

Stanger-Ross, Jordan. *Staying Italian: Urban Change and Ethnic Life in Postwar Toronto and Philadelphia*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009. Pp. 208. Illustrations, photographs, maps

Richardson Dilworth

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1936, les séminaristes se consacrent à leurs études, et seuls des prêtres enseignent jusqu'à près de 800 élèves en 1960. Par la suite, la redéfinition institutionnelle se poursuit jusqu'en 1989 et se traduit par l'abandon du niveau collégial pour un recentrement sur le secondaire. La place des professeurs laïcs progresse à partir de 1955 ainsi que la syndicalisation des différentes catégories d'employés. Laissant vibrer sa corde littéraire, l'auteur parcourt le « Bel aujourd'hui », cette quatrième période dans la vie du Séminaire où se renforce la présence laïque dans l'administration et le corps enseignant. Les femmes s'y font une place, et c'est seulement en 1998 que les filles entrent dans les classes. Panneton consacre une partie aux activités parascolaires et une dernière aux institutions nées des initiatives du Séminaire ou encouragées par ce dernier, « L'arbre et ses branches ». Il présente des notices sur chacune, du Séminaire Sainte-Marie de Shawinigan à l'UQTR ou au Musée Pierre-Boucher.

L'auteur a bénéficié d'un accès illimité aux archives de l'institution. Il les exploite avec habileté pour ménager l'intérêt de son lecteur et particulièrement celui des anciens de l'institution. Il n'a pas renoncé pour autant à des bilans quantitatifs sur les effectifs professoraux et étudiants, les finances, les frais de scolarité. La vie au Séminaire, le rythme scolaire et les programmes font l'objet d'une présentation détaillée qui permet de bien comprendre le projet éducatif et son évolution. La transition des années 1960 et les différentes réformes qui mèneront à la fondation des cégeps font l'objet d'une présentation très claire, malgré leur complexité.

Malheureusement, l'historiographie, renouvelée depuis quelques années sur les collèges classiques, n'a pas été utilisée pour situer le Séminaire Saint-Joseph et son impact dans l'éducation des garçons, la formation d'une élite, la création de réseaux et les aménagements de programmes. Les travaux cités portent essentiellement sur la Mauricie et le Séminaire de Québec. L'impact régional du Séminaire est certes indéniable. Il se traduit dans un recrutement majoritairement rural qui peut surprendre. L'institution draine en effet les jeunes talents des grosses paroisses, tandis que la bourgeoisie trifluvienne préfère Brébeuf et Loyola pour ses garçons.

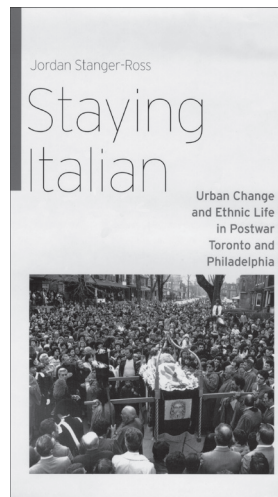
C'est aussi sous le signe de la concurrence que s'opèrent les grandes mutations du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'apparition du collégial public et la chute des vocations orientent l'institution vers le secteur secondaire. La baisse du recrutement des élèves à la fin des années 1990, au-delà des justifications pédagogiques, fait entrer les filles dans ce bastion masculin au détriment des institutions privées qui les accueillaient. Ces faits ne sont pas occultés par l'auteur qui ne tombe pas dans la nostalgie des anciens temps, souvent associée à ce type d'ouvrage. La discipline ancienne reçoit son lot de critiques, les divergences sur les grandes décisions apparaissent, mais le portrait n'en demeure pas moins assez lisse. La transition clercs-laïcs dans l'administration de l'école semble parfaitement harmonieuse. On s'en assure peut-être en privilégiant le recrutement d'anciens du Séminaire connaissant bien la culture de leur

*alma mater*. L'auteur ne cache pas le caractère inégalitaire de traitement des personnels laïcs, avant la syndicalisation. La mesure de l'évolution de l'institution est le progrès qui s'inscrit dans le patrimoine bâti : des vieilles casernes louées aux bâtiments de granit imposants. Des prêtres providentiels prennent les bonnes décisions et savent organiser le financement des grands projets dans la région et auprès des anciens. Ces topoï de l'histoire institutionnelle des collèges ne remettent pourtant pas en question l'intérêt de l'ouvrage, car un certain équilibre est maintenu entre l'action des individus et les forces structurelles. Quelques élèves sortis des rangs apparaissent ici et là, sans *name-dropping* abusif toutefois, car si chaque collège aime à revendiquer ses célébrités pour stimuler le recrutement, l'exercice devient assez vain du point de vue de l'historien puisque ces institutions profitaient d'une situation de monopole dans la formation des élites masculines québécoises.

Brigitte Caulier  
Département d'histoire et CIEQ  
Université Laval

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Jordan Stanger-Ross's insightful (and thoroughly and creatively researched) book, comparing the experiences and practices of Italians in two South Philadelphia parishes, and in Toronto's Little Italy neighbourhood, in the period after World War II, prompts the question of what it means to be Italian in large North American cities, and what that Italian identity can tell us about the nature and structure of those cities. His central thesis is that South Philadelphia's Italians both confronted and constructed greater neighbourhood constraints than the Italians of Toronto. That is,

the South Philadelphians were far less likely than the Torontonians to sell their houses and move out of their neighbourhood; Catholic carnivals and processions in South Philadelphia were hosted, and attended, almost exclusively by parish residents, whereas celebrations in the St. Agnes/St. Francis Parish of Little Italy were attended by Italians (and others) from throughout the Toronto region. And finally, since World War II, South Philadelphia Italian couples lived closer to one another at the time of their marriage than couples in Little Italy. In fact, "By 1990, the couples married in Toronto's Little Italy were separated by almost twice the distance of their South Philadelphia peers." (p. 105)

Stanger-Ross provides a careful accounting of the local, regional, and national forces and structures that might account for at least some of the differences between South Philadelphia and Toronto's Little Italy, his purpose evidently being to provide a context for his more fine-grained comparisons in later chapters, and not to identify specific causal mechanisms, which remain unclear. In the period after World War II, Philadelphia, like almost every other American Rustbelt city, faced a steady loss of businesses and middle- and upper-income families to the surrounding suburbs and elsewhere. At the same time, African Americans moving up from the South were perceived to threaten property values, arguably a self-fulfilling prophecy. The influx of new residents, the outflux of businesses and more affluent taxpayers, and the overall net population loss, all combined to keep city services poor and property values stagnant, thus creating a sense of insularity and "defensive localism" in the Italian parishes. Stagnant property values provided little incentive to sell homes and move, whereas Italians in Toronto could realize a healthy profit by selling their homes, as many of them did, thus accounting for their greater likelihood to leave their neighbourhood.

Defensive localism in Philadelphia was supported by parochial schools that were controlled by the parishes, whereas Toronto's parochial schools were administered by the metropolitan government, and they thus never developed the same local attachments as in Philadelphia. Toronto's metropolitan government also redistributed taxes between the city and suburbs, with the result that Toronto did not suffer the same decline in city services as did Philadelphia. And though Toronto was a more popular destination for immigrants than Philadelphia (and Canada as a whole let in relatively more immigrants than the United States), these new arrivals did not find themselves enmeshed in a spatialized racial conflict, as did black arrivals to Philadelphia, who were welcome in only a few neighbourhoods. By contrast, the Italians who were still arriving by the tens of thousands to Toronto after World War II settled throughout the city, thus expanding their ethnic social networks beyond the confines of Little Italy.

Despite the fact that they were and are both Italian enclaves, it does seem a bit like comparing apples and oranges for Stanger-Ross to compare a vibrant commercial and entertainment district in Toronto to largely residential communities in Philadelphia. Yet the differences between the neighbourhoods are illuminating. There is some small irony in the fact that, in the years covered in this book, Toronto's Little Italy, despite its name, contained proportionately fewer Italians than the two South Philadelphia neighbourhoods that were known (at least in this book) only by their parish names. The only portion of South Philadelphia that is semi-officially designated as "Italian" is the "Italian Market," an open-air food market that once consisted of mostly Italian proprietors, only a small portion of which overlaps with one of the parishes studied by Stanger-Ross. And, of course, few Italians have ever actually lived in the Italian Market.

Stanger-Ross's comparison between Philadelphia and Toronto thus hints at an inverse relationship between the extent to which an urban space might serve as an anchor of ethnic identity, and the extent to which it can also be a residential community of ethnics. Such an inverse relationship is suggested further by the fact that South Philadelphia's Italians apparently shed their ethnic identities more rapidly than Torontonians when they left the confines of their arguably more Italian neighbourhoods. Thus, for instance, Italian Philadelphians, while they lived closer to their coethnics, were less likely than Italian Torontonians to work in distinctly Italian ethnic occupational niches. And by 1960, as both South Philadelphian and Torontonian Italian women looked beyond their parishes for eligible marriage partners, the rate at which the Philadelphians married Italians declined, whereas the rate increased among Torontonian brides.

If the spatial confines of defensive localism in South Philadelphia fostered a strong sense of identity and community, as Stanger-Ross suggests, his comparison to Toronto suggests that South Philadelphians identified less strongly as Italians when they left their neighbourhood. Possibly a more specifically Italian identity in Canada that transcended neighbourhood borders resulted in part from the Trudeau administration's emphasis on multiculturalism, which "has placed diverse immigrant origins at the center of Canadian self-conception." (p. 30) Yet Stanger-Ross is also quick to point out that "Study of Italians in Montreal warns against facile national generalizations." (140)

Regardless of whether national policy or local context shapes the nature of ethnic identity, Stanger-Ross leaves us with a further, and unanswered, question—how do variably constructed ethnic identities shape their respective cities? Have the different Italian identities in Philadelphia and Toronto contributed in any significant way to those cities' larger stories of political and social development? For Philadelphia, we only have a few biographies of Frank Rizzo that hint at answers. We could use instead a second volume from Stanger-Ross, equally as impressive as his first.

Richardson Dilworth  
Director, Center for Public Policy  
Drexel University