

## BOOK NOTES/CRITIQUES BREVES

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Ravitch, Melech. *Night Prayer and Other Poems*. Translated by Seymour Mayne with Rivka Augenfeld. Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1993. 24pp.

*Night Prayer* by Melech Ravitch deals with the thoughts of an elderly poet in his last years. The subject matter is a cause for discomfort to the mature reader reminding him/her of one's mortality. Ravitch is generally precise in language lacking the life-giving flow one would like to read. It is metaphor-free and often difficult to read. Professor Mayne has remained close to the text, rendering it harmonious and sensitive and in his own inimitable style leaving the accuracy untouched. *Night Prayer* is an evening meditation, the poet's secular *Shma*, by far the most meaningful poem and apparently the translator's favorite piece. The translation is powerful, brief, and strong. In a word, to the point. In this pamphlet, Professor Mayne does not interpret. He remains faithful, giving the reader clear authenticity. As both translator and poet, Professor Mayne has added valuable material to the oh-so-small world of Yiddish literature in translation.

Rubin, Harold. *Those Pesky Weeds*. Ottawa: Ottawa Jewish Historical Society, 1992. 167pp.

*Those Pesky Weeds* by Harold Rubin is a young man's chronicle of his life as an immigrant in Ottawa. It covers the period from his youth in 1912 to his experiences overseas during World War II. His family, his living conditions and youthful explorations are all set forth. The high standards they lived by and their relationships

all make for a compact educational and social picture of the times. It is an all-encompassing world where Jews and Gentiles mingled freely with all the contradictions and eccentricities inherent in such relationships. The narrative is that of a mundane journal faithful to the daily events. It is a standard memoir with no critical analysis. It depicts anyman's Ottawa, anyman's war, yet it is always buoyant and enthusiastic. It is an easy read for anyone interested in Jewish Canadiana.

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