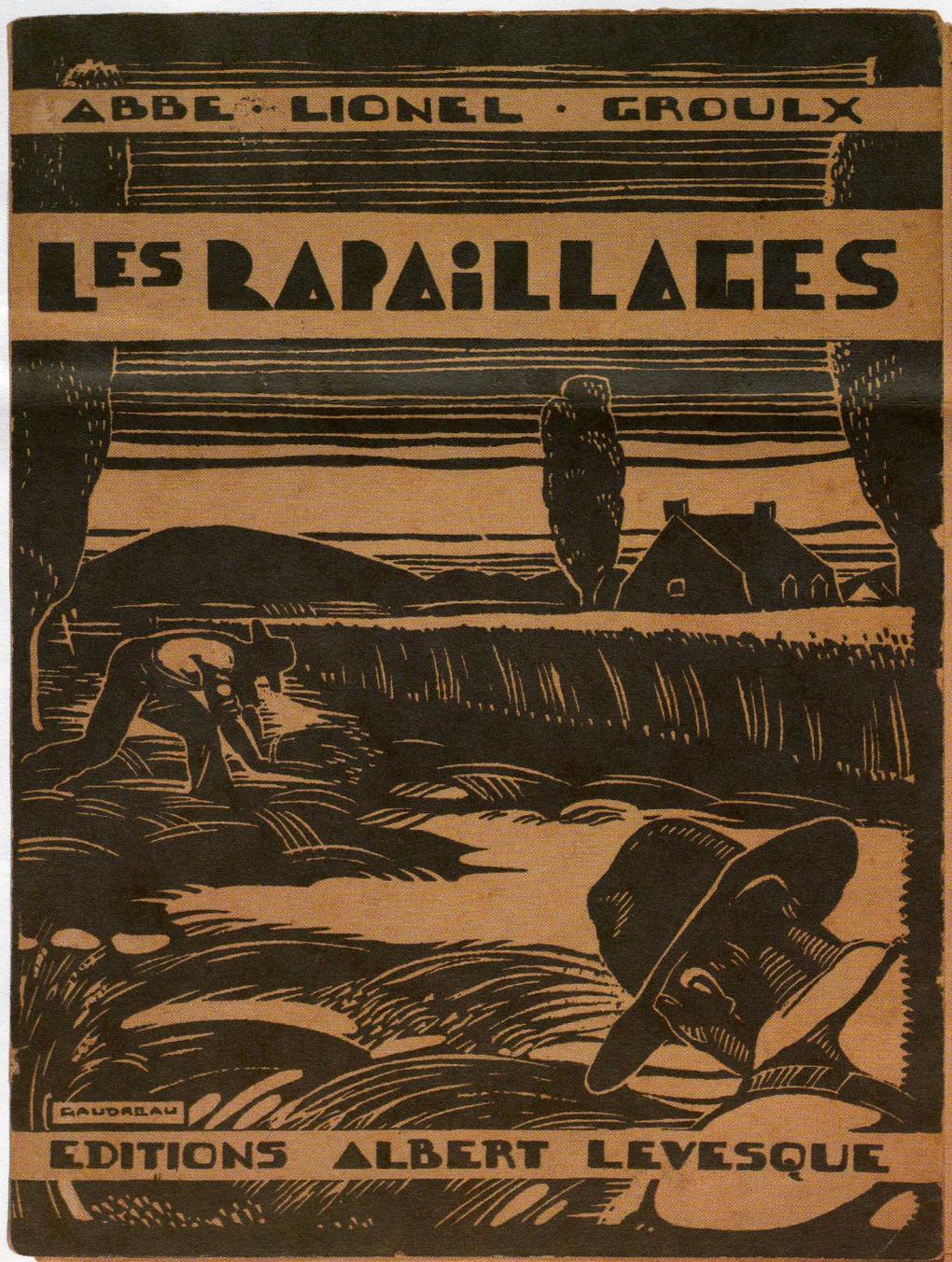


# Journal

The Illustrated Book  
in Quebec and in France (1900-1950)



By the beginning of the twentieth century, book illustration had already come to be regarded by a good many artists as a pursuit that was both creatively and financially rewarding. Art historians have barely touched the surface of this vast body of material, but it is already clear that there is much to be gained from a thorough study of it. For example, by looking at illustrated books brought into Quebec from France during the first half of this century and books illustrated by Quebec artists in the same period, we may gain a broader view of book illustration in general and also deepen our appreciation of Quebec's special contribution to the Canadian tradition in illustrated books. Furthermore, by tracing the habits and tastes of private and public collectors during this era, we may come to a better understanding of the illustrated book as a cultural phenomenon in Quebec.

The place of the modern illustrated book in the history of art appears to be well established now that art museums have acknowledged the so-called "artist's book," that collaborative effort in which the artist intuitively complements the author, while remaining free to express himself in images printed in a technique of his own choice.

Art museums might now begin to broaden their horizon and take a greater interest in the more traditional types of illustrated books. In so doing, they would certainly be fulfilling their mission to preserve and to educate. Illustrated books constitute important sources for a thorough documentation of the work of certain artists, and can also provide some insight into the sensibility of an earlier period.

Although the work of the illustrator can really only be judged by analysing the complete sequence of images that he has created for a given book, one may easily be attracted to a single image alone. In examining the formal arrangement of a page, where the lettering, layout, and illustration together suggest something that presumably reflects the text, the critical eye will instantly recognize a visual universe governed by a fairly strict aesthetic code. For example, the first illustrated edition of *Les Rapailages* (fig. 1) by Lionel Groulx, printed around 1919, has a cover picture that is immediately pleasing and also appropriate to the title. The painter Joseph-Charles Franchère has clearly adapted his anecdotal, naturalistic style, with its frequent impressionist touches, to the writer's purpose. This appears to be the case as well with Theuriet's *La Vie rustique*, illustrated by Léon Lhermitte (fig. 2), an artist undoubtedly known to Franchère. When a subsequent edition of Groulx's book was issued in 1935, its style was altered. The engraver Maurice Gaudreau gave it a modernized appearance (see cover page and fig. 13), as if deliberately to prove that the younger generation could adapt those old snippets of folk memories to the new Art Deco manner.

One might argue that book art is an "impure" art, involving as it does the collaboration of publishers and layout people in addition to illustrators and designers. Indeed the success of the book depends on the success of this collaboration. But impure as this art may be, how fascinating it is, and how revealing of the powers of creation.

Although a number of exhibitions of "artist's books" have been organized by museums and by libraries having a special interest in rare books, mass-distribution illustrated books have still not received the attention they deserve. We know that countless books of this sort have, over the years, been tossed out as scrap; in most cases they were simply too

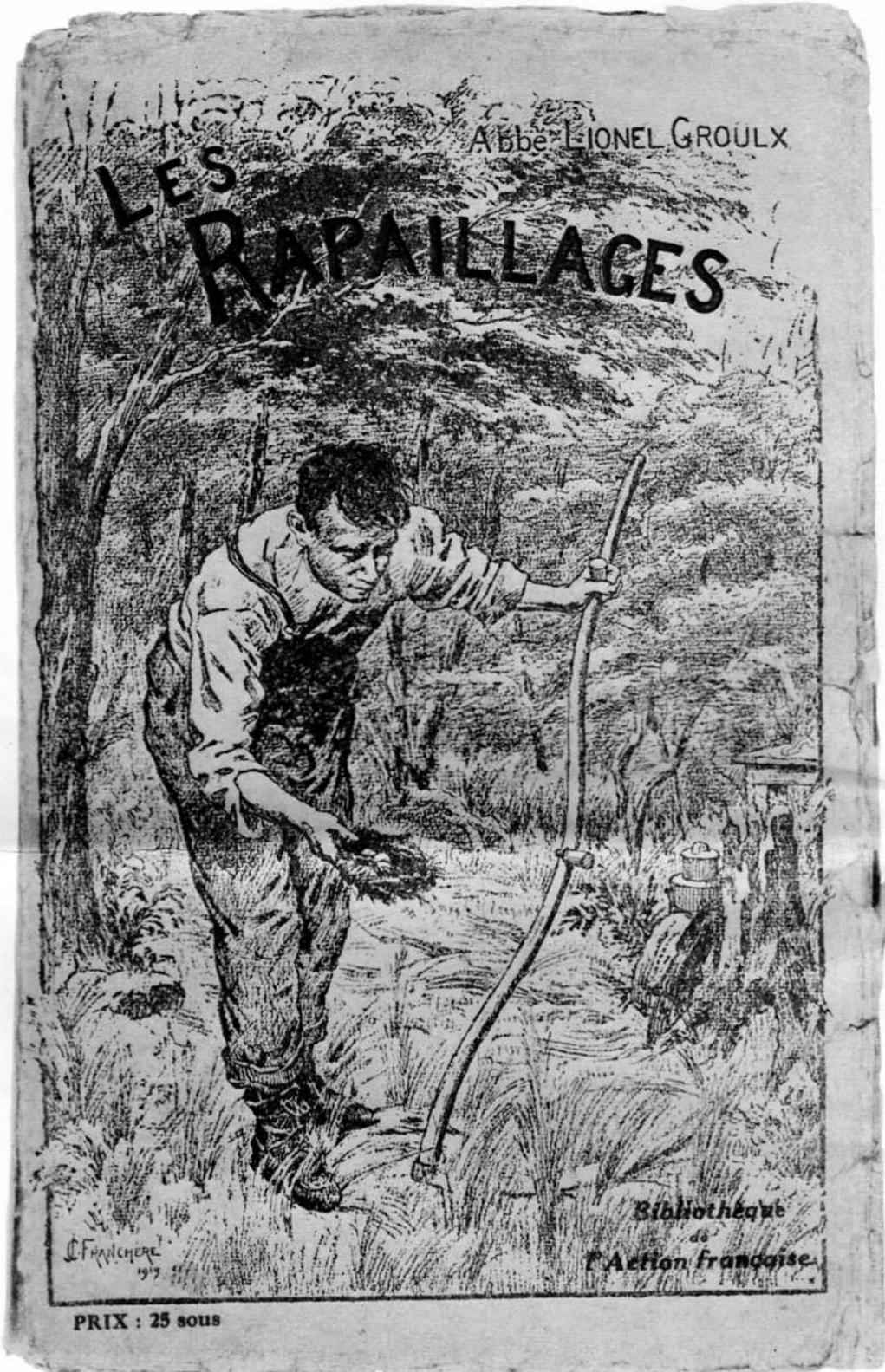


Fig. 1 Joseph-Charles Franchère (1866–1921), cover for *Les Rapailages* by Abbé Lionel Groulx (Montreal: Bibliothèque de l'Action française, 1916 [1919 edition?]). Charcoal drawing, relief printing. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

# LA VIE RUSTIQUE

COMPOSITIONS ET DORTOES  
DE  
LÉON LHERMITTE



XI

J'espérais n'évoquant plus son vied sans qu'avec haine. Elle s'en voulait de sa propre faiblesse. Avec apparence à ce parent... En regardant tous les deux ou tous jours une lettre ou se glissant, parait des amonciés paternels et de tendres remontrances, quelque souvenir des heures saines, le vague espoir d'un rapprochement... Elle ne pouvait dans cet incompréhensible point que des motifs de rancune et de colère. Elle regrettait de ne pas avoir auprès d'elle une amie, d'être avec qui elle eût pu verser tout cela — ses larmes! Pour le compte, des lettres anonymes lui parvenaient où on la raillait cruellement de ses bonnes fortunes. Aux lettres succédaient des cartes postales avec messages de son, pour faire croire aux camarades et aux domestiques qu'elle était mariée; mais elle n'aurait pu en être fière. Malade et veuve. On lui avait dit de venir à Marseille, n'importe pas de lui apporter une somme de

Fig. 4 Guy Arnoux (known 1920-1951), illustration (p. 97) for *Maxime* by Henri Duvernois (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1927). Woodcut and electrotype. Private collection.

Fig. 2 Léon Lhermitte (1844-1925), frontispiece for *La Vie rustique* par André Theuriet (Paris: La Librairie Artistique H. Launette et Cie, 1888). Woodcut by Clément Bellenger after the drawing. National Library of Canada, Ottawa.

les longues promenades. Au départ, sa mère, en l'embrassant, lui a recommandé de se distraire, de se mêler à la foule, de profiter du voyage pour refaire ses forces.

— Je prierai Dieu trois fois le jour pour qu'il ne t'arrive rien de mal, a-t-elle ajouté.

Le jeune homme ne connaît personne dans la cohue mondaine. A qui parlera-t-il, et qui lui parlera? On le coudoie, on le bouscule, comme s'il était un meuble. Partout autour de lui, on babille, on rit, on s'amuse. Cette gaieté, ce débaillement, l'intimide et le scandalisent. Les jeunes filles à démarche leste, au regard provocant, aux jambes bien fuselées, le croisent sans le regarder, parce qu'il est blême et triste. Des hommes entrent par groupes dans le bar, s'abreuvent, chantent des airs grivois. "Personne ici, se dit-il, ne songe à ses fins dernières". Puis cette question: "Comment peuvent-ils trouver du bonheur dans ces grossières réjouissances?" Le mot "bonheur" le frappe singulièrement. Que signifie ce mot terrible et doux, qui ne représente, semble-t-il, rien de réel, en ce monde, et auquel chacun voue un culte, d'un bout à l'autre de la terre? Le bonheur! Le bonheur!...

La veille, peu après le démarrage du paquebot, Sébastien a vu des femmes en décolleté et des hommes en habit se diriger vers une grande salle d'où une musique endiablée jaillissait à



Fig. 3 Maurice Gaudreau (1907-1980), illustration (p. 37) for *Sébastien Pierre* by Jean-Charles Harvey (Lévis Les Éditions du Quotidien, 1935). Linocut. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

common to be appreciated, and rarely attracted the attention of collectors. Today they are in low demand and mostly ignored by the public, or at best treated no differently than any ordinary book. Public libraries gladly dispose of them at their annual sales. Examples of such unappreciated books are those illustrated by Maurice Gaudreau (fig. 3) in Quebec City and Guy Arnoux (fig. 4) in Paris. It would be a pity if we were to lose all trace of works such as these, for their illustrations reflect in many ways the spirit of an age.

Fortunately, there has always existed a small minority of bibliophiles who cared for these books. Indeed it is interesting to try to identify these people and form some notion of how they went about collecting. More often than not, it is through a chance reading of old letters or through one of those library inventories prepared by meticulous archivists that the image of the individual book collector gradually emerges. Second-hand bookshops also reward patient research with significant discoveries: bookplates and dedications, if not autographs, that reveal stories of purchases and of borrowings (not to mention thefts) from institutional and private libraries.

We know that the Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice in Montreal had, since the turn of the century, been especially careful to acquire fine illustrated books on a regular basis. We also know that during the twenties Abbé Olivier Maurault (at one time the director of the Bibliothèque) and several of his painter, sculptor, and writer friends were familiar with the work of illustrators such as Maurice Denis and Jacques Beltrand (fig. 5) and were particularly fond of the work of Paul Baudier and Raphaël Drouart. In the following decades, the graphic arts teacher Simone Hudon in Quebec City conveyed to all her students her admiration for one of the leading figures of Art Deco, the illustrator Edy-Legrand (fig. 6). This discerning minority did not look down on fine works just because they were mass-produced.

Quebec's publishing houses - Déom, Carrier, and then, shortly after 1925, Albert Lévesque - won for themselves a public just as faithful as that of the French publishers Arthème Fayard and J. Ferenczi, who were soon to flood the illustrated-book market with their *Livre de demain* and *Livre moderne illustré* series. In Montreal, around 1945, there was a noticeable resurgence of interest in artist's books illustrated by such figures as Pellan, Mousseau, and Daudelin. And Montreal collectors like Joseph Barcelo and Gérard Beaulieu took an interest in works such as Matta's *Arcane 17* (Brentano's, 1944), Rouault's *Le cirque de l'étoile filante* (Vollard, 1938), Matisse's *Jazz* (Tériade, 1947), and Léger's *Le cirque* (Tériade, 1949).

The juxtaposition of illustrated books from Quebec and from France can be quite revealing. By drawing a comparison in terms of iconography and style, we are able to see the many links that emerge at each stage of Quebec's cultural and artistic development.

Without actually naming influences in every case, one can easily see that the Canadian illustrators represented in this exhibition have adopted visual devices used by European artists before them. Take, for example, Henri Beaulac's little linocut vignette (fig. 7), in the style of an open composition, for Dr Panneton's book *Dans le bois*, and compare it with Raoul Dufy's woodcut (fig. 8) for the August calendar picture in the 1917 *Almanach des Lettres et des Arts*. The image of the fisherman with his pole has about it something quintessential of the early twentieth century. Even though one picture is slightly more



De frère Bernard  
de Quinteval, premier compagnon de saint François.



Le premier compagnon de saint François fut frère Bernard d'Assise, lequel se convertit en cette manière. Étant saint François encore en habit séculier, bien que déjà il eût méprisé le monde, & allant tout dépité & mortifié par la pénitence, à tant que de moult était réputé stupide, & comme fou honni & chassé à coups de pierres & avec fangeux outrages par ses parents & par les étrangers, & lui en toutes injures & moqueries passant patiemment, comme sourd & muet : monsieur Bernard d'Assise, lequel était des plus nobles & riches & sages de la cité, com-

Fig. 5 Maurice Denis (1870-1943) and Jacques Beltrand (1874-?), illustration (p. 3) for *Les petites fleurs de saint François d'Assise* by André Pératé (Paris: Jacques Beltrand, 1913). Woodcut by Jacques Beltrand and his brothers after the gouache. From *Art et Décoration* XI (July-December 1921), p. 131.



Fig. 7 Henri Beaulac (b. 1914), illustration (p. 77) for *Dans les bois* by Sylvain [pen name of Antoine Panneton] (Trois-Rivières: les Éditions Trifluviennes, 1940). Linocut. National Gallery of Canada.



## Jacques CARTIER 1494 - 1554?



arlant de François I<sup>er</sup>, le chroniqueur Brantôme écrit :

“ Il entretenait ses invités de discours grands et savants, leur en donnant le plus souvent les sujets et les thèmes. Était reçu qui voulait ; mais il ne fallait pas qu'il fût âne, ni qu'il bronchât, car il était bientôt relevé de lui-même. De telle façon que la table du roi était une vraie école, car là, il s'y traitait de toute matière, autant de la guerre que des sciences hautes et basses. ”

- A ces réunions, où l'on parlait de tant de choses, on ne manqua pas de parler de la découverte encore récente du Nouveau-Monde. C'est ainsi que jaillit l'idée d'envoyer des vaisseaux de France explorer les côtes septentrionales de ces contrées. Le commandement en fut confié à Jacques Cartier.
- Qui était ce Jacques Cartier? Il était né à Saint-Malo en 1494. De son enfance, on ne sait rien. Vivant parmi les bateaux qui visitaient le port de sa ville, il avait acquis les connaissances qui déterminèrent le choix du Roi. Il avait alors quarante ans. C'était un homme robuste, plein d'énergie, tel qu'on en voyait en ces temps, où les chevaliers étaient de taille à pourfendre un adversaire, d'un seul coup de leur immense épée.
- Le 20 Avril 1534, avec deux vaisseaux et deux cent quarante hommes d'équipage, il quitte Saint-Malo. En vingt jours, il atteint la côte de Terre-Neuve. Il remonte vers le Nord et reconnaît la côte du Labrador, que les géographes de l'époque appellent “ Terra Laboratoris ” ou Terre du

Fig. 6 Edy-LeGrand (1892-1970), illustration [p. 5] for *Voyages et glorieuses découvertes des grands navigateurs et explorateurs français* (Paris: Tolmer, 1921). Pen and ink and stencils. National Gallery of Canada.

narrative than the other, and the personalities of their makers very different, the two works are undoubtedly linked in meaning and style.

In other instances such comparisons bring out even closer resemblances. An illustrated page by Alfred Pellán (fig. 9) may be placed opposite a page designed by Jean Cocteau (fig. 10), or a page by Jean-Paul Mousseau opposite a composition by Roberto Matta Echaurren. Such similarities are of course even easier to recognize when the Canadian illustrator admits to having been influenced by the European artist, as is the case with Charles Daudelin and André Masson.

## The illustrated book in France

Apart from general works such as John Harthan's *History of the Illustrated Book*, there exists no thorough historical study of the illustrated book in France. While there have been many recent publications on twentieth-century French books and illustrators, most are about the “artist's book.” There is one book that might properly be considered a history, but it deals only with the first two decades of the century: *Les Décorateurs du livre* by Charles Saunier.

Saunier briefly outlines the development of the illustrated book from the end of the nineteenth century in order to trace the influence of artist's books published by Vollard and others of the avant-garde. Since his emphasis is on the role played by theoreticians and by the major publishers of *de luxe* and *demi-luxe* volumes, he does not concern himself at all with mass-distribution books. He deals at length with the publishers Jacques Beltrand, Léon Pichon, and René Kieffer. Touching on Édouard Pelletan, however, he does take care to explain the idea of the “beau livre démocratique” (the “fine popular book”) later taken up by René Helleu and, to some extent, by the publisher Crès in his *Maîtres du livre* and *Livre catholique* series. He also speaks highly of the Société littéraire de France, which was working to expand its readership.

It is only recently that collectors and historians in France have begun to show an interest in the modestly priced books that were in wide circulation at the turn of the century and which were ignored by Saunier. Examples are the books in the *Modern-Bibliothèque* series (Arthème Fayard, 1904) and *Sélect-Collection* series (Flammarion, 1914), or the novels of the *Maison de la Bonne Presse* (circa 1910-1930). Because of their low prices, these copiously illustrated books tend to be viewed today as the forerunners of pocket books. Better known, and more highly valued at present in both France and Quebec, are the books in the *Livre de demain* series (Arthème Fayard, 1923-1946) and *Livre moderne illustré* series (J. Ferenczi et Fils, 1921-1939), which, as in the contemporaneous English revival of illustrated books, relied almost exclusively on woodcuts. The covers for *Le livre de demain* (fig. 11) were the work of Jean Renfer and those for *Le livre moderne illustré* (fig. 12) were done by Clément Serveau.

Few historians of bookmaking seem to have recognized that the woodcuts in these books were printed by means of electrotyping, a technique that had never before been used for this particular purpose. In order to print over 100,000 copies and ensure competitively low prices, the pages were set by machine and printed on a rotary press; this entailed producing a plate formed of a thin layer of copper on the surface of a wax mould and curving it to fit the press cylinder.



Fig. 8 Raoul Dufy (1877-1953), illustration (p. 47) for *Almanach des Lettres et des Arts* (Paris: Éditions Martine, 1917). Woodcut. Private Collection.

X

Combien d'étincelles sont mortes  
 Dans cette large mer du soir?  
 Les livres s'avancent, m'apportent  
 Le chant inconnu d'un pas noir.

Leur fantôme s'en vient qui danse,  
 Visage couvert de la main.  
 J'ai peur de l'étrange cadence  
 Qui pourrait bien mourir demain.

Couleur d'un parfum débonnaire,  
 La lune a démasqué la mer  
 Et de son oeil cherche la terre.  
 Ce pied dans le ciel est amer.



Fig. 9 Alfred Pellán (b. 1906), illustration (p. 25) for *Le Voyage d'Arlequin* by Éloi de Grandmont (Montreal: Les cahiers de la file indienne, 1946). Pen and ink drawing, relief printing. National Gallery of Canada.

## Illustrated books and Quebec society

Clearly, it was not only the books produced by the independent publishers at the turn of the century – Édouard Manet, Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, and other great artists – that drew the attention of book-lovers in Quebec. There do seem to have been a few enlightened bibliophiles at the time, but the best-known and most widely sought-after books were those published by Arthème Fayard, J. Ferenczi et Fils, Calmann Lévy, and Flammarion.

In Montreal, *Les cahiers populaires* published by Louis Carrier and the *Romans historiques* and *Recueils de poésies* published by Albert Lévesque were the major counterparts to the French series. Granted, they may not have had as much variety as the French books, but their format and price, and often even their layout and illustrations, indicate a certain degree of affinity.

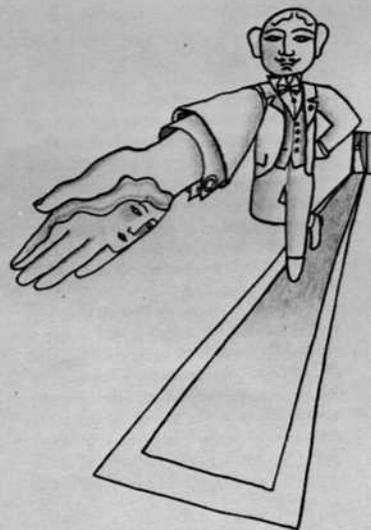
In 1903 the Art Association of Montreal – today the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts – began organizing occasional exhibitions for the members of an association of artists who worked for the major Montreal newspapers. It would appear from this that the museum, with its art school, quickly established

et ces entreprises qui, depuis Serge de Diaghilew, mettent de puissants véhicules aux mains des jeunes, autant de forces qui conspirent, sans même connaître leur entente, contre ce que le théâtre est devenu, savoir un vieil album de photographies.

Les pièces du boulevard éveillent une espérance en chacun. Puisque un tel auteur, pense le public averti, peut atteindre de si hautes cimes, puisque cette vieille actrice peut paraître si jeune, tout n'est donc pas perdu pour moi. *Grosso modo*, un sentiment de cet ordre préside au succès des répétitions générales.

J'ai vu un dramaturge en vogue qui essayait de nous faire partager son médiocre bonheur. Près de moi, quatre de ces femmes qu'on ne rencontre qu'au théâtre, les cheveux jaunes, charmeuses de perles, se cueillaient les larmes dans l'œil avec une pointe de mouchoir, pour qu'en coulant elles ne les défordassent pas.

Simple détail de salle, me direz-vous. Erreur. Ainsi se comporte une salle d'élite. Le reste moutonne derrière.



Ritornella à l'arrivisme...

Fig. 10 Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), illustration (p. 84) for *Le Secret professionnel* by Jean Cocteau (Paris: Éditions Sans pareil, 1925). Colour drawing and stencils. Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris.

itself as a mecca for illustrators. Throughout the 1920s, the École des beaux-arts in Quebec City and its counterpart in Montreal both kept their students informed of the opportunities for employment in the book industry. The catalogue of the 1925 *Premier Grand Salon des Anciens des Beaux-Arts de Montreal* (the first exhibition of alumni works) mentions a display of 30,000 French books organized by the school in conjunction with the booksellers Déom, Méthot, and Pony, held at the Mount Royal Hotel.

Edwin Holgate, an acclaimed engraver and a teacher at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, became the self-appointed spokesman for the new woodcut illustration movement. Outside scholarly circles, many artists were turning their attention to the revival of woodcuts in Europe. Throughout the twenties and thirties, art magazines imported from France, such as *Art et Décoration* and *L'Art et les artistes*, frequently contained articles on engravers and illustrators. It was during this period that Rodolphe Duguay and Louis-Philippe Beaudoin brought back from Paris books by Maurice Busset and Morin-Jean, two engraving instructors, and the book by Charles Saunier, a highly esteemed critic of the day. Beaudoin studied at the École Estienne and was quite familiar with the magazine *Arts et Métiers Graphiques*. In 1942 he founded the École des Arts Graphiques de Montréal, the only school of its kind in North America.

The twenty-eight books in this exhibition by artists from Quebec give ample evidence of the high quality of work done there in the first half of this century. Some of the works by Clarence Gagnon, Edwin Holgate, Rodolphe Duguay, or Simone Hudon might have to be termed "artist's books," though they were certainly not issued in limited editions. Others, every bit as artistic, in fact even more famous, and issued in limited editions for collectors, might not, strictly speaking, be called artist's books since their illustrations were reproduced by photomechanical means. (Such is the case with *Ristontac*, illustrated by Robert LaPalme, and *Le Voyage d'Arlequin* and *Les sables du rêve* illustrated by Alfred Pellan and Jean-Paul Mousseau respectively.) And then there are the remaining examples, like Jean Simard's *Félix*, which serve to represent the very many intelligently designed and well made books of this period.

**LOUIS HÉMON**  
**MARIA**  
**CHAPDELAINÉ**  
 29 BOIS ORIGINAUX DE JEAN LÉBÉDEFF

**LE LIVRE DE DEMAIN**  
 ARTHÈME FAYARD & C<sup>e</sup> ÉDITEURS PARIS



PRIX : TROIS FRANCS CINQUANTE CENTIMES.



Fig. 11 Sample cover from the *Livre de demain* series, designed by Jean Renefer (1879-1957).

Fig. 12 Sample cover from the *Livre moderne illustré* series, designed by Clément Serveau (1886-1972).



Fig. 13 Maurice Gaudreau (1907–1980), illustration (p. 11) for *Les Rapailages* by Abbé Lionel Groulx (Montreal: Albert Lévesque, 1935). Linocut. National Gallery of Canada.

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Cover: Maurice Gaudreau (1907–1980), cover for *Les Rapailages* by Abbé Lionel Groulx (Montreal: Albert Lévesque, 1935). Linocut. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

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The author of this *Journal*, Jean-René Ostiguy, is Research Curator of Canadian Art at the National Gallery of Canada.

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