

the categorization, this is an eclectic volume. The disparate articles are united by their CSJS and ACJS origins, and speak well for the quality of the Canadian conferences at which they were presented and for the health of contemporary Jewish studies in Canada.

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Margolis, Rebecca. *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil: Yiddish Culture in Montreal, 1905-1945*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2011. xxii + 293pp.

This study is the first to consider the phenomenon of Yiddish in Montreal comprehensively. Margolis sets out to understand how it is both the same as and different from Yiddish cultural activity elsewhere. “On the surface, Yiddish Montreal appeared to be a smaller version of Yiddish New York, separated by a generation gap,” she says (35). But this formulation, she shows, minimizes a central difference. The generation that elapsed between the major immigration of Eastern European Jews to New York and that which saw a large number arrive in Montreal was a crucial period. “Montreal’s Yiddish immigration took place largely after 1905, by which time Yiddish cosmopolitanism had been supplanted by nationalist ideologies” (36). In addition, immigrants to Montreal encountered a uniquely bilingual city in which the contested arena of linguistic domination threw up roadblocks to newcomers. Catholic French-speakers and Protestant English-speakers had separate school systems, neither of which could easily accommodate non-Christians. This served to bolster independent community organizations (in this case, schools) that fostered Jewish particularity, delaying assimilation and producing a multi-faceted, intellectually and emotionally satisfying cultural life. “While a mainstream American Yiddish press promoted Americanization, Montreal intellectuals such as pedagogue Shloime Wiseman (1899-1985) advocated an ‘invented yidishkayt’ ” (31).

Margolis focuses on the community organizations that fulfilled this mission in chapters devoted to the press, literary activity, schools, and theatre. The book is based on Margolis' Columbia University doctoral dissertation, but she has usefully reorganized the material to create chapters that cohere thematically. The chapter on Montreal's long-running Yiddish daily, the *Keneder Adler*, shows how this profit-making enterprise was able to support and sustain less commercial cultural venues, while itself making specific contributions that were both literary and social. The *Adler* specifically attempted to unite Jews and minimize ideological differences between them, and to show new immigrants how to be Canadian. But it also published modern literature and groomed a literate, Jewishly-oriented reading public, while simultaneously supporting Yiddish writers financially.

The chapter on the Yiddish theatre shows the other end of the spectrum. Financially non-viable from its beginning to the present day, the Yiddish theatre survived through individual and organizational sponsorships. There were only a few years in which one troupe (Yidishe teater grupe, or YTEG, under Chayele Grober) was able to produce serious, original art, while the majority of theatrical performances were imported, lightweight, popular entertainments. Although Grober's work won excellent reviews and praise from the local intelligentsia, the theatre's fate was sealed when the Workmen's Circle declined to subsidize it. While Margolis says Grober successfully "created an interested and discerning public, albeit a small elite in the Jewish community" (185), it was clearly not in the same league as the *Adler* which reached thousands of households every day. (It is interesting to consider that in the years since YTEG closed in 1942, the press and the theatre have reversed positions. Nowadays the ability to read and write Yiddish is so atrophied that Yiddish periodicals live off donors, or simply die. It is the theatre, with its additional expressive capacities in sound, movement, facial expression—not to mention the ability to sub-title—which is more accessible to

the average person and more likely to be sought out by a non-scholarly Jewish public.)

Margolis states several times that her goal is to investigate a minor centre of a minority culture and to see what conditions allowed it to foster continuity in Canada. She is a cautious scholar and does not argue beyond her evidence, but it seems clear from the picture she presents that the “minor” centre of Montreal produced a more resilient and lasting connection to Yiddish than a “major” centre such as New York did. This was effected through a combination of purposeful, ideological impetus (such as Wiseman’s “invented yidishkayt”) and sheer luck in terms of personalities and situation. The development of Jewish Montreal’s robust institutional infrastructure may have grown from a doubly-exclusionary, pre-existing French-English tension, but it laid the groundwork for cultural maintenance to a greater degree than could be anticipated. Individuals such as Hirsch Wolofsky, the *Adler* editor who refrained from endorsing divisive political positions (to the great irritation of many radical readers), exerted an influence that proved useful for the longevity of Yiddish culture. Among the literati emerged a clear leader, J.I. Segal, who “fostered the development of a local literary milieu” (78), mentoring other writers and demanding a high quality product from them. These factors produced not only artists and activists but an engaged, culturally literate public which expected and demanded yet more cultural product.

Some of the phenomena Margolis investigates are almost impossible to research, leading to unavoidable lacunae in places. As she herself notes in what must count as the best footnote in Canadian Jewish scholarship, “While material abounds on famous visitors who graced the Yiddish stage, documentation on local theatre made up of volunteer actors and running on low budgets is scarce, as is the glamour that has made the professional theatre such a fruitful area of study” (231, n. 29). The study of audiences and readers faces similar constraints, and Margolis is as hampered by this dynamic as other scholars. However, in other areas where we could expect to find cracks,

there is actually a fair bit of material. Informal literary activity, relationships between writers, the effects of the secular Yiddish schools on their graduates, and other such phenomena all yield quite rich material from memoirs and the press. Margolis pieces her sources together with great skill. Overall, this study admirably fills a gap which has truly hampered the study of Canadian Jewry, and does so lucidly and readably.

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Mendelson, Alan. *Exiles From Nowhere: the Jews and the Canadian Elite*. Montréal : R. Brass Studio, 2008. xviii + 411 pp.

Alan Mendelson's *Exiles From Nowhere* has two aims. One is to examine the pervasive antisemitism displayed by the Canadian elite from the late nineteenth century through the aftermath of World War II. The other is to explore how growing up in this milieu molded the noted Canadian intellectual George Grant on issues regarding Jews and Judaism. The result is a fascinating and heartbreaking book.

Mendelson states at the outset that "words have power" (xvii); he then goes on to follow the spoken and written words of the Canadian elite and their ripple effects upon history. In pursuing his investigation, Mendelson introduces his readers to the men and women of money, class, and intellect who wielded influence on the world around them, including Goldwin Smith, Vincent Massey, Waldorf and Nancy Astor, and William Lyon Mackenzie King. The reader is introduced to a world of deep-seated "genteel" antisemitism, in which a deep disdain for both Judaism as a religion and Jews as a people suffused people's thoughts and actions, even as they distanced themselves from the more overt, "vulgar" antisemitism of direct violence, destruction of property, and assault. With persuasive attention to detail, Mendelson demonstrates "that genteel antisemitism had tangible consequences in the real world" (3). Words spoken