Claude Beauchamp, *Données statistiques sur l'histoire culturelle du Québec, 1760-1900* (Chicoutimi: Institut interuniversitaire de recherche sur les populations, 1996), 146.

union of Lower and Upper Canada (Province of Canada, 1840) to Confederation (1867), which began the process of uniting the colonies of British North America, is unfortunately a black hole from the bibliographical standpoint. Nevertheless, the *Bibliographie Rétrospective* prepared by Quebec's Bibliothèque nationale, which covers the period from 1867 to 1967, supplied interesting indicators on the overall production of printed material.<sup>5</sup> (The year 1967 marked the inauguration of Quebec's legal deposit system for publications. This system had also been adopted by the National Library of Canada in 1952.)

I would now like to show the results obtained and the breakthroughs made in several areas of research on Quebec print culture, emphasizing in each case the method used and the sources that provided the documentary series.

For tracking the growth of literacy, the fact that the authorities kept—and preserved—both civil and religious records of baptisms, marriages, and burials has enabled researchers to develop numerical series by analyzing the signatures on marriage documents over a period of more than two centuries. The presence of a bilingual and bi-religious population (Franco-Catholic and Anglo-Protestant) and the differences in the rates of signatures revealed by these records provided determinant variables in the growth of literacy in Quebec City, Montreal, and the province as a whole. Such variables included whether individuals lived in an urban or a rural environment and what their trades or professions, religion, and mother tongue were. The

5. Marie Tremaine, *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), 750; Patricia Lockhart Fleming and Sandra Alston, *Early Canadian Printing: A Supplement to Marie Tremaine's A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 629; John Hare and Jean-Pierre Wallot, *Les imprimés dans le Bas-Canada, 1801-1810* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1967), 381; Milada Vlach and Yolande Buono, *Catalogue collectif des impressions québécoises, 1764-1820* (Montreal: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1984), 251-416; *Bibliographie du Québec, 1821-1967*, website of the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec: [www.bnquebec.ca](http://www.bnquebec.ca) under 'Activités, publications.' For Quebec studies on the culture of print, see the bibliographical link at [www.grelq.qc.ca](http://www.grelq.qc.ca).

curve of marriage signatures, plus the fact that most people in the areas studied were identified as being literate by the end of the 1850s, enabled me to advance the hypothesis of an irreversible cultural take-off—a hypothesis corroborated by the rates of school attendance and the growth of various cultural phenomena, such as newspapers, books, associations, libraries, public lectures, and booksellers.<sup>6</sup>

I was able to draw up a list of libraries in Montreal in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by going through annual municipal directories, which listed well-established institutions, and by checking the official incorporation records for such bodies, as well as by exploring other sources and consulting additional studies. This approach allowed me to focus on the 'collective' or 'membership' library, the type of institution founded by and for various collectivities. Members of the Montreal *grande bourgeoisie* formed a subscription library in 1797. Doctors and lawyers, familiar with college libraries, organized professional libraries, and businessmen opened their own 'mercantile library.' Realizing that a library would be an advantage for themselves and for mechanics in the community, this merchant class imported the British model of the mechanics' institute. The English-speaking professional and business classes had the influence and the means to establish voluntary associations, bringing together enthusiasts of flora and fauna or of history. Two such associations were the Montreal Natural History Society and the Quebec Literary and Historical Society, each with its own library. After 1840, members of the French Canadian liberal professions adopted and adapted this model, and we find lawyers, notaries, doctors, merchants, clerks, and artisans meeting in associations that provided a library for their members—but a general library, not one focused on just professional matters.<sup>7</sup> English-speaking citizens relied on the

6. Michel Verrette, *L'alphabetisation au Québec, 1660-1900* (Sillery: Septentrion, 2002), 192.

7. Lamonde, *Les bibliothèques de collectivités à Montréal, 17e-19e siècles* (Montreal: Ministère des Affaires culturelles, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1979), 139.

philanthropy of their own people to found the Fraser Institute (1885) and were the first to establish a truly 'public' library—the Westmount Public Library (1899)—financed by all the taxpayers of this wealthy municipality and open to everyone living in Westmount. French-speaking citizens were divided on this issue. Most favored the idea of a parish library that was Roman Catholic and confessional in nature. A minority preferred the more liberal idea of a library open to all. After a long civic and ideological struggle, they created two institutions that reflected these preferences: the confessional Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice (1915), named after the Sulpicians, and the Bibliothèque de la ville de Montréal (1917).<sup>8</sup>

This attention to types of libraries, taking into account the phenomenon of the voluntary association, made it possible for me to see that libraries in Montreal became progressively more open to society generally and that the truly public library was the product of socio-cultural development, progressing from membership limited to a particular social or professional group, to 'voluntary,' more open membership, and finally to libraries open to the city's residents, paid for by their municipal taxes, without distinction of profession or craft, religion, language, or gender. There is absolutely no doubt that the collective and public libraries of Montreal were part of the North American dynamic that sparked the emergence of this institution.

A systematic listing of places to read in Montreal also included news rooms and reading rooms. These began to appear around 1820 and were the result of an initiative taken by English-speaking merchants in the city. The very name, 'News Room and Exchange,' and its proximity to a stock exchange (a very informal one at that time) clearly shows that the newspapers found there were of interest for their market prices. Located in

8. Elizabeth Ida Hanson, *A Jewel in the Park: Westmount Public Library, 1897-1918* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997), 153; Jean-René Lassonde, *La Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice, 1901-1931* (Montreal: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1986), 401; Lamonde, 'Le libéralisme et le passage dans le XXe siècle,' in Lamonde, ed., *Combats libéraux au tournant du XXe siècle* (Montreal: Fides, 1995), 9-38.

the business and commercial district, the libraries of voluntary associations soon adopted the reading room format. They also adapted, for cultural purposes, the commercial leitmotif of free trade and the unimpeded flow of information and knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Instead of being stock markets, these associations and their libraries were idea markets.

Having surveyed the retrospective bibliography, I was able to see the quantitative importance and the analytical possibilities of the library catalogue as a printed, long-term source for the study of collective libraries (sixty-five catalogues between 1797 and 1900) and of personal libraries sold at auction (sixty-eight located between 1836 and 1900), as well as of booksellers (forty-six between 1816 and 1900).<sup>10</sup>

Printed library catalogues open the doors of particular institutions for cultural historians. They make it possible to study what books were on offer between fixed points in time and to identify the institution's intellectual and ideological orientation. This last element is readily discernible from the amount of space given to various areas of knowledge in a catalogue—areas described by classification categories. The catalogue serves both to present the institution's collection and to enable all members or subscribers to decide what books they will borrow. Looking at the classification categories in each catalogue and comparing them throughout the nineteenth century, the historian becomes aware of the problems inherent in such comparisons. He or she may be com-

9. Lamonde, 'Les associations au Bas-Canada: de nouveaux marchés aux idées, 1840-1867' (1975), in Lamonde, *Territoires de la culture québécoise* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1991), 105-16.

10. Histoire du livre et de l'imprimé au Canada/History of the Book in Canada database, Catalogues canadiens relatifs à l'imprimé/Canadian Book Catalogues: [www.hbic.library.utoronto.ca](http://www.hbic.library.utoronto.ca). On auctions and auction catalogues in the United States, see Robert B. Winans, *A Descriptive Checklist of Book Catalogues Separately Printed in America, 1693-1800* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1981), xxxi-207; special issue of the *Proceedings of the Bibliographical Society of America* (1995); and Michael Powell and Terry Wyke, 'At the Fall of the Hammer: Auctioning Books in Manchester, 1700-1850,' in Peter Isaac and Barry McKay, eds., *The Human Face of Book Trade: Print Culture and Its Creators* (Winchester and New Castle, Del.: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1999), 171-89.



paring catalogues of the same institution over a given period, or catalogues of institutions in Montreal or Quebec City with varied and changing classification categories, or perhaps catalogues of two libraries, one in Montreal and the other in Halifax, Toronto, Boston, Concord, Dijon, or Glasgow. French historians François Furet and Daniel Roche, who studied the book in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, have found a solution to this problem. In order to compare two libraries with dissimilar catalogues, they suggest using the classification system of the Bibliothèque du Roi (the King's Library). But what about the nineteenth century? By analyzing classification categories in the catalogues of Montreal libraries, I have shown how the first Dewey Decimal System of 1876 was truly the end product and the synthesis of categories in use since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thus, this 1876 classification system enables library historians to compare two or more institutions, even if their catalogues are based on different classification categories.<sup>11</sup>

Thanks to the work of Robert A. Gross, I was able to do a qualitative comparison—which brings me back to Thoreau and Concord. Gross was working on reconstructing the collections of the Charitable Library Society (1795–1820), which became the Concord Social Library (1821–50) and the Concord Free Public Library in 1851. He encountered the same problems in the use of catalogues and the classification of titles, but because acquisition records had been preserved—how I envied him!—he was able to see the diachronic and synchronic dimensions of the catalogues and, most significantly, to analyze libraries and their collections ‘in the making.’<sup>12</sup>

The discovery of the borrowing records of a library—in this instance, those of the Institut Canadien de Montréal—opened up unforeseen research opportunities. The comparison of books

11. Lamonde, ‘A Universal Classification for the Study of Nineteenth-Century Libraries and Booksellers,’ *Libraries and Culture* 24 (1989): 158–97.

12. Robert A. Gross, ‘Reconstructing Early American Libraries: Concord, Massachusetts, 1795–1850,’ *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 97 (1987): 331–42.

offered in the Institut's catalogues between 1865 and 1875 with the 9,393 books borrowed by 1,150 individuals made it possible to take a second look at the reasons traditionally given for the religious condemnation of the library. I discovered that the attack led by the Roman Catholic bishop of Montreal against this library was not primarily explained, as previously thought, by the presence on its shelves of the authors of titles on the Index—Voltaire, Constantin-François Volney, Denis Diderot, and the Baron d'Holbach—but mostly by the predominant circulation of novels that often were on the Index or about to be. These included works by the great serialized French novelists such as Alexandre Dumas, *père et fils*, Emile Souvestre, Paul Féval, Gustave Aimard (the French James Fenimore Cooper), and Ponson du Terrail.<sup>13</sup> The fictional imagination was considered as great a threat as the philosophers of the Enlightenment—if not greater.

One has to exercise a certain amount of caution when using catalogues and borrowing records. What a library catalogue offers is one thing; the actual demand is another, as Gross discovered when he studied the circulation of books among 111 borrowers of the Charitable Library Society between 1795 and 1800. He also noted that the novel, as a genre, was viewed with suspicion by those in charge of the libraries studied, though they were soon obliged to count on fiction 'as a key to increase circulation.' The resemblance between Concord and Montreal was further reinforced by the denunciation of fiction by both Thoreau and Étienne Parent, a leading journalist and lecturer, who advised avoiding 'frivolous' reading and suggested choosing a steady diet of political economy.<sup>14</sup>

The contents of prestigious and exceptional personal collections can usually be studied by means of a handwritten or printed cata-

13. Lamonde, 'La bibliothèque de l'Institut Canadien de Montréal, 1852-1876: pour une analyse multidimensionnelle,' in Lamonde, *Territoires de la culture québécoise*, 117-48, provides an example of the use of the Dewey decimal classification system of 1876.

14. Gross, 'Much Instruction from Little Reading: Books and Libraries in Thoreau's Concord,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 97 (1987): 129-88.

logue. But what about the more common personal library? How can we gain access to it? There is another source available for establishing series, and this is the auction catalogue. As a source, auction catalogues have obvious drawbacks. For example, to what extent do the books sold at auction on behalf of a given person represent his or her library in its totality? What kind of information can one deduce from these book 'lots'? Auction catalogues have their limitations, like all sources, but they do make it possible to analyze the owners of personal libraries in terms of social status and occupation. In the case of my research, auction catalogues revealed clearly that most book owners were members of the legal profession. A series based on book-auction catalogues over a long period of time supplied reliable indications as to the body of juridical works customarily used by lawyers and judges or of the medical corpus used by physicians, and this helped in determining which items in a given catalogue were intended for professional use and which for leisure reading. It is precisely this distinction that enabled us to see the emerging collector and what constitutes, in a given milieu, a tradition of collecting. We see generations of collectors browsing at book auctions, perhaps building a thematic collection, large or small, of, say Bibles or Canadiana.<sup>15</sup>

Again, the sources for creating series provided by catalogues and by the *Montreal Directory* (1842-) enabled me to draw up a list of Montreal bookstores and judge their relative importance—Bossange (two catalogues), Fabre (six), Dawson (four), Rolland (seven), Beauchemin (six). Moreover, these sources helped me establish what makes a viable book trade possible. In the first place, the phenomenon of book distribution obliges us to consider the emergence of the profession of author in Quebec at this time, the various fields (textbooks, fiction, and so on), and also how such authors progressively managed to assert their rights while having to earn a living in journalism or the civil service. Quebec fiction was

15. Lamonde and Daniel Olivier, *Les bibliothèques personnelles au Québec. Inventaire analytique et préliminaire des sources* (Montreal: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1983), 132.

first published by subscription (1837), then in serial form, and finally as trade publications (1870). The history of fiction publishing and distribution in Quebec, like that of textbook publication, clearly shows that the nineteenth-century Quebec bookseller was a transitional figure between the early printer and the later publisher. Research into the history of the Montreal bookstore has shed light on the long process of specialization in the book trade. Initially, the printer was often the bookseller, and this association led to the bookseller occasionally being the 'publisher,' that is, the forerunner of today's professional publisher. In this sense, the history of the bookstore and of book distribution raises the question of the relative importance and interaction of the various components in the printing cycle, from production to consumption and reception.<sup>16</sup>

Researchers into the history of the book are aware of another real challenge involving reading and the reader and the imperative to distinguish between possible, probable, and actual reading. Often the problem is where to find either the collective or the individual reader, for there exists a possible collective reader: to be precise, the person who is the target of library and bookstore catalogues, the person to whom they offer the titles. Bookstore advertisements in newspapers also tell us about this reader.

The probable reader is the one for whom we possess a catalogue of his or her personal library, whether drawn up by the owner while the collection was in progress or when completed, or by the auctioneer's clerk before its sale. Unless we have access to the actual books and can see annotations in the owner's handwriting, we can only consider the titles listed as probable reading—just as, in a library's borrowing register, we can assume that titles under the name 'John Smith' were probably read by the same person. We can verify this assumption by crosschecking these

16. Lamonde, *La librairie et l'édition à Montréal, 1776-1920* (Montreal: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1991), 198; 'La librairie Hector Bossange de Montréal, 1815-1819, et le commerce international du livre,' in Lamonde, *Territoires de la culture québécoise*, 181-218.

sources with others that, ideally, confirm the actual reading of authors and their works.

Such sources exist in the genre of personal or intimate literature, including memoirs, reminiscences, autobiographies, diaries, and sometimes letters. Memoirs, which focus more on the times than the life of the writer, may mention favorite authors (whether or not the writer has met them) and a few titles that have made a lasting impression. They give an essentially panoramic view of the past, while reminiscences are more arbitrary in their choice of subjects or moments in time, perhaps containing a chapter about a particular book, some author from childhood, or the writer's preferred reading haunts. Autobiography is, from the outset, more meditative, and it attempts to establish the synthesis of a life. Its author tries to find why, when, and how this life has developed, on both the rational and the emotional planes. One can safely assume that this writer's reading may be a significant and perhaps decisive factor. Diaries, by contrast, confidently follow the day-to-day passage of time. They may include notes or comments about some title, about meeting an author, or about the contents of a book of polemical essays. From time to time—at the end of three months or three years—they may refer to a passage in a novel or two lines of poetry. Letters are likely to be more or less spontaneous, depending on the recipient, but letter-writers often take advantage of the fact that someone else will read the letter to define their attitudes, to say why they have read this or that book, why they are fond of an author, or why a book has disappointed them.<sup>17</sup>

Amédée Papineau (1819–1903), the eldest son of the Lower Canadian political leader Louis-Joseph Papineau, left documentation of this ideal type, including a diary, reminiscences, letters, and a brief catalogue (1841) of his library. His *Journal d'un Fils de la Liberté* (*Diary of a Son of Liberty*) was written when

17. Lamonde, *Je me souviens. La littérature personnelle au Québec, 1860–1980* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1983), 275; Lamonde and Marie-Pierre Turcot, *La littérature personnelle au Québec, 1980–2000* (Montreal: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2000), 100.

he was a political exile in Albany and Saratoga. What strikes us first is the fact that he does not do his reading only at home, by the fireside and candlelight. For various reasons, ranging from travelling for study to tourism, war, insurrection, or the reversals of fortune, the upper and middle classes of the time were often on the move. They read on sailing ships and steamboats, in coaches, trains, and hotels. As an exile, Papineau avidly read American newspapers in Albany, Burlington, Saratoga, and New York, seeking information on the fate of the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada. Whether in an Albany news room, the state library, or the drawing room of family friends in Saratoga, he scanned the New York *Courrier des États-Unis* or borrowed works by American authors. This French Canadian patriot, who possessed a finely honed sense of the past and an exceptional historical consciousness, was drawn to the works of James Fenimore Cooper. 'I've just read *The Pathfinder*, one of Cooper's best novels,' he wrote. 'These Indian novels [*romans sauvages*] always have a special attraction for a Canadian or American reader, as he can easily imagine in them the history of his forebears, their way of life, and their endless and bloody wars. *The Pathfinder* is set in Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario and on one of the Thousand Islands in the St. Lawrence.' Papineau collected everything written about suppressed rebellions and read Thomas Paine with particular attention: 'Right now I'm reading Thomas Paine's political writings, published at a time when Americans were discouraged and ready to give up the struggle! Where would they be today? What would have resulted from a defeat such as we have just experienced?'<sup>18</sup>

To the categories of possible, probable, and actual reading, we can add that of 'fictional' reading. Such reading is described by

18. Amédée Papineau, *Journal d'un Fils de la Liberté, 1838-1855*, Georges Aubin, ed. (Quebec: Septentrion, 1998), 430, 426. For reading in trains, see Kevin J. Hayes, 'Railway Reading,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 106 (1996): 301-26. See Gross's approach for the study of reading through a personal diary, 'The History of the Book: Research Trends and Source Materials,' *The Book* 31 (1993): 3-7.

an author—most often a novelist—on behalf of the characters in the novel, showing their relationship to print culture, what they read, their jobs as booksellers, librarians, proofreaders, or even writers, and the plots that develop in a printing shop or a newspaper office.<sup>19</sup>

By all these means, the historian of print and reading can hope to come across an individual for whom documentation is available: a list of titles shown in the borrowing register of a given library, a catalogue of his or her personal library compiled by hand by the owner at a given moment, a copy of the auction catalogue of this library, a personal diary, or correspondence sent and received.

The dream of developing a representation of print culture can be pushed further. The researcher may be able to see a painted portrait of this individual, in which the subject may appear against a background of books representing his or her social attributes or even suggesting a form of bookish self-portraiture through the titles or authors that can be read on the book spines. This is what Antoine Plamondon shows in his 1836 portrait of Louis-Joseph Papineau, in which the great statesman is seen against a background of library shelves (fig. 1). On the table beside him are books featuring his favorite authors—Cicero, Demosthenes, Jefferson, Fox—and his preferred subject—political economy. The painter Napoléon Bourassa, Papineau's son-in-law, did the same thing in his 1868 portrait of Abbé Isaac Désaulniers when he showed the abbot pointing at St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*. Désaulniers was a well-known advocate of restoring Thomist philosophy in Lower Canada's Catholic colleges around 1860.

19. Laurent Mailhot, 'Bibliothèques imaginaires: le livre dans quelques romans québécois,' *Études françaises* 18, no. 3 (1983): 81–92; Nicole Deschamps, 'Alain Grandbois: de la bibliothèque familiale à la bibliothèque fictive,' *Études françaises* 29 (1994): 109–23; Micheline Cambron, 'Les bibliothèques de papier d'Antoine Gérin-Lajoie,' *Études françaises* 29 (1994): 135–50. See the studies by Lamonde and Frédéric Hardel on reading in the Papineau family, in Lamonde and Sophie Montreuil, eds., *Lire au Québec au XIXe siècle* (Montreal: Fides, 2004).

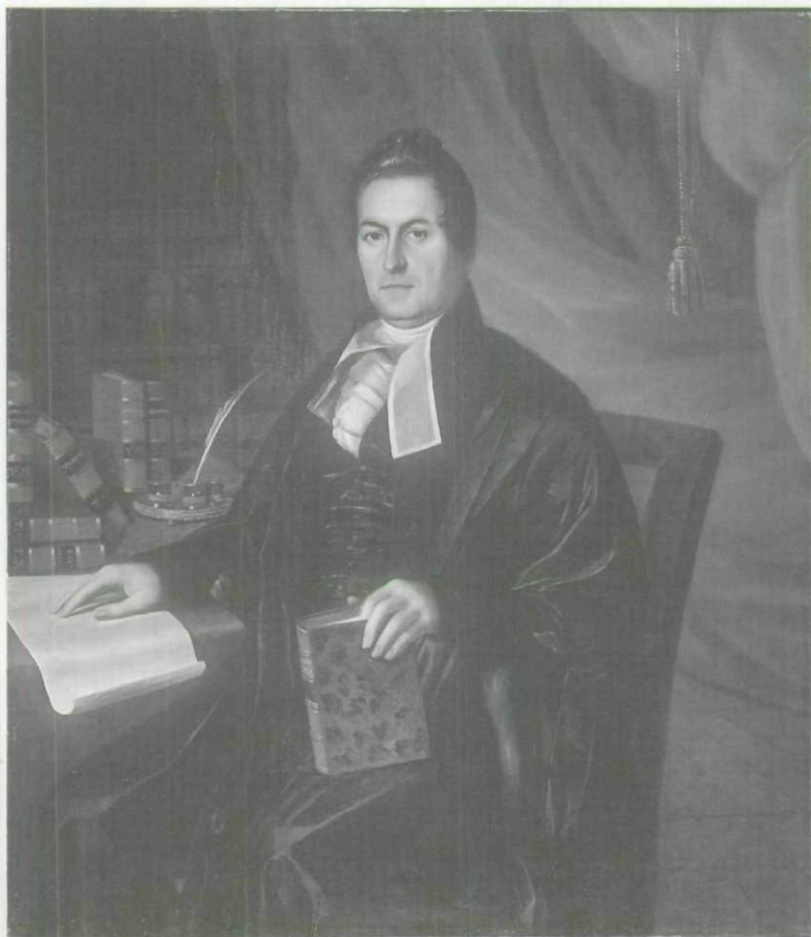


Fig. 1. Antoine Plamondon, 'Louis-Joseph Papineau' (1836). Oil on canvas. Courtesy of National Gallery of Canada (no. 17919).

This example leads us to one final source for creating series in which print culture figures—that is, iconography, especially oil paintings and engravings representing various genres, including portraits, picturesque scenes, still lifes, nudes, and, later on, abstract or nonfigurative paintings. By scanning museum collections thoroughly and going through printed works on Quebec paint-



ers, I was able to put together a series of nearly two hundred pictorial works in which print is represented in one way or another. The book historian learns new things from this visual source, such as the fundamentally bourgeois nature of nineteenth-century print culture, the representation of books in religious portraits, the less usual dimensions of reading, and the presence of printed works in nonbourgeois settings.

The relationship between money, power, and knowledge, we all, of course, know. Print presupposes a certain material wealth and a minimal literacy. Nineteenth-century portraits of the professional and business classes show that the presence of printed works was among the attributes of social belonging. The marks of a rising or well-established bourgeoisie are represented by clothing, hairstyles, jewels, and domestic objects, such as a piano, in addition to evidence of the subject's profession—writing accessories, bookshelves in the background, books on a table, or the reading of a law text, a passage of Cicero, or a breviary. Portraits, better than any written source, situate print socially and suggest that representation is also self-presentation.

Religious portraits demonstrated the Roman Catholic church's consistent opposition to the widespread dissemination of books. Religious authorities opposed the creation of libraries until this stance was no longer tenable in the face of secular initiatives. The church then adopted and adapted the library as a cultural institution. Personal libraries shown in paintings were secular to begin with, because there was no way of using them to symbolize the church's position. The Bible was admissible in portraits of the clergy, but clerical subjects usually held a breviary or some work of devotion and piety. This is the dominant tendency, with the eloquent exception of the 1838 portrait of Monsignor Gaulin, Roman Catholic bishop of Kingston in Upper Canada, represented in an elegant, worldly way against a backdrop of library shelves.

The iconographic representation of reading reveals places and moments not normally connected with this activity. The



Fig. 2. Katherine Jane Ellice, 'The Drawing Room at the Seignury House, Beauharnois, Lower Canada' (1838). Watercolor over pencil. Courtesy of National Archives of Canada, C-013384.

watercolors of Katherine Jane Ellice recall the act of reading during steamboat trips between Montreal and Quebec City, as well as the pleasures of summer reading and music at the Beauharnois manor, near Montreal (fig. 2). The leaning position of some books in a circa 1790 portrait by William Berczy suggests a regular and perhaps intensive use of the family library, and his 1809 portrait of the Woolsey family shows the reading of both a boy and his father, whose newspaper is lying on a table.

Reading, as depicted in iconography, seems to be more genuine and active among women than men, as though it were more a normal pastime than a sign of social status. Books held by men are either open or half-open, the index finger often serving as a bookmark. Women usually hold open books and are already reading, although half-glancing at the painter and through him at posterity. This observation is confirmed in twentieth-century

painting, which shows women reading for pleasure and as a form of relaxation.

Studying the iconography of print culture also enables the researcher to identify the more socially modest places where print is found. It may be at school, where the use of slates to write on is a reminder that printed primers and textbooks have replaced earlier education tools; or a painting showing the rates of road tolls; or the interior of a house, where the only printed matter visible is the religious engraving on the wall and the pack of cards; or a cityscape showing posted notices on Montreal's *Place d'armes*.<sup>20</sup>

It is now more than time to leave this 'thinking-room,' this place of exchange. We hope that the story of these breakthroughs in our field of endeavor may stimulate 'serious and creative thought,' and that this dual look at Montreal as a crossroads has revealed that material bibliography and the social history of culture meet and complement each other in both the cultural and methodological sense. In these days of an ever-growing number of archaeologies, theories, and epistemologies of print culture, we join with Robert Gross in appealing for monographs and research 'from the bottom up.' The simultaneous study of print circulation, in given locations, based on a thoroughly reliable knowledge of printed sources, can only be beneficial to the history of the book. We feel that this geographic, documentary, and methodological strategy is a harbinger of future breakthroughs and comparative studies.

20. Lamonde, 'La représentation de l'imprimé dans la peinture et la gravure québécoises, 1760-1960' and 'Catalogue,' in Bernard Andrès and Marc André Bernier, eds., *Portrait des arts, des lettres et de l'éloquence au Québec, 1760-1840* (Quebec and Paris: Presses de l'Université Laval and L'Harmattan, 2002), 63-88, which gives the location of the portraits referred to here. Among recent works on the subject, Linda J. Docherty, 'Women as Readers: Visual Interpretations,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 107 (1997): 335-88; James Smith Allen, *In the Public Eye: A History of Reading Women in Modern France, 1800-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 143-76.

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