

Narrative Legacies of Migration – Memory Work in the Literary Oeuvre of Montreal’s Francophone Jewish Community

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Abstract

Within his dictionary on immigrant authors in Quebec, Daniel Chartier¹ shows that the literary landscape of Quebec has been considerably shaped by writers from abroad. Among the representatives of Quebec’s *Migrant Literature*, a small group of authors of Jewish origin who settled in Montreal and adopted the French language as their language of literary expression can also be detected. Among them are authors such as Monique Bosco (born in Austria), Naïm Kattan (Iraq), Pierre Lasry (Morocco), Régine Robin (France), Victor Teboul (Egypt) and Marc-Alain Wolf (France).

In many of their novels, these authors portray first or second generation immigrants of Jewish origin whose lives are marked by the attempt to (re-)organize the events of their past through narration in order to place them within a broader context, give meaning to their experiences and reconstruct a coherent self-identity. Given the centrality of the protagonists’ memory work, my presentation will be divided into four parts: The first one will reveal that memories of the past envelop the characters at specific moments of their lives. Second, I will demonstrate that these memories revolve around similar thematic fields. The third part will illustrate that the memory work developed by the protagonists is accompanied by specific narrative strategies – strategies that are employed to highlight the memory process. Finally, I will discuss the role of the francophone Jewish novels within Quebec’s collective memory.

1. Daniel Chartier, *Dictionnaire des écrivains émigrés au Québec. 1800-1999* (Québec, Éditions Nota bene, 2003).