

his own society. Surely the task of reinventing Montreal's history from a pluri-cultural perspective is a daunting one. Hearing the phrase "un shtetl dans une ville" spoken quite spontaneously by a francophone professor in a classroom at the Université de Sherbrooke is all the proof this reviewer needs that Pierre Anctil's efforts have borne fruit.

Eve Lerner  
Concordia University

Forman, Frieda, Ethel Raicus, Sarah Silberstein Swartz, Sarah and Margie Wolfe, Margie, eds. With an introduction by Irena Klepfisz. *Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 1994. xv+392pp.

This book is not new. It came out in 1994. I have been browsing in it ever since. It became a part of my private time; almost a ritualized time spent with my ancestors. The different voices unveiled a world of mother ancestors.

*Found Treasures* is about memory. It highlights a language once thought unsalvageable and a heritage seldom recalled. Eighteen writers who happen to be women share their stories and their lives. It is only recently that we have witnessed this recalling of Yiddish literature, and only rarely have we heard from the women who wrote in that language. With this book as guide, many can remember, listen and begin to understand their struggles and experiences. Ironically, translation has preserved their world of Yiddish.

This book is dedicated to mothers and sisters and to continuity. But it does more than recall an age gone by or save a lost literary legacy. It does more than remind us of diverse female ancestors. It is an artifact of continuity forging links not readily found in our collective histories. It manages to capture an era of creativity and individuality that is then passed on to us its heirs. This sense of cultural continuity is heightened by the last sections of the collection. On page 353 the author's brief biographies are presented followed by the biographies of the contribu-

tors to the volume. Finally the book closes with a bibliography of author's works. These three sections exhibit such a strong sense of lives lived in proximity to each other, of connections made, of time suspended and identity supplanted, that the message of the book is boldly reinforced. And then comes the glossary; Yiddish words translated, made available. The entire book is just that—Yiddish lives and texts made accessible so that we can claim to be links in that chain described by these authors.

Each author has a distinct literary style. Readers will discover that some parts are stronger or more tantalizing than others. But that is about personal taste and talent. I liked the “Zogerin” story by Rokhl Brokhes, not because of its great plot or even its character development. This short piece gave me a perspective on a lifestyle that has enthralled me, and the story challenged my preconception. (I relished the irony of a story about women's prayer being written by a woman with the name Brokhes.)

Some readers may quibble about the translations or about the selections. But that is to lose sight of the significance of this book. I look to the book for its history: “just for the memories!” Crucially, each entry is prefaced with a small introduction which effectively situates the story. All these bits and pieces put the map of our heritage together. Particularly helpful is the suggestive introduction by Irena Klepfisz. It is a major scholarly essay on gender and Yiddish literature with a valuable bibliography.

Regrettably, the beautiful photos of the authors at the beginning of the book are not matched with photos of the contributors. This visual message would have added to our sense of connection and perpetuity. In addition, it would have been interesting to hear about the choices made from the editors themselves. Also unfortunate is the absence of the original Yiddish texts themselves. At least a sampling of the authors' own words would have added to the value of this collection. Although it is probably due to the finances of publishing that we are missing these sections, their absence is tangible. One hopes, along with the editors, that the success of this edition will lead to sustained

publishing in this area.

*Found Treasures* is a book worth owning and sharing. It is a found treasure.

Norma Baumel Joseph  
Concordia University

Kalman Naves, Elaine. *Putting Down Roots: Montreal's Immigrant Writers*. Montreal: Véhicule, 1998. 178pp.

With *Putting Down Roots*, Elaine Kalman Naves takes a mighty leap—attempting in a slim volume to provide an introduction to the varied cultural resources of Montreal's literary community. Her focus includes writers of disparate traditions—Italian, Yiddish, Haitian, Spanish, Hungarian, Arab, Indian, and Chinese. Some of the groundwork for the book was done in the columns Kalman Naves wrote under the title "Other Voices" in the *Montreal Gazette*. And she has imported a stylistic approach common to newspapers—the use of what she calls "sidebars," short vignettes on such subjects as Montreal's small publishers, bookstores, newspapers, as well as backgrounders on the immigrant communities from which her chosen writers draw some of their inspiration. In keeping with the gathering of resources offered in a daily newspaper, *Putting Down Roots* includes a potpourri of short essays, interviews, and bibliographies devoted to each group of writers.

The effect of this gathering is both intriguing in its variety, and a bit disappointing in its abbreviated form. Writers whom Kalman Naves insists are central to the literary expression of their cultural traditions in Canada are met in short interviews, without the reader gaining a true sense of their work. The selected bibliographies prompt the reader to pursue authors in greater depth, but this cause would have also been served by meatier excerpts of at least one key writer working in Canada within each tradition.

The decision to focus on interviews and short biographical sketches suggests that *Putting Down Roots* may in fact be