

In her notes Cherie Smith calls this book a “labour of love”. The book reads this way also. Her appreciation of her family’s struggles, their successes and their failures, comes through in her writing. For those of us who have yet to write our stories Cherie Smith has given us something with which we can readily identify. It is both informing and entertaining.

Susan J. Landau-Chark
Concordia University

Tulchinsky, Gerald. Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community Toronto: Stoddart, 1998. 470 pages

Although Jews are considered “the people of the book”, they were not inspired to write the history of their own community in Canada until the 1990s. Journalists Abraham Rhinewine and Benjamin Sack wrote histories of the community in 1932 and 1945 respectively, but these works, important for the time, stopped at the turn of the twentieth century, and were descriptive rather than analytical. It was not until 1992, when Gerald Tulchinsky’s *Taking Root* was published, that a serious, scholarly perspective of Canadian Jewish life emerged. That study examined the evolution of the community until 1920. *Branching Out* is the second volume of Tulchinsky’s opus, tracing the developments of the community from the 1920s until the late 1990s. These two volumes are sober, scholarly, and well written. Tulchinsky has covered most of the major themes of Jewish life in Canada, and, in *Branching Out*, has opened some heretofore unexplored aspects of Jewish contributions to Canadian society. We finally have a history of a community that is comprehensive and intelligent, one that should be read by all Canadian Jews, and all students of Canadian ethnicity, immigration, and social adaptation.

The theme that runs through Tulchinsky’s analysis of the community in the last eight decades of the twentieth century is that while it became more diverse in terms of culture,

ethnicity, socio-economic status and religious observance, it also became more unified. These processes developed in large measure due to acculturation, and, in some respects, assimilation, into Canadian life. They also occurred because of the growing multicultural make-up of Canadian society, especially in the post-war era. Tulchinsky examines the community according to specific topics. The first three-quarters of the book deals with the period from 1920 to 1945. After laying out the geography of the community in the inter-war period, he analyzes the nativist immigration policies that quickly choked off Jewish arrivals from Europe, Jewish education in Montreal, the needle trades, the Jewish Left, Zionism and antisemitism. He concludes this section with chapters on the contributions made by Canadian Jews to the war effort and to the emergence of the state of Israel. The remaining three chapters deal with the post-war era, and are subdivided by topics pertinent to the period. Some of these discuss the arrival of Holocaust survivors, antisemitism, education, Soviet and Sephardic Jews, culture and Nazi war criminals. Tulchinsky interposes the text with short snippets of stories of interesting characters, poems, and photographs. As befits a scholarly academic work, there are almost one hundred pages of footnotes, based on numerous archival collections, interviews and references to secondary sources.

Tulchinsky is at his best in assembling new research and integrating it with recent studies. The chapters on the Jewish Left and Canada's Jews at War particularly stand out. Tulchinsky is adept at explaining the roots of left-wing activism in the community and how it created fissures, and even cleavages, both within leftist movements, and within the community as a whole. He articulates the struggles of Jewish workers in the Communist Party of Canada against the traditional trade unions, and he also understands the divisions within the non-Communist left. The one cavil is that the complexities of the terminology of the left should have been articulated. For example, he states that the Poale Zion (left) "though Marxist,

was staunchly anti-Communist...” In economic terms, it was Marxist in the inter-war period, but, because of its fierce adherence to Zionism, it was also contra-Marx.

Tulchinsky’s treatment of the Jewish men and women who served in the armed forces during the War is a welcome addition to our history. It is sensitive and informative, and finally sheds light on an all but neglected chapter of the community. Here, he breaks new ground, and, while restricted by space in writing a history of the community, he has opened the door for other scholars to follow with a fuller treatment of the story.

Despite the tremendous contribution that this study has made to our understanding of the history of Canada’s Jews, there are two shortcomings. The first is the balance between the period to 1945 and the period since the war. Tulchinsky has devoted fewer than 100 pages to the post-war period. This amounts to approximately two pages per year, in contrast to 10 pages per year until 1945. Consequently, we do not get a detailed enough picture of several important developments in the community, including the rapid flight from the traditional immigrant neighbourhoods, life in suburbia, the threat of the evaporation of Jewish continuity, and the nature of social and religious divisions in the late twentieth century. The second problem is the emphasis on data to the detriment of a narrative about real people. The *sturm und drang* of the Jewish neighbourhoods isn’t revealed. To a degree, the flavour of the community is revealed in the inserts, but the text itself could benefit from anecdotes and personality profiles.

This second volume marks Tulchinsky as the pre-eminent historian of the Canadian Jewish community. He has skillfully incorporated the work of earlier chroniclers, contemporary scholars and his own pathbreaking research into a comprehensive picture of Jewish life in Canada.

Franklin Bialystok
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