

# Alexandre Vattemare

(Paris, 1796-1864),  
ventriloquist, diplomat, utopian,  
and brilliant inventor

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MONS<sup>R</sup> ALEXANDRE,  
as Nicholas.

(In his run-away dress!)

There is no great achievement  
which was not utopia at first.

Anonymous

# Introduction 1/4

- ▶ Alexandre Vattemare was born and died in Paris (1796-1864). He was a protean character. His exceptional talents of mime and ventriloquist earned him fame in post-Napoleonic Europe.
- ▶ If this man, esteemed by the rulers and the intellectual elite of his time, has gone down in history, it is because he has created an international system for the exchange of double specimens in the fields of arts, natural sciences , scientific and literary works, and advocated the construction of institutes bringing together many public services. He wanted to strengthen the bonds of friendship between groups of the human family and allow workers and poor people to learn easily.
- ▶ The purpose of this conference is to identify the Vattemare project to build in Montreal and Quebec, in 1840 and 1841, two institutes with multiple functions - real urban utopias - in order to break down national, linguistic, and cultural barriers through education, and in particular, free education of the workers and the poor.



Alexandre Vattemare in 1831

# Introduction 2/4

- ▶ During two trips to the United States, Vattermare visited some fifty cities: Washington, where he presented before the Congress a memoir on his exchange project, New York, Baltimore, and more particularly Boston, where he set up precious and lasting friendships with notables, among whom are the two Quincy, father and son, mayors in turn of the city. Quincy Sr. was President of Harvard University. His family had to support Vattermare's project to its final realization: the founding of the Boston Public Library.
- ▶
- ▶ The foundation of this Library will be one of the most beautiful jewels of Vattermare's career. On the marble slabs leading to the grand staircase of the building, his name is among the founders of the institution. And Vattermare did not forget Louisiana, where the population of French origin attracted him.



**Alexandre Vattemare, who created the first cultural exchange system between public libraries and museums, was a ventriloquist who trained as a surgeon, but was refused a diploma after making cadavers seem to speak during surgical exercises.**

**KickassFacts.com**

# Introduction 3/4

- ▶ The “Frenchs of Americas,” as Vattermare will later call French Canadians, also attracted him. In the fall of 1840, he visited Montreal and Quebec City in 1841. His stay was marked by intimate and public visits which gave rise to many hopes. He made contact with well-known personalities, among others, Georges-Barthélemi Faribault, Clerk of Parliament and first Canadian bibliographer; Denis-Benjamin Viger; Jacques Viger, first mayor of Montreal; Joseph-Guillaume Barthe, Stephen Parent, Napoleon Aubin, Auguste-Norbert Morin, Governor General Lord Sydenham, &.

Georges-Barthélemy Faribault (1789-1866)



# Introduction 4/4

- ▶ The French and English-speaking press welcomed his exchange system very favorably. Bishop Bourget and the governor, Lord Sydenham, presented the project to the British Commons.
- ▶ In Montreal and Quebec City, enthusiasm was general. The exchange system project was accompanied by an urban development project that promoted reading. He advocated the consolidation, in a single neighborhood, of the town hall, archives, public services (police, firefighters, citizen assistance services), the university, museums and, of course, the library. Since this is close to public services, workers would be inclined to enter and cultivate themselves by reading.
- ▶ This project made me think about the motivations of the creators of the University of Quebec, and that's what decided me to present it. It is Vattemare's vision for the future that has struck me, as well as the actuality of its urban planning project, one hundred and fifty-five years after the death of the ventriloquist, and the modernity of its conception of the world based on the education of the masses, collaboration and exchange of writings and theoretical knowledge, so important today in scientific research.

# Urban Utopia

- ▶ The urban project of Vattermare is utopian - as utopian as the urban utopias that dot the history of ideas for centuries.
- ▶ The intellectual and material incarnation of an idea, urban utopia is an urbanistic design aimed at architectural and human perfection. It inspires to build and to live in harmony a singular social organization based on certain moral and political precepts. Although many urban utopias have only been dreamed of in the minds of their creators, some have been completed in practice. However, these are "ideal" achievements in the sense that, unlike the spontaneous city, which develops gradually according to the needs according to multiple decisions, and thus in an organic and sometimes anarchic way, the ideal city is conceptually elaborated. before being materially constructed, and its foundation results from an intellectualized, unified will.
- ▶ “A building started and completed by a single architect will usually be finer and better organized than one that several people have tried to patch up by adapting old walls that had been built for other purposes. Again, these old cities of Europe that have gradually grown from mere villages into large towns are usually less well laid out than the orderly towns that planners lay out as they wish on level ground; so much less that from the way the buildings are arranged in the old cities—a tall one here, a small one there—and the way they make the streets crooked and irregular, you would think they had been placed where they are by chance rather than by the will of thinking men.” (René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting one's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, Part 2.)



Alexandre

Propriété de l'éditeur  
Enregistré dans l'Archivé de l'ancien  
Vienne  
chez P. Michelli et C<sup>o</sup>  
Place St. Michel N<sup>o</sup> 1155

# Vattemare's urban utopia

- ▶ The urban utopia of Vattemare is not a new idea. It is in fact part of a long line of utopian projects proposed by philosophers, writers, and the most diverse engineers. The motives behind these projects are also many: some aim at the theoretical reorganization of a truly disordered society; others are like the expression of a generous dream of equality and sharing. Their most obvious common point is their lack of realism and lack of realization.
- ▶ Here again, the urban utopia of Vattemare meets this definition: its urban utopia has not materialized.
- ▶ Let us first look at the utopias of which Vattemare was able to draw inspiration, and then those uttered after his own dream.

# Callipolis

<http://adeimantos.free.fr/>

- ▶ Callipolis is the ideal city imagined by Plato (428-348) in book V of his dialogue *The Republic* (381 BC).



# The Garden of Eden

The Callipolis of Plato often passes for the oldest utopia. But for me, the idea of a perfect spiritual world, found in all ancient religions, is the true archetype of utopia. In this category, the Garden of Eden (the earthly Paradise), reported in *Genesis*, is the best example of the founding myth of a belief in the plausibility of a utopia truly rooted in the material reality of human beings.



Jerome Bosch (1450-1516),  
The Garden of delights (1515),  
Prado Museum, Madrid.

← Tailors are unhappy there!

# Atlantis 1 / 3

▶ There is also Atlantis, a mythical utopia that haunts all classical Greek philosophy, described by Plato in *Timaeus* (360 BC) and *Critias*. Quote from *Timaeus*:

▶ “Many great and wonderful deeds are recorded of your state in our histories. But one of them exceeds all the rest in greatness and valor. For these histories tell of a mighty power which unprovoked made an expedition against the whole of Europe and Asia, and to which your city put an end. This power came forth out of the Atlantic Ocean, for in those days the Atlantic was navigable; and there was an island situated in front of the straits which are by you called the Pillars of Heracles; the island was larger than Libya and Asia put together, and was the way to other islands, and from these you might pass to the whole of the opposite continent which surrounded the true ocean; for this sea which is within the Straits of Heracles is only a harbor, having a narrow entrance, but that other is a real sea, and the surrounding land may be most truly called a boundless continent. Now in this island of Atlantis there was a great and wonderful empire which had rule over the whole island and several others, and over parts of the continent, and, furthermore, the men of Atlantis had subjected the parts of Libya within the columns of Heracles as far as Egypt, and of Europe as far as Tyrrhenia. This vast power, gathered into one, endeavored to subdue at a blow our country and yours and the whole of the region within the straits; and then, Solon, your country shone forth, in the excellence of her virtue and strength, among all mankind. She was pre-eminent in courage and military skill, and was the leader of the Hellenes. And when the rest fell off from her, being compelled to stand alone, after having undergone the very extremity of danger, she defeated and triumphed over the invaders, and preserved from slavery those who were not yet subjugated, and generously liberated all the rest of us who dwell within the pillars. But afterwards there occurred violent earthquakes and floods; and in a single day and night of misfortune all your warlike men in a body sank into the earth, and the island of Atlantis in like manner disappeared in the depths of the sea. For which reason the sea in those parts is impassable and impenetrable, because there is a shoal of mud in the way; and this was caused by the subsidence of the island. I have told you briefly, Socrates, what the aged Critias heard from Solon and related to us.”

# Atlantis 2/3

Quote from *Critias*:

“Now Atlas had a numerous and honorable family, and they retained the kingdom, the eldest son handing it on to his eldest for many generations; and they had such an amount of wealth as was never before possessed by kings and potentates, and is not likely ever to be again, and they were furnished with everything which they needed, both in the city and country. For because of the greatness of their empire many things were brought to them from foreign countries, and the island itself provided most of what was required by them for the uses of life. In the first place, they dug out of the earth whatever was to be found there, solid as well as fusile, and that which is now only a name and was then something more than a name, orichalcum, was dug out of the earth in many parts of the island, being more precious in those days than anything except gold. There was an abundance of wood for carpenter's work, and sufficient maintenance for tame and wild animals. Moreover, there were a great number of elephants in the island; for as there was provision for all other sorts of animals, both for those which live in lakes and marshes and rivers, and also for those which live in mountains and on plains, so there was for the animal which is the largest and most voracious of all. Also whatever fragrant things there now are in the earth, whether roots, or herbage, or woods, or essences which distil from fruit and flower, grew and thrived in that land; also the fruit which admits of cultivation, both the dry sort, which is given us for nourishment and any other which we use for food-we call them all by the common name pulse, and the fruits having a hard rind, affording drinks and meats and ointments, and good store of chestnuts and the like, which furnish pleasure and amusement, and are fruits which spoil with keeping, and the pleasant kinds of dessert, with which we console ourselves after dinner, when we are tired of eating-all these that sacred island which then beheld the light of the sun, brought forth fair and wondrous and in infinite abundance.”





## Atlantis 3/3

<https://www.gurumed.org/2011/03/15/la-cit-engloutis-de-latlantide-aurait-elle-t-finalement-trouv/>



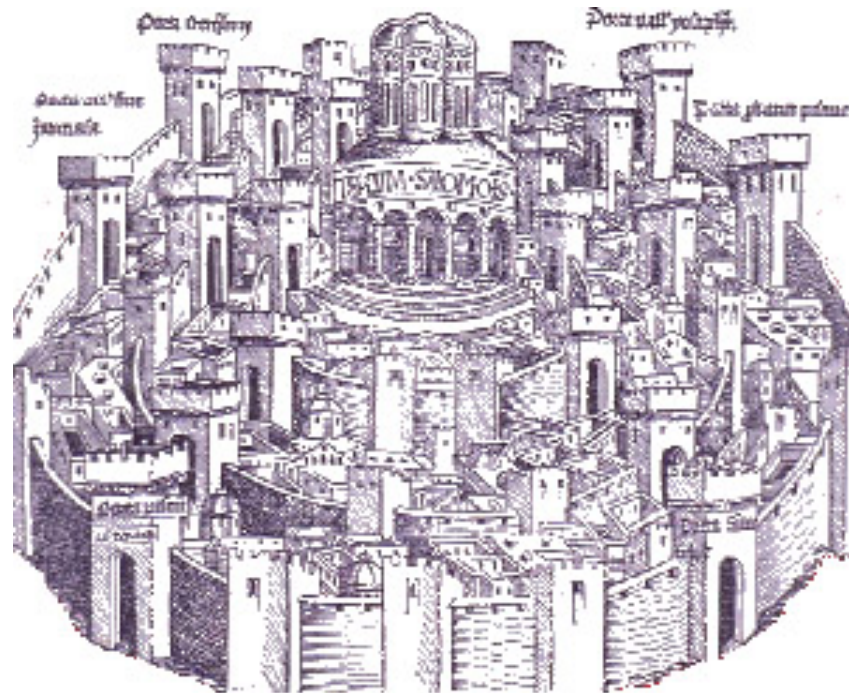
# Babel

Pieter Bruegel (or Brueghel) the Elder (1525-1569), *The Tower of Babel* (circa 1563), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



# An idea of Jerusalem

*Liber chronicarum mundi*, Nuremberg, 1493



# Heavenly Jerusalem

Hennequin de Bruges (unknown dates) and Nicolas Bataille († 1400), *Hanging of Apocalypse*, 1373-1382, Musée de la Tapisserie de l'Apocalypse, château d'Angers, France.

“And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.”

John, *Revelation*, XXI:10-16.

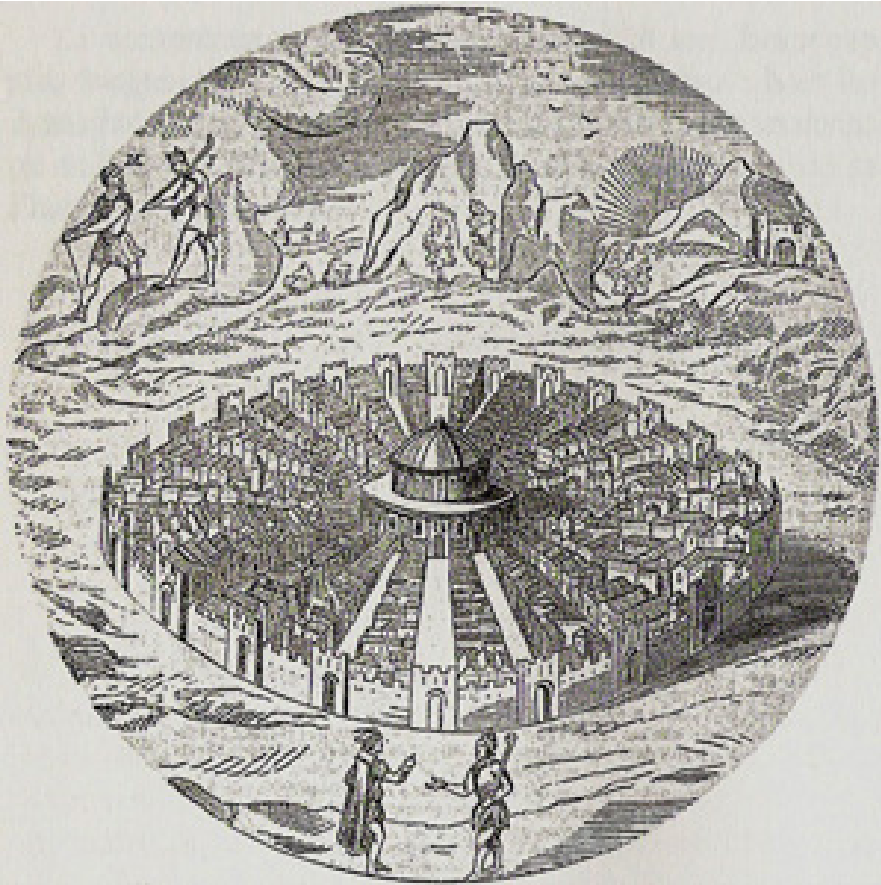


*Utopia* (1516),  
by Thomas More (1478-1535)



# *The City of the Sun* (1623)

by Tomasso Campanella (1568-1639)



This totalitarian utopia describes, with great precision, a society of prison freedom where well-being exists without desires or passion.

# City of Neuf-Brisach (Haut-Rhin, Alsace, France), created by Vauban in 1697



# The fortress of Palmanova, Venice, 1593



The salt factory of Arc-et-Senans (Doubs, France),  
late XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, created by Ledoux



# And there are many more...

- ▶ “The Abbey of Theleme,” in *Gargantua*, by Rabelais, 1534. The book echoes the ideological debates born of the progress of humanism. *Gargantua* is a parody of contemporary historiography. The Abbey of Theleme is founded at the end of the novel, and has the motto “Do what you want”. In *Pantagruel*, Rabelais writes that Badebec, the mother of Pantagruel, is the daughter of the king of Amaurotes in Utopia, reference to Thomas More who, in his work *Utopia*, named Amaurote the capital of the island of Utopia. The country of Utopia, in *Pantagruel*, returns several times in the story, in particular in chapters 23, 24 and 29.
- ▶ *New Atlantis* (1627), by Francis Bacon. This work describes a philosophical community.
- ▶ *Criticon* (1657), by Baltasar Gracian. This book is an allegorical novel in three parts. It recalls the Byzantine romance style with its many adventures and reflects a satirical view of society.
- ▶ *The Other World: Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon* (1657), by Cyrano de Bergerac.
- ▶ *The Southern Land, Known* (1676), by Gabriel de Foigny.
- ▶ *The History of the Sevarites* (1675), de Denis Vairasse d’Allais.
- ▶ *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1699), by François de Salignac de La Mothe- Fénelon.

- ▶ *The Travels and Adventures of James Massey* (1714), by Simon Tyssot de Patot.
- ▶ “Libertalia” in *General History of the Pyrates* (1724), by Daniel Defoe.
- ▶ *The Island of Slaves and The Colony* (1725), by Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux.
- ▶ “A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms,” 4<sup>th</sup> of *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), by Jonathan Swift.
- ▶ *Relation du Royaume des Féliciens* (1727), du marquis de Lassay.
- ▶ “Eldorado,” chapters XVII and XVIII in *Candide* (1759), by Voltaire.
- ▶ *La Vérité, ou le Vrai système* (1760), by Léger Marie Deschamps.
- ▶ *Voyage de Robertson aux Terres australes*, anonyme, Amsterdam, 1766
- ▶ “The Country of the Gangarides,” in *The Princess of Babylon* (1768), by Voltaire. In this perfect place, everyone is at peace with his neighbor and himself. By pacifism this people heals even an Indian king came to invade the country. The latter comes out “neat” and pacifist.
- ▶ *The Discovery of the Austral Continent by a Flying Man* (Paris, 1781), by Nicolas Anne Edme Restif de la Bretonne.
- ▶ *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred* (1771), by Louis Sébastien Mercier.
- ▶ *Paul and Virginia* (1789), by Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre.
- ▶ *The Island of Philosophers* (Chartres, 1790), by Abbé Balthazard.
- ▶ “The Island of Tamoe,” in *Aline and Valcour* (1795), by the Marquis de Sade.
  
- ▶ Collections of utopias, XVIII<sup>th</sup> century:
- ▶ *La Bibliothèques des romans* (Paris, 1735), by Lenglet-Dufresnoy.
- ▶ *Voyages imaginaires, songes, visions, et romans cabalistiques* (Amsterdam, 1789), collected by Charles Garnier, 36 vol. in-octavo.

## ... even in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century

and Alexandre Vattemare could be inspired

- ▶ *The New Christianity* (1825), by Claude Henri de Saint-Simon.
- ▶ *The Phalanstery* (1830), by Charles Fourier.
- ▶ *Travels in Icaria* (1840), by Etienne Cabet.
- ▶ *The Begum's Millions* (1879), by Jules Verne.
- ▶ *Looking Backward* (1888), by Edward Bellamy.
- ▶ *News from Nowhere or An Epoch of Rest* (1890), by William Morris.
- ▶ *Hygeia: A City of Health* (1890), by Benjamin Ward Richardson.
- ▶ *The Mysterious Island* (1874), by Jules Verne.

François Marie Charles Fourier

(1772-1837)



# The urban utopia of Vattemare

- ▶ The urban utopia of Vattemare is inseparable from its project of exchanges between countries of artifacts of art, science, literature and discoveries of all kinds.
- ▶ The international trade advocated by Vattemare's first objective is to promote the knowledge of foreign countries by the peoples who receive the products traded. But at the individual level, Vattemare's idea of urban utopia is to make it easier for workers to access this knowledge. This is the second goal of Vattemare. He does not want only the intellectuals of each country to have a better knowledge of foreign countries, but especially that the people, whose ignorance he deplores, have access to this thing of which they feel distant: culture.
- ▶ The urban utopia of Vattemare is clearly inspired by socialist utopias of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century and is based on a generous conception of the equal sharing of knowledge.

# All institutions in one place

## 1/2

- ▶ In Baltimore (MD), Vattemare advocated the merger into a single Baltimore Library Institute with the Baltimore Museum and the Maryland Academy of Science and Literature.
- ▶ In Montreal, after having approved its system of exchange by the members of the Special Council of the city, he will also propose the foundation of a great design institute. This institute will bring together existing societies: the Institute of Artisans (Mechanical Institute), the Montreal Library, the Institute of Natural History and the Mercantile Library. The Bureau of Commerce is quick to adhere to this project and present to the City Council a petition calling for the erection of a building capable of housing several institutions of public, commercial and cultural interest: the Town Hall , the Post Office, the Stock Exchange and the House of the Trinity (shelter for the homeless).

# All institutions in one place

## 2/2

- ▶ The upper two floors were to contain the National Institute, the Library and the Museum recommended by Vattemare to establish in Montreal a center for the exchange of objects, literature, sciences, arts, crafts, etc. with other countries. By offering young people the prizes they will bid for, this institute would contribute to the quick development of the country's geological, mineral, industrial and other resources.
- ▶ The petition having received enough signatures, the project was able to cross several administrative stages before reaching its goal: the promulgation of a law authorizing the city of Montreal to borrow £ 50,000 for the construction of the monumental building.
- ▶ From the beginning, everything seems to work perfectly. After accepting the project of the Bureau of Commerce, the City Council submits a memorandum to the governor requesting the authorization of the loan necessary for the construction.

# Vattemare, a mountebank?

- ▶ But there are still many obstacles to overcome. As long as it was only a matter of exchanging duplicates, it was easy to believe in Vattemare's disinterestedness, but as soon as he had tackled the delicate financial problem of a loan, a certain mistrust was felt.
- ▶ Differences of opinion are expressed in the form of open letters in newspapers. Some – rare, it is true – are wary of Vattemare (because he is French, or “comedian” [ventriloquist]), therefore unreliable, suspected of hypocrisy and attempted ruse; others, more numerous, praise the generosity and purity of Vattemare's feelings, such as this one, signed by the pseudonym *A Reasoner* in the *Montreal Herald* of December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1840:

# Praise of Vattermare in Montreal

(Autumn 1840)

- ▶ “It is certainly for us, for this country, that Mr. Vattermare works, endeavoring, as he does, to found institutions capable of drawing us from the slumber in which we are, and of which he is not than we go out. (...) The great beauty of Mr. Vattermare's [exchange] system is that the public will have free and unrestricted access to the Institute, and will enjoy all these advantages at no cost; everyone can enter the building at any time, admire the collections, consult the books of the library, and enjoy the readings, without being assailed by periodic requests for money, which are repugnant to the feelings of the majority of the human race. (...) Certainly no one was better calculated (*sic*) than he [Vattermare] for the mission he took on, because of his easy manner and persuasive eloquence. We can say of him: 'To see is to believe'. He is, against his will, obliged to appear on the stage like another himself, the famous ventriloquist Alexander, and though it would not be a dishonor, even for a man in whose veins the blood of the Caesars would flow, to deploy talents as extraordinary as those he possesses, he could have dispensed with them; but the funds he acquires there are scrupulously applied to promoting his voluntary views. Be that as it may, his appearance on the stage does not affect the elevation of his philosophical views.”

## Montreal: former City Library (1917-2005)

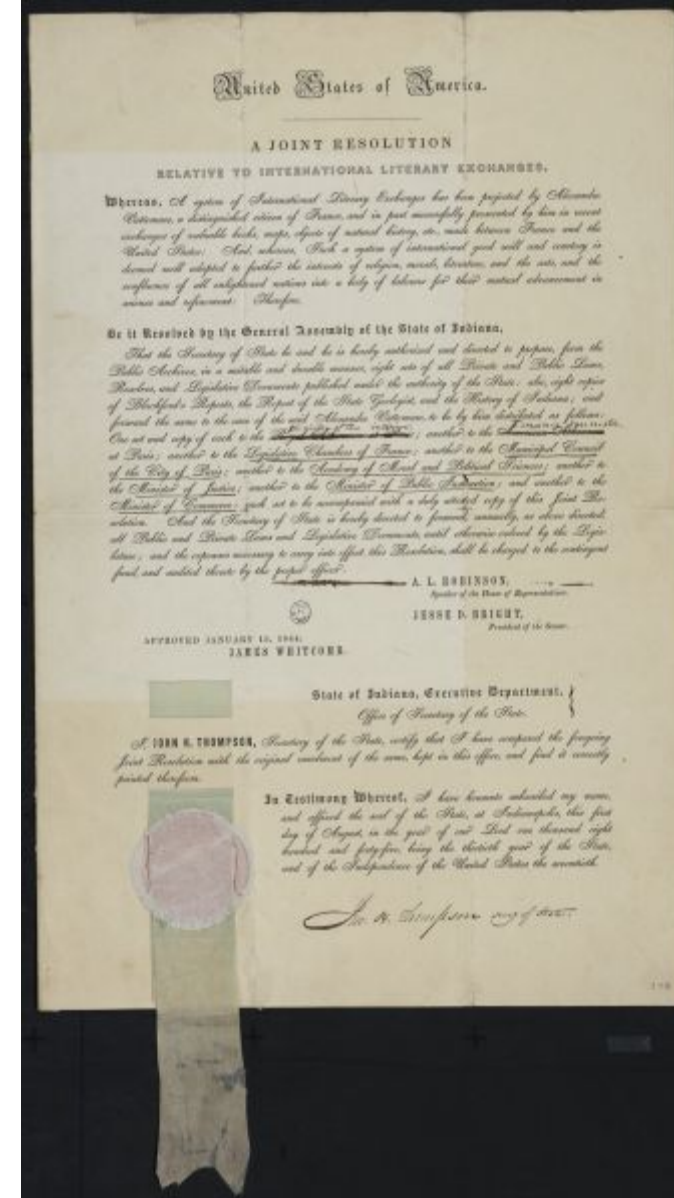




# Tout va très bien, madame la...

Finally, the energy of Vattemare and the devotion of his followers will be right of the recalcitrant. The decision, however, will only be known after Vattemare's departure for Quebec. True to his promise of support, Charles Edward Poulett Thomson, Lord Sydenham (1799-1841), Governor General, introduced the bill to the Special Council, which, on February 6, 1841, promulgated the *Ordinance to Authorize and Enable the Corporation of the City of Montreal to erect a Public Building in the said City, for certain purposes* (*Statutes of Lower Canada*, 4 Victoria, 27). As this document has the force of law, Vattemare has every reason to rejoice at having reached its daring objective.

- ▶ Before leaving Montreal, Vattemare convened a large assembly on St-François-Xavier Street, under the chairmanship of Charles Mondelet, a young lawyer and future magistrate at the Superior Court. At this point, Vattemare's plan is only at the draft stage, hence the importance of keeping public opinion awake. Mondelet does not fail to draw the attention of the assembly, composed mainly of young avant-garde, on the benefits that the project can bring to the education of the mass of the population. In this general enthusiasm, one rivals magnanimous suggestions. Thanks to his magnetism, Vattemare even dominates the dissensions between the two “races” because, having announced the nine “cheers” given at a previous meeting by the English Canadians from Montreal to their French-speaking fellow citizens, the Francophone assembly is hastening to return the favor to the first. Finally, the assembly votes congratulations to Vattemare, the City Council, the Governor General and proposes that a solemn mass be sung at the parish church. It is therefore in an atmosphere of apotheosis that Vattemare's visit to Montreal ends, as indicated by the *Aurore des Canadas* of January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1841.



Frédéric Sorrieu, *La République universelle, démocratique et sociale*, lithograph in gouache monochrome, Lemercier Printing, 1848, 31 x 45 cm, Paris, Carnavalet Museum.

The rebellion of 1848 spread throughout Europe, to the extent that the “revolutions of 1848” were celebrated. The liberation movements saw in this concomitance the signal for the establishment of a “universal republic.” The allegory of homage that this symbolized by a statue receives here, combines religiosity, internationalism, political optimism and reference to history. From the Heavens, Christ blesses the rediscovered fraternity of the human beings, concretized by a long procession which mixes nations, social classes, sexes and ages. Citizens, recognizable by their traditional costumes, parading before a tree of freedom under their respective flags, form a human chain that nothing seems to break. In any case not the power of the monarchs, whose decay is recalled by a floor littered with derisory royal attributes.



# In Quebec City

(Winter 1841)

- ▶ In Quebec City, where Vattemare arrived in early February 1841, the events followed an almost identical course. Obviously, the successes of Vattemare are cumulative; Quebec's reactions to Montreal were very closely followed. On the other hand, some precedents in Montreal have alerted learned societies that do not want to lose their autonomy. It is mainly the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, which holds a charter of the House of Assembly and fears losing its identity (and its charter) by being merged into the great project of Vattemare.
- ▶ Nevertheless, the Vattemare project finds very favorable echoes in the Quebec press. The *Quebec Gazette* and Napoleon Aubin's *Fantasque* consecrated him whole columns, just like the Anglophone *Mercury*. The *Quebec Gazette* of February 10, 1841 goes so far as to admonish the Quebec institutions, asking them to show self-sacrifice:

# The Quebec-Montreal rivalry: already?

- ▶ “If the scientific institutions of Quebec [City] want to show that they have at heart the establishment of the great Institute contemplation (*sic*), they can not do less than similar institutions in Montreal. They have at least no particular reason for acting other than the latter. The members of these institutions must no longer be saddened by the idea of the apparent death that is required of them. We are told that a member of the Society of Natural History of Montreal had cried, during the deliberations of this body on this new plan: ‘Alas! So we are going to have to die?’ – ‘Yes,’ said another member, ‘but like the phoenix, to be reborn from our ashes and resume a life more beautiful, more glorious than before. Let’s hope that the general assembly of the Literary and Historical Society [of Quebec City] will set aside all the petty reservations that the council of this society has suggested in its resolutions, and that the altar of arts and sciences will receive from it and other scientific institutions a offering full and whole.”

# Books and Jesuits

- ▶ On the other hand, the *Quebec Gazette* puts forward a practical proposal: that the former Jesuit college be assigned for the purposes of the Vattemare Institute. This project raises the enthusiasm of public opinion, especially since the military authorities, since 1759, had converted this building into barracks.
- ▶ Vattemare finds another faithful ally in the person of Napoleon Aubin, editor of the *Fantasque*. If the journal of the latter contributes largely to publicize the Vattemare plan, it also strives to sting the self-esteem of Quebecers urging them to make a decision for fear of being outstripped by Americans and Montrealers:
- ▶ “Similar institutions have been adopted with enthusiasm in the principal cities of the United States; hope that Canadians of all origins, by rushing to follow this example, will soon silence the slanderers who represent them as opposed to any intellectual emancipation.” (*Le Fantasque*, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1841.)

# The example of Montreal

- ▶ In another article, entitled "Let's hurry up," Aubin, frightened by the prevarications of Quebeckers, gives the example of Montreal:
- ▶ “When reading the newspapers of Montreal, we read the prodigies that operated in this city the plans so new, but so wise, Mr. Vattermare, we had trouble first to believe the assurances of their writers and it was only the better supported evidence that could convince us of the reality of what we then regarded as true miracles. (...) We were already looking forward to the idea that Quebec would compete zealously with Montreal and that in this noble struggle it would not be long before the latter.”

# The *intelligentsia* of Quebec City

- ▶ After criticizing the egoism of Quebec's learned societies, Aubin also adopted the Quebec Gazette's proposal regarding the Jesuit College and called for an assembly where the project could be discussed. While blaming “an irresistible feeling of mistrust towards the intentions of Mr. Vattemare,” he vehemently defends, in *Le Fantasque* (February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1841), the disinterested objectives of the latter, which could have amassed “an immense fortune thanks to his talent incomparable” of ventriloquist, but who preferred to choose “the hard task which brings him absolutely only honors.”
- ▶ Meanwhile, several meetings are held with the participation of the Quebec City intellectual elite. It includes journalists Étienne Parent, Napoleon Aubin, Joseph Cauchon, Mayor René-Édouard Caron, painters Antoine Plamondon and Théophile Hamel, bibliographer and Clerk of Parliament, Georges-Barthélemi Faribault, the future deputy Augustin-Norbert Morin, etc.
- ▶ But it is especially avant-garde youth who are attracted by the Vattemare plan. A letter signed by “Your humble admirers, Joseph Cauchon, secretary,” comes from the secretariat of the General Assembly of the Youth of Quebec, held in the meeting room, at the Palace of Parliament, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1841. Cauchon sends him a copy of the resolutions adopted at this meeting:

# Quebec's Golden Youth

- ▶ “If we are not allowed, to us who are young, to mix our voices with those of the illustrations of Europe and the new continent, to pay as they do the quota of our admiration, we can at least accompany you with the most sincere and the purest wishes.”
- ▶ Another letter signed by Augustin-Norbert Morin asks Vattermare, on behalf of the young people of Quebec City, to delay his departure for a day so that he can pose for a Canadian artist. But we never knew if this portrait was ever drawn, nor who was the artist.

# Goodbyes 1 / 3

- ▶ As in Montreal, all these assemblies culminate in a great farewell meeting. Convened on March 2, 1841, under the presidency of Mayor René-Édouard Caron, it attracts an audience of approximately 3,000 people. Resolutions are adopted asking the City Council to take the necessary measures to carry out the Vattemare Plan, including the Exchange System and the Institute. As to this last point, the Assembly insists on its social character, capable of providing free education to workers.
- ▶ Vattemare also speaks during the evening, tracing the history of its exchange system during the twenty-five years of its wanderings in Europe. After quoting many letters addressed to him by emperors, kings, archbishops and other dignitaries of Europe, including Mr. Guizot, then Minister of Education in France, congratulating him on his system, he concludes with an ingenious metaphor giving the quintessence of his plan:

# Goodbyes 2/3

- ▶ “Thus, you see, gentlemen, the utility of my system was immediately recognized as the true philosopher’s stone which gave to all, took no one, and by which one enriched oneself with one’s own gifts. Its realization, thanks to the already existing institutions, was made in an instant and the results that it produced led to it being designated by our illustrious poet Lamartine, under the bold and new name of the locomotive of universal civilization.” (*Le Canadien*, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1841.)
- ▶ But his real farewell to the Canadiens will not appear in the press until he leaves for Boston (*Le Fantasque*, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1841). He thanked everyone from ordinary citizens to city councilors, bishops and the governor general for their support. It is in Canada that he found the best understanding. Finally, in lyrical terms, he urges all Canadians to unite to work for the intellectual regeneration of their homeland. Similar admonitions and effusions are found in a private letter written from Boston, addressed to Aubin, of which he publishes some excerpts in *Le Fantasque* of May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1841:

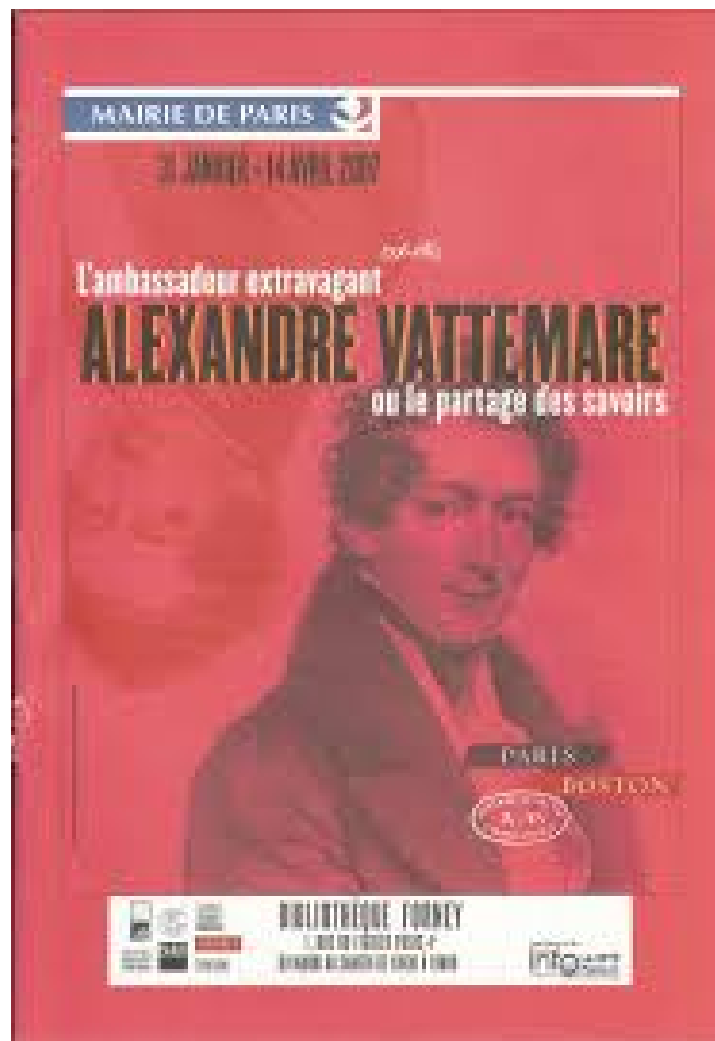
# Goodbyes 3/3

- ▶ “We must not forget the promises that were made especially by our brave Canadian youth, whom I love so much, make Heaven that it always keeps these noble and generous feelings that it expressed, with so many enthusiasm, to our great and glorious family reunion (...) that it remains united in order to effect this great intellectual regeneration (...) that it consolidates with a courageous perseverance the edifice, whose foundations were thrown with such brilliant hopes . (...) That the young people of Quebec and Montreal (both origins) do not stick to the applause of enthusiasm they filled me at their public meetings. For these applause, even this enthusiasm would turn to their shame, if after having made such solemn commitments they would stop suddenly (...) Tell our friends, that the further I get away from Canada, the more my esteem and my attachment increase for them, that all my life I will think of them, I will take care of them; (...) that the names of Quebec and Montreal are engraved in my heart, and that I beg them to keep a small place in their memory for a being who looks at them with pride like these compatriots, and who will seize every opportunity of their to prove the purity of the feelings he feels for this good people (...).” (*Le Fantasque*, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1841.)

# The satisfaction of work well done

- ▶ Apart from the lyrical emphasis of these farewells – we are in the romantic era – there is ample evidence of the sincerity of Vattermare's feelings towards Canada.
- ▶ Even if later events were not to fulfill the first hopes, Vattermare still had a special fondness for Canada.
- ▶
- ▶ But in March 1841 no one could foresee such a denouement. With the almost unanimous support of public opinion, Vattermare left for Boston with the conviction that he had accomplished his mission. He could not imagine that after his departure the scaffolding, painfully assembled, was going to collapse. He could not have guessed either that Boston would be the scene of one of his most enduring achievements, if not an immediate one.

# The sharing of knowledge



# Failure in Quebec 1/6

- ▶ At least one of Vattemare's projects took place in Canada: the exchange system worked for a few years.
- ▶ As for the failure of the founding of the Institute, despite a sanctioned ordinance having the force of law, the real cause remains unknown. A study by Claude Galarneau, "The Philanthropist Vattemare," published in 1968, mentions some positive aspects of Vattemare's visit, attributes the failure to the rivalry of the institutional interests of small societies, the apathy of the population and the context policy. An analysis by Jean-Charles Bonenfant, dated September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1970, answers the question of why Sydenham's order was not executed:

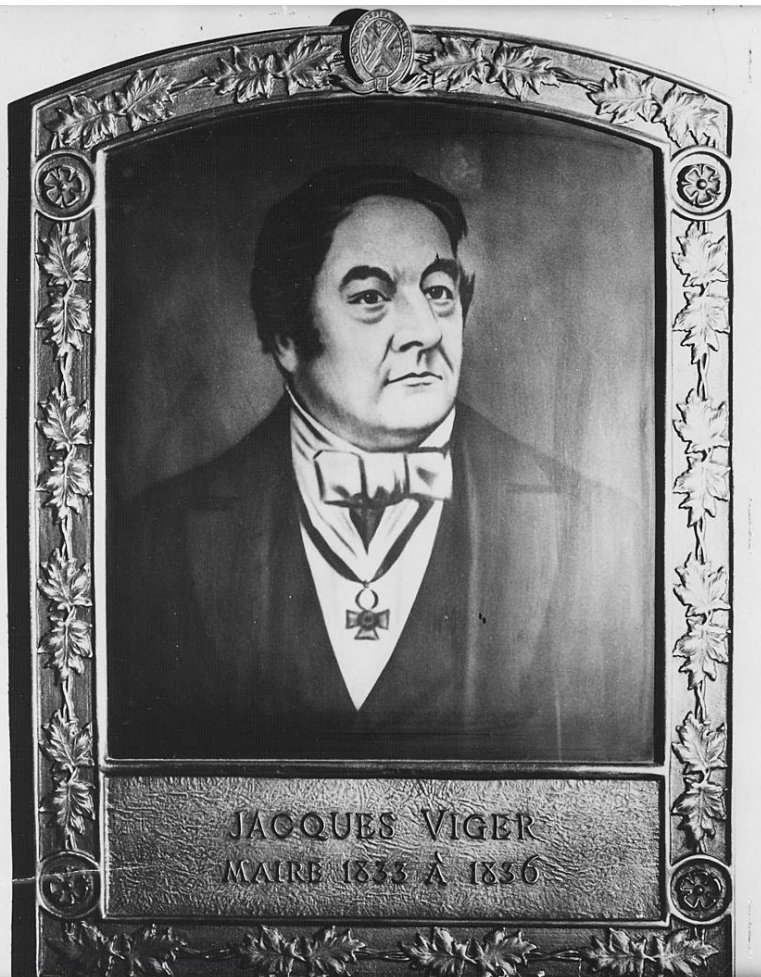
# Failure in Quebec 2/6

- ▶ “It is an order of the Special Council which, from 1837 to 1841, adopted measures which for all intents and purposes were lawful. It was therefore a law that allowed the city of Montreal to make the expenditures mentioned. The city of Montreal did not take advantage of the permission it was given. In other words, the law did not force the city of Montreal to do anything, but allowed it, which is different. It has happened quite often in history that laws of this kind have not gone beyond the stage of adoption.”
- ▶ We can thus explain the reversal of public opinion that leads to the failure of the Vattemare’s plan. Without any obligation, the resolutions of the assemblies were quickly forgotten. After the departure of the irresistible magician, the public was quick to shake the charm that had subjugated him for a few months. Instead of considering the great benefits he could draw from the project, he shrank from the sacrifices the plan required.

# Failure in Quebec 3/6

- ▶ It must also be added that the political context has served and served Vattemare at the same time. Considering the role of Sydenham, as effective as her protection, she was able, at the same time, to turn away from Vattemare the people against the policy of the government. The antagonism between the political factions after Sydenham's departure has resumed with renewed vigor.
- ▶ In the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, Montreal is in economic turmoil. The fortifications were demolished in 1804 in order to unite the center and the suburbs. Stone docks were built on the port in 1830. The majority was French-speaking until the mid-1830s, then became English-speaking. Scottish, Irish, English, Americans arrive massively. Canadians are fighting to save their identity and their homeland, as the British struggle to improve their lives and the economy of the colony; they hardly understand those whom they see as rebels and not patriots. This anarchy requires the trusteeship of the region. Justices of the Peace of the Court of Special Session, appointed by the governor, administer the territory; among them are Judges Robert Christie, John Fisher, William Kemble, Thomas Oliva and Thomas Young. They have little power and very vague mandates.

# Failure in Quebec 4/6



As early as 1828, the English merchants protested: the customs of entry into the country was at Quebec, while the factories and the quays of landing were in Montreal, whose port should have a customs. For their part, the nationalists seek an effective forum. In 1828, they united to demand incorporation, which requires the election of councilors. In March 1831, Montreal obtained its first charter, for four years. In 1832, King William IV sanctions it. It comes into effect in 1833 and Montreal holds its first ballot. Apart from Sainte-Anne, where four councilors are running for office, all candidates are elected without opposition. They are 16 aldermen to represent 8 districts. Among them, they choose Jacques Viger to fill the position of mayor.

# Failure in Quebec 5/6

- ▶ Moderated nationalist, Viger frequents Bishop Lartigue and the deputy of Chambly, Denis-Benjamin Viger (his cousins), as well as Louis-Joseph Papineau, chief of the Patriots (his best friend). In 1822, he was secretary of the group that signed the protest against the Union of the Two Canadas; Papineau is the president. In 1826, he founded *La Minerve*, with Ludger Duvernay and Auguste-Norbert Morin, committed patriots. Between November 1808 and May 1809, he also wrote in *Le Canadien* articles with fiery patriotism.
- ▶ The turbulent political climate that has prevailed between Canadians and the British since the Conquest, and particularly in 1832, does not subside during Viger's mandate. On the contrary, everything announces the Rebellions of 1837-1838. Although the mayor disassociated himself from the armed struggle advocated by Papineau, he did not keep his position when the municipal charter came to an end in April 1836. Faced with the political unrest in Montreal, the governor again entrusted the management from city to justices of the peace of the Court of Special Sessions. Stigmatized because of his political opinions, Viger was systematically removed from public office after 1836.

# Failure in Quebec 6/6

The agitation does not diminish. In 1836, the temporary charter is not renewed. The governor asks Viger to have a magistrate appointed by the council to succeed him, but Viger refuses. Guardianship is again decreed by Governor Gosford; the judges of the Court of Special Session run the city. Number of rights are suspended; the judges use force to put an end to the disorder. This tutelage ends in 1840, when Governor General Sydenham appoints Peter McGill as mayor and 18 councilors including 6 Canadians to represent the 9 neighborhoods that then includes Montreal. The rules of the new charter favor the British at the expense of French Canadians.

Peter McGill →

In this context, the exchange system loses some of its luster and the Francophone institute of Vattemare is soon forgotten.

The efforts given in Canada will only be successful in Boston, where a more homogenous society will be able to realize the idea of the first public library on the North American continent.



# In Boston 1/2

- ▶ Vattemare arrived in Boston early in March 1841. He began by calling a meeting at the Mercantile Library Association. His stay in Canada proved to him that it is with the youth that he can count on the most intense reactions. He is still speaking to young people and emphasizes the benefits that his Institute can offer to young people from poor families.
- ▶ The audience responds with resolutions favorable to the two suggestions: the exchange system and the institute; it decides to hold a new assembly to make final decisions.
- ▶ Vattemare's first visit to Boston lasts only about two months, but these few weeks are enough to tie valuable and lasting friendships among the city's notables. Among them are the two Quincy, father and son, whose eldest at the time was the president of Harvard University, Josiah Quincy supports the Vattemare project to its final realization, the founding of the Boston Public Library.

# Boston Public Library



## In Boston 2/2

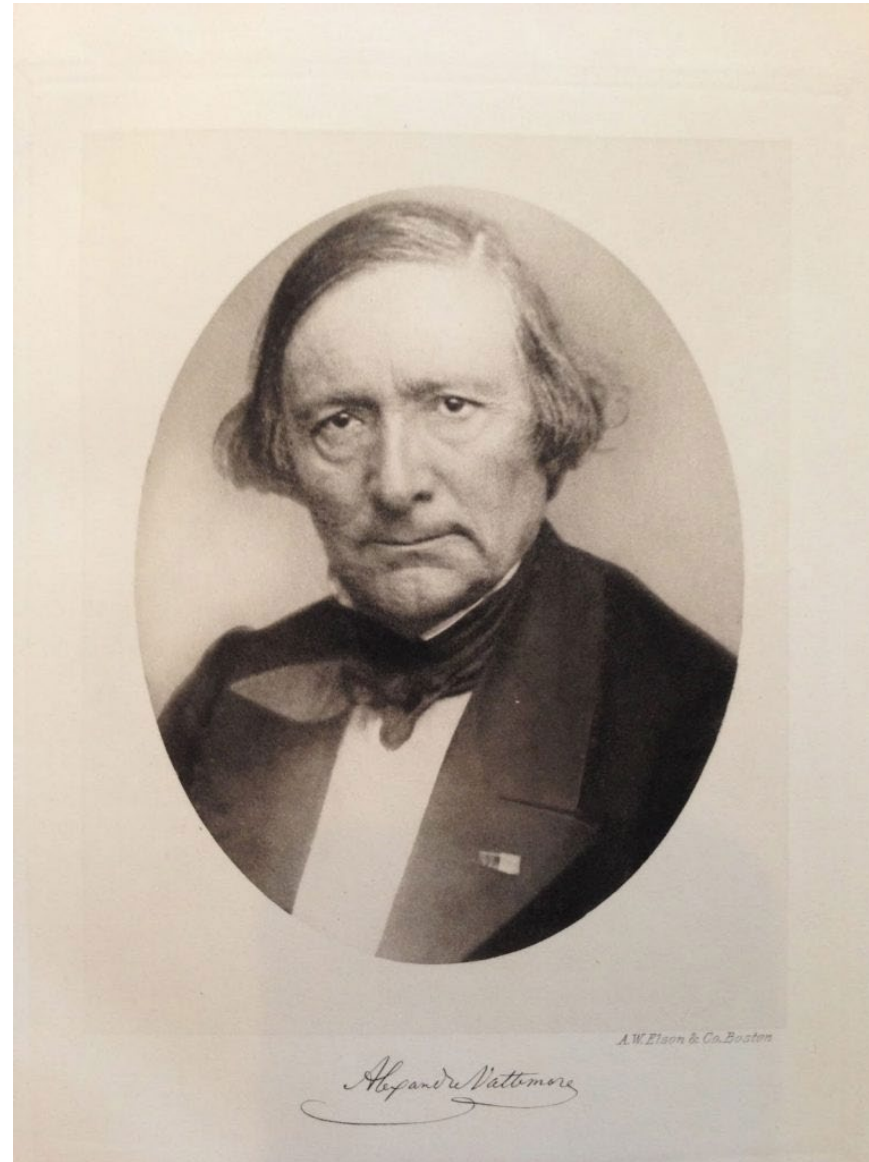
- ▶ With a sincere friendship for Vattermare, Josiah Quincy will often invite him into his family, which will allow his daughter, Mrs. Greene, to draw a favorable and picturesque portrait of this strange traveler in his diary.
- ▶ Boston will be a memorable part of Vattermare's journey in North America, even if the result will be more than a decade away. For Vattermare, the fact of having started the foundation of the Boston Public Library is one of the most beautiful jewels of his crown.
- ▶ It should also be noted that the current interlibrary loan system, which extends to all public, college and university libraries in North America, is directly inspired by the values and characteristics of Vattermare's trading system.

# Vattemare's secret

- ▶ If one considers these extraordinary results for a foreigner, in a foreign language, in America, one comes to wonder what was the secret of Vattemare's ascendancy over his audience. It is then advisable to distinguish one's original personality. His presence had to favor him. At the New York Public Library, among the letters of Vattemare, there is one containing a lock of his hair, sent to a lady of the upper class of Baltimore, Mrs. C. Chase Oldfield, who had asked for this favor. Apparently, the charm he had always had on women, the charm that had earned him in his youth the prospect of a brilliant marriage, was still intact.
- ▶ However, this brown wick attached to the letter of Vattemare is already mixed with gray: during his first trip to America, he is 43 years old. A photograph of the time shows it with marked features in a tormented face. Vattemare now embodies the incarnation of the enlightened philanthropist, propagating humanistic ideas. He has long speeches in English, which reinforces his grip on his audience. There is no doubt that he exercised an irresistible magnetism on his French and English speaking audiences, men and women, young and old.

## Alexandre Vattemare old

Undated picture of Alexandre Vattemare published in *The Public Library of the city of Boston : a history*, by Horace G. Wadlin, 1910, 1911.



# Positive results

- ▶ Before returning to Europe, Vattermare convenes a final assembly at *Clinton Hall* in New York, the place of his first public on his arrival in the United States. After a stay of 19 months, he is now able to present tangible results, as evidenced by the signs of official French recognition - moral, if not pecuniary. A letter from Mr. Bacour, Ambassador of France to Washington, expresses in warm terms the recognition of France:
- ▶ “I hastened to transmit (...) the notes which indicate the scientific and bibliographical wealth that, by your numerous steps and your personal influence, you have just acquired to France. I am happy to congratulate you on this great success, as honorable for you, Sir, as for the American nation, whose sympathies for our dear country you have awakened. The government of the king will doubtless judge, like me, sir, that you have rendered real and important services to France by the researches you have done on the American continent.”
- ▶ Vattermare was an extravagant ambassador of cultures, the promoter of the “American Way of Life,” a bond of esteem and friendship between the old and the new world, the one where one no longer dreams, and the other, where one can still believe in utopias and daring projects.

# After Vattemare

Inside the *famelistère* (1859-1880),  
city of Guise, France



*New Harmony* (1826), community  
project designed by utopist socialist  
Robert Owen (1771-1858)





*The Ideal City* (1470), firstly attributed to à Piero della Francesca ↑ then to Luciano Laurana, and now to Francesco di Giorgio Martini or Melozzo da Forlì.

Model of the city of Miletus preserved at the Pergamon Museum → (Berlin).



# Utopias in the XX<sup>th</sup> century

## 1/6

- ▶ *A Moderne Utopia* (1905), by Herbert George Wells. Two tourists vacationing in the Alps are projected on a planet similar to the Earth (they find there their doubles), governed by a utopian world state.
- ▶ *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven* (1909), by Mark Twain. The story tells Captain Elie Storm's journey after his death, his directional mistake that leads him into a non-human sky, and his discovery of an unexpected paradise.
- ▶ *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician* (1911), by Alfred Jarry.
- ▶ *Utopolis* (1930), by Werner Illing. Karl and Heinz, two sailors from Hamburg, fall on the coast of Utopia, a world without social classes or title deeds. They discover a very advanced civilization, entirely turned towards technical progress. But the last capitalists living still entrenched in the U-Private district are waging a dark plot that could well sign the end of this ideal community. Karl and Heinz will help Utopians defend their world of solidarity against the throes of individualism and greed.

# Utopias in the XX<sup>th</sup> century

## 2/6

- ▶ *For Us, The Living* (1938), by Robert A. Heinlein. Perry Nelson, an engineer (Marine Pilot), drives his car when an explosion occurs, skidding down the cliff and waking up in the year 2086. Although it happened during the summer, it reappears in the middle a very cold snow, dies almost frozen again, and is saved by a woman dressed in fur, named Diana. The exact circumstances of his death and rebirth a century and a half later are never explained. The characters living at the end of the twenty-first century seem strangely curious: showing little interest in the way he came to them, they take his appearance for granted and continue to explain the details of the setting up. social and political world.
- ▶ *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), by Hermann Hesse.
- ▶ *Island* (1962), by Aldous Huxley.

# Utopias in the XX<sup>th</sup> century

## 3/6

- ▶ *The Year 01* (1970), by G  b  . This film narrates a utopian, consensual and festive abandonment of the market economy and productivism. The population decides on a number of resolutions, the first of which is “We stop everything” and the second “After a total pause, will only be revived – reluctantly – that the services and productions whose lack will prove intolerable.” Probably: water to drink, electricity to read at night, the TSF to say “It's not the end of the world, it's year 01, and now a page of Celestial Mechanics.” The entry into force of these resolutions corresponds to the first day of a new era, the Year 01. The Year 01 is emblematic of the protest of the 1970s and addresses themes as varied as the ecology, the negation of the authority, free love, community life, the rejection of private property and work.
- ▶ *Invisible Cities* (1972), by Italo Calvino.
- ▶ “Annare Planet,” in *The Dispossessed* (1974), by Ursula K. Le Guin.

# Utopias in the XX<sup>th</sup> century

## 4/6

- ▶ *Ecotopia* (1975), by Ernest Callenbach, tells the story of an American journalist sent to Ecotopia, a country formed by the states of the newly secessioned West coast, to lift, for the first time in 19 years, the veil on this country that preaches ecology as a way of life.
- ▶ *Farewell to the Working Class* (1983), by André Gorz (last part).
- ▶ *Quebecie* (1990), by Francine Lachance, is a utopia of a new kind, which, after the anti-utopias, takes into account their criticism, that it even radicalizes: “Quebec thus manages to avoid the pitfalls of traditional utopias by solving their difficulties. She even manages to criticize these far beyond what anti-utopias do. It is nonetheless a utopia in that it responds fully to the two functions of the latter, namely the criticism of society and the establishment of an ideal world.”

# Utopias in the XX<sup>th</sup> century

## 5/6

- ▶ *The Giver* (1993), by Lois Lowry. In Jonah's world, war, poverty, unemployment, divorce do not exist. Inequalities do not exist, disobedience and revolt do not exist. Harmony reigns in the family cells carefully constituted by the committee of wise men. People who are too old, as well as unfit newborns, are 'widened', nobody knows exactly what that means. In the community, only one person really holds the knowledge: it is the repository of the memory. He alone knows how the world was, generations ago, when there were still animals, when the human could still see the colors, when people fell in love. In a few days, Jonah will be twelve years old. During a grand ceremony, he will be assigned, like all children his age, his future role in the community. Jonah does not know yet that he is unique. An extraordinary destiny awaits him. A destiny that can destroy it.
- ▶ *The Left-Handed's Island* (1995), by Alexandre Jardin. The novel features Jeremy Cigogne, a young aristocrat who blames himself for failing to convert his passion for his wife into true love. He then decided to set sail for an island unknown to geographers sheltering a population exclusively made up of left-handers, who knew better how to live their lives than in the West. In contact with these great living, Jeremy will mature and acquire another approach to love and life.

# Utopias in the XX<sup>th</sup> century

## 6/6

- ▶ *Empire of the Ants* (1996), by Bernard Werber. The book tells the story of the 103<sup>rd</sup> ant and a student with captivating vocals, Julie Pinson. They are each trying to revolutionize their respective worlds, meet each other, and understand each other despite the millions of years of prejudice that separate them.
- ▶ *Beautiful Green* (1996), movie by Coline Serreau. Somewhere in the universe exists a planet whose evolved and happy inhabitants live in perfect harmony. From time to time some of them go on excursions to other planets. Curiously, for two hundred years nobody wants to go on planet Earth. But one day, for personal reasons, a young woman decides to volunteer. And that's how the Terrans see it land in the middle of Paris
- ▶ *The Obscure Cities* (1996), series of comics by Francois Schuiten and Benoit Peeters.

# The House of Utopia, 1970 in Gif-sur-Yvette, France



# Utopias in the XXI<sup>st</sup> century

## 1 / 2

- ▶ *Saint-Pantel* (2003), by Xavier Tacchella.
- ▶ “Island of Tranquility,” in *We, the Gods* (2004), by Bernard Werber. The hero of the story is Michael Pinson who, after being a human being (*Thanatonautes*) then an angel (*The Empire of Angels*) finally became a “student god.” He is now somewhere in the Universe, on the island of Aeden. Every day, a different god (from Greek mythology) teaches these new students how to shape a world so that one day they can become gods. The competition is tough in this world. Thus, every day, the last of the class are eliminated, carried away by centaurs. Students are also confronted with a mysterious “deicide,” a killer of gods ravaging the 144 students of this new class of apprentice gods. Some students also try to climb the mountain of the island, believing that at the top reigns the master of all the gods ...
- ▶ *The Possibility of an Island* (2006), de Michel Houellebecq. Anticipation novel as well as warning. The possibility of an island is also a reflection on the power of love. Beyond the theses on the end of religions or the dream of a New Man, it is above all a book on fear.
- ▶ *The Butterfly of the Stars* (2006), by Bernard Werber.



# Transparence

*Would you like to live in this toaster?*

Vincent Calabaut, *A vision: the vertical farms at the door of Aubervilliers, Paris, in 2050:*

*for lovers of greenery!* →

**Tower of tomorrow** ↓



# Utopias in the XXI<sup>st</sup> century

## 2/2

- ▶ *La Deuxième Terre* (2004), by Mario Salerno. “I died on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1997 at 6:37 pm.” But for Pascal Marisal, this earthly death marks the beginning of a new life on the Second Earth, a planet where a society lives in perfect harmony. The inhabitants of this utopian world, governed by the Law of Truth, want to get in touch with the Earth to share their experience. The contact is established with Maxime Nopiar, former boss of Pascal.
- ▶ *On the Road to Utopia* (2007), by Christophe Cousin. After cycling around the world, Christophe Cousin toured the utopian communities of the world: from *Libertalia* to *Twin Oak*, passing by the Disney City, *Celebration*.
- ▶ *Chants d'utopie* (2017), by Brice Bonfanti. Songs of Utopia are short epics linking the historical to the mythical. They evoke universal emancipation through many thoughts that have passed through the ages. Some of these epics are in a prehistoric world of hominid animals not so far from us in the history of time, others are placed in the air and the course of humans, or imagine the passage of one towards the other. Places for each of them: Russia, France, Italy, Brazil, United States of America, Israel, Egypt, Turkey ... Characters from our history: Dante Alighieri, Johann Gutenberg, Antônio Conselheiro, Sergei Essenine, Voltairine de Cleyre, Elif Shafak... The first cycle of nine songs inaugurates a series of nine cycles in all.
- ▶ In the *Charte internationale pour la terre et l'humanisme*, Pierre Rabhi considers utopias as premises of solutions.

After Vattermare, there was *Het Fort* (“The Fort”), built by Jacob van Campenplein in 1890 in Den Haag (Netherlands)



And we, Quebecers, have we imagined, like  
Vattemare, urban utopias that made us dream?  
Yes indeed...



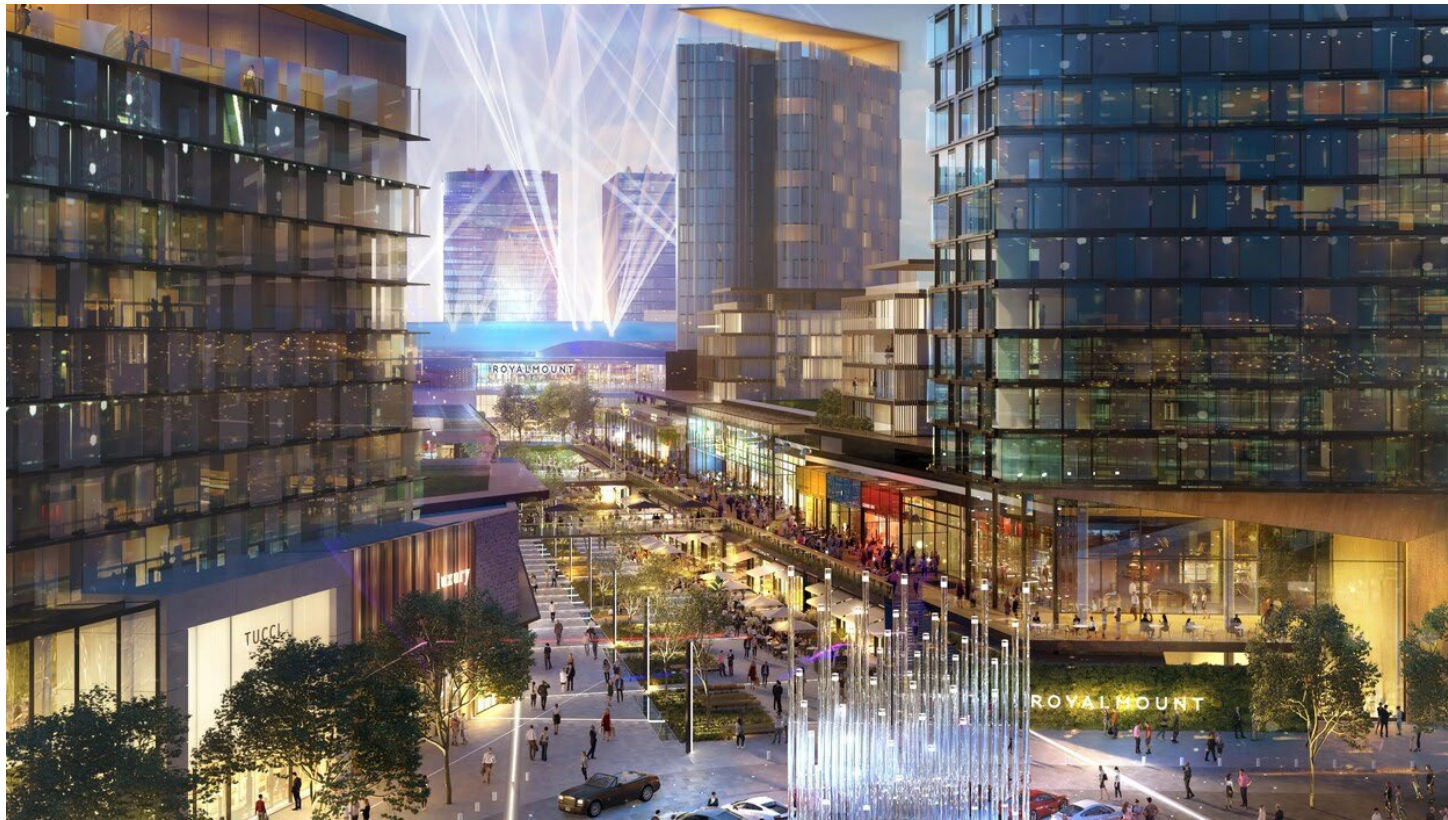
There was Expo '67, whose name, *Man and his world* (“Terre des hommes”), said well that our planet should now be seen as a global village



Habitat 67 brings this dream to life every day



# Royalmount's 15/40 development project looks like a urban utopia... why not?



# ... but utopias sometimes become realities



In Paris could be a farm of 7,000 m<sup>2</sup> in the 18<sup>th</sup> arrondissement on a roof terrace in the future Quartier International Chapel. This urban farm should produce 50 tons of fruits, vegetables, and herbs per year. Green projects are popping up all over the capital: strawberry crops in containers, shared gardens, vegetable gardens... not to mention bees, chickens, goats, and... Human beings.



*May we never stop believing  
in utopias!*

▶ **Thank you!**

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