

Presumably, the intention of this series of anthologies is to make Jewish Diaspora writing available to the large English-reading public, particularly in the United States. This may explain the preponderance of excerpts from the work of novelists. But this practice is not always comfortable for the reader. Although I was content to reread familiar passages from Richler, Cohen, Anne Michaels, and other well-known novelists, I responded with less enthusiasm to excerpts from the work of lesser known writers, such as Michael Redhill and Monique Bosco. Although I might be tempted to read Redhill's novel, *Martin Sloane*, I was not interested in Bosco's *Sara Sage*. In fact, those authors who are represented by a short story or an essay are best served by the anthology.

One might ask why certain authors – Shirley Faessler, Helen Weinzwieg, and Adele Wiseman, for example – are not represented in this anthology. It is also possible to question certain of Greenstein's comments. Klein was not the first Canadian Jewish writer in English, and perhaps it is too sweeping a statement that in his poem, "For My Two Sons, Max and David," Layton begins an "ideological trajectory to the right" that reflects directions taken by "other Jewish writers in North America." These, however, are minor quibbles. Greenstein's anthology, with its impressive introduction, has set a high standard for future work on Canadian Jewish writing.

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Sarna, Jonathan D. *American Judaism: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. xx+ 490 pp.

It is almost a truism that Canadians tend to define themselves in relation to Americans. It is also true that the proximity of Canada to the United States has profoundly affected the ways in which Canadians have lived and thought, particularly in the last century. If what occurs in the United States impacts on Canadians in general, it is no less true that the development

of the Jewish community in the United States has fundamentally influenced the development of the Canadian Jewish community – in spite of real differences in the Canadian Jewish experience. It is therefore important for Canadian readers to pay close attention to Jonathan Sarna's magisterial survey of American Judaism.

*American Judaism* represents the culmination of an academic career spent in the study of American Jewish history. It also refers to the work of numerous historians of the American Jewish experience. In several key ways, however, it differs from earlier works on the subject of American Jews. First, and most important, it views the subject primarily from the perspective of religion. Although it does not exclude major subjects, such as the Jewish labour movement, the main organizing principle of Sarna's book is religion rather than ethnicity. Second, Sarna studies the history of Judaism in America in the larger context of American religious history. Sarna's analysis shows that developments and trends in American Protestant and Catholic thought often shed considerable light on directions taken or not taken by contemporary American Jews.

Although Sarna does not gloss over religious difference, he chooses to emphasize the fundamental beliefs that unite American Jews. Unlike Jacob Neusner, who prefers the plural term *Judaisms*, Sarna persists in his use of the singular term *Judaism*. In so doing, he mirrors the view of many Jews – from Orthodox to Reform – and asserts his own belief that the Jews of America, however much they argue among themselves, are part of a shared experience.

In his description of the shared experience of American Jews, Canada hardly seems to exist. Sarna makes occasional references to Canadian Jews Aron Hart and W. Gunther Plaut, as well as a non-indexed reference to the Shearith Israel Congregation in Montreal. But Sarna is no stranger to the Canadian Jewish experience and has, in fact, published on Canadian Jewry. In all likelihood, he sees the many similarities between American and Canadian Jews as not requiring special

comment, although the differences he notes take him beyond his central concentration on the United States.

Despite the multiple problems facing the American Jewish community, Sarna remains optimistic. The historical perspective he provides in this book shows that throughout history American Jews have faced tremendous difficulties. For contemporary observers, these challenges often have suggested the immanent demise of the community. In his conclusion, Sarna urges readers to adopt the opposite perspective of Simon Rawidowicz, that “[w]ith the help of visionary leaders, committed followers, and generous philanthropists, it may still be possible for the current ‘vanishing’ generation of American Jews to be succeeded by another ‘vanishing’ generation, and then still another” (374).

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Shuchat, Wilfred. *The Gate of Heaven: The Story of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim in Montreal, 1846-1996*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Shaar Hashomayim was the second Jewish congregation, and the first to practice Ashkenazi ritual, established in Canada. Pursuant to an act of incorporation passed in 1846, the cornerstone for the English, German, and Polish Synagogue (as it was originally called) was laid in Montreal in 1859. In 1886, the congregation's name was changed to Shaar Hashomayim (Gate of Heaven). Following a rather chaotic succession of rabbis between the 1860s and 1890s, Shaar Hashomayim experienced considerable stability in its rabbinic leadership for most of the twentieth century. Herman Abramowitz was rabbi from 1902 until his death in 1947. That same year, he was succeeded by Wilfred Shuchat who retired in 1993.

*The Gate of Heaven* focuses on an important subject in the history of Montreal and Canadian Jewry. During the Abramowitz and Shuchat eras, Shaar Hashomayim played an