

**Ira Robinson, ed. *Canada's Jews in Time, Space, and Spirit*. (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 501 pp.**

In this broadly-conceived collection of essays on multiple aspects of the Canadian Jewish experience, editor Ira Robinson has included essays on the culture, context, and evolution of this community from the late 1700's until recent times. The works are of uneven quality and this is probably the result of the stated intention to cover as much of the waterfront as possible in the hope that the book will serve as a course text. But the attempt fails to get there, in part because of the absence here of discreet essays focusing on some of the most important aspects of the Canadian Jewish experience, such as Zionism in its many formulations, the evolution of the clothing industry in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg from the late nineteenth century, long-range occupational and demographic transformations, the emergence of a significant Jewish presence in the new economy and public sphere, and biographies of some of the leading personalities in the community. Instead, the reader is exposed to thoroughly familiar themes that have been well-treated before, reflected in the footnotes.

There are, nevertheless, a fair number of highly useful and largely original components here, namely, two excellent contributions by Richard Menkis on the Reform and Conservative movements, Jack Lipinsky on the Canadian Jewish Congress up to 1945, Ruth Frager on early twentieth century class conflict in Montreal and Toronto, Michael Brown on recent transformations in Toronto Jewry and the tensions arising from bitter confrontations at York University, Frank Bialystok on post Second World War developments, Morton Weinfeld on contemporary Jewish life in Montreal, and Suzanne Rackover and Loren Lerner on the art scene.

The collection, therefore, should advance interest in the subject and serve as a useful introduction to those who need convincing that the Canadian Jewish experience is interesting and distinctive, i.e., that, as David Rome once succinctly put it: "there is a border between the United States and Canada, and it made a difference."

It is now time for the essay writers, some of whom seem to be excessively repetitive, and the overly busy collection promoters to concentrate instead on encouraging the writing of books because that is still where the greatest impact on the Canadian Jewish reading public and the historical profession can be hoped for. While this constituency is probably declining, that is what we should strive to achieve, n'est-ce pas?

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