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**Going Out into the World:  
the “Strategic Approach” of Jewish Members of the  
Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire,  
1900-1939**

*The Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) was a non-sectarian women's patriotic association that sought to bolster Canada's British character. During the interwar period, members dedicated themselves to the "canadianization" of non-British immigrants. Though the Order was overwhelmingly Anglo-Protestant, many established Jewish women joined, embodying a "strategic" approach to humanitarianism. This paper concentrates on the participation of two sisters who joined non-denominational chapters, Irene Wolff and Rosetta Joseph, as well as Montreal's Jewish "Grace Aguilar" chapter. By joining the Order, these elite Jewish women sought to establish a relation of imperial kinship that could influence dominant Anglo-Canadian perceptions of and policy towards the nation's Jewish citizens. The efforts of these women suggest the limits and possibilities of a preservationist respectability politics: by the interwar period, the IODE's vision of British supremacy was increasingly obsolete and demographic changes had irrevocably transformed the character of Canadian Jewish life.*

*L'Ordre impérial des filles de l'Empire fut une association patriotique féminine non sectaire ayant pour mandat d'affermir le caractère britannique du Canada. Durant la période de l'entre-deux-guerres, les membres de l'Ordre se sont consacrés au « devenir-canadien » des immigrants non-britanniques. Bien que l'Ordre ait été constitué d'une majorité de femmes anglo-protestantes, de nombreuses femmes juives issues de la haute bourgeoisie y ont été admises. Ces femmes ont incarné, au sein de l'Ordre, une approche humanitaire à caractère « stratégique ». Le présent article sera consacré aux activités d'Irene Wolff et de Rosetta Joseph, deux sœurs juives ayant chacune adhéré à un chapitre non-confessionnel de l'Ordre, et aux activités de Grace Aguilar, chapitre judéo-montréalais de l'Ordre. En devenant membres de l'Ordre, ces femmes juives d'élite ont cherché à établir, entre juifs et non-juifs, un sentiment de fraternité impériale susceptible d'influencer la conception que se faisaient les anglo-Canadiens de leurs concitoyens juifs et des politiques nationales adoptées à leur égard. L'étude de la participation de ces femmes aux activités de l'Ordre permet de mesurer le potentiel et les limites d'une approche à tendance conservatrice de la politique de la respectabilité. Une fois la période de l'entre-deux-guerres entamée, l'idée de la suprématie britannique qui avait sous-tendu le mandat de l'Ordre s'est mis, graduellement, à tomber dans la désuétude et le caractère de la vie juive canadienne, sous l'impact de profonds changements démographiques, à se transformer de manière irréversible.*

At the 1927 national meeting of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, Miss Rosetta Joseph (1894–1979), the Regent of Quebec City's Baden–Powell Chapter, proposed a motion “that the National Chapter request the Dominion Government to insert in the daily press throughout the Dominion the rules governing the cor-

rect flying of the Country's flag, the Union Jack." A Jewish woman at the centre of Quebec City's Anglophone community, Joseph's care for the flag, as well as her membership in the IODE, demonstrates her dedication to Canada as an integral part of the British Empire. Joseph's concerns about rigorous patriotic protocol may seem trivial, but they aligned with the IODE's purpose to "encourage and develop the spirit of patriotism" throughout the Empire.<sup>2</sup> Joseph also took very seriously the Order's other aims, including "to keep alive the memory of brave and heroic deeds" of the Empire's soldiers: for many years she laid the poppy wreath at the war memorial in Quebec City on behalf of the IODE.<sup>3</sup> Five decades on, in an obituary for her aunt Rosetta, Annette Wolff wrote that Joseph had "loved Britain," while another niece remembered her as a "devout, practicing Jewess."<sup>4</sup>

In her dedication to the IODE and her commitment to Quebec City's Jewish community, Rosetta Joseph embodied a "strategic approach" to imperial humanitarianism. Joseph was among many Jewish women who joined the IODE, proclaiming and performing loyalty to a specific Anglo-Canadian vision of the nation. In establishing themselves as daughters of the empire, Jewish women sought to establish a relation of imperial kinship that could influence dominant Anglo-Canadian perceptions of and policy towards the nation's Jewish citizens.

Joseph was an esteemed member of the IODE. During her lifetime she held several positions at the local, provincial, and national levels of the organization. From 1931-1939, she was the Order's national immigration convener, overseeing policy recommendations, "Canadianization" work, and the IODE's efforts to keep track of the country's changing demographics. Aside from her work for the Order, she was also a correspondent for the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS).<sup>5</sup> Devoutly and deeply involved in Quebec Jewish life, this position with JIAS would have also depended on her close associations with port authorities and government officials that stemmed from her IODE work. In the 1930s, a fledgling JIAS was lobbying the Canadian government to allow Jewish immigration, particularly that of refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. Canada's record as a country that essentially sealed its borders against Jewish refugees is well-documented and grim. The infamous phrase "none is too many," title of Harold Troper and Irving Abella's classic book on the subject, has become a metonym for Canada's bureaucratic deflection of Jewish refugees.<sup>6</sup> Troper and Abella estimate that, of the 800 000 Jews fleeing Europe in the 1930s, Canada accepted a mere 4000, despite significant lobbying efforts by Canadian Jewish politicians and organizations including JIAS.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the same period, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire was also lobbying Canadian immigration officials for very different reasons. Founded in Montreal in 1900, during the Second South African War, the IODE was conceived when women across the nation (including a fifteen-year-old Irene Joseph—Roset-

ta's sister—and Annette Joseph, her mother) responded to Margaret Polson Murray's call for an "expression of our devotion to the Empire."<sup>8</sup> Murray, born in Scotland, arrived in Montreal in 1866, where she became highly active in a variety of charitable organizations. When war broke out in South Africa in 1899, Murray saw a chance for Canadian women "to place themselves in the front rank of colonial patriotism."<sup>9</sup> Interest in the Order remained intertwined with Canadian military affairs; the organization's membership peaked at 50 000 women during the First World War, and reached a second high of 35 000 during the Second.<sup>10</sup> In between, without the patriotic fervor generated by war, the IODE lost some of its focus.

After the end of the Second South African War in 1902, the Order realized that "after peace was declared it was necessary to find varied tasks for the newly-formed Order, lest the enthusiasm following the years of conflict should be forgotten." The IODE directed its efforts towards the new task of cultivating Canada's Britishness.<sup>11</sup> This early effort was affected primarily by advocating for the preferential treatment of British immigrants. After the First World War, as "immigration problems became acute," the IODE shifted its approach and set out to "Canadianize" the non-British immigrants they could no longer ignore.<sup>12</sup>

Despite their seemingly opposing objectives of assimilation and welcome, throughout the 1930s JIAS and the IODE shared at least one member: Rosetta Joseph. Though the potential dissonances between the IODE and JIAS are many, Joseph was not alone in maintaining a robust Anglo-Canadian patriotism and a commitment to specifically Jewish concerns. Her mother, Annette Joseph (1857–1921), and her sister Irene Wolff (1885–1940), had both founded chapters of the IODE in 1900, and they were active members throughout their lives.<sup>13</sup> These two sisters, Rosetta Joseph and Irene Wolff, are at the heart of this paper. The IODE was central to the charitable work of both women. Though there were Jewish chapters—the "Grace Aguilar" in Montreal, the "Disraeli" in Ottawa, and the "Lord Reading" in Quebec City—Joseph and Wolff were primarily involved in non-sectarian (de facto Christian) chapters.<sup>14</sup> Both were, at different points, Regents of the Baden-Powell Chapter of Quebec City, and also participated at all levels of the Order, Joseph with a focus on immigration, while Wolff was the Quebec Provincial Child Welfare Convener.<sup>15</sup>

In their commitment to non-denominational charity, these sisters embody a strategic approach to humanitarianism. By joining the IODE, Jewish women such as Joseph and Wolff attempted to enter into a reciprocal relationship with the local administration of the Empire, in which they hoped that their proclamation of loyalty would in turn mean an imperial commitment to Jewish causes. These efforts to align their humanitarian aims—responding to the increasing persecution of European Jews and ensuring the acceptance of Canadian Jews—with those of the Empire depended on the careful cultivation of their own claims to Britishness and the avoidance of any explicit critique of racist exclusion.

Rosetta and Irene could trace their lineage back to some of the earliest Jewish settlers in this region, including Aaron Hart, who was among the first Jewish settlers in what would become Canada.<sup>16</sup> Besides this long Canadian Jewish lineage, the sisters maintained close connections to relatives in Britain and London's Jewish community—Wolff was the Canadian correspondent for *The Jewish Chronicle*, a London-based paper, from 1933 until her death in 1940.<sup>17</sup> She lived in Westmount, and was, at various times, President of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue's Sisterhood, President of the National Council of Jewish Women, and Director of the Westmount Red Cross.<sup>18</sup> Joseph, who never married, lived in Quebec City where she took care of her aging parents in their house on the Grande Allée, and undertook charitable work, mostly through the IODE.<sup>19</sup>

### The Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire

During the interwar period, the IODE worked to cement a tradition of Britishness in Canada through charity work in the fields of immigration and education. As historian Katie Pickles argues, the IODE was "essential to the construction of Anglo-Canadian identity."<sup>20</sup> As a women's organization dedicated to the Empire, it occupied a unique space in between the many men's patriotic clubs and charitable women's organizations: "while, in common with the patriotic clubs, the IODE offered imperial lectures and provided opinions on imperial matters, it was also expected to perform maternal work."<sup>21</sup> Many scholars of gender and imperialism have demonstrated that the maternal work of nurturing imperial feeling aligned with perceptions of women as "agents of civilization and custodians of the race."<sup>22</sup> The IODE's activities were always performed in deference to 'paternal' institutions such as the Canadian government and the British Crown, and the Order's official prayer beseeched God to "bless our King and Royal Family, and to guide and direct all who sit in authority over us."<sup>23</sup> As this text suggests, though the Order was officially non-sectarian, in keeping with its ideology of British superiority the IODE's membership was overwhelmingly Anglo-Protestant.

The fictive kinship nurtured by IODE, however, included numerous so-called "ethnic" chapters across the country, from the French-Canadian Madeleine de Verchères chapter in Ottawa to the Icelandic Jon Sigurdsson chapter of Winnipeg. Like Jewish members of the IODE, these members were notably not "English" or "British" yet were still understood as white.<sup>24</sup> In much of the existing scholarship on the IODE, these ethnic chapters are treated as anomalies, rather than as a fact of the Order's history.<sup>25</sup> Overlooking such chapters may facilitate a simple narrative of the development of the "Anglo-Canadian identity," but it also minimizes the complexity of the IODE's relationship with minority ethnic and linguistic groups in Canada. Though this disregard is partly due to a lack of sources, as Adele Perry argues, the existence of these "anomalous" chapters suggests that "even the most hyperbolic imperial voices

in Canada were muted or at least complicated by local experiences of migration, *métissage*, and social formation.”<sup>26</sup> Participation in the IODE was, for some “ethnic” women, motivated not only by love for the British Empire, but the possibilities that IODE membership offered for them and for their communities in the public sphere.

The IODE itself argued that “as the I.O.D.E. is, by its constitution, non-sectarian and non-political, it is thus designed to provide one broad patriotic platform upon which women of all shades of opinion may unite for the National Good.”<sup>27</sup> Of course, though the IODE described itself as “non-sectarian and non-political,” this claim was oriented toward differences in Christian practices and among mainstream political practices. Ethnic chapters were welcomed only insofar as they promoted assimulatory “Canadianization” projects.<sup>28</sup> As Paula Hyman explains, the fraught term “assimilation” can be understood as a two-part process, composed of “acculturation, which depends on the behaviour of the minority, and integration, which demands changed attitudes and behaviour on the part of members of minority and majority alike.”<sup>29</sup> Jewish participation in the IODE was an overture toward integration, expecting changing behaviours among Montreal Jewish and gentile communities alike. The strategic approach of Jewish women advocating from within the IODE was available by virtue of their claims to already being integrated into Britishness and whiteness.

The name of the “Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire” was ambitious, possibly redundant, and misleading: the Order never became an empire-wide organization, though chapters existed at various times in Newfoundland, Bermuda, the Bahamas, India, and among expatriates in the United States.<sup>30</sup> The mismatch between the ambitious name and its actual geographic reach was due in part to the ways that, as Pickles explains, “the IODE was trapped by the reverence which it held to all things British.”<sup>31</sup> For example, the mandate of the IODE overlapped considerably with that of the British Victoria League and when the Victoria League objected to the IODE’s expansion, the latter acquiesced.<sup>32</sup> Following the “hierarchies of the Empire,” the colony deferred to the directions of the metropole, and Murray’s ambitions of creating an empire-wide network were never realized.<sup>33</sup> Although its limited influence disappointed Murray, the IODE played a significant role in attempts to solidify the unstable Britishness of Canada throughout the Twentieth century.

Much of the IODE’s efforts concentrated on philanthropic and humanitarian work. During the First World War, the Order raised funds, gathered supplies, and stoked patriotic feeling.<sup>34</sup> In peacetime, too, the Order engaged in a great deal of charity, and in 1921 Montreal chapters assisted over forty-five different organizations, from hospitals to war memorials to the SPCA.<sup>35</sup> But their primary concern remained the cultivation of an appropriately imperial Canadian patriotism. That same year, at the annual meeting of the Municipal Chapter of Montreal, members agreed that

"it was thought best that as Mrs. Clark Murray had always taken a keen interest in the foreigners here," the Order ought to continue work in this area, particularly in the education of foreign children.<sup>36</sup> Though they continued to provide special support for British-born immigrants, the Order began to attempt to shape rather than to limit Canadian ethnic (though still European) diversity. Taking on what they called "welcome work," they aimed to form newcomers as properly imperial subjects. Though Jewish members of the IODE participated wholeheartedly in this assimilation project, their conduct suggests a delicate negotiation of imperial and communal interests.

### **Irene Wolff: Jewish Acculturation and Integration in Canada**

Hand in hand with Rosetta and Irene's commitment to the empire went a firm belief in the importance of integration. Over the course of the sisters' lives, Canadian Jewish demographics had shifted dramatically, as their small, well-off Anglophone community was eclipsed by a stream of predominantly working-class, Yiddish speaking immigrants.<sup>37</sup> Between 1880 and 1931, the Jewish population of Montreal—the largest area of Jewish settlement in Canada—increased from less than 1000 to almost 58 000.<sup>38</sup> Jews in Canada had been negotiating their place in British Canadian society since their earliest arrival, but the influx of Eastern European Jews created a new anxiety about the nature of Jewish participation in secular, yet largely Anglo-Protestant society. In cities both in Canada and the United States, eastern European immigrants "became the most visible Jewish presence in the city."<sup>39</sup> These new arrivals were much more visibly different than the established Jewish community, especially in language, dress, and custom. In contrast, families like the Josephs and the Wolffs seemed to have acculturated—and been integrated—long ago. It is around this moment, too, that most historians have shifted their focus away from the established, even elite, Anglophone Jewish community of Montreal's "uptown" in the Golden Square Mile and Westmount towards the often-radical Ashkenazi Jews who settled in the working-class neighbourhoods of the Plateau and Mile End.<sup>40</sup>

Turning to Irene Wolff's writings on the place of Jewish women in the wider world suggests, however, that even if they seemed outwardly established and anglicized, established Jews also grappled with the difficulties and boundaries of integrating into an Anglo-Protestant culture in a Francophone province. In an unpublished reflection in response to a sermon by a British rabbi, she wrote:

It has been said that "Go out into the world" is the cry of the assimilationist, but that the Jew ought rather to take as his watchword "GO BACK TO JU-DAISM." A modern writer has wisely combined the two into the Saying "GO OUT INTO THE WORLD BUT COME BACK A BETTER JEW."<sup>41</sup>

Central to Wolff's effort to integrate into Canadian society as a Jewish woman was her participation in the IODE. As Hyman explains, "the project of assimilation contained an unacknowledged source of tension: the assumption that limits could be set to assimilation, that Jews would not disappear completely within the larger society, that individual mobility would not conflict with group survival."<sup>42</sup> In this text, Wolff critiques the "assimilationist" and those who would reject assimilation, suggesting a balance akin to Hyman's description of "integration:" both "the world" and "the Jew" are changed by the encounter. Wolff, an observant Jew, navigated this tension in part by proclaiming an existing Anglo-Jewish identity—manifesting partly in her dedication to the Order—that complemented that of Anglo-Protestants.

The IODE's non-sectarian values depended on a fundamentally Christian premise. The Order's prayers during the First World War included lines such as "O Heavenly Father...Give Thy heavenly wisdom to those who seek to build afresh the fabric of a Christian civilization upon the tumbled ruins of the old world."<sup>43</sup> It is unclear how Jewish chapters navigated the IODE prayers that erased their participation and their religion. But Jewish women's insistence that the Order was non-sectarian allowed them to find a place within its ranks.<sup>44</sup> In a 1934 essay entitled "The Jewish Woman in the Home," Wolff expressed very clearly the importance of Jewish participation in such an organization:

It is well...for a Jewish woman to join some non-sectarian organization such as the Red Cross. Seeing a Jewish worker amongst them brings home to the gentile community the realization of the fact that the Jew works for the welfare of humanity at large. A bad Jew dishonours the name of the whole race, but who knows how far-reaching may be the effect of a good Jew in averting race-hatred and persecution?<sup>45</sup>

This is in many ways a striking quotation, and one that echoes centuries of calls for Jews to improve their lot by participating in the secular (Christian) world. Wolff echoes here a well-worn vision of racial uplift through respectability politics, which Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham describes as "self-construction and self-representation" in the face of racist stereotypes.<sup>46</sup> Higginbotham argues that the respectability politics of black Baptist women, "emphasized reform of individual behavior and attitudes both as a goal in itself and as a strategy for reform of the entire structural system of American race relations."<sup>47</sup> In the hands of Jewish IODE members, respectability politics did not constitute a "powerful weapon of resistance," but a means to uphold an existing status: where black women sought to establish respectability, elite Jewish women in the IODE sought to preserve a social position that was changing with the arrival of eastern European Jews.



As Faith Rogow explains in her work on the American National Council of Jewish Women, many upper-class Jews "resent[ed] the challenge the new immigrants seemed to pose to their hard-won acceptance in America."<sup>48</sup> Yet the 1930s saw both the rise of "race-hatred and persecution" Wolff described and what Eric Goldstein has characterized as the "revival of Jewish racial identity" binding Jews of differing backgrounds in new feelings of kinship.<sup>49</sup> Though many Jewish IODE members were also active in organizations including Hadassah and the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, non-sectarian activities remained important for their efforts to manage Jewish life in Canada. Wolff's argument that Jewish women had a particular ability to influence gentile perceptions of Jews seems to have been distinctly shaped by her participation in the IODE as an organization that imagined female imperial kinship to cut across lines of ethnicity.

Wolff insists that Jews cannot confine themselves to their own communities: they *must* go out into the world, not only to become better Jews, but also to better the rest of the world. Not only did she insist, she also strove to embody this ethos herself. Her participation in the IODE laid claims to undeniably respectable characteristics: patriotism, loyalty to Britain, and support for the government. For Wolff, humanitarian action served a wider purpose than it might to other members of the IODE: it served not only the preservation of the Empire, but ameliorated conditions for (some of) those marginalized within it. As Goldstein describes, American Jews tried to "trans-value" racial classification by lauding Jewish accomplishments.<sup>50</sup> Wolff's appeal to Jewish women to join "non-sectarian organizations" was an attempt to strengthen a lineage of Jewish "women worthies." As she so clearly stated, Wolff's participation in the IODE was not only a patriotic act, it was simultaneously an effort to encourage racial uplift among Jews and overcome antisemitism.

### **The Grace Aguilar Chapter: Respectability and Education**

Balancing the needs of their Jewish community and of their commitment to the IODE was vital Jewish women's participation in the Order, as they worked actively to cultivate an Anglo-Jewish identity. To a certain extent, this was simple: many of the Jewish women active in the IODE could trace their families—the Josephs, the de Solas—back to England by way of some of Canada's most prominent Jewish citizens.<sup>51</sup> Other women had anglicized names, often of German origin: Saxe, Pearlman, Diamond.<sup>52</sup> Although the majority of these women married into their last names, they nonetheless call upon a history of British Jews that extends beyond the history of Canada, in the case of the former group, or a willingness to assimilate on behalf of the latter. Though membership lists do not seem to have been preserved, and only the names of the officers remain available, these Jewish chapters were not small: during the First World War, they had a combined membership of approximately 330 women.<sup>53</sup> In 1927, the Grace Aguilar chapter still had a membership of eighty-

one women.<sup>54</sup> It may be that Eastern-European members occupied less prominent roles in the chapters, as they did in Hadassah, a Zionist women's charity organization whose membership often overlapped with that of the IODE.<sup>55</sup> However, Paula J. Draper and Janice B. Karlinsky point out that most Ashkenazi Jewish women "came from backgrounds that rendered them socially and philosophically unsuited for membership in organizations composed of the wives of their husbands' bosses."<sup>56</sup> That all meetings were conducted in English, and membership was by invitation, made the presence of recent immigrants even less likely.<sup>57</sup>

The naming conventions of the chapters themselves reveals a similar tendency to emphasize Jewish roots in England. Grace Aguilar (1816–1847) was a British-Jewish poet; Lord Reading (1860–1935) was, among other accomplishments, the first Jew to serve as Lord Chief Justice of England, and Disraeli (1804–1881), although a convert to Christianity, is widely known as "Britain's first, and so far only, Jewish Prime Minister."<sup>58</sup> In the application for a charter, prospective chapters were required to explain the historical importance of their choice of name.<sup>59</sup> In contrast, Hadassah chapters were usually named after prominent Jewish women of the day rather than historical figures.<sup>60</sup> Where Zionist groups were oriented toward the future, British imperial organizations like the IODE looked toward the past.

In the IODE materials held at the Quebec national archive in Montreal, the Jewishness of the Jewish chapters is only made explicit once. A pamphlet listing each chapter and providing a brief description of their work, published by the Montreal Municipal chapter near the end of the First World War, explained that the Grace Aguilar chapter "is composed of the Jewish ladies of this city. This is a large and active Chapter and has worked to supply comforts for the Jewish Battalion and also done a great deal of loyal relief work; has co-operated in all patriotic projects of the Municipal Chapter, and contributed generously to all national appeals."<sup>61</sup>

This brief summary of the chapter's activities is telling in its references to specifically Jewish philanthropic efforts and "co-operation" with more general patriotic projects. Although part of the British army, the Jewish Battalion was seen as ambiguously loyal to the British Empire: nearly all of the soldiers were non-British, and there was clear hope that participation in the British invasion of Ottoman territory would result in more favourable conditions for Jewish settlement there.<sup>62</sup> The formation of the Jewish Legion can be understood as another sideways approach to achieve specific "ethnic" goals through the British Empire. At the same time, the description ends by affirming that the Grace Aguilar generously supported "all national appeals" for fundraising and supplies. Only one other chapter description in the pamphlet includes this phrase, that of the "entirely French" Alexandre & Lambert Dumont Laviolette chapter.<sup>63</sup> Working for interests beyond their own ethnic and religious communities was essential to the declarations of loyalty of non-Protestant IODE chapters.

The Grace Aguilar chapter, nevertheless, still attempted to influence the wider Montreal Jewish community. As Draper and Karlinsky have explained, upper-class, anglicized Jews sought (unsuccessfully) to "make these new Canadian Jews over in their own image."<sup>64</sup> While Draper and Karlinsky suggest that the changing demographics of the Canadian Jewish community led to a turn inward by established Jews, Jewish women's participation in the IODE suggests otherwise.<sup>65</sup> Reaching out to the youth of immigrant communities was essential to the IODE's efforts to teach "Canadian methods of living."<sup>66</sup> For "ethnic" chapters, educational work also functioned as a demonstration of their own commitment to Canadian and British values. Though the Order prided itself on being "the first to suggest that the laws of our land and the freedoms they protected should be explained to immigrants," much of their Canadianization work consisted of providing material support for other organizations more specifically dedicated to integrating newcomers.<sup>67</sup>

Among these organizations were "Settlement Houses," including Montreal's University Settlement which was located on St. Urbain Street, frequented by many of the immigrant Jewish community's youth.<sup>68</sup> The Settlement movement, which originated in the United States, "encouraged immigrants to find ways to preserve their ethnicity by means of expression appropriate to American culture."<sup>69</sup> In the United States, leaders of the Settlement movement included Jewish women such as Sadie American and Lillian Wald.<sup>70</sup> In Montreal, like the IODE, the University Settlement strove to provide a "non-sectarian" environment, but was ultimately grounded in the Protestant community and its values.<sup>71</sup> In 1921, an IODE committee, formed in part by members of the Grace Aguilar chapter, identified the University Settlement as one of three institutions in which to place libraries for foreign children.<sup>72</sup> That one of these libraries would have a primarily Jewish readership is only implicit in the discussion of the Montreal Municipal chapter. As with their complementary support for the Jewish Battalion and the Canadian military, the Grace Aguilar attached their humanitarian interest in working-class Jewish children within wider IODE projects aimed at immigrant youth. The chapter pursued a strategic approach to negotiating the assimilation of Montreal's Jewish community while working, as Irene Wolff would say, for the "welfare of humanity at large."<sup>73</sup>

Later in the decade, the Grace Aguilar chapter donated again to a Protestant institution with a predominantly Jewish population: in 1927 they gave "historical pictures" to the Baron Byng High School, located in the heart of the Yiddish-speaking Jewish neighbourhood.<sup>74</sup> The city's public schools were bi-confessionally divided between the Montreal Protestant School Board and the Montreal Catholic School Commission. In the 1920s and 1930s Baron Byng High School, despite being in the Protestant board, had a student body that was 95 percent Jewish.<sup>75</sup> The tensions that arose under these circumstances became the "Jewish School Question," which occupied Montreal for decades. Struggles over absences for Jewish holidays, unofficial segregation of

Jewish students, and the school board's reluctance to hire Jewish teachers led many members of the immigrant Jewish community to advocate for a third, Jewish school board.<sup>76</sup> Most established Jews, including Irene Wolff, supported the continued inclusion of Jewish students in Protestant schools, in part because this situation facilitated integration and the patriotic education to which the IODE was so committed.<sup>77</sup> The Grace Aguilar chapter's donations specifically to Baron Byng are another instance of their implicit attempts to influence other elements of their city's Jewish community, guiding children towards an imperial patriotism of which the IODE approved.

Donating historical pictures and texts, endorsing books on imperial themes, and sponsoring patriotic essay contests became central to the IODE's efforts to strengthen the Canadian dedication to the empire.<sup>78</sup> Mrs. Henry Joseph, Irene and Rosetta's aunt, was especially commended for her sponsorship of "Empire Essay Competitions" in public schools.<sup>79</sup> Even without knowing the content of the images donated by the Grace Aguilar, they certainly offered a different narrative of the past than that told by the radical Yiddish secular schools that dotted the area, functioning, according to Rebecca Margolis, as a "bulwark against assimilation."<sup>80</sup> A significant portion of the pressure to which institutions such as the Jewish Peretz Schools and the Jewish People's Schools were responding came from prominent anglicized Jews such as Wolff, or her friend Lyon Cohen, whose paper *The Jewish Times* had called Yiddish "a jargon of abrupt coarseness."<sup>81</sup> In the case of Montreal's school question, upper-class Jews aligned themselves with Anglo-Canadian rather than working-class Jewish interests in order to reinforce their own naturalization.

A strategic approach to local and imperial humanitarianism does not imply dissimulation: the language the 1919 pamphlet used to describe the Grace Aguilar chapter is unambiguously patriotic, as were their charitable endeavours. However, the IODE's description of a chapter comprised of the "Jewish ladies of the city" is also pointed. Higginbotham has shown that upper-class black women employed the word "lady" to assert their rights as respectable citizens in defiance of the word's racial, gendered, and class-based implications, often at the expense of their lower-class counterparts.<sup>82</sup> Although the prejudice faced by black women of this era was markedly more severe than that of Jewish women, the IODE pamphlet still implies that there were other Jewish women who did not participate in the IODE and who did not deserve the designation. It further underscores ladylike behaviour as consisting of loyalty, patriotism, and co-operation with imperial projects, and functions as a "stamp of approval" on behalf of the Municipal chapter. The Grace Aguilar chapter's efforts to promote imperial feeling and assimilation within Montreal's Jewish community is further confirmation of their robust commitment to Canada and the British Empire. The question of whether Jews could be truly loyal to a nation had plagued discussions of Jewish participation in European societies for centuries, but participation in the IODE was, in a certain sense, undeniable proof of Jewish women's allegiance to Britain and Canada.

## Antisemitism and the IODE

As Irene Wolff articulated explicitly, Jewish members of the IODE hoped that this loyalty would be returned. Although I have found no record of antisemitism within the IODE, Jewish women's participation in the Order could itself become fodder for aggression. David Rome, in his studies of Canadian antisemitism, noted an attack on Annette Joseph (Rosetta and Irene's mother) in *La Vérité*, a French-language newspaper, in 1907.<sup>83</sup> On 1 May, complaining of the "financial Judaization" of Montreal, and thus, the province as a whole, *La Vérité* lamented that "At the same time *L'Événement* nearly every day carries official communiqués from Mme. Joseph, treasurer of the committee of the Imperial Daughters, who are working for Lord Grey's plan for the Plains of Abraham..."<sup>84</sup> Although working as treasurer was among Joseph's duties, she was also Regent of the Stadacona Chapter.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, the newspaper cast her as the one handling the money. That this attack came from a francophone nationalist newspaper is a reminder that the divided nature of nationalism—French-Canadian and Anglo-Canadian—made it complicated for Jews to challenge antisemitism through secular nationalism. In their strategic approach, these Jewish women had to pick sides, and their affiliation with the Order—itsself closely linked with the national and imperial government—meant that upper-class Jewish women strengthened their community's ties with the Anglo-Protestants in power.<sup>86</sup>

Such attacks seem to have been rare. In many ways, Jewish participation in the IODE was unremarkable. Without knowing the origins of the women's anglicized last names or the historical figures after which they named their chapters, it would be nearly impossible to tell which chapters or members were Jewish, and members rarely distinguished themselves as Jewish in their IODE work. To a certain extent, this imperceptibility was the point of their participation in the Order, as the proof that differences between Jews and non-Jews were surmountable. Membership in the IODE was a clear demonstration of allegiance to the British Empire and offered access to imperial resources and connections that Jewish women such as Wolff and Joseph attempted to employ for the betterment of their own communities. The IODE at once constructed and represented an Anglo-Canadian-Jewish identity that distinguished upper-class Jews from their lower-class counterparts and linked them to Canada's British elite. Jewish women understood participation in the Order as more than an exercise in patriotism; it was an opportunity to facilitate tolerance and Wolff's vision of a respectability politics achieved through humanitarian acts.

## Rosetta Joseph: Immigration and a Strategic Approach

Canadian immigration policy never explicitly prohibited Jewish immigration. However, the necessary capital requirements and regulation requiring a continuous journey from one's homeland—accompanied, crucially, by the power of discretion giv-

en to individual immigration agents and precarious interventions of Privy Council orders—meant that Jewish immigration to Canada slowed drastically by the mid-1920s.<sup>87</sup> Though intolerance in Canada also rose in the 1930s, as an even more severe antisemitism developed in Europe, organizations such as JIAS dedicated themselves to lobbying the Canadian government to grant that “the unfortunate Jews left in Germany today merit some humane consideration,” and requesting even “a limited selected number [of German Jews] be permitted to come to Canada.”<sup>88</sup> Though JIAS’ work became especially pressing with National Socialist consolidation of power in Germany, even in the 1920s the organization had made monumental efforts to advocate for Jews fleeing persecution in Ukraine, Romania, and the Soviet Union.<sup>89</sup>

In contrast, the IODE was concerned with limiting and, if that failed, attempting to “Canadianize” non-British immigrants.<sup>90</sup> By 1925, an IODE pamphlet explained that “a notable feature of the work of the Order is the assistance given to the authorities, the Red Cross and Travellers’ Aid representatives on arrival of incoming vessels. The I.O.D.E. work loyally with existing agencies of the Immigration Department.”<sup>91</sup> The efforts of JIAS and the IODE conflicted: while the IODE “worked loyally” with the Immigration Department, JIAS sought to change their policies. Though Joseph herself left virtually no record of her thoughts on either organization or their potential opposition, she can be understood as a sort of mediator between these two perspectives. As such, Joseph’s leadership roles in IODE enhanced her power to aid JIAS, in effect opening a side door for JIAS to advocate from within the IODE.

Members of the IODE, including Joseph, were a fixture at the port of Quebec City. One IODE member commented that “[t]he wearers of the [IODE] badge have been the only outsiders allowed in the Immigration Buildings after the arrival of an ocean liner, and have met with every courtesy from the officials.”<sup>92</sup> Once in the immigration buildings, members of the IODE welcomed immigrants by providing them with food and spaces to rest, and by maintaining a post-office stocked with IODE notepaper.<sup>93</sup> In the United States, the National Council of Jewish Women was “undeniable leader” in “port work,” developing out of efforts to support and manage incoming Jewish immigrants.<sup>94</sup> In Canada, where the receiving Jewish community and the arriving immigrants both amounted to much smaller populations than in the United States, it was the non-sectarian IODE that was at the forefront of “welcome work.” Still, Jewish “daughters of the empire” such as Joseph maintained a focus on immigration similar to that of American Jewish women. As immigration convener of a non-Jewish organization, Joseph found herself in a delicate, yet potentially influential position. At the end of the decade as the crisis of Jewish refugees mounted, Joseph asserted in an annual report for the year 1939–40 that “now the question [of refugees] must be faced squarely...as an Order we should consider helping to share England’s burden of aid to refugees.”<sup>95</sup> She proposed a resolution that the IODE, “being deeply sympathetic to the plight of countless European refugees, [ought to advise] the Dominion

Government that should they decide to bring refugees to Canada, the I.O.D.E. will pledge their sympathetic assistance."<sup>96</sup> That the IODE did not work toward increased quotas of refugees and only voiced support for the government should it choose to loosen immigration policy, shows the limitations of the Order's deferential approach to politics. Despite actively working with JIAS, Joseph's IODE report mentioned nothing of Jews. Rogow argues that the NCJW "placed its entire immigrant aid policy in the framework of policy and motherhood," emphasizing the specific relation of Jewish American women to their eastern European counterparts.<sup>97</sup> Though the NCJW worked in coalition with non-Jewish organizations, in becoming Daughters of the Empire, Canadian Jewish women sought elevated tighter claim of relation between themselves and the Canadian host community. Appealing to the ties between daughters of the empire, Joseph had to minimize her specifically Jewish concerns. Instead of mentioning Jewish persecution in Europe, Joseph framed the acceptance of refugees generally as a duty toward England, whose "burden of aid" the IODE must share. Presenting the issue as the duty of the colony to support the metropole rather than an abstract humanitarian duty offered a greater chance of success, both within the IODE and with the Canadian government.

Archived JIAS materials hold no records of Joseph's involvement. The organization's newsletter, which would likely contain some of her correspondence, is only archived from the late-1940s onward.<sup>98</sup> However, after her death Joseph's family decided that an appropriate means to honour her life's work would be to fund a JIAS Vocational Bursary, indicating that they understood the organization as central to her charitable commitments.<sup>99</sup> This means we can only speculate on the nature of her efforts, but, working with JIAS in the 1930s, Joseph certainly participated in the Jewish community's attempts to open up Canadian immigration policy. However, in her capacity as the IODE's Immigration Convener, her duty was to support government policy rather than change it. In attempting to both help refugees in her official capacity within the IODE while remaining conscious that participation in the IODE meant joining an organization that did not consider specifically Jewish interests, Joseph's effort to support Jewish immigration floundered. The resolution passed, but her strategic attempt to merge Jewish concerns with those of the IODE had to be subtle to the point of obscurity.

Despite, or perhaps because of, these fascinating complexities of Jewish women's membership in the IODE, the story of their participation has been somewhat lost. It does not fit neatly either in the historiography of the IODE or of Canada's Jewish community. The IODE, although still active, has largely distanced itself from its imperial origins, and the acronym has now become the official name. In a sense, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire no longer exists.<sup>100</sup> The IODE now celebrates Canada's diversity, which once it tried so hard to limit. For historians to focus primarily on the Anglo-Protestant membership of the IODE at the only time

of significant Jewish and other “ethnic” participation overshadows the many ways that women interpreted and appropriated rhetorics of imperial kinship.

In a similar manner, the period between 1900–1940 belongs, for most historians of Jewry in Canada, to the stories of Ashkenazi immigrants as they worked to establish roots in Canada and wrestled with the forces of assimilation. In most narratives, upper-class Jews are minor figures whose struggles to define their place had been settled long ago. However, Jewish women’s participation in the IODE demonstrates that negotiating integration was an ongoing labour for established Jews well into the Twentieth century, and that Ashkenazi immigration only added to this task. The benevolent work of the IODE allowed upper-class Jewish women another channel through which to influence both outside perceptions and internal dynamics of the Canadian Jewish community.

A uniquely female patriotic space, the IODE offers a great deal of insight into the ways in which integration was performed and validated along intersecting vectors of gender, race, class, and religion. Among their commitments to a broader sense of humanitarianism, Jewish women’s strategic approach to advocacy for Jewish causes from within the IODE depended on their ability to minimize their difference and to present themselves as impeccably British. Yet these efforts were not particularly successful. Irene Wolff limited herself to hoping her presence would demonstrate Jewish worthiness to other IODE members. For every Jewish cause Grace Aguilar chapter supported, they were careful to equally support a Christian cause. As immigration convener, Rosetta Joseph could do no more than articulate a hope that the government would act to aid refugees. Their efforts suggest the limits and possibilities of a preservationist respectability politics: by the interwar period, the IODE’s vision of British supremacy was increasingly obsolete and demographic changes had irrevocably transformed the character of Canadian Jewish life. The Daughters of the Empire, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, were holding on to a cherished past in a rapidly changing world.



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