

Barry L. Stiefel and Hernan Tesler-Mabé, eds., *Neither in Dark Speeches Nor In Similitudes: Reflections and Refractions Between Canadian and American Jews* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 223 pp., ISBN: 9781771122313.

The time would seem ripe in this era of transnational studies to envision Jewish life in the Western Hemisphere not only within but also across national borders. The present volume is a step in the right direction, offering essays that demonstrate in various ways the uses of a 'North American' approach to Jewish Studies. The editors quite appropriately lead with a "modestly revised" version of Jonathan Sarna's classic essay, "The Value of Canadian Jewish History to the American Jewish Historian, and Vice-Versa." Three of the remaining nine articles explore eighteenth and nineteenth century cases of cross-border interactions. Susan Landau-Chark's "Traversing the 49th Parallel: The Canadian Jewish Experience Prior to 1867" documents the ups and downs of personal mobility and trade between Lower Canada and New York and the ways in which post-Revolutionary border disputes, the War of 1812, and other ruptures in British relations with the United States did surprisingly little to disrupt the flow of goods and families. The article is a useful reminder that geographical proximity and cultural similarity smoothed the way for transnational connections.

Lilloet Nördlinger McDonnell provides a West Coast mirror to Landau-Chark in "Bacon, Beans, and a Fine Dish of 'Ditto': Commonalities in Early Jewish Life and Religiosity along the Pacific West Coast." It offers a somewhat more intimate but also time-delimited sketch of "coastal Jews," specifically the continuities and common habits and rituals of Jews from San Francisco to British Columbia, that enlivens a picture of coastal fluidity for Jews on both sides of the border and depicts the creation of a "minhag America."

Barry L. Stiefel's "Re-evaluating *Jew or Juif*: Jewish Community and Life in Franco Heritage North America before ca. 1920" finds a different pattern. He extends the scope of Michael Brown's venerable Canadian exploration to the culturally French world of Louisiana. Stiefel contrasts a defensive Québécois culture to a Louisiana society more open to Jews. Unlike Landau-Chark's and McConnell's Jews, distance and distinct host cultures kept the two Francophone communities largely strangers to each other. Stiefel succeeds particularly well in weaving together comparative demographic, cultural, and economic aspects in his dual portrait, although dated generalizations about Jewish life in the American South detract somewhat from aspects of his argument.

The focus shifts with Howard Gontovnick's "Planting the Seed: The Contributions of the Early Jewish Farmers of America." Gontovnick builds an interesting argument about the Jewish farmer as community builder, noting the ways rural Jewish communities preserved group solidarity in North America by creating cooperative institutions that were closer in character to old-country Jewish settlements than to the typical North American rural village, and that also served as sites of acculturation. However, the article offers little hint that the idea of Jews working the land had deep ideological gravity as an element of Zionist visions of the Jewish turn toward a normal national existence, and as a response to antisemitic arguments of Jews as non-productive parasites. Also, Gontovnick does not take into account such radical experiments as depicted in Kenneth Kann's account of the chicken farmers of Petaluma, California. Were there similar left-wing communities in Canada? He does point out another form of community-building, though, in noting that in some cases farms in the Catskills and Laurentians became Jewish summer resorts.

Three key articles grapple with institutional issues. Zev Eleff's "They Who Control the Time" elucidates the motivations behind and success of Robert Lyons of New York and Abraham de Sola of Montreal, two Orthodox Sephardic Jews, as they created a 177-page calendar-cum-almanac that brought together a fifty-year lunar calendar demarking every Jewish holiday and festival with extensive information about North American Jewish communities and culture. Eleff shows that Lyons and de Sola created usable, detailed calendars of Jewish worship to help assure the continuance of piety and synagogue attendance in the open-ended (and increasingly reformist and Ashkenazic) worlds of North American Jewry.

Ira Robinson's equally revealing, deeply researched "Finding a Rabbi for Quebec City" documents the problems inherent in what Morton Weinfeld once called Canadian Judaism's "branch plant" status vis-à-vis the United States regarding the hiring of ordained rabbis. Robinson documents decision-making on the part of all concerned – the Quebec congregation, newly minted rabbis, and the closest source for a well-trained Orthodox rabbi, the Yeshiva of New York. Both seminary and donor had parts in shaping, and ultimately hastening the decline of the Quebec congregation. Robinson presents a true-to-life, organic vision of the vicissitudes of an Orthodox community attempting to carve out a place for itself when dependent on forces outside its control. Robinson's and Eleff's excellent pieces point to the double challenge of New World communities – dealing with a dominant society which was sometimes hostile, even as Jews themselves were figuring out and feuding over what it meant to be a Jew in a modern and increasingly pluralistic age.

Jeanne Abrams reports a variant of that problem in "'Chasing the Cure' on Both Sides of the Border: Early Jewish Tuberculosis Sanatoriums in Denver and Montreal," an account of the founding, funding, and operation of Denver and Montreal facilities in the period when deaths from tuberculosis outstripped those of all other diseases.

These facilities were remarkable in their openness to poor immigrants and their use of the most advanced treatments. Abrams also describes the ways in which splits between German and Eastern European Jews in Denver necessitated two centres with very different clientele and everyday customs.

Hernan Tesler-Mabé's fascinating article, "Performing Jewish? Heinz Unger, Gustav Mahler, and the Musical Strains of German-Jewish Identity in Canada and the United States," places such feuds in yet another context. One of the many musical refugees from Hitler's Germany and Austria, Unger regularly conducted the Berlin Philharmonic in the 1920s and early 1930s and, not incidentally, championed the symphonies of Gustav Mahler. The Nazi takeover in 1933 ended Unger's career and Mahler performances in Germany. After conducting in Leningrad for a few dismal years and then in England with more success, Unger moved to Canada in 1947 and met with mixed success in Toronto's classical music world. As Tesler-Mabé notes, Unger's championing of Mahler put him squarely in the controversy over Jewish identity and the nature of 'Jewish' music in a post-Holocaust world. Many of Canada's mostly Eastern European Jews shunned Unger as a snobbish German Jew playing German music (read Mahler). For his part, Unger felt part of a broadly transnational German Jewish community of exiled artists, which meant he had more in common with the thriving German Jewish musical communities of New York and Los Angeles than with what existed in Toronto.

Unger's story whets the appetite for more comparative treatment. One need only think of such Jewish, and mostly secular, conductors as Klemperer, Walter, Leinsdorf, Scherchen, Horenstein, and Solti, among others, who found international success in the postwar world. Another question concerns how Unger's recognition (or lack thereof) by the Toronto Jewish community would compare with that of world-class conductor Karel Ancerl, who transformed the Toronto Symphony which until then played the standard European repertoire. Was it known widely that Ancerl was a Jew who survived Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, and did this matter to the Jewish community?

The collection ends with Kelly Amanda Train's "East Meets West: Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in Canada and the United States." Train tells an all-too-familiar story *in extremis* – North African and Middle Eastern Jews faced not only official barriers but also marginality among Jews, even suspicion that they were not really Jews at all. Train's chapter is a very useful introduction to Sephardic and Mizrahic immigration that brings together narratives of Canadian and American governmental policies and intra-Jewish exclusiveness. Train shows that a healthy reaction by these new Jewish immigrants to marginalization was their own creation of social and cultural institutions. She contends that they were intent on both preserving their culture and on establishing an authentic profile within a multicultural Jewish population. This last argument rings true for Canada, though less so for a more acculturationist America.

Neither in Dark Speeches nor in Similitudes opens many conversations and points toward numerous areas for fruitful research. The articles concentrate largely on internal contrasts and comparisons, in most cases only touching lightly on the influence of the surrounding and dominant non-Jewish communities and populations. One symptom of this is the relative lack of attention paid to antisemitism, itself a testimony to the strength of contemporary Jewish life in Canada and the United States. Future scholars may consider reintroducing the waxing and waning of antisemitism and its effect on community formation and on how Jews defined themselves as Canadians and Americans.

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