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Abstract
This dissertation examines the urban mystery in relation to the popular press in order to show how genre and form, modes of publication, and representations of urban space, crime, and punishment all contribute to the formation of national identity in nineteenth-century France and Quebec. Specifically, it explores the ways Eugène Sue’s genre-launching serial novel, Les Mystères de Paris (1842–1843), uses literature and the press to make significant interventions in socio-political debates on social and penal reforms, not just reflecting public opinion, but actually forming it. In the following chapters, I analyze Sue’s novel as well as the works of Sue’s Canadian imitators, who each produced a novel bearing the title Les Mystères de Montréal. These three novels mark three distinct phases in the evolution of not only French-Canadian literature, but also French-Canadian national identity. Chapter Two argues that Henri-Mile Chevalier’s serialized Mystères de Montréal (1855), along with his journalism, make a landmark contribution to the inauguration of French-Canadian literature. Chapter Three proposes a reading of comedy and urban space in Hector Berthelot’s serio-comical Mystères de Montréal (1879–1881). It argues that by using (auto)parody in representations of both French Canadians and a newly industrializing Montreal, Berthelot is able to subvert Church censorship, enlarging the public sphere, in order to facilitate the reader’s affirmation of French-Canadian identity. The final chapter relates Auguste Fortier’s Mystères (1893) to Chevalier’s prescriptions the inauguration of a specifically Canadian national literature in French, as well as to his development and affirmation of his predecessors’ visions for French-Canadian national identity, in a thoroughly cosmopolitan Montreal.

Ultimately, my analysis of these works’ participation in a global cultural imaginary demonstrates the ways the blurred boundaries between literature and the press facilitate the circulations, transfers, and appropriations of both texts and ideas across very permeable national, political, and social boundaries. Straddling literary, cultural, and urban studies, this transnational study provides a panorama of these four popular novels, considered together in light of their capacity to reflect and form not only public opinion, but also national identity.

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THE MYSTÈRES OF PARIS AND MONTREAL: CRIME, NATIONAL IDENTITY, AND THE CITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY URBAN MYSTERIES AND THE POPULAR PRESS

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Adam Mason Geroni-Cutchin
To the memory of Émile J. Talbot
and Lawrence R. Schehr
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ABSTRACT

THE MYSTÈRES OF PARIS AND MONTREAL: CRIME, NATIONAL IDENTITY, AND THE CITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY URBAN MYSTERIES AND THE POPULAR PRESS

Adam M. Cutchin
Andrea Goulet

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INTRODUCTION

If the mania for letter-writing and the epistolary novel dominated popular fiction of the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century was the newspaper century. Like the church bell or the clock tower, the newspaper—a periodical, by definition—came to dictate the rhythm of everyday life.¹ The explosion of activity in newspaper culture in the beginning of the nineteenth century is undoubtedly tied to inventive developments in the printing industry, as well as the innovations of several individuals. And one could scarcely begin a dissertation on the relationships between urban mysteries and the popular press without mentioning Émile de Girardin and Armand Dutacq, who founded La Presse and Le Siècle, respectively, in Paris in 1836—that is, “l’an I de l’ère médiatique.”²

Girardin’s principal innovation with La Presse was the dramatically low price of the newspaper, compared to others of the period, and it is thus regarded as the first penny-press newspaper. Rather than rely on a small number of pricey subscriptions, Girardin cut the standard subscription price of 80 francs to 40, sold advertising space, and bargained on attracting high numbers of buyers to make up for the difference in profits. To give a sense of the impact Girardin’s 50% reduction in price had, it is useful to bear in mind that the average office worker earned between 1,000 and 2,000 francs per year, while a laborer earned barely 3 francs per day.³ The reduced price of newspapers led not

² This phrase is borrowed from the title of Marie-Ève Thérénty and Alain Vaillant’s important work, 1836: L’An I de l’ère médiatique: Analyse littéraire et historique de “La Presse” de Girardin (Paris: Nouveau monde, 2001).
only to increased readers (in this case, those who paid for the papers themselves, rather than taking advantage of cabinets de lecture, public readings, or “second-hand” papers), but also to a profusion of types of newspapers.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, *Le Journal des Débats* had 10,000 subscribers while the other three “large” papers— *La Gazette de France*, *Le Publiciste*, and *Le Moniteur*— had no more than 3,800 subscribers, each. By the end of the century, the major Parisian dailies had a collective print run of nearly 1.5 million. Over the course of the nineteenth century, daily papers, political papers, literary papers, philosophical papers, official papers, feminist papers, papers specifically for women or children— the list goes on— all managed to find their desired markets.

*Nineteenth-Century Newspaper Culture*

The idea that the press is closely tied to the birth of the July Monarchy itself is widely accepted. When the Restoration government challenged the opposition press, the “Trois Glorieuses” were set off, ushering in a period of revolution as well as journalistic innovation and sociopolitical intervention that picked up where the Revolution of 1789 left off. Installing Louis-Philippe as the “King of the French,” as opposed to “King of France,” the Revolution of 1830 crystallized notions of a free press that had been so integral to the redefinitions of liberal society nearly forty years before. For the first five years of the July Monarchy— between the July Days and the September Laws—, the press was able to make use of its power and lack of regulation to participate not only in

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5 Ibid., 24.
politics on national and local scales, but also in redefining ideas of nation, society, and the public sphere. Meaningfully, the close ties between the 1830 Revolution and the beginning of France’s conquest of Algeria, the proclamation of Louis-Philippe as a constitutional monarch, the popular origins of the revolution and the July Monarchy themselves, and the literature from this period all point to new ways of conceiving and conceptualizing Frenchness.

The sudden and consequential mediatic explosion in July Monarchy France was a profoundly urban event. Although other major cities, such as Lyon, certainly had their own newspapers, these smaller papers lived largely in the shadow of Parisian papers, which were disseminated throughout the country (indeed, throughout the world), much as the cities themselves lived in Paris’s shadow due to its status as a political, cultural, and economic capital. Alain Vaillant writes of the fundamental idea that “l’espace public libéré par la révolution de 1830 doit être organisé dans un souci d’efficacité et d’intérêt commun, de telle sorte que les polémiques bruyantes, admissibles et même nécessaires dans un État répressif, laissent la place à un débat positif, visant à instruire le plus grand nombre et, d’autre part, à créer les conditions du progrès matériel et moral,” clearly drawing connections between the popular press, urban space, and the public sphere, especially beginning during the July Monarchy.6

For now, let us leave aside France’s journalistic innovations in favor of a brief overview of the early-nineteenth-century press in Canada. In the first half of the nineteenth century, French-Canadian newspapers, European newspapers, and American

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newspapers all had a tendency to “borrow” from each other—with or without citation—, forming important networks of both journalists and newspapers that brought about formative circulations and transfers of texts and ideas on a transnational scale, even during the decades when the press helped crystallize conceptions of nations and nationalism. That is not to say, however, that Quebec, as France’s former colony, simply “translated” its mediatic innovations to a North American context, by any means. For one thing, Quebec’s newspapers simply could not effect such a translation: France was a much more centralized nation during the period in question. Additionally, French Canadians were dealing with the dual influences of both the French and the British empires, and the role of the Church was much more influential in the development of the French-Canadian press.

Unlike in France, also, the North American francophone press was built on transnational networks, connecting Quebec not only with Europe, but with the rest of North America (especially New York and New Orleans), as well. It was only in the early nineteenth century that the Canadian press began to see a certain “canadianization” of its press, increasingly adapting it to the specifics needs, desires, and agendas of its Canadian editors, journalists, publishers, and readers.  

There were certainly Canadian newspapers and gazettes published during the eighteenth century (significantly, bilingual ones), but the founding of Le Canadien was an important step in the establishment of Quebec’s francophone press.  

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launched in 1806, although it would be suppressed and relaunched a few times over the coming decades. Around 1830, Le Canadien was relaunched alongside La Minerve, a loyalist paper. Committed to opinion and politics, Le Canadien—whose devise newly included possessive adjectives, reading “Nos institutions, notre langue et nos lois”—was devoted to defending the constitutional rights of French Canadians. The rivalry between Le Canadien and La Minerve, as well as each paper’s attempts to dominate the formation of public opinion in Quebec, would lead to a proliferation of francophone newspapers throughout the province.⁹ Indeed, by the 1830s, half of all newspapers published in Lower Canada was published in Montreal.¹⁰

French-Canadian newspapers frequently published French contes, nouvelles, faits divers, and romans-feuilletons alongside their political commentary on goings-on both Canadian and international. The 1850s and 60s were a pivotal time, however. Both La Ruche littéraire et politique and Les Veillées littéraires canadiennes, répertoire historique et littéraire were launched mere months apart in 1853. While each periodical was short-lived, they nonetheless evinced the consequential marriage of the literature, the press, and national identity that had begun developing over the course of the previous decade, as we shall see in great detail in our consideration of the founder of La Ruche, Henri-Émile Chevalier, and his Mystères de Montréal in Chapter 2. In the 1860s, Les Soirées canadiennes and Le Foyer canadien would take up the torch of its predecessors in promoting...

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¹⁰ Guillaume Pinson, La culture médiatique francophone en Europe et en Amérique du Nord, de 1760 à la veille de la Seconde guerre mondiale (Laval: Presses de l’Université de Laval, 2016), 77
the advancement and dissemination of French-Canadian literature in the service of nation-building.

These periodicals, working in fits and starts over the course of two decades, would lay the groundwork for the publication of the earliest works of French-Canadian literature, paving the way for Quebec’s— and especially Montreal’s— transition from the presse d’opinion and the presse littéraire of the first half of the century to the presse d’information of the second.

**Serial Fiction**

In France, the September Laws hardly put a stop to the innovation of the July Monarchy newspapers, even if they limited the freedom of the press. Satirical papers, such as *Le Charivari*, adopted fictional modes to critique the July Monarchy, and, in order to garner still more readers than their low prices attracted, newspapers such as *La Presse* and its direct competitors began soliciting authors for original works written for their papers in order to publish them serially. As the success of *La Presse*’s feuilleton was proven, other papers began serializing novels within their pages, and placement of the novel’s text became standardized in the so-called *rez-de-chaussé*. This space was not a new one within the newspapers— it was first introduced in 1799 when the Bertin brothers bought the *Journal des Débats*, and usually contained texts that lent themselves to “half-fictions” such as travel narratives, historical chronicles, etc.—, but the *rez-de-chaussée* had never before been devoted exclusively to one type of writing.  

11 Judith Lyon-Caen, “Lecteurs et lectures,” 23. Here, Lyon-Caen gives an excellent, brief explanation of the invention of the *rez-de-chaussée* and the early history of the *Journal des Débats*. 
publication of the serial novel in the same section of the newspaper led to the well documented practice of readers (lectrices, for women were presumed to be the most avid readers of the roman-feuilleton) actually cutting out the feuilleton, saving each numbered installment, and eventually sewing together a whole novel, effectively creating a cheap “edition” of the novel for themselves. This practice, in France at least, encouraged publishers to maintain the feuilleton as a nearly sacred space in the newspaper.

Leading up to the 1830 Revolution, throughout the July Monarchy, including the much-publicized trials of Flaubert and Baudelaire in 1857 as well as Zola’s famous journalistic intervention in the Dreyfus Affair at the fin-de-siècle, and arguably culminating at the outbreak of the First World War, the professions, activities, and bodies of work of novelists and journalists were deeply, significantly, and often inextricably entwined. Nearly all of the great French novelists of the nineteenth century—from Balzac, Dumas, Sue, Hugo, Sand, and Gautier to Baudelaire, Flaubert, and Zola—had complex relationships with the papers that published their fiction as well as their journalism.

Such works as those by the early-nineteenth-century French feuilletonistes—such as Balzac, Paul Féval, Sue, Dumas, and even Ponson du Terrail and Paul de Kock—are ideal texts for studying both the tight-knit developments of July Monarchy newspapers,

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popular novels and serial novels, and their political influence and significance.

Nineteenth-century French writers like Balzac and Sue, in particular, often made use of the popular press to offer critiques of social, political, and economic institutions. That said, politics, in the feuilleton, were more often a pretext or a backdrop, rather than a theme; in more restrictive times (such as the two Empires), the feuilleton could often-times “get away with” commenting on what could not be reported in the body of the newspaper.14 While the feuilleton was not devoted exclusively to fiction—often it was used to disseminate reviews of books, theatrical works and art, as well as historical and travel narratives—, it is the roman-feuilleton that specifically concerns us here. As Lise Dumasy-Queffélec makes clear,

Le roman-feuilleton est en effet dès l’abord pris dans un ensemble de discours qui se servent des mêmes techniques de transmission-transformation du réel, ou de ce qui est donné comme tel, pour le rendre attirant, intéressant—consommable. Le roman est pris dans un mode de lecture qui mêle intimement le romanesque (l’extraordinaire, l’aventure, le rêve) au quotidien (dimension référentielle).15

The serial novel necessarily implicates the relationships between fiction and reality; between literature, the newspaper, and their modes of publication; and between those producing the newspaper and literature of all types, and those consuming them.16

A novel’s publication in installments in the newspaper calls up more questions than just those pertaining to fiction’s relationship to the news, though. Serial form—versus novel form, that is, bound volumes of works (whose “completeness” is not to be as-

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15 Ibid., 930.
16 Henry Mansel even went so far as to call the Victorian sensation novel the “newspaper novel.” Mansel, “Sensation Novels” in Quarterly Review CXIII (1863): 481–514.
sumed, either)— accents the form itself as well as the serial novel’s formation, pattern as well as process. Serial publication is not simply a preliminary step to publication as a bound volume. The serial novel, being presented in parts, relies on deferred satisfaction— in terms of narrative, certainly, but in terms of a promise of coherence, as well. The serial novel strings readers along with promises of closure, unity, and coherence, even amidst its apparently desultory, chaotic formation before the eyes of the reader. The reader’s patience as well as his or her cooperation are essential to the serial novel’s coherence. But after all, how often does one read a “complete,” bound novel without stopping, without putting it down? Without giving it a second thought, the reader fragments the text himself, imposing pauses that may or may not line up with the action of the narrative. The modern reader, not accustomed to the famous line “la suite au prochain numéro” punctuating the novel, is nevertheless well trained to deal with the gaps between the installments of the serial novel. An author can work a certain amount of repetition— in the form of either the use of tropes common to serial novels, or literal, explicit reminders of certain aspects of the plot— into the serial novel, but the reader’s active engagement is required to bridge the gaps between discrete elements and texts. If the author promises unity and completeness, the reader must work to construct it; in other words, the reader must buy what the authors is selling, both literally and figuratively, if a serial novel may be read at all.

**Blurred Lines**

Despite presenting itself as a whole, the newspaper is intrinsically fragmentary and incoherent. Posing challenges to both its reading and its study, the newspaper pre-
sents its readers with detached, independent elements (not necessarily articles) that simultaneously give and lack context for understanding the world. Immediately relevant and immediately obsolete, simultaneously structured and chaotic, the newspaper nevertheless creates its own representation of the world, according to its own conventions and socially determined constraints— like any other form of storytelling.\textsuperscript{17}

Although the layout of the papers seemed to impose a firm and literal line between fiction and the “news,” practically, and in terms of content, no such division existed. Sharing modes of production as well as the conditions of their periodical and ephemeral circulation, the various types of works that authors published in newspapers easily crossed the artificial border between the newspaper and the roman-feuilleton, purportedly “imprisoned” in the \textit{rez-de-chaussée}. To neatly separate literature and newspapers— especially during the first half of the nineteenth century— is, frankly, impossible.\textsuperscript{18} Blurring the lines between fact and fiction, novel and newspaper, nineteenth-century writing and publishing resulted in actuality permeating fiction just as fiction cropped up in “the news.” For example, the parcelization of land was equally concerning to Girardin, whose articles on it appeared in \textit{La Presse}, and to Balzac, who collaborated extensively with Girardin at \textit{La Presse} and prominently represented parcelization as an insidious scourge in his posthumously published novel, \textit{Les Paysans}. As we


shall see, Sue used his fiction, published in the *rez-de-chaussée* of the *Journal des Débats*, to engage with the debates raging in the newspapers across Europe on penal reform, even as he incorporated quotations from reports and articles into the footnotes of his novel, and accounts and anecdotes gleaned from the newspapers into the novel’s plot.

Certainly, the role of fiction in the nineteenth-century newspaper has been an object of extensive study, especially in the past decade or so, but the blurred line between fact and fiction in the newspaper concerns more than just the roman-feuilleton; as Marie-Ève Thérenty has written, “cette imbrication entre fiction et journal concerne pourtant bien d’autres rubriques et mobilise en fait la quasi-totalité du journal.”19 Dominique Kalifa has highlighted instances of criminal cases being reported at first in the newspaper and then being completed in the feuilleton, while Judith Lyon-Caen has laid out the “de-fictionalization” of the roman-feuilleton in the case of Sue’s *Mystères de Paris* in particular.20

**The Urban Mystery**

It goes without saying that a novel of any genre may be published serially, but in nineteenth-century France and Quebec, though the *roman maritime* and the *roman frénétique* had brief moments of popularity, the historical novel, the *roman de mœurs* (along


the lines of Sue, Balzac, Dumas, Soulié, Féval, etc.), and the roman policier (by the mid-to late-nineteenth century) were by far the most represented among the romans-feuilleton.

Sue’s novel inaugurated the city mystery genre and indeed, urban mysteries proliferated throughout the world, continuing up to the present day and beginning as early as 1844 with August Brass’s *Die Mysterien von Berlin* and Louise Schubar’s *Mysterien von Berlin*, and including several different *Mysteries of London*, *Los mistérios de Buenos Aires* (1856) by Felisberto Pelissot, as well as Louis Touscher’s *Kjøbenhavns Mysterier, Fortælling* (1852), José Antonio Torres’s *Los Misterios de Santiago* (1858), to give only a few examples. Certainly, in the United States, there were several different variations on the titles *The Mysteries of New York* and *The Mysteries of Philadelphia*, for example, but the American city mysteries were not exclusively devoted to large cities. 1844 saw the publication of both the improbably situated *Mysteries of Nashua* and the *Mysteries of Lowell*, and the amusingly titled *Mystery of Metropolisville* by Edward Eggleston was published in New York in 1873.

The serial novel’s influence on the course of Romantic literature in the July Monarchy is notable, for,

Dans ses diverses orientations, le roman-feuilleton de la Monarchie de Juillet relève d’une esthétique toute romantique: association du comique et du tragique, du grotesque et du terrible, du rire et des pleurs, engagement historique et critique sociale, drame et pittoresque. C’est à travers le feuilleton surtout que le modèle romanesque romantique a pris corps et s’est diffusé dans le public. 22

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21 Although literally hundreds of novels from the nineteenth century alone used the formulaic title “Mysteries of” plus a toponym, not all city mysteries did so—see, for example, *The Quaker City, or, The Monks of Monk Hall: a Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery, and Crime* (1844) by George Lippard.

Before the advent of the detective novel—thanks to Baudelaire’s translations of Poe (beginning in 1852) and Gaboriau’s *L’Affaire Lerouge* (1866)—, the urban mystery genre satisfied the public’s desire for *coups de théâtre*, suspense and cliffhangers, twists and turns, passion, heroics, crime, and violence.23

Not coincidentally, the urban mystery grew in popularity at the same time that the major cities underwent explosive growth, and then industrialization. Often, the cities that served as the settings for these novels were the same ones large and active enough to produce the very papers that serialized them. The urban mystery, unlike the detective novel, is not built around discovering the identity of the criminal (detection, as it were). Instead, the urban mystery genre—variously called the city mystery genre, the “novel of urban mysteries,”24 and the “mysteries of the cities” (rather grandiloquently)25—most often deals with the city’s capacity to entertain the reader with its excitement and danger, and is premised on the novel’s ability to provide the reader with an initiation to this dangerous (and therefore exciting) city and its “dreadful enclosures” from the safety (and comfort) of an armchair.26

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23 *L’Affaire Lerouge* first appeared serially in *Le Pays* in 1863, and a significantly modified version appeared in *Le Soleil* in 1866.


Beginning with Sue’s *Mystères de Paris*, followed by Reynolds’s *Mysteries of London* and the hundreds of other novels published throughout Europe, North America, Central America, and the Commonwealth throughout the nineteenth century, the urban mystery genre “provides a fresh understanding of the novel’s ability to produce and present social knowledge, to analyze the relationship between that mysterious artifact the modern city and its often disoriented citizens.”\(^\text{27}\) As a subgenre of popular novel, the urban mystery—and the study of it—provides useful insights into the connections between text and context, for as Fredric Jameson has written, “[g]enres are essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact.”\(^\text{28}\) Trafficking in exoticism, even while representing the “barbarians among us,” as Sue puts it, nineteenth-century urban mysteries form a unique and important corpus in which the claims made regarding the causes of, justifications for, and proposed “remedies” to social problems deserve to be studied in light of their capacity to reflect, influence, establish, or deny a particular sense of national identity.

**Sue and his Canadian Imitators**

This dissertation seeks to show how literature, whether popular or “high brow,” at once reflects and forms a sense of national identity. The corpus studied in this dissertation is succinctly defined: along with Sue’s genre-launching novel, *Les Mystères de Paris*, I study the only three novels in French to bear the title *Les Mystères de Montréal*. At


first, it would appear that these novels have nothing in common but their formulaic city-mystery titles. Eugène Sue and his three French-Canadian imitators use the urban mystery genre, representations of the global issue of crime and other social problems, and urban development to argue for a particular brand of French or French-Canadian identity. I study these novels in light of their generic categorization among the global, nineteenth-century vogue of urban mysteries, but I also consider them in the context of global nineteenth-century newspaper culture, and in terms of the relationship between the popular press and national identity.

The publication of Sue’s *Mystères de Paris* was the greatest popular success in France since Rousseau’s *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* at the end of the eighteenth century. Pierre Orecchioni estimates that between 1842 and 1844 alone, between 400,000 and 800,000 people read the *Mystères de Paris*, which is probably a conservative estimate. Sue’s novel, in the view taken here, serves as a key document in the evolution of his socialist thinking; in considering Sue’s Romantic socialism, looking at his representations of carceral spaces—especially the prison, but also the asylum and the hospital—allows us to examine the ways his thinking develops over the course of the novel’s sixteen-month-long serial publication. Furthermore, given the novel’s publication in one of the leading newspapers of the July Monarchy, Sue’s *Mystères* constitute both an intervention, in highly publicized debates on issues of social justice (such as penal reform, crime, and poverty), and a document of public opinion every bit as reflective of, and influential in the newspaper culture in which its publication may be contextualized. This immensely

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successful popular novel significantly influenced the crystallization of French national identity in the July Monarchy, leading up to the popular uprising and revolution in February of 1848.

Amidst the torrent of post-Sue urban mysteries, whose publication began even before the end of the Mystères de Paris’s serialization, there were never any Mystères de Québec, no Mystères de Trois-Rivières, Mysteries of Ottawa, Mysteries of Toronto, or Mysteries of Vancouver. Significantly, the practitioners of the city mystery genre in Canada chose to situate their novels in Montreal, exclusively.

The first Mysteries of Montreal was published anonymously, in English, in 1846— just three years after the end of the serialization of Sue’s novel in the Journal des Débats— with the subtitle “A Novel Founded on Facts.” The first Mystères de Montréal (in French, that is) would not appear until 1855, written by a Second Empire exile, Henri-Émile Chevalier. A self-described Republican socialist and a fervent admirer of Sue’s who was exiled for his outspoken political dissent in the Dijon press, Chevalier produced an unfinished novel that is equally useful in considering the city of Montreal itself, on one hand, and the development of a sense of distinctly French-Canadian national identity, on the other. Despite his relatively short tenure in Montreal, Chevalier insinuated himself into the literary culture of the city, interestingly blurring a possible distinction between insider and outsider. Given his position, his representation of the city as well as its inhabitants in his fiction proves particularly useful. In his serial novel, Chevalier portrays Montreal as both a commercial and criminal city on the eve of its industriali-

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zation. In his novel as in his journalism, Chevalier curiously advocates the abolition of
nationalities even as he calls for the inauguration of a sense of French-Canadian national
identity by means of literature and the press, despite his status as an exiled Frenchman.
Chevalier exhorted his fellow members of Montreal’s literary elite to make meaningful,
original contributions to a specifically Canadian corpus in addition to seeking to use his
fiction and journalism to promote an international network of Francophone journalists.
Blurring fact and fiction, Chevalier’s life imitates his work and vice versa, insofar as he
put his own prescriptions into practice, creating one of Quebec’s earliest literary periodi-
cals as well as some of the earliest French-Canadian novels.

The second *Mystères de Montréal* would not appear until 1879, when Hector
Berthelot began serializing his own novel. As a satirist and caricaturist who seemingly
compulsively founded newspapers in Montreal, Berthelot was well placed to offer an in-
cisive, up-to-the-minute representation of the city and its inhabitants. Berthelot, though
beset by Church censors, makes use of his position in the press to influence a nascent, but
potentially unifying sense of public opinion through his papers as well as his *Mystères.*
By means of a satirical figure of his own invention, “Ladébauche,” Berthelot at once sub-
verts Church censorship and foments a sense of French-Canadian national identity
through autoparody. I devote my study of Berthelot’s novel to its relation to both the
public sphere, in the theoretical, Habermassian sense, and public space, in the sense of
parks, streets, establishments, and the toponyms that proliferate in the novel. I thus high-
light the interplay between fiction and journalism in Berthelot’s work, as well as his ca-
pacity to simultaneously divert, inform, and influence his readers at the hight of the city’s industrialization, in the moment when Montreal becomes a truly modern city.

Charlotte Führer, a German midwife living in Montreal, published her own Mystères of Montreal, being Recollections of a Female Physician in 1881, in English. This collection of anecdotes are of the “truth is stranger than fiction” variety— and Führer even uses that phrase as an epigraph on the novel’s title page.31

The final Mystères de Montréal, by Auguste Fortier, were published in 1893, and this is the only novel considered here that was not published serially. Straddling several genres, these Mystères are considered in three contexts here: the period’s renewed vogue of historical, patriotic novels treating the Rebellions of Upper and Lower Canada of 1837–1838; the adventure novel, whose plot Fortier’s life imitated when, at the age of 30, he abandoned his literary pursuits in favor of the checkered life of a globetrotter; and, of course, the urban mystery genre in which the novel inscribes itself by its Sue-evoking title. Fortier’s representation of the city, crime, and punishment necessarily entails comparisons with Sue’s genre-launching novel. In Fortier’s Mystères, Montreal and its public spaces are portrayed as places where, in curious opposition to countless novels, films and television shows portraying urban crime, detection is inevitable. Rather than disappearing into the faceless crowds, criminals in Fortier’s novel are in fact unmasked in Mont-

31 In her introduction to the novel, Führer even refers to authors of popular and gothic novels, writing “During a long practice of over thirty years I have seen many things enacted here in this city of Montreal which, if told with the skill of a Dumas or a Collins, might not only astonish but startle the sedate residents of this Churchgoing community.” At once, Führer asserts the authenticity of her accounts and the text’s status as a popular novel, as well as underlines the novel’s situation in Montreal, a city filled with pious, but curious readers. Charlotte Führer, The Mysteries of Montreal; being Recollections of a Female Physician (Montreal: J. Lovell & Son, 1881), 3.
real. Relentlessly framing the action of his novel in terms of Franco-English opposition, Fortier casts his intrigue of criminals and innocents in overtly nationalist political terms.

After an initial reading, these three novels might appear to have nothing in common but the genre indicated by their titles. They in fact embody meaningful benchmarks in the evolution of not only French-Canadian literature, but the establishment of a French-Canadian (and later Québécois) national identity, as well. The three authors of the Mystères de Montréal, each from a different generation, can be considered as case studies. Chevalier, an exiled Frenchman who only spent a few years in Montreal, was curiously enthusiastic about the institution of French-Canadian literature, passionately calling for a specifically Canadian literature in French, independent of both its European antecedents and contemporaries. Anticipating the themes synthesized in Henri-Raymond Casgrain’s famous essay on the Canadian literary movement of the 1860s, Chevalier insisted that this literature plumb the wells of Canadian history, eschewing the sentimentality perceived as a defect of Romanticism, in order to foment a proper sense of French-Canadian nationalism.

Berthelot, for his part, affirmed a sense of French-Canadian identity through both his newspapers and his fiction at a pivotal moment in the history of Quebec. After the decades of strife between the liberal intelligentsia of francophone Montreal and the Catholic Church, as well as the union of Upper and Lower Canada and Confederation, Berthelot made use of satire, parody and autoparody, and caricature to subvert the Church’s censorship. Through his humor, Berthelot was able to make significant political interventions in his own Mystères de Montréal as well as in his various newspaper ven-
tures. Enlarging the public sphere at a time of both strict censorship and dynamic industrialization, Berthelot’s serial fiction, read alongside the newspapers of his era, highlight the lived experience of the city, as well as the city of Montreal itself. In short, Berthelot’s novel highlights the intersections between the capacity of the popular press and popular fiction to form and reflect potentially unifying public opinion, which is all the more critical for a national identity in formation in opposition to a political majority.

In the final decade of the nineteenth century, Auguste Fortier wrote as a member of a generation that reflects the appreciation for Canadian history through fiction that Chevalier had advocated nearly fifty years earlier. The particular type of intervention Fortier makes in the urban mystery genre—specifically, its engagement with a French-Canadian social imaginary—is made possible precisely because of the progress made by Berthelot’s generation and its own interventions by means of the popular press. In terms of generic distinctions, Fortier’s novel is closer than either Chevalier’s or Berthelot’s to the genres for which Eugène Sue had become famous. Blurring the lines between urban mystery, adventure novel, and historical novel, Fortier represents the city of Montreal as a cosmopolitan one. Like Sue, Fortier’s plots of crime and punishment have ideological resonances that come to bear on his representations not just of French Canadians, but on what it means to identify as a French Canadian, on the construction of a national identity, crystallizing at the turn of the twentieth century.

This transnational study is devoted to the intersections between individual works of fiction, and the journalism and historiographical works published alongside them, in contrast to many studies of the press (and especially the French-Canadian press) that fo-
cus either on a particular figure or a particular publication. Even in *La Vie littéraire au Québec*, the section on “La presse périodique et la formulation d’un discours” is subdivided into sections on *Le Canadien*, *La Minerve*, and *Le Fantasque*. This study, however, highlights the ways these urban mysteries, as constituents of an enduring, transnational literary phenomenon, can be used as points of entry for understanding the ways the evolution of the nineteenth-century popular press participated in a social and mediatic imaginary that worked to crystallize a sense of French-Canadian national identity. Given the inherently urban nature of these Mystères as well as the mediatic milieux in which they were produced, I use mapping in order to connect these novels’ mode of publication and socio-historical context to the lived experience of the cities where they were published, and where their action is located. In reading these texts alongside the newspapers and other, ephemeral periodical forms published contemporaneously with them I not only reconstruct the literary moment of their publication, but also elucidate their participation in a transnational mediatic imaginary in order to interrogate relationships between literature, national identity, the city, and the popular press.

Given its focus on both popular fiction and newspaper culture of nineteenth-century France and Quebec, this dissertation will be of interest to both scholars of literature and culture of the period. These four novels have never been considered together, in one study, and no study of any of the three French-Canadian novels I treat has ever before appeared in English. Engaging with a remarkably strong, but relatively recent current in literary studies—that of seriality and nineteenth-century media culture—, this study

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32 “La presse périodique et la formulation d’un discours” in *La Vie littéraire au Québec*, 2.163–82.
makes a valuable contribution in light of its transnational orientation. In short, the following chapters are devoted to the capacity of these urban mysteries to develop a sense of national identity, within their own discursive framework, and the social, political, and historical dimensions of their representations of crime, punishment, and urban space.
CHAPTER 1:

SOCIALIST ROMANTICISM AND ROMANTIC SOCIALISM: 
REFORMISM, THE PRISON, AND THE CITY
IN EUGÈNE SUE’S LES MYSTÈRES DE PARIS

“Le roman est définitivement démocratisé.”

Sue’s Mystères de Paris was without doubt one of the most popular French novels of the nineteenth century, if not the most popular. Oft quoted and paraphrased is Théophile Gautier’s ribbing that “[d]es malades ont attendu pour mourir la fin des Mystères de Paris; le magique La suite à demain les entraînait de jour en jour, et la mort comprenait qu’ils ne seraient pas tranquilles dans l’autre monde s’ils ne connaissaient le dénouement de cette bizarre épopée.” Published in Le Journal des Débats between June 19, 1842 and October 15, 1843, Les Mystères de Paris enjoyed a broad and devoted readership that is in and of itself deserving of study, from both a literary and sociological perspective. Dominique Kalifa notes that fourteen editions were published during Sue’s lifetime (he died in 1857), and nineteen between his death and the beginning of the First


34 Théophile Gauthier, Histoire de l’art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans, vol. 3 (Bruxelles: Hetzel, 1859), 3:161. Gauthier begins his commentary on a theatrical adaptation of the novel by writing “Tout le monde a dévoré Les Mystères de Paris, même les gens qui ne savent pas lire: ceux-là se les ont fait réciter par quelque portier érudit et de bonne volonté; les êtres les plus étrangers à toute espèce de littérature connaissent la Goualeuse, le Chourineur, la Chouette, Tortillard et le Maître d’école. Toute la France s’est occupée, pendant plus d’un an, des aventures du prince Rodolphe, avant de s’occuper de ses propres affaires.”

35 Sue is said to have received over 1,300 letters related to Les Mystères de Paris, but only about 420 of them have survived; they are reproduced in a two-volume collection, “Les Mystères de Paris”: Eugène Sue et ses lecteurs, ed. Jean-Pierre Galvan (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998), hereafter abbreviated as SL. See also Christopher Prendergast, For the People by the People? Eugène Sue’s “Les Mystères de Paris”: A Hypothesis in the Sociology of Literature (Oxford: Legenda, 2003); and the Correspondance générale d’Eugène Sue, ed. Jean-Pierre Galvan, 2 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010–2013), hereafter abbreviated as CG.
World War, not counting serialized reprints throughout France, an extraordinary number of theatrical adaptations, and songs inspired by the novel. Sue’s success also set off the publication of “une multitude d’imitations, d’avatars, de plagiats […] de parodies […] ou de séries parallèles,” in many countries all over the world throughout the nineteenth century. Sue’s literary success made the *Journal des Débats* financially successful and therefore, as his views on social and institutional reform developed over the year-and-a-half-long serialization of the *Mystères*, Sue was able to be more and more outspoken on issues of social justice, even when his views may have run counter to the *Journal des Débats*’s own political bent. We shall return to the developing, transitional status of Sue’s reformism shortly.

Especially in the second half of his lengthy novel (whose ten volumes exceed 1,000 pages), Sue makes use of his privileged position to engage in public debates on issues such as financial education for both the wealthy and the poor, philanthropy, recidivism, capital punishment, and incarceration during the July Monarchy through articles, open letters, published testimonies before the Assemblée nationale, and novels. In these arguments, Sue demonstrates the national concern over these significantly urban problems. Many of the episodes of the novel certainly take place outside the city of Paris, but

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37 Humorously, George Sand wrote to Sue shortly after the end of the *Mystères*’ serialization and said “Je reçois des propositions d’éditeurs pour un livre à faire, et comme nous sommes coupables, vous et moi, d’avoir mis les romans de longue haleine à la mode à ce qu’il paraît, on me demande huit ou dix volumes.” Sand to Sue, December 1843, *SL* 2:250.
in these episodes, the violence of the city spills over—or indeed, bleeds—into the surrounding suburbs and countryside. In the pre-Haussmann, July Monarchy-era Paris of the Mystères de Paris, the displacement of the city’s dangerous neighborhoods—the Cité, the Cour de Miracles—has yet to take place, underscoring Sue’s warning that “les barbares dont nous parlons sont au milieu de nous.”

Les Mystères de Paris can without doubt be seen as Sue’s contribution to the sub-genre of the “social problem” novel, which is usually considered a more English (rather

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than French) phenomenon of the Industrial Revolution and Victorian Era. Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Benjamin Disraeli, and perhaps George Eliot are more commonly associated with the social problem novel; such novels, which appeared in France roughly from the July Monarchy to the Commune, made use of fiction to dramatize the plight of the urban working poor, in particular, and to develop some possible antidotes to social inequality.  

Charles Brun distinguishes between two types of social novels: the descriptive and the ideological. In the former type, the novelist is interested not simply in the characters and their psychology, but also in their appearances, customs, and various milieux; in the ideological type, the characters and their milieux permit the representation, study, and critique of institutions—and, by extension, contain a certain spirit of reformism. In Roger Picard’s view, Balzac embodies the descriptive social novel, whereas Sand embodies the ideological one. As we shall see in detail over the course of this chapter, at the outset of the novel, Sue’s Mystères de Paris fit rather neatly into Brun’s definition of the

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41 Roger Picard, Le Romantisme social (New York: Bretano’s, 1944), 199–201.
descriptive social novel. As the novel progresses, however, it shifts towards the ideological social novel, nearly crossing the line between the social novel and thesis novel.\textsuperscript{42}

This is a chapter on Sue, not a book, and as such, we must restrict our consideration of the particular arenas of social reform he treats in the novel just as we must restrict the socialist influences on Sue that we consider. The July Monarchy saw a wide array of pre-Marx socialist lines of thought; we must focus here only on the influence of the two most prominent of them, those of Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier and their respective followers. Though Sue’s representations of social issues such as prostitution and the status of women, for example, are significant, politically engaged, and consequential in the novel (as they are in Fourier’s ideology, in particular), here we must restrict our focus to the closely entwined, and no less significant, issues of the so-called social question and penal reform—two vast subjects, to be sure.

\textit{Summary of the Novel}

Although the \textit{Mystères de Paris} was a phenomenal bestseller, the novel is more often referenced than read today, and so an exceedingly rapid summary seems to be useful here. Sue’s novel begins in the dark, dangerous streets of the crime-infested Cité, where Rodolphe, the crown prince of the fictional Germanic kingdom of Gerolstein, saves the young, improbably virginal prostitute Fleur-de-Marie from being attacked by

\textsuperscript{42} As outspoken as Sue becomes on social issues and ideologies in the \textit{Mystères}, the narrative is never governed by the overdetermination that characterizes the thesis novel. Furthermore, as Picard notes, “Il y a tout un art d’écrire le roman social ou roman à thèse. Si l’esprit de parti y est trop visible, il risque d’aliéner à l’auteur ceux qui ne pensent pas comme lui; il communique à son œuvre un caractère factice qui lui ôte sa valeur littéraire et qui le prive de l’intérêt qu’une œuvre puise dans l’imprévu. Il faut un talent soutenu, dans l’affabulation ou dans le style, pour que le roman social du type idéologique puisse survivre à la période où il est paru et où il bénéficiait d’une curiosité spontanée, d’un courant d’idées et de sentiments qui lui apportaient des masses de lecteurs.” Picard, \textit{Le Romantisme social}, 202–3.
the savage Chourineur. In fine melodramatic fashion, Rodolphe will eventually discover that Fleur-de-Marie is his long-lost orphaned daughter, whom he and his estranged wife thought dead. In his youth, the reckless, impassioned Rodolphe had had a daughter out of wedlock by the unscrupulous Scottish Countess Sarah MacGregor. To expiate his disobedience towards his father and mourn the loss of his daughter, Rodolphe travels Europe incognito, exercising vigilante justice, rescuing the pure-of-heart poor, and punishing the wicked. Rodolphe rescues Fleur-de-Marie from the Chouette, her vindictive crone of a guardian, and the latter’s accomplice, the Maître d’école. The Maître d’école turns out to be not only an escaped convict, but also the father of the earnest young man François Germain, and the husband of Fleur-de-Marie’s new, benevolent guardian, Mme Georges. Rodolphe has his personal doctor, David, blind the Maître d’école to punish him for taking advantage of those weaker than himself, but, much later, the Maître d’école kills the Chouette, in turn, for having attempted to betray him. Nearly all the characters of the novel cross paths in two key locations: the apartment building at 22, rue aux Fèves and the office of the diabolical notary Jacques Ferrand, who orchestrates nearly all of the ills that befall the undeserving characters, rich and poor alike. Eventually, with all the evil-doers punished and the good saved and rewarded, Rodolphe takes Fleur-de-Marie back to Gerolstein to live as the princess she was born to be, only for her to die of shame of her past existence immediately after becoming a nun.
Socialist Influences on, and Reactions to, the Novel

“Les Mystères de Paris inventèrent une nouvelle manière d’intervenir dans les débats politiques et sociaux [...]”

Social Justice and Reform

As the popularity of Sue’s serial novel not only endured, but increased over the months of its publication, the plot shifted from its sensationalist, escapist beginnings to become, as Judith Lyon-Caen succinctly puts it, “une tribune de la réforme sociale.” Sue goes beyond simply dramatizing the plight of the working poor, the falsely accused, and the reformed criminal (practically a contradiction in terms), and, given the popularity of the novel and the print runs of the Journal des Débats, ensures that a wide array of social problems and proposed antidotes to them appear before the extremely diverse readership that his popular novel acquired. It is significant that Sue managed this feat at a time well before the idea that the urban mystery (so-called paraliterature) was considered to have attained any level of legitimacy—philosophical, moral, or otherwise. Of the handful of issues that Sue addresses, capital punishment is present in the novel from its early pages, with the blinding of the Maître d’école, while penal reform becomes an increasingly championed cause. Sue represents several different types of carceral spaces—prisons, of course, but also monasteries, hospitals, and asylums (although schools are totally absent from the novel)—that take on a degree of nationalist interest. In the wake of a


succession of socio-political upheavals—the Revolution of 1789, the Terror, the Directory, the Empire, the Restoration, and the July Monarchy—and leading up to the 1848 Revolution, “le pays s’enracine dans la démocratie […] où le corps social émerge, notamment par l’intermédiaire du journal et des lectures de masse,” as Kalifa writes; in this context, “une question comme celle de la prison [peut] constituer un enjeu politique important.”

Three prisons are depicted in the *Mystères*: Saint-Lazare, la Force, and Bicêtre. Of these three, the first to appear is Saint-Lazare, a women’s prison where Fleur-de-Marie finds herself at roughly the midpoint of the novel. The representation of this prison differs significantly from that of the other two, which appear only in the novel’s final 200 pages. The differences in Sue’s representations of these carceral spaces, in the first half of the novel and at its end, serve to show how, on one hand, Sue’s thinking evolved over the course of the novel’s long redaction and, on the other hand, Sue became increasingly outspoken on issues of social justice and reform, thanks to the success of his novel, even when the views expressed in the *rez-de-chaussée* ran counter to the conservative political bent of the *Journal des Débats*, which published them. Sue himself acknowledges this discrepancy in his open letter published in the newspaper—whose full title was *Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires*—on the same day as the final installment of the novel (which is now included with the text of the novel itself). He writes

> *Les Mystères de Paris* sont terminés; permettez-moi de venir publiquement vous remercier d’avoir bien voulu prêter à cette œuvre, malheureusement aussi imparfaite qu’incomplète, la grande et puissante publicité du *Journal des Débats*; ma

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reconnaissance est d’autant plus vive, monsieur, que plusieurs des idées émises dans cet ouvrage différaient essentiellement de celles que vous soutenez avec autant d’énergie que de talent, et qu’il est rare de rencontrer la courageuse et loyale impartialité dont vous avez fait preuve à mon égard. (1213, my italics)

In order to better understand how Sue’s ideas on the entwined issues of poverty, criminality, prison reform, and capital punishment, we must first consider the predominant socialist influences on the Mystères de Paris, as well as the socialist responses to the novel.

**Romantic Socialism and Social Romanticism**

“À certains égards et en certaines occasions, la distinction entre réalité et fiction s’évanouit; la fiction exprime la réalité, mieux que ne le ferait le fait divers; elle est la réalité […].”

**Romantic Socialism**

Before turning to Saint-Simon and Fourier, a few words on “socialism” before Marx. Warren Breckman helpfully notes that it is “somewhat anachronistic to speak of socialism in the late 1820s and early 1830s because the substantive noun denoting a discrete and self-conscious ideology was just coming into usage in the mid-1830s.”

The Romantic socialists were often seen as utopian, or as “opening acts” for Marx’s socialism, and it is easy to see why. To speak of “Romantic socialism,” however, is not to rebrand “utopian socialism,” for quite simply, not all pre-Marx socialists were utopian (nei-

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ther Pierre-Joseph Proudhon nor Louis Blanc could be considered utopian, for example). 48 Jonathan Beecher observes that the “first self-proclaimed socialists were contemporaries of Hugo, Delacroix, and George Sand […].” 49 Often moralizing, the Romantic socialists opposed themselves to what they saw as increasing fragmentation in post-1789 industrializing society, a society bound less and less by any type of affection or solidarity, and increasingly governed by individualism. Although they are variously lumped together under umbrella terms such as “pre-Marxist” or “utopian” socialism, I, following Beecher, consider the ideologies of Saint-Simon, Fourier, Considerant, and Sue in the context of “Romantic socialism.”

The boundaries between the ideologies of various Romantic socialists are admittedly blurred, but in general, these socialists—often utopian in their optimism—are united by their beliefs in a few veins of conciliatory, humanitarian thought. Socialism, for the Romantic socialists, was opposed to individualism and the disintegration of both society and its morals. Rejecting both the atheism and the materialism of the Enlightenment *philosophes*, the Romantic socialists believed in a common good which had the capacity to bind society through feelings of love and solidarity, with the help of the privileged classes, in the absence of class conflict. 50 Together with various forms of

48 See Frederick Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, trans. Edward Aveling (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1910). This study, published in 1880, was originally published as part of *Anti-Düring* (1878), a sort of defense and illustration of Marxism (which embodies “scientific socialism,” in Engels’s view). Realist Marxian socialism is opposed to idealist utopian socialism, although Engels shows considerable sympathy for Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Robert Owen.


Christianity-inflected rhetoric, a “science of social organization” permeates the ideology of the Romantic socialists; this scientific approach to social reform “would allow human beings to turn away both from sterile philosophical controversy and from the destructive arena of politics and to resolve in scientific fashion the problem of social harmony.”\textsuperscript{51}

Furthermore, the Romantic socialists “shared a sense that the institutional arrangements of the new order must be based on cooperation rather than competition, on solidarity rather than egotism.”\textsuperscript{52} Like the Romantic poetry, literature, and art of the July Monarchy, the socialism of 1830–1848 is often idealist and sentimental, opposed to materialism, and characterized by its liberalism. However poetic, human(e), or idealist the socialism of the July Monarchy may have been, there is no denying its visible and lasting influence, even if the various strains of Romantic socialism were eclipsed by Marxism over the course of the nineteenth century.

Chief among the French Romantic socialists are Saint-Simon and Fourier, as well as Pierre Leroux and Victor Considerant; also to be included are the less well-known Philippe Buchez and Constantin Pecqueur.\textsuperscript{53} The influences of Saint-Simonianism and Fourierism in particular are certainly present in the works of Hugo, Vigny, Béranger, and


\textsuperscript{52} Beecher, \textit{Victor Considerant}, 2.

Sainte-Beuve, and are especially seen in the works of Flora Tristan, George Sand, and Eugène Sue.54 “Fouriériste? Saint-Simonien? Sùe lui-même eût été bien empêché d’en décider— encore que les Mystères eussent puissamment contribué à éviter à l’une et à l’autre philosophie l’avortement” writes Sue’s biographer, Jean-Louis Bory.55 We shall examine the ideologies of Saint-Simon and Fourier, as well as their and their followers’ influences on Sue, in due course, but for now, suffice it to say that in general, the Romantic socialists argued for the reorganization of society in order to eliminate the selfish and greedy exploitation of the poor by the wealthy bourgeoisie and aristocracy— and mitigate the suffering of the destitute but earnest and hardworking “toilers”—, and to promote ideals of equality and justice through moral reform.

As much an enfant du siècle as Musset or Lamartine, Hugo or Balzac, Sue was born virtually simultaneously with the Napoleonic Empire (in 1804), was educated under the Restoration, and joined public life during the July Monarchy (he inherited his father’s fortune in 1830, at the age of 26). Sue’s early works, such as Kernok le pirate and El Gitano (1830), Atar-Gull (1831), and La Salamandre (1832), drew largely on his experience in the navy, as well as on the Romantic movement; certainly, he helped promote the popularity of adventure and maritime novels inspired by James Fenimore Cooper in France, and we shall see this influence in our consideration of the works of Henri-Émile Chevalier in the following chapter, and of Auguste Fortier in Chapter 4. In his succeeding works— the Mystères de Paris, certainly, but also Le Juif errant and Les Mystères du

54 On Béranger, see Hunt, Le Socialisme et le romantisme en France, 286–88.
Peuple—, Sue demonstrates with increasing devotion and clarity his affinities for Romantic socialism.

**Social Romanticism**

The twin terms, Romantic socialism and social Romanticism, are not synonymous and are equally necessary to describe the ideological underpinnings of the *Mystères de Paris*. Whereas the former term delineates a particular variety of socialism, as we have seen, the latter refers to a subcategory of Romanticism. As apt a term as “Romantic socialism” is, “utopian” and “pre-Marx” socialism remain much more common; likewise, “social Romanticism” has remained rarely employed. As Roger Picard points out, we often speak of Romanticism in literature, in visual art, and in music; following this line of thinking, we can even consider such famous works by Michelet as *Le Peuple* and his *Histoire de la Révolution française* to be works of Romantic historiography, for example. How better, then, to discuss the the particular ways Romantic novelists, dramatists, and poets address social issues than in the context of “social Romanticism”? Lamartine proclaimed in 1834 that poetry would no longer be lyric, epic, or dramatic, for “la scène de la vie réelle a, dans nos temps de liberté et d’action politique, un intérêt plus pressant, plus réel et plus intime […] ; parce que la société est devenue critique, de naïve qu’elle était.”


telligence [...] Ce sera l’homme lui-même et non plus son image, l’homme sincère et tout entier. [...] À côté de cette destinée philosophique, rationnelle, politique, sociale de la poésie à venir, elle a une destinée nouvelle à accomplir; elle doit suivre la pente des institutions et de la presse; elle doit se faire peuple et devenir populaire comme la religion, la raison et la philosophie.\textsuperscript{58}

With this declaration by Lamartine, an emblematic Romantic poet as well as a statesman who would go on to play a significant role in the 1848 Revolution— the apogee, and then the nadir, of the Romantic socialists’ dreams—, we can see how, in the July Monarchy, Romanticism in poetry, theater, prose, and art was suffused with a political, social dimension.

While they clearly did not accept the Saint-Simonians’ and Fourierists’ ideas for social reorganization wholesale, the Romantics were certainly deeply influenced by their interpretation of the origins of society’s problems and their arguments in favor of reform in order to alleviate them. The Saint-Simonians’ desire to do away with social organizations that create division rather than association— at the level of the family, the city, the state— provides just one, very fruitful, example of their influence on the Romantics, despite the Romantics’ rejection of purely Saint-Simonian doctrine. While the Saint-Simonians sought to abolish birth and hereditary as the basis of modern society, the family was nevertheless the most basic and essential unit of social organization for titans of the era. For Hugo, “les saint-simoniens se trompent. [...] Toute doctrine sociale qui cherche à détruire la famille est mauvaise, et, qui plus est, inapplicable. Sauf à se recomposer plus tard, la société est soluble, la famille non”;\textsuperscript{59} Balzac writes in the “Avant-Propos” of

\textsuperscript{58} Lamartine, \textit{Destinées de la poésie}, 58–61 (my italics).

the *Comédie humaine* “Aussi regardé-je la Famille et non l’Individu comme le véritable élément social”\(^{60}\); and Michelet writes “nous n’avons guère qu’une chose par laquelle nous prétendons échapper à l’égoïsme; ce sont les liens de famille.”\(^{61}\)

Sue is rarely, if ever, referred to as a Romantic novelist, though he is certainly a melodramatic one (which is not to say that I conflate melodrama and Romanticism, by any means, of course). Sue, as an author of popular novels, became more and more “serious” over the course of his career, shifting from the adventure novels and maritime novels of his youthful, dandy days to the socially engaged works of his later years; the ideology of the Romantic socialists was just starting to take root in *Mathilde*, but became more and more pronounced in each of Sue’s successive novels— *Les Mystères de Paris*, *Le Juif errant*, and *Les Mystère du Peuple*.\(^{62}\) The *Mystères de Paris* might be many things—melodrama, social (problem) novel, etc.—, but Sue is not a Romantic. Whereas Romanticism, a capacious term, implies a glorification of nature, emotion, and, most importantly, individualism, the ideological social novel (and the literature of the more restrictive category of social Romanticism) is preoccupied with communion and harmony—that is, with society and its potential to form a cohesive, unified entity.

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\(^{62}\) Sue began to address “social questions” only in the second half of *Mathilde*, which Félix Pyat turned into a (very successful) play in 1842, the same year the serialization of the *Mystères de Paris* began. The novel depicts Paris and the July Revolution, the flight of the aristocracy to the Vendée, Italy, England, etc., and would have the social upheaval of 1830 become a second 1793.
Keeping in mind these preoccupations, as well as those of the Romantic socialists (namely their aims to reorganize society on more egalitarian terms through institutional and moral reform), we shall be able to see how the influence of both the Romantic socialists and the social Romantics bore its fruit over the course of the long redaction of Sue’s novel of social reformism, the *Mystères de Paris*. Although a consideration of the presence of Leroux’s thought in the *Mystères* could be the object of future study, here, we will consider first the influences of the titans of pre-Marx socialism, Saint-Simon and Fourier, and those of their followers before turning briefly to the response of Marx himself to the novel, and his famous critique in *The Holy Family*.

**Saint-Simon, the Saint-Simonians, and Sue’s Saint-Simonianism**

Born into the Old Regime nobility, Count Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon led a checkered life, fighting in the American Revolution, ending up imprisoned during the Terror, and making his fortune speculating only to lose it all and turning to political, social, and economic studies during the Empire and Restoration. Of Saint-Simon’s voluminous writings, his “Mémoire sur la science de l’homme” (1813), *Du système industriel, Catéchisme des industriels*, and *Le nouveau christianisme* are the most important texts related to early socialism.\(^{63}\) In the years leading up the the July Revolution, following Saint-Simon’s death in 1825, the Saint-Simonians continued to develop Saint-Simon’s

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ideas, collecting them in Amand Bazare’s two-volume *Expositions de la doctrine de Saint-Simon* (1828–1830).⁶⁴

Like Fourierism, Saint-Simonianism “cannot be reduced to a set of propositions about the economy. Nor did its analysis of commercial society presuppose the primacy of material interest in history.”⁶⁵ Saint-Simon and his followers believed in “a form of speculative social psychology,” and “thought that beliefs and values fundamentally shape human history. The Saint-Simonian philosophy of history fully expresses this essential idealism.”⁶⁶ Most significant, in the context of this study of the relationship between Saint-Simonian beliefs and the socialism of the *Mystères de Paris*, is the Saint-Simonians’ argument that “antagonism prevails in the relations between nations, between the sexes, and, most portentously for the history of socialism, between wage earners and employers.”⁶⁷ The Saint-Simonians’ means of ending exploitation of man by man were twofold: in order to “alleviate the misery of the ‘poorest and most numerous class,’” it would be necessary to abolish the right of inheritance and, more substantially, create a meritocracy.⁶⁸ With this view in mind, it should fall to the state to “appropriate family wealth and distribute this social capital to truly capable people, whose excellence and

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⁶⁵ Breckman, *Dethroning the Self*, 152.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. See also Georges Jarbinet, “*Les Mystères de Paris*” d’Éugène Sue (Paris: Société française d’éditions littéraires et techniques, 1932), 33.
dustriousness will enrich the general stock of humanity.”  

Furthermore, the state, in addition to managing and redistributing personal wealth, would assume the right to determine individuals’ skills and vocation.  

The resonances between the Saint-Simonians’ beliefs and Sue’s reformism, such as we see it in the *Mystères de Paris*, begin to come to light when, early in the novel, Sue, in his naïveté, advocates individual philanthropy as a means of alleviating the destitution of the earnest, but poverty-stricken masses.  Rodolphe, set up as a philanthropist *par excellence*, possesses an innate sense of moral judgement, intuiting after even the briefest observation who is deserving of either aid or retribution.  Rodolphe, however, is an individual, and thus does necessarily not stand in for the state-led reform the Saint-Simonians envisioned.  

Within the discursive framework of the novel, Rodolphe serves as a model for others of all social classes: both Fleur-de-Marie and Clémence d’Harville ape his do-goodery.  Rodolphe encourages Fleur-de-Marie to imagine “castles in Spain” and after she dreams of nothing more than a simple life in the country, he places her at the utopic farm at Bouqueval.  In turn, after Fleur-de-Marie finds herself imprisoned in Saint-Lazare, she goes through the same exercise with La Louve, who wishes for nothing more than a simple life in a cabin in the woods, removed from the filth, crime, and people of the city.  Of course, for lack of pockets as deep as Rodolphe’s, Fleur-de-Marie is unable to completely “pay it forward” and do for La Louve what Rodolphe had done for her, and

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69 Breckman, *Dethroning the Self*, 153.

70 Jarbinet, “*Les Mystères de Paris*” d’Eugène Sue, 33.
instead assures La Louve that, upon hearing of her worthy case, Rodolphe will surely come to her aid. This obvious pitfall of the “pay-it-forward” model Sue dramatizes is not one he acknowledges.

Likewise, Clémence d’Harville, an aristocratic lady trapped in a marriage to an epileptic despite harboring emotions for Rodolphe, takes an interest in helping the less fortunate, on an individual scale, taking her direction directly from Rodolphe. He first sends her to aid the Morels (an errand that serves the primary purpose of covering up what would appear to her husband as an infidelity), and then to the Saint-Lazare prison, where she ends up taking an interest in Fleur-de-Marie, although Rodolphe remains ignorant of the identity of Clémence’s protégée. When initiating her into the joys of benevolence, Rodolphe says to Clémence,

Et vous comprenez […] que je ne vous parle pas d’envoyer avec insouciance, presque avec dédain, une riche aumône à des malheureux que vous ne connaissez pas, et qui souvent ne méritent pas vos bienfaits. Mais si vous vous amusiez comme moi à jouer de temps à autre à la Providence, vous avoueriez que certaines bonnes œuvres ont quelquefois tout le piquant d’un roman. (389)

Here, Rodolphe underscores the importance of a personal relationship between those giving and receiving assistance; of course, the ethics of “selling” philanthropy as an amusing divertissement for the “idling classes,” to use the Saint-Simonian term, rather than a social, religious, or moral imperative, are questionable. Rodolphe adds that “S’il s’agissait simplement d’envoyer un de mes chambellans porter quelques centaines de louis à chaque arrondissement de Paris, j’avoue à ma honte que je ne prendrais pas grand goût à la

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71 The well-to-do visiteuse de prisons, clearly inspired by Clémence d’Harville, became somewhat of a commonplace in the wake of the Mystères de Paris.
chose; tandis que faire le bien comme je l’entends, c’est ce qu’il y a au monde de plus amusant” (389–90).

Undoubtedly, neither the Saint-Simonians nor Sue’s readers in general would discourage the philanthropy of an individual such as Rodolphe, but in contrast to the social reforms that Sue advocates later in the novel, Rodolphe certainly does not promote any type of institution-based or government-led reforms.

In Sue’s suggestion of individual philanthropy and the surveillance of the poor to determine which of them is deserving and undeserving, we can see Saint-Simonian suggestions of more egalitarian redistribution of wealth, on a meritocratic basis. Furthermore, in Saint-Simon and his followers’ view, the greatest threat to the working classes, those not making meaningful contributions to society as a whole, are the so-called “idling classes.” The Saint-Simonians favored the abolition of the right of inheritance; prominent Saint-Simonian François Barthélemy Arlès-Dufour went so far as to write to Sue, near the end of the Mystères’ serialization, to offer his assistance in Sue’s research, writing “Si dans le travail que vous êtes sans doute en train de préparer, l’héritage, source de tant de crimes, doit jouer un rôle, j’aurai des masses de renseignements à vous donner […].”72 Sue, however, does not suggest that wealthy aristocrats, such as the vicomte de Saint-Remy, are undeserving of their inheritance at this point. While he would go on to denounce the detrimental effects of inheritance in Les Misères des enfants trouvés, L’Avarice, and the Fils de famille, in the Mystères de Paris, Sue would seem to argue that the wealthy have a twofold responsibility to manage wealth: on one hand, those of means

72 Arlès-Dufour to Sue, October 3, 1843, SL 2:72.
have a philanthropic obligation, as we see in the cases of Rodolphe and Clémence d’Harville.

On the other hand, Sue clearly condemns the spoiled, wasteful nature of the idle heir to the Saint-Remy fortune and title, while at the same time bewailing the fact that the wealthy and poor alike receive no financial education. For lack of this education, the wealthy are prone at once to indolence and dissipation, rather than accumulation and productive use of their financial privilege. Despite the risks inherent in reading too much of an author’s biography into his fiction, one must wonder if Sue, when writing the story of the vicomte’s financial desperation, was not thinking of his own life, for Sue inherited an immense fortune at a young age only lose it all, living the profligate life of a dandy. Having written novels for some time, it is quite possible that, after turning to writing as a means of making a living following his pecuniary dissipation, he was sensitive to Saint-Simon’s distinction between “oisifs” and “industriels,” or those who profited from the work of others (landowners, investors, etc., of whom Jacques Ferrand is surely emblematic) and those who labored (everyone from farmers to doctors to journalists).

For all Sue’s preoccupation with institutional reform when it comes to prisons, he does not, until the final chapters of the novel, propose any sort of institutionalized financial support for the destitute, but instead promotes a sort of haphazard philanthropy

73 On this subject of the production and accumulation of wealth, as well as its dissipation (although such concerns are not particularly Saint-Simonian), we can draw links between Sue’s novel and Balzac’s novels (La Recherche de l’absolu and La Peau de chagrin, in particular). We also cannot help but draw comparisons to Sue’s biography: an amateur, though well-liked, author of popular, adventure and maritime novels, it is only after he completely dissipates his own inheritance that he seems to have turned to writing as a profession. The seriousness of the Mystères de Paris, well mixed with the melodramatic coups de théâtre typical of the roman-feuilleton, can thus be readily viewed as a natural result of the change in Sue’s circumstances.
through the characters of Rodolphe and Clémence d’Harville (and even Rigolette, despite her drastically different financial situation, and François Germain, relatively speaking).

Sue no doubt quickly saw the limits and pitfalls of individual philanthropy as a solution to the *misères* of the urban poor— when his readers started to write to him, asking for financial assistance! To Sue’s credit, he did, in some instances, provide small sums of money, but the fact that he was soon asked for more money quite possibly helped him decide that the study of the causes of poverty and institutional reform were perhaps better lines of inquiry. Anne-Marie Thiesse writes that Sue attempted to use his social connections to help those who wrote to him, passing along “interesting cases” to friends such as the Baronne de Rothschild and the vicomte d’Orsay,

ou à des lecteurs en qui le feuilleton a éveillé une vocation de philanthrope, transformant son domicile en un Bureau de Charité et de Placement; en collaboration avec lui, la *Ruche populaire*, journal rédigé par des ouvriers parisiens, publie régulièrement une liste de malheureux désignés à la charité de quelqu’un généreux donateur. Mais très vite […], Süe délaisse les appels à la Charité individuelle, pour un examen systématique et raisonné des causes et remèdes de toutes les “tares sociales” […].

Sue’s solution, introduced near the end of the novel, is the “Banque des travailleurs sans ouvrages.” The Bank for the Poor and unemployed is financed by Jacques Ferrand,

whom Rodolphe blackmails in order to make him expiate his crimes against society.

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75 On July 28, 1843, Sainte-Beuve wrote, with a rather disparaging tone, “On se demande où tout cela va. Habile et assez spirituellement hypocrite qu’il est, il a très-bien compris qu’après les chapitres d’appât et d’ordure, il fallait se faire pardonner ce qui avait alléché; aussi s’est-il jeté aussitôt sur la philanthropie si à la mode aujourd’hui. Il y aurait de belles profondes considérations à faire sur ce sujet: En quoi la philanthropie née de la corruption diffère de la charité. Grâce à ce prétexte, chacun suit en conscience et sans remords M. Sue partout où il vous conduit: c’est pour le bon motif; la fin justifie le lieu.” Sainte-Beuve, *Chroniques parisiennes (1843–1845)* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1876), 80.
The Bank grants small loans, without interest, with the intent of making a difference in the lives of the deserving poor. As long as the loan is repaid in full, the borrower may take out another loan, if and when the need arises; only one loan may be granted to a family at a time, and, if the loan is not repaid in time, the family may never borrow money from the bank again. These small, short-term loans, along with the “favor” of not charging interest on the loans, are meant to alleviate a person’s need to have recourse to pawnshops and moneylenders.\footnote{The usurer figures prominently in the \emph{Comédie humaine}, as well, notably in the character of Gobseck (who appears in several novels, including the eponymous short story) and in \emph{Les Paysans}, in which Marx saw the French peasantry, trapped in the spiderweb of usury.}

In a very Saint-Simonian fashion, Rodolphe’s blackmailing is (somewhat ironically) intended to end the exploitation of man by man— that is, of the desperate and destitute by the usurer Jacques Ferrand—, and to transform the money of the predatory Ferrand, a member of the “idling classes,” into a means of alleviating the misery of the “poorest and most numerous classes.” As specified in the note Ferrand reads to dedicate the funds for the bank, “On a choisi ce quartier [le 7\textsuperscript{e} arrondissement] comme étant l’un de ceux où la classe ouvrière est la plus nombreuse” (1013). Furthermore, the language of the note becomes increasingly manifesto-like at its close:

\begin{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item Ne pas dégrader l’homme par l’aumône…
\item \textit{Ne pas encourager la paresse} par un don stérile…
\item Exalter les sentiments d’honneur et de probité naturels aux classes laborieuses…
\item \textit{Venir fraternellement} en aide au travailleur qui, vivant déjà difficilement au jour le jour, grâce à l’insuffisance des salaires, ne peut, quand vient le chômage, suspendre ses besoins ni ceux de sa famille parce qu’on suspend ses travaux…
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}
In addition to drawing explicitly on a thrice-cited tenet of Christianity—“Aimons-nous les uns les autres, a dit le Christ” (1013)—, Sue’s model for the Bank for the Poor is, as he tells the reader in one of the footnotes that proliferate in the latter parts of the novel, the result of consultation with “plusieurs ouvriers aussi honorables qu’éclairés,” (1014n1). Sue intends that his model should be taken as a first step, as an inspiration for those interested in helping the less fortunate. Despite this earnest assertion, Marx will forcefully disprove the viability of Sue’s plan for the Bank in *The Holy Family*, a critique to which we shall return shortly.

Brynja Svane suggests that Sue’s Bank for the Poor is inspired by neither Saint-Simon nor Fourier, but rather that third (utopian) Romantic socialist, the British reformer Robert Owen. Owen did indeed create the National Equitable Labour Exchange, which operated from 1832 to 1834, but Exchange was based on the sale of goods at prices reflecting the cost of materials and labor in exchange for “Labour Notes,” which could be used as a form of time-based currency. Proudhon also proposed a system using time-based currency in *Philosophie de la misère* (1846) and Karl Marx wrote of “labor certificates” in *Kritik des Gothaer Programms* (1875) (although, of course, neither of these ideas could have been the inspiration for Sue’s Bank for the Poor). The Saint-Simonians of the July Monarchy, in their fervor for hierarchy, organization, and serializing, sought,

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as John Tresch writes, to institute a “centralized system of banks [that] would eliminate unproductive functions, competition, famines and overproduction.” With this goal in mind, we can see how Sue’s Bank— along with the exceptional visibility of his roman-feuilleton— would have been both a well received, encouraged, and encouraging first step in the eyes of his Saint-Simonian contemporaries.

The chapters “Punition,” “La Banque des pauvres,” and “Les Complices” were (coincidentally?) published in the *Journal des Débats* on July 27, 28, and 29, 1843, the anniversary of the “trois glorieuses” that marked the end of the Restoration. On July 30, 1843, Prosper Enfantin wrote to Sue to praise what he saw as the thoroughly Saint-Simonian Bank for the Poor, writing simply, “Mon cher monsieur, c’est bien beau et bien bon ce que vous faites en ce moment. Vous avez pieusement célébré les trois journées de juillet.” Sue responded by sending Enfantin a copy of the illustrated Gosselin edition of the *Mystères* shortly thereafter. The Bank for the Poor, such as Sue outlines it, fulfills the Saint-Simonian vision— outlined in *Le Nouveau Christianisme* (1825)— for a meritocratic institution devoted not to the government of men, but the administration of things.

As for characters who are empowered to make valuable contributions to society thanks to their “innate” qualities, the Chourineur is not the only one to go beyond the

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metropole’s borders to do so; furthermore, Rodolphe is not the only character to leave behind an institution. In the novel’s final pages, Fleur-de-Marie, having returned to her native Gerolstein and assumed her place as the Princess Amélie, joins religious orders and works with orphans. This, despite the fact that the Saint-Simonians believed in a religion “qui n’est autre que la conscience morale de l’ordre social transformé et perfectionné. Le renoncement chrétien est un idéal périmé.” Considering her death at the close of the novel, it could be seen that Fleur-de-Marie’s good works are to the people of Gerolstein as Rodolphe’s good works are to the people of Paris: each character leaves behind an institution and a legacy of good works.

As for Sue’s relationship with Saint-Simonianism, the ideas he disseminated in his novel were well received by leading Saint-Simonians of his day, and his readers showed an enthusiastic willingness to educate an author in such an influential position as Sue’s in one strain of pre-Marx socialism or another. The prominent Saint-Simonian Arlès-Dufour writes to Sue

Votre [...] ne pouvez guère comprendre l’espèce d’influence qu’exerce votre livre à l’étranger. Je vous assure qu’elle n’est pas seulement morale et amusante, elle est sociale et politique [...]. Oui, Monsieur, votre livre contribue mille fois plus à répandre […] les vraies idées françaises, les idées sociales, que tout ce qui dans ce but, pourrait émaner de la diplomatie, dont ce devrait cependant être le grand but.

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84 In the Epilogue, we do read, in a letter from Rigolette to Rodolphe, that at the Bank for the Poor, “Il n’y a presque jamais de remboursements en retard et on s’aperçoit déjà beaucoup du bien-être que cela répand dans le quartier” (1184).

85 Arlès-Dufour to Sue, October 3, 1843, Leipzig, SL 2:71 (italics in original).
Arlès-Dufour adds, continuing to emphasize both the socialist and moralizing aspects of Sue’s work, “Succès oblige, à plus forte raison lorsqu’il y a conviction comme chez vous et vous voilà maintenant obligé de continuer dans cette même voie de moralisation sociale, je dirais presque socialiste, qui exige sans doute de fortes méditations et de profondes études, mais qui doit vous donner aussi d’ineffables jouissances.” Indeed, Sue openly supports the socialist ideas and efforts of the Saint-Simonians, lending not only his narratorial voice to their cause, but also his editorial voice. Following the final episode of the Mystères, published on October 15, 1843, the Journal des Débats included a lengthy address from Sue “Au Rédacteur” in which he goes so far as to give a plug for La Ruche populaire, a Saint-Simonianism newspaper of which Sue became, during the Mystères’ serialization, the de

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86 Ibid., 2:72 (my italics).
facto patron. Sue writes that in *La Ruche*, “L’organisation du travail, la limitation de la concurrence, le tarif des salaires y sont traités par les ouvriers eux-mêmes” (1213). What is more, Sue even cites a lengthy passage from the paper, which begins with an epigraph taken from Rodolphe’s lines in the novel: in this case, a newspaper (the *Journal des Débats*) serializes a novel (the *Mystères*) that includes an open letter from the novel’s author, quoting a newspaper (*La Ruche*) that quotes a novel (the *Mystères*), giving us an outstanding example of the infinite blurring of lines between journalism and literature that characterize the July Monarchy press, and between novelist, journalist, critic, and character.87

Sue develops his tactics of disseminating Saint-Simonian thought in his next novel, *Le Juif errant* (serialized in *Le Constitutionnel* from June 25, 1844 to August 26, 1845), in which the Rennepont family must make use of their inheritance to both maintain their fortune— amassed by prudent investment over the years after a modest principal is entrusted to a Jew and his descendants— and use it to better humanity in some way.88 Viewing Sue’s involvement with the Saint-Simonians slightly different than Thiesse and myself, Roger Picard would have that Sue, over the course of the serialization of the *Mystères de Paris*, “propage alors le fouriérisme et devient une sorte de dieu

87 “Secourir d’honorables infortunes qui se plaignent, c’est bien. S’enquérir de ceux qui luttent avec honneur, avec énergie, et leur venir en aide, quelquefois à leur insu… prévenir à temps la misère ou les tentations qui mènent au crime… c’est mieux” (112, quoted in part on p. 1213).

pour les phalanstériens, qui lui offrent une médaille en 1845. Les saint-simoniens en sont jaloux et après la publication du *Juif errant*, ils le proclament acquis à leurs idées et Enfantin lui adresse toute une collection de livres et brochures de la secte.” 89  Rather than simply being flattered by the attention he received from the Fourierists and Saint-Simonians, as Picard suggests, Sue made use of the *Mystères* to explore a variety of antidotes to social problems that draw on more than one, single “camp.” Having considered the Saint-Simonian influences on Sue’s novel, let us now consider the impact of the Fourierists on the *Mystères*.

**Fourier, the Fourierists, and Sue’s Fourierism**

Charles Fourier, Saint-Simon’s greatest early socialist rival, “came onto the scene,” so to speak, a bit later than his fellow philosopher and so, much to his chagrin, often lived in the shadow of Saint-Simon. After Fourier’s death, Victor Considerant took up his mantle; under his leadership, the Fourierists assimilated a good number of ideas from their earlier, Saint-Simonian days, but also crystallized their deceased master’s thought, namely through the newspapers *La Phalange* and later *La Démocratie pacifique*. 90 Whereas Saint-Simon favored state-led reform, Fourier aspired to reform society through liberty and individualism. 91 According to Fourier, disorder and a lack of

89 Picard, *Le Romantisme social*, 357.


cohesion are at the root of all of society’s ills. With his focus on the individual and his relationship with society, Fourier theorized that twelve “passions” produce over 800 different “personality types.” He and his followers argued for the institution of communes called “phalanges” of 1,600–2,000 members representing the entire spectrum of passions and characters identified by Fourier. The Fourierists grouped individuals by “series” and, like the Saint-Simonians, believed in assigning work according to capabilities and predispositions. Making work well suited to the individual, and therefore more attractive, will increase productivity, and thus wealth in turn. While every member of the *phalange* is free, all are not equal, since equality does not exist in nature.

The Fourierists’ interpretation of disorder as society’s fundamental problem is much broader than the Saint-Simonians’ belief in the prevalence of antagonism in relations between nations, the sexes, and employers and employees. In the first issue of *La Démocratie pacifique* (published August 1, 1843, near the end of the serialization of the *Mystères de Paris*), under Considerant’s leadership, the Fourierists published a “Mani-feste politique et social” where we read that

> L’antagonisme des classes n’est pas irréductible; au fond, leurs intérêts sont communs, et ils peuvent être harmonisés par l’association. Mais l’association ne peut se réaliser qu’à la condition de *subordonner les questions politiques aux questions sociales*, de reconnaître le droit au travail, d’organiser l’industrie par l’union du capital, du travail et du talent.  

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93 For an excellent, brief explanation of Fourier’s rather convoluted system, see Tresch, “The Order of the Prophets,” 321–25.

94 *La Démocratie pacifique* is easily accessible online; this passage is quoted in Jarbinet, “Les Mystères de Paris” d’Eugène Sue, 37 (my italics).
The right to work, organization of labor as well as of society, and class conflict, therefore, lie at the heart of the Fourierists’ ideology. Although “it was not until 1847 that Considerant began to identify himself as a socialist,” the July Monarchy— and the 1840s in particular— saw the flourishing of a sweeping socialist movement whose ideology Considerant helped shaped.  

Considerant’s “influence on the development of socialist thought was probably greatest in the sphere of social criticism. Considerant did much to popularize a view of contemporary society as riven by class conflict”; this conflict exists not simply between the rich and the poor, but also between capitalists and laborers— recalling the Saint-Simonian opposition of “oisifs” and “industriels.”

Many critics of Sue’s work have vaguely or cursorily mentioned the Fourierist influences on the Mystères de Paris— Michelle Perrot and Roger-Henri Guerrand, for example, write that Sue “was the writer who did most to spread Fourier’s ideas”—, but it is more likely that the Fourierists found more resonances of their beliefs in Sue’s work than Sue found inspiration in theirs. Zoé Gatti de Gamond, for example, wrote to Sue on June 6, 1843 to send him copies of Fourierist works; Jean-Pierre Galvan identifies these works as Fourier et son système (1838) and Gatti de Gamond’s own, self-published Réalisation d’une commune sociétaire, d’après la théorie de Charles Fourier (1840).

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95 Beecher, Victor Considerant, 164.
98 Zoé Gatti de Gamond to Sue, June 6, 1843, Paris, 1:214.
de Gamond writes that “les Mystères de Paris sont à mes yeux l’un des ouvrages les plus profonds, les plus philosophiques et les plus moraux qui aient paru à cette époque.”

Considerant himself echoes Gatti de Gamond, calling the novel “le livre le plus moral qui ait paru dans ce siècle.” Sue, like many pre-Marx socialists, was first and foremost a moralizer; in this respect, his thinking was much in line with the Considerant-era Fourierists. Unlike the Saint-Simonians, Sue argues not for state-led social reform, but rather institutional reform—especially in the latter parts of the novel. It is most important to note that Sue’s arguments for institutional reform in the Mystères de Paris are not a straightforward illustration of Saint-Simonian-inflected Fourierism, but instead draw on Fourierism in addition to explicitly Saint-Simonian ideas.

With respect to the social question (i.e., poverty), Fourier believed that the “imposition to moral codes” laid at the heart of poverty and inequality; his followers, on the other hand, saw them as “part of the solution of an essentially moral dilemma.” “For Fourierists,” Pilbeam writes, “the sickness of society came from the neglect of God. They wanted not to ‘liberate’ people, but to teach them appropriate rules of conduct, rooted in a spiritual approach.” Here again, Sue’s thinking is not in line with Fourier’s, but does logically appeal to the sympathies of the Fouriersists.

99 Ibid.

100 Quoted in Bory, Eugène Sűe, 279.

101 Pilbeam, French Socialists, 19.

102 Ibid.

begin to see how Rodolphe’s actions, in particular, based on Christian modes of expiation and moral reform, came to be so appreciated and lauded by the Fourierists. We shall return to Rodolphe’s reformism and efforts shortly, in examining Marx’s response to the *Mystères de Paris*, so for now, let us consider three examples of the Fourierist influences on the novel: the Martial family, the duo of Rigolette and Fleur-de-Marie, and Rodolphe’s attempt to integrate the Chourineur into the bourgeois economy of the July Monarchy.

The first glimpse the reader gets of the Martial family, the “pirates d’eau douce,” is through La Louve, during her conversation with Fleur-de-Marie in Saint-Lazare. Eventually, we learn that the head of the family has been guillotined; the mother, her second son, Nicolas (age 20), and elder daughter, Calebasse (18), are aggressively malevolent and criminal; and the oldest son, Martial (25), and younger daughter, Amandine (9), and youngest son, François (12), are benevolent, despite the potentially corrupting influence of both their family and their home on the Île des Ravageurs. Martial, the eldest son and la Louve’s lover, is desperate to rescue his youngest siblings, François and Amandine, from the nefarious influence of his mother and brother, Nicolas. François is beginning to succumb to his family’s pernicious influence.

Sue writes a degree of urgency into Martial’s attempts to rescue his two youngest siblings from their wicked mother and brother. In introducing this family to the reader, Sue gives them a dimension of social importance, treating them as a case study, much as he treats the Morels. Immediately after detailing the execution of the father and ages of his children, left in the care of their widowed mother, Sue writes “Les exemples de ces familles, où se perpétue une sorte d’énorme hérédité dans le crime, ne sont que trop
fréquents” (657). To read this statement and think that Sue unequivocally subscribed to a belief in hereditary criminality would be too hasty, for he reiterates his arguments from the end of the chapter “Châteaux en Espagne,” adding “Rédétons-le sans cesse: la société songe à punir, jamais à prévenir le mal.” “Morte la bête… mort le venin…” dit la société…” (657). Not so fast, Sue warns: his accusation of society’s shortsightedness follows, in which he highlights society’s hastiness to dole out justice by executing a criminal without a second thought for the well-being of the numerous family he leaves behind. Employing a lexicon of contagion, Sue interrogates the indeterminacy of transmitting criminality. By means of the case study of the Martials, Sue advocates treating these orphaned children, less this abandoned family become gangrenous, threatening to themselves and the “social body” as a whole.

It seems at first that the Martials demonstrate a sort of hereditary criminality that anticipates Zola’s much more rigorous, systematic determinism in the Rougon-Macquart novels. But why, coming from a family whose *pater familias* was a criminal, renowned for having been guillotined, did Martial, who grew up the same household with his defiantly criminal brother, grow up to be an altruistic, hardworking man (who, it must be said, cannot find a way to participate in the “legitimate,” not-underground economy)? If criminality is hereditary, why the urgency of rescuing François and Amandine from their mother’s pernicious influence? In the case of François, Sue evokes an infectious criminality that is beginning to take hold of him, much as he describes the influence of the prisoners of la Force on François Germain (which will be examined in detail shortly). Just as society assumes the son of an executioner will become an executioner as well, it
expects that the son of a criminal will do so too. “Ainsi, pour celui qui, plongé en nais-
sant dans un foyer de dépravation domestique,” Sue writes, “est vicié tout jeune encore,
aucun espoir de guérison!” (658). Decrying thus, Sue does not, in fact, defend the con-
cept of moral determinism, but rather decries society’s negligence of and disregard for
those it itself condemns to a vicious cycle. For all his talk of “instinct,” especially con-
sidering the members of the Martial family and La Louve, Sue firmly commits to a theory
of social determinism in this novel, and represents it in all its complexity. Fourier “did
[not] want to suppress man’s instincts, but to release them.”104 Sue, often referring to in-
stinct as the underlying cause of a particular character’s action, does not wholly subscribe
to a Fourierist view of instinct; he nonetheless makes use of his novel to argue that, and
represent means by which, “bad” instincts can be either exacerbated by society and an
individual’s milieu, or redirected or overcome.105

In another respect, we can see Saint-Simonian-influenced Fourierism in Sue’s nar-
rative insofar as it demonstrates a belief in an individual’s “instinctive” disposition to-
wards a particular profession. Rodolphe seems to follow the Saint-Simonian precept “À
chacun suivant sa capacité, à chaque capacité suivant ses œuvres”; in Fourier’s system,
however, “on the level of institutions there is nothing […] comparable, for example, to
the ‘spiritual power’ that Henri [de] Saint-Simon called for to allocate work and provide


105 Perhaps one day, Sue writes, “la société saura que […] les crimes sont presque toujours des faits de sub-
version d’instincts, de penchants toujours bons dans leur essence, mais faussés, mais maléficiés par l’igno-
rance, l’égoïsme ou l’incurie des gouvernants” (893).
moral guidance to the members of his new industrial society.”

In the *Mystères de Paris*, Rodolphe comes to the conclusion that, given the Chourineur’s proclivity for cutting and slicing— he has a good deal of experience working as a knacker and, after all, he is called the Chourineur for a reason—, what better profession for him than that of a butcher? He offers the Chourineur a house, a shop, and a thousand écus, and even a veneer of bourgeois respectability with an assumed family name, “Francœur.” It is possi-

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106 Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 282. On the subject of the belief that passions should dictate occupations, we can look to an example other than that of the Chourineur, the case of Clémence d’Harville. Rodolphe “sells” her on the idea that philanthropy and doing good deeds can be a fun, entertaining way of filling her days. In this gesture, Marx himself sees Fourier’s influence on Sue. See Chap. 8, section 5, “Revelation of the Mystery of the Utilization of Human Impulses, or Clémence d’Harville,” in Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*, trans. R. Dixon (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), 256–57.
ble, however, that this particular example could indicate either Sue’s halfhearted commitment to Saint-Simonian ideals or his undermining of them.

Rodolphe’s well-meaning experiment proves disastrous: saying “voici une belle occasion d’exercer votre talent” (173), no sooner does Rodolphe leave the Chourineur alone in his new domain than he “falls back into his old ways.” He says to Rodolphe, “Tonnerre! monsieur Rodolphe […]. Ça me rappelle ma jeunesse et l’abattoir; vous allez voir comme je taille là-dedans… Nom de nom, je voudrais déjà y être! Ton couteau, garçon, ton couteau! C’est ça… tu t’y entends. Voilà une lame! Qui est-ce qui en veut?… Tonnerre! avec un chourin [couteau] comme ça je mangerais un taureau furieux” (174).

Seeing a lamb in the courtyard of his new domain and taking the knife in his hands, “Ses yeux commençaient à s’injecter de sang; la bête reprenait le dessus; l’instinct, l’appétit sanguinaire reparaissait dans toute son effrayante énergie.” The narrator emphasizes the animalistic, instinctive savagery of the Chourineur’s actions, describing how “les yeux brillants d’un éclat sauvage, ne s’apercevant plus de la présence de Rodolphe, il souleva la brebis sans efforts, et d’un bond il l’emporta dans la tuerie avec une joie féroce. On eût dit d’un loup se sauvant dans sa tanière avec sa proie.” The violence of the action of slitting the ewe’s throat is heightened by its rather graphic description, and the pitiful cry of the ewe touches the reader as much as the Chourineur himself, who is instantly softened, horrified, and terrified. Madly crying out “Oh! le sergent! le sergent!” recalling the man he murdered during his time in the army, the Chourineur, haunted by the memory of his crime, makes it clear that this type of work, however suited to his “talents,” is no longer a viable option for him. The Chourineur’s penchant for violence is excessive and
as such, he himself must be excised from the “social body” that is only just coming into being in Restoration-era France. The only other means of including the Chourineur in the socially and economically productive “industrial class” according to his talents, such as they are, is to expel him from the metropole. Here, for the sake of the narrative, Sue inscribes the character in the July Monarchy’s colonialist pursuits, exiling the Chourineur to Algeria. In order to serve the nation according to his talents, the Chourineur must leave it (although, he never actually leaves for Algiers, as intended).

The Mystères de Paris was alternately lauded for its realism or decried for its immorality; Bory writes that “tous les philosophes de toutes les doctrines se hâtent d’enrôler Süe sous leur bannière,” but comes as no surprise that Sue was accused of Fourierism by his detractors, given his depiction of the farm at Bouqueval. Although we have already noted that not all veins of Romantic socialism are utopian in nature, the farm is clearly a utopic, phalansterian place. Designed and underwritten by Rodolphe, and operated under the administration of the matriarch Madame Georges (herself a beneficiary of Rodolphe’s philanthropy), Bouqueval is a place where the hard-working, skilled, and de-

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107 The novel begins in 1838, roughly near the beginning of Abd al-Qādir’s renewed resistance to French forces in Algeria; the feuilleton in which the Chourineur is exiled—which devastated readers, showing Sue that the Chourineur was a “crowd favorite”—was published on July 13, 1842; and the French invasion of Algeria, largely viewed as a diversion tactic of the desperate Restoration monarchy, began in July 1830. See David H. Pinkney, The French Revolution of 1830 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 17–18.


109 Bory, Eugène Sue, 279.
vout poor can, for a tenure of two years, get back on their feet. The phalange-like, rural Bouqueval of the Mystères de Paris would get its factory-world complement in Le Juif errant, where the organization of laborers into live-work communities would smack even more of Fourierism. Bouqueval’s bucolic nature certainly invited the criticisms of Fourier’s detractors, for the “agrarian character of Fourier’s utopian blueprint […] earned him in some quarters a reputation as a romantic reactionary, a primitivist, whose prescription for the ills of early industrialization was to turn backward to an idealized rural arcadia.” Unlike Saint-Simon and Marx, Fourier did not view industrialization and increased production as either “a positive and liberating force” or “the key to a better life for all.”

While Sue’s reformism, and particularly the model farm at Bouqueval, is admittedly utopian, utopianism is not real, social reform. Although his commitment to social reform would continue to evolve over the rest of his life at the time of the Mystères’ serialization, Sue was a not a committed Fourierist, however much his writing may have seemed to demonstrate Fourierist ideology and despite the Fourierists’ sustained approbation of Sue’s social ideology, notably in La Phalange. After all, the farm at Bouqueval proves ineffectual as an idyllic refuge when it is “infiltrated” by the Maître d’école, la

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111 Beecher, Charles Fourier, 289.

112 Ibid.

113 In a panegyric published by La Phalange shortly the publication of the Mystères’ first feuilletons, Désiré Laverdant proclaims that Sue “vient d’aborder la critique la plus incisive de la société avec une profondeur, une sagacité et une énergie dignes de toute gloire.” Quoted in Hunt, Le Socialisme et le romantisme en France, 282.
Chouette and Tortillard, and Fleur-de-Marie is abducted. Similarly, when Rodolphe leaves Paris with his daughter at the end of the novel, the final vision of the city Sue gives his readers is one of mob violence and delight at the imminent execution of the widow Martial and Calebasse. Sue depicts a crowd in which escaped convicts are able to conceal themselves and evade justice after threatening the aristocracy with violence—a rather literal representation of class conflict—and murdering the Chourineur as he sacrifices himself to save Rodolphe. As Pilbeam writes, Marx scorned socialists such as Fourier, Cabet, and Leroux as “utopians.” “They rejected piecemeal reform,” she writes, “in favour of creating new autonomous communities.”

Like Considerant, a Fourierist, Sue argues that poverty, crime, immorality, ignorance, and the like are not “inevitable consequences of the human condition but social problems with social solutions.” But, Sue’s arguments for institutional, rather than state-led reform, was one of several reasons that led Marx to condemn him for not being radical enough in his beliefs, and for other critics of both Sue’s ideology and the Mystères de Paris to question his commitment to reform and accuse this former dandy of elitism.

**Marx’s Response to the Novel**

In response to the Young Hegelian Franz von Zychlinski’s laudatory review of the Mystères de Paris in the Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung, Marx wrote a dense and damning critique of Sue’s ideas in The Holy Family (1844). Given Sue’s nebulously delineated Saint-Simonian and Fourierist ideological influences, it comes as no surprise that Marx

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114 Pilbeam, French Socialists, 8.

115 Beecher, Victor Considerant, 165 (italics in original).
mocks Sue’s commitment to social reform, judging him to be insufficiently radical in his propositions. Certainly, Sue did not argue in favor of insurrection or revolution, as the followers of Louis-Auguste Blanqui did; arguments made by Blanqui—a “professional revolutionary,” although a failed one at every turn—for the institution of a classless society after a revolutionary seizing of power in the name of the proletariat can, nevertheless, be seen as a precursor of Marxist ideology. Furthermore, *The Holy Family* was written and published during the sixteen months that Marx spent in exile in Paris, from October 1843 (just after the end of the *Mystères*’ serialization) to February 1845. During this period, Marx “discovered the proletariat, became a socialist, and […] made an intensive study of French socialism,” studying the works of Leroux, Considerant—including the *Manifeste politique et sociale de la démocratie pacifique*—, and Proudhon (with whom Marx had “an intense personal and intellectual confrontation” during his time in Paris). If certain strains of Romantic socialism advocated state-led social reform, Sue, like the Saint-Simonians, did not seek upheaval or revolution, but rather transformation. Sue favored moral reform, at an individual level, based on Christian modes of expiation. In this line of thought, espoused by intellectuals and artisans alike, Sue was in the company of those two leading champions of the people: Flora Tristan and George Sand.

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116 Ibid., 163. Indeed, Marx devotes a large portion of Chapter 4 of *The Holy Family* to Proudhon.

117 Flora Tristan wrote to Sue shortly after June 1, 1843 to ask him to help procure a review of her *Union ouvrière* from Armand Bertin, the head of the *Journal des Débats* during the serialization of the *Mystères de Paris*; although Sue was unable to procure the review for her, the work did attract the critical attention of Engels in *The Holy Family* (29–30). In Sue’s response to Tristan’s letter, which she published in the second edition of *L’Union ouvrière* (1844), he writes “Courage et espoir, Madame; la sainte cause à laquelle vous vous dévouez avec tant de cœur et d’abnégation est en progrès. Le cri de douleur et de misère des travailleurs pénètre jusqu’aux sphères élevées de la société.” Sue to Tristan, after June 1, 1843, *SL* 1:210–11. Additionally, Sue wrote to George Sand to say “Mon plus grand triomphe a été de lire dans un journal que (de bien loin sans doute) je suivais Madame Sand dans une voie sociale qu’elle avait si glorieusement ouverte.” Sue to Sand, around 20 April 1843, Paris, *SL* 1:175.
other hand, Marx, significantly influenced by the French socialists Considerant, Leroux, Blanc, and Pecqueur, would come to see an inextricable relationship between the dehumanization of modern man and its economic roots.\textsuperscript{118}

In \textit{The City in Literature}, Richard Lehan gives a succinct summary of Marx’s interpretation of the \textit{Mystères de Paris}, contextualizing \textit{The Holy Family} within Marx and Engels’s attacks on the Young Hegelians. Marx critiques what he sees as the Young Hegelians’ idealistic view of reality. In \textit{The Holy Family}, “Marx is specifically analyzing [...] that form of idealized consciousness— [...] Christian in form and embodied by Rodolphe— that positions itself within the social matrix. Marx’s point is that although the social conditions of Paris under Louis Philippe have changed radically, the consciousness that informs the city is still medieval.”\textsuperscript{119} In Marx’s view, Sue, by not being radical enough, ends up reifying “the evil he mistakenly thinks he is opposing. Despite the sympathy that Sue created for the Paris poor, Marx believed that he failed to come to terms with the new Paris,”\textsuperscript{120} a Paris where economic conditions allowed for filthy, impoverished, dangerous areas like the Cité and the misery of the deserving poor.\textsuperscript{121} Whereas Sue

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{} Beecher, \textit{Victor Considerant}, 164.
\bibitem{} Ibid., 56.
\end{thebibliography}
favored individual and social reform based on Christian modes of expiation, he also envisaged a leadership “that just happened to be aristocratic, rather than Fourier’s innovative socio-economic fantasies,” that could be achieved without violent revolution or upheaval.122 Sue’s unfavorable depiction of mob violence, social unrest, and the mob’s delight in the execution of the widow Martial and Calebasse by guillotine at the close of the novel (before the Epilogue) indicate his opposition to violent, proletarian-led social and political reform.

In the Mystères, Sue establishes a causal link between poverty and crime, which is one of the novel’s most important points of comparison with Hugo’s Les Misérables. Fleur-de-Marie, for example, is certainly one of the misérables, but, within the discursive framework of the novel, is certainly not culpable, despite being compelled to practice prostitution. As Théodose Burette puts it in a letter to Sue, Fleur-de-Marie is a “délicieuse créature dont l’âme n’a jamais suivi le corps dans les transactions avec la nécessité de vivre quand même.”123 Marx shows how Rodolphe (along with the priest Laporte), while apparently rescuing Fleur-de-Marie from her destitution—a moral predicament predicated on economic disadvantage—, in fact leads her, eventually, to the carceral

122 Stephen Knight, “Master of Mysteries: Eugène Sue’s Les Mystères de Paris,” in The Mysteries of the Cities: Urban Crime Fiction in the Nineteenth Century (Jefferson [NC] and London: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2012), 25. Although this chapter of Knight’s grandiloquently-titled book contains a good number of helpful commentaries and observations on Sue’s socialist thought, it also regrettably contains a good number of inaccuracies (that sometimes derive from using an outdated English translation of the novel), even regarding details of the plot of the novel: Rodolphe is called “Rudolph” and Mme Georges loses the final “s” in her name (31), and the novel closes near the barrière Saint-Jacques, not “de Saint-Jacques,” (20, 42, 44), but more seriously, Morel does not go to “the mental hospital at Salpetrière [sic],” (34) but rather, to the debtors’ prison at Clichy and then, like the Maître d’école, to Bicêtre; to say that Jacques Ferrand “picks on Louise” (36) is at best infelicitous word choice, given that he sexually harasses, drugs, rapes, and impregnates her.

123 Théodose Burette to Sue, July 1, 1843, Paris, SL 1:306.
space of the convent. Whereas “she was able to develop a lovable, human individuality”
even amidst the degradation of the Cité, once Rodolphe and the priest reveal to her the
“filth of modern society,” her “continual hypochondriac self-torture” turns her towards a
Christian duty and eventually leads her to her death.124 “Despite the attempt to infuse the
theme of ‘crime’ with a new social seriousness by articulating it in terms of the theme of
urban poverty, despite the accompanying rhetoric of protest and reform,” Christopher
Prendergast writes, “it is now generally held that the underlying conception of working-
class life and social change in Les Mystères de Paris is ultimately committed to a vision
of no change, at least at any fundamental level of social organization.”125 As Marx argues
rigorously in The Holy Family, the arguments Sue makes in the novel, taken with the
scenarios he dramatizes, do not, in fact, hold up to scrutiny: the various antidotes to social
problems Sue explores by means of his fiction are neither feasible nor tenable. But uto-
pian as Sue’s moral and social reformism may be in certain instances, that is not to say
that the shortsightedness of his posited remedies to social problems disproves or negates
the sincerity of his socialist intent. Rather than a commitment to a vision of no change,
as Prendergast puts it, the social and institutional reforms Sue advocates in the Mystères
de Paris were never intended to serve as any kind of fully-fledged prescription or course
of action for a reorganization of society.

The novel, considered alongside the culture of the July Monarchy press that both
permitted and benefitted from the novel’s far-reaching dissemination, evinces the influ-

125 Prendergast, For the People by the People?, 22.
ence of various strains of Romantic socialism and social Romanticism, as well as the transitional status of Sue’s socialist thought. Sue’s use of the novel as a tribune for social reformism— and his arguments for penal reform, in particular— should be taken as an instance of the author’s use of fiction to explore affective, narrative, and pragmatic antidotes to social problems, and ultimately, to spur his readers to action.

**Social Reform and Penal Reform**

—*Le journal, dit Lousteau, tient pour vrai tout ce qui est probable. Nous partons de là.*

—*La justice criminelle ne procède pas autrement, dit Vernou.*

Having considered the various influences of Saint-Simonian, Fourier, and their respective followers on the Romantic socialism present in the *Mystères de Paris*, let us now turn our attention to several specific aspects of reform that Sue addresses in the novel. Engaging in public debates that flurried at the end of the Restoration and throughout the July Monarchy, Sue— writing in the wake of Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville’s iconic *Du système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis* (1833) and the ensuing international debates— focuses mainly on five points in his arguments that fall into two categories of reform: social reform and penal reform. Sue intervenes in debates on social reform by means of (1) the comparison of conditions of the imprisoned and the poor and (2) the differences in how the rich and the poor are treated in prison. In his arguments for penal reform, Sue addresses (3) the rehabilitation of the criminal, and devotes the bulk of

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his arguments to the enduring debates on (4) criminality and solitary confinement and (5) the ethics of, and rationale for, capital punishment. Although Sue did not conceptualize radical social change— to Marx’s irritation—, he did make appeals in favor of more limited reform, especially as regards prisons, and in this regard, Sue’s novel reflects and influences as much the Romantic socialism of his day as the social Romanticism of his genre.127

Especially in the latter half of the Mystères de Paris, the number of digressions by the narrator as well as the number of footnotes increase dramatically. The length of the footnotes increases as well, grounding Sue’s work much more in the political climate and the “real world” of his novel’s serialization. Specifically, each time Sue introduces a new space, he seems to be sidetracked from his narrative, directly addressing the reader, making use of his rhetoric to editorialize and align his reader with his own perspective on issues and concerns of social justice. At times, Sue integrates passages from news articles directly into the narrative and at other points, he includes them in (sometimes quite lengthy) footnotes. Metanarrative signs, as well as these quotations, citations and footnotes, blur the boundaries between diegetic levels— the heterodiegetic and the extradi- egetic, especially— since some of them self-referentially comment on the novel while

others cite newspapers even while the novel is serialized in the *Journal des Dëbats*, creating an effect of metalepsis. Overall, Sue argues against the injustice of the disparity between the living conditions of the working poor compared to those of the imprisoned, and in favor of the abolishment of capital punishment and the implementation of blinding and the Pennsylvania System as a means of rehabilitation through incarceration.

Sue represents many carceral spaces in the *Mystères de Paris*: Bras-Rouge’s cellar where Rodolphe, then the Maître d’école, is imprisoned, the cellar where David and Cecily are imprisoned during the analeptic excursus recounting their rescue by Rodolphe, Cecily’s room in Jacques Ferrand’s house, and the rooms where François and Amandine, then Martial, are imprisoned at the Île des Ravageurs, to name only a few. Only five of these carceral spaces, however, are institutional ones: the hospital-clinic where Fleur-de-Marie meets Claire de Fermont, the abbey where Fleur-de-Marie takes holy orders after her return to Gerolstein, and the three prisons of Saint-Lazare, La Force, and Bicêtre. We see the women’s prison of Saint-Lazare in the first half of the novel, and the prison La Force and the prison/asylum of Bicêtre in the last quarter of the novel. By comparing Sue’s representation of Saint-Lazare, at the beginning of the novel, to those of Bicêtre and La Force at the end, we can see how his views on incarceration evolved over the

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129 The *Journal des Dëbats* published the feuilleton “Saint-Lazare” on February 8, 1843 and “La Force” on June 1, 1843.
course of the novel’s redaction, especially since, as we have seen through some of Sue’s correspondents eager to engage with him on the subject of his Saint-Simonianism or Fourierism, the potentially reciprocal socialist influence between author and reader was constant.\textsuperscript{130} For this reason, we will focus here on Sue’s later representations of prison, especially since the cases of La Force and Bicêtre will give us occasion to examine Sue’s arguments on capital punishment and prison reform. By studying these two examples of carceral spaces, we shall see the particular ways the \textit{Mystères de Paris} represents the prison as an institution in nineteenth-century Paris and French society. Ultimately, Sue demonstrates an influence by both the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierists, without subscribing to either of these nebulously delineated pre-Marx socialist ideologies. Rather, he proves to be, in \textit{Les Mystères de Paris}, in a critical period of transition from the Legitimist dandyism of his youth and the liberal Republicanism of his last years.\textsuperscript{131} Sue’s contextualization of the prison as an institution within a discourse of social reformism in the \textit{Mystères de Paris} serves therefore as a document not only of the evolution of one author’s thought, but also of public opinion— itself a nascent, but potentially unifying concept at this period— during the July Monarchy, leading up to the popular uprisings of February 1848.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{130} “La plus fréquentée de toutes les geôles parisiennes demeure cependant la prison pour femmes de Saint-Lazare. Il n’est guère de feuilletoniste qui, dans le sillage d’Eugène Sue, n’ait visité l’établissement au moins une fois, et nombreux son ceux qui s’y installent durablement.” Kalifa, \textit{Crime et culture}, 165.

\textsuperscript{131} For a discussion of Sue’s progression from dandy to socialist that, in contrast to many other writers (such as Thiesse, Prendergast, Svane, Bory, Knight, and myself), views the social reformism of Sue’s last years as less than sincere, see Emilien Carassus, “Le mirliflore, le romancier et le socialiste: Le dandysme d’Eugène Sue,” \textit{Europe} 643-644 (novembre-décembre 1982): 17–30.

\textsuperscript{132} The entwined roles of literature and the press, and their complex relationship with public opinion and its role in the public sphere, will be central to our consideration of Hector Berthelot’s \textit{Mystères de Montréal} in Chapter 3.
Social Reform

Prison vs. Poverty

One of the main areas of social reform Sue targets is the apparent injustice in the living conditions of the working poor and the incarcerated. First, Sue, under the influence of the Romantic socialists, sees poverty as a social problem (rather than a moral one, for example); as a social problem, it requires a social solution. The Morel family serves as a case study, emblematizing the working poor and their ineluctable plight. Second, Sue uses scenes set in La Force to represent the prison as an unjustifiably comfortable place, and deliberately structures his novel, opposing the Morels’ destitution to the relative luxury of the prison, in order to highlight the injustice of this discrepancy.

Relatively early in the novel, when Sue introduces the house in the rue du Temple, a nexus for many characters and plot lines throughout the rest of the novel, the reader meets the Morel family. In a chapter tellingly entitled “Misère” (III.xviii, first published in the *Journal des Débats* as IV.vi on December 1, 1842), we see the Morels’ garret for the first time. Ever accenting the filth of the attic room, the narrator describes the floor,

*d’une couleur [sans] nom, infect, gluant […], semé çà et là de brins de paille pourrie, de haillons sordides […]. Une si effroyable incurie annonce toujours ou l’inconduite, ou une misère honnête, mais si écrasante, si désespérée, que l’homme anéanti, dégradé, ne sent plus ni la volonté, ni la force, ni le besoin de sortir de sa fange: il y croupit comme une bête dans sa tanière. (395)*

The filth of the space contrasts sharply with the probity of its inhabitants. For the *pater familias*, Morel the lapidary, things go from bad to worse as his sickly wife asks him to shatter a layer of ice in a bucket to bring her a drink of water; his child freezes to death in the night; his mother-in-law (whose attraction to the sparkling gems Morel cuts had re-
sulted in the loss of one of them, putting the family in even more dire straits) nearly sets the apartment on fire; his daughter, Louise, recounts her abuse at the hands of her employer, Jacques Ferrand; and Morel himself is arrested to be sent to a debtors’ prison. Sue draws out this tragic narrative as long as possible, making each revelation of the Morels’ misery more excruciating than the last. This strategy of drawing things out is as useful for creating the delayed satisfaction on which the serial novel hinges as for maximizing the sympathy of the reader for the poverty-stricken working classes.

The Morels are not an isolated case, but rather a sort of case study, emblematic of the plight of an entire class of urban dwellers previously concealed from the view of either the reader or the “idling classes.” “Si les riches savaient!” cries out Morel. The line was so well known and repeated that Sue even reuses it twice in *Le Juif errant*, once in “Le secret” (XIV.3) and at the very end of the novel; Sue writes that he has attempted “une œuvre de rapprochement, de conciliation, entre les deux classes placées aux deux extrémités de l’échelle sociale; car, depuis tantôt trois ans, nous avons écrit ces mots: — SI LES RICHES SAVAIENT!!!” As Brynja Svane notes, referring to Morel’s hypothesis in the third volume of *Le Monde d’Eugène Sue* (subtitled “Si les riches savaient!”), Sue’s attempts to educate the “idling classes” about the misery of the working classes in the *Mystères* marks a decisive turning point in his career. In the Morels, Sue sees and represents not a family that has fallen on hard times by dint of poor decisions or moral corruption, but rather a family whose destitution was brought about, exacerbated, and systematically maintained by social processes.

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The narrator calls Morel “ce spécimen, hélas! trop réel, d’épouvantable misère,” and promises to try to depict him “dans son effrayante nudité” (397). With similarly “scientific” posturing, Sue takes a pseudo-documentary approach to his representation of La Force— an approach that differs from his rather sensationalist, voyeuristic entry into Saint-Lazare earlier in the novel. Late in Part Seven of the Mystères, the narrator directly addresses the reader to say, with false modesty, that despite some readers’ opinion that the chapter to follow will diminish the unity of the novel’s plot (a dubious claim of unity, in the case of this sprawling serial novel),

dans ce moment surtout, où d’importantes questions pénitentiaires, questions qui touchent au vif de l’état social, sont à la veille d’être, sinon résolues […], du moins discutées, il nous semble que l’intérieur d’une prison, effrayant pandémium, lugubre thermomètre de la civilisation, serait une étude opportune […].

(890)

Sue’s digressive introduction effectively blurs the line—both literal and metaphorical, and not for the first time—between novel and newspaper that the formatting of the serial novel in the rez-de-chaussée was meant to imply. The deictic marker “dans ce moment” inscribes the novel in a historical moment, with the adverb “surtout” to reinforce the actuality of Sue’s intervention. Furthermore, this direct address to the reader highlights the actuality of the novel’s engagement in questions of social justice and prison reform, as well as the immediacy of carceral systems’ social relevance. Calling the narrative and representation to follow an “initiation à la vie de prison,” itself an “effrayant pandémion,” Sue underscores the novel’s fictive, entertaining element: this initiation into prison life stands to be an escapist excursion for the well-heeled reader. On the other hand, by characterizing the representation to follow an “étude opportune” of the prison, a
“lugubre thermomètre de la civilisation.” Sue marks the subject’s “serious” import; the reader is to encounter not a tale or a scene, but a study. In Sue’s use of the definite article to refer to civilization, we can understand “civilization” as process, rather than entity, which draws our attention to the implications of carceral systems and penal reform for a social body, for a state, for a nation as a whole.

Sue joins a long series of authors who purport to educate their readership from a privileged position of insider knowledge, blending the air of authenticity and authority afforded by his novel’s medium of publication with the flexibility afforded by his fictional narrative. “Le souci du réalisme documentaire, du détail pittoresque ou technique, de l’entreprise de pédagogie populaire dont la littérature de grande diffusion est toujours porteuse,” writes Dominique Kalifa, “s’y conjugue avec le désir de voyeurisme et d’exotisme social, à son aise dans la peinture de la contre-société carcérale.”  

Here, Kalifa highlights the tension between the visible and the invisible, the familiar and the mysterious, the known and the unknown—oppositions as applicable to representations of the prison as to those of the poverty-stricken, the misérables. In turning to the prison, Sue at once satisfies the reader’s voyeuristic desire to enter into hidden, forbidden, mysterious spaces and forces the reader to confront the very world his escapist impulse motivated him to explore from the safety and comfort of his armchair. As Michel Nathan describes them, the Mystères de Paris are “à mi-chemin entre le roman noir et les études philanthropiques.”  

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134 Kalifa, Crime et culture, 166.

tion as a successful novelist to weigh in on contemporary arguments over social justice and reform. Sue is less a philosopher and more a moralizer in the Mystères, but he nonetheless makes use of Saint-Simonian and Fourierist arguments for social and institutional—but not political—reform.

In the nineteenth century, and especially during the July Monarchy, in the early 1840s, to denounce the luxury of prisons “au nom d’une conception intimidante et exemplaire de l’enfermement” was, admittedly, “une constante du discours pénitentiaire, resurgissant lors de chaque débat important sur le régime des prisons, la philosophie pénale ou l’état de la répression.”136 In the context of these debates and platitudinous representations, however, Sue nevertheless had the advantage of a wide, enthusiastic readership; as we can see with this example of La Force, he undoubtedly uses his influence to excite the ire and compassion of his readers in order to spur them to action and incite some degree of progress in rectifying the injustices he represents. As Sue had written months earlier at the beginning of the chapter “Saint-Lazare,” “Notre unique espoir est d’appeler l’attention des penseurs et des gens de bien sur de grandes misères sociales, dont on peut déplorer, mais non contester la réalité” (568), in spite of accusations of sensationalism and immorality. Following his explicit announcement that he will make use of characters known and new to illustrate his critiques and initiate the reader, Sue surprisingly begins his description of the prison by saying “Rien de sombre, rien de sinistre dans l’aspect de

136 Kalifa, Crime et culture, 159. Michel Foucault also refers to the commonplace of comparing the comfort of the prison relative to the destitution of the poor as “un postulat qui jamais n’a franchement été levé: il est juste qu’un condamné souffre physiquement plus que les autres hommes. La peine se dissocie mal d’un supplément de douleur physique. Que serait un châtiment incorporel?” Foucault, Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la Prison (Paris: Gallimard [Tel], 1975), 23.
cette maison de détention” (890). Heated in the winter and cooled in the summer, the prison is characterized by “une scrupuleuse propreté,” and there is an emphasis in the narration on the pure, fresh air that circulates throughout the rooms. Sue is quick, however, to set the record straight:

À la vue de ces établissements réunissant toutes les conditions du bien-être et de la salubrité, on reste malgré soi fort surpris, habitué que l’on est à regarder les prisons comme des antres tristes, sordides, malsains et ténébreux.

On se trompe.

Ce qui est triste, sordide et ténébreux, ce sont les bouges où, comme Morel le lapidaire, tant de pauvres et honnêtes ouvriers languissent épuisés, forcés d’abandonner leur grabat à leur femme infirme, et de laisser avec un impuissant désespoir leurs enfants hâves, affamés, grelotter de froid dans leur paille infecte. (891)

In addition to explicitly comparing the living conditions of Morel to those of the prison, Sue highlights this opposition with his choice of La Force, specifically. La Force— the same prison where Dickens places Charles Darnay in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Hugo places Thénardier in *Les Misérables*, and Balzac places Lucien de Rubempré in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*— was located in the 4th arrondissement, practically in the heart of the city; the choice of La Force underscores Sue’s contrasting of cleanliness with filth, comfort with misery, and humanity with animality, since the prison and the Cité were located just across the Seine from each other.

In the Cité, “Les maisons, couleur de boue, étaient percées de quelques rares fenêtres aux châssis vermoulus et presque sans carreaux. De noires, d’infectes allées conduisaient à des escaliers plus noirs, plus infects encore, et si perpendiculaires, que l’on pou-

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137 The narrator does, however, write that “Si l’aspect matériel d’une vaste maison de détention, construite dans toutes les conditions de bien-être et de salubrité que réclame l’humanité, n’offre au regard, nous l’avons dit, rien de sinistre, la vue des prisonniers cause une impression contraire” (940).
vait à peine les gravir à l’aide d’une corde à puits fixée aux murailles humides par des crampons de fer” (38). Fortresslike, the Cité is characterized by its claustrophobic, warren-like putrescence. Sue characterizes the prison (always distinct from the bagne) as a place where, for the price of his liberty, a criminal is guaranteed a roof over his head, a soft mattress, good food, and good pay for easy work with no expenses: “Un condamné endurci ne connaît donc ni la misère, ni la faim, ni le froid. Que lui importe l’horreur qu’il inspire aux honnêtes gens? Il ne les voit pas, il n’en connaît pas. Ses crimes font sa gloire, son influence, sa force auprès des bandits au milieu desquels il passera désormais sa vie” (891). The darkness, filth, and disease that characterize the Cité could not be more opposed to the light, airy, clean, and healthful air of the prison. At length, Sue
demonstrates the marked discrepancy between the deplorable conditions endured by the earnest Morels and the salubrious conditions enjoyed by the incarcerated.

**Unequal in the Eyes of the Law**

The paradoxical injustice in the discrepancy between the living conditions of the poor and the incarcerated does not mean, however, that there is no difference between the conditions of the rich and the poor even within the prison. Ever conscious that the social question and the penal system are inextricably linked, Sue strikingly opposes Maître Boulard, a notary serving time for embezzlement, and Jeanne Duport, a penniless victim of domestic abuse. A visit to Maître Boulard, a law officer (similar to a modern-day notary), by Bourdin, a bailiff loyal to him (the same man who comes to arrest Morel and take him to a debtors’ prison, earlier in the novel [410]), serves to show how class inequities persist even inside prison. Boulard is comfortably staying “à la pistole,” that is, in an individual room where those with the means and know-how can pay to be housed.138 The earnest, imperiled, and wrongfully imprisoned François Germain cannot get into one of these rooms— and ostensibly isolate himself from the rest of the prisoners whom he despises and who plot to kill him— because many of them are being repaired; Maître Boulard reveals that he took the last one (921). Before he asks Bourdin to make inquiries as to the fidelity of his mistress—showing how different his concerns are, compared to those

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138 Louis-Mathurin Moreau-Christophe writes in 1837, the same year he became inspector-general of France’s prisons, that “Il y a deux sortes de pistoles: la double; et la simple.” For the “double pistole,” “Son prix mensuel est de 9 fr. 85 cent. La simple pistole se compose de deux matelas, d’un traversin, d’une paire de draps, et de deux couvertures. Son prix mensuel est de 5 fr. 70 cent. […] On évalue à 2,500 fr. seulement le bénéfice net que l’administration retire annuellement de la location des effets de pistole, dans toutes les prisons de Paris.” Moreau-Christophe, *De l’état actuel des prisons en France, considéré dans ses rapports avec la théorie pénale du code* (Paris: A. Desrez, 1837), 220n2.
of the likes of the Morels, Germain, and Pique-Vinaigre (a pauper storyteller) and his sister, Jeanne Duport—, Maître Boulard describes the surprising comfort of his prison lodgings, saying “Je me suis installé le mieux possible dans ma cellule; je n’y suis pas trop mal; j’ai un poêle, j’ai fait venir un bon fauteuil, je fais trois longs repas, je digère, je me promène et je dors. Sauf les inquiétudes que me donne Alexandrine [sa maîtresse], vous voyez que je ne suis pas trop à plaindre” (ibid.). Furthermore, he has groceries and prepared foods sent to the prison, even making requests of “un pâté de thon mariné… c’est la saison,” and “un panier de vins composé, bourgogne, champagne et bordeaux, pareil au dernier, […] deux bouteilles de […] vieux cognac de 1817 et une livre de pur moka frais grillé et frais moulu,” and his down quilt (918). These indulgent requests are all the more outrageous because they are placed right after the chapter in which Jeanne Duport visits the prison and tells her brother that her husband has sold off all of her furniture, beaten her to obtain what little money she had saved, tried to prostitute their daughter, and brought his mistress to live in their family home, all while she cannot afford to obtain a legal separation from him. She cannot scrape together the 500 francs she needs to divorce him; Maître Boulard scoffs at the “misère d’une soixantaine de mille francs” he embezzles, laughing off his comfortable “vacation” in prison, a twenty-five-franc fine, and being forced to resign a post that means nothing to him anyway (919).

In addition to pointing out the unequal treatment of the wealthy and the poor in prison, Sue highlights the disparity between the punishments handed down for “white collar” and “petty” crimes. Imprisoned in La Force along with François Germain is the storyteller Pique-Vinaigre. Whereas Maître Boulard is incarcerated for stealing thou-
sands from his own clients while the law itself asserted his probity, Pique-Vinaigre has stolen 100 francs from a locked drawer in a stranger’s house. Sue asks rhetorically “Les crimes ne changent-ils pas de pénalité, même de nom, lorsqu’ils sont commis par certains privilégiés?” (925). Dripping with sarcasm, the narrator rhetorically attempts to characterize the nature of Maître Boulard’s crime, writing, “vol… ce mot est par trop brutal… il sent trop son mauvais lieu… vol!… fi donc! Abus de confiance, à la bonne heure! c’est plus délicat, plus décent et plus en rapport avec la condition sociale, la considération de ceux qui sont exposés à commettre… ce délit! car cela s’appelle délit… Crime serait aussi trop brutal” (ibid.). Here, Sue uses irony to make the important distinction that “Le crime ressort de la cour d’assises… L’abus de confiance, de la police correctionnelle” (ibid.).

Assiduously constructing his contrasting representations of the conscientious, beleaguered poor and the cavalier, ostentatious, dismissive rich, Sue, in one of many instances of metalepsis, strengthens his arguments against the unequal treatment of social classes implicit in the law first by directly addressed his readers to say that Boulard’s story is lifted straight from the Bulletin des Tribunaux of February 17, 1843, and then by actually citing the article in question (927). This example is of a bailiff, exactly like Maître Boulard, who is accused of an “abus de confiance” and sentenced to two months in prison and a twenty-five-franc fine. Sue also cites the case of a man named Tellier, who has been sentenced to twenty years of forced labor and the pillory for the theft of some old clothes, bedsheets, worn-out shoes, pots with holes in them, and two bottles of
absinthe.139 Naturally, the reader can see that the stories of Pique-Vinaigre (whose story is modeled after Tellier’s) and Maître Boulard are novelistic adaptations of these same stories, put into the service of Sue’s political argument for legal reform. Sue makes himself unequivocally clear, summarizing his point for the reader’s benefit:

Cette partialité de la loi est barbare et profondément immorale. […] Nous voudrions que, grâce à une réforme législative, l’abus de confiance, commis par un officier public, fût qualifié vol, et assimilé, pour le minimum de la peine, au vol domestique: et, pour le maximum, au vol avec effraction et récidive. (926–27)

Aiming to excite what he would undoubtedly call his reader’s “innate” sense of justice, Sue deploys the excesses characteristic of melodrama in order to make the injustices of the carceral system at once more apparent and more repellent in this social problem novel.140

Sue attempts to inspire outrage on the part of his readers in three ways. The egotistical, callous Maître Boulard, by having claimed the only remaining private cell in the prison, deprives François Germain, with whom the readers are meant to sympathize, from attaining this safe haven. Additionally, class inequality runs rampant even within the prison, where Sue clearly argues that all incarcerated people should be treated equally and humanely. In Sue’s portrait, prison is for the poor both more comfortable than their homes and less comfortable than it is for the wealthy. Finally, Maître Boulard can expiate his “white collar crime” by whiling away the hours, eating well and sleeping, and paying a fine, while a young, destitute woman is denied the protection of the law because she

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139 Lyon-Caen notes that the judgement cited concerns “Tessier” (927n1).

cannot afford it. This last point is very much in sync with arguments Sue makes elsewhere in the novel, arguing for access to legal protection and financial education for the poor, and philanthropy on the part of those with means for the benefit of the deserving but hopelessly disadvantaged.

**Penal Reform**

As we have seen, as Sue became more and more heavily influenced by the Romantic socialists, so did he advocate social remedies to social problems with increasing regularity. In addition to his exhortations for the rich to come to the aid of the deserving poor and for social institutions to mitigate and alleviate the systematic disadvantage experienced by society’s dispossessed, Sue increasingly saw the need for reforms in France’s criminal justice system. These issues figure among the most prominent Sue takes on, as well as some of the most prominent debates that played out over the course of the final years of the Restoration and throughout the July Monarchy, coming to a head precisely around the mid-1840s when Sue’s popularity was at its apogee. In the *Mystères de Paris*, Sue targets his arguments for penal reform to three specific causes: the rehabilitation of the criminal, the institution of the cell system, and the abolition of capital punishment.

**Historical Background**

Debates on penal reform circulated energetically over the course of the July Monarchy, with Benthamian panoptic systems, the Pennsylvania system, and the Auburn system dominating. Bentham’s Panopticon, wherein a central tower permits the constant (or apparently constant) surveillance of prisoners, is well known. The Pennsylvania system, also known as the solitary system, was first instituted at Eastern State Penitentiary (con-
structed in Philadelphia, PA, in 1829). The system imposes quasi-monastic solitary confinement with the intent of maintaining control over prisoners by their isolation and inspiring silent contemplation, remorse, and penance—hence the term “penitentiary.” The Auburn system, named after Auburn Prison (constructed in 1818 in Auburn, NY), imposed complete silence at all times, and entailed forced labor by day and solitary confinement by night.

For logistical, financial, and cultural reasons, Beaumont and Tocqueville, although “seduced” by the system in use at Eastern State Penitentiary, ultimately endorsed the Auburn system in *Du Système pénitentiaire*. In contrast to the Americans, the French population was more accustomed to physical violence than solitary confinement, and so Tocqueville would have tolerated the use of whippings as punishments; the minitre de l’Intérieur Casimir Pierre Perier, better informed of public opinion, absolutely disrecommended it, however. Beaumont and Tocqueville essentially advocated making the French prison at once more and less harsh—but more punitive, above all else, as they hardly believed in the possibility for prisoners’ moral rehabilitation.

The publication of Beaumont and Tocqueville’s landmark report on American prison systems, and the ensuing controversy, marked a new phase in the debates on prison reform. “L’isolement cellulaire, total ou partiel,” writes Michelle Perrot, “n’était pas la pierre de touche de la réforme, mais plutôt le solitary confinement pour un temps limité.” In the wake of the publication of *Système pénitentiaire*, debates on penal re-

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142 Ibid., 132 (italics in original).
form—and on the issue of solitary confinement, specifically—swirled throughout the July Monarchy press. “Il est impossible, et sans doute inutile, de rentrer ici dans les détails d’une polémique qui s’étale dans la presse (ainsi dans Le Siècle) et dépasse les frontières,” writes Perrot in her monumental study of crime and punishment in nineteenth-century France. Without making a foolhardy attempt to lay out these decades-long arguments here, it is worthwhile to note some debates’ most emblematic and representative participants.

If Tocqueville and Beaumont were the heads of the pro-cell system camp, so to speak, Louis-Mathurin Moreau-Christophe, who became inspector-general of France’s prisons in 1837, was its lieutenant. Other leading supporters of the cell system were the vicomte Louis-Hermann de Brétignères de Courteilles, Frédéric-Auguste Demetz and Guillaume-Abel Blouet, Alphonse Bérenger, and Régis Allier. Moreau-Christophe was equally matched with Charles Lucas, a member of the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques, who was strongly opposed to the Philadelphia System; Lucas was joined in

143 Ibid., 136.


On December 27, 1839, \textit{Le Siècle} published an article, “Des effets de l’emprisonnement cellulaire à Philadelphie,” recounting a report by Charles Lucas to the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques arguing that the Pennsylvania system did not, in fact, counter recidivism, and that Eastern State’s cell system, as opposed to the Auburn system, exacerbated both health problems (particularly pulmonary ailments due to poor circulation in the prison) and mental illness. Michael Espérance Hersant, former French consul in Philadelphia, wrote to the editor of the \textit{Journal des Débats} on February 10, 1840 shortly after spending four years in Philadelphia to refute Lucas’s unfavorable report,
passionately supporting the cell system and attempting to show how Lucas “skewed the numbers” to support his own biased views. In his response to Lucas, Hersant refers to the work of his fellow supporter of solitary confinement, Moreau-Christophe. A fervent supporter of the cell system, Moreau-Christophe, as inspector-general of France’s prisons, represented France at the second Congrès pénitentiaire in Brussels of 1847, along with none other than Beaumont. In Brussels, Moreau-Christophe proudly reported that

Depuis le congrès de Francfort [de 1846], la France […] n’a fait qu’un pas; mais un pas immense, comme la France en fait, — quand la France marche. (On rit.) […] Le système de ce projet, vous le connaissez, messieurs, car, j’aime à le dire pour l’honneur de nos travaux, le gouvernement français, déjà éclairé par les enquêtes qu’il avait faites, a adopté la presque totalité des résolutions que vous avez votées. Ainsi, le système de l’emprisonnement individuel, applicable à toutes les catégories de détenus, prévenus, ou condamnés; à toutes les durées de détention depuis un jour jusqu’à perpétuité, aux femmes comme aux hommes, aux jeunes détenus comme aux adultes, est admis comme principe général dans le nouveau projet de loi.

He describes the solitary system as “essentiellement préservateur, essentiellement moralisateur,” proclaiming it to be “tout à fait rationnel; car l’emprisonnement, quelle que soit sa durée, est une peine publique […].” Beaumont, fully in support of Moreau-

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148 *Journal des Débats*, February 13, 1840.

149 Hersant refers to Moreau-Christophe’s *De la mortalité et de la folie dans le régime pénitentiaire*, presented to the Académie royale de Médecine, but mistakes the title of the work as “Mémoire sur la mortalité et la folie dans le régime pénitentiaire.”

150 *Débats du Congrès pénitentiaire de Bruxelles: Session de 1847* (Bruxelles: Deltombe, 1847), 31. Even before the law outlining the cell system presented to the Chamber of Peers became law, some departmental prisons preemptively began constructing prisons that accommodated the cell system, Moreau-Christophe reported.

151 Ibid., 31, 32–33.
Christophe’s report, rhetorically asks “serait-il vrai de dire que le mouvement moral de la réforme [pénale] s’est arrêté? Non; jamais celui-ci n’a été plus rapide.”

This incredibly small selection of examples, taken from a mountain of reports, treatises, newspaper articles, open letters, pamphlets, and speeches published over the course the July Monarchy serves to show the prolonged, intense interest taken by the public, all over Europe and across the Atlantic, in the enormously complex and multifaceted reform not only of prisons themselves, but of the entire penal system. Beaumont explained at the Congrès pénitentiaire de Bruxelles that

ce qui est plus que l’opinion du gouvernement, quelque respectable, quelque considérable qu’elle soit, c’est l’opinion publique. En France, les vives répugnances de l’opinion publique pour le régime cellulaire se sont apaisées; et les inquiétudes, telles qu’elles alarmaient ceux mêmes qui, comme moi, sont convaincus que ce système est excellent, on aujourd’hui cessé. […] Il existe aujourd’hui un sentiment général, profond, que le régime d’emprisonnement cellulaire est le meilleur. Vous avez pu juger vous-mêmes que les vives attaques, dirigées naguère contre ce système par les organes de la presse libérale et nationale en France, ne se reproduisent plus maintenant.

While Beaumont is clearly overstating the success of the efforts of his like-minded colleagues in the audience of reformers attending the conference, he meaningfully highlights the importance of public opinion, as well as the role of the press in debates on prison reform.

Of these debates, Perrot highlights the fact that “[t]out le monde s’en mêle, y compris les romanciers.” Dickens, for example devoted chapter seven of his trave-

152 Ibid., 35.
153 Ibid., 35 (my italics).
logue, *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842), to “Philadelphia, and its Solitary Prison.” He makes his opposition to the cell system clear, writing of the Pennsylvania System, “I am well convinced that [its intention] is kind, humane, and meant for reformation; but I am persuaded that those who devised this system of Prison Discipline, and those benevolent gentlemen who carry it into execution, do not know what it is that they are doing.” Describing the prison, its inhabitants and its workers at length, Dickens states explicitly that “[t]he system here, is rigid, strict, and hopeless solitary confinement. I believe it, in its effects, to be cruel and wrong.” Sue makes his own intervention in these debates on solitary confinement chiefly— but certainly not exclusively, as we have seen— by means of *Les Mystères de Paris*. Sue’s stance was sufficiently well known that Moreau-Christophe himself, in order to refute Dickens’s condemnation of the cell system, writes “Si je voulais jouter [sic], à armes égales, avec MM. [Léon] Faucher et [Charles] Lucas,— à Charles Dickens, ennemi de Cherry-Hill [c’est-à-dire l’isolement cellulaire], j’opposerais Eugène Sue qui en est partisan. […] [D]isons avec M. de Tocqueville: ‘Tous ceux qui, en Europe, s’élèvent contre le système de Philadelphie, ne l’ont jamais vu fonctionner sous leurs yeux.’” Here, it is important to note that we are not talking about just anyone; rather, Moreau-Christophe, the inspector-general of all French prisons and a

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157 Ibid.

man who represented France alongside none other than Beaumont at Brussels, refutes the dissident Dickens, a titan of English serial fiction and an unquestionably canonical author, by invoking Dickens’s French counterpart, the “roi du feuilleton” Eugène Sue.

Moreau-Christophe could have cited any number of reports and statistics— Beaumont’s, for that matter—, but he instead cites a novel, and a novelist. This gesture points to the exceptional influence of Sue’s novel; the remarkable capacity of a novelist and a work of fiction to influence public opinion; and the significantly reciprocal influence, interplay, reflection, and resemblance of newspapers and novels, of fact and fiction.\(^{159}\) (We will return to the question of the press and the public sphere, and the ways Hector Berthelot capitalizes on the the newspaper’s role in forming public opinion in nineteenth-century Montreal in Chapter 3.) The runaway success of the Mystères de Paris with a wide variety of readers— from locales both urban and rural, French and foreign, from the working poor to the aristocracy—, afforded Sue an extraordinary and even unprecedented power to reflect and form public opinion on the subjects of rehabilitation, solitary confinement, and capital punishment.

**Rehabilitation and Hypocrisy**

At the root of Sue’s critiques of France’s carceral system are answers to the tacitly posed question, “What is the purpose of imprisoning a person?” To isolate him from so-
ciety? To inflict pain on him? Or to reform and better him? Philosophies of incarceration, focused on social isolation, penance, and rehabilitation, lie at the heart of works by the likes of Lucas, Moreau-Christophe, Tocqueville and Beaumont, and Villermé. Foucault explains that, following the double shift in punishment of crimes away from spectacle and pain at the turn of the nineteenth century, the body

s’y trouve en position d’instrument ou d’intermédiaire: si on intervient sur lui en l’enfermant, ou en le faisant travailler, c’est pour priver l’individu d’une liberté considérée à la fois comme un droit et un bien. Le corps, selon cette pénalité, est pris dans un système de contrainte et de privation, d’obligations et d’interdits. La souffrance physique, la douleur du corps lui-même ne sont plus les éléments constitutants de la peine. Le châtiment est passé d’un art des sensations insupportables à une économie des droits suspendus.¹⁶⁰

In one of the many polemical digressions that fill the final chapters of the novel, Sue writes “Répétons-le: la société ne tue le meurtrier ni pour le faire souffrir, ni pour lui infliger la loi du talion… Elle le tue pour le mettre dans l’impossibilité de nuire… elle le tue pour que l’exemple de sa punition serve de frein aux meurtriers à venir” (1141).

Linking his arguments for solitary confinement to broader penal reform and rehabilitation, Sue, in his commentary following the lengthy episode in La Force, tackles the issues of recidivism and prisoners’ reintegration into society.

The problem that criminals’ lives in prisons are more comfortable than the lives of the poor is as important as the problems that ex-convicts confront with when they no longer enjoy the “luxury” of prison. From Sue’s point of view, prison conditions do not encourage remorse and expiation, but rather foment crime, as we have seen. Even if a convict manages to be reformed by his time in prison and endeavors to lead an honest

¹⁶⁰ Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, 18.
life, the prejudice he encounters as soon as his past is discovered undoes all of his “écha-faudage de réhabilitation si péniblement élevé” (892). Indeed, Sue argues that a released convict’s life is even more difficult than before his incarceration due to the bad reputation that follows him, writing that “La condition d’un libéré est donc beaucoup plus fâcheuse, plus pénible, plus difficile qu’elle ne l’était avant sa première faute: il marche entouré d’entraves, d’écueils; il lui faut braver la répulsion, les dédaïns, souvent même la plus profonde misère…” (917). He asks his readers: “Quelles précautions la société a-t-elle prises pour l’empêcher de retomber dans le crime? Aucune…” (916). He attempts to expose society’s hypocrisy as he returns to the subject of criminality as contagion, arguing that “La perversité contagieuse de vos geôles est tellement connue, est si justement redoutée, que celui qui en sort est partout un sujet de mépris, d’aversion et d’épouvante; serait-il vingt fois homme de bien, il ne trouvera presque nulle part de l’occupation” (ibid.). Addressing society directly, he continues, “c’est presque toujours la nécessité que vous lui faites qui le conduit à un second crime” (917). Shifting from a narrator’s voice to an editorial one, Sue apostrophizes those who control the prison system:

il est démontré qu’au lieu de corriger, votre système pénitentiaire déprave.

Au lieu d’améliorer, il empire…

Au lieu de guérir de légères affections morales, il les rend incurables.

Votre aggravation de peine, impitoyablement appliquée à la récidive, est donc inique, barbare, puisque cette récidive est, pour ainsi dire, une conséquence forcée de vos institutions pénales.

Le terrible châtiment qui frappe les récidivistes serait juste et logique, si vos prisons moralisaient, épuraient les détenus, et si à l’expiration de leur peine une
bonne conduite leur était, sinon facile, du moins généralement possible… (ibid, my italics)

Repeatedly using possessive adjectives, Sue draws a line in the sand, casting the blame for the carceral system in use; accepting no responsibility for the social ills he decries, Sue practically guilt-trips his readers into aligning themselves with him against those maintaining the status quo of the carceral system. Faced with such a forceful, editorial diatribe as this, who could object to his accusations without appearing either hypocritical or complicit in maintaining an unjust and ineffective system?

Sue yet again highlights the advantages of solitary confinement, portraying it as a safeguard against society’s prejudice towards those who have theoretically “paid their debts.” “Un libéré endurci propose une affaire à un libéré repentant,” Sue writes; “celui-ci, malgré de dangereuses menaces, refuse cette criminelle association; aussitôt une délation anonyme dévoile la vie de ce malheureux qui voulait à tout pris cacher et expier une première faute par une conduite honorable” (892), and the repentant convict, rejected by those for whom he might honestly work, is returned to an inescapable state of misery and desperation that leads to crime. This scenario, of course, plays out in the novel: we learn, through père Micou’s conversation with Nicolas, that le Gros Boiteux will be arriving at La Force either the same day as their meeting or the next, just as père Micou says that le Gros Boiteux will be imprisoned “Pour un vol commis avec un libéré qui voulait rester honnête et travailler” (897). In short, Sue draws attention to the hypocrisy of a society that at once claims to “rehabilitate” criminals by means of its faulty prison system and denies supposedly rehabilitated people the chance to return to society; Sue points out that,
by irremediably branding people as criminals, society implicitly acknowledges the failure of its own carceral system to accomplish its purported goal.

_Scourge and Panacea: Contagious Criminality and Solitary Confinement_

In his descriptions of the prison, which we examined in the context of his advocacy for social reforms, Sue emphasizes the cleanliness of the air, as well as the space itself. As he continues guiding the reader through La Force, as we saw earlier in Sue’s opposition of the prison and the Cité, he goes on to oppose the prison’s cleanliness to the received idea of a parallel between filth and criminality, by means of the concept of contagion. In keeping with the pattern (especially in the last few books of the novel) of introducing a new space, becoming sidetracked with a (lengthy) polemical digression, and then returning to the plot of the novel, the narrator announces that “Dans les scènes suivantes, nous tâcherons de démontrer les monstrueuses et inévitables conséquences de la réclusion en commun” (892). With no shortage of strategic lexicological choices, Sue goes on to proclaim that

Après des siècles d’épreuves barbares, d’hésitations pernicieuses, on paraît comprendre qu’il est peu raisonnable de plonger dans une atmosphère abominablement viciée des gens qu’un air pur et salubre pourrait seul sauver.

Que de siècles pour reconnaître qu’en agglomérant les êtres gangrenés, on redouble l’intensité de leur corruption, qui devient ainsi incurable!

Que de siècles pour reconnaître qu’il n’est, en un mot, qu’un remède à cette lèpre envahissante qui menace le corps social…

L’isolement! (ibid., my italics)

Using a lexicon of criminality as pathogen—“air pur et salubre,” “êtres gangrenés,” “lèpre envahissante,” and “le corps social”—Sue emphasizes that the “illness” of society is
not simply poverty and its consequences, but rather a collective delinquency, inaction that allows social problems—circumstantial, incidental problems, rather than innate or biological ones—to fester. “Dans le discours médico-social qu’il [Sue] développe” writes Anne-Marie Thiesse, “le Peuple est moins conçu comme une collection d’individus caractérisés par une même situation économique que comme un grand Corps malade requérant une thérapeutique spécifique.”

Sue explicitly outlines the adverse effects of criminality as contagion: the space, structure, and organization of a prison not employing the cell system forces any given person to be surrounded by the criminal; this person, however innocent or nefarious, inexorably becomes criminal and, in turn, exerts the same pernicious influence those around him. Claiming that he minimizes, rather than exaggerates, criminals’ horror of solitary confinement, Sue directly addresses the reader to say

Il faut que l’on sache avec quel audacieux dédain presque tous les grands criminels parlent des plus terribles châtiments dont la société puisse les frapper.

Alors peut-être on comprendra l’urgence de substituer à ces peines impuissantes, à ces réclusions contagieuses, la seule punition, nous allons le démontrer, qui puisse terrifier les scélérats les plus déterminés. (946–47, my italics)

Shortly after this claim, the Squelette (a hardened, revered criminal), after laughing and mocking the guillotine and the fear it is supposed to inspire, reacts with horror to the idea of being confined to a cell in isolation, saying

— En cellule! […] Ne parle pas de ça… En cellule!… Tout seul!… […] j’aimerais mieux qu’on me coupe les bras et les jambes… Tout seul!… entre quatre murs!… Tout seul… sans avoir des vieux de la pègre avec qui rire! […] Je pré-

He goes on to say that rather than spend his life in solitary confinement, he would commit suicide. Finally he admits that if he were locked in a cell, even though he fears “ni feu ni diable,” he would be afraid; Nicolas asks him of what, and he replies “D’être tout seul…” (ibid.).

Reinforcing the notion of communicable criminality, of criminality as an acquired trait rather than an innate, instinctive, or intrinsic element of an individual, Sue insists that “Un jour aussi, peut-être, la société saura que le mal est une maladie accidentelle et non pas organique” (893). But how might the reader reconcile this claim against “innate” or “inherited” criminality when Sue devotes hundreds of pages to the case of the Martial family? As we saw in our discussion of Sue’s Fourierist influences, the guillotined *pater familias* of the Martial family, his widow, second son Nicolas, and eldest daughter Cale-basse all relish the criminal life they lead; the eldest son, Martial, is desperate to rescue the two youngest children, François and Amandine, from the clutches of their mother for fear of them being corrupted by the pernicious influence of their family. Martial’s need to rescue them before it is “too late” reinforces Sue’s argument that criminality is not, in fact, a pathological condition one can be born with.

When Nicolas winds up imprisoned in La Force, along with François Germain, Sue writes “Déjà la contagieuse et détestable influence de la prison en commun portait ses fruits” (894). Nicolas is revered in prison as much for his father’s reputation as for his own evident penchant for crime and violence. During his visit from the père Micou,
Nicolas says “Au moins si on me raccourcit comme mon père… j’aurai joui de la vie […]. Depuis que je suis ici, je m’amuse comme un roi. S’il y avait eu des lampions et des fusées, on aurait illuminé et tiré des fusées en mon honneur, quand on a su que j’étais le fils du fameux Martial, le guillotiné” (896). Sue persistently builds his attack on prison systems that do not isolate prisoners from one another, reinforcing his argument that criminality is contagious. Several chapters later, François Germain, during his visit with Rigolette, confirms the deleterious effects of mixing with criminals. Throughout the novel, up to this point, Germain’s purity, melancholic altruism, and earnestness have been lauded, even before the reader sees him for the first time. Although, in the description of his appearance, we read that “En un mot, rien de plus touchant que cette physionomie souffrante, affectueuse, résignée, comme aussi rien de plus honnête, de plus loyal que le cœur de ce jeune homme” (928), Germain himself says “je m’habitue peu à peu aux affreux entretiens que, malgré moi, j’entends toute la journée; oui, maintenant j’écoute avec une morne apathie des horreurs qui, pendant les premiers jours, me soulevaient d’indi-

Figure 1.6. François Germain tormented in prison. (Illustration by Édouard de Beaumont in Sue, Les Mystères de Paris [Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1843–1844], 3:17)
gnation” (931). Thus we see that physical proximity between criminals begets more crime, vice, and immorality, even between the innocent, wrongfully imprisoned and the criminal.

For Sue, solitary confinement would be the ideal means of preventing the spread of contagious criminality within the prison. In prisons that do not isolate their prisoners,

Ceux qui s’épouvantaient le plus de cette hideuse communion s’y habituent promptement; la contagion les gagne: environnés d’êtres dégradés, n’entendant que des paroles infâmes, une sorte de farouche émulation les entraîne, et, soit pour imposer à leurs compagnons en luttant de cynisme avec eux, soit pour s’étourdir par cette ivresse morale, presque toujours les nouveaux venus affichent autant de dépravation et d’insolente gaieté que les habitués de la prison. (893, my italics)

The narrator speculates that had Nicolas (or the Maître d’école) been put into a solitary cell, would have immediately begun reflecting on his misdeeds; even if he did not repent of his crimes, he would at least demonstrate a “frayeur salutaire.” Approaching the over-determination that characterizes the thesis novel, Sue puts his words in the mouth of François Germain, who explicitly draws a link between the space of the prison, his contact with the other prisoners, and his increasing indifferent to criminality when Germain says

À force de vivre dans ces horribles lieux, notre esprit finit par s’habituer aux pensées criminelles, comme notre oreille s’habite aux paroles grossières qui retentissent continuellement autour de nous. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! je comprends maintenant que l’on puisse entrer ici innocent, quoique accusé, et que l’on en sorte perverti…. (931–32)

Fully in the service of Sue’s arguments for the isolation of prisoners and a pathology of crime, Germain laments that
ceux qui [...] nous condamnent à cette odieuses fréquentation [...] ignorent donc qu’à la longue l’air que l’on respire ici devient contagieux… mortel à l’honneur [...] . On dirait [que les autres prisonniers] ont la fatale puissance de vicier l’atmosphère où il vivent… Il me semble que je sens la corruption me gagner par tous les pores…. (932)

Adding another argument in favor of isolation, Germain alludes to the same problems associated with encountering fellow ex-convicts that Sue, in his introduction, and Pique-Vinaigre do. Germain points out that isolation would prevent other incarcerated people from recognizing him, and thus be rendered unable to expose his damning past, should they cross paths following their release, thus recalling society’s hypocrisy, of which we saw Sue’s indictment earlier.

By employing a lexicon of disease in his arguments for the cell system, Sue anticipated the metaphor of quarantine that Foucault would use in Surveiller et punir to trace the development of modern carceral systems. At the beginning of his chapter on panopticism, Foucault sketches out the way “lepers” and “plague victims” are restricted to “spaces of exclusion,” writing that “[t]ous les mécanismes de pouvoir qui, de nos jours encore, se disposent autour de l’anormal, pour le marquer comme pour le modifier, composent ces deux formes dont elles dérivent de loin.”162 France’s systems of incarceration under the July Monarchy are focused uniquely on punishment and removing criminals from society— that is, their quarantine—, rather than on pathological treatment and rehabilitation. In repeated editorializing passages, Sue directly addresses the reader to indict society and expose its hypocrisy for taking an “out of sight, out of mind” approach to its carceral system, and for having done nothing the curb criminal behavior. Foucault writes

\[\text{162 Foucault, \textit{Surveiller et punir}, 233.}\]
that, following the penal reforms of the early nineteenth century, “l’essentiel de la peine que nous autres, juges, nous infligeons, ne croyez pas qu’il consiste à punir; il cherche à corriger, redresser, ‘guérir’; une technique de l’amélioration refoule, dans la peine, la stricte expiation du mal, et libère les magistrats du vilain métier de châtier.”

Solitary confinement affords the prisoner a degree of anonymity— which will protect the rehabilitated inmate from social stigma and discrimination once he has “paid his debt” to society—, coupled with the solitude to reflect on his crimes, and ultimately to repent, following a Christian moralistic framework for redemption.

*Capital Punishment*

The question of instituting the cell system goes hand in hand with the question of abolishing capital punishment, for, as Alphonse Bérenger, shortly after being made a peer, pointed out to the abolitionists in the Chamber of Deputies on October 5, 1830 that the death penalty could only be abolished once a suitable penal system was put into effect to replace it. The popular newspapers of the July Monarchy— and especially those associated with the worker movements, such as *La Ruche populaire*, which Sue helped support— frequently give political explanations of criminality; “Le point d’origine de la délinquance, [les journaux populaires] l’assignent non pas à l’individu criminel (il n’en est que l’occasion ou la première victime) mais à la société […]” Sue would come to be closely associated with two aspects of penal reform: the widespread use of solitary con-

163 Ibid., 17.

164 Petit, *Ces peines obscures*, 221.

165 Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, 336.
finement and the abolition of the death penalty. Taking an increasingly political tone in the latter volumes of the novel, Sue claims that the fear of absolute isolation evinced by even the most hardened criminals is an argument in its favor, and then turns to the question of the death penalty, claiming that he shall show how solitary confinement in prisons could even lead to the abolishment of the death penalty, which he calls “le suprême vestige d’une législation barbare” (949). Through the words and actions of his protagonist, Rodolphe, Sue rails against the inefficacy and laxity of the criminal justice system of the July Monarchy; he argues that capital punishment does nothing to either deter crime or promote beneficent acts, and instead serves only to dispose of a criminal with whom society no longer wishes to be burdened, leaving insufficient time for repentance or rehabilitation by expiation. As Rodolphe says, “Du tribunal à l’échafaud le trajet est trop court” (158).

Sue did not argue, however, for replacing capital punishment with perpetual confinement, solitary or otherwise. “The ‘reformist’ credentials” of Sue’s arguments against the death penalty “were somewhat blunted by the accompanying proposal to replace punishment with the blinding […]” Prendergast writes. Sue’s proposition of blinding as an alternative to the death penalty is not without precedent: going back as far as the Statutes of William the Conqueror, we find both the banning of capital punishment and its re-

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166 Later, in another digression from the narrative, Sue returns to the subject of capital punishment and its alternatives, writing “Nous croyons, nous, que la peine est trop barbare, et qu’elle n’épouvante pas assez…” (1141).

167 Prendergast, *For the People by the People?*, 36.
placement with blinding (and castration).\textsuperscript{168} At many points in the novel, Sue argues in favor of solitary confinement, blinding as an alternative to the death penalty, and giving the criminal the opportunity for remorse and repentance; he focuses on means of using punishment of the body to effect the rehabilitation of the soul.\textsuperscript{169}

Early in the novel, Sue’s digressions are less frequent, less lengthy, and less polemical than they will become. Nonetheless, Sue’s treatment of blinding as an alternative to execution or imprisonment of the Maître d’école in the last chapter of the first part of the novel is instructive. Guilty of forgery, theft, and murder, the Maître d’école escaped Rochefort and hideously disfigured himself with vitriol to evade detection and recapture. After baiting the Maître d’école with the opportunity to commit another theft, Rodolphe captures him and, rather than hand him over to the authorities, explains how and why he will pronounce his own sentence and exercise his own form of justice. This scene is useful first, because it allows us to see how Sue’s ideas develop over the course of the redaction of his novel and second, because we are able to see how Rodolphe, as an exactor of vigilante justice, justifies his own expiatory, providential justice. Rodolphe tells the Maître d’école that “En m’emparant de vous, en vous mettant désormais hors l’impossi-

\textsuperscript{168} In a modern English translation of the Statutes, the tenth statute reads “I forbid that any one be killed or hung for any fault, but his eyes shall be torn out or his testicles cut off.” Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages, ed. and trans. Ernest F. Henderson (London: George Bell and Sons, 1903), 8. Marx also likens the Maître d’école’s punishment to Origen’s self-castration, and claims that blinding as punishment was practiced in the “thoroughly Christian” Byzantine Empire. Marx, The Holy Family, 237.

\textsuperscript{169} On April 28, 1832, a law reforming the 1810 Code pénal and the Code d’instruction criminelle was passed, reducing the number of offenses incurring capital punishment. See Nouveau code pénal: suivi de la loi qui modifie le code d’instruction criminelle, de celles sur les cours d’assises, du jury, des délits de la presse, de la contrainte par corps, etc. (Dijon: Victor Lagier, 1832). Generally, acts of murder (obviously, especially concerning members of the royal family), treason, or insurrection carry the death penalty. It was not until February 26, 1848, following the formation of a provisional government and the declaration of the Second Republic, that the death penalty in political cases was abolished. The death penalty was not completely abolished in France until 1981. See Part II: Punition in Foucault, Surveiller et punir, 87–155.
bilité de nuire, je servais la société [...] Vos crimes demandent une réparation éclatante” (154). Sue echoes these words much later in the novel, clearly stating that “L’aveuglement mettra le meurtrier dans l’impossibilité de s’évader et de nuire désormais à personne” (949). In The Holy Family, Marx writes that Rodolphe “repeats all the trivial objections to capital punishment: that it has no effect on the criminal and no effect on the people, for whom it seems to be an entertaining scene.”

Seeking to prevent the Maître d’école from committing new crimes and to give him ample occasion for philosophical reflection and repentance based on Christian modes of expiation, Rodolphe has David, his personal physician, blind the criminal, sending him out into the world to rely on the kindness of strangers, and the pity of those as cruel as himself.

Sue uses the scene of the Maître d’école’s blinding to critique prisons that allow criminals to interact with one another, saying that in prison, the Maître d’école would “dominer encore cette tourbe par [sa] force et par [sa] scélératesse! pour satisfaire encore [ses] instincts d’oppression brutale!… pour être abhorré, redouté de tous” (157). He goes on to reject the option of life imprisonment or capital punishment, pointing out that chains can be broken, walls can be breached, and that the Maître d’école should not even hope for death. Reinforcing Sue’s arguments, Rodolphe tells the Maître d’école that execution “te voilerait l’horreur expiatrice du supplice […]. Si tu ne te repens pas… je ne veux plus que tu espères dans cette vie, moi…” (157). As the narrator will echo in the episode recounting the preparation of Calebasse and her mother, the widow Martial, for the guillotine, Rodolphe says “Tout crime s’expie et se rachète, a dit le Sauveur, mais

pour qui veut sincèrement expiation et repentir” (157–58). Marx writes that this objection concerns profane criminal justice and that Rodolphe instead “wants to link vengeance on the criminal with repentance and consciousness of sin in the criminal, corporal punishment with moral punishment, sensuous torture with the non-sensuous pangs of remorse.”

Indeed, it is the possibility for (religious) repentance, rather than (social) rehabilitation that concerns Sue in his discussion of capital punishment and blinding as its alternative, but it does not seem as though Sue apprehends the deleterious effects of such a violent punishment.

Whether deliberately or accidentally, the Maître d’école’s fate would seem to undermine Sue’s arguments in favor of blinding’s rehabilitative potential. Just as Rodolphe serves as a model which Fleur-de-Marie imitates, prompting La Louve to imagine “castles in Spain” during their time together the in Saint-Lazare prison, Rodolphe serves as a model for the Maître d’école. Late in the novel, when the Maître d’école is imprisoned in the cellar of the Cœur-Saignant—a carceral space of solitary confinement, although not an institutional one—, Tortillard pushes the Chouette down the stairs as she mirthfully taunts the miserable, blinded criminal. Once she is within his grasp, the Maître d’école mercilessly gouges out her eyes, and then strangulates her. Firstly, blinding the Maître d’école clearly does not have Rodolphe’s intended effect of rendering him incapable of causing further harm to those he encounters. Secondly, Rodolphe’s objectively violent behavior begets more violence in this instance of narrative doubling. Rodolphe’s vengeful act

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171 Ibid., 237 (italics in original).
is replicated in the Maître d’école’s vengeance on his unrepentant former criminal accomplice.

Along with the Maître d’école’s gruesome blinding, the Mystères de Paris includes the chilling—and audacious—representation of the preparation, body and soul, of the widow Martial and her daughter Calebasse for execution in the novel’s final pages (1131–39). Sue justifies the portrait of the “toilette des condamnés dans toute son effroyable vérité” because he puts it into the service of his arguments against capital punishment. Not only is the an execution a public spectacle, having the unintended and undesirable effect of normalizing such ineffective violence in the eyes of the people, but, as Rodolphe argues during the “justice scene” where the Maître d’école is blinded, it affords no occasion for the criminal to reflect on his crimes and repent. Repeatedly, the widow Martial rejects a confessor, unrepentant and defiant before the executioner. Considering the effects of the death penalty on both the condemned and on the rest of society, Sue rigorously constructs an argument, his own intervention in debates that raged for decades, even since the Revolution of 1789. “Au point de vue de la société, de la religion, de l’humanité,” he writes, “c’est pourtant quelque chose qui doit importer à tous que cet homicide juridique commis au nom de l’intérêt de tous…” (1140-41).

In Sue’s opinion, capital punishment is too barbaric in its violence and too rapid in its spectacle. In order to serve as an effective deterrent to violence, a punishment must inspire horror on the part of the “potentially criminal” and compel repentance on the part of the guilty. Sue certainly favors blinding as an alternative to the death penalty, but does not by any means negate the usefulness of prisons; instead, he argues that the carceral
system in use is not just ineffective, but is actually counterproductive, and that a change to the cell system, employing solitary confinement, would be advantageous for both society and the incarcerated insofar as it would promote the rehabilitation of the soul through reflection, prayer and repentance, if not rehabilitation of the body or the citizen. As Béranger stipulated over a decade before Sue, solitary confinement “ne doit pas être une vengeance mais un moyen de correction.”

Conclusion

Throughout the chapters of The Holy Family that Marx devotes to his critique of the Mystères de Paris, he mocks both Rodolphe’s specious religious justification for his megalomaniac vigilante justice and Sue’s use of his deus ex machina hero, all while judging Sue’s reformism to be insufficiently radical. Even if the Mystères de Paris do not demonstrate the kind of proletariat-led reform and revolution that Blanqui, and Marx after him, advocated, it must be remembered that this novel was written over the course of a period of transition and development in Sue’s political and social thinking. It is worth pointing out that the Mystères de Paris were not censored at all during their serialization, but the Mystères du Peuple were— and that Sue was elected to the Assemblée nationale as a socialist, largely due to his popular and Republican reputation in the wake of these novels (along with Le Juif errant), before his exile in the first years of the Second Empire.

With the Mystères de Paris, Sue makes use of a relatively new form— the roman-feuilleton— and capitalizes on his own commercial success to put forth his own interven-

172 Jacques-Guy Petit, Ces Peines obscures, 221.
tions in ongoing public debates on prison reform and social justice. Critiquing the institution of the prison during the July Monarchy, Sue shows how the urban poor are even more destitute than the incarcerated. Even within prisons, the wealthy enjoy relatively comfortable conditions compared to those of the poor, just as wealthy people who commit “white collar” crimes are treated more leniently than impoverished people who commit crimes out of desperation. Furthermore, Sue addresses problems with the prison institution itself, as it functioned during the July Monarchy. Claiming the inefficacy, and indeed counterproductive effects, of the death penalty and collective confinement, Sue argues in favor of blinding as an alternative to capital punishment, and instituting the cell system in order for the soul of the criminal to be more effectively rehabilitated by means of repentance, given that his contemporary society already effectively denies the possibility of expiating a crime in a profane, worldly, and practical way. These arguments, within the broader public debates on crime, criminality, criminal justice, and incarceration in which Sue engages through his novel, are not an insular, tedious polemic. Rather, these interventions provide an example of the transgression of diegetic levels, wherein Sue uses narrative as a means of participating in a very lively and public exchange with implications not just for individuals or characters, but for French society, leading up to February 1848. Given that the professions of novelists and journalists would not become discrete until World War I, it logically follows that Sue, without setting out to be a journalist, blurred the boundaries between the roman-feuilleton of the rez-de-chaussée, and the reporting and faits divers of the rest of the newspaper. As a Romantic socialist and a socialist Romantic, Sue was able to use his novel to advance his own arguments just as his
readers—sympathetic or not—saw the capacity of his narrative to both reflect and influence public opinion. Sue inspired an entire generation both to capitalize on this capacity, realizing its potential to unify the social body amidst decades of socio-political upheaval, as well as to develop and expand the urban mystery genre, in France and throughout the Western world.
CHAPTER 2:

HENRI-ÉMILE CHEVALIER, _LES MYSTÈRES DE MONTRÉAL_,
AND THE NEWSPAPER CULTURE OF MONTREAL IN THE 1850S

After the coup-d’état of December 2, 1851, Eugène Sue went into exile in Savoy, Victor Hugo travelled to Brussels, then Jersey, and Henri-Émile Chevalier, the author of the first _Mystères de Montréal_ in French, set out for New York. He arrived in the spring of 1852 and during the following winter, made his way to Montreal.173 There, he played an influential role in the establishment of French Canadian literature, which is curious, given his relatively young age and the fact that he was an exiled Frenchman who spent only seven years in Montreal. It is for this reason—and the fact that the title he chose for his novel directly alludes to Sue’s—that Chevalier’s _Mystères de Montréal_ continue to be referenced and (rarely) studied, rather than the narrative itself or the quality of its prose (although, to be fair, the novel contains several lively passages characteristic of Chevalier’s style).174 Nevertheless, the _Mystères de Montréal_, in the context of the Canadian journalistic culture of the 1850s, give us a particular insight into the development of the city of Montreal as a commercial and dangerous urban space, as well as the crystallization of French-Canadian identity by means of literature. Through Chevalier’s energetic engagement with the intellectual milieu of Montreal, he asserted that an appreciation for

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173 Savoy was annexed by France in 1792 and then returned to Piedmont-Sardinia in 1815, and was therefore outside France at the time of Sue’s exile.

French Canadian history, by means of literature, was all that was lacking for a fully fledged sense of identity to be evinced by the French Canadian people, while simultaneously helping inaugurate and contribute to this nascent, consequential corpus.

Chevalier’s Life and the Popular Press

Early Life and Exile

Quite little is known about Chevalier’s life before his exile in New York and Montreal, but we do know that he was born Jean-Baptiste-Henri-Émile Chevalier, son of Gabriel Chevalier, on September 13, 1828 in Châtillon-sur-Seine, a commune of the Côte-d’Or.175 Apparently, “il a porté les armes, manié la plume, [et] fait de la politique” before his exile.176 Just after completing a Jesuit education, in 1847, he enlisted in a regiment of dragoons and served for three years before fully engaging in republican journalistic work.177

He made his first foray into journalism by founding the paper *Le Progrès de la Côte-d'Or*, in which he published an article that landed him in a Dijon prison following

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177 La Terreur, “Chevalier, Henri-Émile”; Bitard, Adolphe, *Dictionnaire général*, 266–67; and Beatrice Corrigan, “Chevalier and His Novels of North America.” Ketseti sheds the most light on Chevalier’s activities before his exile, but they are not particularly germane to our interests here. See, nevertheless, Ketseti, “Fortune littéraire et fortune critique,” 32–39.
the coup-d’état. A short story, “Amour de prison, épisode de 1851,” was obviously informed by Chevalier’s own imprisonment. Although it was published in La Ruche in 1853, Chevalier dates it December 22, 1852, in New York. In the story, two friends, Jules and Ernest, run into each other in New York after being separated for years following the coup d’état and Ernest’s imprisonment. In the story, Ernest recounts “Tu te rappelles que je fus arrêté le 5 décembre 1851 au matin, à Châtillon-sur-Seine”— Chevalier’s birth place—, “et jeté avec quinze des nôtres dans la prison de cette petite ville, parmi les voleurs, faussaires, assassins et autres gaillards ejusdem farinae. […] Dans la nuit du 19 au 20 décembre, on vint nous éveiller en sursaut. Il fallait partir pour Dijon.” What is more, Ernest explains that he is a former military man, but the conditions of the prison are still severe, drawing another parallel with Chevalier’s biography. Chevalier quickly does away with quotation marks and switches to the voice of an autodiegetic narrator who recounts that in February 1852, “Le gouvernement essayait des plus honteuses menées pour nous extorquer des soumissions; mais je le déclare, à la gloire des républicains de la Côte-d’Or, peu se laissèrent prendre à ces décevantes promesses.” It is in a footnote near the end of the story that Chevalier becomes explicitly autobiographical after writing “Et le tombereau cellulaire ne tarda pas à l’éloigner [un autre homme, Gégéon] au grand trot, emportant huit de nos amis arrachés subrepticement, lâchement à leurs familles,

178 La Terreur, “Chevalier, Henri-Émile”; Gustave Vapereau, Dictionnaire universel, 423.

179 Chevalier, “Un amour de prison: épisode de 1851,” in La Ruche, 2e série (December 1853), 615–21. Due to the successive name changes of La Ruche, which are outlined below, and to avoid confusion, the review will be referenced simply as “La Ruche” hereafter.

180 Chevalier, “Un amour de prison,” 618.
auxquelles le préfet de la Côte-d’Or, M. Jean de Bry, fils du conventionnel de ce nom, promettait, le matin même de ce jour, l’élargissement de ceux qu’on enlevait comme des galériens.”

In the lengthy footnote, he writes

À l’appui de cette assertion, le lecteur voudra bien me permettre de lui signaler un fait dont je garantis l’authenticité, car il m’est entièrement personnel.

Le 3 mars 1852, mon père étant venu à Dijon où j’avais été incarcéré après les affaires du 2 décembre, alla trouver M. Jean de Bry, préfet actuel de la Côte-d’Or, et lui demanda quelle décision le gouvernement avait prise à mon égard.

—Votre fils sera conduit demain à la frontière, répondit M. J. de Bry.

Le lendemain, j’étais toujours en prison. Mon père retourne le 5 à la préfecture.

—Mon Dieu! lui dit le fonctionnaire, j’avais oublié, mais dans une heure votre fils sera relâché.

Et dix-huit jours s’écoulèrent sans que je connusse mon sort. Ma mère fut leurrée de la même façon; mon frère ensuite me transmit, à cinq reprises successives, l’avis que M. le préfet lui avait donné sa parole qu’à tel moment précis aurait lieu mon élargissement.

C’est ainsi que procéda l’autorité à l’égard de tous les prisonniers politiques pour leur briser le moral. “L’attente leur fait du bien, disait, en parlant de nous, M. Raoul Duval, procureur-général, ça les use!”

La pudeur m’empêche de dévoiler les ignobles moyens mis en œuvre pour nous arracher des soumissions.182

Chevalier’s account in this footnote underlines the injustice of the prison’s conditions, as well as the negligence of those who run it; furthermore, he explicitly uses the editorial gesture of the footnote to confer authenticity and verisimilitude to his narrative. At any rate, if Chevalier’s footnote is accurate, then he could not have left for the United States


any sooner than March 23, 1852, giving us a more precise idea of when he arrived in New York than “early spring,” as Corrigan and La Terreur note.183

In a curious text, “Terre-Neuve, Les Miquelons: leurs pêcheries”— never identified or studied by Chevalier’s biographers or scholars of his work before now—, begun many years later, in 1868, for the Revue moderne, then completed and published in La Réforme Économique in 1878, Chevalier writes, in the first chapter, of his exile and travel to North America. He begins bluntly, “La commission mixte, désignée pour délibérer sur le sort des prisonniers du coup d’État, vient de rendre sa sentence. Nous sommes exilés. À sept heures du soir, le greffier de la maison d’arrêt de Dijon m’a remis un passeport pour l’Amérique. Vraiment cette faveur ne me déplaît point. J’ai vingt-trois ans au plus, l’enthousiasme de ce bel âge, et une véritable passion pour la grande république du Nouveau Monde.”184 This account shows Chevalier’s nostalgic representation of the adventurous spirit with which he truly confronted the reality of his exile. He recounts saying goodbye to his parents in Châtillon-sur-Seine in March of 1852 and traveling, with his uncle, to Le Havre, whence he departed for New York.185 For lack of any historical documentation, there is no way of knowing how much Chevalier dramatizes his transatlantic voyage aboard the W-World, as the ship is named in the story, but it nonetheless shows off the lively style that characterizes his novels and feuilletons, and is clearly in-

183 Corrigan, “Chevalier and His Novels of North America,” 220; La Terreur, “Chevalier, Henri-Émile.”

184 H. Émile Chevalier, “Terre-Neuve, Les Miquelons: leurs pêcheries,” La Revue Moderne, July 15, 1878, 791–823. This text, interestingly, is available, bound as a slim volume— containing only two chapters torn from the Revue Économique—, at Harvard University (F 6582.6); it bears a stamp noting that it is a gift of Daniel B. Fearing, dated June 30, 1915. To my knowledge, none of Chevalier’s biographers mentions this (possibly) autobiographical text.

formed by his personal experience, even if it is not a reliable account of it. Ever insistent on providing excessive detail, he describes the ship, his fellow passengers—in terms of national stereotypes—, and the provisions on board at length, in a realist mode, before turning to a description of a storm at sea that recalls the corvette scene at the beginning of Hugo’s *Quatrevingt-treize* (1874). Chevalier claims, amidst his description of the storm, “je remplis provisoirement les fonctions de médecin à bord,” though there is no evidence that he ever received any sort of medical training; it is quite likely, given Chevalier’s admiration for Sue, that this element of his fictionalized account of his transatlantic crossing is meant to draw a parallel between Sue’s life and his own. According to Chevalier’s account, the storm blew the ship so far off course that it ended up of the coast of Newfoundland, at Saint John’s (Saint-Jean de Terre-Neuve), the present-day capital of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In his second chapter, Chevalier describes a weeks-long cod fishing expedition that no doubt would have significantly delayed his arrival in New York. Although there is no other documentation of such a detour in his travel to the United States, it is perfectly believable, given his lifelong interest in

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187 The octogenarian woman to whom he was supposed to tend died before he arrived at her bedside, and was buried at sea: “Lorsque j’arrivai à son chevet, elle était morte. Morte d’épouvante! Son corps ne reposerait même pas dans une terre consacrée, près de ceux qu’elle avait aimés. Silencieusement, le lendemain, attaché sur une planche grossière, il glisserait dans l’abîme sans fond.” Chevalier, “Terre-Neuve,” 798. There are several septuagenarians on the ship’s manifest, but there is neither a single octogenarian nor a passenger death listed, which seems to confirm that this element of the story is a pure invention of Chevalier’s.

188 Chevalier, “Terre-Neuve,” 800.
geology, commerce, and hunting—as well as his spirit of adventure—that he would have put off making his way to New York.

By all other accounts, however, Chevalier arrived in New York in the spring of 1852 (as late as May, according to Yoan Vérilhac) and began working for Le Courrier des États-Unis—the same paper that had serialized Sue’s Mystères de Paris nearly ten years earlier—reporting, reviewing literary works and providing theater reviews, and contributing feuilletons of his own. Most of those who have written on Chevalier’s life give vague indications of when Chevalier arrived in New York. Here, for the first time, it is possible to say exactly when he arrived in New York. Although several details in the manifest are wrong—he was 23, not 30; he was from France, not Bavaria—for two reasons, we can nonetheless be certain that this is the same man that concerns us here: (1) in “Terre-Neuve, Les Miquelons,” he refers to the ship he travelled on as the W.-World, and (2) in Le Courrier des États-Unis, on January 12, 1853, he writes “débarquement à New-York en mai dernier.” “Émile Chevalier,” as he is listed in the passenger manifest, arrived in New York from Le Havre aboard the Western World on May 3, 1852.

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Chevalier and the Literary Culture of Montreal

Chevalier’s time with the Courrier des États-Unis was short, however. After Las-salle, the owner of the Courrier des États-Unis, and Eugène Masseras, editor of the Phare de républicain, returned from Europe following Napoléon III’s coup, they proposed to merge their two papers, resulting in a shift in the Courrier’s political bent, from its earlier republicanism to more bonapartist leanings. It is thus readily apparent why Chevalier moved on from his collaboration with the Courrier. Chevalier explains in a report to Le Pays, dated March 20, 1853 in New York, that “Vous comprendrez facilement que je me tais sur la fusion du Phare avec le Courrier des États-Unis.” Anticipating his later, more extensive collaboration with papers and journalists across national boundaries, Chevalier clearly did not wait for his emigration from New York to Montreal to begin his collaborations with newspapers of the latter; writing “La part de collaboration littéraire que j’ai apportée au Courrier des États-Unis, pendant les six mois derniers et ma retraite de cette feuille ne me permettent pas d’exprimer publiquement une opinion à l’égard de sa conduite future,” Chevalier seems to have one foot in each camp, so to speak, commenting on his past work with the New York paper even as he lays the groundwork for his future journalistic activity in Montreal.193

While the new Bonapartism of the Courrier no doubt influenced Chevalier’s decision to leave New York, it was most likely the straw that broke the camel’s back rather than his sole motivation. Ketseti quite rightly points to the likelihood that a certain mal de pays influenced Chevalier, as well his desire to engage with a broader francophone

community and the same spirit of adventure that incited his immigration to North America in the first place, as possible explanations for Chevalier’s choice to move on to Montreal.\footnote{Ketseti, “Fortune littéraire et fortune critique,” 44.}

In early 1853, he began contributing to a handful of French-Canadian newspapers (especially Le Pays and Le Moniteur canadien) and eventually moved from New York to resettle in Montreal—a logical choice for an exiled republican Francophone.\footnote{Le Pays, less radical that L’Avenir, was created in 1852 by the Institut canadien, with which Chevalier would become actively involved throughout his time in Montreal. “L’Institut canadien,” in Histoire de la littérature québécoise, ed. Biron et al. (Montreal: Boréal, 2010), 87. Le Moniteur canadien was a reformist paper, “born from the ashes of L’Aurore, which ran from May 1849 to October 1855. André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin, La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1973), 1:164.} It is difficult to date his arrival in Montreal and there is a certain amount of discrepancy amongst those who have written on Chevalier. Vapereau notes that Chevalier travelled from New York to Montreal in 1852 while Marc La Terreur hesitates between late 1852 and early 1853 (although it is unclear what documentation could suggest such an early arrival); Paulette Collet specifies 1852; and Bitard’s Dictionnaire indicates 1853.\footnote{Vapereau, “Chevalier (Henry-Émile),” 423; La Terreur, “Chevalier, Henri-Émile,” 164; Paulette Collet, “L’Enfer et le paradis de l’autre monde ou Toronto, le libre-échange, les réfugiés, le déficit en 1857” in Études canadiennes/Canadian Studies: Revue interdisciplinaire des études canadiennes en France, no. 24 (June 1988); 22; Paulette Collet, “Chevalier, Henri-Émile” in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, ed. William Toye and Eugene Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 112; and Bitard, “Chevalier, Henri Émile,” 267.}

Chevalier himself takes leave of his readers in a March 12, 1853 theater review for Le Courrier des États-Unis, writing “À mes lecteurs aussi j’envoie un humble adieu.” Le Pays reports on April 12, 1853 that Chevalier had recently arrived in Montreal and in La Minerve, a relatively conservative paper opposed to the Institut canadien during the
years Chevalier was in Montreal, from April 21, 1853, we read that the second issue of “la Ruche Littéraire nous a été remis hier soir. Nous voyons que la direction en est maintenant confiée à M. H.E. Chevalier, homme de lettres français, arrivé la semaine dernière en cette ville.” It stands to reason that Chevalier did indeed arrive in Montreal at some point during the first two weeks of April 1853, as both Beauchamp and Ketseti have argued, and joined the Institut canadien—a liberal, French-Canadian literary and scientific society—later that same month. We will see Chevalier’s involvement with the Institut canadien shortly, and will return to the Institut’s importance in the socio-political context of mid-nineteenth-century Montreal in the following chapter.

Regularly, throughout the seven years he lived in Montreal, Chevalier wrote articles, reviews, essays, légendes, and serial fiction for the leading papers of the city, namely Le Pays, Le Moniteur canadien and La Patrie. The bulk of Chevalier’s writing, though, was for La Ruche, a monthly revue purportedly devoted to Canadian literature in French. It is in the second issue of La Ruche, from March 1853, that Chevalier is named the editor of the review. Ketseti contends that Chevalier’s early-April arrival in Montreal would have prevented him from contributing to the direction of La Ruche until the April issue, which became available on May 4. I argue, however, that in addition to the explicit indication in the March issue that Chevalier had been named the review’s editor, the fact that there is a visible shift in La Ruche’s content between the first issue (from February 1853) and the succeeding ones that suggests Chevalier’s involvement, whether he had arrived in Montreal yet or not. After all, his lifelong correspondence with fellow journal-

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ists all over North America points to the reasonable possibility that he could have contributed to *La Ruche* before his ultimate departure from New York. We will return to Chevalier’s involvement with *La Ruche* during his time in Montreal, but it seems worthwhile to devote some attention now to some of his earliest, revealing contributions to the newspapers of Montreal.

Chevalier’s open letters in *Le Pays*, printed even before his arrival in Montreal, were the beginning of a long collaboration with that paper that eventually led to him becoming co-editor, as well as to active collaborations with the other leading papers of Montreal of the time.198 The personal relationships between a large group of French-Canadian “hommes de lettres” favored professional collaborations between the papers—and especially liberal ones, such as *Le Pays* (a weekly democratic, radical paper concentrating on political, industrial, and commercial news) and *Le Moniteur canadien* (a liberal weekly paper bearing the ambitious subtitles “Journal du peuple” and “Journal politique, littéraire, commercial et agricole”—they produced. Beginning even before his arrival in Montreal, then, Chevalier collaborated most often with these two papers, each of which was edited by a prominent member of the Institut canadien (J.A. Plinguet, then Charles Daoust, at *Le Pays*, and C.J.N. de Montigny at the *Moniteur canadien*). Like with *Le Pays*, Chevalier’s collaboration with the *Moniteur* began before his arrival in Montreal,

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198 David Hayne gives a good summary of the works Chevalier published in *La Ruche*, as well as other contemporary papers. See “Les origines du roman canadien-français,” in *Le Roman canadien-français*, vol. 3 “Évolution, témoignages, bibliographie,” ed. Paul Wyczynski et al. (Ottawa: Éditions Fides, 1964), 63–64. Beauchamp gives, in his appendices, the most complete bibliography of Chevalier’s works and their place of publication, although he neglects Chevalier’s works after his return to France, since they do not fall within the purview of his, Beauchamp’s, Quebec-focused project. Beauchamp, “Henry-Émile Chevalier,” 107–126. Ketseti gives a thorough, helpfully annotated bibliography of Chevalier’s works from his time in Montreal and after his return to France, and Beatrice Corrigan’s article on these latter works is indispensable.
with “Mort du général Washington à l’âge de 68 ans” on January 7, 1853. As mentioned earlier, his first writing for Le Pays appeared on February 15 of the same year, in the form of a letter to the editor, addressed from New York in January 1853 and published ahead of a légende—“Sur la Tour de l’Est dans l’ancien Château des Ducs de Bourgogne, à Chatillon-sur-Seine (Côte d’Or), once again recalling Chevalier’s birthplace”—that the editor of the paper acknowledges Chevalier himself wrote. Chevalier addresses Plinguet to say

Monsieur.—C’est avec un vif sentiment d’estime pour votre personne que j’observe la ligne démocratique du Pays; recevez par ma bouche les félicitations du républicainisme européen.

Je voudrais pouvoir vous consacrer périodiquement ma plume, mais mes engagements avec mes éditeurs en France, et le Courrier des États-Unis et l’Orléanais en Amérique ne m’en laissent guère le loisir. Cependant je tâcherai de vous envoyer quelques lettres littéraires ou politiques.

Voici un petit feuilleton que j’ai retrouvé dans mes papiers. Il y a plusieurs années que je le composai…

In this short, prefatory letter, Chevalier asserts himself as the literal spokesman for European Republicanism, underscoring not only his political engagement, but also his own voluminous journalistic output. This open letter points towards Chevalier’s numerous, constant writerly activities, as well as his commitment to many kinds of writing, includ-

199 Here and elsewhere, spelling, capitalization, accent marks, and punctuation have all been corrected and modernized, when appropriate.


201 Le Pays, February 15, 1853. There is no documentation of any of Chevalier’s work appearing in French newspapers during his exile in New York and Montreal.
ing essays, reviews, and fiction. He would maintain this frenzied, somewhat chaotic pace throughout his time in New York and Montreal.  

Chevalier formally introduces himself to his future readers in Montreal through a letter to the editor of *Le Pays* addressed from New York on February 24, 1853, where he writes “Ce que je suis,—un républicain-socialiste; ce que je veux,— des réformes socialistes; ce à quoi j’aspire — à l’abolition des nationalités.” Here, we can see that Chevalier, like Sue and so many other liberal-minded authors raised and educated largely under the July Monarchy, espoused the same strains of Romantic socialism that we examined in the previous chapter. Explicitly identifying himself with the twin term “republican-socialist,” Chevalier affirms his support of both social reform and doing away with nationalities. While this first affirmation is in keeping with the ideology and politics of his personal hero, Eugène Sue, this latter claim is somewhat at odds with Chevalier’s own arguments and, on the other hand, with common nineteenth-century ways of understanding and rationalizing the world, even amidst the early stages of industrialization and globalization. In fact, Chevalier demonstrates with this claim that he subscribes to the same ilk of Romantic socialism that Sue, Leroux, and the Fourierists did; that is, a brand of early socialism that explicitly favored harmony by doing away with social divisions, therefore opposing socialism to individualism. Chevalier’s rather philosophical self-introduction to the readers of *Le Pays* quickly abandons its premise of an open letter to the editor and instead addresses various types of readers directly to say:

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202 It would seem that his writerly activities, upon his eventual return to France, became no less energetic, but at least more focused.

203 *Le Pays*, March 8, 1853.
Anglais, c’est à l’antithèse de l’ordre que vous devez les larges franchises de votre gouvernement constitutionnel. Français, c’est à l’antithèse de l’ordre que vous devez votre amour instinctif de l’indépendance morale. Américains, c’est à l’antithèse de l’ordre que vous devez votre liberté. Cromwell, Mirabeau, Washington, triple personification du désordre! 1645, 1789, 1776, triple date, de funeste mémoire pour les amis de l’ordre. Le peuple anglais, le peuple français et le peuple américain—trois vastes portions de la société sentent et expriment le besoin de s’asseoir au banquet de l’existence intellectuelle. 204

This letter alone shows how easily Chevalier could have roused the ire of the Napoleonic censors. Furthermore, he writes “Que les hommes se comprennent et l’harmonie existe; et là où il y a harmonie, il y a socialisme. Donc tout ce qui tend à accroître les rapports des hommes entr’eux, tend au socialisme, c’est-à-dire à la sincérité, la fraternité, l’extinction de la guerre par l’extinction des nationalités.” 205 Even as a dissident exile of the Second Empire, Chevalier, by opposing order and disorder, certainly echoes the Romantic socialists’ opposition to what they perceived as the increasing fragmentation of post-1789 society. Likewise, Chevalier voices his support for social remedies to social problems. Finally, he equates harmony with socialism, which is notable for two reasons: first, he demonstrates that the term “socialism” had gained considerable traction since the 1820s and 30s, and second, his choice of the repeated word “harmony” in relation to “socialism” specifically points to his Fourierist leanings.

For all his philosophizing and despite proclaiming a desire to abolish nationalities, Chevalier would prove, here and in his many articles and essays, to be very conscious of nationality, as a concept, and to characterize different nationalities in rigid and sometimes

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204 Le Pays, March 8, 1853.

205 Le Pays, March 8, 1853 (my italics).
stereotypical terms. In the short text “Terre-Neuve, Les Miquelons” mentioned earlier, for example, he recalls his fellow passengers on board the ship from France, writing that “Les nationalités diverses sont nettement accentuées dans la physionomie comme dans l’habillement. Sur l’ensemble domine toutefois l’empreinte de la race germanique: le teint blanc et rosé, les cheveux d’un blond fade.” It must be allowed, though, that Chevalier’s references to, and descriptions of, national characteristics can be interpreted as a means of both understanding the world and representing that world for his readers. On the other hand, he truly “practiced what he preached,” collaborating with fellow francophone intellectuals all over North America, favoring associations built on a shared language over nationality or citizenship. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Chevalier was at his most rigorous and lucid when writing about his political beliefs. We shall return to the nuances of Chevalier’s view of nationality, as a concept, and their implications for French-Canadian nationalism.

Although Chevalier was fundamentally associated with La Ruche littéraire illustrée (as it was originally styled), he did not found it, as many are too quick to claim. The monthly journal was first published in February 1853 and was ostensibly devoted to the dissemination of Canadian literature in French. There is no reason to believe Chevalier had any involvement with this first issue, given not only the likelihood that he had not yet moved to Montreal, but also that, at the beginning of the second issue (of March 1853), there is an announcement from the paper’s founder, George-Hippolyte Cherrier, that, be-

ginning immediately, Chevalier would take over the direction of *La Ruche littéraire*.\textsuperscript{207}

Considering Chevalier’s politics, we cannot help but wonder if he was attracted to a collaboration with *La Ruche* because of its apparent allusion to the newspaper of the same name published in Paris during the July Monarchy by the very worker-poets who clamored over Sue’s *Mystères de Paris*. At any rate, in Montreal, the change in *La Ruche*’s content with the second issue also suggests Chevalier’s influence. The second issue begins with a serialized translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s wildly successful novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, prefaced by a quasi-disclaimer:

L’éditeur de la *Ruche Littéraire* avait annoncé qu’il ne publierait dans ce recueil que des écrits canadiens; mais il croit devoir se défaire de cette pensée en faveur de *La Case du Père Tom*, ouvrage qui se rapporte à nos voisins de l’Union Américaine, et qui ne manquera pas de vivement intéresser les lecteurs canadiens. Ce livre a eu un immense succès aux États-unis et en Europe, et nous espérons qu’au Canada aussi on saura l’apprécier, et qu’on fera mentir le dicton, jusqu’ici malheureusement trop vrai, qu’en ce pays on ne lit point.\textsuperscript{208}

Chevalier’s successive emigrations from France and the United States, and his lifelong habit of taking works with him from one country to another (often publishing them in translation and committing what would today amount to copyright infringement), as well as the tone and content of the last sentence, in particular, is in keeping with Chevalier’s views of, and aspirations for, Canadian literature and society— and the French language—, as he expresses them in his more journalistic writings, prefaces to his own

\textsuperscript{207} Additionally, on the front page of the February 1853 issue, only Cherrier is listed, and as “Éditeur,” at that.

\textsuperscript{208} *La Ruche*, 1ère série, March 1853, p. 46. I believe that Cherrier and Chevalier are here referring to Lord Durham’s report from 1839 on the causes for the 1837–38 rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada, in which he recommends the merging of the two Canadas into one province. In general, the report characterizes the French Canadians as devoid of history and culture, and in need of the civilizing deliverance of progressive British culture; needless to say that the French Canadians, and especially the leaders of the Patriots, were outraged by the report.

The “dicton” that the editor mentions at the end of this prefatory remark surely refers to Lord Durham’s famous 1839 report on the causes of the 1837–38 rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada. In the report, he recommends the merging of the two Canadas into one province. In general, the report characterizes the French Canadians as devoid of history and culture, and in need of the civilizing deliverance of progressive British culture; needless to say that the French Canadians, and especially the leaders of the Rebellions, the Patriotes, were outraged by the report. Famously, Durham referred to the French Canadians as “un peuple sans histoire ni littérature” as an explanation for the current status in Britain’s North American colonies and in order to argue in favor of union of Upper and Lower Canada. In due course, we shall see how Chevalier’s literary activity was at once reactionary and visionary, and how the aftermath of Lord Durham’s report shaped the literary and political climate in which Berthelot published his own *Mystères de Montréal*; lastly, we shall see how and why Fortier opens his novel, the last to bear the title *Les Mystères de Montréal*, with a narrative of the Rebellions themselves.

The serialization of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was just the beginning of *La Ruche*’s “branching out,” however. Despite Cherrier’s intention to publish exclusively Canadian works, for lack of material, *La Ruche littéraire* regularly published French works, transla-
tions in French, and journalistic reporting on international affairs; the paper was thus re-styled as *La Ruche littéraire et politique*, beginning with the August 1853 issue. We shall consider the reasons behind the common practice of Canadian papers’ republishing French works, censorship, copyright law, and these practices’ connections to the institution of a national literature in our study of Berthelot’s *Mystères* and the context of their publication.

Often, Chevalier himself filled the pages of the review, either with a “Partie politique” (included to help reduces taxes imposed in France on periodicals that included works of fiction), a roman-feuilleton, and always closed with his “Tablettes éditoriales,” in which he offers general reflections on the difficulties (logistical and financial) of running a review in the Montreal of the mid-nineteenth century, responds to *La Ruche*’s correspondents (announcing whether submissions have been accepted or rejected, for example), and announces the content of issues to come. By Beauchamp’s estimation, 38.67% of *La Ruche* was made up of Chevalier’s own works.²¹⁰ Notably, Chevalier regularly signed his work, either with “H. Émile Chevalier,” “Henri-Émile Chevalier,” or “H.E.C.,” while he used the signature “X.Y.Z.” when writing as the editor of the review. I am inclined to think that the large proportion of *La Ruche*’s content written by Chevalier was due less to his narcissism than to his devotion to the success of a French-Canadian periodical, especially given the fact that all the while, he managed to contribute to other papers, in addition to attending meetings and giving courses at the Institut canadien, and

²¹⁰ Beauchamp, “Henry-Émile Chevalier,” 44.
teaching private French lessons. Undoubtedly, making a living as an home de lettres at the time was no mean feat (see Figure 2.1).

Chevalier joined the Institut canadien in April 1853 and proved himself an enthusiastic member, participating actively in regular meetings and giving courses on French literature. The Institut, founded in 1844 by young liberal-minded French Canadians, established itself as a bastion of increasingly radical liberal thought in Montreal. In addition to providing a library—an important function in an increasingly important city with no public libraries, despite the fact that access was limited to those who paid a fee, as members—, the Institut served as a space for reasoned debate on scientific, literary, political, and historical topics. The minutes of their meeting on January 5, 1860 show that they considered, for example, the question “La liberté de discussion est-elle incompatible avec la prudence?” (Chevalier was among those who victoriously argued “no.”)211 Over the course of the 1850s, the Institut marched steadily towards the breaking point in its contentious relationship with the Church. The Church’s conflict with the Institut, and the Church’s eventual victory, would prove especially influential on the generation of journalists and authors after Chevalier, which includes the author of the second Mystères de Montréal, Hector Berthelot.

Even within the Institut—this “milieu prêtriphobe,” as Robert Sylvain aptly describes it—Chevalier “ne tarda pas à se signaler par ses audaces.”212 In the October 13,
Figure 2.1. Four advertisements, all from the February 1854 issue of La Ruche, for Chevalier’s various money-making endeavors. From top to bottom, advertisements for the Mystères de Montréal, La Ruche itself, French lessons, and translation work.
1854 issue of *La Patrie*, for example, there is both an announcement of Chevalier’s course in French literature, as well as an advertisement for it, showing not only that he was a very active member of the Institut, but also that he was well-connected with Montreal’s journalists and attuned to the possibilities for publicizing himself well.

Those who have written on Chevalier’s life are often quick to point out that he served as librarian of the Institut canadien, as well. What they do not mention, however, is that he was elected librarian in November 1854, only to be succeeded by his assistant librarian and close colleague C.J.N. de Montigny (editor of *Le Moniteur canadien*, which serialized Chevalier’s *Mystères de Montréal*) six months later.213 At any rate, the Institute’s library was both a singular and important resource for the French-speaking community of Montreal.214 In 1850, the Institut’s library had burned down and throughout the 1850s, as reflected in the minutes of its meetings and regular, frequent reports published on its activities, the status of rebuilding the Institut’s collection was of constant concern. By 1858, the library held over four thousand volumes and received about one hundred local and foreign periodicals.

Amidst all his activities with the Institut, with various French Canadian papers, and around Montreal, Chevalier continued to edit monthly issues of *La Ruche* until February 1855, when its constant financial troubles became insurmountable: the revue ceased publication when the publisher absconded with the subscribers’ money. It was not until


March 1859 that, at the request of numerous readers (according to Cherrier and Chevalier themselves, at least), *La Ruche* resumed publication, with a new publisher. This fifth series of the journal hardly differed from the first four; its forty pages, rather than sixty, were the same size, though with smaller print, and were divided into two columns, instead of one. Either as a courtesy to his readers or simply to fill more pages, Chevalier restarted the serialization of his novel, *La Huronne de Lorette*, whose publication had been broken off after seven chapters when *La Ruche* suspended its operations in 1855.\(^{215}\)

The publishers of *La Ruche* sent the new issue to former subscribers, asking them to either return it or they would be considered continued subscribers and thus owe the price of a year’s subscription, due in advance. After changing offices nearly monthly and despite promises of a July issue in the “Tablettes éditoriales,” *La Ruche* (perhaps unsurprisingly) ceased publication permanently after its June 1859 issue.

**Return from Exile**

Evidently, unlike Hugo, Chevalier’s longing for his homeland was more powerful than his political beliefs and, following the amnesty of 1859, he left Montreal to return to France at the age of 31.\(^{216}\) According to La Terreur and Massicote, Chevalier even left

\(^{215}\) In the 1859 serialization, the break between chapters 7 and 8 occurs in the middle of a conversation between two main characters, the siblings Alphonse and Emma Mougenot, the 1855 version of chapter 7 ends with a cliffhanger: “Comme [Alphonse] achevait ces mots, et avant qu’Emma ne se fût assise, des pas précipités retentirent dans la pièce voisine, la porte de la chambre où se trouvait les deux jeunes gens s’ouvrit brusquement et Alfred Robin parut. Il avait le visage blême, défait, les yeux hagards, ses vêtements étaient déchirés, souillés de boue et de sang.” *La Ruche*, 3e série, p. 688.

behind his wife, Sophronie Rouvier when he took advantage of the general amnesty.\footnote{La Terreur, “Chevalier, Henri-Émile”; and Édouard-Zothique Massicotte, “Émile Chevalier et Montréal vers 1860,” 93. These references to Chevalier’s wife also mention that she gave birth to a still-born child in Saint-Rémi de Napierville. Beauchamp, however, indicates that Chevalier and his wife had buried a baptized child in the parish cemetery of Saint-Rémi de Lasalle on March 30, 1856, and that Chevalier had had at least one other child during his time in Montreal. Beauchamp, “Henry-Émile Chevalier,” 20.}


*Novels*

Once he returned to France, Chevalier capitalized on his seven-year stint in North America by publishing (and republishing) a host of novels that are marked, even in their titles, by Chevalier’s travels. The majority of his novels form two series: the *Drames de l’Amérique du Nord*, which include *Les Pieds-Noirs*, *La Huronne*, *La Tête-Plate*, *Les Nez-Percés*, *Les Derniers Iroquois*, and *Poignet-d’Acier*; the second series of *Drames* includes *Le Chasseur noir*, *La Capitaine*, *Les Requins de l’Atlantique*, *Peaux-Rouges et Peaux-Blanches*, and *La Fille des indiens rouges*.\footnote{Due to Chevalier’s habit of “borrowing” from other authors, republishing his own works, and reworking his own writing into new texts, it is difficult (and can even be misleading) to assign dates to the various novels that make up the *Drames*. They have been foregone here, but can be found in the bibliography; throughout, I have attempted to provide the earliest publication date for each title.} In these novels, Chevalier owes an evident literary debt to James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*, Walter Scott’s *Waverly* novels, and Chateaubriand’s *Les Natchez*. The first novel of the first series, *Les Pieds-Noirs*, is in fact a slightly modified version of John Hovey Robinson’s translated serial, *Les Trappeurs de la baie d’Hudson*, which Chevalier published under his own name alone. This first series— which Ketseti coyly suggests could be called the “Mélo-
drames de l’Amérique du Nord”— was enough, however, for Chevalier to be accepted in France as an authority of Canada. Furthermore, just reading the titles of these novels, it will come as no surprise that the exoticism of Chevalier’s fiction has been studied frequently, considering the relatively small amount of scholarship on his work. Chevalier published these works of willfully popular fiction, straddling the adventure novel and the historical novel, long after these genres had lost the status they had enjoyed before his exile. Chevalier’s adventure and maritime novels point towards his enduring admiration for Sue, whose early works fit into these same genres. Even if these genres were no longer widely practiced by France’s literati, however, that is not to say that they had not become and remained popular, in both the social and the financial senses, by the time of Chevalier’s return from exile. Indeed, the numerous editions of Chevalier’s novels published in France attest to their popularity.

If Chevalier’s French readers were willing to devour his novels, it was doubtless because of their interest in tales of adventure in a far-off North American milieu, and not because of their desire for either verisimilitude or an accurate portrayal of Canada or its people. In the case of the Mystères de Montréal, while the unfinished novel is routinely categorized among the transnational literary and cultural phenomenon of urban mysteries, the novel into which Chevalier incorporated much of the serial’s material, La Huronne, is certainly more naturally categorized among either the adventure novel or the historical novel.

More recent critics, it must be noted, decry Chevalier’s disingenuous assertion of an expertise in Canadian culture. “Having returned home,” Chevalier “held learned dis-
course on a country that [he] knew superficially,” writes La Terreur. Nonetheless, two discourses developed in literary representations of Canada, especially in the nineteenth century: representations of Canada’s vast, wild territories, and representations of Montreal as metropolis. Chevalier’s Drames certainly participate in the former trend— along with Jules Verne’s adventure novel, Le Pays des fourrures (1873), for example. Even if it is true that Chevalier sought to assert himself as an expert on all things Canadian, it must be allowed that he never lost sight of the fact that he was publishing fiction, with an eye towards its salability; despite his scientific interests and the value he placed on making use of history in the writing of fiction, Chevalier did not seek to educate his readers by means of fictional works, but rather capitalized on their potential to entertain his readers.

Newspapers

In addition to the numerous novels he published and republished in France, Chevalier also maintained the type of constant literary activity he had participated in in Montreal by collaborating with numerous French papers, including Le Pays, L’Opinion nationale, La Revue moderne, Le Messager des théâtres, Le Globe, La Tribune, Le Musée des familles, Le Monde illustrée, and La Réforme économique, in addition to maintaining his relationships with journalists throughout the Western Hemisphere.

After the death of the vicomte Louis de Dax in 1872, Chevalier served as editor-in-chief of La Chasse illustrée until the end of 1875, when he was replaced by Ernest

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220 La Terreur, “Chevalier, Henri-Émile.”

221 Many of these papers are listed in the short biographies of Chevalier found in nineteenth-century dictionaries. See, for example, Bitard, Dictionnaire général, 267. On Chevalier’s novels published in France after his return from exile, see Beatrice Corrigan, “Chevalier and His Novels of North America.”
Chevalier’s affiliation with the paper logically follows from the geological research and writing he had done in Quebec as well as in France, following his return from North America. Florian Pharaon writes in *La Chasse illustrée* that a report of Chevalier’s death in 1876 is not only false, but that his health was improving:

> M. H.-Émile Chevalier non seulement n’est pas mort, mais l’affreuse cécité qui l’avait affligé a presque disparu et sa santé se remet chaque jour. Il a repris sa plume de romancier, et la librairie Calmann-Lévy met en vente deux romans de lui: *la Capitaine* et *la Fille du Pirate.*

I hardly mean to suggest that the false report of Chevalier’s death was a publicity stunt, but that his colleague would take the opportunity to promote not one, but two of Chevalier’s novels while dispelling rumors is par for the course as far as Chevalier’s tireless self-promotion goes. Pharaon collaborated with Chevalier on *Le Nord et le Sud: L’Espion noir, Épisode de la guerre civile* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1863), republished as *Le Gibet* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1879). Furthermore, Pharaon refers to Chevalier as “notre ancien rédacteur en chef et toujours sympathique collaborateur,” indicating his involvement with the direction of yet another paper.

In one of his few surviving letters, held in the Archives nationales du Canada, Chevalier writes to Alphonse Lusignan, who was editor-in-chief of the liberal paper *Le Pays* from 1865–1868 as well as a member of the Institut canadien, on June 3, 1869.

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222 Bitard, *Dictionnaire général*, 267

223 The paper’s subtitle is “Journal des chasseurs et la vie à la campagne.”


225 Ketseti, *Fortune littéraire et fortune critique*, 264 and 268. Chevalier also adapted *L’Espion noir* as a theatrical work in which John Brown, of Harpers Ferry fame, makes an appearance.
Chevalier thanks Lusignan for sending him copies on Montreal papers, including Le Pays, and gives his opinions on them as well as on recent elections in France. Ever maintaining his relationships with his fellow journalists, Chevalier recalls Louis Fréchette having contributed to La Ruche (although such a contribution is nowhere to be found…) and laments not having had any news from his old friend, G.H. Cherrier, or the report on Canadian fisheries he had promised him. Chevalier also claims to be working on compiling a work on La Littérature de l’esprit français en Amérique and asks Lusignan to send him any printed works of poetry or prose. Evidently, Chevalier’s ambitions for promoting French Canadian literature and for capitalizing on his own Canadian experience led him to branch out even beyond his constant re-editions of his own novels.

The letterhead used for this letter, as well as the minutes of the Société nationale d’acclimatation, indicate that Chevalier created the Correspondance franco-étrangère, located at what was likely his own residence at 19, rue de Lourmel in Paris, naming himself its director; it is unclear, however, what the organization’s activities might have been, or if there were any participants other than Chevalier himself.226 Perhaps this is simply another instance of Chevalier’s habitual self-aggrandizement.

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226 In his letterhead, Chevalier omits the “de” in the street name; this is something he seems to have done frequently—in the Mystères de Montréal, for example, where he refers to the “faubourg Québec,” rather than to the “faubourg de Québec.” Incidentally, Chevalier’s induction into the Société nationale d’acclimation was sponsored by Drouyn de Lhuys, A. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, and C. Millet. “Séance générale du 6 mars 1874” in Bulletin mensuel de la Société nationale d’acclimatation, 3e série t. 1 (Paris: Au siège de la société, 1874), 221.
Politics

After his return to France, Chevalier also became involved in politics once again. Whereas in his youth, his political engagement had been through journalism, his collaboration with various newspapers after his return from North America was largely confined to those journals whose focus was related to his naturalist interests. After the overthrow of Napoléon III and Gambetta’s establishment of a provisional government on September 4, 1870, Chevalier became a member of the *commission municipale* for the fifteenth arrondissement and was then named inspector general of provisions, in addition to serving as a member of the 82nd battalion of the national guard. He was elected as a member of the municipal council of Paris, where he sat on the extreme left, from Grenelle on July 30, 1871, and was reelected in 1874. Two years later, in the elections of April 9, 1876, Chevalier “s’est présenté vainement aux électeurs de la première circonscription de Saint-Denis, comme candidat à la députation, aux élections complémentaires [...] où il n’y avait pas moins de quinze candidats briguant la succession de M. Louis Blanc qui, élu dans trois circonscriptions du département de la Seine, avait opté pour le cinquième arrondissement.” Nothing more is known about his activities following this election.

Three years later, Chevalier died in Paris on August 25, 1879.

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227 *Bitard, Dictionnaire général*, 267.

228 Of the four nineteenth-century biographical dictionaries that include Chevalier, only those of Larousse and Vapereau were published after Chevalier’s death. Larousse notes that he died on August 28, while Vapereau indicates August 25 (Ketseti erroneously comments that Vapereau mistakes the year as 1875, which is not the case). In *Polybition: Revue bibliographie universelle*, we read “M. Henry-Émile Chevalier, né à Châtillon-sur-Seine, le 13 septembre 1828, vient de mourir à Paris le 26 août” (275). Both La Terreur and Beauchamp, the most thorough biographers of Chevalier to date, note August 25 as Chevalier’s date of death.
**Chevalier’s Serial Novel and the City of Montreal**

As early as November 1853, we see the first mention of Chevalier’s *Mystères de Montréal*, in an advertisement at the beginning of *La Ruche* announcing that an excerpt from the novel would appear in the following month’s issue. Indeed, a text entitled “Horrible!” appeared in the December 1853 issue of *La Ruche*, with a continuation and conclusion in the January 1854 issue. Both texts note, just after the title, that “Horrible!” is an “Extrait des Mystères de Montréal, par H. Émile Chevalier.” Was Chevalier testing the waters for an as yet unwritten *Mystères de Montréal*? Had he written “Horrible!” with the intention of including it in the *Mystères de Montréal*, or did he simply use the title—obviously playing off Sue’s, which was well known in both the United States and Canada by this time—to attract readers, planning on working out the details later? Obviously, we have no way of knowing, but, given Chevalier’s habits of writing constantly and always up until the very last minute, and of repurposing his own previously written works, it is entirely likely that, even if the novel was planned as a whole, it was not thoroughly fleshed out. We certainly cannot say definitively one or the other, not least because of the inherently fragmentary status of Chevalier’s unfinished publication of the novel. Ever recycling his own works, Chevalier did indeed incorporate this fragment into *Les Mystères de Montréal* and later, into the prologue to *La Huronne* (first published by Poulet-Malassis in 1862, then by Toubon, then Michel Lévy).

It seems unlikely that Chevalier had actually written much of the novel, however. Starting in February 1854, we see this advertisement in *La Ruche*:
Cet ouvrage formera deux beaux volumes de plus de trois cents pages chacun. Il sera orné de gravures faites par les meilleurs artistes de New-York, et paraîtra régulièrement chaque quinzaine par livraisons de trente-deux pages. Le prix de souscription est de dix chelins, payables immédiatement après l’apparition de la première livraison, laquelle sera mise en vente aussitôt que six-cents souscripteurs auront été réunis.229

This exact same advertisement appears in the first issue of La Patrie (from September 26, 1854), some eight months after the second part of “Horrible!” appeared in La Ruche. Despite all this advertisement for the Mystères and the “teaser” in La Ruche, Chevalier’s attempts to drum up excitement for his new novel were apparently unsuccessful. Evidently, Chevalier’s advertisements did not generate the kind of interest (or funds) he was hoping for and the Mystères de Montréal were never illustrated, published in volumes, or indeed even finished.

The first installment of Les Mystères de Montréal was finally published not as a delivery to subscribers, but as the feuilleton of Le Moniteur canadien, a Montreal paper edited by Chevalier’s friend and colleague, C.J.N. de Montigny. This first part of the serial, however, does not even include the prologue, but rather contains a note from the editor and a lengthy dedication!230 Chevalier continued to attempt (rather unconvincingly) to create hype for the novel both by aligning himself with Sue (through a feigned distancing) and by implying that the novel to come will in some way be scandalous. In the letter from the editor, we read “Ce n’est ni, comme on l’a prétendu légèrement, une œuvre calquée sur celle de M. Eugène Sue; ni un simple récit anecdotique de quelques scènes de

229 From February to July, Chevalier’s name is mistakenly written “H. Emile Chebalier,” alas— and in his own journal, no less! It was finally corrected beginning with the August 1854 issue.

230 Chevalier even goes so far as to reproduce the advertisement (quoted above) he had run in La Ruche in the first feuilleton of Les Mystères.
vol ou de meurtre.” The editor, de Montigny, also tries to sensationalize the novel’s publication by writing that “Si l’acquisition de ce livre nous a coûté de grands sacrifices, nous ne les regrettons pas; car depuis que nous avons annoncé que nous en donnerions les prémices à nos lecteurs, le nombre des souscripteurs au *Moniteur Canadien* s’est accru au gré de nos désirs.” Much less memorably than Stendhal comparing the novel to a mirror or Balzac writing that French society is the historian and he, Balzac, is but the secretary, Chevalier opens his dedication of the novel to the people of Montreal. “C’est a vous que j’ai dédié cet ouvrage,” he writes, “purement et simplement, [parce que] vous en êtes l’auteur […]. [E]ncore que vous me détestiez, vous n’oserez pas dire hautement que j’ai défiguré vos originaux; et moi, mon maître, quoique j’en ai contre vous, je m’inspirerai toujours de vos modèles.” In this dedication, Chevalier claims to have overheard people— in the city and the country, he interestingly notes, perhaps because there was a Montreal version of the *Moniteur canadien* as well as an “édition des campagnes”— talking about the *Mystères de Montréal*, saying

—*Les Mystères de Montréal*? quelle horreur!

—Un vrai scandale!

—Une abomination! […]

—Ne m’en parlez pas c’est un tissu d’horreurs à faire dresser les cheveux: du sang, des cadavres […].

—Il va paraître un mauvais ouvrage; une œuvre du démon. Ne l’achetez, ni ne la lisez; vous vous souilleriez.

Before Chevalier, Sue, exceptionally influential and well connected with other authors and members of high society alike, begins his novel as an initiation into the seedy *bas-
fonds of Paris, tantalizing the reader with promises of tales about the “barbarians among us,” before developing it into a “tribune of social reform,” as we saw in the preceding chapter. What we can see in Chevalier’s posturing, just in this imagined conversation in the dedication of the *Mystères de Montréal*, is that, despite his politics and the importance he accords to history, he really does set out to write a popular novel. Fully embracing a maligned genre, Chevalier recognizes the demand for it. For all the publicity he tried to drum up, it is unlikely that his novel could have elicited such exclamations, not least because of the lack of scandal in the narrative and because it is unlikely that anyone could have already read it (if indeed it was written at all). These comments, furthermore, are platitudes that could be pronounced in reaction to any mildly transgressive novel, especially the exceedingly popular urban mysteries that flourished all over the world in the decades after the *Mystères de Paris*.

Both aligning himself with, and distancing himself from, Sue, Chevalier, in this dedication, asserts that Canada needs its own Eugène Sue to write “un travail littéraire, sérieux par le fond, léger par la forme sur nos institutions politiques, nos habitudes, notre vie publique et domestique […]. La facture de semblable livre requerrait deux qualité[s]: être disposé à braver l’opinion publique et connaître admirablement le pays.” Evidently, Chevalier felt that despite having been in Montreal for less than two years, he had had sufficient time to adequately get up to speed and write such a work, and, rather than simply braving public opinion, actually attempted to form it by means of his fiction as well as his journalism. With this assertion, Chevalier alludes to the value he places on making use of empirical information as well as history in the institution of a specifically *national*
literature; more than a *roman de mœurs*, such a work should be, according to Chevalier, representative of a people as well as their way of life, how it came to be, and why.

After the preface and dedication comes a lengthy prologue that centers around the activity of William Goodluck in Montreal high society. The first part of the novel breaks completely with the action of the prologue, using the pretense of the found manuscript to tell the story of a certain Léon Durien, who is in the midst of reading “Horrible!”— the very text that Chevalier had previously published in *La Ruche* as a teaser and would later use as the prologue to *La Huronne*. It tells the story of a notary, Villefranche, who avenges his daughter’s honor in a duel. It would seem that the *Mystères* might reveal the origins of the bastard Durien (whose name is therefore an overdetermined signifier), but neither the character nor the reader has the satisfaction of finding out the truth, since the *Mystères* end abruptly, before the end of the novel. When Chevalier adapts the material of the serial novel for *La Huronne*, Villefranche becomes Poignet d’Acier, whose multiple names recall Hawkeye from Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* and whose behavior makes him a sort of North American version of the *Mystères de Paris*’s Rodolphe.

Each week, *Le Moniteur canadien* devoted its *rez-de-chaussée* to Chevalier’s novel, but, with the October 4, 1855 installment (and not September 20, as some note), the *Mystères de Montréal* remained unfinished, despite the emblematic promise, “La suite au prochain numéro.”

On the back cover of a short work, *Biographie de Mme Anna de la Grange* (Montréal: Senécal et Daniel, 1856), there is a list of other works by Chevalier, and among the two works “Sous Presse, à Paris,” are *Les Mystères de Montréal* in seven volumes, no
less—by far the longest of the works publicized here. There is no indication, here or elsewhere, whom the publisher may have been, or that the novel was ever published in France or elsewhere, for that matter (perhaps because he never finished it, but instead incorporated part of it into *La Huronne*). Chevalier’s “Tablettes éditoriales” in *La Ruche* show a consistent preoccupation with publishing and distributing his works (novels and periodicals alike) in France, even before his return there in 1860, so it is believable that he would have been in touch with French friends and colleagues in the interest of publishing his unfinished novel, although, disappointingly, any efforts on this score seem to have been fruitless.

The novel has never been published or edited since the *Moniteur* ceased its serialization on October 4, 1855.

If Yoan Vérilhac has ably written on the “mysteries” of the *Mystères de Montréal*, now is the time to write on the Montreal of the *Mystères*. However scattered or incomplete Chevalier’s text might be, his representation of Montreal is still remarkable. Certainly, much of the text takes place either in more pastoral settings or indoors (of course, the same is true of the *Mystères de Paris*, which certainly does not prevent it from being an urban mystery), but, the second volume of the serial, “Le Griffintown,” itself begins with a chapter entitled “Montréal.” In the second chapter, confusingly entitled “Griffintown” just like the second volume, Chevalier turns to the extant Montreal neigh-

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231 Vérilhac admirably explains the way Chevalier reworked material in “Horrible!,” *Les Mystères de Montréal*, and *La Huronne* in “Les Mystères des Mystères de Montréal.”


233 Feuilleton 26 (August 12, 1855).
borhood of the same name, which lies to the west of Old Port area of the city and, in the novel, is clearly meant to resemble the Cité in the *Mystères de Paris*. The dominant representations Chevalier gives of Montreal in the *Mystères* are those of a city of commerce, and a city of danger, with the latter being altogether expected—by a nineteenth-century reader as well as a modern one—in an urban mystery that obviously attempts to capitalize on the popularity of the urban mystery genre.

**Montreal as Commercial City**

We first see Montreal as a port city late in the novel’s prologue. Chevalier describes “une innombrable [flottille] de canots,” “une foule d’hommes qui encombre la rive droite du fleuve,” “des femmes qui se mêlent aux hommes,” “des monceaux de marchandises qui s’élèvent sur le sable de la grève.” Here, the city is not especially urban, but is rather characterized by its river—and therefore by its accessibility, activity, and commerce. The river teems with people as well as boats, each described with a mass noun that connotes both their large numbers and the way in which masses of individuals come together to form a whole. Each boat, each person, is a member of a swarm, functioning as an individual without the whole functioning as one—a *foule fourmillante*, if you will. In his representation of the city’s industry, Chevalier thus emphasizes masses of innumerable individuals, their activity, and their lack of organization (which is not to say their disorganization or chaos). Explicitly referring to the “tableau” he creates, he juxtaposes the crowd with its setting, where “un soleil radieux […] éclaire le tableau; le majestueux Saint-Laurent […] ferme l’horizon; et [le] ciel bleu et diaphane […] lui sert de coupole,” before explaining, for the reader’s benefit, that “[c]e sont les apprêts du départ
annuel des aventuriers au service de la compagnie du Nord-Ouest!” After a rather lengthy description of the adventurous spirit of French Canadian men and the stiff upper lips of their wives, fiancées, and mothers in which he clearly believes he flatters his readership, Chevalier returns to his insistence on Montreal as a commercial city, and a populous city, when he interrupts himself to say “Mais voici que tous les paquets de marchandises ont été arrimés dans les canots, les chants cessent tout à coup; le tumulte des voix aussi. Sur le bord du fleuve le long des magasins royaux, tout une population échange un dernier baiser, une dernière poignée de main.” Here, in Chevalier’s representation of Montreal, crowds and industry are necessarily linked: if the industrial city is associated with the crowd, then the dangerous city is characterized by its desertion.

In Chevalier’s representation of the interior of the city itself, toponymy is as essential to understanding the action of the novel as to its setting—as is also the case in Berthelot’s representation of Montreal, as we shall see in the following chapter. The reader first sees Chevalier’s protagonist, Léon Durien, on an unseasonably warm morning, March 5, 1845, at his home, “située à l’embouchure du faubourg [de] Québec,” which Chevalier explains is inhabited predominantly by francophones. Durien’s home is located on the place Dalhousie: “la façade donnait sur la rue Ste.-Marie; les communs suivis d’un petit jardin, s’ouvraient sur la rue du Bord-de-l’Eau.” Durien, Voulmier, and Durien’s servant Jean leave through the back door and walk down a narrow alley, “bordée d’un côté par des murs d’enclos, de l’autre par le fleuve Saint-Laurent, qui termine brusquement la rue du Bord-de-l’Eau, en venant expirer au pied du pittoresque édifice connu

234 Feuilleton 16 (April 19, 1855).
sous le nom de bâtisses [sic] Molson.” Eventually, they arrive at the rue de la Visitation and, “comme le chemin n’était pas frayé plus loin, ils coupèrent à gauche, puis à droite et enfilèrent la grande rue Sainte-Marie au moment où un traîneau emporté par deux superbes chevaux isabelle, splendidement harnachés, arrivait, rapide comme le vent, de la place Dalhousie.” The many street names present in Chevalier’s account of the action could admittedly be skipped by a reader unfamiliar with the city; but for one who knows the place, this wealth of toponyms and their descriptions convey a sense of confusion and claustrophobia. In the darkness, the three characters follow the path described, ever bordered by walls, buildings, and the river itself. These winding streets are a far cry from the wide boulevards and open public spaces that Chevalier would see in Paris upon his return from exile. This winding itinerary contrasts sharply with the “high view” of the city that we see at the beginning of the narrative, even while each representation depicts the lived experience of an nascent industrial metropole. The totalizing view of the city and its port at the novel’s incipit is here opposed to the lived experience of trajectories imposed by the city’s labyrinthine organization.236

In the preface and dedication of the novel, Chevalier alludes to his firmly held belief that novelists should make use of history in this fiction and his representation of the city shows that he practices what he preaches. During Durien’s nighttime peregrinations through Montreal, he encounters an acquaintance, Edward Smith, who invites him to dinner in Pointe-aux-Trembles (a municipality east of the city, along the rue Notre-

235 Ibid. (italics in original).

Dame at the time, that has since been annexed to Montreal). Durien and his companions reach the “chemin Papineau, ou Victoria, comme, depuis la rébellion de 1838, le gouvernement de Sa Majesté essaye vainement de le faire appeler, en haine de son premier parrain.” Lived experience thus inscribes the conflict between French and English—the two languages as well as the two communities, and colonial rules—on the city itself; thus, this conflict is as omnipresent in mid-nineteenth-century literature and newspapers as it was in the city’s toponymy and its inhabitants’ everyday life.

At the beginning of Volume 2: Le Griffintown, Chevalier takes his time introducing his ostensibly French but more likely Canadian readers to the city of Montreal. Chevalier begins the volume with lengthy quotations from François-Xavier Garneau’s watershed *Histoire du Canada*, which he so greatly admired, before asserting his own voice. Harkening back to pre-colonial times, Chevalier quotes from Garneau’s description of the establishment of the colony of Ville-Marie, writing “Montréal devint à la fois une école de civilisation de morale et d’industrie, destination noble qui fut inaugurée avec toute la pompe de l’église.” He himself asserts that Montreal’s growth was both rapid and incessant, comparing it to Quebec City: “D’après le dernier recensement, le chiffre de la population s’élève à 60,000 âmes, tandis que celui de Québec n’est guère que de

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237 Evidently, the government’s attempts were very much in vain, since the avenue Papineau is even now a major street in Montreal, connecting the port of Montreal to major streets further north.

238 Feuilleton 26 (August 12, 1855).

239 Ville-Marie was a settlement built in the seventeenth century at Hochelaga—a Native American settlement on the island of Montreal—out of which the settlement of Montreal grew.
42,000." The entire chapter to follow, however, deals exclusively with Montreal’s urban and commercial development, to the total exclusion of any plot development and only briefly offering any commentary on social structures, such as the relationship between the anglophone and francophone populations or their evolving socioeconomic status.

Chevalier does much to give realist precision to his representation of Montreal, specifically by including a wealth of toponymic and geographical detail— which is indicative of his personal interests in history, geography, and geology:

Cette île a environ trente deux milles de long sur dix de large.  Au sud, elle est arrosé[e] par le St. Laurent et au nord par la rivière des Prairies, branche de l’Ottawa. […] Montréal (Mont-Royal) décrit une sorte de parallélogramme, avec ses deux cent cinquante rues qui se coupent à angle droit.  La principale voie passagère, la rue Notre-Dame s’étend du nord à l’est sur un espace de plus d’un mille.  Elle est le centre du commerce de détail.  Des magasins superbes la bordent des deux côtés. […] Parallèlement à elle, s’élance la rue St. Paul, plus étroite, moins élégante, mais non moins animée.  La partie septentrionale est envahie par les petits négociants en nouveautés et quincaillerie, la partie méridionale par les gros importateurs.  Immédiatement au dessous se trouve la rue des Communes laquelle longe les quais.  Les quais de Montréal sont, certes, les plus beaux, les plus solides, les plus commodes du nouveau monde. […] [L]a vue […] s’arrête sur les nombreux navires de toutes les nations, voiliers ou vapeurs, goélettes ou trois mats, canots d’écorce ou vaisseaux de guerre, mouillés dans les bassins […].  C’est un spectacle enchanteur pour l’artiste qui aspire et le spectateur qui calcule.  (my italics)

With every detail, Chevalier unites Montreal’s geography with its commercial potential.

Without actually describing the people who occupy the hundreds of crisscrossing streets

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240 The 1851 census shows that the city of Montreal had a population of 57,715 people; by the time of the 1861 census, the population had grown to 90,323 people, which indicates the dramatic growth the city was experiencing precisely during the years when Chevalier lived there. See “Montréal en statistiques,” Ville de Montréal, consulted September 1, 2014, http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=6897,67887840&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL.
he describes—either individually or in general, as he does at the narrative’s opening—,
he gives an impression of hive-like activity, even saying that in the faubourg de Québec,
one of the city’s most populous neighborhoods, the French Canadians “essaiment.” Recall-
ing Hugo’s famous chapter in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Chevalier writes that “En exami-
nant Montréal à vol d’oiseau, nous voyons la ville s’étager en amphithéâtre dans les plis
d’un terrain accident. Les quartiers limitrophes du fleuve sont exclusivement consacrés
aux *affaires*. […] Plus loin, en escaladant les premiers gradins de la montagne, nous [ren-
controns] les rues Vitré, de la Gauchetière, Dorchester et la grande rue Ste. Catherine;
plus loin encore la rue Sherbrooke.”\(^{241}\) All of the former streets listed here are character-
ized by their commercial activity, as well as their French inhabitants. On Sherbrooke,
though, “on entend ni tumulte, ni grincement criard. […] Là point de luxurieux magasins
pour fasciner vos yeux […]. Là point de mouvement; point de passants qui vous
[coudoient].”\(^{242}\) This is the only point in the entire chapter when he describes a residen-
tial area, rather than a commercial one. Just as there is an absence of crowds and their
resultant noise and activity, there is an absence of industry. The narrator explains that the
rue Sherbrooke is the domain of the English aristocracy, showing that the absence of in-
dustry and activity does not necessarily correspond to the absence of wealth.

Chevalier continues his characterization of the city’s hive-like, faceless crowds
and its relentless industrial progress when he describes Montreal as “la vigilante, qui
chauffe ses fourneaux, ouvre ses chantiers, charge et décharge ses cargaisons, décèrce ses

\(^{241}\) Feuilleton 26 (August 12, 1855) (my italics).

\(^{242}\) Feuilleton 26 (August 12, 1855) (italics in original).
monuments, agite ses milliers de bras, remue ses milliers de têtes!” Especially interesting from an Urban Studies perspective is the way he uses the rest of the chapter not only to illustrate Montreal’s urban development, but also to predict its future growth. “Au fur et à mesure que la ville a élargi sa ceinture,” he writes, “les manufactures, les usines se sont multipliées. Par conséquent les rives du fleuve ont acquis une importance relative qu’elles n’avaient pas auparavant.” Chevalier explains that these factories multiply along the waterfront, displacing original inhabitants and

Autour des usines se groupent promptement les magasins: car pour éviter les frais de transport, le consommateur se rapproche constamment du producteur. Bientôt les terrains enserrés par la manufacture ou l’usine doublent, triplent de valeur. Non seulement le propriétaire ou directeur comprend qu’il aurait l’avantage à vendre son emplacement et à transférer plus loin ses ateliers, mais il s’aperçoit de l’impossibilité pour lui d’augmenter ses moyens de production par un agrandissement de local à cause de la cherté excessive des lots avoisinants. Il déloge. Les magasins restent.

With these observations, Chevalier proves himself to be remarkably sensitive to the processes of urban development in the absence of modern city planning. Additionally, it would seem that in the Mystères de Montréal, the urban landscape is characterized by capitalism; alternatively, capitalism, and the inexorable growth of capital, is a profoundly, inherently, and uniquely urban phenomenon.

243 While he was certainly devoted to studying history and disseminating historical information, his observations on urban development are not flawless—perhaps due to insufficient research, poor interpretation, or both—as he reveals by predicting that industrial areas will eventually be replaced by farms: “Quant à la cité, elle subit autant de métamorphoses que de progressions. La manufacture est supplante par le magasin qui sera supplante à son tour par la maison bourgeoise et peut-être, en dernier lieu par la ferme.” Chevalier could have easily looked to the example of Paris, where “smelly” industries such as fat rendering and tanneries were relegated to the Île des Cygnes during the Ancien régime, but were returned to the city center by industrialists after the Revolution.
Additionally, Chevalier plunges into the geographic and toponymic reality of Montreal at the time when the novel takes place (1845), outlining the city’s commercial development. Painting in broad strokes, he calls Montreal a striking example of urban growth, where

[i]l y a un siècle, les comptoirs du commerce s’étalaient uniquement sur la rue des Commissaires. La rue des Communes qui s’annexe à elle n’existait point. Mais là où s’évase le quartier Ste. Anne, des moulins, des scieries, des fonderies, fonctionnaient du matin au soir. Maintenant, moulins, scieries, fonderies immigrent, et des stores leur succèdent partout. Le commerce en détail et en gros confiné aux environs de ce que nous appelons actuellement le marché Bonsecours, le commerce s’enfuit à tire d’aile, il grimpe les rues St. Paul, Notre-Dame, St. Jacques, et déborde dans la rue McGill.

Here, with the verbs “immigrer” and “grimper,” he begins his personification of the city of Montreal that will reveal the most striking parallel between his characterization of the city and crime, and that of his idol, Eugène Sue. The constant growth of this city and the way commerce “spills over” from one street to the next represents Montreal as a city whose industry and progress are as active as they are unwieldy and intractable, as relentless as they are inexorable.

Rather abruptly, to transition from his first chapter to his second (which appears in the following feuilleton), Chevalier shifts his attention to the Montreal neighborhood of Griffintown. Like Sue before him, Chevalier positions himself as a sort of tour guide, initiating the bourgeois reader into the city’s bas-fonds or underworld. If Montreal is a populous, commercial city, it is also a dangerous one.
Montreal as Dangerous City

Sue, in the *Mystères de Paris*, employs a metaphor of contagion to represent criminality and its capacity to infect. Certainly, as we have seen, Sue draws meaningful, causal links between spaces and those who inhabit them, but, especially given his socialist influences, is ultimately focused on the people themselves. Like Sue, Chevalier employs the metaphor of a diseased body, in this case to represent the relationship of a crime-, disease-, and filth-ridden enclave to the productive, lively, populated urban whole. Unlike Sue, however, Chevalier focuses his attention on urban space itself. The “accroissement, le développement de Montréal eux-mêmes” effect the constant “spilling over” of commerce into broader swathes of the city, and this activity, rather than the people performing it, is represented as an ineluctable phenomenon.

Chevalier represents not the social body, but rather the diseased urban body: “il nous faut […] passer des splendeurs aux guenilles métropolitaines, écarter le manteau de pourpre pour montrer la chemise infecte, sonder la plaie cachée derrière l’épaule du *corps urbain,*” he writes. Chevalier rhetorically asks, is it “à l’acheminement de la population mercantile vers l’ouest qu’on sera redevable de la disparition de cette léproserie qui gangrène Montréal et qu’on nomme le *Griffintown*?” By employing the terms “léproserie” and “gangrène” here aligns him closely with Sue, for the only time in all of the *Mystères de Paris* that Sue uses the term “lèpre” (or any of its related terms) is when he rails against communal imprisonment:

244 II.1 “Montréal,” feuilleton 26 (August 12, 1855).
Que de siècles pour reconnaître qu’en agglomérant les êtres gangrenés, on redouble l’intensité de leur corruption, qui devient ainsi incurable!

Que de siècles pour reconnaître qu’il n’est, en un mot, qu’un remède à cette lèpre envahissante [solitary confinement] qui menace le corps social….245

The important distinction between Sue and Chevalier here is that whereas Sue refers to a disease, leprosy, Chevalier refers to a “léproserie,” a space of quarantine. Counterintuitively, though, we are not talking about a disease infiltrating and infected the unaffected; we are talking about urban development invading a space of quarantine.

Griffintown, a real neighborhood of Montreal, certainly drew comparisons to the Parisian Cité or London’s East End during Chevalier’s time in Canada and long after, although it is much smaller than either of its European counterparts; indeed, Griffintown makes an appearance in Berthelot’s Mystères de Montréal nearly two decades after the serialization of Chevalier’s novel, when the neighborhood still connoted darkness and danger. There is nothing particularly montréalaise about Chevalier’s description of Griffintown, however; the description could simply be a pastiche of Sue’s representation of the Cité (or even Hugo’s, for that matter— and Chevalier’s appreciation of Hugo and his work is well documented in his journalism) or Dickens’s East End. Chevalier himself makes a comparison between Griffintown and New York’s Five Points, of which he surely could have had personal knowledge from his time living in New York and which he describes as “le réservoir de la lie de la population.”246

245 Sue, Les Mystères de Paris, 892.

It is significant that Chevalier, whether naively or nebulously, suggests urban growth and industrial development as antidotes to ghettoization, even if he does not distinguish his Griffintown from Paris’s Cité or New York’s Five Points. Furthermore, it is somewhat surprising that Chevalier takes this point of view, rather than recognizing that, if the development he predicts takes place, the slums of Griffintown will simply be relocated, given his lengthy illustration of how factories, mills, foundries, shops, homes, cultural enclaves, and farms can all be displaced over relatively short amounts of time.

Nevertheless, Chevalier proves himself rather prescient, for Griffintown would indeed become the nexus for the Industrial Revolution in Montreal.

Chevalier opens his chapter on Griffintown in a rather grandiose manner, referencing the “encyclopédistes” and Enlightenment thinkers—Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Condillac, Helvetius—and “la plupart des métaphysiciens allemands”; he lays out the relationship between Griffintown and the rest of Montreal, between center and periphery, writing that

De tous temps, chez tous les peuple du monde, tous les grands centres de population, les plus riches comme les plus pauvres, le plus moraux comme les plus dépravés, les plus policés comme les plus incivilisés, ont vu se former dans leur sein une source d’ignorance, de débauche, de misère. Pour la cité, cette source a été, à la fois, une tumeur et un exutoire. Là se sont insensiblement agglomérés les passions désordonnées, les hébétèmes de l’esprit, les difformités du corps, les ulcères de l’espèce humaine. De même que la vertu attire la vertu, que la beauté sollicite la beauté; de même la laideur sollicite la laideur, le vice attire le vice.247

Discourses of the bas-fonds in the nineteenth century regularly conflate spaces, individuals, and behaviors, as Dominique Kalifa reminds us, and such is the case here: even if

247 Feuilleton 27 (August 16, 1855).
crime and poverty exist in the country, the underworld and its inhabitants are inherently urban.\textsuperscript{248} Furthermore, filth, “autant physique que morale, déteint sur les corps […] et sur les caractères. L’horreur de l’âme renvoie à celle des corps, en lien avec les théories physiognomoniques qui édifient une hideuse anthropologie des bas-fonds.”\textsuperscript{249} Chevalier, in his characterization of Griffintown, posits that crime and criminality inevitably breed more of the same, employing a medico-anthropological discourse to suggest that such spaces are at once the symptom and the cause of “depravity.”

Chevalier elaborates his representation of spaces like Griffintown or the Cité, writing that in addition to these spaces’ capacity to breed crime, poverty, and filth, “S’il n’est pas vrai, comme le prétendent certaines gens, que les dons de la nature soient transmissibles avec le sang, il est évident que, tous, nous subissons les influences du milieu dans lequel nous avons parcouru les premiers lustres de notre vie. Par la création nous sommes égaux; par l’éducation nous sommes divisés.” Subscribing to the same point of view on human behavior that Sue does, Chevalier uses the term “éducation” not in the sense of the English cognate, but instead, in the much more nineteenth-century sense of forming a person, developing his or her intellectual or moral qualities. Essentially, he argues that places like Griffintown perpetuate a vicious cycle across generations among those who cannot escape it.

Chevalier’s Mystères are not a social problem novel, though; this serial novel is not a means for him to posit and explore potential remedies or antidotes to crime-ridden


\textsuperscript{249} Kalifa, Les Bas-fonds, 48.
locales such as Griffintown. He believes, as we see in his representation of urban growth, that industrial development and expansion will overtake the slums he describes. His representations show that he believes that immoral or socially disagreeable behavior can be curbed if an infectious, pernicious, or noxious environment is remedied. Chevalier insists upon the humanity of Griffintown’s misérables, demonstrating the same republican socialism that he evinces in his journalistic writing: “Plongez dans la Cité de Paris, ou dans la cité de Londres ou dans le Ghetto de Rome, ou dans le Griffintown de Montréal, ou dans l’un de ces repaires qui nourrissent la paresse, la crapule et l’infamie,” he writes, directly addressing his readers, “et, dites-nous, si les créatures que vous y trouvez n’ont pas face humaine comme vous, si le sang qui coule dans leurs veines n’est pas un sang chaud et généreux comme le votre, si […] ces malheureux, couverts de haillons et de vermine n’auraient pu, soumis aux influences auxquelles vous avez été soumis, […] vivre honorablement comme vous vivez […].” Chevalier’s narrator here echoes Shylock’s famous speech from The Merchant of Venice, with a marked early-nineteenth-century, pathologizing spin. Despite his insistence on the humanity of Griffintown’s inhabitants, he does not address means of alleviating their misery or putting any form of socialism, social reform, or philanthropy into practice, as Sue, Dickens, Elliot, and Disraeli do. Additionally, Chevalier indulges the same kind of escapist, voyeuristic impulses to which Sue appeals at the beginning of the Mystères de Paris by offering his serial novel as a safe, “armchair initiation” into the city’s seedy underworld.

In the Mystères de Paris, Sue describes the Cité as a “dédale de rues obscures, étroites, tortueuses, qui s’étend depuis le Palais de justice jusqu’à Notre-Dame”— that is,
stretching out between two pillars of society, the Law and the Church. “Le quartier du Palais de justice, très circonscrit, très surveillé, sert pourtant d’asile ou de rendez-vous aux malfaiteurs de Paris,” Sue writes, before rhetorically asking “N’est-il pas étrange, ou plutôt fatal, qu’une irrésistible attraction fasse toujours graviter ces criminels autour du formidable tribunal qui les condamne à la prison, au bagne, à l’échafaud!” Similarly, as we have already seen, Chevalier likewise describes an “irrésistible attraction” that causes the criminal and the poor to conglomerate in Griffintown. Even if the warren-like streets are characterized by their filth and darkness, Chevalier explains that the Griffintown’s boundaries are clearly delineated: “Il a la forme d’un polygone, et à proprement parler se trouve inclus entre les rues Guillaume, des Communes, McCord et McGill.” Just as the Cité is a maze of dark, narrow, winding streets, Griffintown is made up of “rues inégales, tour à tour poudreuses ou boueuses.” Underscoring a correlation of infectious filth with infectious immorality, Chevalier writes that Griffintown’s physionomie soulevait le cœur; l’air qu’on respirait donnait des [nausées], tout ce qu’on y voyait était frappé d’un stigmate repoussant […]; des flaques d’eau verdâtres et croupissantes; les lots de terre couverts d’herbes folles; des immondices pestilentielles; des cahutes en planches disjointes; des animaux immondes étalant librement leur saleté sur les voies publiques; des hommes à la mine farouche, aux vêtements sordides; des femmes sans-nom allaitant ou épouillant au soleil des enfants demi-nus, tel est, à première vue le Griffintown. Les détails répondent à l’ensemble. Chevalier gives this characterization of Griffintown, personifying the neighborhood by writing of its physiognomy, as a space where everything is filthy, foul-smelling, and dis-

251 Feuilleton 27 (August 16, 1855).
orderly. Here, as in Sue’s novel, Chevalier participates in the well-documented
nineteenth-century imaginary of the *bas-fonds* and its relationship to poverty insofar as
this unhealthy environment is necessarily linked to the criminality of its inhabitants. On
the other hand, though, Chevalier provides no counterpart to the Morels, the poster-
children for the deserving poor in Sue’s novel. Furthermore, whereas Sue’s early sensa-
tionalism evolves into his critical social engagement, as we saw in the preceding chapter,
Chevalier, despite claiming to be a reformer and expressing comparatively progressive,
Socialist views in his journalistic writing, ultimately fails, in *Les Mystères de Montréal*
and elsewhere, to point to any particular aspect of society or institution that must be re-
formed or to make any particular proposal for reform, social or otherwise.

Simply put, whereas Sue comes to the conclusion that social problems deserve
Social solutions, Chevalier simply presents a world in which poverty and immorality, in-
digence and crime, are necessarily linked. Chevalier does not subscribe to an idea of so-
cial or biological determinism, but rather to a sort of spatial determinism, which is some-
what logical, given that we are here considering the novel as an urban mystery, a genre
which engages with a specifically urban spatial imaginary, after all.

After spending several feuilletons describing Montreal and Griffintown, Chevalier
introduces his readers to a gang of criminals who rendez-vous— where else?— in the de-
serted streets of Griffintown.252 Naturally, “it was a dark and stormy night”— “Point de
bec de gaz pour éclairer les routes”—, but we must remember that Chevalier deliberately
and fully embraced popular fiction. In the *Mystères de Montréal*, we see one criminal

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252 Feuilleton 28 (August 23, 1855).
who is nicknamed “Beggar,” another known simply as Knacker (which Chevalier translates as l’Écorcheur), and the Strangler (l’Étrangleur); Chevalier switches back and forth, at times referring to these characters by their anglicized names, and at others by their French ones. L’Écorcheur is clearly an imitation of Sue’s Chourineur, who, in the Mystères de Paris, gets his name from his time working, precisely, as a knacker, and from translating his gruesome skills to more criminal violence. The key difference between the Chourineur and the Knacker is the way the two authors temper their criminality. The Chourineur’s criminality is tempered when Rodolphe thrashes him and thereafter commands the Chourineur’s dog-like loyalty, while Chevalier makes his Knacker the ring-leader of a stereotypical band of brigands who is also a family man, doting on his infant daughter. Despite the few paragraphs Chevalier is able to devote to the Knacker in the couple of feuilletons in which he appears, the character is arguably more three dimensional, thanks to the different roles he plays, than the Chourineur, who, other than the chapter where he recounts his own backstory, was a beloved, but largely one-dimensional character in the Mystères de Paris. The curiosity aroused by the lack of further development of the Knacker’s character is perhaps one of the most regrettable results of Chevalier’s novel remaining unfinished.

Overall, then, Chevalier’s representation of a dangerous city is less tied to Montreal itself than to the city’s periphery—places like Pointe-aux-Trembles and Griffintown. Perhaps if he had finished the novel, we would see how crime, criminality, and criminals infiltrate the industrial, commercial areas of the city he also represents, but alas, in its unfinished state, the two visions of the city he presents remain contiguous, but distinct and
discrete. The uncomplicated view he gives of these geographic spaces thus undermines
the verisimilitude afforded his text by his scrupulous use of toponymy and history. Just
because Chevalier inscribes his novel in the urban mystery genre, both by its title and by
his promises of a scandalous story of crime and society, does not mean that he sets up
Montreal as a mirror for Paris. While he explicitly compares Montreal’s Griffintown
to the Cité, the Five Points, and the East End, he nonetheless establishes Montreal on its
own terms, thanks in part to his inclusion of detailed toponymy, as well as his use of
socio-historical commentary. For Chevalier, Montreal, like French Canadian literature,
should be autonomous, and discretely differentiated from its Old World colonial powers.

**French-Canadian Identity**

Chevalier’s relevance today is largely due to his lucky timing, voluminous literary
output, and tireless engagement with the literary and journalistic community of Montreal.
Although many literary historians characterize the 1860s as the time when French Cana-
dian literature really took off, Chevalier, along with a handful of other writers (such as
Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau, Patrice Lacombe, and Georges Boucher de Boucher-
ville), and his prolificness, prove that this national literature was, on the contrary,
launched a decade earlier. With good reason, David Hayne writes that “Par la quantité
sinon par la qualité de ses écrits Chevalier demeure le roi du feuilleton au Canada
français.” Hayne claims that the “reign” of the roman-feuilleton in France lasted only

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253 Burgundian by birth, it was only after his return from exile that Chevalier would live in Paris, and therefore likely did not have much, if any firsthand knowledge of the capital.


from 1836, with the inauguration of *La Presse* and *Le Siècle*, until around 1850, when the Riancey law imposed an additional tax on papers including works of fiction, although there were certainly many important and popular romans-feuilletons published throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, in Canada, “la multiplication des revues et journaux ne commençant que vers 1850, ce fut alors qu’apparut le roman-feuilleton, auquel une grande impulsion allait être donnée à partir de 1853 par le proscrit français, Henri-Émile Chevalier.” Chevalier did not simply move to Montreal and attempt to churn out novels as if he were in France, writing for a French audience. Instead, he deliberately set out to foment and contribute to a specifically French-Canadian corpus personally, with his own feuilletons, and professionally, as editor of *La Ruche*. According to Hayne, 1845 is the year when Canadian papers began regularly printing Canadian feuilletons on a daily or weekly basis. “La vogue des feuilletons devient telle,” he writes, “qu’en 1853 deux nouveau périodiques, ayant pour but principal de publier des feuilletons, font leur apparition: *Les Veillées Canadiennes* et *La Ruche Littéraire*.” In the June 1853 issue of *La Ruche* there appears a review of the *Veillées Canadiennes* which, although unsigned, is likely written by Chevalier (based on the content of the “Bibliographie” section in which the review appears, as well as the style of the review). He writes that after being announced for three months, the *Veillées Canadiennes* have finally been published, and

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Nous sommes heureux de voir le goût des publications littéraires se développer au Canada, car, plus que tous les perfectionnements industriels, le progrès des lettres tend à pousser les peuples vers le bien-être matériel et moral. Aujourd’hui, Montréal peut revendiquer à bon droit [un] rang parmi les villes savantes et scientifiques de la mère-patrie. Outre plusieurs journaux et publications périodiques anglaises, on y compte avec bonheur deux Instituts (dont l’un l’Institut [c]anadien, grâce à l’activité de ses honorables fondateurs et au talent de leurs successeurs est devenu pour le pays la source d’institutions libérales, amusantes et instructives), quatre journaux français et deux revues littéraires qui s’efforceront, nous aimons à le croire, par une louable rivalité, à entretenir l’amour et l’étude de notre langue.  

In this appraisal of the *Veillées Canadiennes*, we see many indications of Chevalier’s support for French Canadian literature: he praises, at several points, the fact that Montreal now boasts another serious, literary publication *in French*, choosing to characterize the potential rivalry between the *Veillées* and his own revue as a friendly one. Alas, only six issues of *Les Veillées Canadiennes* (not to be confused with the agricultural journal also called *Veillées Canadiennes*) appeared, while *La Ruche* would prove longer lasting, although unstable. Chevalier also praises the activity of the Institut canadien—of which he was a member, and whose members regularly supplied *La Ruche* itself with material—and anticipates the connection between this liberal institution and the institution of a national literature that would become even more pronounced in the decades to come, during the career of Hector Berthelot. In short, Chevalier regularly insists on three points which he views as essential for the establishment and durability of French-Canadian literature: a

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258 “Bibliographie” in *La Ruche* (1ère série, April 1853), 171.

259 As mentioned earlier, *La Ruche* was founded in February 1853 and ran through 1855 before ceasing publication until 1859, when four issues were published before disappearing permanently. Just a month earlier, at the end of the May 1859 issue, the “Éditeurs” had thanked their readers and contributors for their support and announced that “grâce à leur précieux concours, nous sommes maintenant en pleine voie de prospérité.” “Tablettes,” *La Ruche* (5e série, May 1859) 120.
widespread knowledge of French-Canadian history, the promotion of the French language, and the redaction and dissemination of Canadian literature in French (journalism and novels alike) throughout North America.

**History**

Chevalier firmly believed that the French Canadians should have a literature of their own, and that knowing their own history was of paramount importance. The means to these two ends for Chevalier was, naturally enough, the historical novel. Hayne and Lemire both credit Chevalier with launching the historical novel as a distinct genre in Canada, where Scott’s name and novels were well known, even in translation.\(^\text{260}\) James Fenimore Cooper’s work was an eminently practicable point of reference for the French-Canadian historical novel, as was Chateaubriand’s (and *Atala*, in particular).\(^\text{261}\)

In the July 1853 issue of *La Ruche*, Chevalier published his review of Garneau’s *Histoire du Canada, depuis sa découverte jusqu’à nos jours*, in six pages filled with minuscule type, including several excessively lengthy quotations of the reviewed work.\(^\text{262}\) Chevalier pledges to be coldly impartial in his review, but his appreciation for Garneau’s work is evident, here and throughout his later works, include the *Mystères de Montréal*. Also, it is clear that Chevalier sees a nationality and a people’s knowledge of its history

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261 Excellent examples of Chateaubriand’s influence on Chevalier’s work can be found in *La Huronne*, which includes material adapted from *Les Mystères de Montréal*. For example, one of the main characters, Alfred, contemplating the “affreuse et sublime nature” of Canada’s vast landscapes strikingly recalls René at Mount Etna. On Chateaubriand’s influence on Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau’s historically significant novel *Charles Guérin*, see Hayne, “Les origines du roman canadien-français,” 57–58. Chevalier greatly appreciated Chauveau’s novel, and reviewed it in the March 1853 issue of *La Ruche*.

262 Chevalier, “Bibliographie canadienne,” in *La Ruche* (1ère série, July 1853), 345–51.
as being clearly, inextricably, and necessarily linked. Calling it a “rejeton de la vieille Gaule,” Chevalier writes that Canada

tient toujours à la mère-patrie par la sève abondante qu’il y a puisée au temps de son éclosion. Mais l’éloignement, les tempêtes de l’atmosphère politique l’en ont tellement séparé à cette heure que, tout en conservant dans sa floraison l’essence du germe primitif de la grande famille, il forme une race distincte, et regarde la France comme une étrangère indifférente à ses préjugés aussi bien qu’à ses luttes intérieures.

Quoiqu’il nous en coûte de revendiquer une autre nationalité au milieu de frères imbus de nos mœurs, nos usages, notre langue, notre religion, c’est à ce titre surtout que nous allons nous permettre un travail sur le plus bel ouvrage publié ici: l’Histoire du Canada.263

As an exiled Frenchman trying to find his place in his adopted country, Chevalier seems inclined to continue to draw links between the France and its former colony, even as he identifies a discrete, but nascent French Canadian nationality and identity. Chevalier’s perspective is hardly at odds with other Frenchmen’s perceptions of the tension between the enduring spirit of New France and the young, distinct North American nation.

Several months later, in the February 1854 issue of La Ruche, Chevalier published the first installment of his novel L’Île de sable, which he dedicates to Garneau. In the “Préface dédicatoire,” he writes that if Garneau’s work had been published in France, it would join the ranks of those of Michelet and Louis Blanc. For Chevalier, Garneau’s work “broadened his horizons” and introduced him to a history that was unknown to him in France; newly arrived in Montreal, Chevalier says Chauveau’s Charles Guérin taught him of “le Canada moral,” while Garneau’s history gave him insight into “le Canada social et politique.” He directly addresses Garneau to say “Il y a dans votre narration le ca-

263 Chevalier, “Bibliographie canadienne,” in La Ruche (1ère série, July 1853), 345.
nevas d’un beau roman historique; je suis heureux d’avoir répondu à l’appel que la litté-
ratue sérieuse fait à la littérature légère. Puissè-je l’avoir fait convenablement et puisse
ce livre obtenir assez de succès pour m’engager à dramatiser les plus remarquables épi-
sodes de l’Histoire du Canada!”264 As mentioned earlier, Chevalier certainly would go
on to make use of Canadian history, dramatizing and romanticizing it, writing the novels
of the Drames de l’Amérique du Nord; he also quotes Garneau in lengthy footnotes in the
Mystères de Montréal. Lise Gaboury-Diallo writes that Chevalier “tente de revaloriser le
passé en le présentant sous un nouvel éclairage,” scrupulously conforming to historical
accuracy.265 While specifically about L’Île de sable and Jacques Cartier (the novel, not
the essay be Chevalier of the the same name), Gaboury-Diallo’s commentary that Cheva-
lier “n’oublie pas que son but initial est de présenter une époque de notre passé, de la ré-
actualiser à la faveur d’un récit romanesque” could justly apply to the vast majority of
Chevalier’s works.266

In an address to their readers, Chevalier and Cherrier write “La plupart des nou-
velles qui paraîtront dans la Ruche seront basés sur des événements authentiques. Et
nous chercherons à dramatiser, autant que possible, l’histoire du Canada, pour l’offrir à
nos lecteurs sous une forme attrayante, quoique fidèle à la vérité.”267 Chevalier’s use of
history in his novels neatly demonstrates the form of “romantic” nationalism that Maurice

264 Chevalier, “Préface dédicatoire” to L’Île de sable in La Ruche (3e série, February 1854), 34.
265 Lise Gaboury-Diallo, “Henri-Émile Chevalier,” in “L’apport de cinq écrivains français à la littérature
canadienne-française” (Thèse de 3e cycle, Université de Paris-IV Sorbonne, 1987), 16.
267 The letter, “Au public,” is signed by Chevalier and Cherrier on September 15, 1858, even though the
letter is published in the March 1859 issue of La Ruche.
Lemire associates with the popularity of the historical novel. In many works published in *La Ruche*, as in *Les Mystères de Montréal* and the majority of the novels in the *Drames de l’Amérique du Nord*, Chevalier imbues his narratives with historical fact and verisimilitude that at once reflect and promote romantic nationalism, working to crystallize national identity in opposition to a dominant ruling power. Most significantly, Chevalier’s arguments regarding potential for an appreciation of history in fiction to help institute French-Canadian literature anticipate the prescriptions of Henri-Raymond Casgrain in his essay, “Le mouvement littéraire en Canada” (1866), which we will consider in detail in the following chapter.

Language

Chevalier himself explicitly draws a link between nationality and language in “La Langue française et la nationalité canadienne,” his first piece published in *La Ruche* after it was relaunched in March 1859. For Chevalier, language is to nationality as a mother is to a daughter; in his view, the example *par excellence* of a durable nationality determined by language is that of the Jews— but of course, the Canadians are a close second. Opposing language and government, Chevalier argues that “Il suffit d’une heure, d’un décret pour immoler une nationalité politique. On ne peut jamais préciser le moment où on immolera une langue. C’est que la première est une convention gouvernementale, la

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seconde une nécessité sociale.” After quickly discussing the history of France, from the Renaissance to the Revolution, Chevalier turns to the French colonies of the New World and the Louisiana Purchase. He argues that

si la nationalité politique de [la Louisiane et du Bas-Canada] pouvait être sacrifiée par des gouvernants, il n’en était pas de même de leur nationalité propre, c’est-à-dire celle qui attache les enfants aux parents, celle qui obéit à ce qu’on appelle le cri de la nature. Devenu anglais par la forme administrative, le Canada est, après un siècle de sujétion anglaise, encore français par la langue et les mœurs. […] Malgré leur changement de fortune politique, [les francophones] gardent précieusement la langue et les traditions de leurs ancêtres. Le type français est vivant parmi eux.271

Language, then, is necessary for the preservation of a culture, and helps French Canadians to establish a national identity in opposition to, and despite, the English-speaking British colonial government. If the dissemination of a people’s history is necessary for the development of a sense of national identity, and language is the means by which that people can preserve its customs, it follows, for Chevalier, that the answer to his posed question, “comment hâter le développement de la nationalité canadienne-français en Amérique?” is a corpus of historically informed literature— serious, as in journalism, and popular, as in novels— written in French. As we read in the dedication to the Mystères de Montréal, Chevalier believes fervently in the need for a “travail littéraire, sérieux par le fond, léger par la forme sur nos institutions politique, nos habitudes, notre vie publique et domestique […].”272

272 Feuilleton 1 (January 4, 1855).
Literature

In February 1854, Chevalier writes an open letter to the subscribers of *la Ruche* to reiterate his and Cherrier’s initial objectives in publishing their revue. Chevalier proclaims that

[s]’il est glorieux pour le Bas-Canada de posséder la seule revue française, originale, existant sur le vaste continent américain, il est du devoir de chacun de nos compatriotes de la soutenir de son crédit et de son influence, conséquemment d’assister le propriétaire et les rédacteurs par des souscriptions et des communications littéraires. *La Ruche* sera d’autant plus intéressante qu’elle renfermera plus d’articles canadiens. Nous désirerions même qu’elle se composât exclusivement de morceaux empruntés à notre littérature indigène […].

Aside from the fact that *La Ruche* was routinely in financial straits and Chevalier is clearly making an appeal to his readers for assistance, this address to *La Ruche*’s subscribers demonstrates Chevalier’s consistently held belief in the capacity of the press to inaugurate a national literature, produced both by and for French Canadians.

Chevalier emphasizes the role of the journalist (which, at time in question, was indistinguishable from the writer or novelist) in society, and the links between journalists, public opinion, and national interests throughout another article, “La Presse Franco-Américaine,” published in the April 1859 issue of *La Ruche*.

He also demonstrates (whether deliberately or not) a constant preoccupation with the pecuniary struggles of an “homme de lettres” of his time nearly constantly over the course of the article, even from the very first sentence. “Tout écrivain est inventeur; aussi, comme la plupart des inventeurs, les écrivains ne sont-ils pas riches,” he begins; “L’écrivain aime plus l’argent que

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l’avare,” and “L’Idée ne se paie pas, même au dix-neuvième siècle. Soyez homme prati-
que, et vous roulerez sur l’or. Soyez un homme à idées et vous végéterez, et la misère
s’accolera à vous comme la vermine à un lépreux,” he goes on to say, either pessimisti-
cally or frankly.275 At the risk of reading too much of the author’s biography into his fic-
tion, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that Chevalier’s own struggles inspire
those of the character Alfred, a young author who appears in both the Mystères de Mon-
tréal and La Huronne, into which some material from the Mystères was incorporated.

In order to draw a causal link between public opinion, nationalism, and a national
literature, Chevalier characterizes the journalist in terms of his power— which is neces-
sarily bound to that of the press— and his toil:

[L]es journalistes, les infortunés journalistes, les galériens ex officio! les journalis-
tes qui dirigent l’opinion publique, manipulent les intérêts des nations, les journalis-
tes qui font trembler les gouvernements, hauser ou baisser les fonds, ils sont
proverbialement gueux comme Job, et frémissent devant un directeur, sorte de
banquier, agent de change ou richard aussi bouffi de vanité que sot et inepte en
matière politique et littéraire.”276

“La littérature française, en Amérique, est à la vérité encore à l’état embryonnaire; mais
elle se développe bien,” Chevalier writes, even predicting that it will surpass Anglo-
American literature by the turn of the century.

Continuing to emphasize the tension between Canada’s connections to France as
its former colonial ruler and its increasing independence, despite its newer status as an
English colony, Chevalier writes that in Canada, “nonobstant le peu de relations que notre


276 Chevalier, “La langue française,” 43.
population a avec la France, les journaux s’occupent de ses affaires politiques, commer-
ciales et littéraires. Ils lui prennent ses feuilletons, ses nouvelles, ses œuvres philosophi-
ques et scientifiques et acceptent avec empressement les réformes de sa typographie.
Mais de journalistes de profession, il n’y en a presque pas au Canada, parce que le jour-
nalisme n’a pas encore été élevé à l’état de profession.”277 He explains that Canadian
journalists are therefore young students of law or medicine, who have not yet started a
family, and who have no other occupation. Much of Chevalier’s discussion in this article
involves the pecuniary difficulties of working as a man of letters in mid-nineteenth-
century Montreal, but here, his assertion of a dearth of French Canadian journalists points
to the same devotion he shows in publishing La Ruche, privileging works written by
French Canadians, about Canada, in French.

In the final, short section of this article, he argues that, in order for Franco-
American journalists to assert a stronger position for literature in French, they need to
band together. In this final section, Chevalier nearly turns his article into a manifesto,
exhorting French-speaking journalists to collaborate with one another—as he himself did
over the course of his years in New York and Montreal, with journalists throughout North
America—, to form a metaphorical “phalange,” recalling Charles Fourier and Victor
Considerant by invoking the term, and create a network of French-speaking journalists
and compatriots spanning the entire continent.278

278 Chevalier, “La langue française,” 47.
Although the article “La Langue française et la nationalité canadienne” was published just before Chevalier’s return to France, it shows a remarkable consistency in his ideology, even since his open letter in Le Pays, written roughly seven years earlier while he was still in New York. On one hand, Chevalier writes in his March 8, 1853 letter “Ce à quoi j’aspire — à l’abolition des nationalités”; on the other hand, in “La Langue française et la nationalité canadienne” from March 1859, Chevalier argues in favor of a Canadian national identity that crystallizes around a national literature. In the dedication of the Mystères de Montréal, Chevalier explicitly suggests that he is contributing to the inauguration of French Canadian literature. In this dedication, he includes a dialogue between “vous” and “moi.” When “vous” says “Quel malheur que nous n’ayons pas une littérature nationale et qu’il nous faille sans cesse exporter d’ailleurs ce que nous devrions pouvoir nous procurer chez nous,” “moi” responds “Une littérature nationale! mais vous en avez une et des meilleures!” After a long, overwrought discussion, “moi” argues that “[V]ous avez une littérature nationale éminente. […] Vos journaux… […] anglais et français, tories et radicaux sont, ne vous en déplaise, très habilement rédigés.”

It is notable that here, in the dedication of a serial novel, a man of letters identifies newspapers as evidence of the existence of a French-Canadian national literature. Even if, from his point of view, francophones in general, and especially francophone journalists should participate in a global (or at least North American and European) network, and despite his assertion in his open letter in Le Pays a couple of years earlier that he aspired to the dissolution of nationalities, Chevalier here argues for a national literature that is both French and

279 Feuilleton 1 (January 4, 1855).
English, liberal and conservative, and notably distinct from the national literatures of the two colonial powers, France and England. Additionally, the constitution of this national literature is not contingent on the existence of a corpus of novels; rather, novels, according to Chevalier, will come in due course, if journalists and amateur writers themselves take action to reach their French Canadian audiences, making use of their own history to at once educate and entertain their readers.

For Chevalier, a national identity is not incompatible with a wider, global network of francophone journalist-authors. He closes his article with a plea: “Plaise à Dieu que ma voix soit entendue, et qu’il se trouve à Montréal, à Québec, New-York, ou la Nouvelle-Orléans des franco-américains doués d’une confiance assez robuste en leur nationalité pour former une association exclusivement artistique, dont les ramifications s’étendront sur les deux Amériques et transmettront de leur centre à leurs extrémités, le goût de la littérature française […].” Chevalier does not argue for a homogenized French literature, spanning the Americas and Europe, but instead seeks to promote a broad network, a rich collaboration between Frenchmen, exiled or not, Americans, and Canadians. Just as American literature—especially the works of Irving and Cooper—distinguishes itself from British literature, French literature in Canada, according to Chevalier, can both establish French-Canadian identity in opposition to British colonial rule and by virtue of maintaining the use of the French language, and diminish boundaries between nationalities that Chevalier sees as superfluously divisive.

In the years between the publication of Chevalier’s *Mystères de Montréal* and those of Hector Berthelot, not only did the city of Montreal and the political organization of Quebec change dramatically, but the general thrust of French-Canadian literature did, as well. Following the Rebellions of 1837–1838 in Lower Canada and Lord Durham’s report, the two Canadas were combined to form the United Province of Canada in 1841. 1867 saw Confederation, when the province was once again reorganized into the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, with this latter province largely corresponding to the area that was formerly Lower Canada, and Montreal was the uncontested metropolis of not only the province of Quebec, but all of Canada. In 1851, a bit less than 15% of the Quebec’s population lived in urban areas; just thirty years later, nearly a quarter did. By 1881, the population of Montreal surpassed 140,000 people— even despite the relatively small size of the official city limits—, while Quebec City’s population hovered around 62,000.\(^{281}\) With an influx of French-Canadian immigrants from rural areas to Montreal, the population of the city shifted, from the 1850s to the 1870s, from an English to a French-Canadian majority. The urbanization of the nascent nation over the course of

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\(^{281}\) Linteau et al., *Histoire du Québec contemporain, de la Confédération à la crise (1867–1929)* (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1979), 151–53. Including Montreal’s on-island suburbs and nearby villages, such as Sainte-Cunégonde and Hochelaga, the population in 1881 was 170,745.
these two decades corresponds with the first phase of the Industrial Revolution in Canada.  

Shortly before Confederation, in 1866, l’abbé Casgrain published the frequently referenced essay “Le mouvement littéraire en Canada” in *Le Foyer canadien*, in which he argues for the promotion of the historical novel as a means of establishing a Canadian national literature; as we saw in the previous chapter, Chevalier anticipated many of these prescriptions for the institution of a French-Canadian national literature. Ever devoted to the advancement of French-Canadian letters, Casgrain insinuated himself into a literary coterie—including Étienne Parent, Joseph-Charles Taché, Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau, Louis Fréchette, and Pamphile Le May—and maintained his prominent position in French-Canadian literary society throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Casgrain realized the privilege his position as a member of the Church afforded him and made use of it to ensure the publication and the dissemination of a good number of French-Canadian works, including the complete works of Octave Crémazie. Although, as Jean-Paul Hudon notes, the ideas expressed in “Le mouvement littéraire” are not as original as Casgrain thought, the essay proved influential on the French-Canadian writers in the years that followed.  

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282 Canadian industrialization slowed from roughly 1873–1878, then a second phase took place during the 1880s. See Linteau et al., *Histoire du Québec contemporain*, especially pp. 142 and 153.


novel and encouraging the historical novel, Casgrain at once promoted a new type of national literature and, on the other hand, endorsed an (often ersatz) imitation of French Romanticism. While some would claim that the institution— in the sense of a process— of literature in Quebec did not begin until the 1940s, the evolution of French-Canadian literature must be traced as far back as the 1840s, and the body of works that make up the corpus of nineteenth-century French-Canadian literature represents far more than the sort of religious or patriotic propaganda that admittedly proliferated in the wake of Casgrain’s essay.

By considering Hector Berthelot’s *Mystères de Montréal* in their historical and political context, we can place his text in the trajectory of the French-Canadian novel and see the ways the Church and the literary sphere of Montreal in the second half of the nineteenth century are reflected in its action and content; on the other hand, the parodic nature of Berthelot’s *œuvre* is not simply a personal or idiosyncratic element of his literary and journalistic output, but rather a necessary and significant result of, and response to, the religious and literary institutions of his milieu. Berthelot’s *Mystères de Montréal* are not only inscribed in the torrent of post-Sue urban mysteries, but also anticipate the shift in French-Canadian novels from rural to urban (emblematized, for example, by novels from the early twentieth century such as *Trente arpents* [1938] by Ringuet and *Bonheur d’occasion* [1945] by Gabrielle Roy, respectively). The nineteenth-century French-Canadian novel is largely viewed as rural and nationalist, but Micheline Cambron has

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nevertheless identified around ten urban novels. Cambron includes some of the earliest French-Canadian novels in her study—Lacombe’s *La Terre paternelle* and Boucher de Boucherville’s *Une de perdue, deux de trouvées*, for example—as well as the *Mystères de Montréal* by Berthelot and Auguste Fortier. It is the former of these two urban mysteries that concerns us here.

In this chapter, we shall first turn to Berthelot as a journalist, contextualizing his journalistic and literary output within the newspaper culture of Montreal in the second half of the nineteenth century. In order to examine the satirical, parodic elements of Berthelot’s body of work, let us first address the role of the Church, and the climate of censorship it established and within which Berthelot worked. Drawing largely on Habermas’s concept of the public sphere, we will first consider the role of the press, and then the ways Berthelot was able to use humor, especially by means of his fictional character Ladébauche, to at once subvert the Church’s censorship and foment sentiments of French-Canadian national identity in a society defined irrespective of political boundaries. Finally, I shall show how the city of Montreal in Berthelot’s *Mystères* is represented in all its detail and specificity. Rather than opposing Montreal to Paris, or setting up Montreal as a homologue for Paris, Berthelot asserts the city’s uniqueness, development, and modernity. Furthermore, Berthelot’s humorous, popular novel, as well as his regularly mordant, satirical, political journalism, run counter to the type of historico-nationalist French-Canadian literature that Chevalier and Casgrain advocated. In short, in

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287 Cambron, “Une ville sans trésor,” in *Montréal, mégapole littéraire*, ed. Madeleine Frédéric (Bruxelles: Université de Bruxelles, Centre d’études canadiennes, 1992), 7. Although she does not include Chevalier’s *Mystères* in her list, she does include his *Jolie jeune fille du faubourg*.
an environment where the Church exerted ever increasing influence on published material, Berthelot made use of humor—specifically parody and autoparody—as well as Catholic posturing to both subvert censorship and promote a sense of national identity on the part of his French-Canadian readers, who were at once a demographic majority and a political minority.

*Berthelot and the Newspaper Culture of Montreal*

If Henri-Émile Chevalier was a member of the first generation of Montreal’s journalists and novelists, Berthelot can be seen as the leading journalist of the second generation. These two generations also correspond with two eras of industrialization in Montreal, in the 1850s and then in the 1870s and 80s. A prolific, highly active man in a flourishing period in French-Canadian mediatic history, Berthelot (b. March 4, 1842 in Trois-Rivières, d. September 15, 1895 in Montreal) not only wrote for nearly all the leading papers of his day, but also counted virtually all the major figures of this newspaper community from the second half of the nineteenth century among his friends and colleagues (see Figure 3.1). According to his niece and biographer Henriette Lionais-Tassé, each Sunday night, Berthelot met with other leading men of letters (littérateurs, journalists, and others associated with publishing and the print industry) of his day: Arthur Buies, Louis Fréchette, Benjamin Sulte, Alphonse Lusignan (who, as we noted, corresponded with H.-É. Chevalier after his return to France), and A.P. Pigeon, among others. To parody English “five o’clock tea,” they gathered for “ten o’clock gin.”

Successively founding the humorous papers *Le Canard, Le Vrai Canard*—renamed *Le Grognard* to pre-

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vent confusion between the two—, Le Violon, and Le Bourru (see Figures 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5, respectively), to name only his most successful ventures, Berthelot also contributed to “serious” papers such as Le Pays, La Minerve, La Patrie, Le Monde, Le Courrier de Montréal, l’Étendard, and le Star.289

Berthelot never misses a chance to take a dig at his rivals, which curiously did nothing to diminish how well liked he was in newspaper and literary circles. A handful

289 Le Pays was a radical, democratic, nearly militant political paper that supported the Institut canadien de Montréal; La Minerve was one of the most influential papers in nineteenth-century Montreal and became less and less radical over the course of the second half of the century; La Patrie, founded in 1879 by Honoré Beaugrand, had a rather radical bent, and was opposed to the Church and the conservatives and thus faced many of the same challenges as Berthelot’s papers, as we shall see; l’Étendard was an ultramontanist paper vigorously opposed to the conservatives and the establishment of the Parti national, founded in 1885.
Figure 3.2. Mastheads of Le Canard. The first issue was published on October 6, 1877 (top); the title appears this way until October 4, 1879 (middle), when Berthelot departed to found Le Vrai Canard. Showing both Ladébauche and the anthropomorphic Canard, this masthead was used until the paper suspended publication on September 24, 1887. The third version, was used after Berthelot returned to Le Canard on November 25, 1893, following the disappearance of Le Violon; the Canard had ceased publication since September 24, 1887. Here, we see the masthead as it appeared on the first day of the second serialization of the Mystères de Montréal (May 23, 1896).
of papers show up in the Mystères de Montréal, for example. Ti-Pite, the younger brother of one of the novel’s protagonists, makes a good bit of money selling Le Canard (given how popular it is, of course), La Patrie, and Le Nouveau-Monde— thanks in part to his wiles, no doubt (44, 122–24). At the very beginning of the prologue, in the oppressive heat of a summer day in the Jardin Viger, Ursule takes a copy of Le Nouveau-Monde out of her bag— to use as a fan (32). And, when shot in the buttocks, Ursule is saved by the balled-up copies of Le Nord and Le Nouveau-Monde she had been using, not to keep

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290 An important detail is changed between the two serializations of the novel: when published in Le Vrai Canard, Ti-Pite sells Le Vrai Canard, but when the novel is serialized in Le Canard, he sells Le Canard.
Figure 3.4. Masthead of *Le Grognard*, a title used to prevent confusion between *Le Vrai Canard* and *Le Canard*, showing Ladébauche (accessed 1/17/2015, http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/1803546).

abreast of current events, but as a bustle (152).

Berthelot’s satirical papers were preceded in Canada by Napoléon Aubin’s *Fantasque* (Quebec), which ran from 1837–1845 and was modeled after the Parisian *petite presse*, and J.W. Bengough’s anglophone *Grip Magazine*, which ran for about two decades, more or less concurrently with the last twenty years of Berthelot’s life.291 Another humorous paper— which borrowed both the title of Aubin’s *Fantasque* and one of its epigrams— was one of Berthelot’s favorite targets; he clearly took pleasure in the paper’s failure following a run of just four weekly issues and not only announced its death in *Le Vrai Canard* (see Figure 3.6), but also devoted the typically large front-page caricature to a scene of the Canard visiting the paper’s ailing rivals in the “Hôpital des petits journaux” (see Figure 3.7).292 In this latter illustration, we see not only the *Fantasque*’s corpse being removed from the ward, but also the ailing *Éclaireur*, whose “death” Berthelot would mock on April 10, 1880 (see Figure 3.8).293 The “Burial of the *Éclaireur*” shows the paper as a dog’s rotting corpse, as well as a prominent portrayal of Ladébauche (right)— to whom we shall return in detail— as the gravedigger, in one of a good number of color

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292 In yet another instance, there is a caricature in *Le Vrai Canard* showing the Canard shedding tears over graves in a cemetery for the *petite presse*, with the names of defunct papers on tombstones surrounding him.

293 The *Éclaireur*, a weekly paper that ran from August 4, 1877 to March 30, 1880, was meant to drum up support for the liberal party in Ottawa and Quebec, in power since 1873, but the weakness of the paper and the weakness of the regime seem to have gone hand-in-hand. “*L’Éclaireur*” in *La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours*, vol. 2 1860-1879, ed. Beaulieu and Hamelin (Quebec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1975), 254-55.
illustrations from *Le Vrai Canard* which Berthelot was evidently quite proud to offer his readers. The choice of red for Ladébauche’s hat in this caricature recalls the Phrygian cap, a symbol of liberty, further underscoring the character’s alignment with a Republican French heritage, on one hand, and the rural, lower-class origins the character caricatures, on the other.

Years later, in 1888, Berthelot was interviewed by *Le Monde* and, when his interviewer said “Dans votre journal comique vous ne donnez aucun répit au directeur de l’Étendard. Que feriez-vous au cas où il viendrait à disparaître de la vie publique?” Berthelot responded “Je chanterais le ‘Nunc Dimitis’ et j’attendrais que les événements

![Figure 3.6. Berthelot’s parodic obituary for *Le Fantasque* (*Le Vrai Canard*, December 6, 1879).](image)

![Figure 3.7. *Le Vrai Canard* (December 13, 1879), The Canard visits the paper’s ailing rivals, including *L’Éclaireur* and the recently deceased *Fantasque*. (Photograph: Adam Cutchin, from the library of the Université Laval)](image)
fassent surgir une nouvelle tête de Turc pour l’amusement de mes lecteurs.”²⁹⁴ Despite all the ribbing his rivals endured, they seem to have respected and appreciated Berthelot as much for his wit as a satirist and caricaturist as for his talent as a journalist. Following his death, on September 15, 1895, *La Presse* reported that “le seul humoriste vrai que le Canada français ait jamais produit” had died of a heart attack the previous Sunday; “La veille, Berthelot faisait sa marche habituelle par les rues de la ville, griffonnant des caricatures, car il maniait avec une égale facilité la plume et le crayon.”²⁹⁵ It is fitting that in

²⁹⁴ Quoted in Lionais-Tassé, *La Vie humoristique*, 49.

²⁹⁵ Quoted in Lionais-Tassé, *La Vie humoristique*, 211. In his habitually humorous spirit, he left, in the “Archi. Post-Scriptum” of his will, “dix dollars aux amis qui me suivront jusqu’au cimetière de la Côte-des-Neiges pour être dépensés en consommations à l’hôtel Lumkin ou à son successeur.” Ibid., 214.
this report of his passing, La Presse’s reporter comments on not only Berthelot’s experience as a journalist and caricaturist, but also his intimate relationship with the streets of a city he evidently loved. As we shall see, he put this knowledge of the city and its streets to great use in the Mystères de Montréal. Remembered well by his colleagues, unalienated despite his constant barbs and satire, Berthelot was nonetheless constantly confronted with the difficulties of being an outspoken, politically engaged liberal in a city where, at a time when the Catholic Church strove more than ever to exert its authority.

**Censorship and the Church**

Throughout his career, in all the papers he either founded or to which he contributed, Berthelot dealt with the omnipresent hand of the Church and its censors. The Church held enormous influence in nineteenth-century Quebec society, not least because such a large proportion of the population was Catholic. The number of non-French-Canadian Catholics being as negligibly small as the number of non-Catholic French-Canadians, the terms “Catholics” or “French Canadians” refer to virtually the same population in the period in question here; the Catholic/French-Canadian population of Quebec made up 91% of the general population in 1871. Perhaps counterintuitively, the British government actually strengthened the power of the Catholic Church in Quebec as a means of maintaining control over the province’s predominantly French and Catholic population. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Church’s opposition to both French works and the Institut canadien de Montréal, an effective and symbolic bastion of liberal

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296 Jacques Henripin and Yves Peron, “La Transition démographique de la province de Québec,” La Population du Québec: études rétrospectives, ed. Hubert Charbonneau (Montreal: Les Editions du Boréal express, 1973), 23-24. More specifically, out of a population of 1,192,000, 1,021,000 were Catholic and 940,000 were French-Canadian.
thought in Montreal, raged for decades, beginning in the 1840s; came to a head in the 1860s (amidst the Guibord Affair); and even continued after the Institut closed its doors in 1871.297 In the wake of the Guibord Affair, the Church flexed its muscles more than ever before, with books and newspapers as their battleground.

In light of the ever growing enthusiasm for popular writing (and newspapers, in particular), insofar as it reflected reading habits of the people of Quebec in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Church increasingly saw trends in the development of printed material as a scourge.298 Often reprinting and serializing material already published in France (which was particularly easy in Quebec due to a lack of copyright law prohibiting such “borrowing”), newspapers in Quebec distributed fiction on a large scale, at low prices. The mode of publication as well as its means of dissemination made these works particularly easy to access and preserve; its low price point also meant that these works reached a far broader audience than works published in bound volumes. The popularity of these works meant that on one hand, more people bought the papers that serialized them; on the other hand, selling their papers in such large numbers gave pub-

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297 The Guibord Affair was a highly controversial case concerning Joseph Guibord, who was one of the founding members of the Institut. After his death, Monseigneur Ignace Bourget, the bishop of Montreal, refused to allow him to be buried in the cemetery at Côte-des-Neiges because he had been a member of the Institut. Guibord’s widow enlisted the legal representation of Joseph Doutre, a past president of the Institut, and, after a series of appeals, eventually won the case in 1874, five years after Guibord’s death and three years after the Institut closed its debating room. The library would close its doors six years later, in 1880.

298 See Landry, “Le roman-feuilleton français dans la presse québécoise,” 72. While Landry’s particular focus is on French fiction serialized in Québécois papers, it should be noted that the causes and effects of the popularity of the feuilleton discussed here apply not only to French works (i.e., works from France), but also to Québécois works, beginning several decades earlier. Berthelot’s Mystères de Montréal are very much a part of this phenomenon. Landry cites Jean de Bonville to point out that, even amongst Catholic papers, there are some who prefer their liberty to absolute submission to the Church’s authority. Jean de Bonville, “La liberté de presse à la fin du xixe siècle: le cas de Canada-Revue,” in Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française xxxi, no. 4 (March 1978): 504.
lishers an incentive to continue publishing cheaply reproduced works already published elsewhere, rather than commissioning new works, as the editors of *La Presse* and *Le Journal des Débats* did so famously (and so successfully, both in financial terms, and according to the staying power of many of the now-canonical works) during the July Monarchy in France. Furthermore, the practice of cutting out the *feuilleton*, made easier by its regular publication in the *rez-de-chaussée*, and sewing the installments together after its serialization ended is a well documented practice, in Quebec as in France.²⁹⁹ The significantly enlarged audience of these works therefore drew the particular attention of the Church.³⁰⁰ Citing a critique from *La Gazette de France*, Judith Lyon-Caen points out that novels advertise their “dangerousness” with their means of distribution: their covers, their bindings, their pages, etc.³⁰¹ Serial novels, on the other hand, sneak their way to readers, hidden amidst the ostensibly “respectable” newspapers that publish them.

Commenting on the same practice of serializing European works that Landry traces, Maurice Lemire explains that access to French literature, through its distribution in an ever increasing number of papers to an increasingly literate population, eventually threatened the Church’s monopoly on public opinion. In Lemire’s view, fears that the combination of these phenomena would replicate France’s march towards the Revolution

²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, it must be noted that the *mise-en-page* of French-Canadian papers was not at all as standardized as that of their French counterparts. Often favoring a vertical layout, as opposed to the horizontal division resulting in the nearly sanctified space of the *rez-de-chaussée*, the less rigorous *mise-en-page* of French-Canadian papers often made it messy, if not impossible, to cut out the feuilleton.


resulted in the Church’s perceived need to assert its own power through censorship.\textsuperscript{302}

The Church essentially banned any French work (especially works of theater) by virtue of banning the entire papers that published them.

As the liberal Institut canadien de Montréal grew, it also built an important library— all the more important, in a time when the Church was not only attempting to enforce censorship of works on the Index, but also banning more works, almost exclusively French ones, left and right. The Institut prided itself on its library’s holdings, and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was constantly concerned with increasing the number of works it provided and circulated. As we can see from the minutes of their debates, the Institut’s members explicitly asserted their right to determine the contents of the library— a particular point of contention, given the library’s collection, including the Encyclopédie and the complete works of Voltaire for example, and the library’s important function in the life of a city where public libraries did not yet exist—, and to determine the morality of the works it held (see Figure 3.9).\textsuperscript{303}

The opposition between the Church and the Institut reached a tipping point in the mid-1860s, and Monseigneur Ignace Bourget, the bishop of Montreal, eventually threatened the Institut’s members with excommunication if they refused to cease circulation of

\textsuperscript{302} Lemire, “La Valorisation du champ littéraire canadien,” 62.

\textsuperscript{303} In the Institut’s minutes from April 13, 1858, we read that “l’Institut a toujours été et est seul compétent à juger de la moralité de sa bibliothèque et qu’il est capable d’en prendre l’administration sans l’interaction d’influences étrangères” (Procès-verbal de l’Institut canadien de Montréal, registre 1, 13 avril 1858, BAnQ-Vieux Montréal, Fonds Institut canadien de Montréal [cote P768 S2 D1]). See also Isabelle Ducharme, “L’offre de titres littéraires dans les catalogues de bibliothèques de collectivités à Montréal (1797–1898)” in Lire au Québec au xixe siècle, ed. Yvan Lamonde and Sophie Montreuil (Montreal: Fides, 2003), especially pp. 252–258.
their banned works. The Church prevailed, forcing the Institut to close its debating room doors in 1871 and its library in 1880. The victory of the Church led to even more widespread and strict censorship of Montreal’s papers, in particular, and this power gave rise to a generation of papers that actually advertised their compliance with the Church. For fear of having their papers banned and losing both their readership and their livelihood, newspaper editors displayed not only their Catholicism in their columns, but also a sort of “cachet de pureté.” This type of compliance, ranging from acquiescence to obsequiousness in various cases, effectively impeded the ability of the “Rouges” (supporters of Republican, democratic ideals) to make themselves heard in the press. In this fraught climate, Berthelot, given his liberal political bent as well as his potentially

304 Incidentally, in the Mystères, the vicomte’s tattoo, showing a beaver, maple leaves, and the motto “travail et concord,” is in fact a direct reference to the escutcheon of the Institut canadien de Montréal, which shows these items surmounting a beehive. Théophile Hudon, L’Institut canadien de Montréal et l’Affaire Guibord (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1938), 51.


306 Robert, L’Institution du littéraire, 112.
incendiary satire, found himself especially challenged by the Church’s censorship. Ever witty, clever, and determined, Berthelot capitalized on a handful of strategies to evade the censors and maintain his constant journalistic activity.

Berthelot’s most remarkable accomplishment in his newspapers as well as in his *Mystères de Montréal* is that, by means of his humor, he is able to at once evade the Church’s censorship and enlarge the public sphere, extending it even into the perceived privacy of the bourgeois home. In so doing, Berthelot demonstrates the capacity of the newspaper, in the age of its commercialization, to be an object of cultural consumption, on one hand; on the other, he shows that the newspaper is at once a vehicle for the transportation of information as well as a transmitter and amplifier of public opinion. Subverting the Church’s censorship by means of humor and parody, Berthelot is able to make use not only of his newspapers and the *Mystères* to foster a sense of society amongst his French-Canadian readers, but of his fictional character, Ladébauche, as well. Having examined the way the Church exerted its power of censorship, let us now turn to the formation of the public sphere—first generally and then in the Canadian context with an eye towards the Church’s hand in shaping it—, and the relationship between the public sphere and the popular press. This context is in fact essential for reading Berthelot’s journalism and fiction in order to appreciate his exceptional position in the mediatic, political, and social milieux of late-nineteenth-century Montreal, as well as his role in shaping and fostering public opinion in a period of still-nascent French-Canadian nationalism.

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307 The bourgeois home, the “sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family,” is here opposed to the “open” model of the aristocratic *hôtel*. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 43–44.

308 Cf. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 183.
The Public Sphere, Nascent Public Opinion, and the Press

In the philosopher Jürgen Habermas’s conception, the public sphere comes out of eighteenth-century European Enlightenment society, culture, and ideals: in salons, clubs, and coffee houses, as well as in the press, people—admittedly, almost exclusively men of some means—engaged in free, public discussion of Enlightenment ideals such as liberty and equality. Increasingly, as James Gordon Finlayson writes, “a normative notion of public opinion crystallized around the conception of the common good that was established” through these discussions and exchanges.309 It is important to note that the public sphere is not synonymous with “society,” in Habermas’s terms, and the relationship between the political public sphere and the public sphere of the world of letters (literarische Öffentlichkeit) is fundamental; the former evolved from the latter, and “through the vehicle of public opinion[,] it put the state in touch with the needs of society.”310 As these public discussions of the late eighteenth century developed, the public began to exert a more practical and visible political and social function. Here, the public’s function is opposed to political institutions; public opinion eventually became significant enough to serve as a “check” on government.

Whereas letter-writing was the dominant mode of writing in the eighteenth century—in the heyday of Rousseau’s La Nouvelle Héloïse, Laclos’s Les Liaisons dangereuses, and Richardson’s epistolary novels Pamela and Clarissa—, novels, in the early nine-


teenth century, “constituted the public that had long since grown out of early institutions like coffee houses, salons, and Tischgesellschaften and was now held together through the medium of the press and its professional criticism. They formed the public sphere of a rational-critical debate in the world of letters [...]”\(^{311}\) On the relationship between the public sphere and public opinion, it is useful to consider Habermas’s work as well as the works of German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies. Tönnies’s principal contributions concern Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft—community and society—and works on sociological theory that lend themselves to analysis of the role of the press. In many ways, Tönnies’s writing on public opinion anticipates the more developed, rigorously defined and illustrated concepts of Habermas. Various means of developing public opinion, either by means of or in opposition to the press, could include books, public lectures, social events, etc. Public opinion, according to Tönnies, is the product of both an idea and that idea’s “multiplying amplifier”—that is, most often, the press.\(^{312}\) As is often the case in Tönnies’s work, the language he uses to talk about public opinion and the press is very similar to Habermas’s; as the latter writes, “[t]he press that evolved out of the public’s use of

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\(^{311}\) Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 51.

\(^{312}\) Tönnies, “Selections from *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung*,” 137. Tönnies insists on three different meanings of “public opinion,” but unfortunately does not distinguish between them in either a clear or easily translatable way: die Öffentliche Meinung, eine öffentliche Meinung, and öffentliche Meinung. In English, “public opinion” (öffentliche Meinung) “represents an individual’s publicly expressed opinion,” which is therefore meant for a general audience and that may differ from an individual’s private opinion; alternatively, public opinion (eine öffentliche Meinung) refers to instances where “published opinion becomes an opinion of many, of a majority of an open or closed ‘circle,’ particularly if it clearly expresses support or opposition”; and “opinion of the public” (die Öffentliche Meinung) “is, according to Tönnies, the only pure theoretical conception. It is the real (die eigene), articulated public opinion in a strict sense. Its formation and expression are related to a (great) public that appears in various ‘aggregate states,’ determined by the degree to which the public ‘is harmonious with itself.’” Splichal and Hardt, *op. cit.*, 67-68. Furthermore, in Tönnies’s terms, religion is to community (Gemeinschaft) as public opinion is to society (Gesellschaft). See also the chapter “Public Opinion—Opinion publique—Öffentliche Meinung: On the Prehistory of the Phrase” in Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 89–102.
its reason and that had merely been an extension of its debate remained thoroughly an
institution of this very public: effective in the mode of a transmitter and amplifier
[…]"

The newspaper, through its frequent and regular publication, is particularly ef-
fective in influencing and crystallizing public opinion. By reaching a large audience, the
newspaper influences readers and incites discussion in a way that drama, sermons, im-
ages, and pamphlets had previously done. Succinctly put, “[t]he newspaper appears more
urgent, more stimulating, and unequivocal. […] Opinions gain extended distribution and
a larger market. They are public and circulate among the public.”

It is important to
note that, for Tönnies, the newspaper is not the organ of public opinion, and it does not
make or produce public opinion; rather, the newspaper at once reflects and influences
public opinion, and makes people and their ideas heard, understood, and respected.

Let us now turn to the public sphere in Canada, and its connection to newspapers.
If, by the 1870s and following the shuttering of the Institut and its library, the Church in
Quebec has taken over the public sphere, then the liberal bourgeoisie must resort to read-
ing works of their choice within the private sphere, within the intimacy of the family.
In this private isolation, individuals perceive themselves as independent, “even from the
private sphere of their economic activity— as persons capable of entering into ‘purely
human’ relations with one another.”

313 Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, 183.
315 Tönnies, “Selections from Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung,” 137.
317 Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, 48.
other medium, that this body of readers, in their perceived privacy, isolation, and independence, find themselves related and connected. Through the daily ritual of reading the newspaper, an experience akin to secular prayer, the division between the public and private begins to break down.

Especially in places where a nation is not recognized as a state, newspapers can be considered “national territory,” a space where the nation exists because it is articulated.\(^\text{318}\) This notion is particularly germane to the situation of the French Canadians, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, because of their fraught relationship with both the government— of Montreal, of Quebec, and of Canada— and anglophone Canadians. In specifying the status and position of the French Canadians as a nation not determined by a political boundary, it is important to be careful in choosing a collective noun to refer to them: for Tönnies, “Community is a traditional and inarticulate form of social organization based on personal relationships, customs, and faith. The concept of society signifies an urban and industrial (i.e., a rational social) organization […] based on nonpersonal relations, special interests, conventions, law, and public opinion, respectively.”\(^\text{319}\) The French Canadians that concern us here, in the context of a study of Berthelot, his papers, journalistic milieu and the *Mystères*, therefore constitute a society whom the press is capable of representing as such, and the contemporary reader (i.e., the


audience directly addressed by the newspapers considered here) is able to identify with this society, within a broader community, on national terms. In other words, newspapers are capable of both fostering a sense of society, and of representing that society, within a politically or geographically determined country; a multiplicity of national societies is therefore present and recognizable, even when they do not function as a single political entity.320

French Canadians, given their “infra-national” identity, to borrow Marie-Ève Thérienty and Alain Vaillant’s term, are doubly threatened in the historical period that concerns us here, given their relationship with France as the former metropole, their English colonial rulers (since 1760), and the anglophone inhabitants of former Upper Canada throughout the period of the Province of Canada and Confederation.321 Essential to our understanding of Berthelot’s place in this historical, literary, and political context is an understanding of the ways he made use of (auto)parody and satire in his papers to subvert the censorship of the Church. His humor, however, played another, equally important role. “Le besoin de rire existe dans tout public,” Robert Aird asserts, “mais surtout dans une collectivité maintenue en situation d’infériorité où le besoin de rire se ferait encore plus pressant.”322


In order to see how Berthelot deploys his autoparodic humor to nationalist ends, let us now consider the role played by Ladébauche—Berthelot’s complex, lasting, satirical fictional correspondent—and the way he contributes to the establishment and identification of a French-Canadian society not only in Berthelot’s papers, but in the broader context of the public sphere, constituted, supported, and enlarged by the Montreal press.323

**Ladébauche, Autoparody, and National Identity**

The name Baptiste Ladébauche first appears in *Le Canard* as the author of a “Correspondance parisienne” published on June 28, 1878.324 Allard calls him the “Archétype du vieux paysan canadien-français,” and describes him with “Les manches retroussées, la pipe au bec […].” His language is “rustre et cru, oscillant entre la franchise éclairée et la naïveté feinte: un langage réservé seul aux gens du peuple […].”325 Cambron nuances this description of Ladébauche’s language, saying that “Ses commentaires naïfs livrent une satire mordante de la vie montréalaise, par Paris interposé, et le tout comporte une dimension d’autodérision certaine.”326 Ladébauche’s contributions to Berthelot’s paper include foreign correspondence, including his visits to the likes of Victoire—Queen Victoria, whom he also nicknames “la bourgeoisie”—and Rutherford B. Hayes. Quickly,

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Ladébauche becomes not simply a mouthpiece for Berthelot’s commentary on current events and politics in Montreal and Quebec, but a character, appearing in caricatures as well as in the header for Berthelot’s various papers. From the late 1870s until roughly the 1950s, thanks in large part to the illustrations produced from Berthelot’s collaboration with caricaturist and illustrator Henri Julien, the figure of Ladébauche would take on a life of its own. After Berthelot’s departure from *Le Canard*, his friend, Honoré Beau-grand took control of the paper and began using the signature of Ladébauche as well. Berthelot continued to use both Ladébauche’s figure and signature in *Le Vrai Canard*, *Le Grognard*, and *Le Violon*, even in these papers’ mastheads (see Figures 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5). Ladébauche’s name was frequently invoked in other papers as well (which no doubt contributed to the libel suits that beset Berthelot in his later years)— not to mention Albéric Bourgeois’s use of the figure roughly thirty years later in *La Presse*—, his likeness was used in advertisements for cigars and tobacco, and the character appeared in comic strips in the first two decades of the twentieth century, in addition to being portrayed on the stage.

To give just one example of “Ladébauche’s” brand of humor, as well as his political engagement, let us examine his (obviously fictional) visit to Rutherford B. Hayes,

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328 A good selection of advertisements using Ladébauche’s likeness can be found in Albéric Bourgeois, *Les voyages de Ladébauche autour du monde* (Montreal: VLB Éditeur, 1982).

329 For a brief sketch of Ladébauche’s appearances, see Cambron, postface, 283–84; for a fuller sketch of the various iterations, see Cambron, “Les histoires de Ladébauche,” 256–62. A two-day conference on Ladébauche at the BAnQ has been published as volume, *Quand la caricature sort du journal: Baptiste Ladébauche 1878–1957*, edited by Micheline Cambron and Dominic Hardy, with the collaboration of Nancy Perron (Montreal: Fides, 2015).
with whom he discusses the logistics of the United States annexing Canada, should the American president wish to take him up on his offer. In a singular instance of autoparody in the January 17, 1880 issue of *Le Vrai Canard*, Ladébauche, in a transliterated mix of Canadian French and English, humorously recounts how he walks right up to the White House and when Hayes admits him, introduces himself:

Je lui dis que mon nom était Ladébauche, que j’étais canayen pur sang et que je roulais un peu partout dans l’intérêt de mon pays. Hayes me dit qu’il ne comprenait pas le français. Je lui répondis qu’il n’était pas nécessaire de savoir le français pour comprendre la langue des canayens. J’avais appris un peu d’anglais dans les petites écoles et je me décidai à parler la langue des Yankees. Je pris la parole comme suit: My name is Ladébauche, I come de la Bord à Plouffe. Me rester long, very long dans les shanties. Me come see about a big thing. Business no go in Canada. Protection no bonne for the canayens. We payer trop cher for every thing. The government he tax de sucre, de coffy, all de stuff of yankees and of Angleterre. The poor ouvrier he have no work. Bad boys in our government. They empocher all the money, make big dinners, bum all the time like gentiman, tiré à quatre épingles, you know, pulled at four pins. We always payer. […]

HAYES. —Do all the French Canadians pull well together?

LADÉBAUCHE. —They no pull at all. All divided in two, les rouges et les bleus.

HAYES. —Rouges et bleus! What do you mean?

LADÉBAUCHE. —Mine, les bleus conservateurs have bonne mine, les rouges no mine at all. Rouges no bonne catholiques, les bleus all saint [angels], plus catho-lic than the Pape.

When Hayes inquires about religion and education, Ladébauche responds simply:

HAYES. —If Canada is a [C]atholic country, annexation will not work on account of the public schools?

LADÉBAUCHE. —Never mind the question. French Canadians we don’t go school at all. That’s a small affair for us.
Here, language is essential to the humor of the exchange; Ladébauche’s rapid code switching allows readers to simultaneously laugh at him and identify with him. The pitch of the autoparody in the scene is further heightened with Hayes’s question about education. Ladébauche’s response is both a critique and a joke; the potential truth of his reply is belied by the questions addressed in the exchange—annexation, political corruption, regional politics, national debt and economics, infrastructure, religion, etc. Here as throughout his papers, Berthelot rigorously pursues a political agenda, always protecting himself and his papers with a shield of humor.

As a caricature of a rural French Canadian, Ladébauche demonstrates and refers to a certain number of characteristics of French Canadians—clichés such as a lack of education, a variety of French sprinkled with anglicisms and slang, and a marked element of derision, especially for politicians, for example. The capacity of Ladébauche to inspire a sense of identification and society (sensu Tönnies) derives as much from his humor as from his autoparodic function. Allard writes that Ladébauche’s name “attise immédiatement l’intérêt et polarise l’imagination du public. Derrière ce personnage coloré se cachent non seulement Berthelot, mais aussi toute une part de la collectivité canadienne-française qui trouve en lui un sujet d’identification.”

The regular mention of Ladébauche’s quotidian activities, such as eating, drinking, and smoking, contribute to the Ra-

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belaisian character of Berthelot’s representation of this caricatured Canadian. Instead of contributing to a sort of shameful or offensive stereotype, however, these various qualities are points of pride for Ladébauche; Berthelot, through Ladébauche, puts autoparody into the service of fomenting a sense of nation made up of the French-Canadian minority.

As an imagological figure, Ladébauche—his caricature, his voice, and his name—provides a figure, present and visible in the public-opinion forming public sphere constituted by the popular press, around whom a sense of French-Canadian identity can crystallize. In contrast to my reading of Ladébauche, Cambron would see Berthelot’s differentiation between his own voice, the editorial voice of his paper, and Ladébauche’s voice as a (possibly involuntary) desire not to use Ladébauche as an embodiment of national identity. I would argue that the reading of the newspaper builds a relationship between Ladébauche and Berthelot’s contemporaries that is established based upon an experience of identification, of seeing in Ladébauche characteristics that the reader both considers authentically Canadian and may even feel s/he possesses; a feeling of complexity in turn allows for laughter. Readers are able to see tropes (even if, and even because they are stereotypes) in this caricature, and, by being in on the joke, so to speak, are able

331 Parenthetically, Berthelot is also a fan of the pun. In addition to Ladébauche, he invents a character named l’abbé Tise, playing on the noun “la bêtise” and the verb “tiser,” a slang word for drinking with a connotation that calls to mind a bawdy, ribald, or Rabelaisian variety of monk; this pun evidently points to Berthelot’s ongoing tensions with, and opposition to the Church. To give another example of Berthelot’s punning, in the Mystères, he refers to Dr. O.S. Coxis, whose initials form the word “os,” bone, and whose last name is a homonym for “coccyx,” creating an overdetermined reference to the tailbone; the character is incidental and this particular pun serves no other purpose than to amuse the attentive reader.

to laugh at themselves, with the simultaneous possibilities of identifying with Ladébauche or denying any resemblance to him.

In addition to using him throughout his papers, Berthelot also sets up Ladébauche as the author and narrator of his serial novel, *Les Mystères de Montréal*. This important point, along with the novel’s generic distinctions and the publicity the novel received, casts Berthelot’s work of fiction in overtly nationalist terms.

**Hector Berthelot’s Urban Mystery**

**Publication History**

Berthelot published *Les Mystères de Montréal* in *Le Vrai Canard* between December 20, 1879 and March 5, 1881.\(^{333}\) (Berthelot himself had founded the paper on August, 23, 1879.)\(^{334}\) The novel was subsequently published serially in *Le Canard*, which he also founded, between May 23, 1896 and February 18, 1897.\(^{335}\)

Following the installment of February 28, 1880, before the end of the serialization of the Prologue, *Le Vrai Canard* announces that the rest of the novel will be divided into three parts. “Le trésor des Bouctouche” was to be followed by “Le secret de l’Homme au Chapeau de Castor Gris,” and then “Ange et Démon.” As it is, only the first part of the

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\(^{333}\) The prologue and first part were published from December 20, 1879 to July 31, 1880. At the end of the first part, Berthelot promised that the second part of the novel would begin serialization in September, but it did not in fact appear until November 13, 1880, and ran until March 5, 1881.


\(^{335}\) Although the bulk of Berthelot’s output is journalistic, he did produce four popular novels. The *Mystères de Paris* was not the only novel whose title Berthelot imitated: he also published *Le Conte de Monto-Christin*, in 1894, and *Les Trois Moustiquaires*, in 1893, both in *Le Canard*, playing off two other immensely successful French popular novels by Dumas. Berthelot’s only other serial novel, apart from the *Mystères de Montréal*, was *Le Mauvais zouave* (1895). See Cambron, “Humour et politique dans la presse québécoise du XIXe siècle. Des formes journalistiques comme sources d’humour” in “Humour et politique,” spec. issue of *Le Bulletin d’histoire politique*, ed. Robert Aird, 13 no. 2 (Winter 2005), 31-49. Cited in M. Hébert, “Une pratique marginale,” 19.
novel bears a subtitle, and Berthelot apparently abandoned plans for a three-part novel.

In the same issue, *Le Vrai Canard* reprints a review of the *Mystères de Montréal* from the *Star* that includes the praise “The paper is evidently under the direction of one [i.e., Berthelot] who understands what true humor is; at all events there is always plenty of it.” *Le Vrai Canard* then promises that “Le roman est rempli de situations nâvrantes [sic], d’in- cidents comiques et de scènes canadiennes prises sur le vif.” In addition to their specific qualification of the scenes as “canadiennes,” the introductory statement to the *Star*’s review refers to “Le roman canadien dont nous avons commencé la publication il y a deux mois” (my italics). Thus, nationalism is explicitly at stake in the redaction, publication, and reception of the novel.

In 1898, the novel was published *en volume* by A.P. Pigeon (who also published *Le Canard*). Two different printings exist from this year (slight differences in typography and borders indicate the differences), both published in two columns, recalling the novel’s original publication in newspapers. This edition uses none of the illustrations from the serialization of the novel; about one half of the new images are illustrations, meaning they represent scenes from the narrative, and the other half are caricatures, representing characters in a particular, stylized way (with overly large heads, for example). Furthermore, a portrait of Berthelot is used on the cover, underscoring his attachment to the text nearly twenty years after it was serialized and attributed to Ladébauche (to whom we will return). This two-column version of the novel was once again published in 1901. While there is no extant text that can be identified as the third edition, there is a different edition that abandons the two-column format and includes new illustrations and
vignettes. Labeled as the fourth edition, this text bears no date, but there is an advertisement for a house following the text of the narrative announcing that the buyer can take possession of the property on May 1, 1918, which suggests a much later publication date than any previous edition.

As for the question of genre, it is interesting to note that in the editions of the novel published in volumes, the novel is characterized as a “roman de mœurs.” More canonical French-Canadian novels were qualified in more overtly nationalist terms—Chauveau’s *Charles Guérin* (1846) is called a “roman de mœurs canadiennes” and Doutré’s *Les Fiancés de 1812* (1844) is called an “essai de littérature canadienne,” for example. What is more interesting is that in an advertisement in *Le Canard* from August 23, 1902, the second edition of the novel is promoted as a “roman serio-comique.” For all the humor of the text, twenty years after its original serialization, both its comedic and serious dimensions were still appreciated, even beginning with the novel’s paratextual generic designation.

In 2013, Éditions Nota Bene published an edition of the novel, edited by Micheline Cambron. Cambron restored the Ladébauche attribution while noting Berthelot’s authorship, calling the novel *Les Mystères de Montréal par M. Ladébauche: Roman de mœurs* by Hector Berthelot. With a preface by Gilles Marcotte and a postface by Cambron, this edition reproduces the first serialization of the novel, in *Le Vrai Canard*, and

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the first edition by A.P. Pigeon, from 1898, complete with the various illustrations that appeared in those texts. Cambron defends her decision to publish an edition of the novel devoid of any annotation by saying that it is not necessary to the understanding of the text, and that it would detract from its popular, satirical, and humorous dynamic. Since various editions by Pigeon are easily available online, having been digitized, Cambron’s edition does little to make the novel more accessible, but certainly makes the novel more legible, if not any more readable.

**Summary of the Novel**

With a somewhat convoluted plot characteristic of many nineteenth-century popular novels, Berthelot’s *Mystères de Montréal* merits a somewhat detailed summary here.

The novel’s prologue begins in May 1879 in the Jardin Viger in Montreal, inscribing the narrative in the same time and place as the novel’s serialization. Berthelot quickly establishes a love triangle between Ursule Sansfaçon, Cléophas Plouf, and Bénoni Vaillancourt. Their fates all quickly become entwined with that of the Bouctouche family, which is introduced in Part One. The comte de Bouctouche, his wife, and their moribund child live in an opulently furnished house in Montreal. The family money is in fact the countess’s father’s, and a certain Caraquette is responsible for executing his will, which leaves the fortune to the young vicomte. The heartless count, more concerned with his son’s inheritance than his health, attempts to whisk him and the rest of their household (where Ursule is their servant) away to Saint-Jérôme.

After the vicomte’s demise, a dizzying few chapters ensue in which the count and Caraquette bounce back and forth between Saint-Jérôme and Montreal by train, respec-
tively trying to conceal and reveal the truth of the young boy's status. The count ends up hiring Cléophas to supply an impostor to stand in for his deceased son, and to give the boy a tattoo identical to his son's—a beaver nibbling a maple leaf, surmounted by the motto “Travail et concorde”—which in fact recalls the symbols of the Institut canadien de Montréal. Cléophas just so happens to use Ursule’s younger brother, Petit Pite, a clear imitation of characters like Victor Hugo’s Gavroche and Eugène Sue’s Petit Tortillard. A series of twists and turns, all to cover up the comte de Bouctouche’s deception, eventually ends up with him accidentally poisoning himself, and the rest of the characters all make their way to Montreal—where all roads seem to lead in Berthelot’s Mystères as in Fortier’s, as we shall see in the following chapter.

Cléophas and Caraquette serendipitously take rooms at the same hotel, allowing Cléophas to steal the Bouctouche family fortune from Caraquette’s room and stash it in an old cemetery. The enterprising, widowed and childless countess opens a bar, employing Ursule as a bar maid. In the “wicked city,” all these spaces—hotels where thefts are committed, cemeteries visited at night and used for more than just resting places for the dead, illicit taverns where the violence erupts, and prisons—all connote the danger, immorality, and deception that captivated nineteenth-century readers on both sides of the

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337 The vicomte supposedly died at the age of four and Pite is twelve—and Bouctouche had asked Cléo-phas to find a boy of six or seven! These and other small discrepancies suggest that Berthelot either wrote his novel quickly, published it as he went along, or both; interestingly, they were never correctid in the successive re-serializations and editions of the novel.
Atlantic, and that contributed to the social imaginary of urban crime and the underworld that the nineteenth-century wave of urban mysteries helped form.338

One night, Caraquette, Cléophas, and Bénoni end up in a brawl and are arrested for fighting, while the countess and Ursule are arrested for operating a bar without a liquor license. All five of them are sent to prison for three months— exactly the same amount of time as the break in the novel’s serialization between Parts One and Two.

Part Two departs from the more light-hearted, nearly farcical tone of the first and takes up a darker narrative more characteristic of an urban mystery— filled with twists and turns, night-time escapades, double-dealing, and murder— just as the action is almost exclusively situated in Montreal. The narrative picks up with the release of Cléophas, Bénoni, and Caraquette from prison— the “Hôtel Payette.” Most of this second part of the novel concerns the characters’ schemes to steal the Bouctouche fortune from one another. Things take a more violent turn when, during a scuffle, Bénoni slits Cléophas’s throat and stashes his body in the Sansfaçons’ stable. Caraquette, alternately playing the part of a conspirator and a pseudo-detective, surmises Bénoni’s guilt and blackmails him on the day of his wedding to Ursule.

The novel closes with a hasty epilogue in which Bénoni is arrested for stealing the Bouctouche fortune and murdering Cléophas; Caraquette leaves Montreal to establish himself in a small town one hundred miles north of Saint-Jérôme (apparently forgetting the wife he supposedly left in New Brunswick before traveling to Montreal in the first

place!); and the widowed countess takes up with a young man, Alphonse de Malpèque who turns out to be the new, rightful beneficiary of her father’s will. The narrative abruptly takes an overtly journalistic tone—inscribing the action of the novel even more firmly in the time and place of its publication than its incipit—and ends by explaining that the Marquis de Malpèque and his new wife have bought a magnificent house on the rue Saint-Denis, had many children, and, the previous Tuesday, voted for Jean-Louis Beaudry.339

**Interlude: Ladébauche, Narrative Authority, and Berthelot’s Novel**

Ladébauche, as opposed to Berthelot, is set up as the author and narrator of the *Mystères de Montréal*—at least at first. In the feuilletons of the Prologue and Part One of the novel, the title, subtitles, and chapter names, as well as “par M. Ladébauche” are all unfailingly present. At times, Ladébauche’s authorship is further asserted by “signing” his name at the end of the feuilleton (e.g., June 21, 1880). Interestingly, in the serialization of Part Two, there is no author, implied or real, noted for a handful of the feuilletons.340 Ladébauche, therefore, is an implied author, following Wayne Booth, as well as an intrusive, extradiegetic narrator.341 In all of the publicity for the novel’s sec-

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340 The installments that do not include any mention of the *Mystères*’ author are from March 20, 27; April 3, 17; and May 22, 1880. The indication of Ladébauche’s authorship returns before the end of the novel’s serialization. The omission is likely due to either space concerns or the changeable layout of *Le Vrai Canard* (and this changeability was not at all uncommon among Canadian newspapers, in contradistinction to French newspapers).

ond serialization in *Le Canard* following Berthelot’s death, and in volume form, however, Berthelot’s authorship of the novel is in fact excessively emphasized—his portrait appears not simply in the advertisements, but even on the cover of the novel. Cambron goes so far as to suggest that the omission of Ladébauche’s name in the novel’s publication in a volume reflects the publisher’s faith that readers would understand that he is the novel’s narrator, even if Berthelot is prominently advertised as its author. While Ladébauche’s voice is certainly recognizable, in the narration as in the characters’ voices, I would argue that the irregular inclusion, and then suppression of Ladébauche’s name in the paratext suggests that he, Ladébauche, functions as an implied author; the use of Ladébauche’s name and signature, and the publication of the novel without any attribution in fact reflect Berthelot’s deliberate aim to use myriad narrative elements to form public opinion and foster nationalist sentiment and a sense of society (*sensu* Tönnies) on the part of his French-Canadian readers.

Berthelot also maintains the distinction between himself and the voice of Ladébauche in part by means of a metonymic representation of a duck as the editor of *Le Canard*, as Cambron rightly argues. Playing off the dual meanings of “canard”—either a duck, or popular or third-rate newspaper,— Berthelot, despite being the well known and explicit editor of the paper, uses both a literal illustration and the anthropomorphic caricature of a duck in his mastheads (see figures 2 and 3), as well as the editorial voice of the

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“Canard” figure. To underscore the distinction between Berthelot’s voice and the Canard’s editorial voice, in his correspondence for *Le Canard*, Ladébauche consistently addresses “Mon cher Canard,” rather than Berthelot-as-editor, and maintains other conventions such as including dates, the city whence he addresses his correspondence, and his signature. In the same way that characters of all social classes in the *Mystères de Montréal* speak much the same way (in terms of register, dialect, etc.), Ladébauche, in his “reporting” on everything from his visits with Queen Victoria and President Hayes to the governments of Montreal and Quebec, lends his own manner of speech to everyone he encounters— even in instances of autoparody, such as when he critiques the way the French speak French. His personality, actions, and language are deliberately differentiated from that of the Canard and Berthelot himself. Cambron suggests that this distinction is maintained even as Ladébauche takes on a life of his own in Berthelot’s papers and in the public sphere; likewise, “[a]ucun autre journal humoristique québécois n’usera de ce procédé de manière aussi efficace et systématique.” Although Cambron attempts to make a distinction between texts Berthelot signed as Ladébauche, and those he wrote himself but did not sign (as was common at the time), it should nonetheless be noted that Berthelot in fact used numerous pseudonyms, such as La Cane, and Paul Hisse. A clean, rigorous, or systematic *ex post facto* distinction between Berthelot’s use of the two signatures is thus simply impossible for a reader to make, whether Berthelot did so or not.


As mentioned earlier, Ladébauche lends his own voice to his interlocutors in his correspondence with the Canard. Also, in the Mystères, Ladébauche and his characters speak the same language, which is to say that, regardless of social class or education, they speak the same type of French, heavily inflected with English and slang. Included in the novel is a letter that Bénoni writes to Ursule while he is in prison in which Berthelot/Ladébauche maximizes theautoparodic potential of language. Dated August 15, 1879, in Montreal, the letter reads:


Berthelot’s deliberate misspellings transliterate not only the particular dialect spoken in Montreal (e.g., “drette,” “pômons,” “charche,” “moé”), but also misunderstandings that could be unsurprising, coming from a person of Bénoni’s social class (e.g., homonyms such as “père”/“paire,” “soufère,” “Singe Erôme,” and the “posse criptomme” he includes following the quoted letter). Clearly intended to amuse his reader—the paper as well as the narration are written in “proper” French, albeit scattered with anglicisms and slang—,
Bénoni’s letter, by transliterating the way Berthelot’s readers spoke, invites readers to laugh at him (Bénoni) and at themselves. In this instance of autoparody, the reader has occasion to identify himself in the work he reads at the same time that he perceives distance from it. Through self-identification, humor, and autoparody, Berthelot is able to create a sense of identification on the part of his readers, despite their often independent, isolated, and silent experiences of reading.

For all his lighthearted humor, political barbs, and parodic caricatures, Berthelot was a journalist, first and foremost. We see his reporter’s impulse even in his fiction, and in the Mystères de Montréal, Berthelot demonstrates the same concern for accuracy and up-to-the-minute precision that confer relevance on newspapers. The novel’s means of publication—that is, in serial form—affords it the same immediacy as the rest of the newspaper and allows Berthelot to inscribe this fictional work as much in the present of the city as he fixes Montreal, at a particular, significantly pivotal moment in its industrialization and modernization, in the novel. Written towards the end of the second phase of the Industrial Revolution in Canada, the Mystères serve as a record of Montreal amidst rapid change, and Quebec amidst a first phase of urbanization. In order to see how Berthelot makes use of the immediacy of the serial form to create an absolutely contemporary account of Montreal, let us now examine his representations of public places, as well as his onomastic play.
Throughout Berthelot’s novel, the most striking difference between Montreal and “not-Montreal” is the dizzying flurry of toponyms that he furnishes for the city— not simply a city— that are completely absent for all other locations (such as the towns of Saint-Jérôme, Sainte-Thérèse, or Saint-Sauveur, for example). What is more, the streets, markets, parks, and hotels Berthelot references are not innocently chosen. Essential, rather than incidental, they at once inscribe the novel in the present of both its redaction and publication, and assert Montreal’s modernity when the city is in the full swing of the Industrial Revolution. Berthelot is remarkably rigorous in his cartographic accuracy and makes use of street names, in particular, as well as bars and public places— such as the Jardin Viger, the carré Dalhousie, and the carré Saint-Louis—, not simply to confer verisimilitude on his text, but to establish Montreal as a lively, modern, industrial metropole. By mapping and reconstructing the historical moment when the Mystères were first serialized, using archival maps, I am able to compare fictional and real space in order to show what Berthelot’s contemporaries would have gleaned from his serial novel, as well as what the modern reader can. Furthermore, by considering the Mystères in the context of their dissemination in newspapers, in an iterative present, we can see how Berthelot both intervenes in the politics of his day, despite censorship, and takes up a Richardsonian practice of writing to the moment, translating it into the context of a flourishing

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346 The term “place” is used here to distinguish the real, habitable public places discussed here from the theoretical, conceptual, Habermasian type of public space discussed above.

late-nineteenth-century French-Canadian milieu. Public spaces are almost exclusively depicted in the Mystères and the novel therefore can serve as a lens through which a modern reader can view an industrializing Montreal on the cusp of becoming a modern, industrial city.

**Street Names**

The amount of detail Berthelot provides on the city’s streets is staggering. While he may make mistakes (such as changing the Ursule’s family name from Brind’amour to Sansfaçon, or relocating her house from the rue Dorchester to the rue Lagauchetière), he is usually painstaking when it comes to the city’s toponymy. For example, after the opening scene of the novel, when Ursule speaks with Cléophas and Bénoni in the Jardin Viger, she returns home to the quartier Sainte-Marie. The narrator tells us that “Elle dirigea sa course vers la rue Visitation qu’elle remonta jusqu’à l’Église St. Pierre [sic]. Là, elle entra dans la rue Dorchester, et continua sa marche jusqu’à une petite maison en bois à deux étages” (39). The detail that the house is made of wood is seemingly incidental, an *effet de réel*, until later, when fire destroys it. This timber construction of the Sansfaçon home fits its historical frame: we see in H.W. Hopkins’s *Atlas of the City of Montreal*, published in 1879— the same year the serialization of the novel began—, the vast majority of the buildings in Montreal were brick or stone, since timber buildings had

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348 Whatever inconsistencies Berthelot does introduce into the text, he makes these changes immediately and definitively, at the beginning of the novel.
been banned after the great fire of 1852, when 1,200 buildings were destroyed and nearly a sixth of the city’s population, some 9,000 people, was left homeless.\footnote{Linteau, \textit{Histoire du Québec contemporain}, 191. It was only in the 1860s that the creation of a firefighting corps helped prevent such devastating fires.}

Berthelot also gives exceptionally detailed toponyms when Cléophas steals the Bouctouche family fortune from Caraquette’s room at the Hôtel du Canada, pushing the case out the window into the ruelle Vaudreuil (see Figure 3.10).\footnote{Berthelot includes two Montreal hotels: the Hôtel du Canada, where Cléophas steals the Bouctouche fortune from Caraquette, and the Hôtel Rasco, where Bouctouche, Cléophas and Petit Pite stay before traveling to Saint-Jérôme. Berthelot even specifies “l’Hôtel Rasco, Rue Saint-Paul” (134). A hotel that also figures prominently in Fortier’s \textit{Mystères de Montréal}, the Rasco Hotel was known as one that was favored by French Canadians, rather than English travelers. Caraquette also stays in the Hôtel Beaulieu in Saint-Jérôme, a real hotel where one could apparently have a room for $1.50 per night, in 1888, at least. \textit{The “Blue Book,” A Pocket Dictionary of the Textile Manufacturers of the United States and Canada} (New York, J.E. Palmer, 1888), 255.}

After recovering it, he “la posa sur ses épaules et alla la jeter dans la porte cochère de la vieille maison de la rue Sainte-Thérèse autrefois occupée par le \textit{Pays}, c’est-à-dire à une dizaine de pas de l’endroit où elle était tombée” (174). Here, Berthelot not only connects the action of his novel to the cartographic reality of the city, but also to the newspaper world with which he, and his serial novel, were so closely entwined.

Lastly, when Bénoni tails Caraquette and Cléophas to find out where the Bouctouche fortune is hidden, Berthelot again gives deliberately precise details of their route. Bénoni sees them enter the Hôtel du Canada and then he

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
Cléophas follows the chemin Papineau until he arrives at the military cemetery where he had hidden the stolen fortune before his arrest. Aside from the small mistake that the rue Sainte-Thérèse and the rue Notre-Dame are parallel to one another, the other toponyms reveal a great deal about the historical moment when this novel takes place. The rue Sainte-Marie was in fact an extension of the rue Notre-Dame, until 1882, north of the

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351 Berthelot’s specificity goes a step further in this scene, even describing the particular obscurity of the city streets: “Les principales rues de la métropole n’étaient pas éclairées parce que la lune, d’après les calculs de la compagnie de gaz, devait paraître ce soir-là; aussi le passant attardé éprouvait-il toutes le peines du monde à trouver son chemin. Mais Cléophas connaissait les plus mystérieux détours de la ville” (210).
carré Dalhousie. There were in fact petitions around the time of the serialization of the Mystères to do away with the Marché Papineau that reflect both the urbanization of the city and the changing face of the quartier Saint-Jacques. Likewise reflecting these changes was the petition to change the name of the Chemin Papineau to the rue Papineau. The carré Dalhousie, in addition to its proximity to French-Canadian neighborhoods (working-class, bourgeois, and well-to-do alike), was also the location of a new train station— servicing the same trains that travelled between Montreal and Quebec, stopping in Sainte-Thérèse and Saint-Jérôme. The Québec, Montréal, Ottawa, and Occidental (QMOO), or the “train d’Ottawa,” as Berthelot refers to it, was the result of a combination of smaller projects, eventually financed by the government during the economic crisis of 1873–1878; while the line connecting Montreal and Saint-Jérôme was begun by the curé Labelle in 1869, it was only in 1879— the same year the serialization of the Mystères in Le Vrai Canard began— that Montreal was finally connected to Quebec by the QMOO. These industrializing, infrastructural developments provide an explanation for the ease with which Bouctouche and Caraquette seem to bounce back and forth between the metropole and the outlying towns of Saint-Jérôme and Sainte-Thérèse.

The many street names that constantly fill the pages of Berthelot’s novel do far more than give it an urban “feel.” In addition to helping to situate the novel in a particular historical moment, they are signifying elements, rather than effets de réel, that assert

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352 See Linteau et al., “Les facteurs internes du développement économique québécois” in Histoire du Québec contemporain, esp. 95-102. The choice of including Sainte-Thérèse along this line was in fact quite contentious, since it favored Quebec over Montreal. Once Sainte-Thérèse was chosen as the junction between east-west lines, Montreal only attracted local travelers, while Quebec was able to capitalize on increasing travel westward.
both the journalistic immediacy of the *Mystères de Montréal*, as well as Montreal’s modernity.

**Parks and Markets**

In addition to the many street names, a handful of parks figure prominently in the novel. Already mentioned is the carré Dalhousie, but the Jardin Viger and the carré Saint-Louis also play important roles. The first feuilletons of the *Mystères* were published in 1879 in Montreal; the novel itself begins with a proliferation of deictic markers, firmly establishing the *montréalais* flavor of the novel: “C’était en 1879. Mai répandait ses premières fleurs et sa verdure printanière sur le Jardin Viger à Montréal” (31). The Jardin Viger of the 1880s was very different from the modern-day Place Viger, intersected by the rues Berri and Saint-Hubert, with the Autoroute Ville-Marie passing underneath it. At the time considered one of the most beautiful parks in Montreal, the square Viger was filled with trees, exotic flowers, paths, and a fountain (see Figure 3.11). Indeed, Berthelot calls it an Eden (31)— which is not to say that Ursule, whom the reader first sees there, is by any means an Eve figure. The sheer number of images of the park includes in the Albums Massicotte, relative to other Montreal parks, attests to the Jardin Viger’s photogeneity, popularity, and centrality.354

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354 The Albums Massicotte, containing nearly 6,000 images germane to the history of Montreal, were compiled by Édouard-Zotique Massicotte, over the course of nearly fifty years (roughly 1870-1920). The brother of the “artiste de presse,” Edmond-Joseph Massicotte, Édouard compiled and edited Berthelot’s work for *La Presse* (1884–1885) on the history of the city, publishing *Montréal: Le Bon vieux temps* in 1924. The Albums Massicotte are now held by the BAnQ and are available (and searchable) online.
Also notable in the novel is the carré Saint-Louis. The Bouctouche family lives nearby, on the rue Saint-Denis, which borders the square to the north. This location for the Bouctouches’ home is particularly fitting, since the carré Saint-Louis made the quartier Saint-Louis the newest and hottest neighborhood for wealthy French Canadians. Once a water reservoir there was no longer sufficient for the needs of the growing city, the park was created, inciting a migration of wealthy French Canadians from the Square Viger to the newly chic rue Saint-

Figure 3.11. The Jardin Viger (William H. Carré, Artwork on Montreal, 1898)

Figure 3.12. This map indicates only a reservoir, rather than the newly constructed carré Saint-Louis. As in Figure 3.10, structures colored red indicate brick or stone construction, while yellow indicates frame buildings. (Detail, H.W. Hopkins, Atlas of the City and Island of Montreal [1879], Plate E, pp. 26-27)
Denis, facing the carré Saint-Louis, where they built luxurious, Second Empire homes.

As Linteau writes, “la grande bourgeoisie quitte la vieille ville à partir des années 1860 pour s’installer sur les contreforts du Mont-Royal; elle y érige de somptueuses résidences à l’allure de petits châteaux.” Berthelot’s situation of the Bouctouches’ home in this space is so up-to-the-minute that in Hopkins’s Atlas, published in 1879, doesn’t even label the carré Saint-Louis; instead, only the old reservoir is indicated and none of the newly constructed homes is denoted (see Figure 3.12).

The Papineau Market also shows up in the novel, during Bénoni’s night-time peregrinations, as he tails Cléophas and Caraquette to the cemetery where the Bouctouche fortune is hidden. Berthelot is very specific about the location of the characters, placing them in the military cemetery, rather than the Protestant one (see Figure 3.13). This market was a central node of the city, and even by 1890, following a petition, the market was removed and turned into a public square, and the “Papineau Road,” or path, was renamed “Papineau Avenue,” reflecting its function as a main artery for the city (which it still is today). In situating his characters in this cemetery, after passing the Papineau Market and walking down the “Chemin Papineau,” Berthelot, rather than showing brand new public spaces, like the carré Saint-Louis, locates the action of his novel in

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a city in the throes of transformation—in terms of urbanization, industrialization, and modernization.

Bars, Restaurants, and Taverns

 Particularly striking is the number of bars that figure in the novel. We see the Mère Gigogne’s bar twice—when Bouctouche, Cléophas, the père Sansfaçon and Petit Pite meet there (119–25), and when Ti-Pite runs away from school and becomes an “habitué” there, infatuated with a blue-eyed girl named Céleste (165–66)—; the restaurant in Lachine where Caraquette corners Bénoni while he celebrates his marriage to Ursule; the illegal bar the Countess operates with Ursule after being dispossessed of her fortune; and Cléophas drinks away his wages “chez Joe Beef,” “un estaminet borgne du quartier Sainte-Anne où l’on donnait le cancan avec des grisettes françaises. Peu à peu il s’asso-
cialait avec les plus mauvais sujets du port” (117).357 Far west (south) of the rest of the locations we see in the novel, the quartier Sainte-Anne included both Griffintown and the Pointe-Saint-Charles. Historically a predominantly Irish area, it was also known as a particularly seedy part of town. Indeed, in Chevalier’s *Mystères de Montréal*, published roughly twenty-five years earlier, entire chapters are devoted to describing its dark, muddy, dangerous streets, drawing an obvious parallel with the Cité of Paris, so famously depicted in *Les Mystères de Paris* and *Notre-Dame de Paris*. The concentration of marginalized populations in the muddy, filth-ridden warrens of the city is not uncommon, especially, in the period in question, and the representations both Berthelot and Chevalier give of this *montréalais* underworld is part and parcel of the social imaginary that Kalifa outlines, especially in the first part of *Les Bas-fonds: Histoire d’un imaginaire*.358 Berthelot’s representation of the quartier Sainte-Anne also lays out a correlation between the filth of the space and the immorality of its inhabitants, strongly implying a causal relationship between the two. What’s more, this area was in fact the main location of the Industrial Revolution in Montreal, which takes on greater significance given that Montreal’s status as an industrial, economic capital was already well established.359 At any rate, “chez Joe Beef” is actually quite a ways away from the rest of the Montreal locales that the characters frequent. Its marginal location, as well as the neighborhood’s reputa-

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357 In this context, “borgne” connotes a poorly lit, dark space where one sees badly.


tion, go hand in hand with Cléophas’s new occupation as a stevedore. As he unloads ships, he works and steals enough to feed himself and get drunk.

Furthermore, like the various hotels seen in the novel, Joe Beef’s bar is not an invention of Berthelot’s. Charles “Joe Beef” McKiernan was an Irish-born immigrant who, after completing his military service, opened “Joe Beef’s Canteen” in Montreal in 1868, quickly winning fame as a champion of the working classes. Making a profit while remaining charitable, Joe Beef fed and lodged the poor and destitute, explicitly welcoming all and turning away none (regardless of race, class, or religion), but made most of his money through the sale of alcohol. The owner of the Montreal Daily Witness, John Dougall, called the Canteen “a den of perdition” and “a place of ill fame,” despite Joe Beef’s philanthropy. Berthelot’s similarities to Joe Beef seem to suggest that he includes this particular establishment not to condemn it or Cléophas, but rather to contribute to its renown; Joe Beef seems to have been every bit as satirical and humorous as Berthelot, making light of Dougall’s campaign against him until bringing a libel suit against Dougall on April 20, 1880—just ten days after Berthelot’s mention of Cléophas in Joe Beef’s Canteen in Le Vrai Canard.

In 1875 Joe Beef relocated his bar from the rue Saint-Claude (when the street was widened) to the corner of the rues de la Commune and Callières (see Figure 3.14). It is


361 Quoted in Provencher, “McKiernan, Charles, Joe Beef.”

362 Provencher, “McKiernan, Charles, Joe Beef.” The modern-day bar and restaurant, Joe Beef, in Little Burgundy, has no connection to the tavern discussed here, except its name and general location. The original tavern closed following McKiernan’s death in 1889.
worth noting that Berthélot never provides street names for anywhere outside Montreal—be it towns like Saint-Jérôme and Sainte-Thérèse, or suburbs and nearby towns like La-Chine, Griffintown, and the rest of the quartier Sainte-Anne. The maps shown here, of the quartiers Saint-Louis, Saint-Jacques and Sainte-Anne, all reveal a contrast between the regular, square blocks of the wealthy and bourgeois parts of the city and the irregular, triangulated (dis)organization of the dangerous, industrial, and/or impoverished neighborhoods that recalls Sue’s opposition of the Cité to the rest of Paris, as well; also, open public places, such as parks, are notably absent from the quartier Sainte-Anne, which places greater importance on establishments such as Joe Beef’s tavern, to return to Habermas’s epistemology of the public sphere.

Even if taverns such as Joe Beef’s were known gathering places, important insofar as they facilitated the exchange of ideas and information, I do not mean to suggest
that they fulfilled any sort of function akin to Griffintown salons, as if to follow Habermas’s likening of the democratizing coffeehouses of Europe to the aristocratic gatherings of the Ancien Régime. In the narrative logic of the novel, Berthelot does not present these spaces as incubators of social and political thought, per se. Instead, his inclusion of Joe Beef’s Canteen confers verisimilitude on his serial novel, ever inscribing his fiction in the lived space of the city. Even if the narrator describes it as a place where Cléophas drinks away his days in the company of French grisettes, the bar, thanks to the reports of it in the popular press of Montreal, would nonetheless have connoted a mix of its owner’s philanthropy and its patrons’ infamy to Berthelot’s contemporaries.

**Toponyms and Anthroponyms**

In a number of instances, we see a sort of doubling of toponyms and anthroponyms. For example, Ursule’s younger sister, who makes only a brief appearance, is named Cunégonde (the name of a princess in *Candide*, of course).\(^{363}\) Sainte-Cunégonde, to the north of Griffintown in Little Burgundy, was incorporated as a town in 1876, classified as a city in 1884, and annexed to Montreal in 1906. Similarly, Cléophas’s abandoned wife is named Scholastique, and Petit-Pite, posing as the vicomte Bouctouche, is sent to boarding school in Sainte-Scholastique (appropriately enough). Cambron even points out how New Brunswick is “Montreal-ified” as toponyms become anthroponyms:

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\(^{363}\) Berthelot’s *Mystères*, despite their parodic, satirical, and even farcical character, are nonetheless the most “literary” of the three *Mystères de Montréal* in French—or at least Berthelot peppers his novel with references that suggest his classical education. Pages apart, Cléophas and Bénoni, preparing to fight each other over Ursule’s affections, say “Ça, c’est le spot,” and “Ce sera fair play,” (70) and we read a pastiche of *The Odyssey*: “L’aurore avec ses doigts de rose commençait alors à déboutonner le manteau de la nuit qui enveloppait Montréal et à éclairer le chemin pour le cabaroit lumineux de Phébus” (69). Similarly, when Caraquette summons Bénoni with his “trompette à vache,” Berthelot parodies Don Ruy Gomez’s horn in *Hernani.*
Caraquette (who hails from New Brunswick, in fact), the Bouctouches, and the Marquis de Malpèque recall the New Brunswick towns of Caraquet and Bouctouche, and the Malpeque Bay, respectively.\textsuperscript{364} Given Berthelot’s attention to cartographic detail that we have just examined, it is entirely possible that all this onomastic doubling is simply a \textit{clin-d’œil} to the similarly minded reader.

\textbf{Conclusion}

By considering the historical moment captured and represented in Berthelot’s novel alongside the historical period that his journalism spans, we are able to see his \textit{Mystères de Montréal} not as a puzzle unto themselves, but rather as a piece in a larger puzzle. For all his activity and prominence, why was this novel all but forgotten, from the aughts of the twentieth century until just a few years ago? The case of Berthelot’s \textit{Mystères} allows us insight into both the climate of censorship established in Montreal by the Church in the second half of the nineteenth century, and a variety of strategies employed to subvert the Church’s authority and influence. Through humor, caricature, and parody, Berthelot is able to document and celebrate the industrialization, development and modernization of a city he loves, and promulgate his liberal political views. In addition to reaching a broader audience than he likely could have otherwise reached, his humor—specifically, his use of autoparody— not only enables him to disseminate a particular vision of French-Canadian national identity that is proud and unifying, without being mawkishly patriotic, but fosters this same perception and feeling amongst his contemporaries, as well. With language and caricature, Berthelot permits a process of identifica-

\textsuperscript{364} Cambron, “Une ville sans trésor,” 9.
tion on the part of his readers, both with Ladébauche and with each other, that belies the apparent division between the public and private spheres. His newspapers and serial novel constitute not an incursion into the private sphere, but rather a means of enlarging the public sphere. Most significantly, this enlarged public sphere makes possible rational critical debate and, in turn, the formation of public opinion; Berthelot’s journalism capitalizes on the potentially unifying effects of public opinion in order to nurture a French-Canadian society based on urban, rational social organization and non-personal relations, in addition to shared customs, faith and language—even amidst, and in opposition to, a broader, politically and geographically defined community.
The final text to bear the title Les Mystères de Montréal was written by a 23-year-old French Canadian named Auguste Fortier at the end of the nineteenth century. Published in 1893, it is among the latest urban mysteries to be identified by Médias 19, whose members have compiled a database of nearly 700 urban mysteries (whose titles mostly follow Sue’s model), published throughout the world during the nineteenth century alone.\textsuperscript{365} Fortier’s text is not a pastiche of either Sue’s genre-launching novel, or any of the Mystères de Montréal that preceded it. Instead, Fortier’s Mystères is a deceptively complex narrative, straddling a handful of literary genres and reflecting significant stages in the evolution of the French-Canadian novel over the course of the nineteenth century and approaching the turn of the twentieth.

The novel opens with the 1837 Rebellions in Lower Canada and the denouement plays out in the city. The conflict between the two main characters functions as a micro-cosmic illustration of broader social and political conflict between French and English colonial rule, casting the English as deceitful tyrants and the French as fervent, earnest, Republican defenders of all that is right and good. Fortier makes use of recent historiography to give a less monolithic representation of the status of, and stakes for, French Canadians than writers of historical fiction before him; in addition to the opposition between

the French-Canadian people and their English rulers, Fortier dramatizes the conflict between the rebellious Patriotes and the loyalist Bureaucrates. The two main characters, representing these latter two camps, travel throughout the world, their paths crossing repeatedly, before converging on Montreal. In this novel, it seems as though all roads, no matter how circuitous, lead to the city, where the stakes are higher, the streets more dangerous, and identity more duplicitous. Fortier creates close, signifying links between characters and the spaces where they are represented. Urban spaces such as hotels and gentlemen’s clubs help draw dividing lines between characters and nationalities. Furthermore, throughout the novel, prisons and criminals are presented in a manner that evinces a preoccupation with justice, on personal and national scales, and the justification and causes of violence.

Like Chevalier and Berthelot before him, Fortier makes use of the city of Montreal not just as a “hook” in the title to attract readers, but as a locus of both crime and its detection. The city, for Fortier, is a destination, a space that intensifies conflict and permits its resolution. Unlike Sue, Fortier is not particularly interested in initiating his readers into the underworld of Montreal. Unlike Sue, also, Fortier does not have a particular agenda of social reform that he uses his novel to illustrate and disseminate. Instead, Fortier inscribes himself in a rather short line of nationalist, patriotic, historical, French-Canadian novelists. Tellingly, Fortier’s Mystères de Montréal bear the subtitle “roman canadien.” In the novel, Fortier does make use of elements of the city mystery genre, such as a number of interweaving plot lines that periodically diverge and converge around particular places— like the Pipelets’ boarding house in the rue du Temple in the
Mystères de Paris, for example—that function as nexuses for the characters’ complicated, but intersecting activities. Crime and its location hold a privileged position in this novel, and the intertwined issues of crime, the death penalty, vigilante and legal justice. I am quite careful to avoid the term “divine justice,” for despite Fortier’s cloying epilogue, which lauds the religious devotion of the protagonists, the narrative does not otherwise invoke any sense of religious morality. To speak of a “justice of fate” would perhaps be an apt characterization of what happens in this novel, and it thus resonates well with the older genres that led to the crystallization of the adventure novel of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The discourses of crime, punishment, and a “justice of fate” present in Fortier’s novel all continue a dialogue that is prominent in Sue’s Mystères.

By considering the narrative genres that the Mystères straddle, we can see both why Fortier came to write the novel as a hybrid of the historical and adventure novel, and the patriotic, political stakes of such a novel. By its title, the last novel to bear the title Les Mystères de Montréal necessarily evokes Sue’s novel, published nearly fifty years earlier; by its content, it depicts a nationalist conflict that took place nearly sixty years earlier. By making use of the urban mystery, adventure, and historical genres, Fortier is able to make a meaningful contribution to the corpus of novels that helped to concretize French-Canadian national identity and nationalism.

Auguste Fortier, Globetrotter

Quite little is known about Fortier’s biography, but the little we do know is thanks to his publisher, as well as the indefatigable E.-Z. Massicotte. Massicotte’s principal source seems to have been letters from Fortier to La Presse, and apparently, Massicotte
himself corresponded with Fortier, but only until 1917.\textsuperscript{366}

Auguste Fortier was born in Quebec City on April 13, 1870. His father, Édouard Fortier, moved his wife, Marie Célina, and his two children, young Auguste and his brother Louis-Édouard, to Nicolet and Arthabaskaville, before definitively settling in Montreal.\textsuperscript{367}

The two Fortier sons both studied at the Jesuit Collège Sainte-Marie in Montreal.\textsuperscript{368} One of his first texts to be published was “Le Paysan canadien” in \textit{La Nouvelle Revue} (Paris, July-August 1889), in which he gives a rather

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{auguste_fortier}
\caption{“Jeunes littérateurs canadiens,” detail showing Auguste Fortier (1891). The same montage of vignettes shows E.-Z. Massicotte, among others. (BAnQ, Fonds Albert Ferdinand, MSS4,S3,SS2,D96).}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{367} Massicotte mentions only one brother, Louis-Édouard, but \textit{La Presse} of February 2, 1913 indicates that Auguste had two brothers, both doctors in Montreal, named Louis-Édouard and Émile.

\textsuperscript{368} É.-Z. Massicotte, born three years before Fortier, also studied at the Collège Sainte-Marie before pursuing a career in the law; there is no indication that he and Fortier may have met during their schooling.
picturesque sketch of Canadian life, customs, and morals similar to that which he gives at the beginning of the *Mystères de Montréal*. For a French audience, Fortier explains customs like the *veillée* and the ways the earnest rural Canadians occupy themselves through the various seasons, and reproduces a handful of songs and *légendes*. On one hand, Fortier seeks to reinforce the forthright, salt-of-the-earth qualities of the French Canadians, while on the other, he underlines their heterogeneous, but mostly French origins. It is in his way of life that the Canadian

révèle la grandeur de son caractère: caractère assez complexe, tenant à la fois de celui du Français, du Sauvage et de l’Anglais. Nos pères transportés du pays de France aux rives incultes du Saint-Laurent ont conservé les mœurs et les croyances de la mère patrie; par le contact incessant avec les Peaux-Rouges d’Amérique, ils ont pris le goût des aventures qui est la marque distinctive des coureurs des bois. Plus tard, lorsque l’Anglais planta son drapeau sur nos citadelles livrées par une inqualifiable lâcheté, il communiqua sa froideur à nos pères.

As we shall shortly see, the boldness required to write and publish such a statement could only have come about thanks to developments in the historiography of colonial Quebec, and the fact that this essay was published in France, not Canada.

Fortier’s success in publishing must have encouraged him to embark on writing the adventure novel that the *Mystères de Montréal* would come to be. Massicotte claims, citing no one, that the novel was completed in 1891, while Fortier was pursuing a law degree. It was not until 1893 that the novel would be published by Desaulniers. Massicotte, and Ducharme (most likely following Massicotte) indicates that this text was published in *La Revue de Paris*.


The publisher of the second edition of the *Mystères* claims, in 1894, that Fortier is only 21 years old; I am inclined to believe that the publisher makes a simple mistake, trying to sensationalize Fortier’s promise as a young author.
sicotte claims that Fortier told him he was working on a new novel, *Yvonne la Montréalaise*, but no evidence of the work has survived.

Fortier abruptly abandoned both his writing and studies to join the White Fathers in Algeria, but, apparently being suited more to globetrotting than missionary work, he left Algeria for Paris, where he lived for five years. From there, he travelled to South America as the secretary of the explorer Jules de Pontaine to report on the conditions of Belgian emigrants. With De Pontaine, Fortier travelled to Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina (spending time especially in Buenos Aires, apparently), and then sailed for Madagascar as the interpreter and secretary for Sir James Hawley, an English botanist. He then travelled to Réunion where he took refuge in the mountains from the apparently disagreeable climate of Madagascar. According to *La Presse*, Fortier, his health restored, remained in Mauritius for two years working as a translator. No previous biographer of Fortier has been able to piece together any more of what Fortier actually did during his time in Mauritius. I, however, was able to find that in June 1909, a report in the *Revue du monde musulman* announces that “Un très curieux ouvrage de polémique religieuse a paru, l’année dernière, à l’île Maurice. C’est une traduction française du *Mayar ou Pierre de Touche des religions*, de Syed Mohammad Nosrat Ali, […] faites [sic] par un Canadien français converti à l’islam, M. Ibrahim Auguste Fortier, dont le nom dit assez l’origine et les croyances.” A work that apparently refutes the Trinity and the Gospels, and sings the

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372 *La Presse*, February 13, 1909.

373 *La Presse*, February 13, 1909.

praises of Islam, the work is prefaced by Fortier and his collaborator, a Mauritian named Ahmode Ibrahim Atchia, who “demand[ent] au lecteur de répandre cet ouvrage. En le faisant, il contribuera à faire connaître la vérité.” This apparent conversion is particularly surprising given the heavily religious element of the epilogue of the *Mystères de Montréal*, in which the Christian morals and devotion of the protagonists are (perhaps excessively) lauded, as well as Fortier’s (brief) time with Catholic missionaries, the White Fathers, in Algeria.

After his time in Mauritius, Fortier travelled to Kolkata where he worked as a professor of languages. In 1894, just a year after the publication of the first edition of the *Mystères de Montréal* in Montreal, *Le Petit Bengali*, a newspaper from Chandannagar (a former French colony roughly twenty miles north of Kolkata) published an announcement of the novel’s publication. The announcement begins “Le dernier courrier nous a porté un livre fort intéressant, *les mystères [sic] de Montréal* roman canadien, par M. Auguste Fortier, que nos lecteurs connaissent déjà, par les articles sur le Saint-Laurent, que nous avons publiés en 1888. Aujourd’hui c’est sous la forme d’un roman, que ce français [sic] du Canada veut nous parler de son pays, où le nom de la vraie Mère-patrie reste toujours profondément gravé dans tous les cœurs.” The editors of *Le Petit Bengali* evidently put their announcement of Fortier’s novel to their own use, for Fortier asserts French Canadians’ self-identification as a distinct nation, as inheritors of a language and

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religion distinct from their former colonial rulers. Back in Montreal, the editors of *La Presse* report to their readers that Fortier “a demeuré à Madagascar, en Chine, aux Indes, en Perse. Il a visité le royaume de Siam, l’Annam, la Birmanie et une foule d’autres contrées. L’absence ne lui a cependant jamais fait oublier son pays.”

From Mumbai, Fortier gives an exceedingly sensational account in *La Presse* of how, as a member of a Japanese mission in Siam, he nearly lost his life in a case of mistaken identity. He finishes his account with an address to his fellow Canadian would-be adventurers, “ne vous laissez pas entraîner loin de votre escorte, car vous risquerez d’ajouter un nom de plus à la liste déjà assez longue de ceux qui partis du Canada, un beau matin, joyeux et pleins d’espérances, n’y sont, hélas jamais plus retournés!” Rather prophetically, writing as a young man in 1889, Fortier opens his essay “Le Paysan canadien” by saying that for the Canadian *habitant*, “aussitôt que l’enfance a fait place à la jeunesse, un violent désir de voyager naît en lui. C’est pourquoi tant de nos compatriotes s’exilent et terminent leur vie dans les parties les plus lointaines [...]” Fortier took a job with the international post in Beijing, from which he never returned to Canada: he died in a Chinese hospital on July 26, 1932.

The two issues of *La Presse* that provide the bulk of extant information on Fortier’s biography hold a number of interesting details in common. Firstly, he is rou-

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tinely and prominently called “un Canadien-français.” The editors of the paper repeatedly reinforce his connection to Montreal—“M. Auguste Fortier, ci-devant de Montréal,” “M. Fortier n’est pas un inconnu ici,” “M. Auguste Fortier, un ancien montréalais,” Fortier, who “n’est pas un inconnu pour nos lecteurs”—and his authorship of the Mystères de Montréal. Both issues of La Presse reference him as the author of the Mystères in apposition in the deck of the articles, as well as in the lead.

Publication History of the Novel

There are three versions of Fortier’s Mystères de Montréal, of which the earliest is both the longest and the most easily accessible. The first edition of the novel was published by Desaulniers (Montreal) in 1893 and runs to some 450 pages, making it the longest of the three editions of the novel and of any of the Mystères de Montréal, by far.

A second edition of the novel was published by Leprohon, Leprohon & Guibault (Montreal) as a part of a monthly subscription series, “La Bonne Littérature Française,” aimed at disseminating fine “Literature” at reduced prices; the list of titles offered is somewhat at odds with the editors’ professed goal “de rendre accessible à tout le

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382 “Québécois” was certainly in use as an adjective and substantive, but as a national identification, the term really came into common use around the time of the Quiet Revolution.

383 La Presse, February 13, 1909.

384 La Presse, January 16, 1917.

385 We read, for example, that Fortier “est l’auteur des Mystères de Montréal, roman paru vers 1890” (La Presse, February 13, 1909) and that “Après avoir donné dans sa jeunesse Les Mystères de Montréal, roman d’aventures qui eut un joli succès,” Fortier set out on his own adventures (La Presse, January 16, 1917).

386 It is this edition that we shall reference hereafter in the text.
monde la lecture des œuvres les plus réputées des auteurs français modernes.”

Advertisements for the publisher’s other offerings and information on their subscription series suggest that this second edition of the novel was published in 1894. A “Note des Éditeurs” in this second edition claims that the entire print run of the first edition sold out in only a few weeks, and that it garnered praise from the likes of Alphonse Daudet, François Coppée, Paul Bourget, and even Jules Verne. Regrettably, it seems as though these claims are pure inventions, for publicity’s sake.

Only Nathalie Ducharme indicates that a serialized version of the novel appeared in Le Réveil from September 30 to December 1, 1916.

An abbreviated version of the novel was published in two volumes in 1954 by the Imprimerie Bernard ltée.

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387 The series includes a handful of French popular adventure novels under the heading “Nouveautés à la portée de tout le monde des meilleurs écrivains de nos jours” (all accent marks have been added here) with titles stereotypical of popular fiction from the turn of the twentieth century, such as Le Secret de la roche noire, Madame Vidocq and Le Poignard de la fiancée by the likes of Xavier de Montépin, Paul Saunière, Henri Tessier and Arsène Houssaye. The most amusing title listed is perhaps the horribly misidentified “Corine ou l’Italie delphine par Madesde Stael.”

388 Ducharme indicates that this second edition of the novel is abridged, but the editors of the series advertise that “Chaque volume, grand format […], contient la matière ordinaire d’un volume de 350 à 400 pages, formant une histoire complète et sans suite, qu’on ne pourrait se procurer nulle part à moins de $1.00.” The series, “pour la modique somme de 10 cts., met entre les mains du plus pauvre des lecteurs les chef-d’œuvres des maîtres du roman moderne.” Given the editors’ explanation of the formatting of their editions, along with a comparison of the first and second editions of the Mystères, it would appear that Ducharme’s claim that the second edition is abridged is mistaken. Ducharme, “L’Archive et l’invention littéraire,” 85, n. 1.

389 Ibid.

Figure 4.2. Cover of L’homme aux deux noms, the second half of the 1954 abridged edition of the Mystères de Montréal by the Imprimerie Bernard ltée.
rie Bernard ltée., making Fortier’s novel the *Mystères de Montréal* with the most enduring commercial success. The first volume bears the title *L’Œuvre de la vengeance* and the second, fittingly, *L’Homme aux deux noms* (see Figure 4.2).

**Summary of the Novel**

The novel begins by setting up the rivalry between Paul Turcotte and Charles Gagnon, who both want to marry Jeanne Duval. Jeanne and Paul become engaged, then Paul, along with other, older men from the village of Saint-Denis, helps lead several battles during the 1837–38 Rebellions of Lower Canada. Rather than fight under his rival’s leadership, Charles abstains from fighting in the Rebellions and conspires with English military leaders, using Roch Millaut as a pawn in his plan, to ambush the French-Canadian Patriotes. Early in the novel, then, the Franco-English opposition is thematized, as is Charles’s betrayal of his own people. Branded for the rest of the novel as “le traître de 37” in the narration, Charles continues to live in Saint-Denis, his treachery undiscovered, while Paul goes to prison, escapes, and flees to the United States to avoid being once again arrested by the British authorities. Charles is thus able to pursue Jeanne, while intercepting all correspondence between her and Paul; Paul eventually comes to the conclusion that his beloved Jeanne has died, while Jeanne never gives up hope that Paul is alive.

Paul finds employment on a ship, serving as the first mate on the *Marie-Céleste* and acting as a sort of surrogate son to the English captain, whose son was ironically killed by Paul himself during the Rebellion. Paul therefore takes up his first pseudonym, Nicholas Houle (onomastically fitting, for a sailor). Upon the captain’s death, Paul is
made captain. Charles, at this point, has been discovered as a traitor, exiled from Saint-
Denis and cursed by his father, and has taken up a life of piracy on the Solitaire, under
the assumed name of Captain Buscapié, with the escaped convict John O’Connor (alias
Jos Matson) as his trusted accomplice. (John had been imprisoned in Sing-Sing prison
after being convicted of embezzlement on Wall Street.) Charles finds the Marie-Céleste
and, erroneously believing the woman on board is Jeanne, has John drug everyone on
board, and sets them adrift in lifeboats, leaving the Marie-Céleste to drift mysteriously
into port with no one on board.

Paul and his crew members end up on a deserted island, and of course Paul is the
only one to survive more than a few weeks. In a very Robinson Crusoe-like turn of
events befitting the type of adventure novels Fortier draws on, Paul is discovered by a
passing ship, only to be shipwrecked again, this time off the coast of Central America.
Again, Paul is the only survivor, but this time, he is found by the Guaranis, who believe
him to be a god. Paul exercises the power they afford him by means of a gun left behind
by Jesuit missionaries. After escaping the Guaranis, he is captured by the Outeiros.
Since he had set an Outeiros prince free while playing the role of a god to the Guaranis,
he earns their trust. The Outeiros have an enormous quantity of diamonds, but attach no
value to them, so their leader gives a large quantity to Paul, who then travels to Mexico
and lives as a millionaire, and befriends another foreigner, Alfred Labadie.

Alfred’s family fortune was stolen, coincidentally enough, by Charles, who has in
the meantime successively posed as both a wealthy Louisiana aristocrat and a prominent
Montreal banker. Believing Jeanne to be dead, since their correspondence ended, Paul
rejects the possibility of suicide and instead engages in various suicidal, but benevolent endeavors. Upon the outbreak of war between Mexico and Guatemala, Paul and Alfred agree that they will come to the aid of the Mexican republic, and if they both survive, will return to Montreal, despite the leaders of the rebels of 1837–38 not having been pardoned. Naturally, Paul the infallible hero seemingly singlehandedly saves the foundering Mexican army (although he is wounded), and he and Alfred travel to Montreal.

Charles, living as a successful banker under the name of Hubert de Courval, commits several murders in Montreal to avoid the revelation of his identity as the murderous pirate Buscapié. Jeanne has moved to Montréal at this point and lives with her sister and brother-in-law, George Braun, who ends up wildly indebted to Charles after a spectacular failure at speculation. Jeanne, though a highly sought-after match, still hasn’t given up hope that Paul might still be alive. Charles’s appearance has changed so much that he is unrecognizable, and coerces Braun into forcing Jeanne to marry him. At the ball where Charles intends to announce his engagement, Paul, Alfred, and John (who, though he attempted to rob Paul, has now changed sides, aligning himself with Paul against Charles) enter, accompanied by the detective Michaud (whose investigations, always implicating Charles in thefts and murders, figure earlier in the novel) and the police enter and arrest Charles. Paul and Jeanne are reunited, but agree to wait until after Charles’s trial to return to Saint-Denis for their marriage.

The trial is the subject of the last chapter of the novel; Charles’s crimes are enumerated, and he is convicted and condemned to be hanged. The night before his execution, he attempts to escape and a guard shoots him in the head.
In a rather cloying epilogue, the narrator first explains that now, in the present of the narration (fifty years or so since the plot’s dénouement), Paul and Jeanne still live happily in Saint-Denis, before offering a trite moral, imposed ex post facto on the novel, instructing young men to defend their faith and “nationalité,” and young women to stay faithful, in religion and in marriage.

More than a “Roman canadien”

Having considered the prescriptions of the 1850s and 60s for a specifically French-Canadian literature (in Chapter 2), let us examine the ways Fortier’s novel, published by a young man in the last decade of the nineteenth century, responds to the callings of earlier generations and resists any facile categorization according to genre. On its cover and title page, the final Mystères de Montréal is designated as a “roman canadien,” but to be more specific, the novel straddles the lines of the historical novel, adventure novel, and urban mystery. In drawing on each of these genres, Fortier does not just follow the edicts of the likes of Casgrain, but rather reflects and advances literary representations in a patriotic manner that helps to develop and coalesce a national narrative, and French-Canadian nationalism in turn.

Patriotism and the Historical Novel

The historical context of Fortier’s Mystères’ publication is in fact closely tied to its historical content—specifically, its use of the Rebellions of 1837–1838 in the first part of the novel. Fortier’s novel reflects not only a renewed popularity of the historical novel in general, but also a renewed interest in historical novels of the Rebellions, in particular. The former of these two vogues can be seen as the result of the kinds of prescrip-
tions and ambitions for French-Canadian literature that Casgrain and Chevalier extolled in the late 1850s and 1860s;[^390] the latter trend is tied to historiographical works that appeared in the decade before the publication of Fortier’s novel, amidst a slew of others. In order to more clearly place Fortier’s novel within broader trends in French-Canadian literature of the nineteenth century, let us now consider them in greater detail, with an eye towards the links between fiction and historiography. The two decades of greatest consequence for the novel Fortier would write are the 1860s and the 1890s.

The patriotic movement of the 1860s saw the publication of both Casgrain’s essay, “Le Mouvement littéraire au Canada” and the first novels treating the Rebellions, such as Éraste d’Orsonnens’s *Angélina, épisode de l’Insurrection canadienne de 1837–1838* (serialized from January 25 to February 15, 1859 in *La Guêpe*, under the pseudonym *Er. de Saint-Roch*), Boucherville’s canonical *Une de perdue, deux de trouvées* (1849-51 for the first part, 1864-65 for the second),[^391] L.-C.-W. Dorion’s *Vengeance fa-

[^390]: See *infra* p. 161.

[^391]: The first part was published anonymously in the *Album littéraire et musical de la Minerve* from January 1849 to June 1851; the second was published in *La Revue canadienne* from January 1864 to July 1865. The novel was published for the first time, in two volumes, in 1874.
tale (1874), and Honoré Beaugrand’s *Jeanne la fileuse* (1875). Writing in 1866, Casgrain heralds what he deems “l’époque de la littérature,” writing that after centuries of constant struggle, French Canada has arrived at a period of intellectual maturity. He asserts that “On n’a pas assez remarqué la coïncidence de ce progrès littéraire avec l’ère de liberté qui succédait, à la même époque, au régime oligarchique dont le despotisme avait amené les sanglantes journées de 1837 et 38 [...].” Casgrain argues that Canada should counter the pernicious influence of French literature, of realism, that “manifestation de la pensée impie, matérialiste.” Instead, “On devait au contraire servir la cause nationale,” as Hayne explains, “en faisant revivre les gloires du passé. C’était sonner le glas du roman de mœurs contemporaines, et inaugurer le règne de la grande légende, du roman historique et du roman à thèse.”

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392 Originally published as “Pierre Hervart” in *L’Album de la Minerve* in 1874 under the pseudonym “Carle Fix,” the novel was revised and edited, and published in Montreal in 1893—the same year as Fortier’s *Mystères de Montréal*. Lemire would have that Fortier’s *Mystères* “est en quelque sorte une reprise de Vengeance fatale [...], mais avec une dimension politique” (209). Both plots involve a dizzying number of twists and turns, and Dorion’s novel involves several cases of mistaken identity and overlapping love triangles, but I see nothing in this novel that differs so greatly from other popular, serial fiction of the time (indeed, with any number of Chevalier’s novels) as to incite such a direct link as Lemire suggests. See Lemire, *Les Grands thèmes nationalistes*, 209; and Aurélien Boivin, “Pierre Hervart” in *Dictionnaire des œuvres littéraires du Québec* (Montreal: Fides, 1980).

393 Here, I am careful not to label these texts as purely historical novels. For one thing, especially in the case of the earliest texts, the publication of the novel wasn’t sufficiently removed from the period when it was set (see Hayne, *The Historical Novel*, 60–61); for another, these novels treat the Rebellions only in part.


Authors of studies of Canadian history between the publication of Garneau’s *Histoire du Canada* (1845–1848)— so greatly admired by Chevalier and the generations after him— and the 1880s more or less tend to repeat the work of those before them, with a greater interest in educating readers and passing down knowledge from generation to generation than with originality or accuracy. Even Chevalier, after all, advertised a novel (that he never actually wrote) on the Rebellions, publicizing it in *La Ruche* as early as February 1854— less that a year after his arrival in Montreal (see Figure 4.3). The 1880s, however, saw the publication of a good number of historical studies, among them Benjamin Sulte’s *Histoire des Canadiens-Français, 1608-1880* and Laurent-Olivier David’s *Les Patriotes de 1837–1838*, which break with the unoriginal or idealized popular histories written by their predecessors. Themselves responding to Casgrain’s call for new methods in historical research, Sulte and David mined the resources of Quebec’s archives, national and local, in order to tread new ground in their studies of the history of their nation.

![Image](La Sorcière de St. Charles. Récit Dramatique-Historique de la Révolution Canadienne de 1837-38. H. E. Chevalier. La Sorcière de St. Charles formera un beau volume de 300 pages, orné de Vignettes, et sera publiée au commencement du mois de Mars prochain. Prix $1.)

**Figure 4.3.** An advertisement for a historical novel Henri-Émile Chevalier never wrote, on the Rebellions of 1837–1838. *La Ruche*, 2e série (February 1854).

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397 Maurice Lemire and Denis Saint-Jacques, eds., *La Vie littéraire au Québec*, vol. 4: “Je me souviens” (1870–1894) (Quebec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1999), 246.
As for historical fiction, the defeat of the Patriotes in the 1830s along with the heavy hand of the British victors discouraged Canadian authors from writing about the Rebellions for several decades, whether they might have been even-keeled or overtly partisan—the clichés that the losers are always wrong and that the victors write history are fitting in this case. This lull lasted roughly from 1874 to 1889. The publication of L.-O. David’s Les Patriotes de 1837–1838, in particular, in 1884 could explain why, after this lull, the 1890s saw a proliferation of literature of the Rebellions. In addition to Fortier’s Mystères (1893), Lemire points to Jules Verne’s Famille-sans-nom (1888), Napoléon Legendre’s Annibal (1891), G.-I. Barthe’s Drames de la vie réelle (1896), Ernest Choquette’s Les Ribaud: Une idylle de 37 (1898), and Rodolphe Girard’s Florence: Légende historique, patriotique et nationale (1900). To this list should be added Jean-Baptiste Caouette’s Le vieux muet et un héros de Châteauguay (1901) and Adèle Bibaud’s Les fiancés de St.-Eustache (1910), although they were published after the turn of the

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398 As Lemire points out, the first person to write a historical fiction of the Rebellions was in fact a Frenchman, Régis de Trobriand, who, because of his nationality and short-lived stay in Quebec, could afford to be rather audaciously partisan in his fictionalized telling. “Seul un Français comme Régis de Trobriand pouvait se permettre en 1841 de retourner le fer dans une plaie encore vive. Les Canadiens français n’avaient pas la liberté d’en faire autant; l’intervention de la police et la saisie de l’ouvrage de Trobriand le prouvent bien.” Lemire, Les Grands thèmes nationalistes, 218. Furthermore, the conditions of the novel’s publication must be taken into consideration: Trobriand first published Le Rebelle in four installments in the Courrier des États-Unis (New York) in 1841. Napoléon Aubin published it in Quebec as a volume with the designation “Histoire canadienne” the following year.

399 See Maurice Lemire, Les Grands thèmes nationalistes, 205; David Hayne, The Historical Novel, 150; and Richard Chabot, “Les Patriotes de 1837–1838” in the Dictionnaire d’œuvres littéraires du Québec. Lemire gives 1885 as the date of publication for David’s study, but it was in fact a series of articles originally published in L’Opinion publique from February 15, 1877 to May 12, 1881; the collected volume was published in Montreal by Eusèbe Senécal & fils in 1884 (Chabot, loc. cit.).

twentieth century. The vogue for historical fiction of the Rebellions reached its height in the final decade of the nineteenth century, but its popularity quickly waned over the first quarter of the twentieth.

Legendre’s 1891 novel, *Annibal*, was the first to characterize the rebels as national heroes.\footnote{Lemire, *Les Grands thèmes nationalistes*, 209.} An entry for Fortier’s novel in Philéas Gagnon’s *Essai de Bibliographie canadienne* contains two interesting bits of information. First, it is the only source that indicates the subtitle “Fort à Fort”; second, the only commentary offered is “Hommage de l’auteur à Napoléon Legendre.”\footnote{Philéas Gagnon, *Essai de Bibliographie canadienne*, t. 2 (Montreal: La Cité de Montréal, 1913), 112.} Fortier in fact takes up the same position as Legendre, pitting the Patriotes (the French-Canadian rebels) against the Bureaucrates (Loyalist French Canadians), and all French Canadians against the English; the oppositions are therefore less schematic than they might first appear. Fortier makes use of the Rebellions in order for the conflict between Paul, the protagonist, and Charles, the antagonist, in his central love triangle to take on national significance. A catalogue from the Granger frères booksellers published in 1900, on the occasion of the Exposition universelle, includes the first edition of the *Mystères*, along with the description: “Roman canadien de forme et de ton récents, avec certains traits de mœurs suffisamment locaux pour être originaux. Le traître indispensable est un ‘bureaucrate’ de 37–38, ce qui donne de la couleur patriotique à l’action.”\footnote{Flavien J. and Alphonse A. Granger, *France-Canada. Bibliographie canadienne, catalogue d’un choix d’ouvrages canadiens-français, accompagné de notes bibliographiques et préparé à l’occasion de l’Exposition universelle de 1900* (Montreal: Granger frères, 1900).} By staging the Rebellions at the beginning of his novel, Fortier sets the
stage for the Franco-English conflict that he will weave throughout the narrative. The division of the novel into a prologue and three parts in the table of contents, however, belies its narrative organization. In fact, once the historical framework of the first section has served its purpose of establishing the conflict between the Patriotes and the British, and between Paul and Charles, it falls away and Fortier shifts his focus. For this reason, we must now shift ours too, in order to examine the ways which Fortier inscribes these Mystères in the adventure novel genre, as well.

**The Mystères as Adventure Novel**

On one hand, Fortier’s novel at once takes up the torch of the Canadian patriotic novel and fits into the general trend of historical fiction in the final decade of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, insofar as the Mystères can be considered an adventure novel, Fortier takes up a much older genre from whose roots the adventure novel grew: the Baroque novel, or Prüfungsroman. Let us now consider the Mystères de Montréal as a novel of trial, and therefore Paul as the novel’s hero.

Certainly, the modern adventure novel—that is, from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—can trace its origins back through Defoe, Lewis, Radcliffe, Walpole, Cooper, and London, the Baroque tradition, the picaresque novel (e.g., *Gil Blas*), the medieval romance such as *Tristan et Yseult*, and even to the likes of *La Chanson de Roland*, the *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey*. The Mystères de Montréal exhibits many of the characteristics of the adventure novel, such as the exotic and its opposition to “home,” the violence that puts the hero at risk, the eccentric and exceptional characters that the hero encounters—the redoubtable Blackador the pirate, for example—a degree of irrationality—Paul is
the sole survivor of not one, but two shipwrecks—, as well as the hero’s quest, once dé-paysé, to return home. This latter characteristic is what makes these Mystères, as an adventure novel, more an heir to the Baroque novel than the picaresque tradition. As Bakhtin writes of the Baroque novel, “it is the trial of the protagonist’s heroism and fidelity, his all-around irreproachability, that serves to unify the novel’s grand and exceedingly diverse material […].” The hero must pass a series of tests, proving his physical or moral strength in order for the narrative to progress; here, the connection between the adventure novel and the romance à la Tristan may be easily seen. The criterion of testing the hero, which distinguishes the novel from the epic, could not apply more aptly to Fortier’s novel. In an epic, the hero’s heroism is both unquestioned and unquestionable; in the novel of testing, as Bakhtin describes it— and as Fortier practices it, for that matter—, “Everything in it is a touchstone, a means for testing all the sides and qualities of the hero […].” In the case of Paul Turcotte, we are thus dealing with an unusual sort of Canadian intersection between Odysseus, Roland, Tristan, and Robinson Crusoe: after bravely fighting to defend his Canadian homeland, Paul wanders the world as a political exile and must prove himself over the course of a series of adventures before he can return to his cherished home, and his paragon-of-virtue ladylove.

Paul, being the hero of the novel and not just the protagonist, is seen every bit as fully formed at the beginning of the novel as at the end, following his adventures and re-

404 See Letourneux 19–21.


turn to civilization. Indeed, “Testing begins with an already formed person and subjects him to a trial in the light of an ideal also already formed.”¹⁰⁷ As in chivalric romances and the Baroque novel, Paul’s “inborn and statically inert nobility” as the hero of the Mystères could not be more clearly depicted. Bildung is utterly absent from Fortier’s novel. The purpose of Paul’s peregrinations is not for him to become the man he must be; the Mystères de Montréal being neither a picaresque novel nor a Bildungsroman, Paul is neither a Candide nor a Rastignac. Paul’s infallibility, his directionless adventures throughout the world, and the misfortunes that befall him are not a premise for a coming-of-age story; rather, these aspects of Paul’s narrative are part and parcel of the discourse of pathos that dominates in the Baroque novel. Prosaic, a discourse of pathos, according to Bakhtin, is associated with justification, self-justification, and accusation. And what could be more fitting in a novel that straddles the adventure novel and the historical, patriotic novel where, as we have seen, British colonial power is indicted in contradistinction to the oppression of the French Canadians? What could be more fitting in an adventure novel, a novel of trial, the genre itself being characterized by a broad political and historical scope?¹⁰⁸ “The heroizing idealization found in Baroque novels is [...] the kind familiar to chivalric romances: abstract, polemical and similar by and large to apologias,” Bakhtin writes; “As distinct from chivalric romances, however, this idealization is deeply


felt and is reinforced by social and cultural forces that actually exist and are self-aware.”

An adventure novel is not simply a novel in which adventures take place, but more specifically, a novel where the primary objective is to recount tales of adventure. That is not to say, however, that an adventure novel is pure *divertissement*. In every aspect, in terms of structure, stylistics, poetics, etc., Fortier makes use of the tropes of the genre in order to oppose the exotic, the *dépaysé*, to the quotidian. The quotidian, as a chronotope which the hero leaves in order to quest after returning to it, serves as a means of opposing civilization to barbarism. Much ink has been spilled considering the British adventure novel and its many connections to imperialism; as Matthieu Letourneux writes,

lorsqu’il met en jeu les intérêts divergents de plusieurs pays, le roman d’aventures se fait l’écho du nationalisme et du patriotisme de son temps; lorsqu’il explore, aux côtés du héros, des régions lointaines, il se fait porteur des discours colonialistes et impérialistes […]; ailleurs, à travers une représentation fantasmée de l’Histoire ou de la ville moderne, il peut transmettre sa vision des valeurs qui fondent la société: laïcité ou catholicisme, République ou Monarchie, etc.

Certainly, the travel episodes in the novel are presented through the lens of Paul’s experience, and thus implicitly contrast the Western world with “the islands.” In Fortier’s *Mystères de Montréal*, however, the opposition is not so simple, so Manichean, as ones between either the civilized world and the savage world, the mother country and the colony, or the clash between good and evil. There is no element of a “civilizing mission” on

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Paul’s part amidst his travels. Rather than opposing Paul as the representative of the society he leaves behind and the “savages” he encounters, Fortier depicts the opposition between civilized and savage, the Catholic and the Protestant, the Republican and the monarchist at home, in the present, in the chronotope of the quotidian to which exotic adventures would ordinarily be opposed. In this way, Fortier shirks the ordinary dialectical relationship between the world of adventure and the world of logic, law, morality, and order. Fortier’s opposition is all the less black-and-white because it is not simply between the French and the English, but between the French-Canadian Patriotes, the Bureaucrates, and the English. What is more, the traitor is in fact a French Canadian whose betrayal of his people is motivated not by political ideology, but by machismo, jealousy, and self-interest.

In keeping with the tropes of the adventure novel, Paul’s acts of violence are always required by circumstances, and his actions are always justified in the narration. All signs of transgression are wiped away by the narrative framing of his actions. Likewise, the novel’s logic verges on the irrational; but while the irrational in the adventure novel is not probable or believable, it is nonetheless possible. Paul’s exile following the Rebellion of 1837 leads him first to cross the border to the United States and thence, after joining the crew of the Marie-Céleste as Nicholas Houle as first mate, being made captain, and being shipwrecked on a deserted island. Paul is the only member of the crew to survive long enough to be rescued by a passing ship, but is alas shipwrecked again off the coast of Central America. The similarities to Robinson Crusoe are obvious, but Fortier is hardly making a contribution to the Robinsonade. While it is not likely that a man should
be the sole survivor of two shipwrecks in quick succession, it is not strictly impossible; in this way, the novel pushes the limits of believability without going beyond them. Likewise when Paul maintains his position of privilege amongst the Guaranis who find him, following his second shipwreck, with the help of a gun conveniently left behind by Jesuit missionaries.

**Excursus: The Marie-Céleste**

The adventure novel is closely related to the maritime novel, especially as practiced by literary antecedents of the authors of the three *Mystères de Montréal*— namely James Fenimore Cooper, who was competing with Walter Scott in an international market, and Eugène Sue, who was as inspired by Cooper in his own early novels as at the outset of the *Mystères de Paris* when he draws a parallel between the denizens of the Parisian underworld and the savages “si bien peints par Cooper.” In a way, then, it is quite fitting that Fortier should offer a retelling of the story of the *Mary Celeste* to open his novel: just as the *Mystères de Paris* inspired countless pastiches, knock-offs and spin-offs, the discovery of the American brigantine the *Mary Celeste*—sails in tatters, its crew and lifeboat gone without a trace—by the Canadian brigantine *Dei Gratia* off the coast of the Azores likewise inspired several variations on the theme of the “Mystery of the *Mary Celeste*.”

The *Mary Celeste* left New York for Genoa on November 7 and the last entry in the ship’s log was from November 25; the *Dei Gratia* found the *Mary Celeste*, seaworthy,

with its cargo of denatured alcohol and the crew’s belongings all still on board, on December 4, 1872. Speculation as to the reasons for the ship’s abandonment began simultaneously with its reportage in the newspapers. *The New York Times*, for example, published a statement from the United States Secretary of the Treasury on March 25, 1873 saying that “The circumstances of the case tend to arouse grave suspicions that the master [of the ship], his wife and child, and perhaps the chief mate, were murdered in the fury of drunkenness by the crew, who had evidently obtained access to the alcohol with which the vessel was in part laden.” This is but one of many theories of the ship’s abandonment. The first fictionalized account of the story (aside from the “inventive” reports given by the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*) is Arthur Conan Doyle’s “J. Habakuk Jephson’s Statement” (1884) in *Cornhill Magazine*, which tells a story of vengeful mutiny. Doyle misspells the ship’s name as the *Marie Celeste*, which could be the reason for Fortier’s own spelling, for Doyle’s story gained surprising traction and could well be how Fortier heard of the ship’s mystery.

Well known, the story was disseminated through various media throughout the twentieth century and even into the twenty-first. In the film *The Mystery of the Mary Celeste* (1935), none other than Bela Lugosi, of *Dracula* fame, plays Anton Lorenzen, a vengeful sailor with a Chourineur-like abhorrence of murder. In 1942, Charles Edey

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413 Some sources say the abandoned ship was found on December 5— even *Smithsonian Magazine* contradicts the *Smithsonian Channel* on this point; here, I defer to Brian Hicks, author of *Ghost Ship: The Mysterious True Story of the Mary Celeste and Her Missing Crew* (New York: Random House, 2004), 4.

414 For this reason, I am very careful with the various spellings of the ship’s name here: the *Mary Celeste* is the historical ship, the *Marie Celeste* is the ship from Doyle’s short story, and the *Marie-Céleste* is the ship from Fortier’s novel.
Fay—of the Atlantic Mutual Insurance Company, which held a policy on the Mary Celeste’s cargo when it disappeared—published *Mary Celeste: Odyssey of an Abandoned Ship*, in which he records both his investigation into the crew’s disappearance and his speculation that a buildup of fumes from the alcohol in the cargo hold provoked fears of an explosion, prompting the captain to order his family and crew to abandon ship.  

The most thorough investigation of the ship’s fate since Fay’s is that of Brian Hicks, who published *Ghost Ship: The Mysterious True Story of the “Mary Celeste” and Her Missing Crew* in 2004. The investigative documentarian Anne MacGregor took up the mystery of the Mary Celeste, with the support of the Smithsonian Networks and *The True Story of the “Mary Celeste”* was released in 2007; in it, MacGregor posits that the ship’s captain feared sinking after a rough storm and thought it best to abandon ship.  

The most recent installment in the retellings of the Mary Celeste is Valerie Martin’s *The Ghost of the “Mary Celeste”* (2014), a work of historical fiction in which, interestingly, she makes Arthur Conan Doyle a character, and his writing of a short story becomes one of three interconnected plot lines in a search to explain the mystery of the crew’s disappearance.  

The story of the Mary Celeste, a fait divers that takes on a life of its own, is a fascinating example of the ways novels and newspapers blurred the lines between fact and

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415 Hicks, *Ghost Ship*, 9.


fiction, which we considered in such detail in our exploration of Sue’s interventions in public debates on penal reform. In the case of the *Mary Celeste*, even such a reputable paper as the *New York Times* invents explanations for the ship’s disaster, while Fortier manages to provide more accurate, factual details (such as the coordinates of the *Dei Gratia*) in his work of fiction. As the ship’s story was taken up and rewritten in novels and for the screen over the course of more than a century, the lines between fact and fiction became further blurred, to the point that the ship and its crew’s disappearance became part of a social imaginary, as well, even to the point that the ship’s misspelled name is listed as a common noun in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and is defined as an allusive reference to “a place suddenly and inexplicably deserted.”

Like Doyle, Fortier not only misspells the ship’s name, but also diverges from the known facts of the ship’s voyage to make them suit his novel. Fortier anachronistically stages the ship’s disappearance in 1842, in his proleptic prologue to the *Mystères de Montréal*. Even before being presented as the novel’s protagonist, Paul Turcotte is listed in the passenger list Fortier provides as none other than the captain of the *Marie-Céleste*. It is not until the end of the second part of the novel that the reader gets an explanation for the ship’s disappearance. While transporting a cargo of furs (how Canadian!) across the Atlantic, Paul’s *Marie-Céleste* is attacked by Charles (alias the pirate Buscapié), who believes a woman on board is Jeanne. The mutiny and marooning that ensue are part and

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418 Fortier retains certain facts, such as the *Dei Gratia*’s discovery of the *Mary Celeste*, but invents a new name for the captain. Other details are surprising accurate, if imperfect, in Fortier’s novel: he gives the *Dei Gratia*’s coordinates when it signaled to the abandoned *Mary Celeste* as 30°20'N, 17°15'W, when in fact, they were 38°20'N, 17°15'W (Fortier, *Les Mystères de Montréal*, 6; Hicks, *Ghost Ship*, 74, respectively).
parcel of not only of the maritime novel and adventure novel genres, but also Doyle’s fictionalization of the story of the *Mary Celeste*, by which Fortier may well have been inspired.419

When it comes to Paul overcoming his enemies—be they the British, the Bureaucrates, or Charles,—however, Fortier departs from the adventure novel model. Paul, despite his departure from the “civilized” world and his quest to return to it, despite his suicidal, but valorous exploits, never has recourse to his enemy’s tactics: murder, deceit, lies, theft, etc. Overcoming his enemies entails not the embrace of “savage” tactics, but rather faith, devotion, and forthrightness. The novel’s dénouement is a legal one: Fortier’s Mystères are far from the *roman policier*—the plot is not at all constituted by an investigation into crimes committed,—but Charles’s treason, duplicitousness, and cowardice are all revealed in the final chapters of the novel by the detective, Michaud, and in the narrative of his trial. So, let us now turn to the Mystères de Montréal as urban mystery.

**Urban Mystery: Public Space, Crime, and Punishment**

Of course, it would be impossible to examine the Mystères de Montréal’s qualification as an urban mystery without simultaneously considering Fortier’s representations of crime and violence. On one hand, the voyages Paul and Charles take are necessary insofar as the novel is a *Prüfungsroman*; on the other hand, quite simply, they must leave Canada in order to return to it. Montreal, in this novel, has an inexorable pull on the characters. As Marcotte points out, the voyages in the novel

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sont exigés par le genre, qui est pour une partie celui du roman d’aventures, mais n’oublions pas qu’ils s’inscrivent sous le titre des Mystères de Montréal, et donc qu’ils donnent sens à la ville en même temps qu’ils en tirent leur signification. Montréal, dans l’imagination populaire du siècle, ne peut être vraiment elle-même que si elle se trouve au centre d’un très grand espace, qui nourrit pour ainsi dire sa réalité urbaine. Elle est le but: on ne cesse pas d’y arriver.\(^{420}\)

As in the Balzacian novel, where Paris is constantly opposed to “not-Paris,” here too, Montreal is opposed to all that is exterior to it. Rather grandly, Marcotte writes that “Tout se passe comme s’il n’y avait pas de commune mesure, pas de terrain commun entre la campagne et la ville, entre le national et l’urbain, et qu’il faille subit l’initiation du vaste monde, de l’universel, avant de devenir citadin.”\(^{421}\) In this novel, all roads, eventually, lead to Montreal, a city filled with hotels— and thus newcomers and foreigners, non-Canadians—, dangerous streets, and criminals.

Marcotte rightfully points out the reader’s feelings of disappointment upon picking up Fortier’s Mystères de Montréal for the first time. Despite the title, the novel’s prologue opens in… Gibraltar. The first part of the novel takes place largely in Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu and Paul’s peregrinations take him all over the Western hemisphere: Louisiana, Mexico, Puerto Rico, off the coast of Rio de Janeiro— the list goes on. The narrative does not turn to Montreal until the beginning of Part II, nearly at the novel’s midpoint! The Mystères can nonetheless be considered an urban mystery, for not only does the narrative center around unveiling the crimes and treachery of the antagonist Charles, but the city of Montreal itself holds pride of place, as well. If Montreal is a place that

\(^{420}\) Marcotte, “Mystères de Montréal,” 125.

\(^{421}\) Marcotte, “Mystères de Montréal,” 125.
attracts, foments and facilitates crime, it is also a city that permits its detection. Fortier’s Montreal is at once an infiltrated space, threatened from within, and a surveilled space; the criminal is not able to manipulate or capitalize on the anonymity of the urban crowd, and murder does not go undiscovered, as it does in the city’s hinterlands in the first half of the novel. Instead, criminals, even after avoiding arrest and prosecution for years, are eventually brought to justice and sentenced to death. Fortier, however, renounces both vigilante justice and legally sanctioned justice. In a manner that reflects the novel’s straddling of the historical, adventure, and urban mystery genres, once an individual starts down a criminal path, he seals his fate, finding himself on a slippery slope towards death.

Hotels

In the first scene in Montreal, which opens the second part of the novel, we see the Albion Hotel, a luxury hotel at McGill and Saint-Paul streets. While everyone in the village of Saint-Denis knows everyone else, Montreal, and the Albion Hotel, are characterized by their cosmopolitanism. Guests at the hotel come from all over the world, and

L’Albion a été depuis sa fondation un établissement fashionble et les officiers de milice en garnison dans la ville s’y donnaient souvent rendez-vous dans les premiers temps, et plus d’une fois ses parquets de marbre ont résonné sous les pas de nos gouverneurs anglais. C’était là que logeait tout ce que Montréal recevait de visiteurs distingués […]. Cet établissement étant de première classe reçoit sou-

422 Pace Marcotte, who writes that in Fortier’s Mystères de Montréal, “La ville est d’ailleurs, par excellence, le lieu du déguisement, comme le montre la première scène véritablement montréalaise du roman, où sont conjoints les thèmes de l’hôtel, de l’universel et de la fausse identité […].” Marcotte, “Mystères de Montréal,” 126.
vent des malfaiteurs et des défalcataires\textsuperscript{423} fuyant leurs pays. Aussi on a vu plus d’une fois un individu souper un soir à l’Albion et le lendemain dans la prison de la ville” (207).

With this opening description, then, the narrator draws the reader’s attention to the wealth and elevated social status of the hotel’s guests, politicizes the space by pointing out that English governors stay there, and shows that the display of wealth at the hotel not only contributes to its prestige, but also attracts criminals.

The choice of the Albion—a real hotel, certainly—is also indicative of the patriotic, anti-English bent of the narrator. The phrase “perfidious Albion” pejoratively refers to English duplicity, treachery, and despotism; New Albion, from the Greek name for Britain, was even suggested as a name for the recently unified Canada in the 1860s. The chapter opens with the thefts of a wallet from an American guest, and of $11,000 from the hotel. These thefts, committed under the cover of what the narrator repeatedly calls the “brouhaha” of the urban hotel, serve to show how, in the city, the anonymity of the crowd can be manipulated by the criminal. The refulgent, wealthy masses that fill the hotel are threatened from within: Charles, disguised as the wealthy Carvalho de Topez (whom we later learn Charles has murdered), glittering with diamonds, smoking Cuban cigars, is described as “[un] petit homme maigre, nerveux, à la figure énergique mais sournoise […]. Le regard perçant de cet homme nous disait qu’il était accoutumé à embrasser les grands horizons, et ses poses énergiques qu’il s’exerçait à être imposant. Son

\textsuperscript{423} “Défalcataire” is defined in \textit{Le parler populaire des Franco-Canadiens} and in the \textit{Glossaire franco-canadien} as an Anglicism meaning a “concussionnaire,” someone who takes bribes. N.-E. Dionne, \textit{Le parler populaire des Canadiens français} (Québec: Laflamme & Proulx, 1909), 222; and Oscar Dunn, \textit{Glossaire franco-canadien et vocabulaire des locutions vicieuses usitées au Canada} (Québec: A. Côté et cie., 1880), 56, respectively.
costume n’avait rien de canadien” (205). On one hand, he blends in with his surroundings: he is apparently a wealthy foreigner, his age is indeterminate, and he speaks to no one. On the other, many aspects of his appearance arouse suspicion (and for this reason, the reader can hardly doubt that the man must be Charles in disguise): upon close inspection, his hair color does not match his mustache and eyebrows, his face suggests his “slyness” and “shifty” nature, and his gestures are at once nervous and seek to be imposing. While it is undeniable that Charles disguises himself in order to pull off his theft, I contend that Montreal is not “le lieu du déguisement par excellence,” as Marcotte characterizes it, but rather the place where masks come off. After all, do Paul and Charles not go by different aliases throughout the novel, over the course of their globetrotting adventures, long before their arrival in Montreal? Does Charles not hide behind a mask even while still in Saint-Denis, dissimulating his treachery?

Charles, alias Carvalho de Topez, is questioned by the detective Michaud—“le plus fin limier d’alors,” “un Canadien-français que son flair avait mis en vue [qui] s’était distingué dans des affaires ténébreuses” (208)—, who suspects him, but does not pursue him because of his apparent wealth and social status. Of course, Charles, with the aid of his accomplice and fellow murderer, Jos Matson, do commit the thefts, but Charles himself announces that the city is a space of both crime and its detection. When he and Jos rendez-vous at their boarding house, Charles says “Écoute, Jos, il faut laisser la ville au plus tôt, tu le sais comme moi. Les limiers de Montréal sont fins et si nous restons ici, nous serons pris” (222). Charles therefore explicitly states the risk of being unmasked by Montreal’s detectives, and their evasion of justice depends not on their anonymity, but on
their constant flight, or movement. The surveillance practiced by these savvy sleuths is by no means, however, the subject of this narrative; if their presence is perceived by Charles, it is only through his references that the reader may be away of it, too. The Mystères de Montréal may therefore be unquestionably qualified as an urban mystery rather than a detective novel. Though Michaud is summoned to the Albion Hotel after the theft of a wallet, his does not reappear until end of the novel, when in a *deus-ex-machina coup de théâtre* he enters the ball to arrest Charles.

In contrast to Charles, when Paul returns to Montreal along with Alfred Labadie (his fellow French Canadian whom he meets in exile), he stays at the Rasco Hotel. Down the road from the Albion, on the rue Saint-Paul, the Rasco “était le second hôtel de Montréal. Il était surtout patronisé [sic] par les Canadiens-français […]”. Turcotte e[û]t pu descendre au meilleur hôtel de Montréal, mais il avait pour principe d’encourager les établissements canadiens-français et de donner aux Anglais le moins d’argent possible” (423-24).  

In every way, Paul is the antithesis to Charles. Even with his choice of hotel, he proves to be loyal while Charles is treacherous. While Charles’s choice of hotel aligns him with the English and with criminal activity, Paul’s demonstrates loyalty, rather than betrayal, altruism, rather than self interest. Similarly, whereas Charles sticks out of the crowd for his awkwardness and ostentatiousness, Paul and Alfred change clothes in New York, on their way to Montreal, so that they arrive wearing “des vêtements chauds et convenables à la zone sous laquelle ils allaient séjourner. Ils étaient habillés en noir et

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424 Throughout the novel, circumflexes are frequently omitted in the conjugation of the past conditional and the pluperfect of the subjunctive; hereafter, they will be corrected without indication.
portaient chacun un feutre gris mou. Sans leurs traits bronzés on les eût pris pour de vrais New-Yorkais” (424). When a hotel employee addresses him in English, Paul seemingly miraculously perceives him not to be English and answers in French; “L’employé le regarda avec un air qui signifiait ‘Tiens, mais il aime donc bien le français, celui-là, pourtant il n’a pas l’air d’un Canadien, ni d’un Français’” (424). Even without blending in, Paul manages to conceal his identity as a French Canadian; nonetheless, his friend Alfred immediately remarks to him “On voir que tu connais bien la ville” (425)— and this despite the fact that the only time Paul is ever in Montreal is when he is imprisoned! Nevertheless, as Paul and Charles converge on Montreal and install themselves in their respective hotels, demonstrating their allegiances, respectively loyalist and treasonous, their conflict which opened the novel is thus transported from Saint-Denis to Montreal, from the hinterlands to the metropole.

**Violent Crimes and the City Streets**

While there certainly are two murders in the first part of the novel, they occur during the military violence of the 1837–38 rebellions. Paul, we find out, had killed the son of the captain of the *Marie-Céleste*, who will later treat him as an adoptive son, not knowing of his patriot past. Charles, on the other hand, deliberately murders Roch Millaut, his accomplice in treason, to cover his own tracks, making it appear that he was killed by the English troops attacking the village. Paul’s murder, committed as a patriotic defender of his people and home, is sanctioned by the overtly biased, French-Canadian narrator, as military violence, while Charles’s murder underscores his cowardice, selfishness, and ruthlessness. The murders we encounter in the second half of the text, in Mont-
real, are quite different. Shrouded in mystery, these murders are crimes to be solved, and the culprits are criminals to be punished. In this way, Montreal is established as a place where spaces are policed, and justice is served.

The first urban murder in the text occurs at the beginning of the third part of the novel. The chapter opens in the office of the chief of police of Montreal, where the chief meets with detective Michaud. The preceding night, an unknown man was found dead under the windows of the London Club, the gentlemen’s club to which Charles belongs. To underscore the threat implicated by this undetected murder, the narrator goes on to specify that “le coup avait été appliqué par une main habile pour porter si juste, et l’auteur de ce crime connaissait le métier. Ce meurtre perpétré avec une audace incroyable remettait dans la mémoire du détective Michaud les vols du 14 mai 1842 commis à l’hôtel ‘Albion.’ Il reconnaissait la même main mystérieuse, imprenable […]. Jamais le public de Montréal n’avait enregistré dans ses annales un crime si mystérieux” (286). With every detail, Fortier maximizes the “hype” and singularity of this bit of news. Furthermore, the skill of the murderer can only imply his significant experience. Even without the evocation of Michaud’s quasi-clairvoyant suspicion (why should the “mysterious hand” responsible for this murder recall an American tourist being pickpocketed in a hotel?), the reader could guess that, eventually, it will be revealed that Charles committed the murder. After all, the police chief mentions that a constable thinks he remembers the victim asking, in bad French, where to find the rue Bonaventure; a mere two

pages later, we learn that Charles, now living as a wealthy banker and going by the name of Hubert de Courval, lives in a home named “Kildenny Hall” at 127, rue Bonaventure, a tiny street that runs parallel to the rue Saint-Jacques just south of the rue de la Montagne. Living as the banker Hubert de Courval, Charles “réunissait chez lui des intimes haut placés comme lui, des Anglais de préférence, car il allait beaucoup plus avec ces derniers qu’avec les Canadiens-français” (289-90), further emphasizing his treachery, abandonment, and rejection of what should be, according to discursive framework of the novel’s politics and patriotism, his own people.

Although the city streets do not appear in Fortier’s Mystères as frequently as in Berthelot’s or Sue’s, there are several instances where their presence does merit critical attention. Charles and Paul aren’t the only characters whose paths converge in Montreal; so too does that of Charles’s accomplice from the Solitaire, Jos Matson. After being arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment, working in a penal colony of Venezuela for his crimes, he escapes vows to avenge Buscapié/Charles’s betrayal of his fellow crew members. Working as a sailor, Jos travels to New York where he hears of the “crime mystérieux commis sur la rue Notre-Dame” (349). Apparently a better detective than Michaud, at least up to this point, Matson travels to Montreal where he bides his time at the Cheval-Blanc. “S’il y avait à Montréal des maisons où l’on s’amusait sur un haut ton,” Fortier writes; “il y avait par contre de vilaines bicoques où l’on s’abrutissait. Le cabaret du ‘Cheval Blanc’ situé au coin des rues Claude et Saint-Paul était fameux parmi les estaminets de bas étage” (342). By its name, this tavern clearly recalls the Lapin Blanc, the infamous tapis-franc where the Mystères de Paris begins; by its description, it more closely
resembles the Cœur-Sanglant, Bras-Rouge’s tavern where criminals rendez-vous and Bras-Rouge works as a snitch. Fortier explains with exceptional detail (compared to other descriptions of characters’ movements about the city elsewhere in the novel) how Matson leaves the Cheval Blanc, near the intersection of Claude and Saint-Paul streets, cuts over to the rue Notre-Dame, then turns onto the rue Bonaventure; after crossing the rue de la Montagne, he arrives at the rue Bonaventure, where Charles, alias Hubert de Courval, a banker, lives. Interestingly, this particular itinerary is nearly the perfect opposite of the one Caraquette, Cléophas and Bénoni follow in Berthelot’s Mystères when Bénoni tails Caraquette and Cléophas to find out where the Bouctouche fortune is hidden. Furthermore, for those not totally familiar with the streets of Montreal, Fortier locates Courval’s home in an unexpected neighborhood: Griffintown, which, as we have seen, was a notorious haunt akin to the Cité in Paris, the Five Points in New York, or the East End of London. As Chevalier wrote in his Mystères nearly forty years before Fortier, the wealthy English community did indeed live slightly to the north of this area, however. While Fortier’s location of the Courval mansion is slightly out of sync with Chevalier’s characterization of where such a home would be, his description of the neighborhood for a reader of the 1890s reflects the persistence of neighborhood identity that modern urban studies has come to confirm. Fortier writes that “En 1845, sur la rue Bonaventure, les maisons étaient plus éloignées les unes des autres qu’aujourd’hui. La distance entre les numéros 111 et 127 était de deux arpents dans le moins. La rue était boueuse et ce n’était

426 See infra p. 212.
qu’avec précaution et en tâtant du pied qu’on avançait sur les trottoirs étroits, faits avec des planches mal jointes et pourries par un long service” (344).427

Once Matson enters the home, Charles recognizes him immediately. Matson extorts money from Charles, then leaves, promising to see him again the following today with the ominous words “Cela n’est que le prélude de ton supplice” (352). In a manner befitting the roman-feuilleton, the narrator explicitly opposes fact and fiction, the drama of real life and the reality of drama, by explaining that “Le boudoir du prétendu de Courval, l’élégant Montréalais, n’était pas fait pour ces scènes dramatiques, qu’on voit plutôt sur les théâtres que dans la vie réelle” (350). With the description of Charles’s home,428 together with this description, Fortier seems to anticipate Walter Benjamin’s writing on the connection between opulent bourgeois furnishings for the second half of the nineteenth century and the detective novel in “One-Way Street.” Benjamin draws parallels between detailed descriptions of architecture and interiors given by authors of crime fiction—Doyle, Poe, Leroux, etc.—and the ways these opulent spaces are seemingly only complete with the presence of a body; in turn, these are also descriptions of “the site plan of deadly traps,” the “path of the fleeing victim.” Benjamin writes “‘On this sofa the aunt cannot but be murdered.’ The soulless luxuriance of the furnishings becomes true

427 Cf. infra p. 155.

428 “Meublé avec richesse, l’appartement présentait un coup d’œil chic. Ça et là une chaise de crin, de velours, placée avec une négligence étudiée. Près de la fenêtre qui donnait sur le jardin, un sofa était adossé au mur, à côté [d’un secrétaire en noyer noir sur lequel gisaient des paperasses de toutes sortes; au milieu de la chambre, une étagère où s’étalait la plus variée des collections de bibelots” (345).
comfort only in the presence of a dead body.”\textsuperscript{429} Indeed, in the \textit{Mystères de Montréal}, just after the scene that follows the description of the lavish interior of Charles’s home (wherein Matson extorts money from him), Charles plans to murder his accomplice (356).

When Charles decides that his accomplice, Jos Matson (alias of John O’Connor), can no longer be trusted, he enlists the help of one of his two French-Canadian servants, Pierre Lafleur, to help him, without saying anything about his plan to kill Jos. After drugging Matson, Charles enlists Pierre’s help to get the sleeping man’s body into his carriage and they make their way up the rue Sainte-Catherine before turning to head for the docks. "On eut dit que [Charles] choisissait à dessein les rues obscures et peu fréquentées. Car à cette époque, ce qui est aujourd’hui la rue Sainte-Catherine, n’était qu’un chemin tortueux et sans nom fixe, que les passants évitaient le soir pour ne pas se casser le cou dans les ornières qu’il y avait à chaque arpent” (376–77). When they reach the docks, they are alone and there’s no one’s watch to worry about—or so they think: “tou était solitaire et aucun œil n’était à craindre.” The narrator states explicitly that “Le lieu était propice pour un crime” (377). It is only at this point that Pierre begins to suspect what Charles is up to. Nevertheless, he helps Charles put Matson’s body into a boat and the three of them head out on the Saint Lawrence. When Pierre refuses to go along with the plan and threatens to turn Charles in, the two start to fight and end up capsizing the boat, leaving the unconscious Matson to drown. When Charles and Pierre reach shore,

Charles essentially tells him “Keep quiet or you’re next.” Even though the narrator pref-aces their trip out on the river by saying that there was no one on the docks to see them, the “cliffhanger” at the end of the chapter— again, conforming to the tropes of the serial novel despite never appearing in that format— is the revelation that, although neither Pi-erre nor Charles notices it, there is a brig anchored in a nearby cove. It is thus implied that either their crime could have been observed or Matson might be saved from drown- ing; furthermore, this cliffhanger confirms the city, even including the river, as a sur- veilled space. Indeed, it turns out that Matson doesn’t drown— evading death nearly as farcically often as Paul— and, when he attempts to rob Paul’s hotel room at the Rasco, Paul captures him, they recognize each other from the Marie-Céleste, and Matson gives Paul and Michaud the information they need to unmask Charles and have him arrested.

Punishment

Of the two capital crimes committed in this novel— treason and murder—, treason takes place in the countryside, while murder takes place in the city. Likewise, traitors are not pursued or prosecuted, either in the country or the city: Paul and the other leaders of the rebellions are exiled and a price is put on their heads, and at Charles’s trial, Paul declines to bring up his treason for fear of drawing legal attention to himself.\textsuperscript{430} It is in the city that criminals are brought to justice. Historically speaking, the reason for this is that there were only criminal courts in Quebec, Montreal and Trois-Rivières; the vast ma-

\textsuperscript{430} “Paul Turcotte eut pu accuser Charles Gagnon de beaucoup d’autres crimes, de ceux qu’il avait commis à Saint-Denis, par exemple. Mais il ne voulut mentionner aucun événement de cette époque qui eut ramené sur le tapis la question de patriotes et bureaucrates” (452). Indeed, Paul’s fellow leaders, Duval, Cardinal and Duquette, are all sentenced to death by hanging (98).
jority of the cases heard in these courts in the 1830s involved urban residents, although
80% of the residents of these courts’ jurisdictions lived in rural locations more than 40
miles from the closest city. To come back to the context of this novel, and the opposition
set up between Montreal and the country, though, just because Charles is only tried for
his crimes of theft and murder, however, does not mean that Fortier will allow his an-
tagons to go unpunished for his treason.

The last chapter of the novel is almost entirely devoted to a transcription of his
hearing, where his crimes are enumerated and the specific articles of the penal code rele-
vant to his crimes are referenced. Though the capital crimes he commits are treason and
murder, objectively his treason is not illegal, but rather dishonorable. He did not commit
treason against the English crown; his treason was against his fellow French Canadians
amidst their rebellion against English despotism. Fortier glosses over this distinction and
instead writes that Paul could have accused Charles of the crimes he committed at Saint-
Denis, but that he didn’t want to do anything to bring up anything to do with the question
of the patriots of ‘37 and ‘38. In fact, the English court would never condemn its own
informant. It is thus for his life of piracy, his thefts, and his murders that Charles is con-
demned to be hanged (452).

While Sue included an extended protest against capital punishment in the
*Mystères de Paris*, Fortier includes nothing of the kind in this novel. Instead, he opposes
vigilante justice, legal justice, and justice of fate. Although Paul and Jeanne are com-
mended in the narration for being good Catholic French Canadians, there is no pro-
nounced religious element to the French/English conflict Fortier dramatizes. When
Jeanne’s brother-in-law steals her jewels and money and flees the country following Charles’s arrest, he is killed in a train crash. The narrator recounts with detachment that “Le train de Buffalo, parti le matin à six heures et quart, était tombé en bas d’un remblai près de Lachine et vingt-neuf personnes avaient perdu la vie: de ce nombre était George Braun. On sait pourquoi il avait pris passage à bord de ce train: son ami arrêté, lui se trouvait ruiné et plus que deal, déshonoré” (446). The crash is certainly not presented as being God’s work or any sort of divine retribution for Matson’s crimes; for this reason, I use the term “justice of fate,” rather than “divine justice.” According to the logic of this novel, Matson could never escape his fate to meet an untimely death; for want of legal justice, in lieu of “paying his debt” to society in one way or another, fate intervenes.

The Prison

The prison of Montreal appears twice during the novel: when Paul is imprisoned, following his capture during the Rebellions, and after Charles’s sentencing, when he awaits his hanging. This doubling of the protagonist’s and antagonist’s circumstances is part and parcel of the adventure novel genre that this urban mystery straddles. Just as any Sue-like polemic against capital punishment is absent from these Mystères de Montréal, so is any argument about, or even description of, prison conditions.

When the leaders of the rebellions are brought to the prison of Montreal, Fortier describes it at some length:
La prison où ils furent détenus n’est pas la bâtisse d’aspect presque gai qui s’élève sur le côté nord de la rue Notre-Dame, contiguë aux ateliers du ‘Pacific Canadian’ et appelée Hotel Payette.  

C’est l’immense bâtiment de pierre, de construction sombre, qu’on remarque encore sur le côté opposé de la rue Notre-Dame, en allant vers la ville, qui fut témoin il y a un demi siècle des événements dramatiques que nous avons appris sur les genoux de nos pères.

Son apparence frappe de loin et ses petites fenêtres semblent autant de trous de meurtrières. On ne dirait pas une construction faite pour des hommes. (92)

Likewise in a later description, where Fortier emphasizes the windows of the prison using the same terms. He calls the prison “une immense bâtisse de pierre sombre, flanquée de tourelles avec des fenêtres comme des trous de meurtrière. Une porte cochère percée d’un guichet et surmontée d’un fanal en indiquait l’entrée principale” (195). Apparently aspiring to higher literary allusions, he continues his description of the place of the Patriot rebel leaders’ imprisonment by writing

Elle a quatre étages et une mansarde. Bloc massif sur la façade duquel semble être écrit comme à l’entrée de l’enfer de Dante: “Vous qui entrez ici perdez toute espérance.”

L’intérieur, bien qu’assez propre n’est pas fait pour mettre la gaîté dans l’âme de celui qui l’habite. Des murs gris foncé, de sombres couloirs sans fin bordés de cellules avec leurs portes en fer; le grincement des clefs des gardiens dans les serrures, le bruit des prisonniers qui traînent leurs chaînes, tout inspire l’horreur. (92, italics in original)

It is here that Fortier’s Mystères most closely resemble Sue’s. Drawing on visual, aural, and olfactory senses (by the mention of the prison’s cleanliness, presumably), Fortier attempts to convey not simply the material conditions of the prison, but, explicitly, the hor-

431 In Berthelot’s Mystères, the prison of Montreal is also called “Hôtel Payette” by Cléophas, Bénoni, and Caraquette (138).
ror it inspires. Unlike Sue and Chevalier, however, by the time Fortier wrote his novel, he had never actually been in prison. Even if Fortier makes references to the noise of the prisoners and their horrifying conditions, no kind of social commentary on either prison conditions or the penal system is present in the Mystères.

Shortly after Paul joins the rest of the rebel leaders in prison, a fictional newspaper article from La Minerve reports Paul’s escape under the headline “Évasion d’un Patriote” with the subtitle “Paul Turcotte saute du quatrième étage de la prison!” (96). If this article is any indication, Fortier did not miss his calling as a full-time journalist. The sensationalism of the reporting is nonetheless befitting the type of adventure novel the Mystères will dive into shortly hereafter. At the prison of Pied-du-Courant, “Une évasion extraordinaire et digne de prendre place parmi les évasions célèbres,” La Minerve proclaims. Paul jumps out of the fourth-story window—the article repeatedly emphasizes the high height of the window in his cell—and an immense snow bank breaks his fall.

During Charles’s visit to the prison of Montreal, when he meets with colonel Flynn (general Gore has left for England at this point), we learn that the English had imprisoned Paul twice, and twice he escapes (198). It is Charles who promises, with the aid of six horsemen, to capture him. Charles fills even Flynn with “un profond dédain, en livrant ainsi ainsi son co-villageois” (199). The first part of the novel closes with the discovery that Paul has evaded capture, yet again by jumping out a window (204).

Upon his return to Montreal, Paul reminisces about the snow that saved his life during his escape—and having travelled to Montreal from Mexico by way of New York, the sight of snow, after years spent in Central America, is rendered all the more striking,
all the more Canadian. And, I would argue, all the more French-Canadian. Although the snow that saves Paul’s life is certainly not metaphorical, it does underscore the “Canadian-ness” of the land and its inhabitants, and the intrinsic connection between the two. As Katri Suhonen writes, “L’exploitation de la métaphore de l’hiver dans l’imaginaire québécois révèle la pertinence de l’approche, car on peut y constater un virage analogue dans le rôle octroyé aux forces de la nature: la saison ne sert plus seulement de milieu à certaines activités humaines, mais elle devient elle-même un actant, un élément central de l’intrigue. Ce changement s’impose autant sur le plan poétique que symbolique.” Rarely do we see any season other than a snowy winter in this novel, either in the country or in the city; any season or weather other than a snowy winter is found in warmer climes, exterior to Quebec, the beloved homeland after which the protagonist must quest.

Like Paul, Charles escapes from his cell in the night, after his sentencing and on the eve of his execution. Following his trial, when Charles is taken to the Montreal prison, he “n’attendit pas qu’on lui infligea le châtiment dû à ses crimes. Il avança par sa faute l’heure de sa mort” (453). The narration explicitly highlights Charles’s fault, his guilt, and therefore his cowardice as well. Paul was able to jump from a fourth-story window into a high snowbank, evading his unjust (in the eyes of the French Canadians) punishment, but Charles attempts to scale the prison wall. Spotted by a guard, Charles is shot in the head; not knowing whom he has shot, the guard runs to the fallen body and

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432 Katri Suhonen, “‘Partout de la neige entassée, comme du linge à laver’: La passion de la blancheur dans le roman québécois moderne” in *Voix et Images*, vol. 37, n° 2 (2012): 115.
sees Charles’s face. The doubling of the prison escape, along with Paul’s success and
Charles’s failure, encourages the two to be further opposed to each other by the reader.
Paul, the just hero, escapes without harm; Charles, the traitor, the coward, attempts to
avoid his legally sanctioned execution. After evading justice over the course of virtually
the entire novel, Charles’s escape is untenable. If he is not punished for his murders and
thefts, “pendu par le cou jusqu’à ce que mort s’ensuive,” he is punished for his treason.
Like Matson before him, Charles meets his fate when he is killed, and the guilt of his
executioner is never put into question.

Conclusion

In short, the convolution of the last Mystères de Montréal’s plot belies the well
thought-out complexity of Fortier’s only novel. Sweeping tales of adventure and mystery
on the high seas, treason and rebellion in rural Quebec, and murder, theft and justice in
the big city are in fact seamlessly stitched together to produce a significant hybrid of the
patriotic historical novel, the adventure novel, and the urban mystery. By drawing on
each of these genres, Fortier is able to make a significant contribution to the corpus of
city mysteries that proliferated over the course of the nineteenth century. Whereas
Chevalier represents Montreal as an industrial and crime-ridden space, Berthelot depicts
it in the full swing of its industrialization. In contradistinction to each of them, Fortier’s
representation of Montreal is one of a cosmopolitan city, filled with Canadians and for-
eigners alike, where public spaces, like the streets, hotels, and gentlemen’s clubs facilitate
inevitable, but unlikely encounters between the novel’s main characters. If criminals can
evade justice in the city’s hinterlands or by constant travel throughout the world, it is in
the city that they will be found out, unmasked. Without writing a detective novel, Fortier nonetheless represents Montreal as a place of detection: criminals are apprehended and tried in court. In the world Fortier creates, no one can escape his fate. Why should Paul exact revenge or dole out justice à la Rodolphe from the *Mystères de Paris*? And how could Fortier hypocritically decry the tyranny of the English only to rely on them to justly punish “le traître de 37” for his crimes? Fortier rejects both of these models and instead, constructs a world where the wicked get their just desserts while the just— that is, the honest, the faithful, the *French-Canadian*— are rewarded with the simplicity of domestic life that characterizes them in the first place, and to which they aspire.
CONCLUSION

It seems fitting to conclude a study on the relationships between literature and the popular press— in France, during the July Monarchy, and in Quebec, over the course of the nineteenth century— by borrowing the words with which Étienne Parent concluded his “prospectus” for the re-launched newspaper, *Le Canadien*:

De toutes les presses, la presse périodique est celle qui convient le mieux au peuple; c’est de fait la seule bibliothèque du peuple. Mais dans un nouveau pays comme le nôtre, pour que la presse réussisse et fasse tout le bien qu’elle est [susceptible] de produire, il faut que tous ceux qui en connaissent les avantages s’y intéressent particulièrement, qu’ils s’efforcent, chacun dans le cercle de son influence, de procurer des lecteurs; et en cela ils peuvent se flatter de travailler pour le bien de leur pays; car le savoir est une puissance, et chaque nouveau lecteur ajoute à la force populaire.433

Parent asserts not only the power of the press— and specifically, newspapers— to serve the immediate needs of the people, in a restrictive sense, but also the press’s capacity to influence the public opinion, reaching the people, in the least restrictive sense. Public opinion’s potential for unification as well as the press’s particular significance for infra-national communities were not underestimated by this early-nineteenth-century journalist and politician, the “Victor Cousin of America,” writing thousands of miles across the Atlantic, just under a year after the *Trois Glorieuses* toppled the Restoration government and established a constitutional monarchy in Quebec’s former *mère-patrie*.

In the *Mystères de Paris*, as we have seen, Sue goes far beyond simply representing July Monarchy society, from the destitute *grisette* to the noble prince in disguise. Although he certainly did not invent serial form, he was the first to master it, quickly and

433 *Le Canadien*, May 7, 1831.
consequentially capitalizing on the relationships and interplay between novel and newspaper. The months during which the novel was serialized saw a key period evolution in Sue’s thinking, marked by and reflecting his Romantic socialist influences. The novel shifts from its escapist, voyeuristic beginnings to become a tribune of social reform, making significant interventions into public debates on social and penal reform. In his representations of carceral spaces, Sue advances the notion of criminality as contagion and lays out his arguments to the widespread implementation of the cell system to bring about rehabilitation according to both Christian and early-socialist moralistic frameworks.

The “mysterymania” of the nineteenth century produced hundreds of urban mysteries and we must not underestimate the influence Sue and his novel had on other writers—his contemporaries and the generations to follow him alike. Many sought only to divert their readers, as indeed Sue did at the outset of his *Mystères*. Also like Sue, many authors made use of fiction and its serial publication to put forward political statements in addition to positing social remedies to social problems.

A great admirer of both Sue and Fourier, Henri-Émile Chevalier, after being exiled from France for publishing an article critical of the Second Empire, found himself in Montreal and insinuated himself into the francophone literary elite of the city. Chevalier’s dual position as insider and outsider, as well as his political beliefs as both a Romantic socialist and a Republican Frenchman, led him to simultaneously desire the abolition of nationalities and seek to promote a sense of French-Canadian national identity by means of instituting a national literature. In his own Sue-inspired urban mystery, Chevalier puts his own prescriptions for this institution of French-Canadian literature into prac-
tice. In his representations of the city of Montreal, Chevalier demonstrates his participation in a mediatic imaginary insofar as he depicts the bas-fonds of the city, drawing explicit comparisons between the dangerous streets of Montreal and those of New York, London, and Paris. On the other hand, he evinces remarkable attention to urban development, long before the advent of modern city planning, and thus represents Montreal as an economic capital as well as a locus of crime. All the while, Chevalier draws on the history of Quebec, highlighting the importance of the French language, in order to use a genre and form, inspired by Sue’s success with the Mystères de Paris, in the service of forming a sense of nationalism on the part of his Canadian readers.

When Berthelot, a mordant satirist and caricaturist, set out to write his own Mystères de Montréal, he strategically used the imagological figure of Ladébauche as both the novel’s implied author and its narrator. The portraits of Ladébauche—both literal and narrative—that Berthelot paints through his many newspapers as well as his Mystères allow him to make use of parody as well as autoparody, more consequentially, to prompt a sense of identification on the part of his French-Canadian reader. With humor, Berthelot is able to not only subvert Church censors—whose influence on society, literature, and the press in nineteenth-century Quebec is one of the most marked differences between its history and that of France—but also enlarge the public sphere, harnessing the potential of the popular press to both reflect and form public opinion. Representing Montreal in the full swing of its industrialization, Berthelot’s novel, when read alongside the newspapers of his day, is able to give an up-to-the-minute account of the city, and thus serves as a lens through which the modern reader is able to gain insight into the lived
experience of Montreal at a pivotal moment in its history. Furthermore, the modern reader can see these *Mystères de Montréal* in relation to Sue’s urban mystery insofar as Berthelot uses the serial novel not only to make significant, effective interventions in contemporary politics, but also to marshal public opinion into the service of the crystallization of a national identity.

In the final decade of the nineteenth century, a young author, Auguste Fortier, would write his only novel, the final *Mystères de Montréal*. Although Fortier was a journalist as well as an author, his novel was not serialized, nor does it reflect the intimate and complex relationship with the press that the novels of Sue, Chevalier, and Berthelot do. Rather than the blurred boundaries between the novel and the newspaper, Fortier’s novel blurs the lines between the very genres that made his predecessor, Eugène Sue, famously successful. Fortier’s *Mystères* are labelled as a *roman canadien*, but the novel itself reflects a renewed interest in Quebec for the historical novel, which was prompted by a new era in French-Canadian historiography. And, this young author’s use of French-Canadian history in a work of fiction is precisely what Henri-Émile Chevalier had advocated as a means of inaugurating a specifically Canadian literature in French in the interest of fostering a patriotic, French-Canadian national identity roughly forty years earlier.

In his representations of Montreal’s public space, Fortier picks up where Berthelot left off, representing the city as a thoroughly cosmopolitan locus for crime, as well as its detection. Much like in the novel that “started it all,” Fortier’s novel is built around “punishment plots” in which the just are rewarded and the wicked are punished according to their crimes, ultimately affirming an idyllic and wholesome French-Canadian way of life.
In short, these four urban mysteries, written over the course of the nineteenth century, each demonstrate the potential the serial novel had to participate in the formation of a sense of national identity by virtue of its form and modes of publication. Using serial form to capitalize on the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction, as well as between novel and newspaper, Sue, Chevalier, and Berthelot are able to use their urban mysteries to make meaningful interventions in the socio-political debates of their times, while Fortier reflects the contributions of his predecessors to the evolution of French-Canadian literature, while making his own, original contribution to its continued advancement approaching the turn of the twentieth century. These novels, in conjunction with the popular press, each contribute to a transnational cultural imaginary by taking up representations of urban space, crime, punishment, and society (in the broadest sense) in order to make significant strides in the formation of a sense of national identity.
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