

**Paul-André Linteau. *Une Histoire de Montréal*. Montréal, Boréal, 2017.  
360 pages**

Steven High

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les effets physiques des moyens de transports modernes et les sensations ressenties par les citoyens dans les rues de la ville. L'examen attentif des discours des principaux commentateurs de la ville (inspecteurs municipaux, hygiénistes, réformateurs urbains) permet à l'auteur d'affirmer que les expériences personnelles et sensorielles ont joué une place prépondérante dans la construction du rapport à l'espace urbain des Montréalais et des Bruxellois durant cette période de profonds bouleversements économiques et sociaux.

*The Feel of the City* est un ouvrage d'une grande qualité qui se mesure tant par le talent d'écriture de l'auteur que par l'originalité du propos et la finesse de son analyse. On y trouve un bon équilibre entre la théorie et les exemples et l'auteur illustre sa thèse de manière convaincante. À cet égard, soulignons que la thèse aurait gagné en profondeur si Kenny avait discuté de son choix de sources de façon plus élaborée. En l'absence d'une présentation exhaustive et critique des sources, les exemples sélectionnés par l'auteur semblent servir trop unilatéralement le propos de l'auteur: il apparaît difficile pour le lecteur d'évaluer la représentativité d'un discours, d'un rapport municipal ou d'un article de journal s'il ne connaît pas l'ensemble du corpus consulté. Également, nous nous expliquons mal le choix délibéré de Kenny de ne pas aborder le sens du goût, alors que Montréal et Bruxelles voient durant cette période se multiplier les grands restaurants, les hôtels de luxe, les théâtres et les troquets, autant d'établissements qui ravissent les sens et offrent de nouvelles expériences corporelles aux citoyens en quête de divertissement. Enfin, mentionnons que nous aurions préféré voir les extraits des discours cités par Kenny présentés dans leur langue d'origine. En favorisant la traduction anglaise d'articles de journaux, de romans et de poèmes rédigés en français, l'auteur doit, pour faire son analyse linguistique des discours, s'adonner à une gymnastique syntaxique qui alourdit la lecture du texte et qui ne rend pas service à son argumentation (voir par exemple la section *Representing Workers in the City*, au chapitre cinq). Ces quelques remarques n'enlèvent rien à la qualité de cet ouvrage admirable, richement illustré et accompagné d'une imposante bibliographie qui saura plaire tant aux universitaires qu'aux lecteurs férus d'histoire urbaine et culturelle.

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**Paul-André Linteau. *Une Histoire de Montréal*. Montréal, Boréal, 2017. 360 pages.**

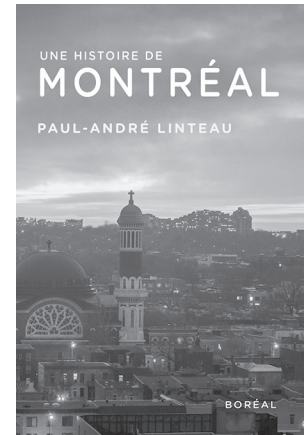
Recently retired after an illustrious career, Paul-André Linteau offers us a repackaged interpretation of the history of Montreal. He first published *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* back in 1992 and followed this up with a *Brève histoire de Montréal* which covered the pre-Confederation period as well. *Une Histoire de Montréal*, pitched to a general audience,

represents a hybrid of the two. Linteau doesn't hide that this is basically a new and improved edition and that the reader will be in familiar territory. We shouldn't, therefore, deplore that he recycled many parts of his 1992 synthesis, which was to be expected. The problem, to me, is the overall narrative remains very much unchanged after 25 years. If one can say that the book's archival erudition is commendable, its ethnocentricity and celebratory arc may be said to be its greatest weaknesses.

Linteau is a pioneer of Montreal studies. He not only wrote on the city's suburbs (Maisonneuve) but also on some of its liveliest streets (Sainte-Catherine street) as well as lost neighborhoods (Faubourg à M'lasse, Goose Village). His work brought him some of the highest academic distinctions in Quebec, including the prestigious Léon-Gérin prize, in 2012. He has been considered one of the most remarkable historians of his generation, someone who has shaped our understanding of the past through specialized publications and, perhaps more importantly, pedagogical contributions such as exhibits and a textbook. Linteau's influence in the field makes it even more pressing to address his global theoretical approach and methodology. Linteau, whose career started in the 1960s at a moment of great nationalist concerns and political upheaval, was always keen to separate his political opinions from his scientific research. He advocated for a social history based on facts and figures. Moreover, he invited his peers to look at history differently, enlarging the scope of their inquiry by including neglected sources on popular and labour classes. He belonged to a generation that wanted to look at history "from below" and move it away from the traditional political history focused on the Canadian elites.

For roughly 30 years francophone Quebec historiography was dominated by social history, only to be challenged in the early 2000s by a version of cultural history which heavily borrowed from social history. This social history might have been welcomed in the 1970s, but I fear that it has now rendered all the services it can give and has exhausted its potential. A review of *Une Histoire de Montréal* constitutes a good opportunity to underline some of the blind spots that Linteau's perspective continues to carry notwithstanding its claims of inclusiveness.

I may sound harsh. But look at the evidence. In Linteau "new and improved" edition of his 1992 book, Montreal is still "heroically" founded in 1642. Except for four pages on the "pre-history" of indigenous peoples, this is where the story begins. These opening pages demand some hard questions. Is pre-history still a term that we should be using uncritically in this



day and age? It is highly racialized. Then, the reader is once again told, with confidence, that the original inhabitants of the area “mysteriously disappeared” after Jacques Cartier’s initial voyages, and so the Europeans occupied an area that was already emptied of its original inhabitants. It had become a “no man’s land”. This is, of course, a convenient narrative that sets up French Canadians to become the first people of this part of the St. Lawrence Valley. It is also a claim that is highly contested by the Mohawk people. Yet the reader remains unaware of these public debates. Here the Iroquois are the aggressors: the invaders. Indigenous people are located sometime before, or somewhere else. We don’t get a sense of the changing place of indigenous people on the Island itself, or of racial mixing. Instead, we hear that *métissage* existed “plutôt” in the Canadian West. In Montreal, “les peuples se côtoient sans vraiment se mélanger” (p. 71). The same point could be said about the historical narrative written here, with “Montreal’s history” being located only on the one side of this racial line.

What follows is the old chronology of exploration and pioneer settlement, then industrialization, and modernization, which is largely indistinguishable from the grand narrative of Quebec and Canadian history surveys except for the smaller scale of the account. Because Montreal was Canada’s metropolis for much of its history, the book covers much the same ground. Of course, some of the players are different as we learn about local mayors, industrialists, reformers, and promoters, but it is much the same story. For the most part, the city is treated as a single unitary object of study.

The same problem arises with racialized and ethnicized groups. Yes, early Jewish and Black immigrants to Montreal are mentioned at several points. But they are little more than footnotes in another people’s history. As with indigenous people, the city and its history does not belong to them. They “colour” the story but do not shape it. Racism is acknowledged as being present in Montreal. However, for Linteau, racism was never “systematic” (p. 219). Once again, the author diminishes the ways that race structured life in the city. Montreal might not have had a system of legal segregation, as in the southern United States, but it did have a history of slavery and pervasive racism thereafter. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Black Montrealers never knew if they would be served going into a bar, restaurant, cinema or store. Proprietors had the right to serve whoever they wished. Fred Christie, a Black Montrealer from Verdun, faced this when he was refused service at a bar at the Montreal Forum in 1936. There were also cases of Black tourists being refused hotel accommodation during Expo 67. Even the Prime Minister of Barbados was denied hotel accommodation during his visit to Montreal in the mid-1950s, sparking a diplomatic storm.

None of this is worth mention here. What we have instead is a section on the “new diversity” tacked on at the end of a celebratory narrative of the making of Montreal on sale for the city’s

375th anniversary. There are other silences, too, like the absence of the student strike of 2012. At a time of heated debates around cultural diversity and settler colonialism, this volume does nothing to unsettle popular assumptions about race or immigration. It is an uncritical narrative that could have been written thirty or forty years ago. I realize that I am being severe in writing these words, but as citizens and scholars, professional historians need to challenge our readers’ racialized assumptions or we become part of the problem. Urban historians, everywhere, must think seriously about our inherited frames of research. I wonder what a book on the history of Montreal would look like if it made settler colonialism and other racialized processes an integral part of the analysis? That book is needed now more than ever.

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**Catherine Charlebois et Paul-André Linteau (dir.), *Quartiers disparus. Red Light, Faubourg à M’Lasse, Goose Village* (Montréal : Cardinal, 2014), 311p.**

**Gilles Lauzon, *Pointe-Saint-Charles. L’urbanisation d’un quartier ouvrier de Montréal, 1840-1930* (Québec : Septentrion, 2014), 244 p.**

**Réjean Lemoine, *Limoilou, un quartier effervescent* (Québec : GID, 2014, coll. « 100 ans noir sur blanc »), 208 p.**

L’historiographie de la vie quotidienne dans les quartiers populaires du Québec s’enrichit de trois nouvelles publications. Le premier ouvrage est dirigé par l’historienne et muséologue Catherine Charlebois et par l’historien professeur à l’Université du Québec à Montréal Paul-André Linteau. Il s’intéresse à trois quartiers disparus de Montréal, le Red Light, le Faubourg à

M’Lasse et Goose Village, dont la population a été expropriée dans le cadre de la modernisation urbaine des années 1950-1960. Issu de l’exposition *Quartiers disparus* du Centre d’histoire de Montréal (2011-2013), il témoigne de la destruction de « pans entiers du patrimoine bâti de la métropole » (p. 21) au nom du progrès, et cherche à en faire revivre la mémoire. Le recueil est composé de 121 photographies provenant des Archives de Montréal, accompagnées d’extraits d’entrevues réalisées avec des personnes ayant vécu dans ces quartiers, des intervenants et intervenantes de l’époque, ainsi que des experts et expertes. Basé sur une collection exceptionnelle de photographies prises essentiellement par les fonctionnaires de

