

JR | RELIGION & CULTURE
C

Volume 27 Number 1 & 2

Religion, Ideology & Violence

JR
C

The JRC would like to acknowledge the support of sponsors
from within the Concordia University community:

Dean of Students
Concordia Council on Student Life Special Projects Committee (CCSL)
The Department of Religion and Culture
Graduate Student Association

We would also like to offer our special thanks to:
Lynda Clarke, our very supportive department Chair;
Tina Montandon and Munit Merid, administrators extraordinaire;
all of our referees, readers and everyone else who gave their time to
the publication of this journal.



RELIGION & CULTURE

A Peer-Reviewed Graduate Student Journal

2017 Volume 27, no. 1 & 2

Journal Committee

Executive Committee

Alexander Nachaj
Elyse MacLeod
Lindsey Jackson
Joseph E. Brito
Georgia Carter
Laurel Andrew
Daniel Sáenz

Editor-in-Chief
Article Editor
Article Editor
Publication Editor
Book Review Editor
Book Review Editor
Art Editor

Editorial Board

Jocelyn Beaudet
Dalia Ramirez Cote
Anthony Easton
Scarlet Jory
Laura Jurgens
Amanda Mormina
James Quinn
Purna Roy
Daniel Santiago Sáenz
Praveen Vijayakumar

Faculty Advisors

Lynda Clarke
Marc Desjardins
Cimminnee Holt
Marc Lalonde
Leslie Orr
Marcel Parent

The Journal of Religion and Culture (JRC) is proudly produced
by the Graduate Students of the Department of Religions and Cultures
at Concordia University.

© 2017 Journal of Religion and Culture,
Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec.

ISSN 1198-6395
Journal of Religion and Culture Volume 27, no. 1 (2017)
Journal of Religion and Culture Volume 27, no. 2 (2018)

All rights reserved. No part of this journal may be used or reproduced in any matter
without the express written permission of the editors except in the case of brief quotations
embedded in critical articles and reviews.

For more information:
Journal of Religion and Culture
Department of Religions and Cultures (FA-101)
Concordia University
1455 de Maisonneuve O.,
Montreal, Quebec
H3G 1M8

JRC logo design: Christopher Burkart
Book design: Joseph E. Brito
The type face of this journal is Minion Pro,
designed by Robert Slimbach,
issued as a digital Open Type font
by Adobe Systems, Mountain View California, 2000.

Content

Articles

- 103 *Tragic Violence, Hate Crimes and Grieving Within Sacred Geographies of Faith:*
Sikhs and the Oak Creek Gurdwara Shootings, 2012
Doris Jakobsh
- 132 *The Epistemology of Violence and the Conception of Otherness: The Case of The Islamic State (Daesh).*
A Mutation of Contemporary Islamism, or a Prolongation of it?
Amany Fouad Salib
- 160 *Maintaining Multiculturalism*
The Muting of Anti-Syrian Refugee Sentiment in Canadian Public Discourse
Georgia Carter

Book Reviews

- 173 ***Key Terms in Material Religion***
Alexander Nachaj, reviewer.
- 175 ***Is Islam an Enemy of the West?***
Georgia Carter, reviewer.
- 178 ***Hagiography and Religious Truth:
Case Studies in Dharmic and Abrahamic Traditions.***
Alexander Nachaj, reviewer.
- 180 ***The Jews of Harlem:
The Rise, Decline, and Revival of a Jewish Community.***
Lindsey Jackson, reviewer.
- 184 ***Golem
Modern Wars and their Monsters***
Elliot Mason, reviewer.

JR | RELIGION & CULTURE

Volume 27 no. 2



constructively examine the concept of “text” as more than “written word” and the concept of “truth” as beyond verifiable/falsifiable. The reader is effectively presented with different understandings, uses, and meanings of hagiography that move well beyond the two dichotomies, so fearfully presented in the initial sections, and provide some inspiring approaches for future case studies.

Nevertheless, despite the strengths of the case studies, if this collection is to be taken as a complete, cohesive text, it is difficult to determine exactly who the intended audience is. A graduate seminar broadly examining storytelling and religious truth may find some use of this collection; while more likely, a selective reader researching the figures presented in the case studies herein, or an author in need of basic methodology for a case study of their own, will find something of interest within these pages.

Alexander Nachaj
Concordia University

The Jews of Harlem: The Rise, Decline, and Revival of a Jewish Community. Jeffrey S. Gurock. New York: New York University Press, 2016. 293 pages. \$37.62 CDN (Kindle); \$44.25 CDN (Hardcover).

Jeffrey S. Gurock's latest book, *The Jews of Harlem: The Rise, Decline, and Revival of a Jewish Community*, tells the story of how the Jewish community in Harlem was created, maintained, and eventually scattered to other areas of New York City. An expansion of his previous book *When Harlem was Jewish: 1870-1930*, published in 1978, *The Jews of Harlem* explores the development of Harlem as a Jewish haven beginning in 1870, to its decline in the 1920s, and its gentrification and gradual revival in the present day. Using a variety of archival material such as census records, newspaper articles, biographies, real estate records, maps, synagogue reports, and letters, in addition to personal interviews, Gurock uses Harlem as a case study to draw attention to the grassroots efforts of “regular” Jews in the creation and maintenance of their communities in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. By highlighting some of the struggles this community faced, such as congregational disputes, lack of adequate Jewish education, low synagogue attendance, and retaining a connection

to Judaism, Gurock demonstrates the struggles newly American Jews experienced in harmonizing Jewish tradition, customs, and ideals to the new American context.

The first four chapters of the book chronicle the development of Harlem from an isolated and inaccessible area of New York City in the late nineteenth century to its rise as a vibrant Jewish community in the early twentieth century. Gurock begins with a profile of early Jewish residents of Harlem, such as Israel and Emma Stone, Adolf and Celina Zabinskie, and Solomon and Sarah Carvalho. Rural, remote, and physically separated from Jewish institutional life in the city center, Jewish Harlemites recognized the need to establish Jewish organizations and institutions of their own. The founding of Congregation Hand-in-Hand in 1870, a Jewish school in 1874, and the Harlem YMHA in 1879 provides evidence of the beginnings of an established Jewish community in Harlem. The development of a reliable railway system connecting uptown Harlem with downtown New York City toward the end of the nineteenth century put an end to Harlem's status as a rural and sparsely populated neighbourhood, resulting in a considerable population increase in the 1880s. Wishing to escape the crowded and impoverished living conditions of the Lower East Side, Eastern European Jews started to make the move to Harlem. The establishment of the first Russian congregation in 1891 and the Uptown Talmud Torah in 1892 marked the beginning of a significant Eastern European population in Harlem. The decade from 1895 to 1905 was the period of mass migration to Harlem. A boom in residential construction in Harlem, coupled with the arrival of tens of thousands of immigrants to the Lower East Side, motivated many young families to relocate uptown. The construction of different types of housing, such as brownstones, apartment buildings, and tenement housing, effectively created a neighbourhood that was able to accommodate the working, middle, and upper classes. Harlem subsequently became an ethnically and economically diverse neighbourhood, and by 1917 was the second largest Jewish community in the United States. Never losing the connection to their previous Lower East Side neighbourhood, Gurock explores the cooperation witnessed between the "sibling communities" of uptown and downtown Jews. Problems affecting both communities, such as the rising cost of kosher meat and oppressive rent increases, united Lower East Side and Harlem Jews to protest together against common causes. The collaboration between uptown and downtown Jews showcases the connection between two physically separate and distinct Jewish communities.

Chapters five and six document the challenges Harlem Jews experienced in connecting youth to their religious heritage. The creation of adequate Jewish schools that combined religious and general education was one avenue through which Jewish leaders in Harlem endeavoured to retain the interest of Jewish youth. In addition to the United Talmud Torah (founded in 1892), the Rabbi Israel Salanter Talmud Torah was founded in 1909. A combined enrolment of 2 500 students, primarily boys, prompted the expansion of Jewish education to girls at the United Talmud Torah. This represented the first instance in which formal Jewish education was made available to girls in New York City. In addition to using education as a means of engaging Jewish youth, Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein created the Institutional Synagogue in 1917. A three-in-one synagogue, the Institutional Synagogue provided religious, educational, and social activities all under one roof. Goldstein's innovation was preceded by the founding of the YWHA by Bella Unterberg in 1903. The lack of Jewish institutions directed at or even accessible to women prompted Unterberg to create a space for Jewish women to congregate. Responding to the lack of "Hebrew" in conventional YMHAs, Unterberg's YWHA boasted a synagogue, library, gymnasium, and a swimming pool.

Reaching its peak in 1917, Jewish Harlem started to decline in the 1920s (chapter seven). During and immediately after World War I, New York witnessed a dramatic increase in population. Less housing was available, rent soared, and properties were not maintained. As one of the most affected areas of the city, Harlem Jews began relocating to Brooklyn and the Bronx. Once boasting a population of approximately 175 000 Jews, Harlem was home to only 5 500 Jews by 1930. As Jews started to leave Harlem, increasing numbers of African Americans, who were migrating to New York from the South, decided to settle uptown. Due to the restrictions placed on where African Americans could live in the city, many, regardless of socioeconomic status, were crammed into Harlem. By the early 1920s, Harlem had become a predominantly black neighbourhood. Gurock explores the racial tensions between white Jews and African Americans in Harlem that started to manifest during this period of co-habitation while simultaneously sharing stories of Jews living amicably with African Americans. Chapter eight documents the roots of this tension, which Gurock posits is a result of the exploitative working conditions experienced by black employees on the part of Jewish business owners. Jews owned prominent businesses in Harlem, such as Blumstein's department store

and the famous Apollo Theater. Gurock showcases the theater culture of the 1920s and 1930s, where African Americans were hired as performers and Jewish performers would often don “blackface.” This era of a booming theater and music scene ended with the Harlem riot of 1935. Chapter nine traces the deterioration of Harlem that took place between the 1950s and 1970s when, plagued by high crimes rates, violence, and deemed a “community in distress,” Harlem became a part of New York City to be avoided. The final chapter chronicles the gentrification of Harlem, which began in the 1980s. Crime rates decreased and condemned buildings were rebuilt or restored. Poor Harlemites were gradually pushed out of the neighbourhood and the white population increased. According to a *New York Times* report in 2010, African Americans were no longer the majority in Harlem. The “revival” of Harlem has inspired a very small (arguably insignificant) resurgence of the Jewish community that once was. (Note: Gurock’s use of the term “revival” to describe gentrification and the resurgence of a white population in Harlem is problematic. Often pushing out the poor, in this case black Harlemites, gentrification is a controversial phenomenon and warrants a more critical and nuanced approach than Gurock provides). In 2011, Jews comprised 20% of the white population in Harlem. Other than the Harlem Chabad and the Harlem Minyan, there is no significant Jewish institutional presence in Harlem. Gurock concludes the book by proclaiming his uncertainty regarding whether Judaism will witness a second hey-day in Harlem.

A comprehensive historical analysis of Jewish Harlem from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, *The Jews of Harlem* investigates the grassroots creation and gradual dispersion of a particular Jewish neighbourhood. Harlem Jews created their own community from the ground up in an effort to preserve their religious and cultural heritage all the while trying to “fit in” with American customs and ideals. More than a story about a Jewish community, *The Jews of Harlem* documents the transformation in the composition, landscape, and culture of Gotham, to which Jews undoubtedly contributed. An essential read for anyone interested in American history generally or American Jewish history specifically, *The Jews of Harlem* joins the ranks of Gurock’s 18 other books documenting important historical moments and cultural trends in the narrative of American Jewish history.

Lindsey Jackson
Concordia University