

Book Reviews

Comptes rendus de livres

Apolonja Maria Kojder and Barbara Glogowska, *Marynia Don't Cry: Memoirs of Two Polish-Canadian Families*

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Kojder, Apolonja Maria, and Barbara Glogowska. *Marynia Don't Cry: Memoirs of Two Polish-Canadian Families*. Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1995. xi + 195 pp., 20 illus., \$24.94, ISBN 0-919045-65-0.

Ethnocultural Voices is a series of books that describes the personal experience of new immigrants to Canada, the loss of their homeland and their integration into the new society and culture. Published by the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, the series contributes to the knowledge of problems faced by a multicultural nation, such as Canada, that has been greatly influenced by immigrants.

Marynia Don't Cry: Memoirs of Two Polish-Canadian Families is a chronicle of two Polish-Canadian families that came to Canada between the 1920s and 1940s. The book is based on the oral history and memoirs of two families. The first story is written by a daughter of immigrants, the second by a family friend. Written in a plain, documentary style, the book is an account of daily life.

Marynia Don't Cry touches so many problems that it is difficult to determine which might be the most important and the most interesting for the reader. Each wave of Polish immigrants that came to Canada had a different social and political profile. The liberation of Poland from partition in 1918 brought with it great expectations for the nation. The image created by romantic poets presented a free Poland as a promised land that was supposed to flow with "milk and honey." Emigrants leaving Poland in the 1920s were mostly coming from the poorest class of society. They were often unskilled workers with an agricultural background. They were leaving a newly liberated Poland with

feelings of disappointment and disillusion, and expected Canada to fulfil the myth of the promised land. In letters to relatives they described Canada as a land of opportunities, almost a fairy-tale land, creating the perfect vision of the faraway country.

The next wave of Polish immigrants came to Canada during or just after World War II. It consisted of people from many different social backgrounds but with a similar life experience: they had lost property and all their belongings; survived Russian or German camps and suffered through tragedies that inevitably influenced their view of their new country. Again, they expected a promised land where they could finally lead a peaceful life, and were disappointed by Canadian reality.

The first story, titled "A Mother's Legacy" addresses the role of women in society, in particular the use of a "female support system" as a means of survival, as well as the importance of family and land. It relates the story of the Beznowski and the Kojder families. Jan Beznowski immigrated to Canada in 1925 and settled on a farm in western Saskatchewan. His wife Marja and daughter Helena Kojder with her husband joined Jan in 1948. They stayed on a farm only for a few months and decided to move to North Battleford. "Mothers's Legacy" chronicles the hardship of life in Poland, the deportation of the Kojder family to Russia, and finally their immigration to a new country. (It also touches on the problem of gaps in history books that can only be filled by oral traditions.) The tone becomes emotional when the story's author describes her own, complex experience and her difficult integration into Canadian society.

The second story, "Three Generations (The Deputat Family)", tells the history of a young

immigrant, Mike Deputat, who left Poland in 1928 and settled in Toronto. He came from the same agricultural background as the Kojder family, but did not bring to Canada the tragic experience of war and deportation. His view of Canada is very different from the one presented in the first story. His family, established and raised in Canada, did not have any assimilation problems. They became perfectly integrated into Canadian society, at the same time keeping their Polish roots. However, the second story lacks the painful emotion of the immigration experience, and is rather a basic account of the family history.

The stories told in *Marynia Don't Cry* are limited by the size of the book, but they each contain enough material for a novel. The book sheds light upon the process of integration into a new society, rather than Polish-Canadian material culture, but it is an excellent starting point for research in material history. The Kojders and the Deputats are almost clichés of typical Polish-Canadian families that are still relevant some forty years later. Even now, families that come to Canada with small children and leave their properties in an old country have difficulty integrating into the new society; young people that establish and raise their families in Canada adapt easily.

The first generation of Polish immigrants presented in *Marynia Don't Cry* advanced themselves from poor agricultural workers to

the Canadian middle class. They moved from a farm to a city; left one-room shelters and handmade furniture to buy houses, cars, stores, and businesses. They were socially active in their new communities. Yet even as the first generation of Polish-Canadian immigrants became seemingly integrated into the Canadian middle class, their home life preserved Polish customs and material culture. Tools and home appliances were the same or similar to those used in Poland. Family friends were all from Poland, and only the Polish language was used in private conversation. Apolonja Kojder clearly defined her childhood world as divided between "home (Polish)" and "school (Canadian)." Education played a big part in the process of assimilation. It was seen as a way to advance in society. Children of immigrants were expected to go to university, receive a degree and become professionals, but they were also expected to know Polish history, use the Polish language and preserve their customs.

Marynia Don't Cry does not provide detailed accounts of customs and material history of Polish immigrants, but rather it presents a view of life in typical Polish-Canadian families. The value of the book lies in its portrayal of daily life and the essence of the Polish-Canadian experience, which played an important part in the development of Canada as a nation of immigrants.

Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture and Tourism in Ontario, 1790–1914*

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Jasen, Patricia. *Wild Things: Nature, Culture and Tourism in Ontario, 1790–1914*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. 194 pp., 35 illus., paper \$18.95, ISBN 0-8020-7638-6.

From Niagara Falls to the Thousand Islands, Muskoka, Lake Huron and the country in between, tourists in Ontario before World War I looked for wildness. Most saw only what they wanted to see and defined wildness in terms prescribed for experiences of it — variations on *sublime*, *beautiful*, *picturesque* or *romantic*. Patricia Jasen details how the search for wildness, however defined, formed the basis for the tourism industry in Ontario.

Jasen's book compliments other studies useful for the understanding of the history of tourism such as John Sears's *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (1989) and Philip G. Terrie's *Forever Wild: Environmental Aesthetics and the Adirondack Forest Preserve* (1985). While these other volumes are about America and have different focusses (Terrie is primarily interested in the history of ideas with reference to the Adirondack region of upstate New York, and Sears in a period earlier than the thrust of much of Jasen's book), all three examine the mindset of tourists. Examining many of the same sorts of evidence, Jasen and Terrie both conclude