"Between a Life Lived and a Life Imagined—Elsewhere":[1] The Figure of Home in Contemporary Polish-Canadian Literature[2]

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Recent years have seen much success among writers of Polish origin living and working in Canada, with many first- and second-generation authors publishing novels, memoirs, and short fiction. Before 2010, there were only isolated examples of critical acclaim for Polish-Canadian writers, such as Eva Stachniak's debut novel *Necessary Lies* (2000), which won the 2000 *Amazon.com/Books in Canada* First Novel Award, but the 2010s have witnessed an outpouring of Polish-Canadian migrant literary production. During this period, some of the writers in question, such as Andrew J. Borkowski (*Copernicus Avenue*, 2011, which won the Toronto Book Award in 2012) and Kasia Jaronczyk (*Lemons*, 2017), published their debut short story collections, and others, such as Aga Maksimowska, have released debut novels (*Giant*, 2012). Others, such as Eva Stachniak and Ania Szado, have continued in their established literary careers with new historical and biographical novels, including Stachniak's *The Winter Palace* (2012), *Empress of the Night* (2014), and *The Chosen Maiden* (2017), and Szado's *Studio Saint Ex* (2013). Jowita Bydlowska, in turn, made her debut with a daring memoir, *Drunk Mom*, in 2013, quickly followed by a novel, *Guy*, in 2016. These writers have managed to gain a certain status and now seem to embody the field of Polish-Canadian diasporic writing.[3] They do not form any unified or formal artistic group, but they have become the major voices of Polish immigrant literature written in English and published in Canada. This newly emerging phenomenon was acknowledged during a 2015 panel discussion organized by the Canadian Polish

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Research Institute and chaired by Professor Tamara Trojanowska, "Writing Change and Continuity: Culture, Languages, Generations." The debate featured some of the aforementioned writers of Polish descent: Eva Stachniak, Andrew Borkowski, Ania Szado, Jowita Bydlowska, and Aga Maksimowska.

Furthermore, 2017 witnessed one more, unprecedented event for Polish-Canadian diasporic literature: the publication of the first anthology of short stories written by first and second (or even third) generations of immigrants from Poland to Canada, as well as a few texts written by Canadians who claim to have been inspired by Poland, its culture, and its literature. The anthology *Polish(ed): Poland Rooted in Canadian Fiction*, edited by Kasia Jaronczyk and Małgorzata Nowaczyk, has contributed to the visibility of Polish migration in Canada and showed the writers' creativity and desire to share their unique voices with the Canadian audience. In her foreword to the anthology, Magda Stroińska discusses how identity and the concept of home are redefined in the challenging process of migration. In this context, the first and, so far, only anthology of texts written by Polish-Canadians delves into the question of transnational identities seen as "palimpsest" ("Foreword" xvii). Migrants and exiles forming their concept of home and expressing their ideas in writing have tackled many different aspects of this phenomenon, such as (un)belonging, language, history, and ethnicity, among others. The aim of this article is to delineate select themes and tendencies in recent Polish-Canadian writing on the basis of the short stories included in *Polish(ed): Poland Rooted in Canadian Fiction*, to examine the multifaceted figure of home as well as the transnational challenges of writing diasporic literature.

Towards a Diasporic Minor Literature

The Polish-Canadian writers represented in the anthology are diverse. Some of them belong to subsequent generations of immigrants and have limited access to the Polish language and Poland itself; others emigrated from Poland in their teens, still use the language, and remember the country. Yet another group consists of writers who identify with the Jewish diaspora, and their links with Poland are the result of their ancestors' past lives in the territories that belonged to Poland at some point in history. All of them, however, have chosen to write in English, although their texts are abundant in references to their country of origin. It can be argued that such diasporic literature corresponds to the concept of minor literature. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari suggest three main elements in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*: they claim that "[a] minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that, which minority constructs within a major language" (16). Furthermore, "everything in [minor literature] is political" (17) and "its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics" (17). Third, it "takes on a collective value" and "finds itself positively charged with the role and function of the collective, and

even revolutionary, enunciation" (17), and, as a result, "produces an active solidarity" (17). In this light, the choice of Canadian writers of Polish origin to speak in the language of the majority seems to be a conscious, albeit paradoxical, political act of performing solidarity with the deterritorialized nation and, by voicing their individual stories, they comment on the situation of the diaspora, as well as the whole nation. At the same time, they remain rooted in their new host homeland while using their knowledge of the history and culture of their country of origin. Vertovec (54) claims that transnationalism is connected to the development of global media and mass communication, although in a country such as contemporary Canada, migrants, and migrant writers in particular, are no longer pressed to choose linguistic allegiances. Moreover, through their texts, the contexts they use, and the problems they discuss, Polish-Canadian writing is introduced into the literature of the major language (in the case of Canada, English or French) even as it comments on Poland, its culture and history. To reiterate Stuart Hall's contention, "[w]e all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context,' *positioned*" (234; emphasis in original).

Situating diasporic literature within the context of migrant literature informs its understanding even further. The category of migrant, rather than immigrant, literature is informed by the writers' focus on themes that are not necessarily closely connected to the very experience of immigration into a new country. The condition of a migrant is a broader one and first-, second-, or third-generation writers of Polish extraction living in Canada explore the status of migrancy as a space of questioning one's identity, constructing one's self on a deeper level than struggling with the everyday process of adapting to living conditions in a new country. The identity of a migrant writer is, therefore, no longer concerned "with being but with becoming" (Mardorossian 16). There is a significant departure from the literature examining the process of immigration and adjustment to the target culture towards migrant writing, which discusses more universal problems, and, above all, reshapes the culture and language of the majority while also challenging the concept of national literatures, a process clearly visible in Canada. These are exactly the strategies employed by migrant writers, who move away from the communal experience in favour of individual perspectives. This, in turn, opens up migrant literature to Bakhtinian exotopy, linguistic polyphony, and multilingualism.

This reinventing of one's identity and the question of transnational identity to which Stroińska alludes in the context of palimpsest ("Foreword" xvii) evokes both the traditional and contemporary understanding of the concept. The idea of a palimpsest as parchment with multilayered inscriptions serves the notion of identity as multifaceted and undergoing dynamic and constant reconfigurations. A similar interpretation can already be found in Thomas de Quincey's 1845 essay "The Palimpsest." De Quincey argues that the palimpsest is an involuted phenomenon in which texts that are not directly connected with each other refer to and infiltrate one another. His belief in the accumulation of ideas, emotions, images,

thoughts, and other phenomena in the human brain connects to a larger notion of simultaneous coexistence of otherwise disconnected texts, understood not only as written documents, but also as various realizations of culture and human experience. Consequently, Sarah Dillon sees palimpsest as an ability of relation and mutual interactions among texts and stresses the importance of the ways we read and analyze them (3). Thus, the palimpsestic nature of the conceptualizations of home and identity does not directly stem from the experience of emigration from one country to another, but rather originates within the multifarious ways of experiencing the migrant status and transnational identity.

Similarly, in their book *Writing Across Worlds,* Russell King, John Connell, and Paul White see migration, together with colonialism, as the key factors that have shaped Anglophone and Francophone literatures (xii). As a result, "literature no longer simply sheds light on migration processes, but migrants, or writers born out of the migrant experience, play an increasingly prominent role in shaping the development of erstwhile 'pure' national (and international) literatures" (King et al. xii). Migrant literature assumes a unique position of being in-between as it explores the idea of identity and rereads the country of the writer's origin through the lens of the new homeland. Paul White claims that "we all continually refine our self-identities throughout our life-course [...] [and] migration intervenes in that process of renegotiation as a lasting force, rather than a single event" (15). That is why Mardorossian postulates a shift from exile literature, understood as focusing on the event of immigration into a new place, to migrant literature, seen as a process of self-identification. Thus, for migrant authors, "writing becomes a place to live" (King et al. xv), and their writing explores movement, meandering, and crossing borders. Pierre Nepveu, one of the first literary critics to use the term *migrant literature*, sees its advantage over the concept of immigrant writing as well. In addition to his understanding of this type of writing as being on the constant move, he emphasizes its departure from highlighting the immigrant experience toward an aesthetic practice that is fundamental for contemporary literature (Nepveu 233-234, qtd. in Sadkowski 69-78). Hence, "the migrant voice tells us what it is like to feel a stranger and yet at home, to live simultaneously inside and outside one's immediate situation, to be permanently on the run, to think of returning but to realize at the same time the impossibility of doing so, since the past in not only another country but also another time, out of the present" (King et al. xv).

In the seminal essay "Ethnic Anthologies: From Designated Margins to Postmodern Multiculturalism," published in *Scandalous Bodies*, Smaro Kamboureli claims that "Ethnicity is not simply a matter of origins. It is indeed a matter of cultural and social contingencies" (163). She analyzes different mechanisms governing the production of such collections and their readership and stresses the importance of mutual influences as well as hybridization of genres and themes created by diasporic writers. Since Avtar Brah stipulates that "the concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the

same as desire for a 'homeland'" (180), recent diasporic writers explore their position stemming from the experience of transnationalism and redefinition of the concept of home. According to Pnina Werbner, "[d]iasporas […] are both ethnic-parochial *and* cosmopolitan. The challenge remains, however, to disclose how the tension between these two loyalties, like struggles for citizenship, are never finally settled" (75; emphasis in original). Therefore, she calls for a notion of "complex diasporas," which would serve the twenty-first-century realization of the notion in question. Due to various intersections between globalism and locality, mass migrations, and transnationalism, Werbner sees this necessarily refigured concept to respond "to the emergence of regional mass popular cultural production centres" (75). As a result, diasporic authors of texts discussed in this article offer a conceptualization of home that is different than a mere exploration of the motif of emigration. Not rejecting the "transnational ties, myths of migration and dreams of return" completely, they raise "[t]he question about the relationship between 'homeland ties' and successful home-making in the 'new home'" (Stock 25).

The stories gathered in the volume *Polish(ed): Poland Rooted in Canadian Fiction* respond in one way or another to the concept of migrant and minor literature through interrogating the figure of home metaphorically. Of the twenty-three stories in the collection, seventeen are written by Canadians of Polish and Polish-Jewish extraction who write almost exclusively in English. Six other stories are written by authors who have learned about Poland either via marrying a Pole, meeting Polish friends in Canada, or travelling to Poland.[4] The collection touches upon the issues typical of minor literatures, from discussions of what is the best language of self-expression, through social and political analyses of what it means to be a Polish-Canadian, to existential problems of a more general kind. Since it is impossible to discuss all the stories featured in the collection in detail, my analysis focuses on a selection of texts featuring different approaches to the concepts of diaspora, identity formation, and the figure of home in a transnational context.

Language as an Aspect of Diasporic Identity

The subject of transnational and linguistic identity is of great importance in migrant and minor literatures. Its exploration in the anthology has resulted in a variety of stories that are also generically the most experimental ones. Ania Szado's short story "Bottleneck" depicts a couple approaching the moment of getting married. Since Nada Narowski is of Polish origin, she ponders the impending change of her surname, having already been through a name change. When she was a little girl, her name was altered from Nadzia to Nada to avoid the obvious Slavic connotations, one of the first political compromises in her new country. During the preparation stage, when different marital decisions were to be made, she also thought about her surname and considered a shortened version of Narowski, "Nar." Finally, after signing

the papers, she officially became Susan Amanda Miller, in order to start a completely new period in her life: “the new life. The life of ‘I do’” (Szado 32). While considering these alterations, Nada was also thinking about the clear allusions to nothing[5] and nothingness to which her first name referred. She felt as though her Polish name reflected her status in Canada as nobody, and thus relegated her to a second-category citizen. By changing her name to a typically Anglophone one, she would merge with the mainstream Canadians, assimilate, and become invisible. This act, together with not inviting her Polish relatives to the wedding, shows how significant such a move can become even in a multicultural country such as Canada. When she reminisced about her school years, Nada mentioned classrooms full of “Italian, Polish, and Irish” students (Szado 26); yet, the common dream was to fuse into a Canadian. Her constant feeling of being displaced is a factor that pushes her to embrace the process of becoming rather than being constricted and limited by the old place and old times (King et al. xv). Following Stroińska’s conviction that

> [i]dentity, like the parchment of a medieval palimpsest, endures infinitely many auto-corrections. Nothing is ever entirely lost there. Old memories are buried under new experiences but they have already left their traces […] The palimpsest nature of our identity allows us to make endless interventions (“The Role of Language” 108),

Nada’s self-fashioning is a process of growing up in a migrant environment rather than a fully formed identity. Both the reference to the old rewritten parchment and Nada’s need to mark her deterritorialized identity by reinscribing it reflects the concept in De Quincey’s and Dillon’s depictions of the palimpsest. This palimpsestic practice of “unearthing, […] bringing to life the hidden continuities” is enriched by “the production of identity” (Hall 235).

Dawid Kołoszyc’s story “Scenes from an Imaginary Life” examines the limits of a language acquired during the process of migration. The text, however, does not present any typical storyline with a particular protagonist; it is, rather, a philosophical essay of what it means for a migrant to live in exile after December 1981 and the introduction of Martial Law in Poland. In the sections of the short story devoted to the identity and linguistic aspects of living far from one’s homeland, Kołoszyc engages in a discussion on the influences of migration and linguistic choices on one’s mind and psyche. He discusses living abroad among the ghosts of the past, languages, sounds, landscapes, and places, but mostly concentrates on the linguistic aspect of migration. Living in a new language is compared to living in various incarnations, in secrets and in mirage due to the impossibility of a perfect self-expression (Kołoszyc 67). As an author writing in English, he also reflects in a metatextual manner on his “dubious task of filling pages with words that know nothing about [him]” (Kołoszyc 68). Kołoszyc illustrates his text with two parable-like sketches: one describes the frozen landscapes of the People’s Republic of Poland and Christmas time with carp on the table amidst the warlike atmosphere of Martial Law. The other considers a situation during an elegant dinner when he receives a living fish while other participants get

their dishes perfectly grilled. The terror and absurdity of the moment is multiplied by his inability to speak in order to protest, only moving his lips without uttering any words. Arguing that the muteness and inability to speak, as well as the images of fish, can be interpreted through Biblical references to Jesus eating fish in silence after His resurrection, Kołoszyc asks questions about "the limits of [his] words" (70), which create a certain barrier between the world of the past and the world of the present. Furthermore, even knowing the words in a new language may not allow one to master a perfect self-expression and self-identification. His usage of Kafka's words from *The Zürau Aphorisms*, "From a certain point on, there is no more turning back. That is the point that must be reached" (qtd. in Kołoszyc 67), as an epigraph to his story also suggests his awareness of the rhizomic nature of an identity of a person in exile. Speaking from the peripheries of minor literature in a language of majority, Kołoszyc compares himself to "[a] moth which, sooner or later, comes to rest on a windowpane, looking at a world it can't enter" (71). His short story tries to answer the questions posed by Deleuze and Guattari:

> How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and know poorly the major language that they are forced to serve? This is the problem of immigrants, and especially of their children, the problems of minorities, the problem of minor literature, but also the problem for all of us […] How to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's language? (19)

Such a confrontation with the intangibility of language reveals Kołoszyc's interests in more complex functions of language than mere communication. Although this short story does not depict any particular migrant experience, it addresses a diasporic experience shared by many migrants and their descendants. Through the memories of past events, sites, and situations, he reflects on the inability to live in a new language if an extensive part of one's life happened in a different language, and this past is as formative as childhood, youth, and early adulthood.

Kasia Jaronczyk's story "Lessons in Translation" discusses the notion of language use from the perspective of a translator whose craft makes the protagonist more aware of words, the nuances of their meanings, and their etymology. Reflecting on her roots, the main character thinks about her forced exile from wartorn Poland and her wandering through Siberia and Tanganyika. As a result, the protagonist travelled not only across continents but also across languages: Polish is her mother tongue, while she learned English, German, French, and Italian at home from governesses. During the family's stay in Africa, she also acquired Swahili. These experiences led the main character to develop her own, nonexistent language while bringing up her little son. In order to protect her intimate relationship with the boy, she "built [their own language], a home made of sounds" (Jaronczyk 109). Inspired by Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* and Eva Stachniak's *Necessary Lies* (Jaronczyk and Nowaczyk ix), Jaronczyk ponders the nature of language(s) we acquire and in which we express our deepest thoughts and emotions when we are transferred and translated into another culture and country. In this way, the story interrogates the concept of home as fluid

and connected to the experience of locality and milieu. This perception resonates with Werbner's claim about diasporic ethnicity as a tension between the parochial and the cosmopolitan (75). For the protagonist, it is the place where the translator settles down, and the people with whom she lives, that create her understanding of home. Consequently, the concept of home can change and evolve; it is both individual and collective, always facilitated by the new conditions. The newly created language as a hybrid form of expression seems to be the epitome of such an idea. Jaronczyk's vision resonates with Avtar Brah's perceptions:

> Where is home? On the one hand, "home" is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin." On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality […] The question of home, therefore, is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is certainly about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of "belonging." (192)

Jaronczyk also explores migrants' serious decisions concerning their future life and choice of homeland. The unnamed protagonist realizes her son is like a palimpsestic "portmanteau child" (Jaronczyk 108) and accepts her parents' compromise and their decision to go back to the Communist Poland, while she resolves to "go to Canada, an amalgam country, like a compound word" (Jaronczyk 109). The story emphasizes the importance of language and perception of the figure of home as both a physical place and a philosophical and metaphorical concept, while also exploring the palimpsestic notion of identity.

Excavating the Hidden Layers of the Parchment

Emigrants from Poland include many Poles of Jewish origin, whose ancestors come from Jewish communities in pre-WWII Poland. Norman Ravvin's "The Dulcimer Girl" tells a story of a young musician employed to play the dulcimer at a filming location. The place turns out to be a former Jewish cemetery and it seems to appeal to the Canadian musician in a strange way. This impressionistic story does not offer a clear resolution: the musician, Nadia Baltzan, and her guide, Lusia Wielopolska, reach the outskirts of Radzanów, record the Jewish tunes, and leave. During the car ride to the filming location, the narrator states that "Nadia cannot read the landscape" (Ravvin 165), which turns out to be a revealing statement. A musician skilled in dulcimer folk music, probably a descendant of Polish Jews herself, Nadia is foreign to the region.[6] Not only is she unable to embrace places such as Warsaw and Radzanów, she is also alien to the landscapes that display almost no remnants of pre-WWII culture. There is, however, an important moment during the film shooting when a woman, perhaps playing a part of a Jewish healer, collects herbs on the meadow that used to be a graveyard. Nadia does not feel comfortable with her music

accompanying this particular scene. She is not familiar with the history of this place, but the fact that the landscape is "contaminated," to use Martin Pollack's term, carries another implication. Ravvin's short story, in a delicate and nuanced way, echoes Pollack's perception of the Polish landscape, which is rarely uncultivated.[7] Though frequently seen as soothing and idyllic, landscapes in Central and Eastern Europe very often hide cemeteries, bloody battlefields, and execution sites, which cannot be visible today. The story stimulates thoughts about the sites of memory in Pierre Nora's understanding of the term, the question of home and the need to remember the past inhabitants of the land. Ravvin seems to ask, after Nora and Pollack, how the Poles, who are aware of their history, perceive the land, villages, and pastures near which and in which they live. By bringing a Canadian musician to Radzanów, he also questions how newcomers comprehend the tangled history of Eastern Europe.

As a result, landscape becomes an intertext, a palimpsest, an involuted phenomenon, which needs to be spiritually excavated. Suppressed and made invisible, the past is presented in Ravvin's story as one of the early inscriptions on the parchment; once retrieved, the memories or postmemories influence and infiltrate the newer layers of the palimpsest. Nadia, whose name suggests Eastern European roots, although alien to both Jewish and Polish-Jewish culture, has to confront her own understanding of identity and her (probably diasporic) past.

Zoe C. Greenberg's story "The God of Baby Birds" transfers the reader into the 1960s in the small town of Brilsk in Poland, and examines the friendship between a Jewish girl, Leja, and a Polish girl, Weronika. The girls develop a close relationship as Leja's parents leave for Montreal and she is left behind to live with Weronika and her parents. They create a deep bond, playing the roles of husband and wife, and building their "secret forest home" (Greenberg 202) where everybody would be happy and loving. While growing up, the girls' friendship turns towards a relationship tinged with eroticism, although Weronika says: "sometimes we would kiss and caress […] It was not for sex, but the opposite: to stay hidden in the world of children" (Greenberg 204). Finally, Leja has to reconnect with her parents in Israel, where they have moved in the meantime, and the girls are desperate in the face of parting. At the end, Weronika screams into her father's face that Leja should stay in Poland as "we are her kind" (Greenberg 206) and not the Jews in Israel. The story includes a covert allusion to the 1968 exile of Jews from Poland. The description of the deep bond between the two girls and their profound conviction of being bound by the symbolic figure of home in the forest, a secret, yet absolutely safe place against the country's anti-Semitic atmosphere, privileges the natural instincts of childhood and feelings of equality. Greenberg's text, although simple in its plot construction, offers a profound commentary on the concept of borders in Central and Eastern Europe. Reflecting on European borders, Emil Brix sees them as purely political constructs, which, as such, are rarely shaped by cultural and geographical factors (147-48). In this context, "The God of Baby Birds" becomes not only a story of growing up, but predominantly a commentary on divisions and borders that are different from cul-

tural and geographical bonds. Leja and Weronika used to live together, shared a space, town, home, language, and culture; while borders cannot be abandoned, they may constitute either bridges or barriers (Brix 157). Greenberg's short story rewrites the 1960s as a dark period in Polish history.

Greenberg's perception of history has affinities with De Quincey's ideas of palimpsest as well as more recent discussions of this phenomenon. "Although the process that creates palimpsests is one of layering, the *result* of that process, combined with the subsequent reappearance of the underlying script, is a surface structure," claims Dillon (4; emphasis in original). Furthermore, the ghosts of the past, stories, and memories can also serve as the elements of the palimpsest in which "otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other" (Dillon 4). This, together, with the rejection of the borders and mental divisions represented by the two friends, proposes to view the "social worlds and lives as inherently transnational" (Levitt 40).

From Migrant Texts to Minor Literature

Apart from the aforementioned works, the anthology also offers a selection of stories more directly engaged with migrant experience and its aftermath. Emigration from one's homeland is a difficult experience for those who change their country of residence as well as for the next generations who, in one way or another, have to face delayed repercussions. In this context, Andrew J. Borkowski's story "Ghost" appears to be a good example of the inherited legacy of migration handed down onto the second generation. Borkowski's text presents a family living in Toronto who, after the death of their father (struck by a car on Copernicus Avenue[8]), a first-generation Polish immigrant, have to deal with the persistent smell of him lingering at their summer cottage for two years. They suspect it is the father's spectre who wants to say goodbye to his children and grandchildren. The family tries coping with the smell in different ways, but to no avail. The persistent odour cannot be eradicated and becomes the son's obsession. Finally, the son decides to sell the house and, in order to permanently exorcise the spectral presence of his father, he digs up the ground where his father's ashes were put in order to bury him at the neighbouring lake. Another portion of the ashes is transported to Polesie, a region on the borderland between Poland and Belarus, and scattered there. Here, Borkowski shows how deterritorialization influenced the late father's life. He managed to successfully function in Canada, building the house and creating a family. He was, however, unable to fully accept his place of residence and treat it as his home. For him, home remained forever closely linked to his homeland, where he desired to be buried. One can only speculate about the reasons for this situation. It is possible that the father's inability to feel at home in Canada could have resulted from the political situation in Eastern Europe. During his life, the father could not travel to Belarus, which was at that time a part of

the Soviet Union, and the Communist regime did not allow for such nostalgic tourism. As "members of diasporas have been deterritorialized" either by force or due to political situations, they did "experience this not so much as liberation" (Bernal 167) but rather as imprisonment. Moreover, just as Brah distinguishes between "a homing desire" and a "desire for a 'homeland'" (180), in Borkowski's story, the father's spectre is apparently possessed by the latter and rejects Canada as a potential "homeland" for him and even his ashes after death. As a result, it is only after the father's death that his spectre started to crave freedom. The figure of the ghost together with the negotiation of the land and the place of burial create a unique discussion about the concept of home, which the spectre visits, haunts, and recreates. Borkowski leaves his readers with a question asked by the Canadian-born son, "where will I leave my scent?" (21), which is suggestive of the second generation's doubts about their home.

Douglas Schmidt's story "Pushpins," in turn, discusses a classroom of migrant children who come from various corners of the world. Patryk from Poland is especially interested in the big chart on the wall, where the teacher puts "pushpins on the world map where each student in the class was born" (Schmidt 74). Patryk is a boy with a majority of pushpins located in Poland, except for his little sister, who was born in Canada. The text is also a reflection on liberty and imprisonment, and clearly suggests that the Poland of 1987 is still behind the Iron Curtain whereas Canada is perceived as a land of freedom. In a symbolic way, Patryk puts one of the pins into his pocket and treasures it as a promise of his personal freedom and ability to go anywhere. The story raises the question of the price migrants pay for being far from their homeland. The children at school are sometimes impolite towards those who do not speak perfect English and have different customs. For adults who have lived throughout their lives in a Communist, homogeneous country, as Poland was, "Canada has too many different kinds of people with too many languages and cultures. […] that's why people don't understand each other here. In Poland, everyone speaks one language and understands each other" (Schmidt 79). The story emphasizes the discrepancy between the figure of home, seen as a well-known and familiar prison, and a free but heterogeneous and demanding promised land. On a personal level, Patryk is torn, too, as during a school trip to the CN Tower he experiences mixed emotions. On the one hand, he wishes to share the moment with his family, but on the other hand, he is happy alone, looking at the lake, the city, and his new homeland. Patryk's migrant identity is in the process of becoming. His hyphenated self is still subject to change and the

> hyphen itself […] constitutes the limitless third space before any signification gains new grounding. This is a third space of suspension in the non-categorisable intermezzo between deterritorialization and reterritorialization, never touching ground with either side of the hyphen or establishing any new category. (Moslund 67)

Although his is a story of growing up, as are some other stories in *Polish(ed)*, Patryk's dilemmas render visible the migrant experience of double-identity and the conflict-

ing pressures of sustaining one's culture and immersing oneself in one's new home.

Although the two short stories touch upon the themes of immigration to Canada, they do not offer direct discussions of the processes of migration, living conditions, or everyday life struggles. Instead, they offer reflections on various consequences of migration and discuss multifaceted aspects of deterritorialization and its influence on diasporic identity. The questions of home remain important for diasporic protagonists, despite the successful immersion of subsequent generations in the Canadian lifestyle. Borkowski and Schmidt situate their characters in hyphenated realities and transcultural contexts, not avoiding political and national contexts; writing their stories in a major language, they open their oeuvre to being read within the category of minor literature and to reaching diverse audiences.

In conclusion, the figure of home is a viably dynamic concept that can be analyzed in the contexts of palimpsest, transnational, and diasporic discourses. Home, which is typically associated with stability and familiarity, can also be perceived as a complex and variable "cultural, socio-economic and ideological paradigm" (Sandten and Tan 2) as well as an "emotional space" (Rubenstein 1). Hence, the texts written by first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants to Canada offer important insights into the concept of transnational identity and show the migrants are "always on the[ir] way home" (Stroińska, "Foreword" xvi) as they "traverse […] the gap between longing and belonging" (Rubenstein 6). These writings demonstrate that "we cannot keep our *self* intact, whether we stay at home or wander far from it" and suggest that the migrant identity is akin to a palimpsest that undergoes constant revisions and interventions (Stroińska, "Foreword" xvi, xvii; emphasis in original). According to Jopi Nyman, the whole body of "new migrant literatures written in the language of the 'host'" offers significant "examples of cultural transformations peculiar to contemporary globalization" (15). Polish-Canadian literature, being a niche itself, comments from its marginal positions on the long tradition of Polish migrant literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while at the same time exploring possibilities of its own independent existence within the vast body of Anglophone literatures. With its exploration of language identities, *les lieux de mémoire*, Jewish-Polish legacy, and migrant experiences, *Polish(ed): Poland Rooted in Canadian Fiction* is a pioneering collection that contributes to and enriches the paradigm of minor and migrant literatures.

Notes

1. This quotation is from a short story by Dawid Kołoszyc (67).

2. This work was supported by the Polish National Science Centre (Narodowe Centrum Nauki) under Grant UMO–2017/27/B/HS2/00111.

3. For a comprehensive overview of recent Polish-Canadian literature, see my "[They] Would Say She Was Betraying Poland Already" and "Quo Vadis Polish-Canadian Writing?"; and for more in-depth

studies of particular texts, see my "Multicultural Poland as Discovered from the Canadian Perspective of a Polish Émigré" and *Forgetful Recollections*.

4. This article focuses only on the short stories written by migrants from Poland and their descendants. The six stories that are inspired by an interest in Polish culture are excluded because their theme is outside the scope of this article.

5. The meaning of the word *nada* in Spanish triggers connotations of nothingness and a lack of value. Cf. also Emily Dickinson's poem "I Am Nobody," which clearly identifies social aspects of the identity formation process.

6. Norman Ravvin's short story included in the volume is part of a novel, *The Girl who Stole Everything*, published in September 2019.

7. Pollack claims that the problem of contaminated landscapes does not concern only Poland; such landscapes stretch from Lithuania and Ukraine to Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Danube (54-55).

8. In Borkowski's story, Copernicus Avenue refers to Roncesvalles Avenue in Toronto, which was one of the largest Polish neighbourhoods in Canada, now gradually losing its character because most Poles and their descendants have moved out of the avenue and the surrounding streets.

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