

Editorial

Today, for the first time in history, it is possible for women to assume, joyfully, an identity that is both Jewish and feminist. Yet little is known about Jewish women's experience in Canada, and our contribution to the history of Canadian Jewry is almost invisible. At best, we are present in the margins in something dismissively labelled the "helping sphere."

As feminists, we believe it matters whose accounts constitute "real" history, whose experiences are recognized and remembered. We therefore sought, with this issue of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme*, to broaden the public record of Jewish women's experiences in Canada.

When we called for submissions, we were overwhelmed with the response we received. Articles, poems, drawings, and paintings from across the country told a complex and multi-layered story. The voices were at once personal and political, providing both critical analysis and individual histories that crossed generations, continents, and identities. They spoke of many of the defining aspects of the experience of Jewish women in Canada: growing up Jewish in rural Canada, experiencing anti-Semitism, surviving the Holocaust and fleeing to Canada as refugees. They also told about creating woman-centred ritual, about the interplay of Jewish and ethnic identities in a bilingual and multicultural nation, and about the place of Jewish women within Canadian feminist movements.

Through their words and images, these women bore witness to our struggles to be different and our struggles to fit in, our diversity as well as our shared experiences and memories.

The journal issue itself is just a first small space, small and yet hugely significant, within which to present this record. The abundant response to our call, a source of great joy, also meant hard choices. Because of constraints of funding and space, we can offer you only a selection of the rich and varied voices that we had the privilege of collecting. But it is a selection, we think, that begins to answer the complex question: Who are we as Jewish women in Canada?

Ce numéro de *CWS/cf* est le résultat d'une série de rencontres entre universitaires partageant une volonté commune: celle de faire émerger les expressions particulières de nos identités. Notre implication de longue date dans les milieux de la recherche féministe a permis de nourrir cette réflexion. Grâce aux liens—souvent ténus mais durables—tissés au cours de ces entretiens, nous avons pu mieux apprécier et comprendre la complexité des identités juives. Ce numéro est le résultat concret de ces rencontres.

Mais pourquoi s'interroger sur les femmes juives au Canada; ces femmes qui, pour la plupart, sont à l'écart des institutions, qu'elles soient communautaires ou académiques? Et surtout, comment donner la parole aux femmes juives pour qui l'identité complexe est souvent source de problèmes plus que de sérénité? De qui parlons-nous enfin lorsque nous parlons des femmes juives au Canada?

Ces questions et bien d'autres ont animé les rencontres d'un comité éditorial. Les membres de ce comité aux origines multiples et aux expériences diverses tentaient de se faire discrètes face aux nombreuses questions et attentes que suscitait ce numéro. Les controverses n'ont pas manqué, entre Toronto et Montréal; il a fallu beaucoup de travail pour arriver à respecter les sensibilités et les exigences de chacune. Cependant, le plaisir de se voir et de construire ensemble ce numéro nous donnaient l'espoir de bientôt le voir naître.

Ce qui ressort de ce numéro, c'est l'envie de comprendre les identités juives: comment elles se transmettent, comment elles se transforment et la place qu'elles occupent dans les récits de vie. En restituant une place, certes encore ténue, et un rôle que l'on voudrait plus central, aux récits de femmes juives, c'est un peu l'histoire du Canada que l'on reconstruit. Les textes du présent numéro jettent une lumière nouvelle sur le processus de formation complexe des identités nationales.

Note: Hebrew and Yiddish: Translations and transliterations of both Hebrew and Yiddish are radically inconsistent, here as in everyday usage; we have followed the authors' own preferences. The brief explanations of terms that we have footnoted are amplified in Susan Weidman Schneider's *Jewish and Female* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

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