

Comptes rendus / Book Reviews

Pierre Anctil — *Tur Malka : Flâneries sur les cimes de l'histoire juive montréalaise*, Sillery (Québec), Septentrion, 1997, 199 p.

This collection of articles tells the story of a remarkable intellectual journey. Pierre Anctil, a product of the era of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, received a doctorate in anthropology at the New School in New York and came to Montreal in 1978 to make a discovery that decisively influenced the course of his academic and political life. He had discovered the Jewish community of Montreal and the rich and diverse civilization it possessed. His interest spurred him to achieve a mastery of Yiddish, the language of the predominantly Eastern European immigrants who were the “founding fathers” of that community, and Yiddish became his passport into the intellectual world of Montreal’s Jews. Though he was certainly not the first French Canadian to evince an interest in and sympathy for the Jewish community of his home province (the names of Stéphane Valiquette and Jacques Langlais come readily to mind in this connection), by virtue of his linguistic efforts he was certainly, as he puts it, the first francophone to glimpse fully the cultural riches of Yiddish Montreal (p. 20).

The nine articles in this collection, written between 1984 and 1994, allow the reader to experience Anctil’s voyage of discovery and to see the Jews of Montreal through his eyes. In the first two essays, the author introduces us to a Jewish community that did not “fit in” to the English-French duality that marked nineteenth-century Quebec. Neither French nor English, neither Catholic nor Protestant, the Jews created for themselves, by force of circumstances, a “third solitude”. This cultural “solitude” constituted, in Anctil’s description, a unique combination of fidelity to the Jewish religious cultural tradition coupled with a passionate openness to new currents in contemporary thought, societal change, and social justice (p. 44). This third solitude also had its negative side, Anctil observes. From it resulted the social and cultural phenomenon of the Jewish community’s estrangement from the reality of French Quebec, and the consequences are still to be felt in the often strained relationship between the contemporary Jewish community and Quebec’s cultural and linguistic majority. In other essays Anctil surveys the historical geography of Montreal’s Jewish communities, takes a look at such significant literary and political fig-

ures of that community as Hannaniah M. Caiserman and A. M. Klein, deals with the issue of Orthodox Judaism (to help make sense of tension between francophones and Hassidim in Outremont), and takes a light-hearted look at the cultural and “theological” aspects of the Montreal bagel. While not evading the issue of anti-semitism in Quebec, Anctil attempts to minimize its scope and impact. Thus, in evaluating the tension between French Canadians and Hassidim in Outremont, he puts forth the opinion that it entailed as much a fear of change as a specific hostility to the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov (p. 160).

Taken as a whole, Anctil’s essays constitute a commendable attempt to demarginalize the study of the Jews of Montreal, hitherto mostly undertaken by scholars of Jewish studies, and to make this subject part of the universe of discourse among French Canadians. They also have a reasonably explicit political agenda, one made particularly evident in Anctil’s essay on André Laurendeau, which is only marginally related to the other essays in the collection. The major changes that have occurred in Quebec since the Quiet Revolution have resulted in French Quebec opening its doors to social and cultural forces more diverse than it had ever before experienced. In the face of such cultural diversity, the francophone majority in Quebec needs to bring to bear new creative energies. In that context, Anctil feels that the historical example of the Jews of Montreal constitutes a valuable lesson, and he calls upon French Quebec to engage in a renewed dialogue with the Jewish community (p. 51), with the goal, expressed in his last essay, of “forging a viable partnership” (p. 171).

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Léo-Paul Desrosiers — *Iroquoisie* (sous la direction de Denis Vaugeois), Sillery, Septentrion, 1998, 4 tomes : xxxii, 324 p.; 344 p.; 352 p.; 368 p.

Born in 1896, Léo-Paul Desrosiers was, among other things, a writer of fiction and historical romances and a historian. Arguably his most important historical work, *Iroquoisie* was published in 1947 under the auspices of his good friend Abbé Groulx and the Institut d’histoire de l’Amérique française. Originally intended as the first of a five-volume history of French-Iroquois relations, only volume 1, covering the years up to 1645, was published. One of his biographers has suggested that the whole project was too expensive to be published in its entirety (Julia Richter, *Léo-Paul Desrosiers* [Ottawa: Éditions Fides, 1966], p. 95). Desrosiers continued to publish pieces of his research, primarily in the *Cahiers des Dix*. After some 50 years Denis Vaugeois has brought out this edited version of Desrosiers’s manuscript in four volumes. The work covers the period beginning with Cartier’s contact with the St. Lawrence Iroquoians to 1701, when the Iroquois and French concluded one of their many peace agreements.

The first volume begins with Vaugeois’s brief biography of Desrosiers and of the latter’s efforts to publish *Iroquoisie* in full. Vaugeois does not question whether pub-