

Yiddish Circuit: Korn, Maze, Zipper, Rosenfarb...

Curated by Shelley Pomerance

Texts written by Shelley Pomerance, Goldie Morgentaler, Sherry Simon
and Norman Ravvin

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By Shelley Pomerance

Hi. I'm Shelley Pomerance, and I'm delighted you've joined me for this Blue Metropolis podcast about Yiddish Literary Montreal. On this virtual tour, you'll hear from current and former Montrealers who have thoughts about this city's Yiddish literary past: translator and editor Goldie Morgentaler, and writers Norm Ravvin and Sherry Simon.

Before we start walking, I want to tell you a little bit about my connection to this part of town and to the Yiddish language. So if you like, take a seat on one of the park benches nearby, in parc Jeanne Mance, which I first knew as Fletcher's Field...

I've lived on the Plateau since the late 1970s. My father grew up in this neighbourhood, he came from a very poor family and was the youngest of eight children. His name was Solomon, Sol for short, Schloime in Yiddish, his brothers and sisters called him Sonny even into old age. I have one photograph of his father, my grandfather, whom I never knew, in which he appears as an austere, old, bearded man in a black kaftan. Though he wasn't in fact all that old when that photo was taken, since he died at age 57. My father was just 13.

Family lore has it that my grandfather made a living repairing sewing machines, I also have some rudimentary stationary, a piece of plain lined paper with his name and the title "Justice of the Peace" printed on it.

But mostly he spent his days pouring over religious tomes,
while his children worked 6 days a week— as many people did then—
including Saturday, the Sabbath, in order to support the family.
But since they worked on the Sabbath, my grandfather, a very religious man,
wouldn't allow them to have meals with him. My father, too young to work,
was the only one permitted to sit at the table with his father,
and I gather mealtimes with this stern and uncompromising man
were anything but cheerful. Where was my grandmother?
Probably busy in the kitchen and serving the meal.
She kept house, cooked, took care of her eight children
and endured her irascible husband.

My father was the only one of the children in his family
to finish high school, thanks to his siblings who paid his school fees.

My father spoke fluent Yiddish, it was his mother tongue, and wrote it beautifully as well.
During my childhood, when he and my aunts and uncles got together,
they told jokes in Yiddish, partly so that we, the children,
wouldn't understand their off-colour humour, and possibly
because Yiddish is a much better language for telling jokes!
At least, it always sounded that way to me,
with its blend of soft and guttural sounds, its twisty diphthongs,
all of it incomprehensible to me, but which inevitably
gave way to laughter among the adults.

Occasionally my parents spoke Yiddish to each other—
though my mother understood more than she spoke—
it was a code they used, a way to exchange information not suitable for young ears.
As with many of my peers, our parents never taught us to speak Yiddish.
Themselves the children of immigrants from Eastern Europe,
they were intent on having us blend into the majority culture.
That meant learning to speak, read and write English and French.

I have a folder of letters my father wrote to his sister Betty,
who lived in Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay).
These letters date from the 1930s to the 70s.
My aunt couldn't read the Yiddish alphabet
(girls didn't go to cheder, the school where Hebrew was taught,
so they never learned that alphabet, which is also used to write Yiddish),
so my father penned his letters to my aunt in Yiddish, but written out phonetically,
using the Roman alphabet. I can decipher the words, but can understand only a little,
relying on my smattering of Hebrew and German.

In this way I was shut out of my father's world, shut out of this language he loved,
that he wrote in delicate slanting symbols that travelled left to right across the page.

He loved this part of town, he would say let's go slumming,
which meant let's go to Mile End and the Main,
to these streets that held so many memories for him, both good and bad.
He would tell me how he once stood outside the old forum on Mt Royal corner St Urbain (where a
Provigo now stands) to hear Enrico Caruso,
the great Italian tenor, whose voice soared through the walls out into the street.
But when I do a little research, I discover that the last time Caruso sang in Montreal was 1920, when my
father would have been just 7 years old— obviously he was a precocious opera lover...

Now, as I stroll around this neighbourhood, on my way to visit a friend,
to do my grocery shopping or walk my dog,
I try to imagine what it was like here a century ago, when my father was a child.
I imagine you would have heard Yiddish on these streets then...
mothers calling to their children, shopkeepers kibitzing with their clients,
pedlars hawking their wares... What's been described as a "third solitude" existed here,
Yiddish speakers, alongside the English and French-speaking residents of this neighbourhood.

Of course, one can still hear Yiddish on streets not far from here, a little farther north and west, where the Hasidic community lives, in Outremont and Mile End.

In the first half of the 20th century, there were many Jewish institutions in this neighbourhood, on or around De l'Esplanade: the Jewish Immigrant Aid Service, the Hebrew Old People's and Sheltering Home, the Young Men's Hebrew Association (or YMHA); and Herzliah High School, to mention just a few.

Sometimes my father reminisced about the authors he read and admired as a young man, the Yiddish poets Rokhl Korn and Eda Maze, Yaakov Zipper who became a friend of his, AM Klein, the poet and lawyer who worked in the same law office where my aunt Freda was a secretary, who wrote in English, and whose autographed books sat on our bookshelves and sit on my shelves now.

Before the Second World War, there was already a community of Yiddish writers in Montreal, but after the Holocaust their numbers grew, and Montreal became a vital centre of the Yiddish literary world, rivaled only by New York City.

You might ask why I haven't learned to speak Yiddish.

I've studied other languages, French and Spanish, German and Hebrew, even a little Italian. I could take up Yiddish now, though the people I would like to speak the language with, the people whose jokes and memories and stories I would really like to hear—my father, my aunts and uncles, my maternal grandparents—are no longer alive.

Fortunately, however, works by some of Montreal's Yiddish authors have been translated into English and French. One example is Chava Rosenfarb. Her daughter, Goldie Morgentaler, has translated into English and edited a number of Rosenfarb's works—the latest one being "Confessions of a Yiddish Writer and Other Essays," published by McGill Queens University Press.

Chava Rosenfarb, a Holocaust survivor, arrived in Montreal in 1950. In her essay “Harps on the St. Lawrence: Yiddish Poets in Canada,” she tells us about the Yiddish writers she encountered here, J.I. Segal (known in Yiddish as Yud Yud Segal), Melekh Ravitch, and Rokhl Korn. These writers often gathered at the Jewish Public Library. Originally, it stood at 4099 De l’Esplanade (I’ll tell you more about that building later), but in 1953 a large modern building, designed by Montreal architect Harry Mayerovitch, was built here, at the corner of de l’Esplanade and Mt-Royal Avenue. As Goldie Morgentaler tells it, the Jewish Public Library was vital to her mother’s existence as a Yiddish writer in Montreal.

Chava Rosenfarb and the Jewish Public Library of Montreal

Written by Goldie Morgentaler

My mother, the Yiddish writer Chava Rosenfarb, once told the journalist, Elaine Kalman: "There was a good reason why Jews called Montreal 'the Jerusalem of North America'. . . Take the Jewish Public Library! It was the centre, the vital heart and nerve of Yiddish and Jewish life in North America, not just in Canada. And the great Yiddish writers from New York used to come to Montreal to speak at the library. I met them all, right here in Montreal."

The institution Chava was referring to, the Jewish Public Library, officially opened its doors on May 1, 1914 in a cold-water flat on St. Urbain Street. It started with a collection of 500 Yiddish and Hebrew books. But the collection quickly grew and by the end of its first year the library had 1500 books, half of which were in Yiddish. By 1929, circulation had reached 15,000. As it grew, the library rented larger and larger spaces at various locations in the Plateau section of Montreal, which was then the heart of the Jewish immigrant neighbourhood of the city. It called itself in Yiddish "Di folks biblyotek," that is, the peoples' library, open to all regardless of language, political ideology or degree of religious observance. As such the Library quickly established itself as the beating intellectual heart of Jewish Montreal.

In 1953, the Library opened its own three-story building at 4499 Esplanade Avenue, corner Mount Royal, where it stayed until 1967, when it followed the Jewish migration west first to Décarie Boulevard, then to Côte Ste Catherine Road. The building at 4499 Esplanade is the one I remember from my childhood. My parents were both Holocaust survivors from Lodz, Poland, who spent the five years after the end of the war in Belgium as stateless, non-persons whose identification cards were marked "Droit émigrer," must emigrate. My mother's sponsor in Canada was Harry Hershman, her Yiddish-language Montreal publisher.

One of the first places my parents lived was a third-floor walk-up on Bernard Street, not far from Park Avenue, and within easy walking distance of the Library on Esplanade. Montreal would be the incubator of my mother's novels, as well as the setting of her short stories. The Library itself is the setting of her one and only ghost story. What stimulated her creativity was the rich intellectual atmosphere that she encountered among the Jewish population in the city. Here is her description of the kind of literary ferment that greeted her on her arrival in Montreal.

"Upon my arrival in Montreal in 1950, I found a bustling Yiddish social life. Without having to wait until I learned English properly, I could read the *Keneder Adler*, the Montreal Yiddish newspaper every day, and so keep up-to-date with world and Canadian news events. Harry Hershman, my Montreal publisher, supplied me with Yiddish periodicals, which kept me informed about Yiddish cultural life both here and abroad. He took me to the Folk University at the Jewish Public Library, which was the centre of Yiddish cultural life in the city. I visited the Folk Shule at Waverly and Fairmont, and the Peretz Shule on Duluth, and I became a student at the Yiddish Teacher's Seminary.

I counted more than forty Yiddish writers living in Canada in the years just after my arrival, writers of international reputation and recognized all over the Yiddish-speaking world, as well as more marginal writers, so-called graphomanes. There was an active Yiddish writers' union in Montreal, which I was invited to join. There were constant public lectures on literary topics. There were visits by the great Yiddish writers from abroad. Here I met Avrom Reisen, H. Leivik, Itsik Manger, Israel Joshua Singer and his brother, Bashevis. They came to give public lectures and were feted at private parties. They joined us for promenades on Mount Royal and came along on literary excursions to the Yiddish literary chalet in Sainte-Agathe in the Laurentians.

I do not have space to enumerate the many Yiddish-language journalists, historians, pedagogues, essayists who lived in Montreal in the early nineteen-fifties, nor all those who wrote belles lettres, who were novelists or poets.

For the next 50 years, so long as she remained in Montreal, the Jewish Public Library remained my mother's spiritual home, where she was often invited to speak, and where she absorbed the intellectual atmosphere that nourished her own writing.

Goldie Morgentaler, translator, and editor
of *The Confessions of a Yiddish Writer and Other Essays*, by Chava Rosenfarb.

Next door to the Jewish Public library, at 4479b De l'Esplanade,
lived another Yiddish writer, Ida Maze. Known mostly for her children's poetry,
she also wrote stories, novels and articles. She was famous for her literary salon,
which drew Yiddish writers from Montreal and abroad, and for the warm welcome and assistance she
gave to many immigrants and refugees arriving in this city.

You'll find a wonderful video about her online, titled
"Ida Maze, the Den Mother of Yiddish Montreal," in which her son,
the literary scholar Irving Massey, and others, pay tribute
to this extraordinary and complex woman.

Just around the corner, at 4540 Clark, is the apartment building
where J.I. Segal lived from 1930 to 1954.

Each year, the Jewish Public Library presents the J.I. Segal Awards,
named after this acclaimed poet and journalist,
whose work often appeared in the *Keneder Adler*, Montreal's Yiddish newspaper.
Segal, who originally came from the Ukraine, published a dozen volumes of poetry,
one of which has been translated into French by historian Pierre Anctil.
Anctil is also the author of an in-depth biography of J.I. Segal,
in addition to having written and translated countless other books
about Yiddish Montreal and its literature.

If you walk down Esplanade to Rachel, and along Rachel to St. Urbain, on the west side of the street, just north of the corner, you'll find number 4210.

This was where Harry Herschman lived.

He was the person who brought Chava Rosenfarb to Canada and became her publisher. He was involved in so many facets of Montreal Yiddish life - political, cultural and literary.

At first, he had a small lending library in his home, which was the inspiration for the Jewish Publish Library.

Later, he occupied a storefront on the Main that was part bookstore, part tobacco shop. He published a number of literary journals and was one of the founders of what would become the Peretz Schule.

But more on that a little later.

If you continue walking east along Duluth to St Laurent, turn south on St. Laurent and keep walking, you'll eventually come to number 4075, a large 4-storey building on the east side of the street.

These days, the ground floor is home to the Jetsetter, a shop that sells suitcases, backpacks and other travellers gear...

Before that, for many years, Beacon, a shop that sold light fixtures stood at this spot.

It's also the building that from 1924 to 1969 was home to the Keneder Adler, or Canadian Eagle, Montreal's long standing Yiddish newspaper.

Founded by Hirsh Wolofsky in 1907, it survived for 70 years, with Wolofsky's son Max taking over after his father's death in 1949.

The Adler did more than report on politics and current events, it also published literary works.

Poetry and prose were common features of Yiddish newspapers.

Hirsch Wolofsky also ran a publishing house, Farlag Keneder Adler/ the Eagle Publishing Company, which put out a number of books by Montreal's Yiddish writers, and he wrote several books himself.

From here, we're going to walk along Duluth.

There were two secular Jewish schools in this neighbourhood, the Yidische Folks Schule (or Jewish Peoples' School), where both Hebrew and Yiddish were taught, and the Peretz Schule (originally known as the National Radical School, where the focus was primarily on Yiddish. The school was named after a great Yiddish writer, I.L. Peretz.

It first stood on Cadieux St (now De Bullion), before moving here to Duluth St in 1942.

It remained here for seventeen years before moving to Côte St. Luc, following the Jewish population as it migrated west.

Yaakov Zipper was the principal of the Peretz School from 1928 until he retired in 1971, except for a few years he spent in Winnipeg.

Deeply devoted to keeping the Yiddish language and its literature alive, he was also an acclaimed writer, and it was discovered after his death that for 30 years, he kept a journal. Norm Ravvin is a novelist and professor of literature and Canadian Jewish Studies at Concordia University.

Here he is talking about Yaakov Zipper and his journal.

NORM RAVVIN: YAAKVO ZIPPER'S JOURNALS

Norm Ravvin's latest novel is *The Girl Who Stole Everything*, about the relationship between Polish shtetl life and Jewish life today.

Yaacov Zipper's Journals

Written by Norman Ravvin

Even in translation Yaacov Zipper's voice is elegiac; it sounds an end time. Zipper was raised in Tishevitz, a sizable town in eastern Poland. He came to Montreal in 1925, and by 1928 had taken the role of Principal at the Peretz Shule, a leading Yiddish day school that was located on Cadieux before it moved to a renovated factory building on Duluth Avenue East in 1942. It would not be long after this move to the heart of the Jewish neighbourhood that Zipper's writerly and educational goals were swamped by change and the challenges it brings.

Zipper kept a detailed, almost novelistic diary between 1950 and 1982. It is a Yiddish artifact of its time, which was translated for English-language readers by Zipper's daughter, Ode Garfinkle and Concordia University professor Mesh Butovsky. It opens with the diarist's account of a meeting of community organizers, who offer scant support for the Peretz Shule's budget challenges. "The neighbourhood is exhausted," Zipper records his comrades telling him in May, 1951, and the goal of maintaining the school in its present state is a fool's errand (18).

Absence of ready support was compounded by the enrollment, between 1946 and 1954, of as many as 700 child Holocaust survivors, and the children of survivors, who sought Yiddish education but were hard-pressed to pay for it (36).

The signal characteristic of the postwar decade was the neighbourhood's unpeopling, so that the area around Duluth underwent, in Zipper's view, an intense cultural crisis. This is a repeated theme in his diary. In June, 1954, he writes:

In the last three years I've had the feeling that we are slowly approaching a catastrophe Bit by bit the neighbourhood surrounding the school is emptied

of long-time residents and is filling up with new immigrants, harshly battered and deeply embittered . (35)

The number of children at the school increased, but the “the number of activists” willing to support it was diminished.

This pattern resulted in the school’s departure from Duluth in favour of the new western suburbs. On June 21, 1959, the last graduation day was held in the old building, in a neighbourhood where, Zipper says, “we have become strangers” while the “surroundings” were increasingly “empty of Jews” (78).

Zipper acknowledges the postwar influx of Eastern European orthodox Jews, some of them Chasidim, who will not replenish the secular Yiddishists’ ideals of the Peretz Shule, regardless of their shared Yiddish vernacular. In June of 1954 he marvels in his diary at feeling, in Montreal, as if he is back in Tishevitz, as he watches the “arrival of Hungarian Jews in their full traditional costume with their fur-trimmed hats and long black coats” (33).

In later years, on return visits to the old streets around Duluth, Zipper completes his elegy to his Montreal lost to memory and bemoans the absence of a written record of what is gone. On a “wonderful spring day” in 1967, just as Expo was opening at the city’s port, Zipper makes a stop “at the tailor’s in the old neighbourhood around Mount Royal” where he

had the urge to take a walk through the neighbourhood, the dwellings of your youth, our beginnings here, which had resounded with the ebb and flow of Jewish life. The Yiddish language was vibrant, and the hustle and bustle of Jewish labour, trade, old synagogues, schools, clubs, and social halls sprouted in every corner. The appearance of the district has hardly changed. The same cracked sidewalks, the curved outdoor staircases of the dark, shabby houses Very few Jewish names on the stores selling junk merchandise or on the small factories. And on St Lawrence even fewer Jewish faces – on the side streets I didn’t meet a

single Jewish face. The former synagogues are, for the most part, parking lots or apartment houses. The cornerstones that were in Yiddish . . . now have the Jewish letters effaced or painted over . . . That's the situation at the Peretz Shule . . . (139).

It is the springtime of Montreal's modern era, a much-touted triumph of cultural nationalism. But Zipper is oppressed by cultural eclipse marked by the disappearance of the old "district" that was once called the "Jewish Quarter." In Yaacov Zipper's diary we find a melancholy guide to the city's Yiddish-speaking past.

Norm Ravvin's latest novel is *The Girl Who Stole Everything*, about the relationship between Polish shtetl life and Jewish life today.

Retrace your steps now, heading back along rue Duluth towards the mountain, passing cafés, trendy hair salons, shops selling all kinds of tchotchkes, and turn north on De l'Esplanade.

As you walk up the street you'll pass an imposing building with a crenellated parapet. Once a private home, for a number of years it housed the Jewish Peoples' Library until the JPL moved to the modern building you saw earlier, on the corner of De l'Esplanade and Mt Royal.

When you reach rue Rachel, turn right and walk through parc Jeanne Mance toward the mountain. If you like, you can cross Park Avenue and take a seat near the grand monument topped by the winged Goddess of Liberty, that stands at the mountain's edge. Here you can listen to Sherry Simon, Concordia University professor, translation scholar and the author of a number of books on cities and language. Here she is talking about Montreal's Yiddish writers and Mt Royal.

Mount Royal, the Yiddish park

Written by Sherry Simon

With a bit of imagination, you might, as you lift your eyes from the corner of Rachel and Parc, catch a glimpse of the Tower of Babel. The mountain as it rises from Jeanne-Mance Park has some resemblance to the celebrated painting by Breughel, beginning with the winding paths that gently ascend towards the summit and disappear into low hanging clouds. But what makes me think of the Tower of Babel as I look at the mountain has to do with languages. Like Breughel's tower, the mountain calls to mind stories of diversity, of people and languages from here and elsewhere. When I climb the winding path to the summit, winter and summer, I hear voices around me, bits of conversation in French and English, Spanish, Brazilian, Italian, Russian, Hindi, Tamil. Immigrants have always been attracted to the mountain, and their stories are part of its rich imaginative history.

Because Mount Royal is that precious and complex thing: a natural milieu which is also deeply cultural. It is saturated with memories and stories of many Montreal communities. Immigrants arriving in a new place will take in their surroundings through the prism of the past. Writers, whose work it is to tell stories shaped by their imagination, will apply to the new place words and images that come from elsewhere.

The Yiddish-language writers of Montreal were no exception. Bringing with them a language and a heritage shaped in the Jewish world of Eastern Europe, they created sometimes surprising amalgams of language and landscape in their new home.

The cross, for instance. Hardly a positive symbol for the Jewish populations who had fled the pogroms of Eastern Europe which often ignited by trumped up religious disputes, the mountain-top cross could well

have been an unwelcome feature of their new city. Yet, in the writings of several Yiddish-language poets of the 30s, 40s and 50s, the mountain **and its cross** are an object of affection. The cross has been debarbed, no longer a weapon brandished, more like a bedside lamp.

This might have had to do with the fact that the cross had become a familiar feature of the new world. The Yiddish-speaking population lived very near the mountain, and observed it daily. From the 1880s when the migration began until the 1950s, when the Jewish population began to move to newer and more spacious neighbourhoods, the Yiddish-language population lived along the north-south corridor of Saint Lawrence Boulevard. The first years were close to the port, but with increased prosperity the community moved up to the sector between Pine Avenue and Laurier street. Here they were close to the mountain. Major institutions like the Davis YMHA and the Jewish Public Library were within one block of the mountain, and many Yiddish speakers lived in the elegant flats on Esplanade directly giving onto Mount Royal Park. Mount Royal was known as Tur Malka from Aramaic (a Talmudic reference to a mountain near Jerusalem, or Kinigsberg, in Yiddish. Four writers of Yiddish Montreal had especially vivid ties with the mountain: JI Segal, AM Klein, Chava Rosenfarb and Régine Robin.

The Yiddish writer whose name is most often associated with the mountain is the poet J.I. Segal (1896-1954) who has already been mentioned in these podcasts. He represents the very figure of the immigrant poet—a tailor working in a factory by day, a dedicated scribbler at night. He might well have been one of the habitués of the café Jack Beder painted in 1935. The painting was entitled ‘And by night they resume their existences’, referring to those legions of men and women who worked at mundane jobs all day only to devote their evenings to politics, ideas and art. Both Beder and Segal paint their city in affectionate colours, for Beder salmon-red bricks and glistening rainy streets, for Segal the dreamy evocations of small streets filled with the music of piety.

In his many poems written about Montreal we observe the poet as he wanders the streets, listening to the music drifting from the streets, church bells and Jewish chants,

capturing 'a smile in the window', children playing in the streets, but also the proud silhouette of the mountain, resplendent in the bright light of the snow, a throne built by the winter. And the cross, throwing its light for great distances 'shines all night, who knows, for eternity?' (p.138) In this poem, the cross stands in for the 'immensity' which at once inhabits and escapes him.

The mountain, along with the streets and markets of the immigrant neighbourhoods and the bustling activity of the port, was a favourite subject of Yiddish poetry about Montreal. The mountain has sometimes wildly different connotations—a sign of the divine presence or the holy city of Jerusalem, but also the wilderness of the Canadian landscape: solemn, silent, untameable. Other poets, such as Yudika, Noah-Isaac Gotlib, or Sholem Shtern, evoked these many aspects of the mountain, but none as persistently and as convincingly as Segal.

A.M. Klein, though technically not a Yiddish-language poet, belonged to the world of Montreal Yiddishkeit—through his upbringing and through his ongoing connections with the language and the literary milieu. Klein was an English-language writer, familiar with Chaucer, Shakespeare and James Joyce. All the same, Yiddish, the language of his childhood, continued to nourish his creativity throughout his life.

Klein was more of a Montrealer than Segal. He was entirely at home here, having grown up in the city and having explored it extensively. He had a stronger sense of his voice as a public figure. In his *Rocking Chair* poems, a volume in which he engaged with the Catholic francophone community, he writes of convents, hospitals, or St. Josephs Oratory as places that are alien to him, representing a fiercely parochial

religious identity. But the mountain is a strange or alien site, rather a familiar companion, written into an affectionate narrative of daily life.

Klein didn't just look up at the mountain, as Segal seems to have done, he actually spent time on its paths, had his favourite lookouts, his favourite bench on what he calls 'the second terrace', his favourite wild flowers. Klein's best-known poem, 'The Mountain' starts with the cross 'bleeding into the fifty miles of night its light' and becomes a pastorate of youthful capers and first love. The Georges-Etienne Cartier monument, known as 'Winged Victory' is mentioned as the target in a game Klein and his friend Lefty play, throwing gravel and trying to hit the female sculptures in the breasts.

Chava Rosenfarb, who you have already heard about from her daughter, Goldie Morgentaler, arrived in Montreal only after the war and after several years in a Displaced Persons camp in Europe. And so, like Segal, she only came to know the city as an adult. Much of Rosenfarb's writing take place in Europe, in the past. But several of her short stories take place in Montreal. One of these stories, Edgia's Revenge, is a difficult tale of two Holocaust survivors meeting in Montreal and reliving some of the anguished emotions of the camps—relations of subjection, guilt, shame, revenge. At the start of the story, Edgia and her husband Lolek are living on Esplanade, in the shadow of the mountain. The cross appears as a symbol of suffering. One of the characters remarks on the beauty of the shining cross, but adds that it is missing the body of Jesus, the burden that the cross itself bears. Drawing a link across unbridgeable traditions, especially in the context of the Holocaust, Rosenfarb's character responds: 'Sometimes I believe that I am such a cross and that I am carrying Jesus on my back'. Rosenfarb uses the Christian symbol of suffering to enhance the emotional charge of her difficult tale.

Let's give the last word to Régine Robin, a French-language Montreal writer recently deceased, steeped in Yiddishkeit, author of a distinguished oeuvre of novels, stories, essays, and historical scholarship as well

as the now classic *L'Amour du Yiddish* in 1984 and whose relationship to time-honoured symbols is never pious or conventional. Interviewed for a documentary on the mountain, she notes that the most important lesson of the mountain is given by its cemeteries. This the place where the Fourth Commandment is obeyed, the command to honour your father and mother, to ensure the transmission of memory across generations. Robin recalls that the mountain has four cemeteries, more than 1 million graves. This makes for a huge weight, to which is added the memories transmitted by the cross itself. But for Robin, as for most observers today, the memory transmitted by the cross has much more to do with history rather than with religion.

In her introduction to *L'amour du Yiddish*, Robin says: I write from one place only, the 'in-between'. Would this be a fitting thought with which to conclude this promenade on the mountain? The mountain itself lives in an in-between of languages and stories—through words as numerous and inviting as its pathways.

Sherry Simon's latest book is "Translation Sites: A Field Guide"

Our virtual visit comes to an end here.

I'd like to mention a few of the people and resources I turned to in putting this podcast together.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank Goldie Morgentaler, Norm Ravvin and Sherry Simon who responded with such enthusiasm and generosity to my invitation to contribute to this podcast.

I'd also like to thank the Museum of Jewish Montreal, with its wonderful online resource, where you will find much more information about the people and places we've mentioned today.

If you're interested in reading more on the subject, you might look for works by Pierre Anctil and Chantal Ringuet.

Véhicule Press has published a number of books about Yiddish Montreal, including *An Everyday Miracle: Yiddish Culture in Montreal*, edited by Ira Robinson, Pierre Anctil and Mervyn Butovsky, and *Montreal of Yesterday* by Israel Medres, translated from the Yiddish by Vivian Felsen.

Thanks to Kleztory and Marc Labelle for the music.

And finally thanks to my friend Susan Bronson, heritage consultant, who knows this neighbourhood like the back of her hand.