

qui répétait des données déjà connues, était nécessaire. Olazabal, nous l'avons écrit, aurait pu utiliser plusieurs de ces pages pour rallonger le chapitre cinq, très intéressant, et original. Il aurait aussi pu donner plus d'informations sur les troisième et quatrième générations, qui ne sont qu'effleurées. Nous trouvons aussi que l'auteur aurait pu être plus transparent sur son processus d'entrevues. Plusieurs questions se posent en effet : combien de personnes a-t-il interrogées? Combien de chaque génération? Comment sont-elles réparties quant à l'âge, le sexe, et d'autres données démographiques pertinentes?

Même si les trois premiers chapitres manquent d'originalité, le bon côté de la médaille est que l'une des forces du livre réside justement dans la volonté louable de l'auteur de faire connaître succinctement la communauté juive ashkénaze à des francophones non-juifs, le lectorat ciblé. Etant un excellent condense des connaissances sur l'histoire et la culture des Ashkénazes, en Europe et à Montréal, ces chapitres constituent une très bonne entrée en matière pour quiconque débute dans le domaine des études juives. Le fait qu'Olazabal ne soit pas juif et qu'il ait dû se renseigner sur les concepts et les termes relatifs à la vie juive a certainement influencé sa manière d'écrire ce livre; ainsi, il ne prend pas pour acquis que le lecteur est déjà initié aux pratiques et idées qu'il décrit, et qu'il prend donc la peine d'expliquer, de manière didactique.

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Sivak, Max (Motl) and Jennie (Chienke). Chienke's Motl and Motl's Chienke: A Twentieth Century Story. North York: Mantua Books, 2011. 163 pp.

Max (Motl) and Jennie (Chienke) Sivak were two poor immigrants, whose families ended up in Montreal after fleeing pogroms in Europe. They attempted, through their memoirs, to produce a description of their entire life, from their childhood in

Ukrainian and Lithuanian *shtets*, to their involvement in Zionist youth movements in Montreal, to the kibbutzim of Palestine and back to the Diaspora in Montreal. Each phase of their life was a struggle, and each stage required the same pioneering approach, hard work and Jewish sense of purpose.

Their son, Dr. Jacob Sivak translated the memoirs from Yiddish to English, adding his own thoughts and placing his parent's story into the context of the historic, political and social background of the Jewish people. His commentary about the places, people and events in Eastern Europe, Palestine, and Canada is interesting and valuable.

Motl grew up in Monasstrische, a province of Kiev, where he lived through robbery, rape, murder, and torture. During a pogrom, Motl's brother, Avrum, and his grandmother, Baile, were killed. When this tragedy befell his family, Motl's family fled to Romania, where whole families lived in wooden bunks, with little to eat. The Romanian government soon tired of the Russian emigrants and gave them an ultimatum to leave or be expelled back to Russia. In 1923 Motl and his family came to Canada.

Chienke was born in Pilvishok, Lithuania, then part of the Russia. Chienke recalled the hard and dangerous life in her *shetl*, winter in shacks, lack of food, and the burning of her *shtetl*, Pilvishok, by the Germans, during World War I. Her father died leaving eight children in dire circumstances. Like Motl, she was exposed in the *shtetl* to Zionist movements such as *Hechalutz*, and *Hashomer Hatzair*. Training in *Hashomer Hatzair* prepared her for pioneering life in Palestine. However, life took its course and she went to Canada in 1925, when she was fifteen.

Life-long dreams about moving to Eretz Israel were planted in the *shtetl*. This story concentrates on left wing Zionist ideology, but Dr. Sivak does give an overview of the other Zionist movements. Once in Montreal, Motl started to agitate for *chalutzit*; this ideology was directed toward

the development of kibbutzim in Palestine. Motl joined the *Poele Zion* while Chienke organized a new *Poele Zion* socialist youth movement; the difference between the two groups was the relative degree of Marxism.

Motl, at eighteen years old, went to Western Canada to volunteer as a laborer on a wheat farm, where he worked long, hard hours, in preparation for being a farmer in Palestine. When he returned to Montreal, he took evening courses in mechanics and blueprint reading as further preparation for a pioneer life. Chienke was involved in planning a new *chalutz* movement to be directed by Canadian youth for which she provided educational leadership. She was instrumental in developing a non-Marxist Zionist group, based on the writings and philosophy of the well-known Hebrew writer A.D. Gordon, which is still a central feature of the Montreal Labor Zionist scene and an important source for the contemporary Naamat organization. In 1931-2 they helped set up a summer camp in the Laurentians to provide *chalutzit* experience for children. This was the beginning of Undzer Camp, which was supported by *Poele Zion* members.

Motl left for Palestine at nineteen, entering on a tourist visa, as Britain restricted entry for immigrants, and was apart from Chienke for a year. He then experienced the hardships of life in Palestine and the complexities of kibbutz life. The heat, barren landscape, gloomy political situation, lack of modern conveniences, lack of money, low standard of hygiene, inadequate roads for travel, and the constant threat of Arab hostilities were coupled with lots of singing and dancing. Life in the kibbutz was work, politics, *oneg shabbats* and classical music. Motl and Chienke were exposed to interesting people such as, Dr. Yehuda Kaufman, the Hebrew writer, Chaim Greenberg, leader of *Poale Zion*, Yosef Sprinzak, first speaker of the Knesset, and Chaim Nachman Bialik. Motl met Ben Gurion. It was here in Palestine that Motl and Chienke got married, with a borrowed ring, Motl wearing khaki shorts, Chienke wearing a blue skirt and white blouse.

In keeping with the Jewish National Fund's philosophy that there should be Jewish laborers, Motl, now called Mordechai, worked in construction, though he had no formal construction experience. Of course, both Mordechai and Chienke were also involved in defense and guard duty.

Unhappiness with rival factions in the kibbutz added to the hardships and led them to try private life in Haifa. They rented a room with a tiny kitchenette where they shared a shower and a toilet with four families. It was difficult to maintain a job outside of the kibbutzim and there was not enough food to eat. Hence, when parents sent tickets, they returned to Montreal for a visit; but the year was 1939 and with the advent of World War II, they could not return to Palestine.

In Montreal difficult times continued; they lost a one-month-old baby boy and Motl could not get permanent work until he got a job as superintendent at Adath Israel Congregation. He remained at the synagogue for thirteen years where he had a good relationship with the clergy and congregation, but eventually left his position and synagogue apartment to go out on his own in the installment merchant business, known as custom peddling. Custom peddlers represent an aspect of Jewish history in Montreal, a niche of business no longer in existence.

They did return to visit Israel in their older years. Chienke died in Montreal and Motl, at eighty-nine, moved to Toronto to be with his children. It is a story of idealism meeting reality, of having a dream, but being unable to live it. The main point of the memoirs, according to their son, is that they remained *chalutzim* in all phases of their life.

Maxine Jacobson

Troper, Harold. *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. xi + 356 pp.

Harold Troper's latest book, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics and the Canadian Jewish community in the 1960s*,