

Out of the Nest Polish Women Immigrants in Canada in the XX century

By **Maria Anna Jarochowska-de-Kosko**.
Translated by **Zbigniew Izydorczyk**. New
York: Vantage Press (vantagepress.com), 2011.
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Bożena Karwowska

In the introduction to her book the author states that “*Out of the Nest* tells the story of the twentieth-century Polish women who left their home country and moved to Canada, a country completely foreign to them, to start new lives as immigrants.” This authorial description provides a good point of departure for more detailed observations, beginning with the fact that Jarochowska-de-Kosko’s book allows the rare opportunity to engage in Polish-Canadian migration discourse. This, together with a limited availability of studies devoted to the situation of women as immigrants, especially in the period immediately following the Second World War, makes her study a pioneering work.

The emerging feminist field in exile and emigration studies is characterized by the fact that studies of women immigrants are almost exclusively conducted by researchers who themselves are female immigrants. They tend not only to stay within their gender but also within the experiences conditioned by ethnicity and social background, and by the same token they blur the boundaries between the researcher’s own experiences and those of her studies’ subjects. The author of *Out of the Nest* belongs to that category of writer-researcher studying the lives of émigré women cohorts of which she herself is a part. She came to Canada from Poland in 1965 after completing her graduate studies, and continued her academic career as a professor at various Canadian universities.

Thus Jarochowska-de-Kosko looks at the experiences of Polish émigré women through the lens of the cultural values and beliefs that she herself professes. The title of her book reflects a

firm belief in national identity and in the traditional understanding of gender roles. She further suggests that these Polish women who found themselves in Canada were forced to find their place in life outside their “nest,” that is, far from the sheltering familiarity that offered them a lifelong social identity.

Jarochowska-de-Kosko divides women immigrants into four distinctive waves based on the dates of their arrival in Canada: 1900–1940, 1940–1956, 1956–1979, and 1979–2000. She points out that only the first group came to this country voluntarily, i.e., for economic rather than political reasons. Nevertheless, in the author’s view all Polish newcomers, regardless of the differences between them, were united by their limited knowledge of Canada. This lack of knowledge is an important aspect of Jarochowska-de-Kosko’s narration and her ability to deal with it is the book’s most important asset. In studies devoted to Polish literature and culture Canada is seldom seen as a separate and unique entity; instead, it is overshadowed by its large and powerful neighbor to the south. In works on Polish émigré writers, e.g., Janusz Pasterski’s study of Bogdan Czaykowski’s poetry, reflection on the Canadian form of multiculturalism has been replaced by irrelevant and confusing references to American policies. Despite such common critical errors, Canadian immigrants have built a country and a nation whose multicultural framework is strikingly different from that built by their American neighbors, and these differences have had an impact on the lives of Polish Canadians.

Jarochowska-de-Kosko is aware of this, and she is justly proud of her own and other Polish women’s achievements in Canada, including their roles in Canada’s growth. She sees immigration as a two way process—a negotiation between the self and the new culture that is not static but constantly evolves due to various political and cultural pressures. In regard to Canada’s economic conditions, Jarochowska-de-Kosko does not fail to point out that Canada warmly welcomed only those Poles who could actively contribute to its economic growth. This was especially true in the 1960s when she herself became an immigrant. Her generation’s émigré wave was strongly rooted in Polish national identity and rather suspicious of hybrid

identities. Accordingly, Jarochovska-de-Kosko pays much attention to all forms of belonging and contribution to the Polish diaspora, dispersed throughout the vast Canadian provinces. She offers numerous insights regarding this diaspora's geographical as well as generational and class-related differences. Dedicating her work to the lives of Polish female immigrants to Canada, she writes about women as different as "country women who settled in Western Canada, 'white collars' who filled the offices of central and eastern cities, and professional women who surprised Canada (and often themselves) with their accomplishments."

Out of the Nest, originally published in Polish and titled *Poza gniazdem* (2006), has had limited circulation in Poland, partly because it was published in Canada. It did not reach English-speaking Canadian scholars either. Hopefully, this skilful translation by Zbigniew Izydorzyc, another Polish-Canadian from the University of Winnipeg, will remedy this. The book offers unique insights into the lives of female immigrants to Canada whose fate, I repeat, was frequently quite different from that of the Polish women who emigrated to the United States. Δ

Between the Brown and the Red

Nationalism, Catholicism, and Communism in 20th-Century Poland: The Politics of Bolesław Piasecki

By **Mikołaj Stanisław Kunicki**. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. Polish and Polish American series (ohioswallow.com), 2012. xix + 266 pages. Index, bibliography. ISBN 13-978-0-8214-2004-1. Hardcover.

Ewa Thompson

This book deals with the political career of Bolesław Piasecki (1915–1979), a minor politician and activist in Soviet-occupied Poland who gained notoriety as head of a quasi-Catholic organization, PAX. PAX enjoyed considerable privileges in a country where committed

Catholics were marginalized or persecuted, and where Catholic publications were censored or otherwise prevented from freely reaching society. It could publish certain Catholic books when other publishers were forbidden to do so, and was permitted to open bookstores and devotional stores in cities where sales of Catholic devotional items were limited to churches. At the same time, rank-and-file Catholics were aware that PAX was kept on a medium-length leash by the political police and that it was frowned upon by the Church. No bishop has ever belonged to PAX, and the priests who joined were distrusted by their bishops. Writer Marek Nowakowski (b. 1937) stated in a February 2013 interview that the goal of PAX was the destruction of the Catholic Church in Poland.

The author begins with the peregrinations of a group of people in prewar Poland to which Piasecki belonged and whose marginal presence in Polish society manifested itself mostly in numerous regroupings involving changes of the name by which they called themselves. While Kunicki admits that both the Polish Catholic clergy and *Endecja* (right wingers) had "largely ignored" the groups of which Piasecki was part, he seems obsessed with presenting Piasecki as an incipient danger. He states that "as a leader of a small fascist group, Piasecki envisaged Poland as a protototalitarian state" (3). Yet Piasecki was alienated both from the left and from the right; indeed, he served time in the Bereza Kartuska camp for political offenders together with assorted radicals and Marxists. I submit that the terminology coined by the leftward-leaning American scholars does not fit Polish developments.

Piasecki survived the Second World War, but was arrested by the communists and, one assumes, chose collaboration over a painful death. This aspect of Piasecki's choice (fear of a painful death) is ignored in Kunicki's narrative. As a communist collaborator, Piasecki attempted to infiltrate the Catholic Church and its priests via PAX which he created in circumstances that have not been clearly documented. PAX was a tiny organization, and its only visible presence in society was the aforementioned bookstores. As Piasecki's usefulness to the communists