

park. Such a “big visualization of Judaism,” (p.101) as one participant calls it, may, moreover, suffer from the problems theme parks are known for: trivialization, selectivity, partiality, and manipulation. The author is aware of this, but she chooses to stress the positive vision of Judaism offered here in contrast to that of present-day institutional Judaism.

The programme—particularly the special effects it uses, such as the Bar Kokhba cave ceremony—may have a dramatic short-term impact on the participants. One wonders, however, whether it enhances “Judaism by choice” in the long term. Romanticized, mythologized presentations of Judaism of the kind Shapiro describes can hardly be seen as “knowledge-based.” In the opinion of this reviewer, moreover, knowledge of Jewish tradition and a genuine dialogue regarding its relationship to contemporary liberal values are essential if real and lasting choices are to be made. In fact, they are crucial, if Jewish culture in North America is to survive.

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Simon, Sherry. *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006. 280 pp.

Boundary-crossing encounters over language, culture, and space characterize Montreal. Sherry Simon’s *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City* masterfully delineates a series of such cultural exchanges formed in the middle ground between French and English. It is this contact zone, torrid and fertile, which defines Montreal’s uniqueness and inspires much passion and unparalleled creativity.

Simon succeeds in placing Montreal on a world map of historically divided cities and offers much by way of comparison and contextualization with cities such as Calcutta, Prague, and Trieste, also defined by separate but overlapping spheres. In this way, Simon “translates” Montreal to the greater public

intellectual sphere beyond the borders of Canada. *Translating Montreal* adds to the body of cultural literature on Montreal by offering a new and highly nuanced approach to understanding the city through astute and multidisciplinary analysis.

Montreal's "internal colonialism" (21) and "persistent division" force a "constant awareness of otherness" (210); translation is "the condition of living in a city with a double history" (9). Simon begins her various "crosstown voyages" by stating, that "the divisions of the city are imaginative beginnings" (xiii). And so we embark with her as our guide through a series of discussions illuminating the passages between and among Québécois, Franco- or Anglo-Québécois, English-Canadians, immigrant and ethnic writers and other cultural figures, including artists, filmmakers, anthropologists, and historians. Translators exist "at the heart of the action," Simon writes, for these journeys are not unidirectional; they traverse the divide. "[Translators] establish the terms through which cultural realities are brought into dialogue," she asserts. "My aim is to explore these pathways, showing how they signal changes in direction or intensity of exchange" (7).

Translating Montreal traverses disciplinary boundaries, as well, and Simon's methodological breadth and scope reflect both her erudition and the interwoven fabric of cultural production in Montreal. In this award-winning book (*Translating Montreal* won the 2006 Gabrielle Roy Prize for English-language criticism given by the Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures), Simon begins with Malcolm Reid's English depictions of his forays into the *parti pris* writers' circle of the 1960s, comparing his attempt to translate *joual* French with others' such as the literalism of F.R. Scott. She analyzes the deviant, experimental, and "perverse" works of contemporary writers and translators emerging from the contact zone, including Gail Scott, Nicole Brossard, and Jacques Brault, in many cases influenced as much by interlingual contact as by feminist criticism and poetics. Anne Carson and other local poets also appear throughout the book. Other major writers

such as Walter Benjamin and Marcel Proust, figures who may never have set foot in Montreal, guide us along with their timeless insight on the city, in general, and the meaning of place. Finally, geography and architecture become the subjects of Simon's rich analysis, as she turns our gaze to bridges, streets, cafés, and Mount Royal Park. These sites and structures act as literary, cinematic, and artistic symbols of Montreal's political and social divides in works produced by artists such as Léa Pool, Emile Olivier, Gabrielle Roy, and Marco Micone.

Ethnic identity and immigration play a role in many of these projects. Indeed, immigration represents a complex and pivotal layer to translation and language dynamics in Montreal: "The diasporic writing of migrant communities in North America and the growth of transnational migrancy is giving lie to the traditional story of immigration as a one-way street leading to full-stop assimilation" (181).

Simon calls our attention to the issues of hybridity central to works produced by Jewish, Haitian, Italian, Chinese and other immigrant and second-generation writers, playwrights, and filmmakers. While these works add to Montreal's sense of cultural pluralism, Simon notes, that "the city is held together by the very forces that can tear us apart.... That is why cosmopolitanism conjures up two different visions—that of the nightmare of exploding differences and that of the ideal of tolerance.... Neighbours can turn into strangers—even enemies" (169). A somber reminder, for although Simon argues that "the city has turned certain historically charged frontiers of distrust into zones of creativity" (212), ethnic politics remain a charged issue today.

Two major chapters of *Translating Montreal* concern Jewish writing, and in this effort Simon also succeeds in "translating" what lies at the literal and figurative historical centre to the foreground of Canadian cultural studies. Although this book does not emerge from Jewish Studies, it focuses in large part on A.M. Klein and Chava Rosenfarb, Jewish writers deeply influenced by the mixture of languages (English, French, Yiddish,

and other immigrant languages) in their hybridized Mile End surroundings. In this way, Simon brings Yiddish, the third most spoken language in the city until the mid-twentieth century, to the central place where it belongs in any modern historical examination of Montreal. Although Klein was “the first Jewish Canadian to make English his poetic language,” Yiddish infuses his fabricated terminology and hybridized neologisms, and his poetry and prose consciously recall Jewish diasporas near and far; “his strategy was to remain between languages” (63). Klein ingeniously called upon the organic hybridity and “imbrication of languages” of his immigrant milieu, and he “brought the Jewish tradition into dialogue with international modernism. Joyce and Pound, Rabbi Low of Prague, Chaim Nachman Bialik—all contribute to the gathering of remnants across the continents and the centuries” (63).

Simon traces the generational shift from Yiddish to English among Montreal’s east European Jewish community, one of the last communities on the continent to lose the *mamaloshen*, in which, unlike other North American cities, French language and politics played a decisive role in the silencing of this immigrant lingua franca. Yet at the turn of the twenty-first century, a new chapter in French-Yiddish relations emerged. At the centre of this discussion stands historian and translator Pierre Anctil, himself representing and spearheading a new generation of Québécois academics, writers, and translators traversing the distance from French to Yiddish.

Curiously missing from this discussion is the major wave of French-speaking Sephardi Jews from North Africa to Montreal. Although this post-World War II immigrant wave completely altered the language map of Montreal’s Jewish population, it is absent from *Translating Montreal*. While Anctil and his cohort signify “a new chapter in the history of language relations in the city” (98), the large community of French-speaking Jews in Montreal seem to mark no such place in Simon’s history. This apparent oversight is all the more striking in Simon’s discussion of new Francophone academic

interest in Jewish writing and history. “To write about Jewish Montreal in French, to open a new space of discussion and debate within the Quebec social sciences—this movement represents a new turn in the cultural life of Montreal” (97). While Yiddish culture might be a new field of investigation for Québécois intellectuals, surely the presence of a growing and increasingly powerful French-speaking Jewish community—particularly as Montreal’s Ashkenazi population dwindles—deserves attention in a book-length treatment on cultural dynamics in Montreal, particularly where Jews occupy a central place in this analysis of encounters. How does the presence of French-speaking Sephardi Jews alter the political, social, and cultural scene Simon otherwise so carefully lays out?

This small point should not detract from this book’s enormous value. This criticism rather points to further avenues of exploration. It highlights, moreover, the ways in which the unique linguistic landscape of Montreal embodies the complex history and contemporary politics of this fraught but beloved city.

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Brownstein, Bill. *Schwartz’s Hebrew Delicatessen—The Story*. Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2006. 155 pp.

As the year 2006 drew to a close, a long feared event occurred in Montreal delicatessen history. Ben’s closed, amid swirling rumours of management-union wrangling, leaving Schwartz’s as the undisputed king of Montreal delis. Bill Brownstein’s chatty history chronicles the three-quarters of a century of the world-famous Schwartz’s, which was also showcased in a 2006 feature film by Gary Beitel and film animator-turned panhandler-turned filmmaker, Ryan Larkin, who for a long time had plied his “spare change” trade outside Schwartz’s.

Brownstein’s book takes the reader from the founding by Reuben Schwartz in 1928 to the present, but it shouldn’t be mistaken for a definitive, official history. It’s too full of anecdotes,