

ent histories of racism and victimization. Without some clarity over what these lessons might be, the presentation of the particularities of the NAJC's political strategies appears rather belaboured to those outside Omatsu's "community". This portion of the book is certainly less compelling than the life histories and war stories, which have a far wider humanistic appeal. Nevertheless, this is a rather minor objection to *Bittersweet Passage* and does not diminish the book's salutary effects as a chronicle of how women and men acted in concert to reclaim their history, fight bigotry and win in a country that often runs its affairs in a state of complacent denial over the existence of racism.

### WEDDED TO THE CAUSE: UKRAINIAN WOMEN AND ETHNIC IDENTITY, 1891-1991

Frances Swyripa. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

by *Ameë Sandhu*

Frances Swyripa has written a new kind of history. *Wedded to the Cause* attempts to bridge the gap between immigration history and gender history. In this book, Swyripa has embarked on a journey of perceptions of Ukrainian women held by the greater Anglo-Canadian society. Her main thesis explores the "impact of Ukrainian Canadians' self-image as Canadians and their continued involvement with Ukraine on one segment of the group—women." This study does not do actual Ukrainian women's history in the traditional sense: we are not told a story of these women's lives. Instead, Swyripa uses a "top down" approach to show how Ukrainian women were depicted and what they were thought of by the

greater Anglo-Canadian society and by the different Ukrainian immigrant political factions, the nationals and the progressives.

The first two chapters of *Wedded to the Cause* deal with the negative stereotypes of immigrant peasant women. The peasant woman was viewed as unassimilable, unfeminine, and as the most backward element of the Ukrainian community. These views were held by the dominant culture, the Ukrainian community élites, and the women's rebellious daughters who alienated their mothers even further by rejecting them as well.

The following three chapters follow Ukrainian immigrant descendants as they age, and their attempts to improve Ukrainian women's image and status in mainstream society and in their own community. The Ukrainian mythology of the 'Great Woman' was Canadianized as Ukrainian women attempted to emulate past heroines by throwing themselves into work for Ukrainians in Canada, and in the Ukraine.

The last chapter comes full circle back to the peasant immigrant woman. But this time she is important and crucial to the survival of the Ukrainian community and to the building of Canada itself. She has been reclaimed by Ukrainian women's organizations, by the formal Ukrainian community and at the grassroots level, to represent the struggle and commitment of Ukrainians to Canada. Where once *baba* was a sense of shame and represented the unassimilability of immigrants, she now represents the Others who helped to build Canada.

Swyripa's book has many strengths. She demonstrates a talent for integrating Ukrainian artwork, crafts, photographs and mythology into her history of the immigrants. She traces the groups of women chronologically, a technique reminiscent of Strong-Boarg's *New Day Recalled*, which enables her to show the different circumstances of the successive waves of Ukrainian immigrants.

However, her weaknesses are more substantial. For example, she empha-

sizes the combination of gender and class in her introduction; yet in the text class only applies to the leftist progressives, not to the more conservative nationalists.

By far the weakest aspect of *Wedded to the Cause*, however, is Swyripa's claim in the introduction that in her case study, gender is eclipsed by class and ethnicity. She fails to prove this in the analysis; in fact, she proves the opposite. The reader is struck by the extent to which Ukrainian women were subjected to ridicule by their own community as well the dominant culture. Swyripa does not account for the difference in treatment between the men and the women, even within their own ethnic group. There is material in her book that effectively proves that gender *was* of vital importance to the experiences of Ukrainian women in Canada. For example, a member of the Communist Party of Canada observed that Ukrainian Communist men actively discouraged their wives from joining political organizations, feeling that if they were members, it was enough. This clearly implies that women's experiences were different from men's, and that women were valued less than the men. Perhaps being Ukrainian gave the women admission into the community, but not good seats.

The Ukrainian women possess no agency until the middle of the book. Swyripa's approach to her subjects turns them into passive, voiceless women. They only came to Canada because they were wives and daughters. Even though she claims her book is about Ukrainian women, it only shows what others thought of them, what others wanted them to become and what others rethought of them in the near present.

Even when Swyripa comes full circle at the end of the book, there is still no agency. Did *baba's* rehabilitation have anything to do with *baba*? The book is about what other people thought about *baba*, never what *baba* thought about herself.