

Lisa Grekul and Lindy Ledohowski, editors. *Unbound: Ukrainian Canadians Writing Home*. Foreword by Weronika Suchacka, U of Toronto P, 2016. xiv, 154 pp. Notes. Appendix. References. \$45.00, cloth.

It is obvious that we need more research on, and more books about, Ukrainian Canadian writing and Ukrainian Canadian writers. Ukrainian Canadian writing becomes an indispensable and valuable component in Canadian studies; it is also enjoyed widely. The book under review, *Unbound: Ukrainian Canadians Writing Home*, is a high-calibre volume, and it will be of interest to researchers specializing in this field and adjacent ones.

The initial essay, "Foreword: 'Write Your Stories Down; Make Your Voices Heard'" (vii-xii), was written by Weronika Suchacka, a professor from Poland. Suchacka describes her personal experience and involvement with the topic of "the nature of Ukrainian-ness in Canada" (vii). She considers Ukrainian Canadian literature to be "highly contextual and deeply personal" (ix). For this reason, her meetings and communications with Ukrainian Canadian authors, such as Janice Kulyk Keefer, Lindy Ledohowski, Jars Balan, Marusya Bociurkiw, and Myrna Kostash, "an icon of Ukrainian Canadian literature" (viii-ix), were both inspiring and fascinating. The author is especially intrigued by Ukrainian Canadian women writers. And for her, dialogue and the need for dialogue are very important. The book tries to provide an answer as to "what it means to be Ukrainian and Canadian" (Lisa Grekul's words, xi)—the issue of identity is crucial here. The editors, Grekul and Ledohowski, in the short section "Acknowledgments" (xiii-xiv), express their gratitude to Lubomyr Luciuk and Robert Paul Magocsi and to other individuals and organizations.

The next essay, "Introduction: Ukrainian Canadian Poet Pedagogues" (3-22), was written by Ledohowski. In it, she briefly looks at four waves of immigration to Canada from Ukraine. "All of these varied immigrants and their descendants make up a loose ethnocultural group of Ukrainian Canadians," the author states (4). The Ukrainianness of this unbound group is the focus of the book. The views of the contributors are diverse and quite often even contradictory ("many things to many people" [5]). Vera Lysenko and Grekul are typical representatives of the viewpoint that considers "Ukrainian-ness" and "Canadian-ness" to be two parts of one whole (see the subsection "Position 1: 'Ethnic' Is Canadian" [6-7]). A different point of view, as described by Ledohowski in the subsection "Position 2: I'm Not 'Ethnic!'" (7-9), is represented by Maara Haas and George Ryga; the writer Ryga is one of the best Canadian playwrights of the twentieth century, and his new themes and ideas revolutionized Canadian theatre. "[B]oth were vocal about their distaste for the focus on Ukrainian-ness and ethnicity in relation to them as people, and as writers," Ledohowski states (8). Another

representative of this point of view is Helen Potrebenko. The viewpoint in the subsection “Position 3: Picking Up My ‘Ethnic’ Baggage” (9-11), according to the author, is shared by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, Keefer, and Bociurkiw. The viewpoint in the subsection “Position 4: What is Ukrainian-ness Anyway” (11-13) is exemplified by the literary activity of Kostash, who has raised many issues of ethnic identity in her works: “She is not alone in her multiplicity of identities, in being unbound by categorizations,” Ledohowski concludes (13). A number of questions are posed in the subsection “Position 5: Nationalists versus Communists” (13-20). The author briefly analyzes all seven chapters of the book and the concluding section as well.

Chapter 1 is called “Language Lessons” (23-40), and it was written by Keefer. From the beginning, the author is straightforward: “[L]anguage for me is the defining characteristic of my Ukrainian-ness, which I experience as something conflicted, problematic, endlessly engaging” (23). Although this volume is of high calibre and quality, some misprints/mistakes, unfortunately, occur. For instance, in the phrase “I found myself referred to as *Halychana*, or someone belonging to *Halychyna* . . .” (24), the word *Halychana* should be *halychanka*, written with a lower-case letter *h*, not with a capital *H*. Some other misprints/mistakes include the words and phrases “*ridniy*” (27—it should be “*ridnyi*”); “*povney sleez*” (28—it should be “*povnyi sliz*”); “*Marika*” (28—it should be “*Mariika*”); “*Slavyutych*” (31—it should be “*Slavutych*”); and “*chotyri . . . khloptsiv*” (33—it should be either “*chotry . . . khloptsy*” or “*chetvero . . . khloptsiv*”). Keefer’s colourful description of her attempts to master the Ukrainian language is worthy of recognition. In fact, the entire chapter is worth reading.

Elizabeth Bachinsky is the author of chapter 2, “Eight Things” (41-64). She enumerates the first Ukrainian Canadian authors to write in English (Anna Bychinsky, and then Lysenko in her famous *Men in Sheepskin Coats: A Study in Assimilation*, which was published in 1947). She also vividly and masterfully describes the internment of Ukrainians in Canada during World War I. She presents a written collage that manages to effectively convey the sense of grief and pain associated with that episode in Canadian history. Bachinsky also addresses the topic of the Holodomor—the penetrating wound on the soul of every Ukrainian.

Skrypuch wrote the essay “Am I Ukrainian?” (65-72), which is chapter 3 in this collection. For her, the search for Ukrainianness is neither easy nor straightforward: “It is not the sense of being Ukrainian that resonates most deeply for me; it’s the sense of not belonging” (65). The author’s words “It’s been a long journey for me to turn shame into pride . . .” (71) indicate that the process was worth the effort.

Bociurkiw is the author of chapter 4, which is called “Bringing Back Memory” (73-85). Her path to Ukrainianness also has not been an easy one—

“no family archive, oral or written. No real sense of where we’d come from” (77). Unfortunately, the same problem with Ukrainian expression occurs here as well: “*Che vin nash*” (80) should be “*Chy vin nash*”; “*Maidan Nezalazhnosty*” (83) should be “*Maidan Nezalezhnosty* [or ‘*Nezalezhnosti*’]”; “*Zaporozhya*” (83) should be “*Zaporizhzhia*”; “*vyshyvanky*” (83) should be “*vyshyvanky*”; “*Annia*” (84) should be “*Ania*”; and “*Ploscha Rynok*” (85) should be “*Ploshcha Rynok*.” In general, in my opinion, this seeming carelessness toward the Ukrainian language somehow undermines this entire noble and worthy project. The backdrop of Bociurkiw’s story is the Maidan and the idea of what it is like to be a lesbian in Canada and Ukraine.

Erín Moure wrote the essay “*Tuteshni*” (which is chapter 5 [86-99]). The author discusses her trip to Hlibovychi Velkye (probably Velyki Hlibovychi) in Ukraine, the land of her mother and her ancestors. Moure writes about the atrocities committed by the Germans toward the Jews during World War II in Volove and Bibrka (very close to Velyki Hlibovychi). She admits, “I come from people of the Ukrainian earth who trade with and recognize the legitimacy of all the peoples” (90). As we can see, her definition of being Ukrainian is broad and inclusive.

Daria Salamon is the author of chapter 6, “Putting the *Baba* Back in the Book” (100-08). In her view, defining what is meant by the term *Ukrainian Canadian* is not straightforward: “Ukrainian Canadian is an identity that conjures up pretty specific images and metaphors for many people” (103). The author feels a sense of connection with the pioneers: “In a strange way, my experience as a writer wasn’t so different from that of the first Ukrainians who came here chasing dreams of a better life” (104). Obviously, her word “*gidos*” (106) should be “*didos*.” According to Salamon, being Ukrainian in Canada brings something new and exciting: “I worried that there was a lot that isn’t ‘nice’ in my novel; it’s definitely not your immigrant-breaking-new-land book” (107). And there is no typical Ukrainian in Canada: “One woman confided in me that she was sick to death of the stories about Ukrainian farmers. No one in her family had ever farmed” (107).

Kostash wrote chapter 7, “The Gulag, the Crypt, and the Gallows: Sites of Ukrainian Canadian Desire” (109-20). She analyzes her three books *The Doomed Bridegroom: A Memoir* (1998), *Prodigal Daughter: A Journey to Byzantium* (2010), and *The Frog Lake Reader* (2009) and her 2011 playscript, *The Gallows Is Also a Tree*. And Kostash, who speaks Ukrainian, uses the word *chernozom* instead of the correct word *chornozem* (e.g., 115).

Grekul is the author of the final essay, “Conclusion: Ukrainian Identities On(the)Line: Writing Ethnicity in a Time of Crisis” (121-35). The book *Unbound* raises “questions about the reciprocal relationship between ethnicity and writing, how a writer’s ethnic identity simultaneously shapes and is shaped by her work” (126).

This collection includes the section “Appendix: Bibliography of English-Language Ukrainian Canadian Literature, 1954-2009: 55 Years of English-Language Ukrainian Canadian Writing” (137-40). A reference section (141-47) and the short biographies of the contributors (149-52) conclude the volume.

The book *Unbound* is both timely and necessary. It can spark debate on Ukrainian Canadian writing—not only in Canada but also in Ukraine.

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