

2010 Helen and Stan Vine Canadian Jewish Book Awards: Citations

***Coming of Age: History of the Jewish People of Manitoba* by Allan Levine**

Coming of Age is an interesting and vivid presentation of the rich history of the Jewish community in Manitoba. Using judiciously abundant iconographic and historical resources, Allan Levine creates a vibrant narrative, bringing out the courage and determination of the people confronted with much hardship and isolation. Jews of Manitoba maintain their attachment to Judaism and its values. The book expresses with talent, the heart and smile of a community that overcame so much adversity to create its own world of culture and humanity.

***What the Furies Bring* by Kenneth Sherman**

This lucid and lyrical collection was inspired by the terror and tragedy of September 11. In nineteen remarkable essays, Kenneth Sherman explores what writing means to authors who have created their work under duress and are struggling to express the darkest moments of humanity. As a reflection of the impressive range of his reading and insights, Sherman examines writers as disparate as Primo Levi, Czeslaw Milosz, Anne Frank, John Updike and Nahman of Bratslav. The Jury found that despite the bleakness of the subject, the beauty of the prose and the spare pure language makes for an inspirational and uplifting experience, engaging our hearts and our minds. As Cynthia Ozick says of Sherman's collection: "Carved sentences, luminous apprehensions of art, history, and human connections. In short, Kenneth Sherman is a consummate essayist."

***Save the Deli* by David Sax**

This deeply affecting memoir by David Sax is about a journey towards an uncertain future and an unattainable past. In a road memoir, originally an epithet for the peculiar sights and smells of the cherished deli, transplanted Torontonian (with roots in Montreal) David Sax sees the closing of the storied Second Avenue Deli in New York as the end of a cultural and gastronomical institution. Sax seeks to rediscover deli goodness and excess in Detroit, Los Angeles, and Miami but also in unexpected parts of the Midwest, and even Las Vegas (but don't bet on it). He *noshes* up to Europe, and even returns to the *shtetl* in search of the deli. Sax comes full circle and rediscovers the deli ethos is alive and well in New York, and finds even more hope for a deli renaissance in Toronto. Sax's odyssey inspires the idea that moving forward means that we embrace the past.

***Stingy Buzi and King Solomon* by Goldie Sigal**

A heritage is passed from generation to generation through storytelling. Yiddish especially lends itself to storytelling. *Stingy Buzi and King Solomon* is a delightful tale for children told in Yiddish, English as well as Yiddish transliterated into English. Written and illustrated by Goldie Sigal, retired as Judaica Librarian at McGill University, it is based on legends and folktales about King Solomon as interpreted in a Yiddish play which was mimeographed by Montreal Folk Shule teacher, J.J. Grossman in the 1940s. Sigal takes the traditional Yiddish tale and presents it as a colourful modern graphic novel with appeal to children today.

***The Winterhouse* by Robin McGrath**

From the sophisticated drawing rooms of early 19th century Europe, a young Jewish artisan, Jacob Harris, arrives ill in body and bitter in spirit at a Newfoundland outport community, where he survives the winter only with the aid of Rosehannah Quint, a clever and resourceful teenage girl. Their slowly budding romance is framed by the story, two centuries later, of the hunt by a Jewish folklorist for evidence of this long ago Jewish presence in the colony. The Jury was impressed by the author's ability to create characters who live on the page and by her vivid imagining of life in 19th century Newfoundland, as well as by the unusual theme of possible hidden Jews in our history and the circumstances that may have driven them here.

***Some Measure of Justice: The Holocaust Era Restitution Campaign of the 1990s* by Michael R. Marrus**

In this short but densely packed and thought-provoking book, Prof. Marrus combines his knowledge of Holocaust history with his grasp of jurisprudence to trace the attempts to extract restitution for stolen Jewish property since the American courts established their jurisdiction in the matter during the Clinton era. The Jury praised the book for showing how issues raised by the Holocaust continue to reverberate in the present and for the way the author grapples with the question of whether financial settlement to distant relatives can really achieve “some measure of justice” for long dead Holocaust victims.

***Puppet* by Eva Wiseman**

Puppet recounts the story of a blood libel trial that took place in Tisza-Eszlar, Hungary, in 1883, marrying historical accuracy seamlessly with dramatic events and rounded characters. Moral dilemmas are treated with subtlety: the chief witness against the Jews is a young Jewish boy, Morris Scharf, desperate to free his father and brainwashed by the authorities to believe his own lies. Meanwhile, his gentile friend, Julie, the story's engaging young narrator, struggles with her own dilemma: Should she reveal evidence that will exonerate the Jews? Maintaining the suspense of a good detective story, *Puppet* keeps the readers on the edge of their seats until the truth comes out, dramatically, at the end of the trial. But Wiseman goes beyond plot, evoking the atmosphere of an impoverished Hungarian town whose visitors find relief in blaming Europe's traditional scapegoat for their hardships. The Jury commends *Puppet* for introducing young readers to a relatively unknown event, and for broaching moral issues that will provoke intense discussions at home and in school.

***Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire* by Jeffrey Veidlinger**

This impeccably researched book on Jewish cultural and intellectual history explores the grassroots movement by which Russian and Polish Jews engaged with culture in a public way in the early 20th century. The Jury was impressed with the broad scope of the book, its engagement with history and politics in their encounter with theatre, literature, and other aspects of public culture. They had high praise, too, for its clear and engaging prose, bringing a complex slice of Jewish cultural history to a wide readership.