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I Am Hutterite: The Fascinating True Story of a Young Woman's Journey to Reclaim her Heritage

Mary-Ann Kirkby. Thomas Nelson, \$19.99 (176p) ISBN 978-0-8499-4810-7

This sweeping prairie memoir, self-published in Canada in 2007, rapidly garnered both commercial and literary applause. Recounting the author's journey from a Hutterite girlhood to an adolescence of desperate striving to catch up with fashions of the time, the book manages to pack information about Hutterite life into a coming-of-age narrative without slowing it down. Kirkby's family moved away from their Manitoba colony when she was 10 years old, after what she calls a "near idyllic childhood" in the cradle of a communal society. Once a reader commits the many characters and their relationships to each other to memory, the book becomes as riveting and well-paced as a novel. Kirkby captures the complex cadences of Hutterite life—the bawdy humor and knack for storytelling that stands beside austere ritual, the poverty of personal possession and freedom that exists beside the security of community life—with pitch-perfect writing. She also manages to avoid either vilifying or romanticizing a culture that has been subjected to both. Readers will find themselves hoping that Kirkby follows the popular trend in memoir writing: producing a sequel. (*May*)