Emerging Trends in Book History and Print Culture

Eloïse Pontbriand*

In the spring of 2013, students from the Groupe de recherches et d’études sur le livre au Québec (GRÉLQ) at the Université de Sherbrooke and from the collaborative program in Book History and Print Culture (BHPC) at the University of Toronto hosted a conference series titled “Emerging Trends in Book History and Print Culture.” This series, which took place approximately a decade after the first BHPC and GRÉLQ student conferences, aimed to examine the state of research in the field and to assemble, in a bilingual context, young researchers from Canadian universities. The contributions, published here, stem from this conference: Nicholas Giguère discusses the Québec gay militant periodical press; Tatiana Burtin, contemporary francophone theatre publishing; and Marie-Clémence Régnier, the representation of literature in museums.

Bringing our attention to a rich, yet mostly unexplored, corpus, Nicholas Giguère surveys the magazine Le Berdache, which was published by the Association pour les droits des gai(e)s du Québec (ADGQ), to show its leading contribution to the construction of a homosexual identity in Québec and to the history of the political movement of gays and lesbians in this province. Giguère focuses more specifically on the various incarnations of a magazine that, after several years of success, struggled to remain relevant when, on one hand, the editorial staff was divided and, on the other hand, the magazine no longer represented the interests of a new generation of readers for whom activism was less important. Moreover, the analysis demonstrates that, over-focused on Montreal, the periodical had difficulty responding to the expectations of the homosexual population of the Québec regions and found itself competing with local periodicals. Giguère’s paper sheds light on periodicals published

* Eloïse Pontbriand is a doctoral student at the Université de Sherbrooke. Her SSHRC-funded dissertation project examines the single-author periodical in nineteenth-century France.

1 The series took place in Sherbrooke 21–22 March and in Toronto 5–6 April 2013.
in the non-profit context and comments on the editorial conflicts engendered when a mission founded on activism collides with economic factors. He makes a meaningful contribution to the study of militant print culture.

Tatiana Burtin examines how contemporary director-playwrights publish their plays, given that both the text and the book format could be perceived as inadequate when it comes to capturing complex multimedia performances. Her analysis of Wajdi Mouawad’s *Seuls* and Robert Lepage’s *Le Projet Andersen* demonstrates the strategies deployed by these playwrights to convey the essence of their work in print and details their revisiting of the conception and making of their plays: Mouawad does so textually and visually, in the printed pages of his book, while Lepage supplies an accompanying DVD in order to complement/transcend the printed word. The two playwrights’ relationships to the book differ; these relationships also influence their respective authorial postures. Burtin concludes that, despite the differences, the approaches adopted for the publication of the multimedia plays invite the reader in both instances to participate in a reconstruction of the play, allowing the playwrights to appeal to an audience beyond the traditionally limited theatre publishing market.

We can draw parallels between Burtin’s essay and Marie-Clémence Régnier’s, which traces the evolution of literary exhibits in museums and investigates contemporary examples. In museums, as in theatre publishing, the book persists but faces competition from other media that have the potential to convey the content in another manner and thus to appeal to the public differently. Through a study of the exhibits *Livre/Louvre* (Paris) and *L’Univers de Michel Tremblay* (Québec), Régnier brings to light different institutional and collective relationships to books and culture. She contrasts the presence of the book in the Parisian exhibit against its absence from that of Québec. This contrast, which reflects some current concerns regarding the relationships between books and literature, outlines the importance of the cultural interpretations that underline the approaches adopted by museums that exhibit literature. Régnier’s paper shows, ultimately, how the study of literary exhibits also enriches our understanding of the representations of writers, representations that, like those of books and literature, are transformed by new technologies.

---

The challenge brought to the book by other media emerges as one of the dominant themes in the articles published in this issue, whether observed in the dissemination of complex theatrical works or in the presentation of literature in the context of museums. Also linking the articles are questions related to the construction of individual, community, collective, and authorial identities in the *Berdache* and other gay publications, in the theatre publishing market, and in public institutions such as libraries and museums. Perhaps even more interesting is that these themes in Burtin’s and Régnier’s case studies are linked: the presence of technologies, either competing with or accompanying books, directly influences cultural and authorial identities. When seen through the lens of this special issue at a time when technology’s influence upon the shaping of our identities is acutely felt, the discipline of book history can be perceived as embracing an increasingly expanding multidisciplinarity and evolving to accommodate new digital customs.

Thank you to Elizabeth Klaiber and Matt Schneider of the conference series organization committee, for their contributions to this special issue. We also thank the organizations that have made the conference series possible. The Sherbrooke part of the conference series was supported by the following organisations: GRÉLQ, Vice-rectorat aux études supérieures et à la formation continue de la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de l’Université de Sherbrooke, Chaire de recherche du Canada sur l’histoire de l’édition et la sociologie du littéraire (ÉdiSoc), Association des étudiantes et étudiants de maîtrise et de doctorat en lettres et communications de l’Université de Sherbrooke (AGEMDELCUS), Regroupement des étudiantes et des étudiants de maîtrise, de diplôme et de doctorat de l’Université de Sherbrooke (REMDUS), and the Colby-Curtis Museum. We would particularly like to thank Josée Vincent and Anthony Glinoer for their support. The Toronto part of the series was supported by the following University of Toronto organizations: the Department of English, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the Department of French, the Emilio Goggio Chair in Italian Studies, the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology, the Department of Religion, the Toronto Centre for the Book, the Collaborative Program in Book History and Print Culture, the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, and Massey College. We also would like to thank the Scientific Advisory Committee of the conference series: Leslie Howsam, Marcel Lajeunesse, Yvan Lamonde, Dan O’Donnell, Scott McLaren, and Lise Jaillant.