

is made to deal with the Israeli decision-making process that helped to shape mutual relations.

It is for that reason that the main advantage of this book is the light it sheds on several aspects of Canada's foreign policy, and the way it was formulated. It is less informative on the mutual relations between the two states, Israel and Canada.

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King, Joe. *Fabled City: the Jews of Montreal*. Montreal: Price-Patterson Ltd., 2009. 200 pp.

This book is the latest in a series of tributes to Jewish Montreal flowing from the pen of Joe King. As an experienced journalist and a talented storyteller, King has made the most of a rich body of material in order to evoke the personalities, incidents and anecdotes that mark the rich history of the Jews of Montreal over two and a half centuries. He knows a good story when he sees it and tells it well. The book is the result of a great deal of research and consultation, which the author graciously acknowledges. *Fabled City* is well designed with copious illustrations on nearly every page. Both those who are new to the historical memory of Montreal Jews and those who are already familiar with the subject will be entertained and instructed.

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Levine, Allan. *Coming of Age: A History of the Jewish People of Manitoba*. Winnipeg: Heartland, 2009. 511 pp.

Almost fifty years after the publication of Arthur Chiel's *The Jews in Manitoba*, Allan Levine gives us a chronicle of astounding scope, supplemented by wonderful photographs from the archives of the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada. The task of writing a regional history is no small one. The story must have sufficient depth and breadth so that readers from inside the

community portrayed can easily recognize themselves and their community, and at the same time be compelling and coherent, so that readers unfamiliar with the community will be drawn into it.

The outline of the narrative that Levine gives us is in many ways very familiar to students of North American Jewish history. Beginning with German Jewish settlement and entrepreneurship in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he chronicles the mercurial rise of the Coblenz family, along with a handful of other peddlers and merchants who were established, for a short time, in the countryside and later moved into Winnipeg. They are followed by waves of Russian immigrants who inhabited the area north of the CPR tracks, that part of the north end known for a time as “Little Jerusalem.” This same Russian Jewish immigrant community produced a wealth of educational and cultural institutions such as the Peretz and Sholem Aleichem schools, nurtured in the soil of Yiddish radicalism. Levine goes on to relate in exquisite detail the discrimination faced by Jews as they moved into the social mainstream; the housing conventions of suburban Tuxedo flats, the University quotas. Finally he chronicles the growing ethnic diversity of an affluent community that has now “come of age.”

While the outline of the story is familiar, its colour is uniquely “Manitoba”, influenced by the physical and cultural topography, starting from as far back as 1732 when Fernand Jacobs was a factor for the Hudson’s Bay Company, followed by a number of other German Jewish fur traders who plied their trade near Fort Gary.

The prairie landscape produced a generation of Jewish farmers who, for a brief interlude make their living from the land, in the farm colonies, (such as Edenbridge, that most contentious of radical socialist experiments), or in their own nuclear homesteads. The success of these families, as well as that of the rural general store merchants, claims Levine, lay in their ability to adapt to the multicultural environment in which they found themselves. They move amongst Mennonites,

Ukrainians, Belgians, Dutch, as well as English, Scottish, and Aboriginals “dealing with the multicultural mix and learning bits of several languages including Cree and Ojibway was natural and became a part of doing business in the country.” (p. 339)

In addition to this ability to negotiate multiculturalism, the spirit of creativity, and innovation emerges from the narrative as distinctive to this place; Levine devotes a chapter (my favourite) to the creative projects, such as the L’Chaim dance troupe and the Labour Zionist Camp Massad . He tells how the camp, which operated out of a glorified parking lot, somehow managed to produce interesting and provocative theatre.

Perhaps this gives us a clue to the Manitoba Jewish mystique. This tiny people, making up 3% of the Winnipeg population, and 1.5% of the provincial population in 2006 (a total of about 16,000 people) has incubated more than its share of wildly creative and successful entrepreneurs that permeate this story- the Bronfmans, the Keives (of K-tel fame), the Vickars, and the Simkins (land developers), to name a few .The cultural field includes Miriam Waddington, Adele Wiseman, Sarah Sommers, Gad Horowitz, and in the field of religion, Manitoba can lay claim to Zalman Schachter. Perhaps, Levin speculates, the very scarcity of material resources and the relative isolation of Manitoba Jewry provided a stimulus to resourcefulness and hence greater creativity.

Another Manitoba motif emerges from Levine’s telling; transience. Many of the families portrayed are from somewhere else, and many move, either from the countryside to Winnipeg, to the United States or to Eastern Canada in order to further their careers. The very landscape echoes this motif of transience. Of the farm colonies, for instance there often remain only buried traces, literally, in the case of the hidden cemetery of Bender Hamlet, founded in 1902, between Lake Winnipeg and Lake of the Woods.

But the solidity of the edifice that frames the narrative, from the prologue to the concluding chapter cannot be doubted. It is the Asper Jewish Community Campus, built in Winnipeg in

2006. It is a symbol of the affluence of the Jewish community, its self sufficiency, and its ability to take care of its own, and of course, of the social acceptance that make such visibility in the wider community possible. For this is the central metaphor of the book, and these qualities of affluence, self-sufficiency, social and political and integration, for Levine, are the concomitants of maturity.

Should affluence and ability to blend in be key measures of communal maturity? Some would argue that indeed, these are the prerequisites to being able to enrich and sustain Jewish communities. Without affluence, there will be no Community Campus.

However, Levin argues, 'Coming of Age' in Manitoba has had a cost: crushing conformity. Gone is the social and cultural diversity of the North End (the Jewish population of Winnipeg lives and prays in the South End now), the Yiddish flavour of difference, the creativity of a generation of radical secularists.

Nostalgia ? Perhaps. But the contrasting of the contentious diversity of the past with the monolithic conformity of the present begs another question. Is it possible that Levine's backward looking nostalgia actually hides real, contemporary diversity in the Jewish community? He mentions, for example, the divisive issue of Israeli state and military policy in Manitoba congregations. He also includes, as a tease, an image of a newspaper headline from 1999 concerning local furor over same-sex (and interfaith) marriages. Why not go further, and explore these differences, in as far as they relate to perceived or real diversity in the community?

To his great credit, Levine is not afraid to tell the discomfoting stories often left in the shadows, of Jewish prostitution at the beginning of the last century, for instance, or of the Kosher meat scandal of the 1960s. At times, however, the celebratory tone of the volume made it difficult for an outsider such as me, to accept the group portrait of the community as entirely real (such scepticism can only be counteracted,

no doubt by a fair dose of infighting and disillusionment). Occasionally the focus of the story grew blurry, given the great range of material presented.

Allan Levine has made an invaluable contribution to fleshing out the history of the Jewish people of Manitoba by the inclusion of wonderfully original chapters on culture, sports and leisure. In addition to using a wealth of memoir material, he integrates an astounding breadth of oral history, drawing on over 200 interviews. The integration of beautifully laid out full, and even double-paged archival photographs goes a long way to making the history pertinent and immediate, and his thought provoking treatment of the history of the Jewish People of Manitoba makes *Coming of Age* an absolutely essential reference book for any student of Canadian Jewish History.

Eve Lerner

Maoz, Daniel and Gondos, Andrea, eds. *From Antiquity to the Postmodern World: Contemporary Jewish Studies in Canada*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011. xiii + 302 pp.

This volume is a collection of articles that originated as presentations at the annual meetings of the Canadian Society for Jewish Studies (CSJS) and the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies (ACJS). These two learned societies, which exist in a symbiotic relationship, engage respectively in the fields of Jewish Studies (CSJS) and the multidisciplinary study of Jews in Canada (ACJS). In the introduction, the editors go into detail describing this interesting and somewhat complex relationship.

The articles in the volume, thirteen in number, are grouped in four sections: “The Rabbinic Period: Issues of Gender and Status,” “Jewish Mysticism: Approaches to Its Popularization,” “Jewish Texts: Interpretation and Application,” and “Jewish Society, History, and Art.” As one can tell from