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The Ethnic Experience in Canadian Literature

In recent years, ethnic literature has proliferated in Canada. No longer regarded as outside the literary mainstream, works by Canadian authors of non-French and non-British descent are making their mark on Canadian literature. Evidence of this acceptance abounds — in the recognition in English Canada of Jewish writers and in the increasing thematic significance of ethnicity in the works of major Canadian authors.

Since about 1970, the increased diversity of new immigrants has given new impetus and variety to ethnic literature.

Despite the relatively small number of Jews in Canada, Jewish writing is perhaps the most impressive of Canada's ethnic literatures. Irving Layton, Mordecai

Richler, A.M. Klein and Miriam Waddington, just to name a few, have so skilfully articulated the Jewish experience in Canada that their work has earned Jewish writing a major place in modern Canadian literature.

A number of other small European groups in Canada have also produced substantial bodies of literature. Hungarian-Canadian writer George Jonas, for example, has achieved mainstream success with his works *Vengeance* (1984) and *Cities* (1974).

Polish-Canadian poet Wacław Iwaniuk, whose achievements include *Ciemny Czas* (1968), later translated into *Dark Times* (1979), and most recently *Evenings on Lake Ontario* (1981), has also attained critical acclaim.

Czech-Canadian Josef Skvorecky was already a known literary figure before he immigrated to Canada in 1968. He has published a number of works in Canada that have been translated into

English such as his novella, *The Bass Saxophone* (1977), and *The Story of an Engineer of Human Souls* (1984). Although Skvorecky's work has political overtones, it is preoccupied with the universal themes of the individual's fate in history and the importance of art.

During the seventies and eighties, Italian-Canadian literary activity has burgeoned substantially. Unlike other European groups who were

