

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.

Lara I. Rabinovitch

New York University

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,

jokes, and rumours for that. And therein lies its charm. First there's the cover, with author Bill, clad in an apron, Schwartz's corporate ball cap on his head, poised to take an order for an "old-fashioned." The item is not in the index, but it's loosely translated as a less fat-laden sandwich. Early in the text, Brownstein establishes his lineage as the possible direct descendant of the "inventor" of smoked meat back in Romania. The narrative proceeds, accompanied by numerous photographs that anchor the book in Montreal lore.

The reader will learn about "schmutz," the magic formula that, according to the author, makes Schwartz's superior to its across-the-street competitor, The Main, despite the latter's name spelled out in huge, faux Yiddish letters. Schwartz's, on the other hand, is identified by a sign that reads, "Charcuterie Hébraïque." Whatever the weather, tuck Bill's book under your arm, join the ridiculously long line, and return to the last century.

Stanley Asher
CJRS (Radio Shalom)