

(by Ian Sinnamon); psychiatrist Clara Lazar Geroe (by Judith Brett); confectioner Harry Lea (by Richard White); nightclub and restaurant-owner Sammy Lee (by Gerard Oakes); Max Lemberg, biochemist (by R. Bhathal); Sir Aubrey Lewis, psychiatrist & academic (by Michael Shepherd); school-teacher Samuel P. Lewis (by Martin Sullivan); meteorologist Fritz Loewe (by Mark Richmond); Sir John Isaacs Loewenthal, military surgeon & academic (by John Carmody); restaurateur Walter Magnus (by Chris Cunneen); herd-tester Otto Marx (by Meredith Fletcher); Philip Masel, businessman & writer (David Mossenson); singing teacher Marianne Mathy (by John Carmody); Oscar A. Mendelsohn, polymath & public analyst (by Ray Marginson); Sir Archie Michaelis, businessman & politician (by John Levi); public health administrator Emanuel Morris (by James Gillespie); Rabbi Isack Morris (by Lionel Fredman); Hirsch Munz, scientist & man-of-letters (by Malcolm J. Turnbull); Sir Norman Myer, businessman (by David Dunstan); mathematician Johanna Neumann (by Kenneth F. Fowler); communal leader Horace B. Newman (by Suzanne D. Rutland); Judge David L. Opas (by E.R. Baker & P.I. Rose); art historian Franz Philipp (by Jaynie Anderson); Sir Philip D. Phillips (by Laurence W. Maher).

Malcolm J. Turnbull

COMING OUT JEWISH: CONSTRUCTING AMBIVALENT IDENTITIES

Jon Stratton (London & New York: Routledge, 2000; ix + 341pp)

Jon Stratton is Professor of Cultural Studies at Curtin University of Technology in Perth. So far as I am aware I have never met him, and his name will probably be unfamiliar to most readers of this Journal, including its academic readers. I know virtually nothing whatever about the author, apart from the fact that he had a 'gentile father' who 'used more Yiddish than my assimilating mother' (p. 9) in Golders Green, London, where he apparently grew up. (His degrees are from British universities). I found his book by chance in a shop in London and, intrigued by the Australian Jewish identity of the author, decided to purchase and read it.

This book is really three or four works in one. There is, almost always lurking behind the scenes, like the theme allegedly concealed, but never played, in Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, an autobiographical work of self-discovery, by someone who is apparently a very marginal member of the Jewish community and has become interested in his background. It would probably have been better if the author had written such an autobiography, which would have been, in many ways more valuable than the work he has written. Secondly, the book consists of a number of essays on Jewish identity in Australia, from the viewpoint of 'cultural studies'. 'Cultural studies', enormously popular at the present time in some quarters, stresses the ambiguities and lack of 'boundaries' of any self-defined 'culture', and the existence of the so-called 'other' in 'constructing' identities. In many ways it has acted as an ideologically congruent replacement for the now-discredited Marxism so popular in academic discussion thirty years ago, and shares with it an underlying assumption, never

proven, that the 'establishment' must be racist and fascist. There are some merits in stressing the ambiguity of Jewish identity in Australia, especially prior to the 1950s, and some interesting insights might be expected. Stratton, however, is no historian, and invariably views Jewish identity with post-Holocaust eyes in a way which is simply wrong-headed and, in the context of Australian history, misplaced. For instance, he fails to understand that Jews were irrelevant to the main line of 'ethnic' division in Australia down to the 1940s, that between Catholics and Protestants. His essays are not without their interesting features, but are, by and large, that of an outside observer of the Jewish community bringing with him a set of assumptions (generally predictable in advance) which are often highly tendentious. Stratton's views on Zionism and Israel are not difficult to guess in advance. As with most leftists, he has great trouble coming to terms with Jewish collective identity. A fair sample of these views may be found on p. 111: '... we must remember how Jewish-Israeli attitudes are mediated by ghetto thinking. If the Palestinians and other Arabs did not exist, the Israelis would have to invent them. To some extent they have, through their own intransigence and violence ... [They] assume that Israel is always under threat, always about to be attacked, and that any individual, if not Jewish (but these days this is a problematical category) and Zionist, might be an aggressor'.

The third strand within this book concerns the Jewish community itself. To a certain extent, he is quite right to stress the ambiguity within modern Jewish identity, and he is certainly right to point to the many and varied Jewish ideologies which developed between 1850 and 1939; indeed, from his viewpoint, he might usefully have made much more of this. Nevertheless, as an essential outsider to the mainstream Australian Jewish community, often hostile and unsympathetic, he carries this obsession with ambiguity and marginality to ludicrous extremes, especially in his almost studious refusal to consider such matters as Jewish religious identity or the chief matrices of Jewish identity in contemporary Australia such as the day school system. (Surely there are more rabbis in Australia than Jewish professors of cultural studies). He seems, in fact, to be afraid of taking head on any manifestations of Australian Jewish identity which is strongly positive, perhaps because of his own marginality, perhaps because he knows so little about the actual workings of the Jewish community. Unfortunately, this very flawed view of Australian Jewish identity is likely to be widely read by those who take 'cultural studies' seriously. Professor Stratton is an intelligent and often sensitive writer and observer, but in all seriousness I would suggest that spending three months living in Jewish Melbourne would immeasurably increase his value as a commentator on this subject.

Professor Stratton's comments on my own writings do little to inspire confidence in his accuracy. For instance, my 'analysis of the Jewish situation in Australia from the 1991 census had to be entitled *Judaism in Australia*, rather than *Jews in Australia*', because (in his words) 'in Australia, the censuses have always categorised European Jews by religion, assuming them to be "white".' (p. 235). Ignoring the utter and total absurdity of the second part of this quote, the reason my booklet is entitled *Judaism in Australia* is because it

appeared in a series on religious groups in Australia (the second booklet was, I believe, on Lutheranism in Australia). This is so stated on the title page and by the series editor in his introduction. Professor Stratton's conclusions here are typical of how unfruitful and misleading his post-modernist approach is, steeped in an almost wilful refusal to take Jewish identity sympathetically or on its own terms.

William D. Rubinstein

THE NEW ZEALAND JEWISH COMMUNITY

Stephen Levine (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 1999; xix + 320pp.)

Of the world's 'distant Diasporas', New Zealand's Jewish community is probably the most remote. Its 5000-strong Jewish community is many thousands of miles from the centres of Jewish life, and seemingly too small to escape near-complete assimilation into the general community. That it survives at all is remarkable, and a searching and sophisticated examination of its structure and history is likely to prove not merely fascinating but instructive for other larger Jewish communities. This Stephen Levine's book has in large measure provided.

The New Zealand Jewish Community emerges from an invitation made by the late, much esteemed Professor David Elazar, President of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, to prepare a study of the New Zealand community based upon the approaches taken by Elazar and his group, which stress the organisational framework and institutional structure of each Jewish community as a basis for cross-national comparisons. The author carefully notes that this is not a history of the New Zealand Jewish community as such, but an account of the growth of its organisational and institutional framework and of its constitutional structure, in the context of a realistic account of how these have actually worked in fact during the recent past. Thus, of the book's 310 pages of text, not less than 161 consist of appendices giving, in full, the constitutional documents of the leading institutions of the New Zealand Jewish community, from the Bye-laws of the Dunedin Jewish Congregation, 1897, to the Rules of the Council of Jewish Women, Wellington (Incorporated), 1992. Although some will doubtless initially regard this as absurd, Elazar and his followers argue cogently that it is necessary to reproduce such documents in order to ascertain the evolution of a Jewish community.

The main body of Levine's commentary consists of a very interesting and well-informed discussion of the recent and present state of the New Zealand Jewish community, whose many problems are not disguised. These include tiny membership and a continuing decline in, particularly, Orthodox synagogue numbers not compensated for by recent immigration from Russia and elsewhere; the absence of a core centre of Jewish life; much Orthodox/Progressive animosity; the lack of a significant Jewish leadership of any real distinction; and often surprisingly chilly relationships with the New Zealand government and the local media, with the Jewish community bearing the brunt of the hostility of New Zealand Labor governments to Israeli policies as well