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Patricia Jasen. *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. x + 194 pp. $45.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8020-7638-0; $50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8020-0684-4.

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Ontario Re-Visited

My heart is in Muskoka, my heart is not here,

My heart is in Muskoka, a chasing the deer;

Chasing the wild deer, *in dipping canoe*,

My heart is in Muskoka, wherever I go.[1]

In *Wild Things*, Patricia Jasen expands upon her previously published articles to explore tourism and nature in Ontario from 1790 to 1914. Jasen argues that during the nineteenth century, what is now Ontario was a popular destination for European and North American tourists hoping to experience the picturesque and the sublime by visiting the wilderness. This romanticism, she claims, is the key to the tourist industry:

"This book argues that being a tourist means being in a state of mind in which the imagination plays a key role, and each variety of tourism it examines reveals the central and enduring importance of the 'romantic sensibility' to the culture, economics, and politics of the tourist industry" (p. 4).

In seeking to "show just how intimate and enduring the connection between romantic values and the workings of the tourist industry was" (p. 7), Jasen attempts to demonstrate "that the most powerful unifying theme in Ontario tourism before the First World War was the tension and interplay between notions of civilization and wildness":

"If these ideas were the product of the European imagination, aided and abetted by the pervasive ideology of romanticism, they were nonetheless produced and perpetually recast for concrete social, political, and economic reasons. The nineteenth-century passion for wild things belongs to the history of ideas, but it belongs equally to the history of real people, real power, and real money" (p. 28).

Discourses about nature and the wilderness are not benign. They are created and maintained for political reasons. They are products of time and place.

Jasen pursues her argument through a number of case studies. There are chapters on the development of the tourist industry in Niagara Falls, historic sites and promotions along the St. Lawrence, European incursions into Native lands in the upper Great Lakes, the growth of "cottage country" north of Toronto, and, finally, a fascinating chapter on the complex interaction between the Euro-American tourists and their Native guides which explores the role of tourism in the "expansionist cause."

The chapters themselves are interesting case studies, many of which are insightful and informative. Drawing on Mary Louise Pratt's work on travel writing and imperialism, Jasen suggests that travellers to the Ontario wilderness helped shape their society's views of the Native population by passing on information and prejudices that aided the expansionist cause (p. 152). Jasen's work explores not only the image of the Native populations living in these tourist destinations, but also how Natives themselves negotiated the expansion of Ontario tourism. Her discussions of Native guides in chapter 6, "Close Encounters," and of Native involvement in the tourist trade in chapter 4, "Native Lands," do well to present these Native peoples as active participants in Ontario's history. Jasen's book also draws our attention to women travellers. Jasen convincingly demonstrates that female tourists were not as rare as previous studies would have us believe. Upper- and middle-class Victorian women traveled and recorded their perceptions of Ontario's wilderness. These findings suggest that travel diaries (a genre once considered solely a male domain) can offer a great deal of insight into women's lives in Victorian Canada.

Yet brought together as these chapters are under one cover, they do not offer a convincing argument in support of the position Jasen takes in the introduction. That introduction, entitled "Nature, Culture, and Tourism," is an extremely useful historiographical essay. Jasen outlines the argument of her book and recounts many of the

key debates in the literature surrounding the history of tourism. She does this clearly and concisely–so clearly in fact that even Hayden White is accessible here! This part of the book offers a useful overview of the recent flurry of literature on the study of tourism and contains some insightful critiques. I would highly recommend this part of the book for anyone interested in the history of tourism.

However, the primary reason for bringing these earlier studies together was surely to establish a pattern or broad historical picture, and here Jasen is less successful. Her overarching contention seems to be that tourists flocked to Ontario in the nineteenth century motivated by romantic perceptions of the wilderness. But Ontario in this book is an unchanging setting. Perceptions of its wilderness–and of Ontario as a place–do not seem to change over time. Here is how Jasen sets out the context of her study on the very first page of the book:

"*Wild Things* is set in the nineteenth century and the years before the First World War, an age of imperialist expansion and an overwhelming preoccupation–in 'Western' middle- and upper-class patterns of thought–with matters of racial health and the rise and fall of civilizations" (pp. 3-4).

Most Canadian literature on the topic would suggest that this description is more apt for the period between 1880 and 1920 than for the entire nineteenth century itself. The turn of the century, many have argued, was a period in which Canada was "transformed."[2] It was also an era, according to several studies, that prompted concerns about racial health and threats to middle-class authority.[3] American scholars such as T. J. Jackson Lears and George Cotkin have done much to explore this era through the subject of antimodernism. This approach is drawn upon in the Canadian context by Ian McKay in his studies of tourism in Nova Scotia.[4]

To argue that romanticism has been the constant source of tourist interest in the Ontario wilderness verges on the ahistorical. The "antimodern" era makes up a large part of Jasen's own period of study. Previous studies suggest that at least some parts of the leisured classes concerned with racial decline and burgeoning cities sought fulfillment not in the "primitive past" (p. 3), as Jasen argues, but in the chivalric ideals of medieval knights. One might even see antimodernism as a heightened version of the romanticism that Jasen sees as the dominant theme in all tourism. Whatever the case, Jasen needs to at least engage with the literature on antimodernism, since it is so central to the time period she is discussing.

Whereas the literature on antimodernism sees the late nineteenth century as a time of uncertainty and secularization, Jasen emulates the approach of Ian Ousby and other historians of tourism who trace back the beginnings of tourism to a secularizing of Western society several centuries earlier. Jasen draws on the work of Colin Campbell on consumerism and suggests that tourism has "been aptly compared to a secular pilgrimage" (p. 12). Here again, closer attention to change over time is needed. Was Western society really secularized in the eighteenth century? A more nuanced understanding of tourism's relationship to romantic thought and religion might posit that at certain times over the past several hundred years, the centrality of religion to Western society and to Ontario in particular has ebbed and flowed. Seeing this would open up the opportunity to see tourists' motivations as more connected to the time and place in which they toured.

Finally, as informative as the historiographical aspects of the introduction are, some of the debates highlighted there are not fully incorporated into the case studies she researches. This is particularly true of the discussion surrounding gender and tourism. One recent debate in the literature on the history of tourism concerns whether male and female tourists observe things differently. Some contend that in touring European colonies, women were able to empathize with the Native populations, while men were less sympathetic.[5] Jasen alludes to this debate in her introduction, yet she does not incorporate its suggestions and its lessons into her own study. Having uncovered so many diaries and journals written by men and women, she might have paid more attention to the construction of masculinity and femininity. As well, for a study apparently focussed on "class, gender and race," surprisingly little is said about the way in which places (and regions) are sometimes classed, gendered and raced.[6]

Despite these problems, and whatever my reservations about her thesis, Jasen is fulfilling an admirable aim: she is helping to tell the story of Ontario outside Toronto. While not explicitly seeing Ontario as a region, her work, along with other recent works such as Karen Dubinsky's *Improper Advances*, and Ian Radforth's *Bushworkers and Bosses*, holds out the hope that Canadian historians (and jaded Western Canadians like myself) will stray further from the monolithic Toronto-Ottawa centred view of Ontario, to see this province in its regional and cultural complexity. In doing so we would be making a great contribution to the study of regions in Canada. After all, one of the biggest barriers to regional history in Canada has been the refusal on the part of Ontario-centric historians to see that province either as a region

like the other provinces or even as a province made up of regions. Studies such as this one offer a degree of optimism for those convinced of the importance of regional history in Canada.

Notes

[1]. Charles H. Tinker, in James Alexander Hedley, *Notes of a Hunting Trip with the Dwight-Wiman Club in the Muskoka District, Canada, October 1884.* Cited in Jasen, p. 116.

[2]. See, for example, R. Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974).

[3]. See, for example: Keith Walden, *Visions of Order: The Canadian Mounties in Symbol and Myth* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1982); Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); and Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and the Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

[4]. See especially, Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

[5]. See, for instance: Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984); Shirley Foster, *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth Century Women Travellers and their Writings* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990). For a more nuanced approach, see Sara Mills, *Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

[6]. Karen Dubinsky's study of heterosexual conflict in rural Ontario demonstrates how rural southern Ontario saw the north as sexually immoral.

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