

A Voice of English-Montreal  
The First Twenty Years of Véhicule Press, 1973–1993

Amy Hemond  
Department of English  
McGill University, Montreal  
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### **Abstract**

Véhicule Press is a small book publishing company in Montreal that specializes in poetry, fiction, and social history and publishes in the English-language. Directed by Simon Dardick and Nancy Marrelli, the Press celebrated its forty-fifth-year anniversary in 2018. Drawing on data collected from the Véhicule Press and Véhicule Art (Montreal) Inc. fonds stored in the Concordia University Library Special Collections, this thesis explores the first twenty years (1973–1993) of Véhicule Press and follows the evolution of the company from a commercial printing operation in the back room of a gallery, Véhicule Art Inc., to a book publisher that has contributed greatly to the communities of Montreal. The thesis argues that, through the publication of poetry, artist books, and books on the history of Montreal and Quebec, a continual policy of inclusivity and diversity, and a gradually expanding outreach, Véhicule Press has sought to educate the world about the unique and diverse histories and peoples of Montreal and Quebec. The thesis also acknowledges the impact that funding, especially from the Canada Council for the Arts, has had on the publishing house over the years, as well as various other events that helped shape the press into the company that it is today.

## Résumé

Véhicule Press est une petite compagnie d'Édition de livres à Montréal qui se spécialise en poésie et en histoire sociale et qui publie principalement en anglais. La compagnie est dirigée par Simon Dardick et Nancy Marrelli et a célébré son quarante-cinquième anniversaire pendant l'été 2018. Ce mémoire, en examinant les archives de Véhicule Press et Véhicule Art (Montreal) Inc. qui sont conservées dans les collections spéciales de la bibliothèque de l'Université Concordia, enquête sur les vingt premières années (1973–1993) de Véhicule Press. Le mémoire suit l'évolution de la compagnie de ses débuts, comme une opération d'impression commerciale dans la salle arrière de la galerie Véhicule Art Inc., à une Maison d'Édition de livres qui a grandement contribué aux communautés de Montréal. L'argument soutient que Véhicule Press, à travers la publication de poésie montréalaise et de plusieurs livres sur l'histoire de Montréal et du Québec, et à travers le maintien d'une orientation très inclusive et diversifiée, travaillait pour éduquer le reste du Canada sur les histoires et les peuples uniques de Montréal. De plus, le mémoire reconnaît l'impact de divers événements et du financement externe, notamment du Conseil des Arts du Canada, dans le façonnement de la compagnie telle qu'elle existe encore aujourd'hui.

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## Introduction

The year 2018 marked the forty-fifth anniversary of Véhicule Press. Few Canadian book publishing houses can boast as fascinating a history as the Montreal small press, which began as an experimental commercial printing operation in the back room of Véhicule Art Inc.—the second artist-run gallery in Canada<sup>1</sup>—and which has since become a respected publishing house and cultural icon in Montreal (“About Us” [Véhicule Press]). Even fewer publishing houses can claim to have been as involved in their local community as Véhicule Press. Since its founding, the small press’s mission has been to promote and publish books on subjects that are important to both Quebec and Canada. Its most critical achievements have been its books by and about the English-speaking community of Quebec that have been adapted for an international readership.

Over the last forty-five years, Véhicule Press has published more than four hundred different titles, many of which are the works of well-known figures of Canadian literature, from Earle Birney to Louis Dudek and David Solway, among many others. *Violent Duality: A Study of Margaret Atwood* by Sherrill Grace, published by Véhicule Press in 1980, was the first mid-career book-length analysis of the celebrated author. The first major critical work on Michael Ondaatje, an anthology called *Spider Blues* by Sam Solecki, was also published at Véhicule. Michael Harris, Linda Leith, Andrew Steinmetz, Carmine Starnino, Dimitri Nasrallah, and Brian Busby have worked under its wing as editors. Today, Véhicule Press operates out of the bottom floor offices of a Victorian limestone building in the Plateau-Mont-Royal neighborhood of Montreal, where its publishers and general managers, Simon Dardick and his wife Nancy

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<sup>1</sup> Véhicule Art Inc. was the first artist-run gallery in the province of Quebec (“About Us” [Véhicule Press]).

Marrelli, also live. Under their direction and the efforts of various editors working from remote locations across the country, Véhicule Press publishes award-winning books of poetry, fiction, essays, and social history, several of which are French-English translations (“About Us,” Véhicule Press).

In 1993, when Ken Norris wrote the introduction to *Vehicule Days: An Unorthodox History of Montreal's Vehicule Poets*, he expressed the hope that he would “see discrete studies of both Véhicule Art and Véhicule Press in the not-so-distant future” to complement his own exploration of the history of the group of poets who were some of Véhicule Press’s first authors (“Introduction” 8). At the time, he did not know that a history of Véhicule Art Inc. had already been written by Diana Nemiroff in 1985 as part of a master’s thesis submitted to Concordia University. Yet, a history of Véhicule Press, the most prominent and enduring of the three, was never written. In recognition and celebration of Véhicule Press’s many achievements and contributions to Montreal society, this thesis, a history of the first twenty years of the small press, from 1973 to 1993, is intended to redress this lack.

Drawing on the Véhicule Press fonds and the Véhicule Art (Montreal) Inc. fonds in the Archives and Special Collections library at Concordia University’s Loyola Campus in Montreal as its main source of data, this thesis provides a snapshot of the major events and changes which contributed to Véhicule Press’s evolution. Throughout, the thesis also highlights the many programs and organizations, such as the Canada Council, which have supported Véhicule Press along the way, and thus enabled it to make such a difference to the English-language community of Montreal.

Chapter 1 covers the years from 1972 until 1976, when Véhicule Press first came into being as a print shop inside the gallery Véhicule Art, Inc. It explains how this connection gave

Véhicule Press extensive roots in the local Montreal arts community and instilled in it an appreciation for cultural education, community accessibility, and inclusivity. This chapter also details the vital importance of Local Initiatives Program funding to the publication of the publishing house's first experimental books, and the establishment of its first imprint.

In Chapter 2 I investigate the years from 1976 until 1981, when Véhicule Press and its surrounding environment underwent a series of sudden changes that forced it to re-evaluate both its identity and its place in society. During this period, the expansion of the press, alongside its qualification for the Canada Council Block Grant Program, contrasted starkly with both the failing of the gallery Véhicule Art Inc. and the migration of English-speaking peoples out of Quebec. The publishing house's decision to keep moving forward and to continue publishing and promoting the English-Quebec community presents an example of Véhicule Press's resilience, strong leadership, and loyalty to its community.

Finally, Chapter 3 follows Véhicule Press as, from 1981 to 1993, it redefined its goals, strengthened its ties to Montreal, and grew into the company that still exists today. These years marked the first under Simon Dardick and Nancy Marrelli's sole leadership. As they took on greater responsibility as publishers and editors, they also launched new initiatives, genres, and series to better reflect the changing English-Quebec landscape. At the same time, they came to realize the indispensability of federal government policy to Canadian publishing.

Despite all odds, Véhicule Press has managed, for forty-five years, to publish English-language books from within a majority French-speaking province. This is partially because of its directors' resilience and determination to keep the press going. It is also, I think, because Véhicule Press has managed to do something that few other publishers have even attempted. Véhicule Press focuses on, incorporates, and reflects a minority community lodged within a



larger minority community. The English minority that lives in Quebec, as the case of Véhicule Press demonstrates, inhabits a much different reality from the English-speaking peoples living in the rest of the country. Those Anglophones who have chosen to live within the borders of Quebec are, in fact, much closer culturally to their French-speaking counterparts than many realize. They inhabit a kind of hybrid identity between the two cultures. Thus, in seeking to represent Montreal's Anglophone community, Véhicule Press has never once rejected the French-Quebec culture that surrounds it. Instead, it embraces bilingualism and other values that bridge the gap between the two communities. Dardick affirms that "there are not many small publishers in this country who have the unique approach to publishing that Véhicule has. We reflect, in design and content, a vital cultural activity that exists in both French and English-language communities" (Dardick, letter to the Canada Council [1985]). In addition, what Roy MacSkimming terms the "nostalgic and celebratory mode" (*Perilous* 259), in which Véhicule Press publishes, ensures that Quebec traditions and memories are kept alive, both for the community living within the province and others elsewhere.

The name "Véhicule" alone reveals much about the nature of the press and its origins. Véhicule Press inherited its name from the group that founded the gallery Véhicule Art Inc., in which it was created. Dardick affirms that Véhicule Press is "an appropriate hybrid name" for the facility with which it appeals to both French and English speakers ("Exploring"). As Nemiroff wrote, Véhicule Art's "choice of the French version of the name ... indicated their awareness of and openness to the specificity of the Montreal milieu" (125). By keeping this name, Véhicule Press declares itself to be an accessible Montreal establishment—one that does not take sides in the great language wars that continually flare up in the province of Quebec.

The meaning behind the word “véhicule” also carries weight. The eighth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* lists three definitions:

**VÉHICULE. n. m.**

- 1) Toute sorte de voiture.
- 2) Ce qui sert à transmettre.
- 3) Certaines substances servant à introduire dans l'organisme un médicament.

As the first definition entails, the name Véhicule conveys a feeling of movement, of progress. The idea that it could be any type of transport or automobile instills the name with a machine-like engine hum and a sense of industry and modernity. In addition, just as the second definition of “véhicule” suggests, the name expresses the aspirations of the thirteen founders of Véhicule Art Inc. to present their group as a “vehicle of ideas” transmitting art to the general public of Montreal and Canada (Dardick, “Exploring”). Nemiroff writes that “the choice of the name Véhicule by the largely Anglophone group of founding members underlined their vision of the gallery as a channel of communication ... Véhicule meant an openness to the outside, a channel for energy and a conduit for information” (Nemiroff 125, 137).

It has been said that Véhicule Press, especially in its first decades of existence, “fostered a cross fertilization of the arts, offering concrete opportunities for co-operation between artists, writers, photographers and so forth, along the lines that Coach House Press, for example, had developed somewhat earlier in Toronto” (Nemiroff 147–48). Indeed, Véhicule is no less significant than such Canadian stalwarts as House of Anansi, Coach House, and Contact Press, all of which have been researched and written about to a much greater extent. It seems that, in the same way that Véhicule Press was the last of its Véhicule colleagues to garner a history, so too is it the last of its fellow presses to receive detailed scholarly attention.

Why is it that Véhicule is nearly invisible in critical discourse about book publishing in Canada? In Roy MacSkimming’s ground-breaking work *The Perilous Trade*, which covers the

history of several publishers in Canada, Véhicule makes only a brief appearance. Even more disquieting is how little it appears in the third volume of *History of the Book in Canada*, which Candida Rifkind writes is a “major reference work for scholars and students working across a variety of fields in Canadian studies and transnational book history” and praises for its “admirable effort to ... highlight the differences between publishing inside and outside Quebec” (Rifkind 170, 172). Véhicule is mentioned in only three of the 122 essays, and then only in passing.

However, the absence of scholarship on Véhicule does not indicate that the press lacks significance in the Canadian publishing spectrum. Rather, it demonstrates the challenging and liminal position in which Véhicule finds itself as an English-language book publisher within a largely French-speaking province. Contradictorily, the uncertain and marginalized space that Véhicule inhabits is also what makes it so important.

As Bruce Whiteman, former director of Rare Books at McGill University, quips, “English publishing in Quebec has taken place in unusual circumstances” (11). It is precisely these unusual circumstances which explain why there has been such a dearth of research on the subject. Scholars, unsure about how to approach or categorize studies of English-language book production in Quebec, have largely left them to the side. As a result, not only is Véhicule Press absent from *The Perilous Trade* and *History of the Book in Canada*, but, in fact, Anglophone publishing in the province of Quebec has very little representation in those studies. In the *History of the Book in Canada*, for example, the article that discusses “Book Publishing in Quebec” is in the chapter “Publishing Books in French,” essentially dismissing English-language publishing in the province. Instead, consideration of Montreal English-language publishing takes up only a paragraph in George L. Parker’s ten-page article, “Trade and Regional Publishing in Central

Canada,” which is a section of the chapter “Trade and Regional Book Publishing in English” (168–78). Most English-Canadian critics misrepresent Anglo-Quebec writing in this way. Reconsideration of Anglo-Quebec literature and publishing has only started gaining momentum since the late 1980s, but in general it has been slow to take.

The reasons for this resistance are political. Tensions between the French- and English-speaking inhabitants of Quebec have been simmering since long before the Quiet Revolution, and as a result, Anglo-Quebec literature has only recently been recognized as a genre of its own. As Linda Leith writes, up until 1997, “to be a Quebec writer meant writing in French. The very definition of Quebec literature therefore excluded us [English-Quebec writers] ... by definition, there could be no such thing as an English-Quebec writer” (*Writing* 99). Even now, Leith acknowledges, “one of the issues on which we Canadians and Québécois are most likely to agree is that Canadian writing is in English and Quebec writing is in French” (11). This same concept is what motivated the editors of the *History of the Book in Canada* to categorize English-Quebec and French-Quebec writing separately, and it is what has influenced much of the Canadian population with regards to how they treat literature in French and English, even when it comes from the same place.

Since the 1990s, Leith and other influential writers have worked to open up new avenues for the consideration of Anglo-Quebec literature, and by extension, publishing. These advancements have allowed subsequent scholars such as Claudine Gélinas-Faucher to legitimately study English literature produced in Quebec as its own category. Her 2015 Ph.D. dissertation at McGill University explored “the ways in which the changing social, political, and legal position of Anglophones in Quebec has influenced English language novelists in their representation of the city” (2). Writing on the history of Véhicule Press, which has made great

strides to promote inclusion and understanding between the residents of Montreal through English-language books of poetry, fiction, and social history, seems like a good way to continue the work of Leith, Gélinas-Faucher, and others who seek to grant greater representation for the English language in Quebec.

### **The Véhicule fonds**

In 1632, the seventeenth century Venetian writer, Baldassare Bonifacio, wrote in the essay “Des Archivis”:

There is nothing more useful for instructing and teaching men, nothing more necessary for clearing up and illustrating obscure matters, nothing more necessary for conserving patrimonies and thrones, all things public and private, than a well constituted store of volumes and documents and records ... (Born 233–34)

Indeed, volumes and documents and records—mainly those stored in archives—have played a crucial role in the construction of this thesis. The data collected for this project was amassed over the course of forty-five hours of on-site archival research conducted from April until November 2018 at the Concordia University Libraries Special Collections unit in Vanier Library on the Loyola Campus in Montreal. Two fonds housed in the Special Collections form the basis of this research: The Véhicule Press fonds and The Véhicule Art (Montreal) Inc. fonds.

Véhicule Press is not the only Canadian book publishing company that has preserved its archives in an institution. Perhaps better known publishing archives include the Macmillan Company of Canada fonds and the McClelland and Stewart Ltd. fonds held at McMaster University and the Coach House Press, Tundra Books, and Aya Press fonds at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa (McMaster University Library; Millar 19; Library and Archives Canada). In addition, the archives of Talonbooks and the Douglas & MacIntyre Publishing Group are preserved at Simon Fraser University (Millar 19; MemoryBC; Simon Fraser

University). The McGill University Rare Books and Special Collections Library also contains the records of The Muses' Co., the independent press that former Véhicule Press editor Endre Farkas founded in the 1980s (Frédette).

Neither is this the first nor the last study to consult a publishing house's archive in order to trace its development over the course of several years. It is, in fact, a common practice. For example, Ruth Panofsky's *The Literary Legacy of the Macmillan Company of Canada: Making Books and Mapping Culture* (2012) utilizes research conducted at Macmillan and Company's dispersed archives housed at the British Library, the University of Reading, the Macmillan Group's head office, the New York Public Library, and, most notably, McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, to describe the literary and cultural history of the Macmillan Company of Canada from 1905 to 1986 (Panofsky 12). Although conducted on a much larger scale, her research and its objectives are nonetheless comparable to those of this thesis. Through her book, Panofsky seeks "to extend knowledge of how large publishing companies such as Macmillan ... helped shape Canadian literary culture through their publishing programs and their influence on authors and readers" and "to underscore the centrality of publishing and publishers to Canada's cultural enterprise and national imaginary" (Panofsky 10–11). In a similar vein, this research project uses data garnered from the Véhicule Press and Véhicule Art (Montreal) fonds to illustrate the critical importance of one small press to Quebec's English-speaking culture.

The documents in the Véhicule Press fonds were first donated to the Concordia University Archives by Simon Dardick in 1990, with new boxes deposited every few years until 2010. The fonds includes documents that range from 1972 to 2008 (Concordia, "Véhicule Press" 3–4). It contains 242 photographs, twenty-seven posters, two objects, and 13.85 metres of textual records consisting of manuscripts, published books, publicity materials, correspondence,

pamphlets, production materials, editors' and authors' notes, grant applications, and post cards (3–4), all of which provide intriguing and sometimes surprising clues to the history of running a small publishing operation.

The other collection mentioned frequently throughout this project is the Véhicule Art (Montreal) Inc. fonds. Following the closure of the gallery in 1983, the documents in this fonds were in danger of being left on the curb outside for the garbage collectors. The recorded history of the gallery would have been lost forever if a call from Dena Davida had not alerted Dardick and Marrelli to the situation. Dardick and Marrelli were thus able to rescue and donate these important documents to Concordia University Archives (Concordia, “Véhicule Art” 5; Dardick and Marrelli). As the Special Collections catalogue reports, this fonds spans the period from 1972 to 1982 and contains 4.96 metres of textual records, 1,826 photographs, 168 posters, seventy-two postcards, fifteen audio reels, six collages, five drawings, four audio cassettes, two audio discs, one architectural drawing, one map, and one microfilm reel (Concordia, “Véhicule Art” 3). The administrative and financial files were especially important resources for research on the early years of both the gallery and the press.

Not only do the fonds reveal the fascinating history behind Véhicule Press and Véhicule Art Inc., they also have their own history. For instance, many documents in the Véhicule Press fonds sustained water damage during the Montreal flood of 1987. The flood was the result of more than one thousand millilitres of heavy rain that struck Montreal on July 14, 1987 (Government of Canada, “Flooding”). The rain left the Décarie expressway submerged in a three-metre high river of water and 350 thousand buildings without electricity. Véhicule Press was one of the forty thousand houses and businesses in Montreal that was affected. Half a metre of water entered the Véhicule Press office, completely submerging many of the files that were

stored there, although, miraculously, most of the documents were saved (Dardick, letter to Carol Martin [1987]; letter to Randall Ware [4 Sept 1987]). Some of these documents ended up in the Véhicule Press fonds, but the historic Montreal event left its traces in the occasional blotches and smudges on letters of correspondence and photographs, and pages sealed together by thirty-year-old rainwater. Thus, these records provide insights into the time when they were written and the time that they have endured.

The limited scope of this project allows for greater in-depth study of the records that have been saved and the details behind the diverse periods in the press's history. Yet, there is much that remains to be discovered amongst the documents compiled in the Special Collections library.

### **The History of English-Quebec Publishing**

Although Véhicule Press and its fellow English-language publishing houses in Montreal—the likes of which include Black Rose Press, Linda Leith Publishing, DC Books, and McGill-Queen's University Press—have only existed for the past half-century, many may be surprised to learn that the publication of English works in this province goes back at least a century further. In 2019, we are accustomed to the idea of Toronto as the capital of all things related to book publishing in Canada. Penguin Random House, Simon & Schuster, The Macmillan Company of Canada, HarperCollins, Wiley—all these large publishing houses have their Canadian headquarters established quite firmly in Toronto. However, the consolidation of the publishing market around the large Ontario city, it turns out, is a relatively new phenomenon.

Montreal was once the literary centre of Canada (Parker, *Beginnings of the Book* 79). Bruce Whiteman explains that “at mid-[nineteenth] century and even later, Montreal was the



centre of the Canadian book trade in both English and French. It has remained so for books in French, but by the turn of the century the publishing and distribution of books in English had shifted to Ontario, and Quebec had declined greatly as a publishing centre” (57). Between 1890 and the start of World War I, several foreign publishers seeking to open offices in Canada, including Macmillan, Hodder and Stoughton, and Oxford University Press chose Toronto as their Canadian base. George N. Morang and McClelland and Stewart established themselves in Toronto, as well (60). As a result, writes Whiteman, “English publishing in Quebec declined substantially and never quite regained the level of prominence it had in the nineteenth century” (60). The shift of presses from Montreal to Toronto, coupled with the death of the reprint industry in the 1890s (Whiteman 44–47), meant that the survival of the English book publishing industry in Montreal throughout the twentieth century rested on the shoulders of a select few determined companies. It was their mantle that Véhicule Press took up many decades later.

Indeed, Simon Dardick readily admits that Véhicule Press was built on the backs of previous English-Montreal literary magazines and book publishing houses. As he articulated in a letter in 1985, “we [Véhicule Press] feel very much part of the Montreal tradition begun by A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott in the 1920’s” (letter to the Canada Council [1985]). The Montreal tradition that Dardick refers to took shape in *The McGill Fortnightly Review* (1925–1927), a little magazine that was started by Smith and Scott when they were students at McGill University. Although it only lasted two years, *The McGill Fortnightly Review* had a profound effect on Canadian literature and is often taken as a sign of the emergence of Canadian poetry from the Victorian era into modernity (Norris, “The Role” 21; Hancock, “The McGill Fortnightly Review”).

Another important forerunner to Véhicule Press was the publishing house Louis Carrier & Co. Press (Whiteman 61). From the mid-1920s until 1931, Louis Carrier published extensively, printing and designing works by such writers as Frederick Philip Grove and Sir Andrew Macphail (61–62). Titles of its published books include *An Outline of Canadian Literature: French and English* (1927) by Lorne Pierce, *America and French Culture, 1750–1848* (1928) by Howard Mumford Jones, *Archibald Lampman, Canadian Poet of Nature* (1929) by Carl Yoder Connor, *The Storied Streets of Quebec* (1929) by Blodwen Davies, and *The St. Lawrence Waterway Project* (1930) by G.W. Stephens. The many books about Quebec and the relationship between French- and English-Canada that Carrier published show how important it was, even then, for a Montreal-based publishing house to produce books that explore this unique socio-geographic location. Unfortunately, with the onset of the Great Depression, Carrier went bankrupt (64). It would take years for the Anglo-Quebec scene to recuperate.

In 1942, the little magazines *Preview*, edited by Patrick Anderson, and *First Statement*, edited primarily by John Sutherland,<sup>2</sup> arose in Montreal to satisfy the need for English literature (O’Rourke, “Preview”; “First Statement”). The two magazines, often referred to as rivals (MacSkimming, *Perilous* 168),<sup>3</sup> published modernist poetry. In 1945, when the two magazines merged to form yet another poetry magazine, *Northern Review*, John Sutherland retained First Statement Press until 1951, and published a series of eight poetry books (O’Rourke, “Northern Review”; MacSkimming, *Perilous* 168). Both outfits—*Northern Review*, which had the largest

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<sup>2</sup> Although John Sutherland primarily edited *First Statement*, it was also founded by Irving Layton and Louis Dudek.

<sup>3</sup> This characterization of the relationship between the two magazines has also been disputed. See Brian Trehearne’s *The Montreal Forties: Modernist Poetry in Transition*.

circulation of any literary journal in Canada during the years it was run, and First Statement Press—continued until John Sutherland’s death in 1956.

There is no mistaking the profound influence that John Sutherland’s literary magazines had on Véhicule Press. The magazines’ conventions determining which forms and genres of poetry were most desirable provided the framework for the poetry that Véhicule Press later published. Indeed, the work of the Vehicule Poets whose poetry was published by Véhicule Press throughout the 1970s was undeniably modernist (Norris, “The Role” 309–311). The impact of these Montreal literary journals was carried forward by Véhicule Press in more profound ways, too. In 1985, Dardick confirmed that

the aims which have guided Vehicule Press for almost a dozen years ... embrace those stated by the ... writers [Layton, Dudek, and Sutherland] in 1942 when they formed First Statement Press ... To maintain the highest possible literary standards without regard to any consideration of any other kind; to provide expressions for writers of merit denied publication elsewhere; to give special encouragement to the young writer and to the experimental writer; to help sharpen the awareness of Canadian writing both past and present; to employ only strict standards of criticism but to emphasize the importance of the developing native sensibility in Canada; to establish wherever possible a liaison with the French Canadian writer. (letter to the Canada Council [1985])

Each of these guidelines, first articulated by First Statement Press, has been actively employed by Véhicule Press for the last four decades, thus preserving in memory and in spirit a Montreal literary tradition.

Although these magazines did much to advance Canadian modernism and set the stage for further exploration of English poetry in Montreal, the chapbooks that First Statement Press

produced could not be called “books” as we might think of them today, in the sense that they were not perfect-bound full-length poetry manuscripts. Therefore, after the bankruptcy of Louis Carrier & Co. Press in 1931, it was not until 1952, when Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, and Raymond Souster established Contact Press, that Montreal<sup>4</sup> experienced another book publishing revival (Whiteman 65).

David McKnight notes that, “drawing upon American and British models and aesthetics, Contact Press played a monumental role in advancing modern and experimental poetry in Canada and set the stage for the New Wave Canada poets who would burst onto the literary scene in 1967” (312). The small press published the works of Daryl Hine, Eli Mandel, Al Purdy, Milton Acorn, Gwendolyn MacEwen, John Newlove, George Bowering, Frank Davey, D. G. Jones, David McFadden, Phyllis Webb, and Margaret Atwood (Hancock, “Contact Press”; Gnarowski; MacSkimming, *Perilous* 169). Dudek’s McGill Poetry Series, published by Contact Press beginning in 1956, published first poetry collections by McGill University students,<sup>5</sup> including Leonard Cohen’s *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (Davey, “Louis Dudek”). Contact Press, however, would not survive for very long. As Roy MacSkimming recounts in *The Perilous Trade*, Contact Press was eventually torn apart by the founders’ disagreements and

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<sup>4</sup> Contact Press was not exactly a “Montreal” publishing house. Raymond Souster managed Contact Press from Toronto, keeping the inventory and filling orders at his home there, and later, at Peter Miller’s apartment (MacSkimming, *Perilous* 169). Louis Dudek and Irving Layton (until 1958) managed their side of operations from Montreal. As a result, a number of titles by Contact Press, many of them part of the McGill Poetry Series, including *Let Us Compare Mythologies* by Leonard Cohen, *Night Is a Flaming City* by Michael Malus, and *The Carnal and the Crane* by Daryl Hine, list their publication city as Montreal. Thus, although I may appear to situate Contact Press in Montreal, in reality, Contact Press was divided between the two cities, although most of its history happened in Toronto. Nonetheless, Montreal’s undeniable link to Contact Press through Dudek, Layton, and the McGill Poetry Series deserves to be recognized.

<sup>5</sup> George Ellenbogen was one of the students who was published early on in Dudek’s McGill Poetry Series. Much later, three of his books were published by Véhicule Press, starting with *Along the Road from Eden* (1989) (Dardick and Marrelli).

insufficient economic support (170). Many of their issues stemmed from the misfortune of having been established in what Michael Gnarowski calls “a period of marked or unusual sterility in Canadian publishing” in which there was very little public interest or economic support for either poetry or book publishing in Canada (5). As a result, Contact Press shut down in 1967 (MacSkimming, *Perilous* 170).

Following the success of Contact Press, Louis Dudek participated in and founded several other literary ventures in Montreal, although none was as successful. He helped Aileen Collins edit the magazine *CIV/n* (1955–1957), which was, according to Frank Davey, “heavily influenced by the editorial ideas of Louis Dudek and Irving Layton, in whose home editorial meetings were held” (Davey, “CIV/n”). Norris, too, asserts that although “all of the production work and distribution were handled by Aileen Collins and the Rozynskis<sup>6</sup> ... much of the interesting energy expressed in the magazine stems from Layton and Dudek, and particularly from Dudek” (“The Role” 114–15). *CIV/n* lasted for only seven issues.

Another little magazine, *Delta* (1957–1966), edited, printed, and published by Dudek, started up shortly after, taking over where *Northern Review* left off (Davey, “Delta”; Davey, “Louis Dudek”), but it was discontinued a year before Contact Press ended. When Contact Press shut down, Dudek attempted to revive interest in English book publishing with Delta Canada (1967–1970), but the company failed after only three years (Davey, “Louis Dudek”). His next book publishing project, DC Books (1970–), remains active today, yet it publishes books on a much smaller scale than Véhicule Press (“About DC Books”; Davey, “Louis Dudek”). In fact, despite Louis Dudek’s connection to DC Books, it was not Dudek’s book publishing company,

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<sup>6</sup> Stanley (Buddy) Rozynski and his wife Wanda (née Staniszevska) (Irvine 243).

but Simon Dardick's Véhicule Press, I would argue, which seems to have filled the void in the English Montreal literary book publishing scene.

Political upheaval in Quebec during the Quiet Revolution and broader nationalist movements throughout Canada brought about sudden changes. Reacting to the increasingly volatile clashes between separatists and English-speakers, many English-speaking Quebecers migrated to other provinces. As Leith writes,

The 1970s were a time of soul-searching for English-speaking Quebecers, and many decided they would leave. Toronto especially enjoyed considerable and lasting benefits from the influx of Quebec's brightest and best. A total of 197,000 people, most of them English-speaking, uprooted themselves and left the province between 1971 and 2001 rather than face the tide of Quebec nationalism. This represented some 25 per cent of the pre-1971 population of English-speaking Quebec. (*Writing* 53–54)

The migration of publishers to Toronto in the 1890s and the exodus of a main audience of Anglo-Quebecers in the 1970s would seem to spell the end for Anglo-Quebec book publishing. In reality, these conditions, along with national movements taking place in the 1970s, actually opened doors for English Canadians looking to get into publishing in the French-speaking province. Perhaps, it is true, all of the big publishers of Canada and much of the English population relocated their homes to Toronto for good, but they left behind, in Montreal, a nostalgia for their forsaken home, past, and identity, a largely unopposed niche market for small and independent presses, and a bilingual and English-speaking readership that stayed behind and which longed for a cultural community of their own. It was this community that Véhicule Press would later cater to by publishing poetry and books on the history and social realities of Quebec that capture and satisfy a sense of longing for a bygone era.

There was also another movement taking place at the national level during the 1960s and 1970s which made literature the focal point of the Canadian psyche. In reaction to the American civil rights movement and involvement in the Vietnam War, as well as to centennial celebrations,

Trudeaumania, and Expo '67, Canada suddenly exploded in a burst of nationalism (Litt 40). Schools scrambled to teach their students the classics and the public hungered to read the newest fiction by their country's authors. This translated into a surge of interest in Canadian-made cultural products, which resulted accordingly in a call for new anthologies and literature by Canadian authors and on Canadian subjects. The federal and provincial governments, too, began to shell out money left and right in support of new art. As Paul Litt reports, "in retrospect the 1970s would be seen as the heyday of governmental support for the book" (44).

To oversee and manage funding opportunities for artistic projects, the government established several national organizations and hired employees to manage the applications and awarding of grant money. The Canada Council for the Arts, established in 1957, was one of the first of these organizations. It came into being after the Massey Commission—appointed by Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent in 1949—reported that Canadian-produced arts were greatly threatened by American companies and influences (Litt 39; Stewart and Kallmann). It was not, however, until the Writing and Publishing Division of the Canada Council was created in 1972, that the government began to offer funding specifically for book publishing projects (McKnight 310).

The explicit purpose of the Writing and Publishing Division was to offer programs that "not only supported creators and publishers, but also aided in the distribution, export, and reception of literary works" (McKnight 310). One such program was the Local Initiatives Program, "designed to provide employment opportunities for young Canadians" (315). Meanwhile, the independent Publishers' Association (IPA), formed in 1971, pushed for public funds to go only to Canadian-owned firms producing Canadian titles (Parker, "Trade and Regional" 175). Yet another organization, the Literary Press group, "a not-for-profit association

of Canadian literary book publishers,” was founded in 1975 (“About Us,” LPG; McKnight 310). All together, these federal programs and organizations made it feasible for existing Canadian publishing houses to thrive, and for new presses across the country to open and start running their companies under favourable conditions. In fact, the Canadian book publishing industry as we know it today could never have been possible without the aid of the Canada Council.

The provincial governments, too, sought measures to protect their local authors and artists. Local support took on a distinct meaning depending on the province, and this was especially the case in Quebec. As Josee Vincent tells us, “the protection and development of the book milieu were closely linked to the definition of French-Canadian identity. Early independent publishers such as Albert Lévesque and Édouard Garand used patriotic arguments to promote their books and, like authors, did not hesitate to appeal directly for the support of political leaders” (45). By the mid-twentieth century, these early appeals to local business protectionism would eventually give way to official book policy.

In 1976, for example, Quebec politician Jean-Paul L’Allier advocated for a policy that would support cultural industries in Quebec and establish a policy on reading (Vincent 51). Bill 51, the Act Respecting the Development of Quebec Firms in the Book Industry, was passed on December 21, 1979, and put into effect in 1981 (Vincent 51; Gerson and Michon 517). The bill “gave government-accredited retail bookstores the exclusive right to sell to institutions and required Quebec ownership of all book-related businesses that sought government support” (Vincent 51) and clause 8 requires that bookstores “keep ... an inventory of at least six thousand different book titles, including at least two thousand different titles of books published in Québec” (Éditeur officiel du Québec). This meant that Quebec book publishers could easily get ample representation in bookstores.



It is difficult to say how much English language book publishers in Quebec like Véhicule would have benefitted from provincial government support. Most of the Quebec book policies, put in place after the Quiet Revolution, were explicitly for “the maintenance of the French language and the fostering of cultural identity” (Gerson and Michon 517). In other words, they were created to protect the French-Quebec economy and culture from the threat of English-Canadian and American domination. Certainly, publishers based in Quebec that produced English titles might have benefitted from greater representation in local bookstores thanks to Bill 51, but, as Simon Dardick would later note, provincial funding opportunities for English publishing houses in Quebec left much to be desired, and the small English-language presses in Quebec would often eye their counterparts in other provinces with envy for the greater amount of grants and funding opportunities made available to them (Dardick, letter to Carol Martin [1983]).

Nonetheless, even without much provincial aid, the support provided by the federal government was more than enough for a new publishing house in Montreal to find its footing, and a literary press was precisely what the city needed. At the start of the 1970s, there were a few other presses in existence in Montreal, but they were all small and published for a specific and established readership. Harvest House, founded in 1959 by Maynard and Anne Gertler, produced mostly books in translation, history, science, and biography (Parker, “Trade and Regional” 177). Established in 1970, Black Rose Books “espoused the radical Left” and “attacked American imperialism and social inequities” (177). Louis Dudek’s DC Books, also started in 1970, presented perhaps the greatest early competition to Véhicule Press, as it was run by an established and experienced name in Montreal. Throughout the 1970s, DC Books published collections by Avi Boxer, Marc Plourde, John Glassco, Jeremy D.B. Walker, Laurence Hutchman, and Henry Beissel. Yet, in an interesting twist, Véhicule Press became Dudek’s

publisher throughout the 1980s and into the 90s (Dardick and Marrelli). Thus, there was certainly room for another poetry publisher in Montreal and Anglo-Montrealers needed more platforms to express themselves. With the promise of federal government support, the facility of low local competition, and a clear desire for a press that could produce poetry for “audiences that were overlooked or ignored by larger houses” (177), Véhicule Press found its opening.

### **Discussion**

The history of Véhicule Press puts into perspective the realities and challenges of Canadian and Quebec publishing today. In 2019, as retailers like Amazon wrestle book sales away from publishers, the self-publishing industry expands, and Canadian publishers seem to be slowly losing their sense of Canadian-ness, many small presses are struggling. With these circumstances in mind, this project was created in part to illustrate just how important small community-oriented presses are to the vitality of a cultural identity. In the case of Véhicule Press, the extensive cultural contributions that this publishing house has made to its surrounding community have been vital to the maintenance of Quebec’s collective memory.

Véhicule Press extended a tradition of literary publishing in Montreal inherited from *First Statement* and other magazines and publishing houses. By choosing the bilingual name “Véhicule Press,” the publishing house determined a hybrid identity for itself that could connect to and appropriately serve the needs of the Anglo-Quebec community—a community which has also been formed in relation to the Francophone majority in the province. Yet, Véhicule Press’s dedication to reflecting and promoting the Anglo-Quebec identity has been no easy task. While federal arts funding has been instrumental in the growth of Véhicule Press, provincial arts funding has been slow to provide aid. Moreover, Véhicule Press’s devotion to its niche

community has received and perhaps resulted in relatively little representation in scholarly discussion and the media. Thankfully, as this thesis demonstrates, this is a lack that can be remedied by virtue of the existence of extensive archives on Véhicule Press and Vehicule Art Inc. that are kept at Concordia University Special Collections in Montreal.

## Chapter 1: The Poetic Prelude to a Small Press, 1972–1976

When Véhicule Press entered the scene in the 1970s, it developed slowly and experimentally. For most of the first decade of its existence, Véhicule Press existed in the back room of the gallery Véhicule Art Inc. Because of its early connection to the gallery, the story of Véhicule Press and its origins is thus linked with the history of Véhicule Art Inc. and the Véhicule Poets who ran a reading series at the gallery. The Véhicule Group, composed originally of thirteen local artists, was united by the desire to create and disseminate quality art through low-cost exhibits and educational programs. They established Véhicule Art Inc. in late 1972. For years, the gallery served as the centre of operations for the artists, as well as the birthplace for a number of artistic projects. Véhicule Press, which was one of these artistic ventures, effectively began as a community printing project.

This chapter covers the launching of the gallery Véhicule Art Inc. in 1972 and the first four years of Véhicule Press's existence, from 1973 to 1976. These years were crucial, as Véhicule Press was shaped by its first influences and the expectations of the artists at the gallery. Following the acquisition of a printing press by a member of the Véhicule Group, and the establishment in 1973 of a reading series, which attracted many of the press's first authors, Véhicule Press got its start through creative collaboration. As Ken Norris recalls,

The years 1974–1977 were the real peak years at Véhicule Gallery, the real years of group activity. Poets came to readings each week to hear what their peers were up to, to be stimulated, and to offer criticism. This was the period in which many young Montreal poets published their first books and so the excitement level ran high, the feeling was in the air that new poets were testing their fledgling wings. (“The Role” 309)

Indeed, Véhicule Press's fledgling years arguably coincided with and partially brought about the best years of the art gallery. During this time, Véhicule Press published its first experimental publications, including the chapbook *Three Dozen Sonnets and Fast Drawings* (1973) by Bob

McGee as well as some perfect-bound poetry collections, of which *Vegetables* (1975) by Ken Norris is of particular note. This chapter also explains how Véhicule Press applied for and received its first project grants from the Canada Council for the Arts—funding that was crucial to the company’s initial activities. The chapter further recounts how Véhicule Press became a cooperative by the name of Coopérative d’Imprimerie Véhicule, a move which instilled in the small press the importance of collaborative work and connecting to the community.

Over the course of four years, Véhicule Press developed its style and early identity and experienced its first successes alongside its first failures and mistakes. As it established its ties to the community, the press evolved from a casual community printing project to a cooperative non-sectarian printer for political and community action groups and a publisher of magazines, commercial flyleaves, chapbooks, and prizewinning poetry books. With community-oriented service at its core, Véhicule Press was able to successfully build up a reputation as a valuable source of creativity and community support in Montreal.

### **Starting Up Véhicule Art Inc.**

On Saturday, 11 December 1971, a group of individuals drew up their first set of plans for a new, alternative gallery in the city of Montreal (Véhicule Art, “Meeting minutes, 11 Dec 1971”). Their main goal was to establish a community-oriented, non-profit gathering space where local artists could generate and showcase creative works as well as educate the public, and so they officially founded their new co-operative in March of the following year (Paikowsky; Toupin 61). The thirteen original members of the Véhicule Group—Bill Vazan, Suzy Lake, Gary Coward, Serge Tousignant, Dennis Lukas, François Déry, Tom Dean, Gunter Nolte, Andy

Dutkewych, Kelly Morgan, Jean-Marie Delavalle, Milly Ristvedt, and Henry Saxe (Nemiroff 136–37)—named their new project Véhicule Art Inc.

The Véhicule Art (Montreal) Inc. fonds at Concordia University contains minutes from the many meetings that this group held, and detail the long, painstaking process that they underwent in order to bring their dream of a collaborative art space into reality. For instance, it took several attempts and the involvement of all thirteen members before the perfect location for the gallery could be found. Before settling on 61 St. Catherine Street West, the group investigated eleven other buildings spread throughout the city (Ristvedt, “Search for Space” 5), including a promising second floor space with five thousand square feet on rue St. Dominique and Guilbault East. Other spaces brought to the group’s attention were located at the crossing of Visitation Street and Ontario Street East, multiple different addresses on Boulevard St-Laurent, one site at the corner of Avenue des Pins and Clark Street, two locations on rue de Bleury, a flat at 87 St. Catherine Street East, and another at 1412 rue de Bouillon (Ristvedt, “Search for Space” 5). Yet, each place that the Véhicule Group came across had a different problem. Some were too small and difficult for the public to access. In others, the owners had already found another lessee or did not want their property to become a gallery.

Finally, at a meeting on 19 August 1972, it was announced that an acceptable space had been found (Véhicule Art, “Meeting minutes, 19 Aug. 1972”). Measuring approximately thirty-five by sixty feet, the second floor of 61 St. Catherine Street West was the right size for a gallery. Inside, a large exhibition room stretched across most of the space, with a storage room and cloak room hidden in the back. Against the side of the exhibition room, a staircase led up to an indoor balcony which wrapped around three walls and connected to an office space (Véhicule Art,

“Building Plan”). With the assistance of a lawyer, the Véhicule Group negotiated the rent to \$300.00 per month for the first year (“Meeting minutes, 15 Sept. 1972”).

Shortly after settling on this new location, the founders launched their opening party on a crisp and clear classic autumn day: a Friday, 13 October 1972 (Toupin 59). Friday the thirteenth, a day so often associated with bad luck, might be considered by many to be a dangerous day to start a new business. To the contrary, this day was particularly auspicious, as it marked a fortuitous beginning to what would eventually become a monument of Montreal culture.

Sandra Paikowsky writes that Véhicule Art, Inc. was originally “conceived as both an exhibition space for visual artists and a locale for performance, video, film, dance, music, and poetry readings.” She explains that it was meant to be a

non-profit, non-political centre directed by and for artists ... This would hopefully, “rejuvenate public interest in the visual arts in Montréal, stimulating public consciousness and developing its interest” ... as well, the founders stressed its essential role as an education and information centre with discussion groups, guest lectures, resource and documentation libraries as well as a liaison programme with public schools and universities within the city. Such aims were intended “to fill a gap in the community.” (Paikowsky)

Indeed, Millie Ristvedt, Véhicule Art Inc.’s first president, proposed that the gallery be “a space where art that is being produced now can be shown or performed—a space for the young artist who otherwise has little or no hope of putting the fruits of his endeavors before his peers and the general public” (Ristvedt, “Proposed Activities”).

This early approach to art that Ristvedt and, by extension, Véhicule Art Inc. adopted—that art should be accessible to the community, that it should be educational, and that anyone who wants to showcase her works or perform should be able to do so without fearing discrimination or requiring a reputation first—greatly influenced the way that Véhicule Press was later run, and even how it operates today. As the current “About Us” section of the Véhicule

Press website announces, of the over one hundred titles published in the Signal Editions poetry series, a quarter of them have been written by first-time authors (“About Us” [Véhicule Press]). This openness is what distinguishes Véhicule Press today, and it is what also differentiated Véhicule Art Inc., setting it apart as a positive and encouraging site of progress.

From the beginning, many people recognized the potential of the gallery to become great and to reach beyond the borders of Montreal. This included Gilles Toupin, whose favourable review of Véhicule Art, Inc. in the magazine *Vie des arts* declared that the gallery “prolifèrera, sans doute, si on lui permet concrètement de poursuivre son travail. Non seulement il pourra devenir un point de repère important au niveau de son territoire immédiat mais il pourra étendre ses tentacules sur la scène mondiale” (Toupin 61). Indeed, Véhicule Art, Inc. grew to become a popular venue for artists from all over the country. Within its first two years, the gallery hosted around sixty events and exhibitions (Paikowsky), and its artists even travelled to schools, CEGEPs, universities, and other locales across the country to give educational talks and showcase their works (Nemiroff 146).

The first artist-run gallery in Quebec, and the second in all of Canada, Véhicule Art Inc. was ahead of its time. A site of learning, experimentation, creativity, collaboration, and opportunity, the gallery was formed in the heart of downtown Montreal yet aspired to make an impact on the arts at the national level. In this it succeeded, but possibly its greatest achievement was in bringing together and supporting a community of emerging artists who otherwise may not have found a way to pursue and promote their creative talents.



### **The Founding of a Reading Series and Print Shop**

From the first meeting of the Véhicule Group on 11 December 1971, printing was outlined as a necessary component of the gallery's operations for the purpose of disseminating information (Véhicule Art, "Meeting Minutes, 11 Dec. 1971"). That day, Tom Dean was placed in charge of acquiring printing equipment. He first investigated a Roneo mimeograph machine, but eventually bought an old ATF Chief 20 printing press, which he placed in the back room of the gallery and with which he planned to print his magazine *Beaux-Arts* ("About Us" [Véhicule Press]; Dardick, "Meet the Publisher"; "Exploring"; Véhicule Art, "Meeting Minutes, 11 Dec. 1971"). However, the printing press came with some dangers. As the story goes, one of the artists toying with the ATF Chief 20 in the back room of the gallery—possibly Tom Dean, while printing an issue of his magazine—accidentally trapped his hand in the mechanism (Dardick, "Meet the Publisher"; Dardick and Marrelli). After the incident, the artists, fearing for their limbs, let the printing press lie idle for several months.

It was too useful a tool to remain abandoned for long. In a proposal for a Local Initiatives Program grant in December 1972, Véhicule Art Inc. argued that the printing press was a vital addition to the gallery. It would allow the gallery to provide students, creative artists, and other artistic groups with professional printing at a much lower cost and with greater flexibility than local commercial printers. The services the printing press would provide, they explained, were threefold:

- 1) Publications for non-profit groups, artists and individuals. We would print publicity material, reports and creative works for such concerns at cost price. Besides the price saving we would offer the opportunity for creative communication and collaboration with the printing staff. Véhicule is already in touch with numerous groups which would be happy to use these services. MEDIART, a Montreal magazine of art news financed by the Canada Council, and Ingluviv Publications, a poetry publisher also operating under a government grant, are two examples.

2) Experimental workshop for artists, students etc. Offset printing can be a highly creative field ... However, because of the expensive equipment involved individuals rarely have the opportunity to experiment creatively ... One afternoon per week would be devoted to instruction. Evenings when the professional staff was through work, the equipment would be made available to those people judged qualified to handle and use the equipment ...

3) Literature involved withith [sic] the functioning of Véhicule. A printing shop would allow Véhicule to extend its own services. Posters and announcements for the gallery shows and events could be printed. Resumés, artists' statements and artists' catalogues would make the shows more complete and accesible [sic] to the public. (Véhicule Art Inc. "Véhicule Printing Co-op")

Thus, Véhicule Press, in its original conception, was meant to be a cheap and accessible print shop for the community, not a publisher of books. It would both perform jobs for the community and also provide artists associated with the gallery with a convenient means to print flyers to advertise their works. Encouraged by this vision, Dean's ATF Chief 20 printing press<sup>7</sup> was started up again, and, using it along with equipment inherited from Kenny Hertz's Ingluv Publications ("About Us" [Véhicule Press]), Guy Lavoie, Annie Nayer, Marshalore, and Vivian Jemelka-White informally founded Véhicule Press in 1973 as an independent outfit that was affiliated with, but not a division of, the gallery.

News spread through the surrounding Montreal arts community that Véhicule Art Inc. had acquired an old printing press and was offering services to the public. This caught the attention of not only artists and painters, but of amateur writers who needed a place to print their poems and magazines and distribute them. Within months, Véhicule Art Inc. had become the preferred artistic base of a group of seven poets who "shared an interest in hip American poetry and experimental European art movements" (Norris, "Introduction" 7) and who, as David McKnight describes, were "a younger generation of Montreal poets [who] explored a wide array

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<sup>7</sup> Vehicule Art Inc. agreed at a meeting on 30 July 1974 to loan the print shop \$400.00 towards the purchase of Tom Dean's press, thus ensuring that press belonged solely to the cooperative (Véhicule Art, "Meeting Minutes, 30 July 1974").

of influences, including concrete, dada, and language-centred writing” (315). John McAuley, Artie Gold, Tom Konyves, Stephen Morrissey, Ken Norris, Endre Farkas, and Claudia Lapp, finding that the gallery provided for their artistic needs, attached themselves to it and began to call themselves the Vehicule Poets.

In the fall of 1973,<sup>8</sup> Lapp and Michael Harris established a weekly reading series, which would last for almost a decade<sup>9</sup> (Farkas). The readings, held on Sundays in the gallery’s exhibit hall, drew a regular crowd and were well-known among the English-speaking Montreal community. Norris recalls that the reading series “provided local poets with a place to be seen and heard” (Norris, “The Role” 308). According to Morrissey, it was “the most important poetry series in English-speaking Montreal at the time” (145). Farkas, who in 1974 organized a total of thirty-seven readings at the gallery, writes, “We brought in the locals that the universities wouldn’t bring in, and also we brought in some of the people who later on read at Concordia ... We had bill bisset, the Four Horsemen ... Michael Ondaatje read at Véhicule, we even had Ann Waldman from the States” (Norris, “The Role” 308; Farkas). Posters in the Véhicule Art (Montreal) Inc. fonds list Al Purdy<sup>10</sup> and F.R. Scott<sup>11</sup> in the Fall 1977 lineup (“Poetry Véhicule Art (’77) Fall”).

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<sup>8</sup> Ken Norris states in *Véhicule Days* (1993) that the first of these readings took place in December 1972 (“Introduction” 7), but other sources disagree, including Norris’s Ph.D. Dissertation (308-9; Farkas), so I lean towards the fall 1973 date.

<sup>9</sup> The reading series was later run by Farkas and Gold in 1974, by Ian Burgess in 1975 and 1976, by Robert Galvin, McAuley and Morrissey from 1976-1977, and by Konyves from 1978 until 1980 (Norris, “The Role” 308-9; Farkas)

<sup>10</sup> Al Purdy read at Vehicule Art Inc. on 13 November 1977.

<sup>11</sup> F.R. Scott read at Vehicule Art Inc. on 27 November 1977.

Amidst the ever-changing art exhibitions and the many artists who came and went, the Vehicule Poets and their Sunday reading series were a reliable constant at Véhicule Art Inc. throughout the 1970s. As Konyves articulated in one interview,

I can't overemphasize the significance of arriving at the space to find a thought-provoking, if not shocking, exhibition of young experimental artists, as well as meeting and getting to know painters, sculptors, musicians, performance artists, video artists, dancers from all over the world ... It was inevitable that we would examine our own expression, poetry, in the light of what we were seeing around us.

... the gallery made poetry come alive; it was more than just a venue for readings. (Coffee houses were different, but ultimately the poets there do not control the space. At Véhicule, we did.) ...

The press, the performance/reading space, the video recording equipment, the gallery network, the resident and visiting artists, the communication tools (access to telephone, mass mailings, calendars, stationary [sic]), enabled us not only to participate in an active art scene, promote each other's work, and keep up to date on contemporary art issues, but also to take poetry wherever we desired ... We became aware of the power of the group—allowing us to reach farther, inside and out. (122)

In this way, the gallery sheltered and inspired the poets, giving them the space and resources to realize their ambitions. Such resources included the printing press, which served to produce and distribute political pamphlets and community posters as the gallery had originally planned, and the Vehicule Poets were soon using the press to print their own chapbooks, poetry collections, and literary magazines, too.

Others began to join the Véhicule team. Around mid-summer 1973, Simon Dardick, a student at Sir George Williams University<sup>12</sup> in Montreal, heard about the print shop and the activities taking place inside Véhicule Art Inc. Having previously published an issue of Juan Rodriguez's *Pop-See-Cul* magazine, Dardick was drawn to the gallery. When he arrived one day at the gallery looking for publishing-related work, the print shop brought him on as a typesetter. From that day forward, Dardick's life, and the fate of Véhicule Press, were forever changed.

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<sup>12</sup> Sir George Williams University merged with Loyola College to become Concordia University in 1974.

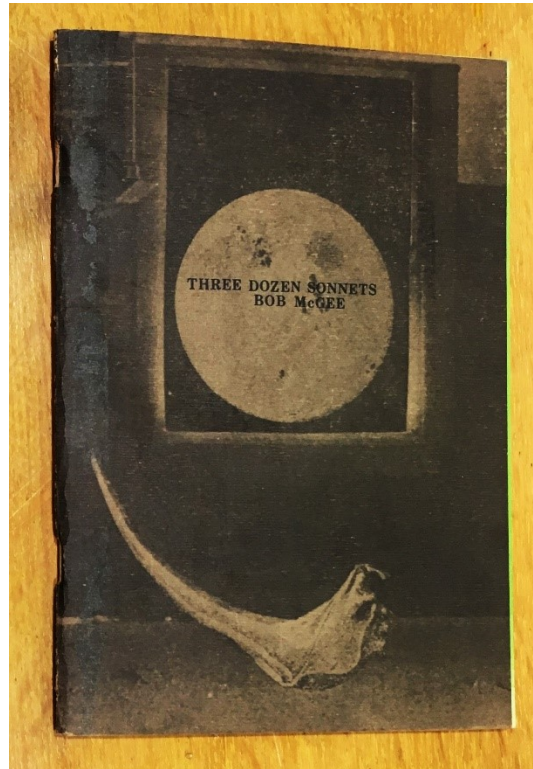
Alongside the involvement of motivated editors and staff in the gallery and print shop, external funding was key to the continuation of the press's activities. Tracking the initial grants that Véhicule Art Inc. applied for, Nemiroff writes that,

Véhicule had originally applied for a grant of \$32,000.00 from the Canada Council to cover the full scope of its projected activities; it received \$12,000.00 ... Neither the private sector ... nor the city of Montreal nor the Quebec government was ready to offer support at this time. Then, in the winter of 1972, Véhicule applied for and received a grant of \$40,000.00 through the federal Local Initiatives Programme. The grant, which was to run from February through May, 1973, was extended until the end of the year and then renewed until June, 1974. In total, Véhicule received \$105,000.00 through the Local Initiatives Programme over a period of a year and a half. (142)

As Nemiroff shows, the relationship that Véhicule Art Inc., and by extension Véhicule Press, established with the Canada Council during these first years was critical. Later, when Véhicule Press applied for aid from the Canada Council separately from the gallery, the decisions made by the jury of the Canada Council would have great repercussions for the press. Overall, the grants from the Canada Council were a tremendous help to both Véhicule Art Inc. and Véhicule Press, which were essentially able to keep printing and publishing thanks to this program's support. Indeed, the support of the Canada Council and the Local Initiatives Program (LIP) meant that, by December 1973, "the printshop had published numerous flyers and posters, three numbers of the Véhicule newsletter, the kite booklet, an illustrated sixty-page magazine of student work from Sir George Williams University called *Fine Art Times*, a small catalogue to accompany [an] exhibition ... and a book of sonnets by Montreal poet Bob McGee" (Nemiroff 147). In effect, the materials that Véhicule printed at this time were a direct result of external funding.

*Three Dozen Sonnets and Fast Drawings* by McGee was arguably Véhicule Press's first published book and a testament to the press's early commitment to combining poetry and art and its resolute insistence on defying expectations. Saddle-stitched, lacking page numbers, and non-laminated, Bob McGee's *Three Dozen Sonnets and Fast Drawings* looks more like a chapbook

than a regular bound book. At fourteen by twenty centimetres it is far from standard size. Its unique shape is likely due to the fact that Véhicule's early poetry books were printed on offcuts—paper trimmings left behind from other print jobs (Dardick, "In House"). At any rate, it was an experimental publication in almost every aspect.



**Figure 1** The copy of *Three Dozen Sonnets and Fast Drawings* by Bob McGee that is held in Rare Books and Special Collections at the McGill University Library.

Behind the cover, the four pages of front matter, which include colophon, title page, and dedication, are bright neon green, a demonstration of Véhicule Press's participation in the early 1970s counterculture and psychedelic art. The colophon acknowledges two sources of funding for the book, the Dawson College English Department and the Local Initiatives Program, demonstrating that even early on, Véhicule and its authors gathered their funding from various

sources. The book contains exactly three dozen sonnets, as the title suggests, along with several pictures and six crude drawings of men and women's faces and bodies. One of the pictures, a photograph of an elderly Ezra Pound, forms the background of sonnet number eight, entitled "ezra ezra read all about it" (McGee 9). There are also various images of crushed soda cans, which were taken by Michael McGee and which accompany the group of poems McGee names "The Archaeological Sonnets" (26–29).

Much of the poetry inside McGee's book conforms to an aesthetic and style undeniably influenced by George Bowering, who, at the time, was teaching in Montreal and mentored many of the Vehicule Poets. Mixing the profane with the sublime, McGee's "Sonnet 17" begins "This valley so still/i wonder as i squat fr a shit whether/even in their hugeness these peaks/won't shatter & crumble in th tremor/th turd makes hitting th ground" (McGee 20). The shortening of the words is consistent throughout the book and characteristic of Bowering's poems of the time, as well. An erratum slip stapled into the last page notes three printing errors, confirming that these misspellings were made on purpose.

The fact that Véhicule Press was able to publish a chapbook like McGee's within the first year of its existence says much about the company's early support networks. First, it demonstrates the immediate impact that Canada Council and LIP funding had on the company. Between the \$12,000.00 Véhicule Art Inc. received from the Canada Council and the \$105,000.00 from the Local Initiatives Program, the gallery and its printshop had enough to cover their first expenses and to begin providing support for the surrounding artistic community. Second, it shows how talented and committed the artists and poets affiliated with the gallery and print shop were. McGee's chapbook and the other early projects printed at Véhicule Press were mostly of an experimental nature, and they reveal that behind the scenes there was a high level of

organization, a willingness to learn, and a moral and financial support network that made art come to life.

### **Learning the Tricks of the Trade: A Cooperative, An Imprint, and Some Vegetables**

In 1975, Véhicule Press became Coopérative d’Imprimerie Véhicule, although the cooperative was not legally incorporated in Quebec until 1976 (Dardick, “Meet the Publisher”; Dardick, “Véhicule Press Chronology”). At the time, it was Quebec’s only cooperatively owned printing and publishing company. The concept of the cooperative was one that was gaining momentum elsewhere in Canada. Endre Farkas explains that, at the time, “the ideas of coops ... the collectives like the Véhicule Art Gallery seemed like a good alternative to the hierarchical models ... It ran as a collective—everything was coming together on that shared basis, the commune, the collective, the coop, we worked together, as a possibility that the world could become this” (Farkas). George Bowering, pointing out two other artist-run companies that also pursued cooperative business models in the 1970s, Forest City in London, Ontario and A-Space Gallery in Toronto, called cooperatives “the most interesting phenomenon in our arts to arise since the growth of the small presses in the sixties” (letter of recommendation to the Canada Council). Turning the press into a cooperative further cemented in Véhicule’s management style the ideal values of collaborative effort and community connection, which the press would carry forward even after the cooperative itself was disbanded.

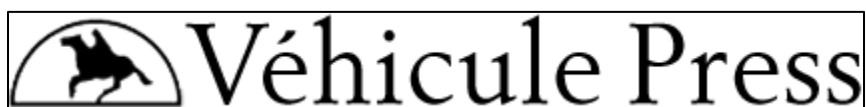
During this time, while Coopérative d’Imprimerie Véhicule was the name of the printing co-op, this was not the name that would be printed on the books published by the press. The printers and editors wanted the name Véhicule Press on the books, but, in the publishing world, books need to be listed under a registered imprint. This was something Véhicule Press was quick



to learn, as, without a registered imprint, the books it produced would not receive funding from the Canada Council. In 1974, Dardick realized that the press had been making a mistake by not registering their imprint sooner. As he told the Canada Council in a letter from November of that year,

Three or more years ago, if we knew that we would have been considering an application to the Canada Council we possibly would have taken more care regarding what imprint publications carried ... there were publications which we actually published or financially contributed to in a major way but which did not carry the Véhicule Press imprint ... we were more concerned with what contributions we could make to Montreal's artistic community, what assistance we could give to writers and poets, than we were with what imprint the book would carry. (Dardick, "Supplementary note")

Only by registering as an imprint of the collective and by forming an editorial committee could Véhicule Press finally receive Canada Council funding separately from the gallery. Thus, in 1974, the press was registered as an imprint under Dardick's name, with Dardick and Guy Lavoie listed as the general editors, as well as an editorial board and selection committee which comprised Vehicule Poets Ken Norris, Artie Gold, and Endre Farkas, and advisory members Alden Nowlan, George Bowering, and David McFadden (Dardick, "Véhicule Press Chronology"). Along with the imprint, Guy Lavoie designed the press's logo, a running horse, to mark each book. The name of the press is also included in the logo, typeset in Berling™ font (Dardick and Marrelli). This logo is still displayed today on all of Véhicule Press's books and publicity materials ("About Us" [Véhicule Press]).



**Figure 2** Véhicule Press Logo designed by Guy Lavoie, as it appears today on the website for Véhicule Press, <http://www.vehiculepress.com/>. Accessed 21 July 2018.

Following the creation of the cooperative, the registration of an imprint, the establishment of an editorial committee, and the company's subsequent eligibility for Canada Council support, Véhicule Press began to take the form of a fully operational publishing house. As George Bowering writes, the press

took its place among the little poetry presses of the country, learning its direction from, say, Talonbooks and Coach House Press, where the concerns for contemporary modes in poetry were accompanied by a desire to make interesting art of their books. Printer Simon Dardick and poets Farkas and Gold bent their heads together the way printer Stan Bevington and poets Victor Coleman and bpNichol used to do.  
(Bowering, "Introduction" 3)

Indeed, the books Véhicule Press published between 1975 and 1976—*Vegetables* by Ken Norris, *Honey* by Claudia Lapp (co-published with CrossCountryPress), and *The Concrete Island: Montreal Poems 1967–71* by George Bowering—were without doubt created out of “a desire to make interesting art of their books.” Uniquely crafted artists’ books, they also reflect the press’s growing ties to the community and its increasing understanding of the book trade.

One of these, *Vegetables*, was the collection that launched Ken Norris’s prolific career in poetry. Originally priced at \$3.00, *Vegetables* is a fifty-two page perfect-bound poetry collection, printed on recycled “stone coloured” Carnival Kraft construction paper with standard front matter that includes title page and colophon (Smith, letter to Henri Perron; Presses at Véhicule Art). The title of each poem is a vegetable, such as “Radishes,” “Sweet Potato,” “Unfinished Carrot,” “Cucumber,” and “Artichoke.” The collection ends with the poem “Vegetable Stew,” an excerpt of which follows:

Your flirtations have brought me  
To cut up my vegetables, to surrender up  
Their individual qualities  
And to bring them together  
In a brotherhood of the pot. (Norris 1–5)

The poems are quirky and original, and interspersed among them are eight black and white drawings by Jill Smith, also of vegetables.

The collection has many interesting peculiarities not present in a typical trade book, and which show that Véhicule Press was undoubtedly still in an experimental phase. Most notable at first glance are the 8 ¼ by 11 ½ centimetre seed packets which are glued to the centre of the 13 by 20 centimetre cover of each copy. Supplied by W.H. Perron & Co. Ltd., each seed packet is different: the McGill Rare Books Library, for example owns one copy with rutabaga seeds and another with radish seeds, while George Bowering recalls how his copy came with eggplant seeds (Bowering “Introduction” 4). In fact, W.H. Perron & Co. Ltd. had the seed packets made specially for *Vegetables*, as the normal packets they sold contained too many seeds and were too bulky. An order form found in the Véhicule Press fonds indicates that the press ordered six hundred total seed packets for the first edition: one hundred of carrot, one hundred of kohlrabi, one hundred of lettuce, one hundred of radish, one hundred of turnip, fifty of onion, and fifty of tomato (W.H. Perron & Co., “Order no. C44638”). W.H. Perron & Co. offered a deal to accompany the book launch: any reader who ordered a \$1 seed catalogue from the company would receive the catalogue for free if they mentioned *Vegetables* in their request (Dardick, letter to reviewer). The seed packets introduced readers to a unique book of poetry, and Jill Smith considered them “essential to the theme of the poems” (Smith, letter to Henri Perron). Moreover, Véhicule Press’s partnership with the local seed shop demonstrates how Véhicule’s willingness to reach out to the community in creative ways brought about exciting results.



**Figure 3** One of the copies of *Vegetables* held in Rare Books and Special Collections at the McGill University Library features a kohlrabi seed packet.

As it turned out, the seed packets, combined with Norris's cleverly written poems and critical eye for editing, made the book a hit. Along with positive reviews in the *Montreal Star*, *Books in Canada*, and the *Small Press Review*, *Vegetables* won an Honourable Mention for Design Excellence in the 1975 Look of books/Les plus beaux livres competition, a national book award reserved for fewer than twenty books across the country. The award granted the book representation at the Montreal International Book Fair, a permanent exhibition in Ottawa, and inclusion in a catalogue of the year's award-winning books (Dardick, letter to Henri Perron). Ken Norris also made an appearance on the CBC radio show "As it Happens" to promote his new book (Dardick, letter to Jim Kennedy). The effect of this publicity translated directly into sales. The first five hundred copies sold out so quickly that the book had to be reprinted the following

year (Smith, “Vegetables”), and soon 2,700 new copies of the second edition emerged from the printing press, adorned with turnip, radish, eggplant, and tomato seed packets (Dardick, letter to Henri Perron; W.H. Perron & Co, “Order no. A10936”).

*Vegetables* was a great achievement for Véhicule Press and a demonstration of how far the company had come in just a few years. Véhicule Press’s first best-seller, *Vegetables* was a clever and quirky addition to the publishing house’s growing list of poetry titles. It is an example of the publishing house’s strides towards professionalization and a deepening understanding of the book trade, as it was produced to be perfect-bound—a more traditional format than the saddle stitching evident in McGee’s earlier book. At the same time, it was still quite experimental and creative. It also shows what the press would be capable of going forward, now that it was able to apply for Canada Council funding separately from the gallery. The partnership between the garden store W.H. Perron & Co. Ltd. and the press illustrates Véhicule Press’s collaborative stance. By involving local businesses in its projects, Véhicule Press proved that it was not only a “cooperative” by name, but also cooperative in its relationships with external companies. *Vegetables* was, in effect, a manifestation of the publishing house’s progress and its potential.

## **Discussion**

Véhicule Press’s first years were rooted in community development and creative experimentation. The founding of Véhicule Press inside the gallery Véhicule Art Inc. meant that the press was placed in direct contact with the Montreal community from the very beginning. By offering an accessible community printshop and a weekly reading series, the gallery attracted emerging artists and writers who realized the potential for the printshop to become a book publisher. Motivated individuals like Simon Dardick were hired to make this idea a reality.

Canada Council and Local Initiative Program funding was pivotal, as it allowed the press to produce its first works, including the chapbook *Three Dozen Sonnets and Fast Drawings* by Bob McGee. The establishment of Véhicule Press as a cooperatively-owned printing and publishing company stamped its character as community-oriented, while the registration of the Véhicule Press imprint, the company's eligibility for Canada Council project funding separately from the gallery, and the establishment of an editorial board gave it a more official status. Finally, the success of its early experimental poetry collections, like the prize-winning *Vegetables*, began to garner it greater recognition. These years, marked by learning, excitement, and creativity painted Véhicule Press as a promising new figure in the world of arts in Montreal.

## Chapter 2: Years of Transition, 1976–1981

Between 1976 and 1981, Véhicule Press began to transform. It moved out to its own office space in Chinatown, qualified for the Canada Council Block Grant Program, discontinued its commercial printing operations, and slowly disengaged from the gallery and the Vehicle Poets. As Véhicule Press evolved, the gallery in whose back room it had been built began to fail. By 1983, Véhicule Art Inc. no longer existed, the Véhicule Group had disbanded, the Vehicle Poets had gone their separate ways, and Véhicule Press was a new company nearly unrecognizable from its former self.

Why did Véhicule Press find it necessary to leave the gallery? And why, just at the moment that Véhicule Press finally seemed to be finding its footing, did the gallery fail? Along with an examination of how Véhicule Press's operations developed during this period, these are some of the main questions that this chapter will address. It is evident that Véhicule Press chose to strike out on its own because its survival depended on it and because it was time to let go, and not because of any major conflict with the gallery. Judging by the information provided by the Véhicule Press and the Véhicule Art (Montreal) Inc. fonds, the issues faced by Véhicule Art Inc. were mostly internal. Diana Nemiroff pinpoints at least three different factors that led to the gallery's demise: bad administrative management which led to mishandling of funds, internal mistrust and conflict, and a steep decline in membership (183–85); competition that arose when a number of new artist-run and commercial galleries opened in Montreal throughout the 1970s (183); and a loss of motivation, direction, and identity (184).

Knowing the various factors that led to Véhicule Art Inc.'s decline highlights how well Véhicule Press was managed. Comparing the experiences of the two companies shows that, for the most part, the complications that brought Véhicule Art Inc. down are all challenges with

which Véhicule Press did not have to contend. In the late 1970s, Véhicule Press remained engaged and interested in the events taking place in Quebec and Canada and thus produced relevant texts that addressed current issues. It also did not have to deal with much competition from other publishers in Montreal and, in fact, its relationship with other small presses in the region was one of mutual support, as evidenced by Véhicule Press's distribution program, which ran from the mid-1970s until the mid-1980s. Moreover, the Véhicule Press administration was willing to make hard decisions that were ultimately in the press's best interest. They were also careful with budgeting, taking pains to save money on rent and urging the press towards titles that might be easier on the bottom line. It certainly helped that, during these years, Véhicule Press qualified for the Canada Council Block Grant Program. By the early 1980s, Véhicule Press settled on a fixed identity and objective for future operations and Simon Dardick and Nancy Marrelli were more motivated than ever to keep the company running.

Ken Norris claims that "when the gallery closed its doors in June of 1982, it confirmed the death of the concepts of community and collectivity that had been at the very core of Véhicule" (Farkas and Norris 7), but this chapter argues to the contrary. True, Véhicule Press may have interpreted the gallery's original emphasis on community and collectivity differently, yet each new change that the press underwent between the years 1976 and 1983 enabled it to re-configure its identity to one better suited to providing the best possible support to the Montreal community.

### **English-Quebec Poetry of the 1970s**

The positive response Véhicule Press received for its first titles paved the way for the next few years, which were marked by a flurry of new poetry publications. From 1977 to 1978,



Véhicule published *The Strange Case of Inspector Loophole* (1977) and *Intersleep* (1978) by Opal L. Nations, *Nothing Ever Happens in Pointe Claire* (1977) by John McAuley, *Murders in the Welcome Café* (1977) by Endre Farkas, *The Trees of Unknowing* (1978) by Stephen Morrissey, *The Perfect Accident* (1978) by Ken Norris, *I Don't Know* (1978) by David McFadden, and the poetry anthology *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies* (1977) edited by Ken Norris and Endre<sup>13</sup> Farkas. Through these early publications, most of which were authored or edited by the Véhicule Poets, the press made its name as a publisher of English-language poetry books—a reputation that persists even into the 2010s, as the press publishes the works of contemporary poets Laura Ritland, Jim Johnstone, Nyla Matuk, David Solway, and Stephanie Bolster.

The establishment of Véhicule Press as a publisher of poetry books escalated its importance within the Canadian literary scene. It was Véhicule's unique position as a specifically English-language poetry publisher within the province of Quebec that brought it the greatest recognition. Publishing in English did not keep Véhicule Press from embracing Quebec culture. Quite the opposite. While it is true that many of its publications were and are still written by authors who live outside of Quebec, Véhicule Press has continually maintained a steady focus on the English-Quebec community. The concentration of Véhicule Press on English-Quebec issues began with its creation as a printing program meant to be accessible to the English community in Montreal, but it took on greater meaning when Véhicule began to publish its first books in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

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<sup>13</sup> *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies* credits Farkas as Andre Farkas, but he has since preferred to spell his first name with an E.

The anthology *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies* (1977) edited by Ken Norris and Endre Farkas is one example of a book that Véhicule published to show the world the true face of English-speaking Quebec. The 164-page anthology features the works of poets Peter Van Toorn, Anne McLean, Fraser Sutherland, Guy Birchard, Richard Sommer, Raymond Gordy, John McAuley, Joan Thornton-McLeod, Michael Harris, Stephen Morrissey, Artie Gold, Carole Ten Brink, Bob McGee, Ritchie Carson, Marc Plourde, Marquita Crevier, David Solway, Laurence Hutchman, Claudia Lapp, and Tom Konyves, as well as poems by the two editors. All of these contributors resided in Montreal at some point during the 1970s, and many were connected to the weekly reading series at Véhicule Art Inc.

Priced at \$3.95, the anthology was published in August 1977 in a print run of 1,500 6 ¼ by 8 ½ inch copies (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1977”; “Title Analysis: Montreal”). Although production costs of the book put the Press down an estimated \$2950.00, a Canada Council project grant of \$1,947.00 covered Véhicule’s projected deficit from the book after sales. Dardick also reported positive response to the book in several local newspapers (letter to Katharine Benzekri [1977]). Indeed, by early October, 350 copies of the paperback had already been sold, mainly to professors teaching Canadian Literature courses (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1977”). In less than two years, the anthology would be sold out (Dardick, letter to Katharine Benzekri [1977]; [1979]).

The great success of *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies* laid the groundwork for Véhicule Press to publish future anthologies of English language poetry written in the French-speaking province. *Cross/cut: Contemporary English Quebec Poetry* (1982) edited by Peter Van Toorn and Ken Norris received even greater praise. Priced at \$9.95 for paperback and \$19.95 for hardcover in a print run of 2,000 copies, the book was launched in Toronto in October and in

Montreal in December (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1983”). The Montreal launch, formatted as a gala, was covered by a local TV news host, and was featured in the *Montreal Gazette* (Dardick, letter to Carol Martin [1983]). By January 1983, Véhicule Press had sold 900 copies of *Cross/Cut*.

Véhicule Press was motivated to publish these anthologies for many reasons. As the previous examples demonstrate, anthologies sold well. Dardick asserts that “anthologies are important because they can be a kind of a stock-taking, or indicate current trends, or point readers in the direction of fresh and innovative writing. They are also very good for the bottom line!” (“Exploring”). As anthologies provide readers with a curated collection of writings, they are a useful resource for teachers and professors, and thus are more likely to generate sales.

The anthologies also reflect the publishing house’s loyalty to the English-Quebec community. The early anthologies mentioned above were collections of English poetry in the province of Quebec, which makes them especially intriguing, given the political climate in Quebec at the time. In 1976, the Parti-Quebecois—a provincial political party established by Quebec separatists in 1968—won the Quebec election for the first time, making René Levesque the province’s twenty-third premier (Foot and Latouche). This election was a historic moment for Quebec and contributed to even further tensions between the English and French communities living in Montreal. As L. Ian MacDonald writes, this election “led the way to Bill 101, the 1980 Quebec referendum, the 1981 patriation of the Constitution with the Charter of Rights,” all of which greatly transformed the relationship between French- and English-speaking inhabitants of the province.

The Charter of the French Language of 1977 (Bill 101) alone prompted a massive migration of English-speaking Quebecers to other parts of Canada. Bill 101, as explained by

John Alexander Dickinson and Brian Young, “restricted English education to children whose parents had been educated in English in Quebec, prohibited bilingual signs, and restricted the use of English in business and government” (324). In reaction to the act, 46,000 people left Quebec in 1977 (MacDonald). By 1981, this number had grown to more than 125,000.

The editors, authors, and administrators at Véhicule Press refused to be among these numbers. Publishing an anthology of English poets in Montreal at a time when the English language was largely being discouraged in Quebec was a defiant political statement. Well aware of how the collection would appear to its Quebecois readers, Endre Farkas and Ken Norris addressed their contentious political stance in the introduction to *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies*:

On first reading these poems, one may be surprised at the lack of what one would expect to find in a current English anthology coming out of Quebec: poems dealing with political realities ... But a careful re-reading will show that the degree and area of political and social awareness are there but appear in a different guise: that of language. Language is the most powerful of all political realities in Quebec. To write in English is to take a political stand. That political stand is for the survival of an Anglophone culture in Quebec, a culture that, inevitably, must benefit both Anglophone and Francophone.  
(xi)

As a defense of what most separatists at the time considered an invading culture, this statement may have read as a threat to French culture in the province of Quebec. However, this was not the message the Vehicule Poets intended to convey. Unlike the other Canadians who fled Quebec and claimed Ontario as their homeland during this period, Véhicule Press and its authors and editors appeared adamant to remain in Montreal and continue to publish English-Quebec poetry. Véhicule Press, to some extent, supported and understood the Francophone cause. Farkas, who felt that the introduction to *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies* had not properly explained their position, later elaborated:

One of the essential ways that a people gets to know itself, articulate its fears and aspirations, and name itself, is through its art ... The francophone-Quebecois culture couldn't have developed without facing up to its minority position in a North American reality but by refusing to live only by that definition. The English writers in Quebec operate out of a similar awareness. This is partly because we recognize that we have more in common with the francophone-Quebecois than with the English in Canada-North America. We don't deny our larger world, but know that it is from here that we are working to out there, not vice versa. The new English-Quebecker is beginning to realize this. And he must start to look at the local work of local artists seriously, to look into their mirrors, not to separate himself from the rest of Quebec, but to identify himself within it. (Dudek and the Vehicule Poets 73)

The simple fact that Farkas—and, likely, the rest of the Vehicule Poets—felt closer to the French-speaking residents of Quebec than the English-speaking citizens of North America reveals much about the English-Quebec reality. It suggests that assumptions made by book historians and critics that English-Quebec literature can be lumped into the same genre as English Canadian literature are inadequate.

English-Quebec literature, especially the works that have been published by Véhicule Press, reflect a culture that is impossible to reproduce in the rest of Canada. This remains true even today. This does not mean that the Vehicule Poets or other English-Quebec writers necessarily believe that English should be the majority language in the province. Farkas, for instance, realized that English-Quebec writers must embrace their minority status, but also look beyond it. The Quebec they supported is one that is, though majority French-speaking, also bilingual. The English-language poetry produced by Véhicule Press in the late 1970s, I believe, attempted to show that the two languages share common ground. As David McFadden wrote regarding the poetry program at Véhicule:

It's an exciting time in Montreal, a city where language is so important and can cause such misunderstanding and bitterness. When everything else has failed, perhaps great poetry can leap across the wound that separates the two languages in Canada and produce some sort of healing process. (McFadden, letter of recommendation)

It is perhaps unusual, especially today, to suggest that poetry is capable of unifying people. Many argue that poetry is one of the least accessible genres of literature. Poetry is often called elitist, or popular, too difficult, and too emotionally remote.<sup>14</sup> By publishing poetry and other works in English, Véhicule Press never intended to alienate the two languages or pose a threat to the French language in Quebec. Rather, it hoped to bridge the gap between the two cultures and provide a source of support and unity for its community.

To this end, *Cross/cut: Contemporary English Quebec Poetry* contains various poems in its selection that embody a feeling of solidarity with and acceptance of the French-Quebec society by English-Quebec poets. Frequently invoking Montreal and Quebec landmarks, many of the poets infuse their poetry with French words, phrases, or translations, as is the case with John Glassco's "I Am Far From Easy Sitting On this Chair" (97), "Nous Ne Sommes Pas Des Comptables" (98), "Pines Against the Light" (98), "Bout du Monde!" (99), and "The Game" (99), all of which are translations of poems by Saint-Denys-Garneau. Several poems indicate an awareness and a lament of the French-English divide in Quebec and appeal to a longing for French unity, such as Endre Farkas's "Letter to Bill & Naomi" (79) and Ken Norris's "In the Supermarket" (183). Of these, the most potent is the poem that opens the anthology on page 39, by Montreal-native Mona Adilman. Contrasting the literary histories of the two languages, Adilman's poem "Bill 101" articulates her love of both the French-Quebec language and her native English:

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<sup>14</sup> See Christopher Ingraham's 2015 article "Poetry is going extinct, government data show" in the Washington Post.

“Bill 101”  
by Mona Adilman

The language of De Musset,  
La Rochefoucauld, Voltaire  
anthologizes music  
from a foreign sphere.

The nearer voices  
Of Saint-Denys-Garneau,  
Hébert, Nelligan  
haunt my reality  
with shimmering texture,  
and I reach out  
in hunger, weave myself  
into a rich fabric  
I only partly understand.

The speech of Tremblay,  
Vignault, Arsenault  
cavorts on fiddle strings,  
twangs a gut tune  
of poignancy  
and joie de vivre.

The French idiom  
is a sparkling apéritif,  
a savory, tongue-teasing  
platter of hors d'oeuvres.  
I gulp each delicacy  
with voracity.

But my Mother-tongue

... English ...  
breathes from my pores,  
runs radiant in my veins,  
lines the creative womb  
with pulsating words.

I inherit the resonance  
of Shakespeare and Milton,  
the luminous landscapes  
of Keats and Shelley,  
the fertile images  
of Carlyle and Ruskin.

The past flows into me.  
Benevolent centuries  
monitor my aching pen,  
strengthen philosophic wings.  
My thoughts flower  
in English.

In a linguistic universe  
animated with galaxies  
of speech, French is  
a brethren language.

But English frees my mind,  
unshackles the emotions,  
drains frustrations,  
tethers the soul  
to the furthestmost stars.

Seeing French as “a brethren language,” Adilman’s persona craves bilingualism and the marriage of Quebec French’s “poignancy/and joie de vivre” with “the resonance/of Shakespeare and Milton.” Yet, the persona also recognizes the distance between the two, how English “tethers the soul/to the furthestmost stars” and reveals the frustrations arising from the fact that her mother tongue excludes her from participating in that world. The ellipses around her first mention of “English” signifying the hesitance with which she utters the word, further reflects the animosity

directed towards her native tongue in the place where she lives. She seems to hope to reclaim her language, but also learn and adapt to the foreign language she does not yet fully understand. This longing for the unification of Montreal's French and English communities—so often perceived as rare among English speakers in Quebec at that time—featured in many of Véhicule Press's poetry collections and anthologies. It was this longing that has made the small press such an important addition to Montreal.

### **The Véhicule Press Distribution Program**

One could argue that the dedication of Véhicule Press to its English-Quebec readership through the publication of poetry was limited by the number of titles it could produce per year, but Véhicule Press proved itself devoted to not only its community of readers, but also to its fellow literary presses. Although Véhicule Press could only produce a few of its own titles per year, it had the financial and logistical capacity to meet much greater distribution demands. As it happened, distribution was precisely the task with which other literary presses in the vicinity were struggling. Because Véhicule Press occupied a position at the centre of the English-Montreal writing community, thanks to the reading series and the gallery, it was only logical that Montreal small presses would look to Véhicule for help. Véhicule Press, in turn, was more than happy to offer to distribute the books of its neighbour small presses.

Beginning in 1975, Véhicule Press began a distribution program for the English-Montreal community. The program meant that Véhicule Press was responsible for promoting titles by other small presses in its catalogue, flyers, and brochures, and represented other publishing houses at Book Fairs (Véhicule Press, A Distribution). Véhicule Press would also fill all book orders for the publishers and maintain a sales record of all books sold. In 1976, the press printed



3,000 copies of its first catalogue, which was mailed to 2,500 bookstores, libraries, distributors, and jobbers (“Operating Data 1976”). The catalogue listed around forty poetry, prose, and art titles distributed by the press (“Proposal”). Judging by the number of titles Véhicule Press had produced by that point in time, only around eight of the books listed in the 1976 catalogue would have been titles published by Véhicule Press.

Among the first presses whose titles Véhicule distributed were Villeneuve Publications managed by Fred Louder, CrossCountry Press by Bob Galvin, Moosehead Review by Robert Allen, The Alchemist by Marco Fraticelli, Maker Press by John McAuley, and Powerhouse Gallery by Nell Tenhaaf (“Proposal”). By 1980, Véhicule Press had signed a distribution agreement with a total of fourteen small presses, including Antonio D’Alfonso’s Guernica Editions, which signed on in 1979. Moreover, Véhicule Press had become the sole representative of Glen Siebrasse’s New Delta/Torchy Wharf publications, meaning that they not only distributed this press’s titles, but were also “responsible for all correspondence and financial matters transacted in New Delta’s name” (Dardick, letter to Book Purchase). Consequently, the 1980 catalogue listed eighty-three different titles, of which only twenty-two were books produced under the Véhicule Press imprint (Véhicule Press, “Proposal”; Dardick, letter to Roy).

The Véhicule Press Distribution Program benefitted the English-Quebec literary community in multiple ways. For the small presses in Quebec that did not have the resources or the connections to be able to widely distribute their own titles,<sup>15</sup> having Véhicule Press distribute for them allowed the presses to focus their energies on producing rather than circulating their titles. Véhicule Press’s outreach during these early years was relatively local and not particularly

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<sup>15</sup> These were two common issues for small presses in Quebec, who were isolated from the larger English literary circles in the rest of Canada, and where government funding (for English) was often either scarce or nonexistent.

widespread. Canada Council operating data forms note that, for the most part, the publishers themselves visited local bookstores and made personal contact with purchasers in order to publicize their books. However, the press did contract some companies to sell its books in other locations. These companies included Bookpeople, which represented Véhicule in the U.S., while two other organizations, The Distributors and Cloudland, provided sales support in Canada (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1980”).

While the distribution program helped promote Quebec small presses, it was also a convenient arrangement for book buyers. As Dardick explained to the Canada Council for the Arts,

The grouping of several small literary presses into one organization is probably one of the few good examples of the benefits of ‘centralization’. When a jobber like John Coutts wants a small press book from Montreal he knows that Véhicule Press has it. It saves tracking down the press, it saves on paper work because one order is sent for several titles from different presses. It’s economical for the small publisher also. Only one invoice is sent to one supplier. (Véhicule Press, “Proposal”)

In addition, producing a collective catalogue was not a large expense for Véhicule Press. Upon learning about the distribution program in 1980, the Canada Council awarded the press \$4,000.00 to assist in the mailing of the catalogue (Martin, letter).

With some of their expenses covered by the Canada Council, the program was good business for Véhicule Press. According to the five-year distribution agreement signed by New Delta and Véhicule Press in 1980, Véhicule Press would only have to send all due payments to New Delta and a copy of the sales report once per year (Véhicule Press, “A Distribution”). Another clause states that Véhicule would offer printing services in lieu of payment if the publisher wished, indicating the flexibility of the agreement. As commission, Véhicule Press received 50% of the retail price of each book sold and it also charged a handling fee of 10% of the retail price of each book. In return, New Delta was required to print Véhicule’s name,

address, and its role as the publisher's distributor in all of its new books. From 1977 until 1987, when the program ended, Véhicule reported its sales from distributing other publishers' titles in its annual Canada Council grant applications.<sup>16</sup> During the peak year of the program, 1984, Véhicule reported making \$5,000.00 just from distribution, which made up 16.67% of its total sales that year (Véhicule Press, "Operating Data 1985").

The distribution program demonstrates both Véhicule Press's connections to its community and fellow presses and its deepening understanding of the book trade. Realizing that other publishers were not achieving the representation that they deserved in the national market, Véhicule Press offered its own distribution and cataloguing services to make it easier for them to sell their books. In return, they received some supplementary income. A profitable, convenient, and beneficial cooperative business agreement, the program highlights the relative success of Véhicule Press among its peers, as well as its steady maturation and growth in publishing.

### **A New Direction: Moving, Block Grants, and Changing Leadership**

By 1976, Véhicule Press produced perfect-bound books and was receiving large print orders from the community. Véhicule Press's imminent expansions through the publication of its own English-Quebec poetry and the distribution of titles by other Quebec publishers were only the first of several ambitious projects that the press was planning. Yet, its ongoing projects were already becoming more than the press could handle from inside the back room of Véhicule Art Inc. In other words, Véhicule Press had outgrown the gallery, and its staff was beginning to understand that the only way to realize the press's potential would be to move out.

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<sup>16</sup> See Table 1.1 in Appendix 1.

For one, Véhicule Press's new orders required a large amount of space, and space inside the back room of the gallery was limited. The ATF Chief 20 printing press took up the majority of the area available, meaning that there was no extra room for storing new shipments of paper and sheets that had already been printed (Dardick and Lavoie 2). Moreover, although the employees would have liked to have a long clear table on which they could collate and stitch together gatherings, they did not have a place to put one. Instead, this stage of production had to be completed elsewhere.

Another issue was that the building, which in 1972 had already been in need of maintenance, was deteriorating before their eyes. A large homemade covering made of plastic protected the old Chief printing press from plaster and debris that reportedly fell from the ceiling on occasion (Dardick and Lavoie 2). Lack of insulation meant that during the cold Montreal winters, the paper often got too cold to use, as low temperatures caused it to hold more static and curl. Yet, the most difficult part about the space was its location on the second floor of a building that had no elevator. This meant that heavy packages arriving for the press—and there were many—had to be carried up a long flight of stairs.

One final complaint that the press had against Véhicule Art Inc. did not have to do with the physical building in which they were located, but rather the administrative activities of the gallery. Since a change in administration in May 1975 had placed Trevor Goring and Chris Richmond in charge of the artists' cooperative, Véhicule Press began to doubt the integrity of the directors (Nemiroff 163, 174). Véhicule Press would leave the gallery before anything came to light, but, according to Nemiroff, their suspicions would be confirmed in 1977, when John McAuley accused Goring and Richmond of siphoning money away from the reading series' operating budget to publish a new magazine called *Virus* (174–75). In any case, it seems that

Véhicule Press had seen the writing on the wall as early as the autumn of 1976, when it became clear that it was time to leave.

In 1976, Simon Dardick and Guy Lavoie drafted a report explaining that, for the reasons mentioned above, the gallery was no longer a suitable home for Véhicule Press, and that they had decided to find new premises (Dardick and Lavoie 2–3). In this report, which was delivered at a General Meeting of Véhicule Art Inc. on 22 September 1976, they admitted that although “for the first years the gallery provided a comfortable haven for the press to develop and grow” and that “without the gallery the Press could not have existed,” the truth was that “a move to different premises would ensure a healthier future for it” (Dardick and Lavoie 2).

Dardick and Lavoie came prepared to the meeting. By the time the report was delivered, they were already in the midst of negotiations to become the new tenants of a 2,100 square-foot commercial space situated on the ground floor of a building at the corner of Duluth Avenue East and De Chateaubriand (Dardick and Lavoie 3). With windows that looked out onto Duluth and a garage in the back that would be perfect for deliveries it was, as the report claims, “the ideal place for the Press.” Dardick and Lavoie’s goal was to move by the middle or end of October, only a month after the general meeting. Evidently, they were eager to move out before the freezing Montreal winter set in.

Despite how keen they were on the location at Duluth and Chateaubriand and their determination to move as soon as possible, negotiations for this space fell through and Véhicule Press did not leave the gallery in October 1976 as they had planned. Yet this small snag in the plan did not dissuade the press from searching for other possibilities, and a new office was found before long.

In late spring of 1977, Véhicule Press finally left the back room of Véhicule Art, Inc. to establish their own independent office at 1000 Clark Street in the heart of Chinatown (Dardick, “Véhicule Press Chronology”). Although they were now, for all intents and purposes, an independent, legally autonomous company, the press remained a member of Véhicule Art Inc. for a few years more (Nemiroff 174). In the report that was delivered to Véhicule Art Inc. in September 1976, Dardick and Lavoie outlined their decision to stay connected to the gallery:

It will be a strange sensation for us to be separated from the gallery. And we imagine a strange sensation for the gallery—no more machinery noises ... coming from the back of the gallery. We think it is important for the press and the gallery to examine what the relationship should be between each other. We think that there would be more benefit for the two to have official liaison with each other than to each go their own ways. Véhicule Press and Coopérative d’Imprimerie Véhicule carry in their names certain basic relationship with Véhicule Art. In people’s minds they will always be connected and well they should. Since the gallery is moving towards different groups like Poetry Véhicule, Video etc. establishing themselves as semi-autonomous activities under the umbrella of Véhicule Art, maybe we should consider that the Press has gone one step further. It remains connected to the gallery (in a manner to be defined by the membership of the gallery and the press) but is autonomous. Who knows, for viability and expanded creativity, other bodies within Véhicule Art may someday consider the same course of action so that they may better serve the community? (Dardick and Lavoie 3)

This last question foreshadowed what was to come. Although Véhicule Press was the first of the initiatives started at Véhicule Art Inc. to leave the premises of the gallery, another program called Véhicule Video would follow in its footsteps only a few years later. Véhicule Video, also called Prime Video, branched off in 1981 under the leadership of marshalore and David Rahn (Nemiroff 1981). In the case of Véhicule Press it seems that the move enabled the company to serve the community better.

One consequence of the move is that it emphasized the financial situation at Véhicule Press. While under the umbrella of the gallery, Dardick and Lavoie had laid the blame for any lack of growth in finances on their limited space. As they stated in their 22 September report, “although we have become a busier print shop our money situation has improved only

marginally. A good part of this can be attributed to the fact that we have simply outgrown the space we now occupy” (Dardick and Lavoie 2). Up to that point, their publishing activity had “been only as active as finances and time could allow,” but they declared the hope that, “if the Press attains a more financially secure basis then ... publishing and distribution activities will broaden” (2).

Dardick and Lavoie looked for financial support from as many sources as they could find. For the most part, their largest source of funding was the federal government. Since Véhicule Press first became eligible for Canada Council project grant support in 1974, the cooperative had been benefiting from the small amounts of money, usually in the hundreds of dollars, that were awarded through the Canada Council Project Grant Program to eligible titles as a means to cover production expenses. In 1977, *Trees of Unknowing* received \$920.00 from the Canada Council, while *Montreal English Poetry of the Seventies* received \$1,947.00 (Canada Council, “Project Grant 1977”). In the summer of 1978, *The Perfect Accident* by Ken Norris received \$821.00 (Benzekri [June 1978]), while *I Don’t Know* by David McFadyen received \$655.00 in early autumn (Benzekri [Sept. 1978]).

By 1979, the Canada Council was distributing a total of \$5.7 million dollars in annual subsidies for Canadian-owned publishers depending on their size and budget as part of the Canadian Book Publishing Industry Development Program (Litt 43). It was this kind of support—distributed through annual block grants—on which Véhicule Press had set its sights. This program would not only award Véhicule much larger amounts of money than individual project grants, it would also allow the press to use the block grant to cover any and all of its combined expenses, not only those of certain books. When Véhicule Press was finally accepted

into the block grant program in 1979, it received seven thousand dollars right away (MacSkimming, “Grant Notification [1979]”).

With the block grant in hand, Véhicule Press dissolved its editorial committee. The committee, made up of Vehicle Poets, had been formed for show as a way to qualify for Canada Council support. The three editors, Ken Norris, Endre Farkas, and Artie Gold were informed by mail in late July. “On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1980,” each letter reads, “we made a decision which terminates your position as an editor of Véhicule Press” (Dardick, letter to Ken Norris; letter to Endre Farkas, letter to Artie Gold). Norris, alone, was invited to remain on staff because it was he who had brought Sherrill Grace and Earle Birney to the press, but out of solidarity with Gold and Farkas, he refused (Dardick and Marrelli).

Unfortunately, the maneuver had the effect of distancing the press from the Vehicle Poets. Following the termination of the committee, the era in which Dardick, Gold, and Farkas bent their heads together like Stan Bevington, Victor Coleman, and bpNichol—as George Bowering recalled in his 2004 introduction to the book *The Vehicle Poets\_Now*—ended (Bowering, “Introduction” 3). 1982 would be the last year in which any member of the Vehicle Poets was published by the press.

Some of the individuals connected to the Vehicle Poets have expressed some bitterness at the ending of the partnership between Véhicule Press and the Poets, such as Bowering, who claims that,

The present-day Véhicule Press is not interested [in the Vehicle poets]. They recently had a 25-year anniversary party, at which there was apparently no mention of these middle-aged folks. On the internet you can find a picture book of Montreal writers as seen by Véhicule Press. None of these seven is anywhere to be seen ... One senses that there is some animosity being exercised to handle history. (Bowering “Introduction” 4–5)



The reality of the relationship between the two groups is less dramatic, I think, than Bowering makes it sound. Neither Dardick nor Marrelli indicates any misgivings toward the Poets (Dardick and Marrelli). Dardick explains that the decision to terminate the editorial committee and publish new poets “was not the result of enmity on our part. We felt that in terms of poetry, it was time for an editorial change ... New editors bring new sensibilities” (Dardick and Marrelli). The simple fact is that the many initiatives and groups that once shared space at Véhicule Art Inc. were run by different people with conflicting interests, ambitions, and ways of operating. There was no reason, at the twenty-fifth anniversary, or even the twentieth or fifteenth anniversaries, for the directors of Véhicule Press to mention the Vehicle Poets when their works were no longer being published by the press.

The following year, 1981, marked yet another important turning point for the cooperative printing and publishing workshop. It was the start of a new decade, and burgeoning technological advances in printing were forcing Véhicule Press to reassess its own limited capabilities and the future of its operations. Véhicule Press’s equipment—acquired second-hand almost ten years prior—was outdated (Dardick and Marrelli). In order to compete with more advanced printing technologies, the company would have to invest in expensive new machinery. The other problem was, as Dardick explains, “we didn’t envision committing to a life of commercial printing” (“Meet the Publisher” 4). Between the financial stress that investing in new technology would put on the company, and the lack of interest in maintaining the company’s printing operations, the only option was to close down Coopérative d’Imprimerie Véhicule.

After looking at the remaining options, Dardick and his wife, Nancy Marrelli, started Véhicule Press over. The couple took on sole management of the press and moved it into the bottom floor of their Victorian limestone family home in the Plateau-Mont-Royal

neighbourhood. What grew into somewhat eclectic offices three steps down from the ground floor side entrance is still the home of the press. From that day forward, Véhicule Press operated exclusively as a book publisher. Printing of the books was outsourced to a book manufacturer, giving Dardick and Marrelli time for editorial work (Homel). Moreover, not needing to operate the press out of a separate office space “immediately eliminated tremendous overhead in terms of rent” (4). It was a revolutionary moment for Véhicule Press.

These many changes took place in quick succession. In just five years, Véhicule Press moved out of Véhicule Art Inc., qualified for the Canada Council Block Grant program, dissolved its editorial committee, effectively ended its relationship with the Vehicle Poets, closed Coopérative d’Imprimerie Véhicule, and started over as a publishing house. It all started when Guy Lavoie and Simon Dardick expressed discomfort with the limited space, lack of elevator, draftiness, and crumbling conditions in the back room of Véhicule Art Inc. in 1976. The press’s decision to move out in 1977 afforded it greater autonomy, larger and more professional office space, a freight elevator, and generally better working conditions. A few years later, the qualification of Vehicle Press for the block grant program, its subsequent dissolution of the editorial committee, and emerging technological advances that reached far beyond the capabilities of the old ATF Chief 20 printing press spelled a new era for Véhicule Press. By 1981, Véhicule Press was in a new space, under new leadership, and no longer a commercial printing operation. Although the new developments effectively distanced the press from its original connections to the Vehicle Poets and Véhicule Art Inc., they also enabled the company to grow in exciting ways that would better benefit the Montreal community.

## **Discussion**

As this chapter shows, the late 1970s were years of transition in which Véhicule Press, for the first time, discovered its true potential. Understanding the needs of its English-Quebec readership, Véhicule published poetry collections and anthologies that brought them closer to their regional and linguistic community than ever before. These publications also highlighted the importance of its role as a voice for those English speakers who had resisted the call to leave their province. Véhicule Press's deepening comprehension of the book trade enabled it to serve its fellow presses as a distributor, allowing books published in Quebec to garner greater visibility overall both inside and outside of the province. Through both the poetry it published and the works it distributed, Véhicule Press emerged as a meaningful representative for the English-speaking community residing in Quebec.

These five years also revealed deepening divisions between Véhicule Press, the Vehicle Poets, and Véhicule Art Inc. In the context of the Vehicle Poets, Ken Norris traces the beginning of the group's divisions to one title in particular:

With the publication of the Véhicule Press anthology *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies*, edited by Andre Farkas and Ken Norris, an era of controversy and minor factionalism began. The launching party for that book took place on September 30, 1977, and it can be seen as the last event in the celebration of a true community. Shortly thereafter, most Montreal poets became involved in their individual ambitions as opposed to communal sharing. (Norris, "The Role" 309)

Ironically, Norris's statement implies that the book of poems with which Véhicule Press hoped to unify the two languages in Quebec was the last book in which the Vehicle Poets found common ground. By publishing anthologies on English-Quebec poetry like *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies*, Véhicule Press had hoped to indicate both sympathy for the minority Francophone position and recognition of a shared culture in Quebec that transcends language. Contrary to Norris, I would argue that, for Véhicule Press, *Montreal: English Poetry of the*

*Seventies* was the beginning, not the end, of a more definitive turn towards the sharing of new and varied stories about the Montreal community.

Yet Norris is correct that these years marked the last of the cooperative efforts between Véhicule Press, the Vehicule Poets, and Véhicule Art Inc. The poets and the gallery began to dissolve as a group as they lost sight of the community and values that had originally held them together. In contrast, the press began to coalesce under the leadership of Simon Dardick and, as it did so, all other organizational structures fell away. It was Dardick, along with Guy Lavoie, who negotiated Véhicule Press's move out of the back room of Véhicule Art Inc. in 1977. When the press qualified for the Canada Council Block Grant Program in 1980, it was he who dissolved the editorial committee made up of Vehicule Poets. One year later, when the time came for Coopérative d'Imprimerie Véhicule to close, it was Dardick and his wife Nancy Marrelli, who found the resilience to keep running the publishing house from the bottom floor of their home. Under their careful direction, Véhicule Press evolved into the company that still exists today.

### **Chapter 3: The New Véhicule Press, 1981–1993**

The second decade of Véhicule Press's existence was marked mainly by expansion. Between 1981 and 1993, Véhicule Press greatly amplified its selection of titles, genres, and authors in ways that delved into a deeper exploration of Montreal and Quebec culture and history, and even worked towards broadening its audience in Canada and internationally.

Taking charge of the newly redefined Véhicule Press publishing house, directors Simon Dardick and Nancy Marrelli had a plan. They would honour Véhicule Press's past tradition of publishing English poetry in Quebec by launching a new poetry imprint, Signal Editions, in 1981. They would also branch out into prose, mostly specializing in titles on social history, while also adding translations to their list, and broadening into fiction by the early 1990s.

Yet the more the press expanded, the more its growth shed light on its dependence on funding from the Canada Council for the Arts. Obtaining enough funding to sustain the press and the books it published was, during this period and more than ever before, a constant concern. Véhicule Press relied heavily on Canada Council programs such as the book purchase program and the block grant program to keep going. In fact, the impact of the Canada Council's decisions on the small press's sales throughout the 1980s demonstrates how much of a role the federal government played in the continued existence of the press. By its twentieth anniversary, Véhicule Press was even stronger and more ingrained in the culture of Montreal than ever before.

#### **Embracing Quebec in the 1980s: Signal, Dossier Quebec, Fiction, and Translations**

Between 1981 and 1993, nearly one hundred different titles were published by Véhicule Press, the majority of which were about Quebec, by a Quebec author, or by a writer residing in Quebec. While the company had been Coopérative d'Imprimerie Véhicule, most of its books were by a select few authors who were related to the Vehicule Poets or were otherwise connected

to the Véhicule Group. The new Véhicule Press run by Dardick and Marrelli was more interested in publishing titles that reflected different aspects of the Montreal experience and captured the voices of a wider swathe of the city's population. Thus, even as Véhicule Press deepened its explorations of English-Quebec poetry, it also commenced the Dossier Quebec series focusing on the history of Montreal and branched out into fiction and translations.

Although they had their sights set on expanding the press and venturing into other markets, Dardick and Marrelli were also determined to keep poetry central to their operation. The Signal Editions imprint was launched in 1981, which, with Michael Harris at the helm as founding editor, would ensure that the press would continue to publish English poetry in Quebec. Signal Editions featured a diverse range of authors. Up to 1993, thirty-five titles written by twenty-seven different writers were published under the Signal Editions imprint. The poetry in this series was notably different in style from that previously published by Véhicule Press. Julie Frédette calls it “the result of a small ‘coup’ against the Vehicule Poets” (16). Commenting on the differences between Signal and the Vehicule poetry, she writes that “the Signal Editions series—or rather, its director—has tried from its very beginnings to cultivate an aura of prestige, favouring a more formal style of verse and maintaining a large distance from experimental poetry” (Frédette 16).

Indeed, in a survey of Signal Editions' first poetry collection, *Selected Poems* by David Solway, not one of the poems comes across as experimental. The poems are mostly serious in tone and traditional in terms of metre and rhyme scheme. The poem “Ornithology” (15), originally included in *The Crystal Theatre* (1971),<sup>17</sup> is placed at the front of *Selected Poems* to set the tone for those that follow. It presents an excellent model of more traditional form:

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<sup>17</sup> *The Crystal Theatre* by David Solway was published by Fiddlehead Poetry Books.

“Ornithology”  
by David Solway

I wish to speak of ravenous birds:  
I know the vulture whose smiling beak  
Is full of carrion words;  
I’ve heard the vampire speak,

I’ve seen him play his jugular tricks;  
The buzzard circles like a saw;  
Now and then a pterodactyl picks  
An unlikely victim and eats him raw;

I’ve heard the red and windy hawk  
Cry up his crime as something regal;  
I’ve caught the trombone devil-talk  
Of an avalanching eagle;

And I’ve listened to the feathered words  
of the harbinger of love.  
Of all my allegorical birds  
Beware the ravenous dove.

Note Solway’s careful attention to *abab* rhyme scheme, strict adherence to quatrain structure, and his calculated play with iambic tetrameter. It resembles much more closely that traditional form than, say, Norris’s absurdist and informal, almost conversational, “Vegetable Stew” (1975). Signal Editions thus redefined Véhicule Press’s approach to poetry. *The Signal Anthology: Contemporary Canadian Poetry* (1993) edited by Michael Harris, released on Véhicule Press’s twentieth anniversary, looked back on a decade of work published in the series.

Although poetry was very important to the new Véhicule Press, Dardick and Marrelli also wanted to publish in other genres. Dardick decided that nonfiction books would enable the publishing house to present new and different ideas to the public—ideas which were easier to convey through prose. Nonfiction was, however, a difficult undertaking. Unlike poets, nonfiction writers were not actively approaching the press to publish their works. Instead, Véhicule Press

editors had to come up with a potential topic and approach the right author for the job. While this meant more work for the press—especially given that nonfiction, being both longer and more condensed than poetry, would likely require more editorial work—the shift in genres was a welcome challenge. After all, there were many advantages to publishing nonfiction. For one, it was an opportunity for Dardick to publish books on topics he found important. Secondly, publishing nonfiction was an easier way to make money. Indeed, it is well known that, until 1996, nonfiction was the genre that made Canadian publishers the most revenue (MacSkimming, *Perilous* 370). This is still true for Véhicule Press: Dardick admitted in a 2012 interview that Véhicule’s bestselling book is *Techniques in Home Winemaking: The Comprehensive Guide to Making Chateau-Style Wines* (1998) by Daniel Pambianchi (“Exploring”).

It is clear that Véhicule Press’s early prose books were carefully considered additions to the publishing house’s existing literature. The decision to publish literary criticism led to the publication of three very important works: *Spreading Time: Remarks on Canadian Writing and Writers, 1904–1949* (1980) by Earle Birney, *Violent Duality: A Study of Margaret Atwood* (1980) by Sherrill Grace, and *Spider Blues: Essays on Michael Ondaatje* (1985) by Sam Solecki. Dardick claims that Véhicule chose to begin publishing literary criticism in 1980 because “no one else was doing it” (Homel), but there was more to it. As he revealed in an interview for *Asymptote Journal*, these nonfiction books could be used by teachers in Canadian schools and universities:

I’m a cultural nationalist, and realized, along with our colleagues, that there weren’t books being published on Canadian writers ... We believed it was really important for Canadians to read Canadian-authored and Canadian-published books. To that end, we started publishing books for use in colleges and universities such as the first mid-career evaluations of Michael Ondaatje and Margaret Atwood. (Dardick, “Meet the Publisher”)



Publishing books in prose allowed Véhicule Press to target a new audience in schools and universities that they had not been able to reach through poetry and to develop the Canadian literary tradition at a time when it was needed.

Publishing books in prose was also a smart move for the publishing house's finances. *Spreading Time* and *Violent Duality* are two books that were later credited with helping Véhicule Press "break out of strictly regional publishing" ("PWAC" 3) in 1981. Because each of these books, including *Spider Blues*, were studies on well-known Canadian writers and successfully targeted a known gap in the available literature, all three sold well (Dardick, "PWAC" 3). *Spreading Time*, being Earle Birney's only autobiographical memoir, was of particular value. By 1984, Birney's book, originally in a print run of 2,000 copies, had already completely sold out and had to be reprinted to meet the ongoing demand (Véhicule Press, "Operating Data 1981"; "Spreading Time"). Given its popularity and a large amount of additional material that the author wrote for the book, Véhicule Press also encouraged Birney to write a second volume, which would have covered the years from 1950 until 1980 (Dardick, letter to Moe Lyons). Birney's declining health meant that the book was never finished (Véhicule Press, "Spreading Time"; Dardick, letter to Carol Martin [1983]). Nonetheless, the first volume of *Spreading Time* stands on its own as a significant contribution to the world of Canadian literature.

Grace's and Birney's books had given Dardick and Marrelli their first taste of publishing prose in 1980 and they wanted to keep going. In 1981, Dardick announced to the Canada Council that Véhicule Press had changed its orientation, explaining that "we wish to have a mixed economy of poetry and prose titles. Experience over the past two years has shown us that prose titles sell well and they help to stimulate the sales of poetry titles" (Dardick, "Véhicule Press & the Block Grant"). This meant readjusting how many poetry collections they would publish each

year in proportion to the number of prose works. In one letter to Ken Norris in which he discussed the upcoming 1981 season, Dardick told him, “we have decided to publish fewer poetry books ... In fact, we plan to publish fewer books in all categories although emphasis will be put on prose titles.” From that moment up until today, not one year has gone by without Véhicule Press publishing books in both prose and poetry.

The new prose titles would not necessarily be literary criticism. In fact, Véhicule Press planned to phase out literary criticism in favour of another nonfiction genre that better suited Dardick and Marrelli’s skills and passions (Homel). Marrelli was Director of Archives at Concordia University from 1982 to 2010 and, as an archivist, she was very interested in history, social history, and historical documentation. Her involvement, alongside support from specific government programs in Canada, allowed Véhicule Press to publish more on the history of Montreal and the social sciences (Homel). Books in these genres, Dardick and Marrelli figured, would allow them to make more money, while giving them the ability to reach out to the community and educate the broader Canadian and international public about Montreal culture.

Back in 1978, an opportunity to hire staff to develop a new series of books focusing on the urban environment had come through the Employment Opportunities in Product Development program hosted by Design Canada, a division of the federal department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, and Dardick capitalized on it. The program offered to cover 75% of the costs related to wages and salaries for interns hired for the design, development, and marketing of products (Design Canada pamphlet). After applying to the program on the first of February 1978, Dardick received his acceptance letter on the eleventh of April, and thus hired two new employees to start working on the series (Dardick, “Employment Opportunities”; Fredenburgh).

The new employees' work eventually led to the development of the Dossier Quebec series in the mid-1980s. This series, according to the Véhicule Press website, “documents Québec society for those of us who live here and to those in the rest of Canada and beyond” and includes among its early texts the books *Life of the Party* (1984) by Gérard Fortin and Boyce Richardson, *The Milton-Park Affair: Canada's Largest Citizen-Developer Confrontation* (1986) by Claire Helman (“Dossier Quebec”), and *Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montreal* (1988) by John Gilmore. This is all to say that Dardick’s long-term plan to create an urban environment series would successfully come to fruition, thanks in part to the Design Canada Program in 1978 (Dardick, “Employment Opportunities”). To quote David Homel, “what’s allowed the house to prosper—if such a word can be used in the small press world—and become influential is Dardick’s ability to expand his list and reflect his twin passions for social history and poetry.” Dossier Quebec opened the door for Véhicule Press, enabling it to publish in a field that, second to poetry, would eventually define the publishing house and allow it to focus its attention more fully on Quebec.

Other nonfiction titles, although not part of the Dossier Quebec series, shed light on other facets of Montreal. *The Montreal Story Tellers: Memoirs, Photographs, Critical Essays* (1985) edited by J.R. (Tim) Struthers and the *Montreal Photo Album: Photographs from Montreal Archives* (1993) edited by Nancy Marrelli offered glimpses into important moments in Montreal history. Another title, *The Guide to Ethnic Montreal* (1992) by Barry Lazar and Tamsin Douglas, which provides “individual histories and walking tours of Montreal’s ethnic communities” and “lists organizations, restaurants, and community resources,” was on the *Montreal Gazette*’s bestseller list for six weeks (Dardick, letter to Gordon Platt [1992]).

Véhicule Press's titles in the 1980s also embodied Montreal in other ways. Venturing into translation was a natural development for a press located in a bilingual city. In 1980, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood's translation of *Neons in the Night* by Lucien Francoeur, "Quebec's flamboyant rock poet and performing artist," won Véhicule Press the John Glassco Translation Prize, given by the Literary Translators' Association of Canada ("Neons in the Night"; "John Glassco"). From then on, French-English translations were regular additions to Véhicule Press's yearly catalogue and were frequent winners and finalists of prizes. In 1984, Michael Harris produced the first and only English translation of famed French-Canadian author Marie-Claire Blais's *Pays voiles* (titled *Veiled Countries/Lives* in English). *Blind Painting* (1985) by Robert Melançon, translated by Philip Stratford, was shortlisted for the Canada Council Translation Prize (Dardick, "Request"), while *Deathly Delights* (1991) by Anne Dandurand, which was translated by Luise von Flotow, was a finalist for the 1991 Governor's General Award for Translation ("Deathly Delights"). Jane Brierley also translated several titles for Véhicule Press, among them *Yellow-Wolf & Other Tales of the Saint Lawrence* (1990) by Philippe-Joseph Aubert de Gaspé, which won the 1990 Governor-General's Award for Translation ("Yellow Wolf"), and *White Desert* (1991) by Jean Ethier-Blais, a winner of the 1991 Félix Antoine-Savard Prize for Translation at Columbia University ("White Desert"). Véhicule Press did not only produce French-to-English translations. Books translated from other languages like *Voyage to the Other Extreme* (1985) by Marilu Mallet, translated from Spanish by Alan Brown, and *In the Heart of Warsaw* (1993) by Szloma Renglich, translated from Yiddish by Zigmund Jampel, reflected Montreal's diverse ethnic and linguistic populations.

Publishing fiction was another way that Véhicule Press celebrated Montreal's diverse culture. Two collections of short stories were published by Véhicule at this time: *The Bequest &*

*Other Stories* by Jerry Wexler (1984) and the anthology *Fatal Recurrences: New Fiction in English from Montreal* (1984) edited by Hugh Hood and Peter O'Brien, which contains stories by Wexler, as well as Anne McLean, Lorris T. Elliott, Brian Bartlett, Gail Scott, Howard Roiter, Renato Trujillo, Robyn Sarah, Mel Dagg, Edward O. Phillips, Nigel Thomas, and Miriam Packer. Later on, the hiring of Linda Leith into the position of fiction editor in 1988 enabled Véhicule Press to publish more extensively in fiction.

The same year that Linda Leith joined as fiction editor, Véhicule Press published Leith's edited anthology titled *Telling Differences: New English Fiction from Quebec*. In the introduction to this book Leith laments the lack of English fiction published in Quebec in the 1970s and 80s. "Many English writers here feel isolated within both Quebecois and English Canadian literary circles because they write in English in Quebec," she remarks, and goes on to say that "the energies and talents of so many new writers are now being engaged so interestingly that, all separatisms aside, it is time they were given their due as the English voices in Quebec fiction and the Quebec voices in English-Canadian fiction" (5). The stories included in the volume are but a small sample of what was to come. Five of the thirteen writers that Leith featured would later publish a full-length book of their own with Véhicule Press in subsequent years, including Ann Diamond, Kenneth Radu, P. Scott Lawrence, Robyn Sarah, and George Szanto.

*Writers in Aspic* (1988) edited by John Metcalf was a series of selected short stories presented alongside literary criticism, presenting a bridge of sorts from Véhicule Press's previous books of literary criticism to its new fiction, but, for the most part, the fiction that Véhicule Press published in the years that followed were short story collections such as *Birds of a Feather* (1990) by Catholyn Jansen, *A Private Performance* by Kenneth Radu (1990), and *A*

*Nice Gazebo* by Robyn Sarah (1992), with the notable exception of *Home Fires: A Novel* by Radu. A distinctive feature of most of these collections is the prominent role Montreal plays in various stories within each volume. Thus, the early fiction anthologies, short story collections, and novels serve to tether Véhicule Press more strongly to Montreal.

As Dardick once wrote, “a list that is balanced between poetry and fiction, and a variety of strong non-fiction titles, ensures financial viability, and also provides us with the stimulation that makes publishing worthwhile and exciting” (letter to Gordon Platt [1992]). The four types of books published by Véhicule Press through the 1980s and early 1990s—poetry, social history, translation, and short fiction—capture different aspects of Montreal, demonstrating the avidity and dedication with which Dardick and Marrelli went about collecting and promoting the city and the province’s culture. It is thanks to their efforts that much of the English-Quebec experience has been recorded and commemorated.

### **The Profound Influence of the Canada Council for the Arts**

It is important to remember that Véhicule Press’s projects were made possible by external funding and, throughout the 1980s, the funding that Véhicule Press received from the Canada Council affected the company in major ways. This is important because it shows how much Véhicule Press’s ability to publish meaningful books about its community depended on the support of others. The easiest way to see how Canada Council funding impacted Véhicule Press is through its sales. Although Véhicule Press’s reported sales each year were also affected by many other factors, the tables in Appendix 1 reveal that, as soon as Véhicule Press was admitted into the Canada Council Block Grant Program, its sales steadily increased alongside the increase

in block grant funds. Meanwhile drops in sales also often corresponded to cutbacks in Canada Council funding a year earlier. Overall, however, it was an upward trend.

For instance, in 1979, the year that Véhicule Press received its first block grant of \$7,000.00 (MacSkimming, “Grant Notification” [1979]), its total sales were somewhere around \$6,500.00 (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1980”). A year later, sales had more than doubled (“Operating Data 1981”). By 1992, the amount of the annual funding Véhicule Press received from the Canada Council had risen to \$74,072.00 (Platt, “Grant Form” [1992]) and, correspondingly, sales of Véhicule Press books reached \$80,590.00 in 1993 (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1994”). Of course, these sales values also reflect Véhicule Press’s success with its own formula and do not take into account the small press’s many operating expenses. Yet, it is clear that the Canada Council greatly affected Véhicule Press.

Perhaps never was this more evident than in the 1980s. In 1980, as a consequence of the moves, the closing of the printing operation, and the unexpectedly long amount of time it had taken to publish the Grace and Birney books, Véhicule Press was helped back onto its feet by the Canada Council. In their next grant application to the Canada Council, Dardick discussed his and Marrelli’s plan to recover and explained why they would not be issuing many new titles that year:

we would like to propose a catch-up year in 1981. This means we would publish 5 postponed titles (at an estimated deficit of \$10,100.00 for the five) and two new titles ... The balance sheet for 1979–1980 combined, shows a deficit of \$5954.00 beyond that of the combined Block Grant totals. We would like to eliminate this in 1981 and rectify the financial imbalance that was created when we joined the block grant program. (Dardick, letter to the Canada Council [1981])

In reply, the Canada Council agreed to continue funding the press under the block grant program. A cheque issued to Véhicule Press in the amount of \$11,175.00 covered the deficit left over from 1979 and 1980 and more than half of the estimated deficit, leaving approximately \$4,879.00 of

the deficit either to be carried forward into the following year or be paid off by the press's earnings (MacSkimming, letter; "Grant Notification [1981]").

Help also came in the form of the Canada Council Book Purchase Program, which boosted Véhicule Press's sales and publicity. As early as 1977, Véhicule Press was made aware that they were eligible for this program, which was, in the words of the Writing and Publication unit of the Canada Council, "established initially with the aim of assisting the Canadian publishing industry through the promotion and distribution of Canadian books in Canada and abroad" (Canada Council, "Memorandum"). Through the program, the Writing and Publication unit offered to buy copies of certain titles, usually at a discounted rate, which they would then send to bookstores in an attempt to give Canadian presses greater visibility.

It seems that being eligible for the program did not necessarily mean that the Canada Council would immediately order new books from Véhicule Press. First, the small press had to meet their conditions. For example, the program required that catalogues of the year's publications be sent to their office by a certain date. Véhicule, which in 1977 had already run out of its catalogues by the time the Council's notice arrived, instead sent copies of the books *Vegetables* by Ken Norris, *Nothing Ever Happens in Pointe Claire* by John McAuley, *Honey* by Claudia Lapp, *The Concrete Island: Montreal Poems 1967–71* by George Bowering, and *The Strange Case of Inspector Loophole* by Opal L. Nations (Dardick, letter to Luc Jutras). No documentation exists in the archives to indicate that any order resulted from the book purchase program that year, or even for the next three years.

Another difficulty was the availability of Véhicule Press books. When the first book purchase order for 240 copies of *Murder in the Welcome Café* by Endre Farkas came from the Canada Council in 1980, Véhicule Press was already sold out of this title (Dardick, letter to



Randall Ware [1980]). The order, had Véhicule been able to comply with the request, would have awarded the press \$720.00 (Canada Council, “Order #50”). Although it may not seem like much of a gain, just this sale alone would have allowed the press’s total sales that year to grow by about 5% (Appendix 1, Table 1.1). This was a disappointment, but the following year and every year until 1984, Véhicule Press was finally able to deliver each order that the Canada Council requested. In 1981, the total amount of the Canada Council’s book purchase was \$1,990.00, constituting about 12% of Véhicule Press’s sales that year (Ware [1981]; Canada Council, “Order #166”). In 1982, the Council paid Véhicule \$1,029.60 for its books, about 5.72% of its total sales (Ware [1982]). In 1983, Véhicule received \$1,611.00 from the Book purchase program, making around 6.71% of that year’s total sales (Ware [1983]).

1984 was an outlier year in many ways, for reasons which will shortly be explained. That year, Véhicule Press received \$5,584.80 for the purchase of 208 copies each of three different titles, constituting about 18.61% of the publishing house’s total sales that year (Canada Council, “Order E034”). It was a huge increase in funds received from the book purchase program—over 246% more than the previous year. This was partially because Véhicule Press was selling its new prose books at nearly twice the price of its poetry books. Whereas previous book purchase orders from the Canada Council had requested poetry books in the \$5.00 price range (Canada Council, “Order #50”; “Order #166”), *Veiled Countries/Lives* and *Stories from a Montreal Childhood*, two of the three books ordered in 1984, were each priced at \$9.95. This is a good example of how much more the press was earning through the sale of prose books as compared to its previous sale of only poetry. The increased purchase order in 1984 also exposes an aspect of the Canada Council Book Purchase Program that was not as positive. The sudden increase—and one can imagine for other presses, decrease—in funds it awarded to presses shows that the program was

both erratic and unsustainable. No matter how much the extra sales and book promotion helped to bring in greater revenue, book publishers like Véhicule Press could not rely on or plan around the funds received from these programs. As Dardick later noted, “The book purchase program was a bit like Russian roulette—you never knew how many books were going to be purchased by the Council, or not purchased” (letter to Randall Ware [1986]).

The Canada Council was not unaware of flaws in its system. One of the most admirable features of the arts council is how often it re-evaluates the functioning of its programs and policies. Recognizing some of the more inconvenient elements of the book purchase program, including its unpredictability and “that publishers know best what sort of marketing tools are required to help to sell their books,” the Canada Council decided to “make funds available to publishers in order that they might undertake their own marketing plans” (Ware [1985]). This program, named the Book Publishers Promotion Fund, took the place of the Book Purchase Program. In favour of the idea, Dardick deemed the revised Book Publishers Promotion Fund “a complete success” and “[attested] to its usefulness” (Dardick, letter to Randall Ware [1986]).

However, the few flaws in the Canada Council Book Purchase program had not had many negative impacts on Véhicule Press. The company’s experience with both the Book Purchase Program and the Book Publishers Promotion Fund was positive. The Canada Council Block Grant Program had greater power over Véhicule Press, and minor changes in the system or decisions by the block grant jury had the potential to significantly help or harm the small press.

After 1979, the year that Véhicule Press qualified for the Canada Council Block Grant Program, the company was mostly awarded steadily increasing amounts of grant money each year. In 1980, Véhicule received \$8,600.00 (MacSkimming, “Grant Notification” [1980]). As already stated, in 1981, Véhicule’s catch-up year, a cheque for \$11,175.00 arrived in their

mailbox to help them out of their deficit (“Grant Notification” [1981]). In 1982, the grant amount was suddenly increased by 57.05% to \$17,550.00 (Martin, “Grant Notification” [1982]), and in 1983, \$20,650.00 arrived for Véhicule from the Canada Council (“Grant Notification” [1983]). Each of these years, as the block grants increased, so too did the sales in the following year, just as they had done the first year that Véhicule Press was eligible for Canada Council funding. Thus, between 1980 and 1984, total sales for Véhicule Press rose by more than 100% (Appendix 1, Table 1.1). Given the fact that Véhicule had not greatly altered its mode of operation except to grow and produce new titles during these five years, the press had no reason to think that the Canada Council would decrease the amount of its next grant in 1984. The very worst the press could expect was that the amount awarded might remain the same.

Then, in 1984, the press received \$16,375.00 from the Canada Council (Martin, “Grant Notification [1984]”), which was more than a 20% decrease in funding from the previous year, and less than the amount Véhicule Press had received two years prior.<sup>18</sup> It was also the third-highest cutback in funding from the Council for a Canadian publisher in the entire country (Dardick, letter to Pat Lagacé). This unexpected loss was compounded by the fact that Véhicule, at this early stage in its independence, desperately needed the Canada Council funding in order to survive. It was receiving no other source of government funding, not even from the Quebec government. In a letter to an agent of the Writing and Publishing Division regarding the unanticipated reduction of funds to Véhicule, Dardick revealed his frustration, not only with the loss of funding from the federal government, but also with the lack of opportunities available to him from the provincial government. Exasperated with another agent with whom he had spoken on the phone about this predicament, Dardick wrote on 8 June 1984 that

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 1, Table 1.2.

Her comment to me during our telephone conversation that she could never understand why Anglophone publishers did not apply to Quebec for money also reflects an insensitivity to the situation in this province. It is only recently that we have felt welcome, as English language publishers, to apply to Quebec and Véhicule Press is making plans to do so. It is certainly not a good enough reason to reduce our funding by \$4275.00. (Dardick, letter to Pat Lagacé)

This episode reveals just how difficult it was to run a small press in Quebec. Even though interest in Canadian-published books was at a high point and Véhicule Press had very little competition in Montreal to worry about, one small obstruction in funding—the loss of four thousand dollars—had the power to set Véhicule Press back years.

As Table 1.1 in Appendix 1 demonstrates, the cutback in Canada Council grant funding had a large impact on Véhicule Press's sales the following year. The publishing house sales growth dropped by 26.67% in 1985, and its total calculated revenue from grants and sales declined by 1.85%. Dardick explained these losses in a 1986 letter to an agent of the Canada Council:

The past two years have been harrowing and exciting at the same time. The severe cutback in our 1984 Block Grant began a series of events from which we are only now recovering. The fact that, to satisfy our printer we could not publish our 1985 titles until the end of the year, meant we went through a complete year without the sales of new titles. (letter to Carol Martin [1986])

In fact, Véhicule Press would not fully recover until 1987, after which sales once again steadily increased for the rest of the decade. In the end, Véhicule made it through, but it was a close save. Dardick warned the Canada Council that for Véhicule Press, “another cutback like this and it is game over. Until last year there were only two English-language publishers in Quebec in the Block Grant Programme. If we must look forward to this sort of uncertainty from the Canada Council, the situation will be bleak indeed” (letter to Pat Lagacé). The incident illustrates how crucial the Canada Council was—and remains—to small presses like Véhicule Press. It is thanks to the Canada Council that these presses have been able to contribute so much to the cultural

vitality of Canada. It is also disconcerting how much the presses rely on the Canada Council to survive.

Unfortunately, reliance on the federal government was and continues to be inevitable for a small press like Véhicule. After 1984, it is noticeable that the frequency with which Véhicule Press began to receive grants from sources other than the Canada Council greatly increased. Today, Véhicule Press applies to as many sources as possible and receives annual funding not only from the Canada Council, but also the Canada Book Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage and la Société de développement des entreprises culturelles du Québec (SODEC). In addition, as Dardick explains, “Whenever possible we access funding from foundations to support specific books, such as the Jewish Family Foundation and the Chawkers Foundation ... we also apply to the Council’s translation program on behalf of literary translators to cover the cost of translation for books translated from the French that we are publishing” (Dardick and Marrelli). This last source of funding has become extremely important for Véhicule Press, which today publishes a large number of French-English translations, an initiative that began when Véhicule Press sought new ways to take advantage of and contribute to its surrounding cultural environment throughout the 1980s.

### **Discussion**

In the decade that followed the re-establishment of the press as a publishing house under the sole leadership of Simon Dardick and Nancy Marrelli, Véhicule Press flourished through its continued loyalty to its community and federal government support. Publishing books that reached new audiences and better represented Montreal communities gave Véhicule Press a niche which helped it to grow and to serve as an important cultural entity. Dardick and Marrelli’s establishment of series such as Dossier Quebec, which mapped out the history of Montreal for

many readers, and the expansion of their publications into the genres of fiction and translations also helped to amplify the voices of Montreal. The many prizes Véhicule Press won throughout this decade, especially in translation, were also crucial for the small press. Prizes rewarded the press and its authors and editors for their hard work, while bringing the work and the company into the public spotlight. Meanwhile, Véhicule Press's qualification for the Canada Council Block Grant Program gave it many more possibilities and opportunities, but it also meant that it had to learn how to navigate this new financial landscape. Ultimately, the more the Canada Council gave Véhicule Press, the more the company became dependent on its financial schema, demonstrating just how critical Canada Council funding is to the continuation of quality, independent Canadian book publishing.

## Conclusion

1993 was marked by a year-long celebration of Véhicule Press's first two decades of existence (Dardick, letter to Gordon Platt [1993]). In October, Véhicule Press held a gala book launching and reading at St. Michael's College in Toronto, while in Montreal, on 15 November, nearly five-hundred people gathered to wish the publishing house well. They had much to celebrate. Véhicule Press was finally reaping the rewards of its dedicated and locally involved approach to book publishing. Between 1992 and 1993, the publishing house was the recipient of prize after prize, and not only for its books. Véhicule Press was, for example, one of four publishing houses shortlisted for Publisher of the Year by the Canadian Booksellers Association in 1992 (Dardick, letter to Gordon Platt [1992]).

Moreover, despite a recession in the wider economy, 1992 and 1993 were banner years financially for the press. Total sales were growing and by 1993 had reached more than CAD \$80,000.00 (Appendix 1, Table 1.1). A portion of this was US sales, which by late spring and early summer of 1993 were earning Véhicule an average of USD \$2,000.00 per month (Dardick, letter to Gordon Platt [1993]). As Dardick explained to the Canada Council for the Arts, "increasing sales in the United States is a new and promising development for Vehicule Press" (letter to Gordon Platt [1993]). The increase in US sales was partially the result of Véhicule Press's participation in the Literary Press Group's US sales project, which gave the small press greater visibility in California and the Eastern Seaboard through promotional targeting of the readers of five American journals, including the *Bloomsbury Review* and the *San Francisco Review of Books* (letter to Gordon Platt [1992]; [1993]). Moreover, Véhicule Press's own sales representatives in the United States, Inbook in East Haven, Connecticut, were doing their part selling several of the publishing house's nonfiction titles.

Nearly all that Véhicule Press had worked for, and more, had become possible in the twenty years since it started out as a commercial printing operation in the back room of Véhicule Art Inc. When, in 1973, a weekly reading series at the art gallery drew together a small, English-speaking Montreal-centred community of artists and writers, no one then could have guessed that the cooperative printing and publishing workshop would become such an icon of the Montreal English-language publishing landscape. Small successes—registering for an imprint, qualifying for Canada Council project grants, establishing an editorial board, publishing experimental poetry collections such as *Three Dozen Sonnets and Fast Drawings* by Bob McGee and *Vegetables* by Ken Norris—led the way to greater achievements, such as the publishing of more complete, politically motivated English-Quebec poetry anthologies, *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies* and *Cross/cut: Contemporary English Quebec Poetry*, and the creation of a distribution program that served the needs of other small presses in the province.

Even more critical to Véhicule Press's development were the series of events in the late 1970s which eventually brought the company together under two leaders and which made it fully autonomous. This included Véhicule Press's move out of the back room of the gallery, its qualification for the Canada Council Block Grant Program, deepening divisions between the press, the gallery, and the Vehicle Poets, and, ultimately, the dissolution of Coopérative d'Imprimerie Véhicule. When Simon Dardick and Nancy Marrelli emerged as the new directors of Véhicule Press in 1981, their resilience and drive propelled the company forward. Dardick and Marrelli's dedication to the community produced a selection of award-winning books in poetry, translation, fiction, literary criticism, and social history.

In the twenty-five years since the company celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 1993, Véhicule Press has continued to dedicate its efforts to publishing books that contribute to our



understanding of the Montreal community. Its Signal Editions and Dossier Quebec series, which are still cornerstones of the small press, were joined by two new imprints in the 2000s. Esplanade Books Fiction Series, founded by Andrew Steinmetz in 2003, was established to expand on Véhicule Press's foray into the genre in the 1980s. Harkening back to a bygone era, the Ricochet Series by Brian Busby publishes and provides contexts for reprints of vintage Canadian noir novels from the 1950s and 60s, often set in and around Montreal (Dardick and Marrelli).

The incredible evolution of Véhicule Press from a commercial printing operation in the backroom of a gallery, of all places, to a beloved community-oriented publishing house identifies it as a Montreal institution that deserves to be preserved and remembered. By publishing books that strive to both represent and amplify Montreal's longstanding cultural tradition, Véhicule Press has positioned itself at the centre of the city's literary activity. Part of Véhicule's success has been its ability to embrace its marginalized culture. Emblematic of the Montreal community which it has served for so long, Véhicule Press has sought to be the voice of a minority within a minority within Canada. Even so, it has never pushed away the French culture and bilingualism that characterize the province of Quebec. The accent over the e and the spelling of "Véhicule," stand as tribute and bridge from the English to the French communities of Montreal. In 2019, a year after Véhicule Press's forty-fifth anniversary, there is even more reason to celebrate this beacon of the English-Montreal community.

## Appendix 1: Calculated Sales, Grants and Revenue, 1976–1993

**Table 1.1 Calculated Sales (approximate)<sup>19</sup>**

Year	Sales of Véhicule Imprint Books by CAN authors	Sales of Books not under Véhicule Imprint or by Non-Canadian Author <sup>20</sup>	Sales from Distribution	Sales from Other	Total Sales	Sales Growth/Year
1975	—	—	—	—	<\$10,000.00	—
1976	—	—	—	—	<\$10,000.00	—
1977	\$3,500.00	—	\$1,500.00	—	\$5,000.00	—
1978	\$8,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,200.00	—	\$11,200.00	124.00%
1979	\$4,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,500.00	—	\$6,500.00	-41.96%
1980	\$8,339.00	\$2,967.00	\$3,000.00	—	\$14,306.00	120.09%
1981	\$13,000.00	—	\$3,000.00	—	\$16,000.00	11.84%
1982	\$14,000.00	—	\$4,000.00	—	\$18,000.00	12.50%
1983	\$20,000.00	—	\$4,000.00	—	\$24,000.00	33.33%
1984	\$25,000.00	—	\$5,000.00	—	\$30,000.00	25.00%
1985	\$19,000.00	—	\$3,000.00	—	\$22,000.00	-26.67%
1986	\$23,000.00	—	\$1,500.00	—	\$24,500.00	11.36%
1987	\$32,335.00	—	\$2,200.00	—	\$34,535.00	40.96%
1988	\$51,400.00	\$1,100.00	—	—	\$52,500.00	52.02%
1989	\$55,300.00	\$1,000.00	—	—	\$56,300.00	7.24%
1990	\$65,943.00	—	—	\$1,000.00 <sup>21</sup>	\$66,943.00	18.90%
1991	\$63,082.00	—	—	—	\$63,082.00	-5.77%
1992	\$78,102.00	—	—	—	\$78,102.00	23.81%
1993	\$80,590.00	—	—	—	\$80,590.00	3.19%

<sup>19</sup> Sales values for each year are approximate and are acquired from Véhicule Press “Operating Data” forms found in Box HA 04478 of the Véhicule Press fonds and cited below.

<sup>20</sup> Books authored by non-Canadian authors or not registered under the Véhicule Press imprint were not eligible for Canada Council grant support, so sales for these titles were listed separately in Véhicule Press’s yearly operating data forms.

<sup>21</sup> In 1990, Véhicule Press received \$1,000.00 for a translation service (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1991”).

**Table 1.2: Grants Received and Reported by Véhicule Press<sup>22</sup>**

Year	Canada Council Block Grants	Canada Council Reprint Assistance Grants	Canada Council Project Grants	Canada Council Book Promotion Fund	Other Grants	Total Grants	Total Grant Growth/Year
1975	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1976	—	—	\$500.00	—	—	\$500.00	—
1977	—	—	\$2,867.00	—	—	\$2,867.00	473.40%
1978	—	—	\$1,476.00	—	—	\$1,476.00	-48.52%
1979	\$7,000.00	—	—	—	—	\$7,000.00	374.25%
1980	\$8,600.00	—	—	—	—	\$8,600.00	22.86%
1981	\$11,175.00	—	—	—	\$4,000.00 <sup>23</sup>	\$15,175.00	76.45%
1982	\$17,550.00	—	—	—	—	\$17,550.00	15.65%
1983	\$20,650.00	—	—	—	—	\$20,650.00	17.66%
1984	\$16,375.00	—	—	—	—	\$16,375.00	-20.70%
1985	\$19,150.00	—	—	\$2,680.00	\$1,685.00 <sup>24</sup>	\$23,515.00	43.60%
1986	\$22,100.00	—	—	\$2,680.00	\$1,765.00 <sup>25</sup>	\$26,545.00	12.89%
1987	\$28,320.00	—	—	\$2,605.00	—	\$30,925.00	16.50%
1988	\$43,125.00	\$2,400.00 <sup>26</sup>	—	\$2,675.00	\$7,691.00 <sup>27</sup>	\$55,891.00	80.73%
1989	\$46,890.00	\$3,656.00 <sup>28</sup>	—	\$2,755.00	—	\$53,301.00	-4.63%
1990	\$49,683.00	—	—	\$2,980.00	\$1,755.00 <sup>29</sup>	\$54,418.00	2.10%
1991	\$67,100.00	\$2,000.00	—	\$4,025.00	—	\$73,125.00	34.38%
1992	\$74,072.00	—	—	\$4,445.00	\$5,170.00 <sup>30</sup>	\$83,687.00	14.44%
1993	\$82,775.00	—	—	—	\$7,755.00 <sup>31</sup>	\$90,530.00	8.18%

<sup>22</sup> Grant values are exact and reflect the total amount of funds received by Véhicule Press as reported in Block Grant Notifications, Operating Data Forms, letters from agents of the Canada Council, and Title Analysis Reports stored in Box HA 04478 of the Véhicule Press fonds.

<sup>23</sup> Grant to assist in the publication and mailing of a catalogue for the Véhicule Press Distribution Program (Martin, letter). See Chapter Two.

<sup>24</sup> Grant from the Association for the Export of Canadian Books (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1986”)

<sup>25</sup> \$1,765.00 received from the Association for the Export of Canadian Books (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1987”)

<sup>26</sup> \$1,200.00 to reprint *Veiled Countries/Lives* by Marie-Claire Blais and the same amount for *Blind Painting* by Robert Melançon (Canada Council, letter to Simon Dardick).

<sup>27</sup> \$1,000.00 grant from Concordia University for *Canada Under Mulroney* edited by Andrew Gollner and Daniel Salée (Véhicule Press, “Title Analysis: Canada”). Jane Brierley received a \$6,691.00 SSHRC grant for *A Man of Sentiment* (“Title Analysis: A Man”).

<sup>28</sup> \$2,700.00 grant to reprint *Spreading Time* by Earle Birney. \$956.00 grant for *A Nun’s Diary* by Anne McLean (Canada Council, letter to Simon Dardick; Yates, “Grant Form [1989]”).

<sup>29</sup> Grant from the Secretary of State, Multiculturalism for *An Everyday Miracle* edited by Ira Robinson et al. (Véhicule Press, “Title Analysis: An Everyday”).

<sup>30</sup> Grant from the Secretary of State, Multiculturalism (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1993”).

<sup>31</sup> Grant from SSHRC to aid Scholarly Publishing (Véhicule Press, (Véhicule Press, “Operating Data 1994”).

**Table 1.3: Total Revenue from Grants and Sales**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>% Revenue from Grants</b>	<b>Total Revenue Growth/Year</b>
<b>1975</b>	<\$10,000.00	—	—
<b>1976</b>	<\$10,000.00	—	—
<b>1977</b>	\$7,867.00	36.44%	—
<b>1978</b>	\$12,676.00	11.64%	61.13%
<b>1979</b>	\$13,500.00	51.85%	6.50%
<b>1980</b>	\$22,906.00	37.54%	69.67%
<b>1981</b>	\$31,175.00	48.68%	36.10%
<b>1982</b>	\$35,550.00	49.37%	14.03%
<b>1983</b>	\$44,650.00	46.25%	25.60%
<b>1984</b>	\$46,375.00	35.31%	3.86%
<b>1985</b>	\$45,515.00	51.66%	-1.85%
<b>1986</b>	\$51,045.00	52.00%	12.15%
<b>1987</b>	\$65,460.00	47.24%	28.24%
<b>1988</b>	\$108,391.00	51.56%	65.58%
<b>1989</b>	\$109,601.00	48.63%	1.12%
<b>1990</b>	\$121,361.00	44.84%	10.73%
<b>1991</b>	\$136,207.00	53.69%	12.23%
<b>1992</b>	\$161,789.00	51.73%	18.78%
<b>1993</b>	\$171,120.00	52.90%	5.77%

## Appendix 2: Véhicule Press Catalogue: 1973–1993<sup>32</sup>

### 1973

*Three Dozen Sonnets & Fast Drawings* by Bob McGee  
*Honey* by Claudia Lapp  
*Contacts* by Bill Vazan  
*Hitchhike* by Frank Vitale and Stephen Lack

### 1974

*15 Unedited Poems* by Mario Diacono

### 1975

*Suzy Lake: A Genuine Simulation of ...*<sup>33</sup>  
*Vegetables*<sup>34</sup> by Ken Norris with drawings by Jill Smith

### 1976

*The Concrete Island: Montreal Poems 1967–71* by George Bowering

### 1977

*The Strange Case of Inspector Loophole* by Opal L. Nations  
*Nothing Ever Happens in Pointe Claire* by John McAuley  
*Murders in the Welcome Cafe* by Endre Farkas  
*L'Affaire Corridart*  
*Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies* edited by Ken Norris and Endre Farkas

### 1978

*The Trees of Unknowing* by Stephen Morrissey with drawings by Pat Walsh  
*The Perfect Accident* by Ken Norris  
*Intersleep* by Opal L. Nations  
*I Don't Know* by David McFadden

### 1979

*Before Romantic Words* by Artie Gold  
*What Henry Hudson Found* by John McAuley  
*Dream of Dreams* by Opal L. Nations  
*Trouble on Happy Lane* by Eric Martin

### 1980

*Violent Duality: A Study of Margaret Atwood* by Sherrill Grace  
*Spreading Time: Remarks on Canadian Writing and Writers 1904–1949*<sup>35</sup> by Earle Birney  
*Neons in the Night*<sup>36</sup> by Lucien Francoeur, translated by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood

*The Growth of Human Ideas* by Peter Payack

### 1981

*Selected Poems* by David Solway (Signal)  
*The Mulberry Men* by David Solway (Signal)  
*Continuation I* by Louis Dudek  
*The Womb Rattles Its Pod: Poems* by Cathy Ford  
*A.J.M. Smith Bibliography* by Michael Darling

### 1982

*CIV/n: A Literary Magazine of the 50s* edited by Aileen Collins  
*The Insecurity of Art: Essays on Poetics* edited by Ken Norris and Peter Van Toorn  
*Cross/cut: Contemporary English Quebec Poetry* edited by Peter Van Toorn and Ken Norris  
*A Slow Light* by Ross Leckie (Signal)  
*Night Letters* by Bill Furey (Signal)

### 1983

*Shulamis: Stories from a Montreal Childhood* by Shulamis Yelin  
*Selected and New Poems* by Richard Sommer  
*Hope's Half-life: Nuclear Poems* by Raymond Filip  
*Knowledge Never Knew* by Steve McCaffery  
*Complicity* by Susan Glickman (Signal)  
*Ideas for Poetry* by Louis Dudek

### 1984

*Fatal Recurrences: New Fiction in English from Montreal* edited by Hugh Hood and Peter O'Brien  
*The Bequest & Other Stories* by Jerry Wexler  
*Life of the Party* by Gérard Fortin and Boyce Richardson (Dossier)  
*Cavalier in a Roundhead School* by Errol MacDonald (Signal)  
*A Nun's Diary* by Anne McLean (Signal)  
*Veiled Countries/Lives*<sup>37</sup> by Marie-Claire Blais, translated by Michael Harris (Signal)

### 1985

*Spider Blues: Essays on Michael Ondaatje* edited by Sam Solecki  
*The Montreal Story Tellers: Memoirs, Photographs, Critical Essays* edited by J.R. (Tim) Struthers

<sup>32</sup> Unless otherwise noted, this information has been compiled thanks to Simon Dardick's "Véhicule Press Chronology." The catalogue does not include revised editions or reprints and contains only a sample of prizes/awards.

<sup>33</sup> Art piece.

<sup>34</sup> Winner of Design Canada's Honourable Mention for Design Excellence.

<sup>35</sup> Earle Birney's only memoir.

<sup>36</sup> Winner of the 1982 John Glassco Translation Prize ("John Glassco").

<sup>37</sup> Blais's first poetry collection to be translated into English.

*Voyage to the Other Extreme: Five Stories* by Marilu Mallet, translated from Spanish by Alan Brown  
*Small Horses & Intimate Beasts* by Michel Garneau, translated by Robert McGee (Signal)  
*Blind Painting*<sup>38</sup> by Robert Melançon, translated by Philip Stratford  
*In Transit* by Michael Harris (Signal)

#### 1986

*The Fabulous Disguise of Ourselves* by Jan Conn (Signal)  
*Ashbourn* by John Reibetanz (Signal)  
*Zembla's Rocks* by Louis Dudek (Signal)  
*The Power to Move* by Susan Glickman (Signal)  
*The Milton-Park Affair: Canada's Largest Citizen-Developer Confrontation* by Claire Helman (Dossier)

#### 1987

*So To Speak: Interviews with Contemporary Canadian Writers* edited by Peter O'Brien  
*Modern Marriage*<sup>39</sup> by David Solway (Signal)  
*K. in Love* by Don Coles (Signal)  
*Magellan's Clouds* by Robert Allen (Signal)  
*The Life of a Document: A Global Approach to Archives & Records Management* by Carol Couture and Jean-Yves Rousseau

#### 1988

*Telling Differences: New English Fiction from Quebec* edited by Linda Leith  
*Writers in Aspic* edited by John Metcalf  
*When Paupers Dance* by Szloma Renglich, translated from Yiddish by Zigmund Jampel.  
*The Invisible Moon* by Carla Hartsfield (Signal)  
*Mapping Literature: The Art & Politics of Translation* edited by David Homel and Sherry Simon  
*Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montreal* by John Gilmore (Dossier)  
*Infinite Worlds: The Poetry of Louis Dudek* edited by Robin Blaser (Signal)  
*Canada Under Mulroney: An End-of-Term Report* edited by Andrew Gollner and Daniel Salée.  
*A Man of Sentiment: The Memoirs of Philippe-Joseph Aubert de Gaspé, 1786–1871* translated and annotated by Jane Brierley (Dossier)

#### 1989

*Dunino* by Stephen Scobie (Signal)

*Kinetic Mustache* by Arthur Clark (Signal)  
*Who's Who of Jazz in Montreal: Ragtime to 1979* by John Gilmore (Dossier)  
*Grassroots, Greystones & Glass Towers: Montreal Urban Issues and Architecture* edited by Bryan Demchinsky (Dossier)  
*Along the Road from Eden* by George Ellenbogen (Signal)  
*Moonwebs: Journey Into the Mind of a Cult*<sup>40</sup> by Josh Freed  
*WSW (West South West)*<sup>41</sup> by Erin Mouré

#### 1990

*Despite the Odds: Essays on Canadian Women and Science* edited by Marianne G. Ainley  
*A Private Performance: Stories*<sup>42</sup> by Kenneth Radu  
*Birds of a Feather: Stories*<sup>43</sup> by Catholyn K. Jansen  
*Yellow-Wolf & Other Tales of the Saint Lawrence*<sup>44</sup> by Philippe-Joseph Aubert de Gaspé, translated by Jane Brierley (Dossier)  
*Light of Burning Towers: Poems New & Selected* by Gary Geddes  
*Rue Sainte Famille* by Charlotte Hussey (Signal)  
*The Invention of Honey* by Ricardo Sternberg (Signal)  
*Henry Moore's Sheep* by Susan Glickman (Signal)  
*South of the Tudo Bem Café* by Jan Conn (Signal)  
*Continuation II* by Louis Dudek  
*Sign Language and Other Tales of Montreal Wildlife* by Josh Freed  
*An Everyday Miracle: Yiddish Culture in Montreal* edited by Ira Robinson, Pierre Anctil and Mervin Butovsky (Dossier)

#### 1991

*Evenings at Loose Ends* by Gérald Godin, translated by Judith Cowan (Signal)  
*The Proving Grounds* by Rhea Tregobov (Signal)  
*The Passionate Debate: The Social and Political Ideas of Quebec Nationalism 1920–1945* by Michael Oliver (Dossier)  
*Stone Voices: Wartime Writings of Japanese Canadian Issei*<sup>45</sup> edited by Keibo Oiwa with foreword by Joy Kogawa  
*White Desert*<sup>46</sup> by Jean Ethier-Blais, translated by Jane Brierley

<sup>38</sup> Shortlisted for the Canada Council Translation Prize (Dardick, "Request").

<sup>39</sup> Winner of the QSPELL Book Prize for Poetry.

<sup>40</sup> First published by Dorset Publishing Inc. in 1980.

<sup>41</sup> Co-winner, 1990 QSPELL Book Prize for Poetry.

<sup>42</sup> Winner, 1991 QSPELL Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction.

<sup>43</sup> Alcuin National Design Award (3rd prize) for best designed prose book in Canada.

<sup>44</sup> Winner, 1990 Governor General's Award for Translation.

<sup>45</sup> Winner, 1992 Canada-Japan Book Award (Dardick, letter to Gordon Platt [1992]).

<sup>46</sup> Winner, 1991 Félix Antoine-Savard Prize for Translation, Columbia University ("White Desert"; Dardick, letter to Gordon Platt [1992]).

*Deathly Delights*<sup>47</sup> by Anne Dandurand, translated by  
Luise von Flotow  
*Little Bird* by Don Coles (Signal)  
*Hometown*<sup>48</sup> by Laura Lush (Signal)

## 1992

*A Leap in the Dark: AIDS, Art and Contemporary  
Cultures* edited by Allan Klusacek and Ken Morrison  
*The Anatomy of Arcadia* by David Solway  
*The Guide to Ethnic Montreal* by Barry Lazar and  
Tamsin Douglas  
*Fortress of Chairs*<sup>49</sup> by Elisabeth Harvor (Signal)  
*Sheepish Beauty, Civilian Love* by Erin Mouré (Signal)  
*Foxspirit: A Woman in Mao's China* by Zhimei Zhang  
*New and Selected Poems* by Michael Harris (Signal)  
*Home Fires: A Novel* by Kenneth Radu  
*Terrorist Letters* by Ann Diamond (Signal)  
*Paradise: Essays on Myth, Art, and Reality* by Louis  
Dudek  
*A Nice Gazebo* by Robyn Sarah  
*Half the Kingdom: Seven Jewish Feminists* edited by  
Francine Zuckerman

## 1993

*Raging Like A Fire: A Celebration of Irving Layton*  
edited by Henry Beissel and Joy Bennet  
*Montreal Photo Album: Photographs from Montreal  
Archives* edited by Nancy Marrelli  
*Missing Fred Astaire & Other Stories*<sup>50</sup> by P. Scott  
Lawrence  
*Evil Eye*<sup>51</sup> by Ann Diamond  
*Mr. Blue* by Jacques Poulin, translated by Sheila  
Fischman  
*Restless Energy: A Biography of William Rowan* by  
Marianne Ainley  
*The Signal Anthology: Contemporary Canadian Poetry*  
edited by Michael Harris (Signal)  
*In the Heart of Warsaw*<sup>52</sup> by Szloma Renglich,  
translated from Yiddish by Zigmund Jampel  
*Canadians of Old: A Romance* by Philippe-Joseph  
Aubert de Gaspé, translated by Jane Brierley  
*Murmur of the Stars* by Peter Dale Scott (Signal)  
*Bedrock* by David Solway (Signal)  
*The Writers of Montreal* by Elaine Kalman Naves

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<sup>47</sup> Finalist, Governor-General's Award for Translation ("Deathly Delights"; Dardick, letter to Gordon Platt [1992]).

<sup>48</sup> Finalist, Governor General's Award for Poetry.

<sup>49</sup> Winner, 1992 Gerald Lampert Award for Poetry ("Fortress of Chairs").

<sup>50</sup> Winner, 1993 QSPELL Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction ("Missing Fred Astaire"; Dardick, letter to Gordon Platt [1993]).

<sup>51</sup> Winner, 1994 QSPELL Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction ("Evil Eye").

<sup>52</sup> Winner, 1994 Toronto Jewish Fiction Prize ("In the Heart of Warsaw").

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