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Between the solitudes

Reviewed by Kathleen L. Kellett-Betsos

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Narrated by Quebec journalist Josh Freed, this "offbeat odyssey through anglo Montreal" gives some insight into the complexity of the English-speaking community in Montreal which often feels excluded by nationalist cries of "Le Quebec aux Quebecois!"

Freed presents a series of interviews with anglophone Montrealers, including a former débutante who recalls the impact of the October crisis on affluent Westmount; unilingual anglophone teenagers in working-class Pointe St-Charles who feel they have no future in Quebec; members of a once-thriving Jewish community whose children have left for more welcoming climes; a shopkeeper of Irish origin who, recalling the historical ties between the Irish and the French united against the English, feels betrayed by restrictive language policies; university students engaged in a debate over whether the children of immigrants, particularly members of visible minorities, are truly considered "Quebecois."

Freed shows the resentment engendered by the imposition of the Quebec language laws, particularly Bill 178, even among those anglophones once sympathetic to Quebec nationalism. The Quebec nationalist view point is presented by journalist Gérald Leblanc, whose friendly arguments with Freed are subtitled for the benefit of unilingual anglophones. After having spoken with many Montrealers, such as Marianne Ackermann, founder of a bilingual theatre, who welcomes the challenge of living in two languages, Freed concludes on an optimistic note: if English-speaking Montrealers can continue to adapt to the new linguistic reality of Quebec and the "old guard" nationalists can overcome their outdated stereotypes about the anglophone minority, there is hope for healthy cooperation between the solitudes.

Lively, well organized, beautifully filmed, *Between the Solitudes* is also readily affordable. In a classroom setting, this film would enrich discussions of Quebec politics, although students would require background information on Quebec history and language laws.

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