

WARREN, Jean-Philippe and Andrée Fortin – *Pratiques et Discours de la Contreculture au Québec. Québec: Les éditions du Septentrion, 2015. Pp. 266.*

In their new book on counter-culture in Quebec, Jean-Philippe Warren and Andrée Fortin introduce a welcome layer to the story of Quebec's New Left in the 1960s and 1970s. To date, most writing on the period by both insiders and academics (including Warren) has focussed on waves of political activism or the organized bodies that sustained a radical critique of society for most of the 1970s. Warren and Fortin add to our intellectual understanding of the new left through their description of an ambiguous counter-culture that at times provided linkages between feminist, environmental, cooperative, nationalist, and even communist movements, and at other times delineated the differences between them. The ways that counter-cultural practices and discourses facilitated everyday connections between groups and individuals in 1970s Quebec help explain the rapidly fluctuating landscape of the new left as well as its relationship with the commoditized mass counter-culture of the 1980s.

Warren and Fortin are primarily concerned with understanding the intellectual contours of the counter-culture scene. How did those people who lived by the principles of "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" find commonality with more structured groups who promoted a specific political program? How did counter-culture intellectuals reconcile the desire for personal freedom with their collective goals? Why was it so easy for the capitalist class to appropriate the symbols of the cultural "underground" and market them to a mass audience? To answer these questions, the authors deconstruct the intellectual production of some of the more prominent figures in the movement, locating these actors in both a local and global context. We learn that many Quebeckers discovered counter-culture through their travels to places like Haight Ashbury in San Francisco, or after listening to Sgt. Pepper on one of the rapidly growing community radio stations. In Montreal, locals interacted with American draft dodgers who introduced them to the thriving counter culture south of the border. Quebeckers were, however, not simply passive consumers of an American phenomenon, but articulated a uniquely local version through underground journals like *Mainmise* and *Logos*. One influential counter-culture intellectual, for example, combined the aspirations of nationalists and hippies through the search for a global village, playfully referred to as *Kébèk*, in which individuals would find community through their connections to the earth. Warren and Fortin also demonstrate how many hippies drifted in and out of other political organizations that were particularly prominent in Montreal, explaining how their turn to living otherwise was a reaction to these other groups' increasingly rigid vision of collective struggle.

The authors conclude their study at the end of the 1970s, which they contend marked the decline of a counter-culture as a marginal phenomenon and its appropriation into a broader popular culture. One of the strengths of this book, however, is that the authors do not depict this shift as an inevitable transition driven only by market forces. Instead, they describe the internal struggles that plagued different wings of the counter-culture movement. Founders of collective

living situations, for example, often quickly abandoned their projects after discovering that residents chose to pursue personal fulfilment over contributing to the collective. The failure of these utopian projects reflected a more general fragmentation and demobilization of the new left at the end of the 1970s, contributing to an intense sadness that permeated Montreal's activist communities into the 1980s.

What makes *Pratiques et Discours* original is that it is based on archived materials that intellectuals within the Quebec counter-culture produced themselves, chronicling the evolution of the scene (at least partially) as internally constituted. Compared with books that have depicted hippies as naïve or drug addled, this is a breath of fresh air. There are also, however, disadvantages to this approach. Most of the excerpts that the authors include from memoirs, interviews, and periodicals tend to speak in universal terms, and do not reference specific times or places, making it difficult to understand the scale or specifics of the scene they are referencing. The title identifies that the book is about Quebec, but most of the action takes place in a small section of downtown Montreal. Locating their study more explicitly in this smaller frame would have opened the door to an analysis of how counter-culture affected the daily interactions between people on the streets and in collective organizations. Intellectuals in the counter-culture scene developed their ideas in relation to things happening in their immediate vicinity as well as to the linguistic, race, gender and class politics that dictated with whom they interacted and the nature of those interactions. The authors themselves introduce the potential of this type microanalysis through a map depicting the linguistic segregation within the counter-culture movement in downtown Montreal, but unfortunately, they do not pursue this line of inquiry very far (p. 32). Counter-culture was very much a product of city politics and people used counter-culture for different political ends. The reader is thus left with several questions about how people at the margins influenced this underground culture: how did the presence of black or queer artists affect the scene? Was there a counter-culture in the peripheral working-class neighbourhoods? How did sub-groups within the counter-culture scene reflect the everyday politics of the city?

These are, however, perhaps unfair criticisms for a book that did not set out to answer these questions, and they should not deter anyone interested in Quebec's counter-culture or the New Left more generally from picking up this excellent book. The authors' inclusion of detailed drawing and photographs, moreover, add visual texture to an already engaging narrative. Just as clear and fluid in its analysis as it is in presentation, this book should appeal to specialists and casual readers alike.

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