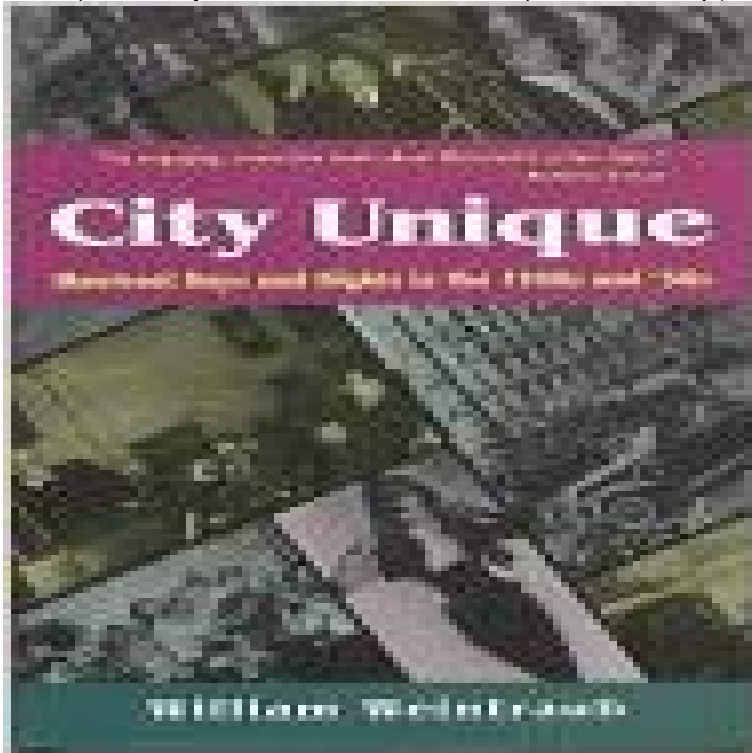


City Unique: Montreal Days and Nights in the 1940s and 50s



Montreal in the 1940s and 50s was Canada's largest, richest, most vibrant and colourful city. It was, at the end of those prosperous decades, bursting at the seams, still growing, still far ahead of Toronto. No one then could foresee the rise of Quebec separatism, which would cripple the city, and send it into its long decline. In *City Unique*, William Weintraub introduces the reader to many of the extraordinary characters who gave Montreal its singular flavour. They include Camillien Houde, the mayor who was interned during the war for advocating treason; Lili St. Cyr, the ultimate striptease artiste, who mesmerized men and boys; Maurice Duplessis, the dictatorial premier who could evict individuals from their homes if he suspected they were communist; Harry Ship, the czar of illegal gambling dens; and Anna Beauchamp, the flamboyant madam who operated a string of at least a dozen brothels. Montreal was a wide-open town, the vice capital of Canada, where the amply bribed police and politicians connived to resist all attempts at reform. But two crusaders, Pacifique Plante and Jean Drapeau, were determined to clean up the city and Weintraub gives a lively account of their battle with the vice lords. During the era, far-reaching changes took place within the communities that comprised Montreal's three solitudes - the English, the French, and the Jewish - and the author examines their effects. He also describes the city's passionate ideologues, both communist and fascist, their struggles and changing fortunes in the aftermath of the Second World War. He examines, too, the emergence of a generation of novelists, playwrights and poets, including Hugh MacLennan, Gabrielle Roy, Irving Layton and others who set a new standard for Canadian literature. The 1940s and 50s were a unique period, different from everything that came before - the Great Depression, the lingering stuffiness of the

