

And those left behind? Central European immigration to Canada

[Review of *Migrating Memories: Central Europe in Canada*, vol. 1 – Literary Anthology, edited by Vesna Lopičić and *Migrating Memories: Central Europe in Canada*, vol. 2 – Oral Histories, edited by Rodica Albu (Brno: CEACS, 2010)]

The two sleek volumes of *Migrating Memories: Central Europe in Canada* are the outcome of a joint project undertaken by the Central European Association for Canadian Studies, who set out to map the diasporic experience of Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, Serbian, Slovakian and Slovenian immigrants to Canada.

Although sharing the focus, each volume contributes to the whole in a different way. Volume One opens with the essay “Diaspora Making Its Story in Canada” by Vesna Lopičić, the editor of the volume. She approaches identity and otherness through the prism of Edward Chamberlin’s emphasis on reimagining ‘Them and Us’ and so provides a solid cornerstone to the volume, in which each of the following sections is dedicated to a different Central European country. Scholars from each country introduce the reader to the history, contexts and other details specific for each nation’s immigrants and then provide concise biographical information about the writers as well as excerpts from their works. It is these extracts and examinations of the particular authors that make the two volumes especially valuable, particularly for scholars in expatriate or diaspora literature and North American immigrant literatures.

In Volume One, poetry, short stories, essays and various other types of texts by the immigrant writers can be found. In Volume Two, there are in-depth interviews with the authors each telling their fascinating stories, which taken in total highlight each writer’s feelings about their adopted home of Canada, the diversity of opinion concerning the situation in their home countries in the intervening decades, as well as varying degrees of nostalgia and pride for a motherland left behind in time and place. Together, these texts concenter to form a colorful assemblage of discourses evidencing the varied motivations and experiences of immigrants to Canada from different European homelands.

The Czech section was prepared by Květa Kunešová (University of Hradec Králové) with the help of Daniel P. Sampey (University of Pardubice). In her introductory essay “Canada was good for them. They hope they were good for Canada” the author makes it clear that as regards Czechoslovakia (the Slovaks also have their own section), there have been three major waves of immigration to Canada. The first took place during and after the First World War, the second before World War II. The third and most important wave, however, was triggered by postwar political developments, especially by the 1948 coup d’état (as Květa Kunešová indicates, the title of her essay comes from a plaque in Halifax commemorating the arrival in Canada of 113 Czechoslovak refugees in 1949). The choice of émigré writers and their work is intriguing. After a few pages from J.R.Č. Čermák’s history of Czechs and Slovaks in Canada titled *It all started with Prince Rupert* (2003), there are short stories from *The Exotic Canadians* (1989) by Jan Drábek, an excerpt from Jaroslav Havelka’s philosophical treatise *Reflections and Preoccupations* (1980), a selection of fine poems from *Far from You* (1981) by Pavel Javor and several other ‘tastings’ by Jiří Klobouk, Eva Klobouková, Vladimír Krajina, Jiří Krupička, Zdena Salivarová, Josef Škvorecký, Jiří Traxler and others (some of the texts were translated for the volume by the Květa Kunešová and D.P. Sampey). Like the other parts of the two volumes, this section provides an accomplished display of authentic material laced with useful and well-researched insights by the author.

Whether the reader is interested in the literature of diaspora, the history of European immigration to Canada, or simply in experiencing interesting and diverse perspectives from the nations represented, *Migrating Memories* is both informative and enticing on many levels. Reading it, however, is also rather saddening. It reminds one of the irrevocable loss that the emigration of exceptional, educated and independent individuals from their homeland presents for the culture, art, science, politics and general welfare of the fellow citizens left behind.

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