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Jean Le Moyne's
Itinéraire mécanologique
Machine Poetics, Reverie, and Technological Humanism

Two events define the career of Jean Le Moyne. The first is the publication of the Governor General's Award-winning *Convergences* (1961; English translation 1966), a collection of essays he wrote in the years leading up to Quebec's cultural and political transformation in the 1960s. The second is Le Moyne's decision to leave Montreal for Ottawa in 1968 to join his friend Pierre Elliott Trudeau, newly elected Prime Minister, as a speechwriter and advisor. Politics and literature would remain the pillars upon which his public reputation would be built throughout his life. In 1982, Le Moyne was awarded the Order of Canada for his "important contributions to Canadian humanities"; that same year he was appointed to the Canadian Senate by Trudeau, where he served until his retirement in 1988 at the age of seventy-five. His career follows an uncommon, but certainly not unheard of transformation from man of letters to political insider.[1]

However, such an account of Le Moyne's career oversimplifies his transition from literature to politics, ignoring the projects he worked on between the publication of *Convergences* and his arrival in Ottawa. Beginning in the mid-1960s, his primary interest was an analysis of the place of science and technology in society. Evidence of this growing interest can be found in the film and radio productions he contributed to during these years. In film, this included writing the script for *Cité savante* (1963), a film about the activities of scientists working at the National Research Council in Ottawa described as a "hymn to modern science" (Blain 66) as well as his collaboration with Claude Jutra on the documentary *Comment savoir* (1966), which profiled the use of technology to support learning. He was

subsequently a contributor to André Belleau's *La cybernétique et nous* for Radio-Canada (broadcast between November 1967 and April 1968), where he spoke at length about the importance of developing a philosophically grounded approach to science and technology. While less well known outside of Quebec, his opinions also garnered occasional interest elsewhere in the country. An interview with Le Moyne was included in a radio show produced for the CBC by Glenn Gould about the Moog synthesizer in which Le Moyne's views on, in Gould's words, "the human fact of automation and its sociological and theological implications" were edited together with an interview with electronic music pioneer Wendy Carlos and a short commentary by Gould on "music à la Moog and its meaning for our age" ("Glenn Gould on the Moog Synthesizer" n.pag.).

Le Moyne's goal throughout this period was bringing about a "cultural integration" through the creation of works that recognized the importance of poetic and technical imagination in equal measure to the renewal of humanism for a modern age. While the most widely circulated products of Le Moyne's interest in technology involved film and radio, he did not entirely abandon his commitment to literature during these years. Speculating at times that new media and modes of expression had superseded literature, he struggled to find the form through which literary expression might make a contribution to the project of bridging the divide that separated scientific and technical knowledge from philosophical humanism.[2] The fruit of these struggles and experiments was a literary-philosophical project called "Itinéraire mécanologique" (Mechanological Itinerary), a proposed three-volume work that would span the breadth of his interest in machines beginning with his childhood memories. The *Itinéraire* was never made available to the public in its entirety (and likely never completed). Only the first eight chapters were published in *Écrits du Canada français* in 1982 and 1984. These sections were only made available due to persistent requests from journal editor Paul Beaulieu, a friend of Le Moyne's who had worked with him at the journal *La Relève* in the 1930s. Close friends, including Claude Hurtubise, Alphonse Ouimet, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and John Glassco, wrote to Le Moyne with encouragement soon after the first chapters of *Itinéraire* came out, yet no new chapters were forthcoming; the project was subsequently forgotten by critics and historians of Canadian literature alike.[3]

This article revisits Le Moyne's *Itinéraire* in order to elaborate the contributions that its experimentation with genre as well as the conceptualization of technology it developed might make to contemporary discussions about

the place of science and technology in Canadian literature. The *Itinéraire* was distinguished by the way in which Le Moyne brought together the form of the "reverie" as developed in the later writings of Gaston Bachelard, with a body of philosophical work that sought to overcome the opposition between subjective experience and scientific knowledge. The value in returning to Le Moyne's writings on science and technology, a failed and mostly forgotten project, lies with the intersection of philosophical and poetic questions he attempted to resolve by writing the *Itinéraire*. While there is an established tradition of Canadian writing that has engaged with the relationship between literature, science, and technology, the canonization of these texts has obscured the volatility of the contexts from which these texts have emerged and in which they initially circulated. By returning to a text that was not completed, let alone able to find a community of readers, we hope to throw some light on the unstable contexts that played a determining role in discussions between the sciences and literature in the 1960s and 1970s.

To better understand the context that shaped Le Moyne's literary writings on technology and their interest to contemporary readers, we situate his work on machines both historically and in relation to the lines of thought they develop—lines of thought that might suggest new avenues for research into literature in the age of increasingly ubiquitous technology. In the first part of the article, we trace the development of Le Moyne's interest in science and technology in order to better understand the context in which he developed his ideas about a literary practice appropriate to the age of technoscience. In the next section, we examine Le Moyne's adaptation of the "reverie" to the topic of machines by situating it in relation to Bachelard's discussion. We show the way that Le Moyne's use of the reverie in his *Itinéraire* involved a change in the subject matter usually associated with the genre at the same time as it put forward a broader argument about the role of writing in lessening the divide between the tradition of literary humanism and contemporary technoscience. In conclusion, we situate Le Moyne's engagement with Bachelard and theories of machines in the context of the ideas and institutions that structured cultural production in Canada during the 1960s, as well as the debates about the relationship between the humanities and sciences taking place at the time. We suggest that the failure of Le Moyne's *Itinéraire* project resides as much with the disjuncture between the philosophical principles he adopted and the literary form of the reverie as it does with the institutional and intellectual context in which he worked.

Contextualizing Le Moyne's Interest for Machines

While he never published a programmatic overview of his views regarding the relationship between science and technology during the period between 1960 and 1980, Le Moyne attempted to articulate on several occasions the broader vision he was advocating: a project of social renewal that approached scientific and technical knowledge as originating from the same sources of creativity and imagination that produced traditional humanist wisdom. In the final episode of *La Cybernétique et nous*, Le Moyne offers a clear explanation of why it is necessary for humanists in particular to turn their attention to science and technology:

> To avoid alienation, we need to turn to the mediation of a new humanist, of a new *honnête homme*. This is a man who will lend himself to an austere scientific and technological impregnation, who will agree to be informed by science and technology, and thus properly equipped will exercise on science and technology his poetic contemplation and philosophical criticism. ("L'Avènement des automates" n.pag.)[4]

Le Moyne revisited the topic in light of his understanding of the divide between science and culture and the dangers it presented in a short text from 1968, writing,

> It is clear that the unity of culture has been broken and we are today divided between two cultures. Yet, it is absolutely impossible to bring these two cultures into alignment with one another. . . . Such a division impedes the integral humanism for which we are made and that must be our only expression. ("Parenthèse mécanologique" 3)

As is evident in the above passages, Le Moyne's views developed in a context described by C. P. Snow's analyses of the "two cultures" in 1956. While Snow argued that the sciences might bring greater moral clarity to the corruption he saw in the humanities, Le Moyne argued that the future lay in the establishment of new forms of knowledge that were capable of overcoming the entrenched divisions and suspicions between the two modes of inquiry and activity. To this end, Le Moyne dedicated significant effort during these years to the foundation of a new discipline, a "science of machines," to be called mechanology ("Prolegomena" 4). Le Moyne argued that mechanology, borrowing its name from the writings of French engineer Jacques Lafitte in the 1930s, was necessary for the consilience of science and the humanities, as it would reveal the common foundations shared by humanist philosophy and modern scientific and technological progress. Arguing that mechanology should be included on grade school curricula like mathematics, he explained that spreading "the science, philosophy and poetry of machines" was

necessary for humans to enter into "creative synergy" with the products of modern science and technology ("Parenthèse mécanologique" 32).

While Snow's discussion of the two cultures likely resonated in Le Moyne's rhetoric, Le Moyne's views on this subject bore the traces of being formed during his participation decades earlier in the circle of intellectuals at *La Relève* where he was introduced to the Catholic humanist philosophy of the 1930s (see Falardeau; Pelletier). Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier were the most important thinkers for this group, who "often refer[red] to their authority in order to justify their positions" (Pelletier 95). In this sense, Le Moyne's growing interest in science and technology did not represent a radical break with his earlier work on theological and political questions confronting Quebec in the twentieth century that had been the subject of *Convergences*. The expression "integral humanism," frequently used by Le Moyne to describe the synthesis of science and humanities he was proposing, was borrowed from Maritain's 1936 book *Humanisme intégral*. Similar to Le Moyne's broader project of establishing a new humanism, Maritain's discussion of "integral humanism" was motivated by his view that cultural and social renewal was urgently needed. However, Le Moyne's interpretation of integral humanism differed from Maritain's views regarding the relationship of scientific and technical knowledge to philosophy and artistic creativity, in that Le Moyne saw its integration as one of equals rather than the "mastering" of the technology by the human spirit as expressed through poetic and Christian morality. From Mounier, Le Moyne took his belief that the individual—the "new humanist" he called for on numerous occasions in his writings—might be capable of comprehending vast technological systems yet retain free will and reason, extending the arguments regarding the centrality of free will that was central to the individualist traditionalism that defined Mounier's "personalism." It was also through his reading of Mounier that Le Moyne was introduced to the work of Jacques Lafitte, thanks to a favorable citation of *Réflexions sur la science des machines* (1932) in Mounier's *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* (1936).

However, it would be a mistake to see Le Moyne's interest in machines as a simple extension of the work of Mounier and Maritain in the 1930s. Taken with Lafitte's claim that machines could be studied systematically and concretely according to philosophical principles, Le Moyne updated the typology of machines he found in Lafitte's short text to include a wider range of technologies. His decision to include a new class of machines, which he

categorized as "networked" and described as transforming communication and the circulation of information, is evidence of the influence that cybernetics had on his work (an influence that was already apparent in the documentary *Comment savoir*). However, perhaps attempting to retain the "aggressive individualism" (as David Hayne put it in 1967) that characterized *Convergences* and formed the foundations of the humanist philosophy he inherited from Mounier, Le Moyne never identified wholly with the system-oriented theory elaborated by Norbert Wiener (78). As he would later recall in a letter to publisher Claude Hurtubise, "my fervor for cybernetics was never very deep. In reality, Wiener and company were nothing more than avenues quickly traversed during my path towards machines (hard and rough)" (n. pag.).

It was instead the work of contemporary philosophers Gilbert Simondon and Henri Van Lier that were most influential in helping Le Moyne formulate a broader philosophical framework bridging scientific and humanistic modes of thought and expression. Both Simondon and Van Lier appropriated the insights of cybernetics about the systematic and reciprocal nature of interactions between humans and technology, while arguing that cybernetics' emphasis on the drive towards stability and equilibrium in systems reduced the complexity of technical objects to mere tools and instruments. In an argument similar to Le Moyne's, both Simondon and Van Lier argued that the renewal of humanism would only be possible if there was an adequate engagement with modern science and technology as sites of innovation and transformation. It is not, Simondon told Le Moyne, that society is too technical, but "poorly technical." This is because new techniques and technologies continue to be evaluated and engaged with according to outdated criteria, what Simondon describes as a kind of "cultural hysteresis" ("Entretien sur la mécanologie" n. pag.). Elsewhere, Simondon explained this argument in greater detail:

> The most powerful cause of alienation in the world of today is based on misunderstanding of the machine. The alienation in question is not caused by the machine but by a failure to come to an understanding of the nature and essence of the machine. ("On the Modes" 2)

Following a similar line of argument, in *Le Nouvel âge* Henri Van Lier described this new approach to technology as the dawning of a "new age" in which science, technology, and art would belong to a single world view.[5]

While many (including Simondon) pointed out to Le Moyne that the concept of "machine" did not seem adequate for thinking about the

pervasive influence of science and technology in society, his decision to remain focused on machines allows for a clearer understanding of his broader intellectual project. The "machine" for Le Moyne is best interpreted as a hybrid concept that, at one level, enabled him to analyze the full range of relations between humanity and tools while, at another level, allowing him to discuss the concrete details of material objects. In this sense, the concept of machine entailed the overlaying of two related, but distinct sets of relations: first, the relationship between humans and their environment as mediated by the creative use of scientific rationality and technical knowledge; and, second, the relationship between the abstract and the concrete as it related to the distinction between the theoretical and conceptual register of knowledge, on the one hand, and lived sensory experience on the other. In the context of debates about the relationship between literature and science in the 1960s, Le Moyne's mechanological project was a response to two common perspectives on technology: an understanding of modern science and technology as threats to human existence as well as sources of individual and collective alienation, and a pragmatic position that took an applied approach to new technology at the expense of its broader social significance (see Feenberg). Viewing both of these positions as inadequate and philosophically impoverished, Le Moyne felt that the "integral humanism" that might be brought about through the development and diffusion of mechanology would bridge the divide between science and culture, as well as between technology and humanism, by means of an engagement with machines as material artifacts that embodied areas of knowledge and modes of experience commonly taken as incommensurable.

Bachelard's Reverie and Le Moyne's Machines

Le Moyne never viewed mechanology as a project he could realize on his own, recognizing that an array of knowledge and expertise would be necessary to bring about the broad social transformation he felt was necessary. He saw his personal contribution to the achievement of integral humanism through the development of a poetics of machines. Following a 1971 colloquium on mechanology he helped to organize in Paris that brought together a number of philosophers and scholars (but relatively few poets or artists), he wrote that his "formidable" role was to "make sure that the voice of poetry could be heard" (Letter to Roger Bodard n. pag.). While he frequently acknowledged the insights and inspiration to be found in the philosophical texts of Lafitte, Simondon, and Van Lier, he

nonetheless argued that it was necessary to adopt a form of writing that was more amenable to documenting the symbolic and subjective experience of machines. New ways of thinking and writing about science and technology were necessary that did not fall victim to the entrenched divide between reason and the imagination that defined traditional humanism. To this end, he dedicated himself to the writing of "reveries," a term he borrowed from Gaston Bachelard's later writing on imagination and poetics.[6] Explaining the importance of these new modes of cultural expression (and the "reverie" in particular), he writes, "The study of machinic reveries must be a part of mechanology; it is indispensable to the total cultural integration of the machine. But this will not be classical or literary humanism into which we are trying to integrate the machine" ("Rêveries machiniques" 87). However, the "poetics of machines" he was proposing would not simply repeat the forms and effect of traditional poetry. Explaining the intended effect of the machinic reveries, he writes, "This is not a matter of aesthetics, and I know that traditional art is impotent before the machine. It is a matter of poetry. It is a poetry nourished in another universe than that of elementary nature. We find ourselves in a world where theory, prediction, and operation dominate. The poetry of that world cannot be anything else than a critical one" ("Rêveries machiniques" 88).

The appeal of the reverie for Le Moyne was its ability to fulfill his desire for a mode of writing that was capable of analyzing scientific and technical experience and expertise, yet did not block the relationship between these and the breadth of human imagination. The reverie, as developed by Bachelard, was both a poetic and critical practice. Described as "night" to the "day" of his earlier work on science and epistemology, such a description perhaps overstates the division between imagination and scientific knowledge put forward by Bachelard in his description of the reverie. The reverie does not simply reaffirm simplistic divides between science and non-science (see Lecourt; Richard). Rather, the two are mutually supportive, forming part of the continuum through which knowledge and experience are inductively co-constituted. This co-constitution is apparent both in the form and the content of the reverie. Bachelard was explicit that, distinct from dreams, reveries require the dreamer to be awake, but lost in the space and time of the poetic imagination, a state of wonder, awe, and "lucid tranquility" (*Poetics of Reverie* 64). Not estranged from the hypnagogic experience, reverie induces poetic images with recurring themes and metaphors that Bachelard situates in the individual experience of consciousness (see Hans).

Of equal importance to Bachelard's understanding of the reverie is that the dreamer is also a writer. Dreams, writes Bachelard in *The Poetics of Reverie*, may be recounted orally; a reverie can only be communicated through writing and appears to the consciousness in the form of the "sounds of the written word" (7). As he explains, "the reverie is written, or, at least, promises to be written. It is already facing the great universe of the blank page" (6). Finally, the reverie is not simply a collection of interpretations of daydreams and idle thoughts. It also holds epistemological value. As Bachelard writes in *The Poetics of Space*, the reveries constitute a "phenomenology of the poetic imagination," an "esthetics of hidden things" (xxiv, xxxvii).

While its relevance to Le Moyne's larger intellectual project is apparent, his interest in both Bachelard and reverie was quite uncommon among literary critics concerned with science and technology. Northrop Frye, however, was also interested in Bachelard's writings on poetic imagination during these years, having played a role in the translation and publication of Bachelard's *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. As he describes in the preface of the translation, Frye's interest in Bachelard was a result of the similarity he saw between Bachelard's discussion of poetic images and his own interest in myth and symbol (vi, vii). But even Frye's promotion of philosophers such as Bachelard and Eliade seemed peculiar and, as John Ayre puts it, "ostensibly unpromising" (288). On the other hand, Bachelard was a rather well known figure in the French Canadian intellectual circles. Thus Le Moyne's decision to turn to Bachelard should not be seen as entirely unexpected in light of the influence of the French philosopher's ideas about imagination and experience on Le Moyne's writings since the 1950s. Writing for *La Revue moderne*, a mass-market women's magazine that Le Moyne edited between 1953 and 1959, he published a piece describing the transition from steam to diesel-powered trains titled "Un adieu et une révélation." To research the article, Le Moyne sought to experience the technological revolution first hand, travelling from Montreal to Lévis, Quebec, on the *Northern*, a steam locomotive, and returning on a train pulled by a diesel engine. In his account of the trip, Le Moyne focuses on the aesthetic experience resulting from the contemplation of the two types of trains. For him, this approach to technology entailed a consideration not just of the machine from a technical or social point of view, but of the ways technological transitions provoke different poetic images. He writes, "The diesel engine, which is replacing the steam locomotive, will never be able to nourish the same poetry as its predecessor, but its improvements correspond to a more reasonable, more

adult, mentality" ("Un adieu" 11). Searching for the poetry of the train, Le Moyne begins his account by wondering which "privileged objects" are at the centre of the engineers' reveries and how the transition from one system to the next modified our "elementary communion" with machines (11). He notes how locomotives are perhaps the "richest and most original source of poetics of the technical era" (12). The text's interest in the poetic images associated with the steam engine and diesel locomotive echoes the vocabulary that Bachelard was already using for the analysis of poetic images related to natural elements, suggesting that Le Moyne was experimenting with the reverie even before completing *Convergences*.

The chapters published from the beginning of *Itinéraire* (subtitled "Identifications initiales et premières rêveries") provide a sharper and more explicit experimentation with the reverie. Forming the first eight chapters of book one, the text begins with memories of the many trains that populated his childhood, from toy trains to the tramways in the streets and the steam locomotives he saw at the station when visiting family in the industrial neighbourhood of St-Henri. Recalling his time spent traversing the city of Montreal, he writes, "[A]ll alone, I was generally in search of, or lost in contemplation of machines" (50; ch. 1). The St-Henri train station is described as a "technical and machinic paradise" (49; ch. 1) as he documents the machinery that he encounters on his journey. Presenting a panoramic perspective on the machinery that allow life in the city to circulate, he writes:

> At the port, I found the gigantic and solemn wildlife of liners, cargo ships, tugboats, cranes, ferries, elevators, silos, barges and numerous trains filled with merchandise in perpetual motion; to the east, towards the end of the large quays, Viger Station, where there were different locomotives from those I saw at Saint Henri; to the west, near the first lock of the canal and a dock where an entire family of tugboats were kept and large liners stopped, there was the terminal for the suburban train line, of which the electric rails of the train and tramway leading to Longueuil over the Victoria Bridge, only to return by passenger steamship. (51; ch. 1)

However, these chapters did not simply consist of a catalog of machinery or nostalgic recollections of his childhood; the text continuously shifts from personal memories to exhaustive technical descriptions of machines to minutely precise descriptions of physical encounters with machinery inspired by the phenomenological roots of the reverie (see Genette and Morgan). Setting the stage for his experiences of industrial Montreal, he writes of his first toy trains (one green, made of wood, and one red, of metal): "not only can I still see them, I can touch them: the roughness of the first and the smooth curves of the second remained imprinted on my hands" (45; ch. 1).

In a later chapter, he describes the sound of electrical transformers, writing: "The transformers around me sang their cycles, each one with a particular timbre. Unchangeable music, an indestructible counterpoint in its duration! How I loved it, this warm and black chorus, this supreme measure of consistency!" (32; ch. 1).

Capturing both the schematic and the sensory aspects of the machinery he encounters, Le Moyne's mechanological perspective transforms these inert and inorganic objects into sources that give structure to the entirety of his subjective experiences. Reflecting on their role in his personal transformation, he writes: "I narrowly escaped the disaster that my parents and teachers were preparing me for, while my machines, they only offered an innate purity and the assurance of an unwavering poetry" (18; ch. 6). Le Moyne frequently projects his own feelings of confinement onto technical objects, mixing technical descriptions with his subjective feeling of confinement. When he writes that "departure [is] one of the preferred elements of the poetic universe that emanates from machines" (11; ch. 5), it is the departure of the locomotive itself rather than its passengers or cargo with which Le Moyne is identifying. Elsewhere, recalling his relationship with the toy trains of his youth, he comments, "My steam engine possessed me much more than I possessed it." (*Au bout de mon âge* 185). Explaining this process of identification in a radio interview, he states: "[There] was a process of identification, no doubt. And in those different machines, aside from the progressive consciousness of their rationality, I satisfied a need. In the steam engine, it was a need for power. I didn't have that power. I saw it there. In the case of the electric machine, it was the need of continuity, that is security, which I didn't have . . . these were the source of two kinds of reveries" ("Glenn Gould on the Moog Synthesizer" n. pag.).

Le Moyne's focus on his childhood was not to show the development or refinement of his ideas about technology as part of a process of personal development. On the contrary, his central epistemological assumption throughout the *Itinéraire* remains the articulation of his broader philosophical positioning regarding machines. At several points, he highlights the extent to which "integral humanism" might be made possible through the actualization of mechanology by showing that it is already present in the simplest and immediate experiences of technology. Early in the *Itinéraire,* he writes: "Ultimately, in the depths of my childhood, I encountered the locomotive that had burst the frames of literary humanism" (46; ch. 1). Throughout the *Itinéraire*, he integrates numerous theoretical

and philosophical comments and digressions in addition to poetic images and technical descriptions. At times, this seems quite explicit. The following passage, for instance, clearly evokes a theory about passive machines known to Le Moyne, elaborated by Lafitte in 1932:

> The worship of movement was equally harmful for me on the technological plane. For example, the stillness of buildings, bridges and other structures prevented me until adulthood from understanding the dynamics of their forms. (65: ch. 3)

Consider Lafitte's perspective:

> And, on the other hand, I don't know any example of a child, supposedly placed in possession of the most complete box, who has not constructed first passive machines (tower, bridge) then active ones (auto, plane, train, etc.) without ever starting on reflex machines properly speaking. The construction of these last, when it is effected with these games, always remains the achievement of children who have reached an advanced age, already almost adults. (81)

Taken in its entirety, then, the *Itinéraire* should be read as an attempt to reintegrate theories about machines from within the personal experience of technology. His readings of philosophers of technology *inform*—literally— his machinic reveries.

However, the realization of the *Itinéraire* remained fraught with contradictions and tensions. Most significantly, the objects of the reveries themselves did not seem well adapted to Le Moyne's endeavour. While Bachelard's studies of the elements or the family house focused on objects that foster contemplation and stillness, Le Moyne's machines in motion evoke a more fitful stimulation not particularly suited to the silent and calm state of the reverie. He notes this ambiguity at various occasions: for instance, the "frenzy" of the drive wheels "jeopardize reverie" (74: ch. 4), and some materials, like plastic and rubber, were "absolutely refractory to poetic animation" (70: ch. 3). The recurring spectacle of arrivals and departures of machines fuel his reveries with the "poetic resources that furnished [his] solitudes" (53; ch. 1). Trains (and machines more generally), being objects in motion, are a hazardous inspiration for reveries.

In the end, Le Moyne did not feel that he was successful in his attempt to overcome the deeply entrenched divide that separated literary humanism from scientific and technical discourse. Indeed, he would come to argue that opposition to his broader literary and philosophical project was the reason he was unable to find an audience for his mechanological writings. He noted that the failure of these projects to achieve the impact he desired was due to the "iron curtain between disciplines [and] cultural resistances" (Letter

to Henri Jones n. pag.). Throughout his career, Le Moyne explained the failure of his work on science and technology as the result of a conflict with *les littéraires*, a vaguely defined group of critics and cultural gatekeepers he repeatedly referred to throughout his work on machines. It was *les littéraires* from the National Film Board, for instance, who had been responsible for blocking the advances that mechanology might offer Canadian audiences because of their adherence to an outdated understanding of culture, one that denigrated technology and science.

Perhaps his encounters with *les littéraires* also undermined Le Moyne's personal confidence about the *Itinéraire* from the start. In a 1968 interview with Simondon, Le Moyne explicitly asked him for his opinion of the *Itinéraire*, which he was just beginning at the time, as if he was seeking a sort of attestation for the project. He wondered if it would be inappropriate to use Bachelard's literary genre of the reverie to analyze scientific apparatuses. When Simondon replied that one could "very well do a psychoanalysis of technical objects, just like Bachelard did to all elements," Le Moyne responded with a vibrant: "This is where I was going" ("Entretien sur la mécanologie" n. pag.). However, he felt that while he possessed the poetic abilities to describe machines, he lacked the technical knowledge of machines required to fully achieve the goals of the reverie as genre of inquiry (*Itinéraire* 78; ch. 4). With the passing of time, Le Moyne's enthusiasm waned and he spent less time working on the *Itinéraire* as his professional obligations in Ottawa increased. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, he confessed to several friends how his "machinic book" was only advancing in dribs and drabs, even though he often proclaimed his intention to return to it.

Conclusion

Le Moyne's feelings of isolation and uncertainty are curious in retrospect given that it was a period during which a number of others were attempting to overcome traditional oppositions between science and culture. At the same time that Le Moyne was beginning his engagement with the study of science and technology, Marshall McLuhan created his Centre for Culture and Technology (1963) and published *Understanding Media* (1964). Within the circle of interdisciplinary research on human interactions known as the "Explorations" group (see Darroch), McLuhan was also the one actively advocating for the voice of literature to be heard. Of major concern for him at the time was the "untapped field of communication in contemporary poetry" ("Untitled" n. pag.). His interest for both Christian theology and

humanism in the 1950s and 1960s testifies further to the intellectual context, shared by Le Moyne, within which scientific advancements (and especially the latest stage of mechanization) were articulated in relation with literature. In subsequent years, McLuhan's analysis of media and communication influenced a number of writers and poets, including the speculative poetics of the Toronto Research Group (bpNichol and Steve McCaffery) in the 1970s and many years later, the conceptual poetry of Darren Wershler and Christian Bök. Le Moyne's project solicited significantly less interest and it is not unfair that it currently languishes in obscurity.

However, its relevance to contemporary debates should not be overlooked. Recent work in the digital humanities has sought to expand discussions about the ways the tools and methods of computational analysis might contribute to our understanding of cultural practices and textual forms. Le Moyne's mechanological work raises questions about how to navigate the relationship between the ontology of technology, the epistemological grounds of scientific knowledge and literary practice. His interest in producing a literary form adequate to such an inquiry stands as an intriguing experiment to crossing the lines between cultural criticism, philosophy, and creative writing rather than a refusal to let go of anachronistic practices. Neither an attempt to popularize ideas about technology nor an aesthetic appreciation of scientific knowledge, it was, rather, an attempt to radically transform the relationship between science and literature, going so far as to dissolve the divisions between the two by means of the reverie form. This is not to overstate the artistic or philosophical worth of Le Moyne's work, but to acknowledge that its scope and range deserve to be seen as a contribution to debates about the relationship between science and culture that have only come into focus in recent years. For this reason, Le Moyne's *Itinéraire*, and the project of creating a "new" humanism it promised, deserve continued reflection and contemplation, remaining a site of promising exploration despite its failure to be fully realized.

NOTES

1 Le Moyne's career is another example of the success that Catholic intellectuals from Quebec found in Canadian public life during the 1960s. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau is the most notable, but other examples include the careers of politician and journalist Gérard Pelletier and Pierre Juneau, initially a filmmaker for the National Film Board (NFB) and later the first chair of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

2 In a document he prepared on the state of communication media while at the NFB, Le Moyne argued that literature had been surpassed by the newer media of photography, film, and television because they permitted the "direct capture of life itself" ("Le Désordre dans l'imagerie contemporaine" 3).

3 John Glassco found "Rêveries machiniques" "brilliant, original and profound—and also extremely amusing," and told Le Moyne how "no one [was] writing as well as this in Canada, in either language" (n. pag.). Gilles Marcotte, an author, critic, and filmmaker, encouraged Le Moyne in his philosophical and poetic endeavour: "You say that the poetics of machine can only be critical. Isn't it true of all veritable poetry today?" (n. pag.). Pierre Elliott Trudeau also encouraged him to "break his silence" on machines upon reading *Itinéraire* in 1982 (n. pag.).

4 Unless otherwise noted, all translations of citations originally in French are by the authors.

5 Le Moyne regularly mentioned the importance of Van Lier and Simondon; their influence on his work was profound. He worked to increase awareness of their work in North America, conducting interviews with both philosophers in the hope of having them distributed in the form of educational films by the Office du Film du Québec.

6 Bachelard's main publications on imagination and reverie include *L'Air et les songes* (1943), *L'Eau et les rêves* (1964), *La Psychanalyse du feu* (1965), *La Terre et les rêveries du repos* (1965), and *La Poétique de la rêverie* (1965).

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