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From Ethnic Towards Transnational: *The Green Library* by Janice Kulyk Keefer

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that *The Green Library* by Janice Kulyk Keefer can be read as a Canadian national narrative. In the novel, Keefer sets a task to explore how ethnic minorities in Canada (Ukrainian Canadians in this case) construct their identity and how their transnational experiences affect their identification process in the New World. By exploring the stories of three generations of Ukrainian immigrants in Canada, *The Green Library* shows the shift in the immigrants' perception of themselves; while the first-generation immigrants cling desperately to the Old Country, and their children try to reject their ethnic heritage altogether, the third-generation Canadians need to rediscover their origin. The urge to redefine their ethnicity often sends them on a "return journey" to the homeland abandoned by their ancestors. This "return journey" involves exploration and rereading of history; in *The Green Library*, history becomes one of the most important constructs of identity of the novel's characters. In addition to history, Keefer recognizes gender as one of the major markers of identity; the novel seeks to explore gender relations in Canada from ethnocultural rather than majority perspective. Thus, the ultimate purpose of the "return journey" that the third generation Canadians undertake is to rewrite Canadian national narrative from the minority perspective using what Homi Bhabha calls a transnational knowledge of the world. The shift from an ethnic to a transnational understanding of identification, as well as the recognition of the existence of multiple narratives in Canadian culture, will allow ethnic minorities to accept the plurality of Canadian identity.

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PREFACE

When I first read *The Green Library* by Janice Kulyk Keefer, I was struck by how my own view of my home country, Ukraine, was different from Keefer's presentation of it in the novel. The country to which Eva "returns" in her search for her Ukrainian roots seems to have very little in common with the country in which I live. On the other hand, Keefer's version of Ukraine depicted in *The Green Library* draws attention to aspects of Ukrainian life to which Ukrainians, who have to deal with them every day, become "blind"—we don't see face to face, do we? Once I realized that Keefer's Ukraine is a construction which serves certain purposes in the novel, I wished to find out what made her attempt to construct my homeland for herself (or for her Canadian readers) the way she does—no matter how accurate or inaccurate, from *my* point of view, this construction might be.

When I started researching for my future thesis—which, at that stage, was not even a baby unable to walk or talk but an embryo—I turned, first of all, to Canadian literary and history scholars of Ukrainian descent. The first thing I learnt from my brief preliminary research was that many Ukrainians in Canada felt a need to justify themselves as Ukrainians. At this point, I began to understand why Keefer's picture of Ukraine was so different from mine: having been born in that country, I'd had little need to defend it against imposed stereotypes and prejudice; more importantly, even when I'd had to, I'd felt honoured, not ashamed. Since the novel is mostly written from the point of view of Eva Chown, who I think can be equaled to a third-generation Ukrainian-Canadian, Keefer's construction of Ukraine

clearly shows that the third-generation Canadians see themselves as *coming from* the Old Country, but no longer *part of it*. Thus, Keefer's Ukraine in *The Green Library* serves its purpose: if descendants of immigrants in Canada wish to establish themselves as Canadians, they need not only to rid themselves of their possible feeling of inferiority in an Anglo-Canadian middle-class society, but also, in a way, to break free from the Old Country in order to be able to move on. By looking back at their history, their culture and trying to recognize the value of their transnational experience, they establish a place for themselves in the future.

As a person who did not grow up in Canada, I can only hope that my attempt to reconstruct the steps which immigrants and their descendants must take in order to establish their Canadianness will ring true to a Canadian reader; even if my constructions of Canada are flawed, I feel myself justified in what I am doing if only because it gives me a possibility of looking at myself from somebody else's point of view. No matter how much I disagreed with *The Green Library* when I first read it, having finished researching and writing my thesis (which I now see as an awkward adolescent), I want to thank Janice Kulyk Keefer for creating her novel. It made me, a Ukrainian born and raised and living in Ukraine, try to review what I knew about my country and my culture and what I accepted without questioning, as well as to reassess Ukrainian society from an outsider perspective, and now I hope my thesis will help Canadians to see Canada from outside, too.

INTRODUCTION

Janice Kulyk Keefer, a Canadian descended from Ukrainian immigrants, the author of poetry, short stories, non-fiction, and novels, among them *The Green Library* (which was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for Fiction) and, most recently, *Honey and Ashes* and *Anna's Goat*, has been engaged for several years, in her own words, "in writing ethnicity, literally" (" 'Coming Across Bones' " 84). In her fiction, she often uses her characters to raise the problem of ethnic minorities in Canada who attempt to fit into a multicultural society, but at the same time wish to preserve their distinct cultural traits. *The Green Library* can be read as a Canadian national narrative, a quest for identity interwoven with the stories of the families destroyed and people displaced by World War II, the stories of immigrants' children who are torn between the two cultures, and the love story between the main characters, Eva Chown and Alex Moroz. To adopt the words of Homi Bhabha, "the local story of love and its domestic memory can only be told between the lines of history's tragic repressions" (213). Eva's discovery of her partly Ukrainian heritage creates conflict between her former self, her new attitude towards ethnic stereotypes, and the place of history in the creation of identity. By examining the symbolic and literal journeys Eva takes to uncover her roots and establish her new self, this thesis will show the shift from an ethnic to transnational

understanding of identity and its importance for the immigrants' determination of both their place in the New World and their relationship with the Old Country[1].

In "'Coming Across Bones': Historiographic Ethnofiction," Janice Kulyk Keefer claims: "what had driven me to begin *The Green Library* [had been] the emergence of a need to explore and redefine my long-repressed ethnicity" (98). Like many other descendants of immigrants in Canada, she seems to live in an in-between space, belonging to the New World but constantly looking back to the Old Country. The instability of her identity, torn between the Old World past and the Canadian present, makes her vulnerable and willing to re-explore what exactly makes her Canadian and what being Canadian means. Trying to voice minority discourse in *multi*cultural but only *bi*lingual Canada, Keefer's novel explores the consequences of cultural (as well as territorial) displacement and, to use the words of Arnold Itwaru, the immigrants' descendants' "attempt to find a sense of belonging [...]" (45) to the place which their ancestors chose as a new home but were as reluctant to accept as their true home as it was reluctant to accept them. For

[1] The two opposing terms—the New World (an allusion to the new world of the Judeo-Christian Creation Myth based on the perception of the Americas as "virgin lands" yet to be explored and developed) and the Old Country (representing an ancient civilization)—should be read as social constructions with certain cultural connotations; in the case of the Ukrainian emigration to North America, as early as 1895, the brochure by Osyp Oleskiv titled *Pro Vilni Zemli* (*About Free Lands*) saw Canadian prairies as "free lands" (it is only Quebec and Ontario that are "more or less populated," he says [28]), thus supporting the idea of the "new" and "virgin" land without recognizing the presence of the aboriginal civilizations there.

them as ethnic minority members, it becomes necessary—or better inevitable—to come to terms with their heritage before they can claim their place in Canada and recognize themselves as Canadians in every sense of this word. Thus, Keefer sets Eva Chown, the protagonist of *The Green Library*, on a search for her origin, because, as Elisabeth Mårald notes, "one of the connotations of ethnicity is the celebration of one's origin" (25), the desire to return to the roots in order to understand and appreciate one's difference from the dominant culture(s). In an interview with Cherry Clayton, Keefer confesses: "I'd always had this thing about 'going back' to a place I'd never seen before" (188).

However, for both Keefer and the novel's heroine, who belong to a generation born in Canada, their origin appears to be only an abstract notion, the Old Country mythologized and frozen in time. Eva's vision of Ukraine does not go beyond souvenir stores and signs in Cyrillic on Bloor Street in Toronto—the place where people still speak this unfamiliar language and wear embroidered shirts as a sign of their difference, of their belonging to another world. The necessity to maintain their difference often comes from the fact that although Ukrainian immigrants are perceived by the Old Country as a diaspora (voluntary *immigration to* a new country), many of them nevertheless consider themselves in exile (involuntary *emigration from* the country of origin); hence they attempt to recreate the Old Country in the New World the way they remember it. As Gina Buijs explains: "Along with memories of the homeland left behind was often rekindled a desire to remake the abandoned way of life [...]. This remaking or refashioning did

not, and could not hope to replicate the past, but was an attempt to construct a meaningful identity in the context of life in alien and often [...] oppressive circumstances" (18). In this reconstruction of the Old Country, the ethnic minorities tend to mythologize it, and when new generations, looking for their roots, take a "return journey," this trip becomes in fact a journey towards both the Old Country and Canada. "Going back" to demythologize the place of the childhood tales is for them one of the ways to establish their belonging to Canada: as Keefer's interviewer, Cherry Clayton, suggests, "There's often a stronger loyalty after a return [...]" (188)—loyalty to the place of their birth, to Canada.

The "return journey" for descendants of immigrants in Canada often involves exploration and rereading of history. In his comparative study of Keefer's *The Green Library* and Askold Melnychuk's *What Is Told*, Maxim Tarnawsky suggests that one of the issues addressed in both novels is "the importance of history in the community's sense of identity" (104). In his article, Tarnawsky argues that "the fundamental truth of Ukrainian ethnicity is history" (105); "[h]istory is [...] at the heart of many of the interpersonal relationships in the novel" (106); and, most importantly, to "many Ukrainians, [...] history is one of the markers of identity" (107). Talking specifically about *The Green Library*, Tarnawsky claims that, compared to other texts raising similar issues, Keefer's novel stands out because "Canadian literature focused on problems of Ukrainian identity has traditionally concentrated on culture not politics, geography not history and Canada not Ukraine" (108). Nonetheless, Keefer's rendition of history is not

without its flaws. In Tarnawsky's opinion, "Keefer seems [too] preoccupied with questions of responsibility, with the issue of who is guilty of the Holocaust [...]"; she "is often explaining history, sometimes even preaching to her reader [...]" (108). However, as this thesis will show, Keefer is not so much "explaining" history as presenting the tragic stories of her characters as representatives of specific ethnic groups in an attempt to reread (and rewrite) the accepted history from the minority perspective.

The three waves of Ukrainian immigrants brought into Canada very few possessions but a lot of memories; those memories were strongly related to the history of the land they left behind. Other ethnic groups brought in their own histories of the same land, often read from a distinctly different perspective. On the Canadian "neutral ground," the ethnic groups are "reliving" the past which makes them oppose each other. This opposition seems to function on the subconscious level: in Keefer's novel, Eva Chown finds out that she is partly Ukrainian when she is an adult; she has never identified herself as anything but WASP; nonetheless, when her Jewish partner, Dan, learns about her origin, the history of the two nations' relations interferes with the characters' personal relationship and makes their living together impossible unless the historical problem itself is solved. The resolution of this problem requires the retelling of history.

In addition to history, Keefer identifies gender as one of the most important markers of identity. In *The Green Library*, two Ukrainian male characters seem typical representatives of the patriarchal society. One of them, Mr. Moroz, the

father of Oksanna and Alex Moroz, returns from Canada to Ukraine taking his son with him and leaving his daughter behind. The other one, who turns out to be Eva's father and Oksanna's lover, is obsessed with having a son; as Oksanna tells Eva, "'He said he'd marry me if only I would have his son. Not his child: his son'" (259). Based on Keefer's depiction of these characters, the reader is expected to accept that Ukrainian society is essentially patriarchal; without any background knowledge of Ukrainian history in general and history of gender relations in particular, the reader cannot challenge Keefer's construction of Ukraine. In some of her other works, Keefer explores the problem of ethnic women's oppression, which she sees as rooted in a patriarchal tradition Ukrainians brought into Canada and which can be partly or completely resolved in the late stages of immigrant life. Discussing Keefer's short stories, Elisabeth Mårald states: "Patriarchy, the world view that governed the European Ukrainians, was brought across the Atlantic" (31).

However, the theorists on gender problems in North America show that the issue of male domination in Canada (and in immigrant communities in particular) might have different roots. As Gina Buijs explains, "[r]estrictions on movement in the host country and lack of access to [...] adult education appear to be the most inhibiting, even paralysing, factors which resulted in women being bullied into conforming to imagined and unrealistic criteria of what constituted 'ideal' feminine virtues" (18). Besides, in the case of Ukrainian immigrants in particular, the early Anglo-Canadian stereotypes make them appear backwards and pagan, willing to sell their daughters out to older grooms rather than educate them (Swyripa 78), and

"being hot-tempered enough to murder on a whim [...]" (Aponiuk 52). Thus, for later generations, the New-World myths "screen" the truth about the Ukrainian family, for which, as ethnographer Anatoliy Ponomaryov argues, "the great importance of the woman and, in the first place, mother is traditional" (249; my translation). Canadian poet of Ukrainian descent Andrew Sucknaski insists that in the Ukrainian family as he remembers it "*baba* [grandmother] was the god and the head of the household" (75). Thus, when exploring the gender construct of identity of the characters in *The Green Library*, we have to take into account the fact that the Ukrainian culture as Keefer sees it has been transplanted into the New World and might have been influenced and changed by it.

Once Eva Chown has gone through the process of (re)discovery of her ethnicity, she seems to have arrived at a different understanding of her Canadian identity. Maxim Tarnawsky observes that though the focus of *The Green Library* is on what it means to be a Ukrainian in Canada, "Janice Kulyk Keefer gives us a view of the Ukrainian community through the eyes of an outsider" (112). The explanation of this perspective might lie in the fact that Keefer, a third-generation Canadian, has already stepped beyond the borders of ethnicity towards a broader understanding of Canadian identity. In her interview with Cherry Clayton, Keefer explains that she sees her fiction as transcultural, and for her "'transculturalism' has very strongly the connotation of crossing borders, crossing boundaries of things normally kept separate [...] [i]n one's national or cultural construction" (194). Elisabeth Mårald has already addressed aspects of transculturalism in Keefer's

short stories; however, as Rachel Dyer points out, Mårald's study *In Transit* may be "complemented with a discussion on recent theories on 'the stranger', and core theories, such as Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture* [...]" (417).

Eva cannot fully identify with Ukrainian culture (even in its Canadian form) because she is only half Ukrainian; besides, not all ethnic minorities are happy with being perceived as hyphenated Canadians. "Each time," Maara Haas writes, "the word ethnic rears its hyphenated head, the odor of a clogged sewer smelling of racism poisons the air" (136). In any discussion of ethnic or national identity we must not forget that identification, according to Homi Bhabha, "must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference [...] is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (Bhabha 2). In her search for who she is, Eva must recognize herself as a "cultural hybrid" and thus move beyond the ethnic understanding of her identity—towards the transnational "re-creation of the self in the world of travel" (Bhabha 9).

The condition that Homi Bhabha sees as "cultural hybridity" is rooted in the history of cultural displacements which mark the modern world. In *The Green Library*, Olya Pavlenko, Mr. Moroz, and Ivan Kotelko, those "DeePees" (75) uprooted and struggling to adjust to the new and often hostile environment, become the metaphor for cultural displacements of the modern age. On the one hand, they must voice the histories of the suppressed, marginalized, and silenced. On the other

hand, they are the immediate link between the Old Countries and the New World; they bring together different cultures and establish different perspectives. These first-generation immigrants come to the New World with a hole in their hearts the shape of their abandoned homeland, but their departure also means that their place in the Old Country will forever be vacant. This vacant place has become, for example, the haunting image of southern Italian art, manifested in "a photograph of a family group with the middle of the picture occupied by an empty chair and a man's hat. These objects represent an absent family member, often a father or a brother, who has sojourned away and is expected to return home" (Pivato "Effects on Italian Communities" 254).

This image emphasizes the reciprocal impact of the Old and New Worlds on each other; it also reveals the first-generation immigrants' attitude towards their former homeland and the new country: they consider themselves not immigrants but travelers, migrant workers who can return *home*—for they are still awaited and welcome there—and who expect they will eventually return. As Orest Subtelny explains in the context of Ukrainian immigration to North America, "Ukrainians who immigrated [...] prior to the First World War [...] initially planned to stay [there] until they accumulated enough money to return to their native villages, purchase adequate land, and establish a household" (538). Talking about the highly politicized post-Second World War wave of immigrants to which Olya Pavlenko, Mr. Moroz, and Ivan Kotelko belong, Wsevolod Isajiw notes its "ideological commitment to help with the processes [the struggle for independence] taking place

in Ukraine" ("The Changing Community" 267). In *The Green Library*, Mr. Moroz does return home; Ivan Kotelko dreams of returning and thus is "involved in all kinds of—let's just call them political activities" (*The Green Library* 240); and Olya Pavlenko, at the end of the book, goes back to the place of her birth, although the reader is unsure whether her return is permanent or only temporary.

In their attitudes and ways of identification, the second-generation immigrants in Canada differ greatly from their parents. "The prevalent sociological theory," Isajiw writes, "is that the second generation rebels against its ethnic group and has strong desire to become part of the society at large" ("The Changing Community" 255). In *The Green Library*, the second-generation Canadians are exemplified in the character of Oksanna Moroz, Olya Pavlenko's daughter, presumably born in Canada. If we borrow the description from J. W. Berry, who talks about the construction of identity of the first and second generations of an Italian immigrant family, Oksanna can be seen as similar to a typical

> teenaged daughter [who] is annoyed by hearing Italian language in the home, by having only Italian food served by her mother, and by being required to spend most of her leisure time in her Italian family; instead, she much prefers the assimilation option, desiring to speak English, participate in her school activities and generally be with her Canadian age group. (38)

In Oksanna's case, as in the cases of many other second-generation Canadian immigrants, the contrast between the family and the outer world increases a feeling

of inferiority; seemingly unimportant factors—her strange-sounding name, her black braids, and her mother's occupation as a cleaning woman—produce a picture of the Self as Other and cause the rejection of this imposed identity. As soon as Oksanna is grown-up enough to make her own decisions, she cuts her braids, changes her name to Susan Frost, and generally casts off her Ukrainian heritage; "'I have nothing to do with Ukrainians anymore,'" she tells Eva (*The Green Library* 91).

For further generations, however, the grounds for self-identification change significantly. In their essay "Ethnic and Civic Self-Identity in Canada: Analyses of 1974 and 1991 National Surveys," Rudolf Kalin and J. W. Berry make a comparison between the two national surveys in Canada conducted in 1974 and 1991 with the goal to reveal both changes in self-identification and the prevalent attitudes towards the policy of multiculturalism among Canadians in recent years. As the authors explain, today more and more Canadians have

> mixed ethnic origin and for these individuals it becomes an interesting question of how they resolve the [problem] of ethnic identity. Others have ancestors who have been in Canada for many generations; hence, their ethnic origin as opposed to their civic allegiance to Canada may not be a significant feature of their self-identity. (Kalin and Berry 2)

In both surveys, the respondents were asked similar, though not identical, questions. In the 1974 survey, they were questioned about the origin of their parents

(father and mother separately) as well as how the respondents "usually thought of themselves" in terms of national identification (Kalin and Berry 5). In the 1991 survey, the respondents were asked from which ethnic groups their ancestors come, and, if they answered "Canadian," the question would be more specific: "Other than Canadian, to which ethnic or cultural group(s) did your ancestors belong?" (Kalin and Berry 6). The comparison of the two surveys has revealed several major trends in Canadian self-identification. First and most important, the majority of citizens living outside Quebec, that is in English-speaking Canada, identify as non-hyphenated Canadian (Kalin and Berry 1). Secondly, the comparison showed "the decline in the choice of 'Ethnic' identity [...] between 1974 and 1991" (Kalin and Berry 1). Thirdly, although most of respondents showed high tolerance for multiculturalism in Canada, the combination of strong Canadian and weak ethnic identification "suggests that civic identity in Canada is more important than ethnic identity" (Kalin and Berry 13).

This change in self-identification coincides with the time when, in ethnic communities, Canada-born persons greatly outnumber immigrants born in the Old Country (for example, as of 1993, about 92 per cent of Ukrainian-Canadians were born in Canada [Kordan 35]). Starting with the third generation, being "Canadian" seems no longer problematic. However, as Isajiw reminds us, "[a] current theory in regard to the third generation points to its need to rediscover its ethnic identity" ("The Changing Community" 255). In *The Green Library*, Keefer sets a task to investigate the steps which a third-generation Canadian, Eva Chown in this case,

must take in the process of rediscovery of her ethnicity and what kind of identity she will arrive at in the end. For Eva, who technically belongs to the second generation but is actually so removed from her ethnic origin that she can count as the third generation, this is not so much a *re*-discovery of "an identity [she] had neglected or ignored" (Bennett and Sherburne 213) (which would have been the case had she been an offspring of the second-generation Canadians who, like Oksanna Moroz, deny or hide their origin) as an actual *discovery* (or even creation) of that part of herself she has not known about before. Eva starts her symbolic journey into an unfamiliar world of ethnicity by studying library books and learning stories of Ukrainian immigrants she knows (Olya Pavlenko, Oksanna Moroz), and then she actually takes a trip to Ukraine.

In other words, Eva sets out on *rites de passage*, and so enters a transitional, "liminal" state from which she has to reestablish who she is. Liminality, as Victor Turner defines it, is comprised of three phases, namely separation, *limen* meaning "threshold," and reaggregation (231-32). The first phase, separation, is marked by "the detachment of the individual [...] from either an earlier fixed point in the social structure or from an established set of cultural conditions [...]" (Turner 232). Once the individual is detached from the group, s/he enters a "liminal" state, "neither here nor there, betwixt and between" (Turner 232). This state of outsiderhood is explained by Turner as "the condition of being [...] situationally or temporarily set apart, or voluntarily seeing oneself apart" from the group (233). The "liminals," though, must be distinguished from the "marginals," who are

"simultaneously members [...] of two or more groups whose social definitions and cultural norms are distinct from, and often opposed to, one another [...]" (Turner 233). It is only the "liminals" who can rely on the "cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity" (Turner 233). According to Turner's model, "marginals," among others, would include migrant workers (that is first-generation immigrants), second-generation immigrants, and people of mixed ethnic heritage (233).

In the context of *The Green Library*, the first generation reaches only the separation state: Olya Pavlenko is involuntarily separated from her home country and finds herself in a society reluctant to accept her as a full member; she is forever an emigrant from the Old Country. The second generation reaches the second phase, but becomes "marginal" instead of "liminal": Oksanna Moroz is caught in-between two cultures, and although she chooses to deny her Ukrainian part, she can never totally disregard it. Once Eva Chown discovers that she is half-Ukrainian, she also enters an in-between space, but, unlike the previous generations, she is separated from the mainstream Canadian culture and her place in the centre shifts to the margin. On the other hand, Eva is of mixed ethnic heritage and might also be caught on the margin without the possibility of reaggregation.

However, today the very concept of reaggregation seems problematic because the society into which "liminals" are striving to reaggregate is no longer homogenous. In the Introduction to his study *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha calls for redefinition of nation and national cultures in terms of

"transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees—these border and frontier conditions" (12), because it is from the place occupied by "disenfranchised minorities" that the modern "'national' cultures are being produced" (6). This place, which Bhabha calls the "beyond" (1), is defined as an "in-between" space, simultaneously "inside and outside," "inclusion and exclusion," "here and there" (1); in such a definition, the "beyond" best of all corresponds to the second phase of Turner's *rites de passage*, although what has yet to be determined is whether the "beyond" is temporary or permanent. Can the "beyond" be described as a state of liminality and those going through it are moving towards reaggregation and homogeneity? Are those caught in the "beyond" doomed to remain "marginals," though the national narrative will be retold from their perspective? Or is there a third possibility, a way out? The ultimate questions Eva has to answer, as she goes through her own *rites de passage* in *The Green Library*, are whether the third-generation immigrants have a hope of reaggregation in modern culture, what this reaggregation will mean in Canadian society, and how their transnational experience will redefine the essence of identity.

CHAPTER ONE

The Old Country and the New World:

Return as a Means of Progress

Canadian identity, marked by historical and social narratives pertaining to both the place of origin and the country of immigration, is an identity often split between the two narratives and the two places. What the three generations of Ukrainian immigrants in *The Green Library* have in common is this split of personality between the two places; however, each generation deals with it differently, since the extent of belonging to one place more than to the other is different for each of them. If the first generation regards the possible return to the Old Country as a "one-way ticket" (as in cases of Mr. Moroz returning to Ukraine and taking his son with him and Olya Pavlenko returning to stay with her sick granddaughter Katia), and for the second generation the very thought of return is impossible (as in the case of Oksanna Moroz), then for the third generation this return becomes a means of obtaining a definite place in the country of immigration—the country voluntarily chosen as a new home. Based on the experiences of the three generations as presented in the novel, this chapter will explore what Janice Kulyk Keefer has called, in an article devoted to the problems of being a writer and a member of ethnic minority in Canada, "a return to the homeland, either in person or via memory, and a final severance from the old country, complemented by an act of commitment to the new" ("In Violent Voice" 46).

The return journey of the descendants of Canadian immigrants has been a recurring theme in recent Canadian ethnic fiction. By looking at several novels of Italian-Canadian writers, Joseph Pivato, in his article "Effects on Italian Communities of Migration to Canada: A Literary Perspective," gives an analysis of the meaning of the return journey and its importance for the ethnic identification in Canada. As a basic ground for his argument, Pivato quotes Frank Paci, the author of one of the earliest novels dealing with the return journey written in Canada, who speaks about the significance of his 1972 trip to Italy: "The trip dramatically impressed upon me the wide gulf between the Canadian and the Italian cultures and the depth of my heritage... The trip also made me appreciate my parents..." (qtd. in Pivato "Effects on Italian Communities" 258). The (sometimes imaginary) trip to the Old Country, as Pivato shows, makes the immigrants' descendants reevaluate the role of family in shaping ethnic identity in Canada; it addresses the problem of the transmission of immigrants' identity to their children and changes the perception of the Canadian society (259). This journey becomes "a manifestation of the family ties between Canada and the old country" (261-62).

The trip back in place stimulates a trip back in time: it inspires reassessment of history and "the critical comparison between old and new worlds" (Pivato "Effects on Italian Communities" 259). Before the return journey, the place of origin is often seen by the immigrants' descendants as what Janice Kulyk Keefer has called in one of her short stories "the Country of the Dead," because family stories and histories, transmitted through generations, make, as Pivato puts it, "dead

ancestors [...] more real than living relatives" (261). Many immigrants' children are obsessed with the dream of their place of origin, that mysterious and mythical land (re)constructed (read: invented) from the stories, and it takes a return journey for them to "begin to reconcile [their] life in Canada with [the] dream of [the Old Country]" (Pivato "Effects on Italian Communities" 263). One of the characters of Caterina Edwards' novel *The Lion's Mouth* explains her urge to go back to Italy: "I needed to exorcise my dream of Venice. I needed to rid myself of the ache of longing that I have carried for so long" (qtd. in Pivato "Effects on Italian Communities" 263). Following the trail of other writers, Janice Kulyk Keefer sends Eva, the heroine of *The Green Library*, on a trip to Ukraine so that she can demythologize the Old Country and thus accept Canada as her home.

Eva's return involves not only a literal trip to Kyiv, but also a metaphorical journey to the Old Country through her encounters with the first and second generations of Ukrainians in Canada. The part of *The Green Library* preceding Eva's journey to Ukraine is filled with Eva's reminiscences of her teenage years and her acquaintance with the Moroz family, the recent émigrés from Ukraine. In 1993, when Eva finds in her mailbox an old photograph of a boy who resembles her own son and realizes that she might be half Ukrainian, she turns to the Moroz family in the hope that they might know the boy and the woman in the photo. Olya Pavlenko (Mrs. Moroz) does find out that the woman in the picture is Lesia Levkovych, a Ukrainian poet, and the boy is her son, Ivan Kotelko; she believes that Lesia Levkovych is Eva's grandmother and thus helps Eva establish a

connection with the "country no more real to her than a kingdom in a fairy tale" (*The Green Library* 99).

Olya is the first one to tie the two countries through family bonds: on the one hand, through the bloodline between herself and her son Alex, with whom Eva was in love when she was thirteen and whose eyes are now "[l]ooking out of Olya's face" (220), and on the other hand, through the bloodline between Eva and her grandmother, thus linking Eva with the "doomed people" (99) from "the Country of the Dead" (the first thing Eva learns about her grandmother is that Lesia died shortly after the picture had been taken). Olya plays the role of a storyteller mythologizing the Old Country; when telling Eva that Lesia Levkovych was a "very fine" poet (98), she shows Eva the whole world of the short-lived Ukrainian Renaissance. By simply writing Lesia's name on a piece of paper, Olya bridges "the impossible distance between this young, scowling boy in the photograph [Ivan Kotelko] and [Eva's] own son [...]" (99) and gives Eva the right to claim "the Country of the Dead" and return to it. In fact, she persuades Eva to go to this country: "'Go to Kiev, to your grandmother's grave. Give her back her name, her past; honour her'" (103). The return trip Olya wants Eva to make is not only for Lesia's sake; its ultimate goal is give Eva a past—and thus, a place in the future.

When Eva asks Olya why she herself cannot go to the country where she was born, Olya does not give an explanation but tells her another story, the story of how she was transported to Germany and how she wound up in Canada (116). Her narrative shows that Olya sees herself in exile in Canada because her emigration

from her place of birth was involuntary, and the only reason why she does not return is that she has no one left there who would still be waiting for her. As she explains to Eva, "'My husband is dead, my son is as good as dead to me. In the whole world I have no one left but Oksanna'" (116), and Oksanna made her mother choose between the two countries once and forever: "'She said it was either Oleksa [Alex] or her [...]'" (116). Olya realizes that if she chooses Oksanna, she chooses Canada and loses her right to Ukraine. In her article "'The Sacredness of Bridges,'" Keefer explains why immigrants see their return to the Old Country as impossible: "'You can never go home again,' we've been told—or if you do go home, it will only be to find out that 'home' has shifted ground, relocated itself neither here not there, in old or new country, but somewhere maddeningly in-between" (103). Olya finds herself "maddeningly in-between" two homes, unable either to adjust to the new one or to go back to the old one.

Similarly, Eva's father, Ivan Kotelko, who "was always planning to go back home one day, back to Ukraine" (*The Green Library* 240), has never had a chance to return to where he feels he belongs. There is, however, something which this "old, ruined man, who won't live out the winter" (259), does and which can be read as his symbolic return to the Old Country. With Oksanna's help, he goes back to "the first place he'd come to in Canada" (240); more importantly, he wants to claim his grandson—"to put his hands on his head, give him a blessing and receive one in return" (255). Telling the boy the story of his life, Ivan restores his connection with Ukraine and with his mother Lesia Levkovych. "Tomorrow he will tell his story

[...]. Tell it in such a way that the boy will not judge [...] but will come to know the truth [...]. Know and forgive him as she [Lesia] had done, all those years ago" (255). Ivan's coming back to the island where he met Eva's mother over forty years ago and his discovery that he has a grandson become for him a symbolic return to the Old Country.

Olya, once she gets an invitation from Alex (she learns after Eva's trip to Ukraine that Alex's daughter Katia is ill), does return "home," to the Old Country, and will, quite probably, stay. By the end of the novel, Olya has gone to Odessa to look after Katia and does not seem to be coming back to Canada, but Keefer keeps all the options open. When Eva, despite busy lines and poor connection, reaches Alex on the phone, she builds a bridge from one country to another that will allow her—and others—to travel between them, both literally and symbolically. At the end of the novel, it is Keefer herself who wants to build "a bridge [...] that spans daunting gaps between cultures, races, and histories [...]" ("'The Sacredness of Bridges'" 97). The whole purpose of Keefer's writing *The Green Library* is to bring the two worlds together; she says: "We live in a world where the bridges we desperately need to enable us to connect, in spite of profound differences, are under threat of demolition or else disintegration through neglect, deliberate or inadvertent" ("'The Sacredness of Bridges'" 97). The bridge Eva builds in *The Green Library*, between herself and Alex Moroz, the past and the coming generations, Canada and Ukraine, the past and the future, is the bridge that

Canadian literature has been lately trying to build to bring the fragments of the multicultural mosaic together.

Olya's going back to Ukraine symbolizes the very possibility of returning "home," wherever it might be. Through the character of Oksanna Moroz, a second-generation Ukrainian-Canadian, Keefer further explores the problematic notion of "home." Oksanna completely turns away from the country which her mother still sees as her lost home; she even refuses to maintain any contact with her brother Alex, who returned to Ukraine with their father. For her, "Alex does not exist. Has been made not to exist. Oksanna has cut her memory short, like her hair [...]" (90). Denying her roots and her heritage, Oksanna, without realizing it, denies herself a unique identity, an individuality. When Eva visits her at home she is surprised to discover that Oksanna's house, though very similar to the one that Eva herself owns, is anonymous; it has "none of that feckless, shabby air that gives Eva's place what she calls 'character' " (89). The room Eva walks in is "blindingly clear of colour, clutter, anything that could tell a story about its occupant" (90); the two identical leather sofas on which Oksanna and her guest are seated are also white, deprived of colour, and thus emphasize the anonymity of the place.

The facelessness of Oksanna's house shows that the second generation, which has tried hard to break any connections with the Old Country but cannot feel completely comfortable in the new, does not know what a home is. Oksanna would hate to have any object in her house that would connect her to her Ukrainian heritage, but she does not understand that any house becomes a home only when

filled with things from the past, with memories that give people comfort. To be a Canadian is not to live in a sterile environment where the past is crossed out, but Oksanna's fear of her heritage will not let her admit it. She invites Eva to her place as her revenge for all the humiliation she felt as a teenager in the Chowns' house: "'I wanted you in my house for a change, Eva. On my home ground'" (238), though in fact her faceless "home ground" cannot provide any confidence for her. That is why Oksanna's behaviour, this "globe of sealed glass that nothing can break" (90), is the only "home ground" she has; it becomes her personal protection against a split in her self. When she, a dermatologist, examines Eva's back she uses gloves that "cut off any connection between her hands and Eva's skin" (90)—that is, any connection between Oksanna and the outer world. She has established a place for herself—not in the country but under the "globe of sealed glass" that happens to be situated in this country, and that is why she does not allow herself to look back. Once she finds out that Alex's daughter is ill, all she can think of is to "bring the child back here [to Canada], if that's what they [Olya and Alex] want" (260). For Oksanna, neither literal nor symbolic return to the Old Country is possible because this place—and any identification with it—is crossed out.

Identification with a specific place, and geography in particular, is essential in the case of Canada, as Ian Angus suggests, because "geography becomes important for identity where history has failed to provide it" (*A Border Within* 114). Angus goes on to argue that "Canada First nationalism emphasized the characteristics of Canada as a northern nation [...]" (114). In *The Green Library*,

the identification with a place is double-sided: when Eva Chown receives an old photograph from a stranger, she first of all goes up north to Porcupine Creek to talk to a Native woman, Phonsine, once a friend of her mother's, to discover the truth about her birth. Keefer's decision to make Porcupine Creek the place where Eva's life started "out in the bush" (*The Green Library* 47) highlights the importance of northern geography for Canadian self-identification.

On the other hand, the fact that Eva learns about her partly Ukrainian heritage from a Native woman, Phonsine, is not accidental. The presence of the Native people, for whom the New World is the Old Country, is an integral part of Canadian identification. Phonsine tells Eva about the game Holly Chown (Eva's mother) and Phonsine used to play over forty years ago: "'we'd both dress up in blue jeans and check shirts, flannel, you know, and we'd put our hair in one thick braid down our backs—braid thick as your arm. Tryin' to make out as we were twins, and no one could tell us apart'" (47). By making Holly play the game, "rubbin' charcoal into her hair [...]" (47), trying to look like Phonsine, Keefer shows her readers that Native people are an important part of Canadian identification; Phonsine, who "takes in everything" (*The Green Library* 45), who reads Eva's face as if it were a book, is a bond with the history of which this land has been deprived. Talking to Phonsine, Eva goes back in time, however impossible it might have first seemed to her. Phonsine "did not leave town when Holly [Eva's mother] did, and did not move out to the nearest reserve, and did not die or lose memory" (45); she is here to give Eva her past and to tell her who she is.

Eva's going back in time is important for her not only as an individual but also as a member of an ethnic community. As Raymond Breton argues, "[t]he symbolic construction of a society or ethnic community involves its location in time. This entails the reconstruction of the past and/or the creation of a mythical past" ("Collective Dimensions" 7). Eva's reconstruction and/or creation of a mythical past are inevitably connected with her discovery of Ukrainian history. Some critics have pointed out that Canada is a country with "a weak national mythology" (Angus *A Border Within* 114); Marie Vautier believes that Canada is still in the process of "creative *making* of New World Myth" (48). In an article, Keefer contrasts American idea of nationalism, which she sees as an "obsession with inventing a central, unifying national mythos [...]," and Canadian "lack of a unified, stable, national identity and mythos"; she suggests that the "postcolonial, post-Anglocentric code of Canadianness is fractured, multiple, shifting" (" 'Coming Across Bones' " 92). Canadian mythology is not something fixed but flexible; it is itself a mosaic of various myths, both native and imported.

In *The Green Library*, Keefer chooses to make the protagonist look for her national identity without establishing an opposition between Canada and the United States but, rather, by trying to recognize Canadian "difference 'within'," if we adopt the words of Homi Bhabha (13). In doing so, Eva needs to discover a Ukrainian mythology that still informs the identification process of the Ukrainian community in Canada. Eva's exploration of Ukrainian history, as a part of her reconstruction of the mythical past, becomes for her "an affair of extreme urgency

[...]" (*The Green Library* 75), a step back in time before she can make a step back to a hitherto unknown place—the Old Country. However, an important question arises in relation to the mythologizing of the past by ethnic communities: "Do the reconstructed and mythical pasts pertain primarily to the country of origin or to the experience in Canadian society?" (Breton "Collective Dimensions" 7).

Eva's answer to this question is that the two dimensions of the reconstructed past are balanced, because the Ukrainian history that Eva is looking for is directly connected with Canada, and the mythical figure she (re)constructs from the "potted histories of the Second World War" (*The Green Library* 75) is a figure of a Displaced Person (who, for Eva, has the face of her father, Ivan Kotelko) and his experience in the New World. The starved, half-alive DPs seem happy to come to Canada and "after the starvation of the war and the minimal rations at the refugee camp [...] find the tables crammed with sausage and salami, bread, pickles, cheese, cakes with nuts and raisins" (*The Green Library* 245), but the "land of milk and honey" turns out to be bright and beautiful only on the surface. As soon as the DPs are admitted into Canada, they are sent to northern camps "to cut down endless stands of trees, or scratch in the earth for nickel" (246); in return for this abundance of food, they have to put up with "the way they all are treated by the Canadians in the camp: as second-class, second-rate: a less murderous contempt than that shown to *Ausländer* and *Ostarbeiter*, but contempt all the same" (247). By describing tragic experiences of the Displaced Persons in Canada, Keefer shows where the split personality of ethnic Canadians may come from.

After her return in time, Eva has to return literally to the Old Country to be able to reconcile the two parts of her split identity. Eva's trip to the Old Country is preceded by a poetic description of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine; the very first sentence of this section reads: "All great cities are cut or caressed by water" (*The Green Library* 121). In this section, Keefer juxtaposes Canadian and Ukrainian landscapes, thus exploring nature as a part of identification. If Canadian geography is marked by bush and lakes, suggesting the virginity of the land as if existing outside of time, Ukrainian landscape is marked by the flow of the Dnieper (Dnipro) river and the numerous beautiful gardens of the city of Kyiv, showing a historical development over time; this difference in the landscape works as a wilderness/civilization opposition. However, once Eva returns to the Old Country, this opposition is subverted, for Eva discovers that, besides golden domes of ancient cathedrals, there are other signs of "civilization": "a department store window entirely taken up with a giant-sized Tampax carton; ugly, glass-fronted kiosks, displaying their treasures: tins of Campbell's soup, tubes of Crest toothpaste" (139). Although in reality a tourist would be unlikely to find any Campbell's soup or Crest toothpaste in any Kyiv kiosk, ugly or not, Keefer's picture of Ukraine shows how much our perception of place and geography (wilderness versus civilization; ethnicity versus globalization) is a social construction. As John O'Neill puts it,

> Nothing can be more curious than the annual flocking of American immigrants to their former homelands to discover the now

> omnipresent [...] toothpaste, central heating, hamburger, and Coca-Cola signs for which their ancestors displaced themselves and with which they identify their choice of America as the ultimate trip. (20)

These markers of the technological age, in a country Eva used to identify only with "the ethnic strip" of Bloor West Village in Toronto (*The Green Library* 234), serve to demythologize the place of longing.

Once Eva crosses the border, she receives a customs declaration, and this scene is one of many instances when Eva feels irritated by cultural signs she cannot understand or accept. The lengthy description of the Ukrainian Customs Declaration given to Eva in Boryspil Airport demonstrates Keefer's own annoyance at her inability to adjust to the reality of the place which existed heretofore only in a mythical form. However irritating the customs procedure may be, Eva seems to forget the fact that Canadian customs authorities require all travelers to fill in similar Customs Declarations; and while the English-speaking tourist in Ukraine can always ask for a Customs Declaration in English (and Eva obviously gets one since its text is quoted in the book), a Ukrainian traveling to Canada can hardly hope for such a convenience. Moreover, Eva's first encounter with the Old Country is marked by prejudice; the warning given by Dan before her trip to Ukraine keeps coming into her head: "*Beware of the men there—they'll kiss your hand and rob you blind. Just don't let anyone marry you. They're all looking for Western wives. Tickets to ride. I mean it, Eva*" (*The Green Library* 136).

From the beginning of her trip, Eva's relationship with Kyiv develops in terms of material values; it establishes the opposition "rich Canadian/poor Ukrainian." The description of Kyiv does not fail to mention "Helltown" (the city outskirts that in Ukrainian we call the "Sleeping Districts") with its "[c]oncrete cabinets in which millions of [people] are filed away each night" (139). The inner thoughts of minor characters—the two receptionists at the hotel where Eva stays—are focused, of course, on money: one of them, Tamara, despises Eva for not giving her a tip; the other is instantly (and nearly forever) made happy by a fifty-dollar bill. The waitress in a restaurant where Eva and Alex have had a meal is happy that the couple have eaten so little: she will be able to "scrap[e] the uneaten portions into containers to take her husband and children and father-in-law [...]" (143). By judging people on the basis of how much money they have, Eva is trying to justify her father's emigration to Canada, his abandoning the Old Country.

When Alex asks Eva to tell him about Toronto, he assumes that she rents an apartment, and Eva is too "ashamed to admit that she owns a whole house, with twelve rooms in it for only four people" (*The Green Library* 159). This question adds to the tension Eva feels as a "woman of means" (142) in a poor country, although the question itself seems far-fetched and culturally incorrect: first, Alex, who knows that the Chown family was rich and that Eva is the only child, would hardly assume Eva would be renting an apartment; second, although he might remember Canada well enough, I would argue that for Alex, who spent thirty years

in the Soviet Ukraine where people neither owned nor rented flats, the idea of renting an apartment would not be the first to come to mind.

This is one of the points in the book when Keefer's own myths of the Old Country creep into the narrative; it emphasizes how much the Ukraine Keefer is presenting to her reader is a (re)construction of the mythologized past. As she confesses in an article,

> During my visit to Kiev I might have been on a different planet, so vast were the gaps between what I had expected and what I experienced. [...] I saw that I would have to revise drastically the Ukraine I had already scripted into my novel [*The Green Library*], a Ukraine invented from books and magazine articles and conversations with friends who'd already been there. (" 'Coming Across Bones' " 94)

Eva, like Keefer herself, is irritated not so much by what she sees as by the fact that it is so different from what she expected. The quarrel that Eva and Alex have before her departure back to Canada appears to be caused by the clash of the opposition "rich Canadian/poor Ukrainian," but in fact the words that Alex shouts at Eva are the climax of cultural misunderstanding: " 'Why don't you stay home if you can't live without pizza and Coca-Cola? Why don't all you Westerners, with your big money that you spend like water over here, for Christ's sake just stay home?' " (204). Being in the place where Eva is constantly "feeling guilty just for wanting to be comfortable" (205) makes her resent the Old Country and think of Canada more

and more as her true home. However, she will not be able to feel completely at home in Canada until she reconciles with the Old Country; for this to happen, she must go through several stages.

Eva's return to the land she has never seen is marked by her "return" to the language she cannot understand. Although Raymond Breton argues that "the adoption of English or French by people from a large number of different ethnic origins dissociates language from ethnicity [...]" ("Collective Dimensions" 7), Keefer deliberately introduces words and phrases in Ukrainian, which make the English-speaking reader feel an outsider to the text, in order to emphasize the importance of language for the understanding of the essence of ethnic identity. The use of the Old Country's language by ethnic writers stresses the influence of the ethnic culture on the dominant one; the effect it produces is what Joseph Pivato calls "the deterritorialization of the dominant language" ("Representation of Ethnicity" 154). Keefer's own relationship with the Ukrainian language has never been easy, as she confesses in an essay:

> I suffered agonies of humiliation at the hands of language. My teachers [at Ukrainian school]—displaced persons with rudimentary English—taught neither grammar nor vocabulary, holding to the view that it was their task merely to polish their students' phrasing or correct their pronunciation. They refused to believe that I could not speak Ukrainian; that it was to me not a mother tongue but a foreign one. ("Gender, Language, Genre" 164)

In *The Green Library*, however, Keefer chooses to turn occasionally to this "not a mother tongue" because, as she says in her article, "some twenty years after I left my parents' home [...] I have begun to try to understand Ukrainian—the culture as well as the language" ("Gender, Language, Genre" 166). For her as an ethnic writer, inclusion of the words and phrases in the ethnic language into the novel becomes one of the important dimensions of the text; it is her way to understand the basis of her Ukrainian-Canadian identity.

Thus, even before Eva goes to Ukraine, she has to learn the sound of her father's language (and for her it is merely the sound of the words without any meaning attached to them). The only meaning behind the words she hears is "otherness," and since this unfamiliar language is essentially connected with her own heritage, she is forced to start viewing herself as the Other. These "meaningless" words are articulated by a Polish woman in Porcupine Creek and by Olya Pavlenko; however, if the words the reader overhears in Porcupine Creek serve as a background, a hint at a multicultural dimension of Keefer's text, Olya's Ukrainian phrases are there to get Eva prepared for crossing the border between the countries and cultures. In the first instance, Olya says, "'*Ne zhurysia, donyu*'" (*The Green Library* 95), which roughly means "Don't worry, daughter," without providing any translation for Eva. This marks the first stage of Eva's "return" to the language. Later in the novel, Olya sings a Ukrainian hymn "*Vichnaia pamiat*" (103); and in this case she translates for Eva its meaning: "in everlasting memory."

At this stage, Eva steps beyond mere sound into actual meaning which the words are supposed to possess.

In the third instance, Eva, now in Ukraine, plays a word game with Alex and learns some Ukrainian words and phrases. At this stage, she moves from being an outsider to becoming an insider—both in the text and in the culture in general. Most important, however, is the moment when Alex, in response to their quarrel, teaches Eva how to say "I love you" and "Fuck you" in Ukrainian (262). The words "love" and "fuck," which represent love and hatred, both ultimately refer to love and express Eva's feelings about the Old Country and her Ukrainian origin. This lesson symbolizes such a level of intimacy with the Ukrainian language that it allows Eva to feel part of the Ukrainian culture (although she will probably never actually learn to speak Ukrainian). Eva's "return" to the Old Country's language draws the reader's attention to the fact that, despite Breton's argument that language does not seem to be an important marker of identity in the New World, its transplantation to new soil changes both the language and the culture that had been there before. The presence of Ukrainian phrases in the novel alerts the reader to multiple layers of the modern culture. "[B]ilingual [...] texts," as Arun Mukherjee states, "demand that we recognize the reality of a multilingual, multicultural earth [...]" (167); they "inform their readers [...] about the multicultural and multilingual nature of Canadian society" (170). Keefer's text, though not, strictly speaking, bilingual, foregrounds the minority discourse; it makes the reader reassess the reality in which s/he lives from an ethnic minority position.

However valuable the language of words may be, the language of silence is more so. Since Eva is returning to the "Country of the Dead," and death is naturally associated with silence, the focus in the novel shifts from words to gestures. Eva's most important mission during her visit to Ukraine is to see Babyn Yar, the place where her grandmother Lesia Levkovych is buried. When she stands on the black soil, which became a grave for thousands and thousands of people, she makes a gesture that changes her relations with her Ukrainian ethnicity: "Crouching on her heels, Eva runs her fingertips along the roughness of the concrete" (*The Green Library* 186); she bends down to the dead buried under her feet, lowers herself to become closer to them; this gesture is a recognition of the bond between "here" and "there," the present and the past. Eva's experience at Babyn Yar resembles Keefer's own experience at the museum of Ukrainian poet-prophet Taras Shevchenko during her return to the Old Country. She describes its meaning for her identification, for her establishing of a self, in the article " 'Coming Across Bones': Historiographic Ethnofiction":

> At first I'd been reluctant to visit what I expected to be a martyr's shrine. [...] Far stronger, however, was that twofold shame I'd always felt regarding Shevchenko—shame at the poorness of my Ukrainian, which meant that I could only read his best-known work, *Kobzar*, in the saccharine translation provided by Watson Kirkconnell, and [...] shame at the fact that Ukraine's national poet had led a life so painfully expressive of what I could only see as

> abject failure—failure being anathema to my North American values.
>
> All of this changed when I entered the Shevchenko museum in Kiev [...]. It [was] the fact that, as soon as you enter the museum, you must put on a pair of flat, felt, dark grey slippers that tie around your ankles [...]. The humility involved in bending down to tie these simple felt slippers that countless others have worn before you, the way they cause you to shuffle as you walk, to adopt the gait of those enslaved peasants from whom Shevchenko sprang, astonished me.
>
> [... Nonetheless, these] shoes somehow freed me from my early shame at being Ukrainian-in-Canada: different, other, "funny," foreign. They freed me, as well, from my shame at being connected, however obliquely, to those first immigrants—barefoot, kerchiefed, sheepskin-coated—described by some Canadian newspapers as "disgusting creatures" of "filth and ... vermin" [...]. (96-97)

Keefer's confession about her shame of being a descendant of "men in sheepskin coats" emphasizes not only the fact that immigrants' children see the "American dream" as a part of their identification, but also that their perception of themselves in Canada is shaped by stereotypes of the dominant culture.

In her article "The Problem of Identity: The Depiction of Ukrainians in Canadian Literature," Natalia Aponiuk analyzes the portrayal of Ukrainian-Canadians in Canadian literature written in English. Her analysis allows her to divide the development of the Ukrainian-Canadian literary character into two stages. In the first stage (novels published in the early and mid 20th century), the focus is on the assimilation of the immigrants' children. They are shown as striving to become "Canadian," that is, to adopt "the religion and mores of the Anglo-Saxon and marry[...] a WASP [...]" (Aponiuk 53), since their Ukrainian parents are portrayed as "lacking morality, having a fatalistic passivity, and being hot-tempered enough to murder on the whim [...]" (Aponiuk 52). This stereotype was enough for many second-generation Ukrainians in Canada to feel shame about their origin; however, as early as 1921, a study by Professor B. Hurd shows that Ukrainians "appear to be particularly free from crime of a serious nature" (qtd. in Young 261-62). The study also states that while the Slavic people as a group have a very high criminal record, the rate for Ukrainians is unbelievably low: "out of a population of some 25,000 between ages of 10 and 20 years not one was found in a reformatory in Canada in 1921" (qtd. in Young 262). Professor Hurd's work is the best proof that stereotypical attitudes are often not grounded in reality.

In the second stage of the development of Ukrainian-Canadian characters in literature (works published in the mid 20th century up to the 1970s), Aponiuk argues, "the focus shifts and the problem is presented in terms of the child's inner being: what is the effect on the child of the Ukrainian immigrant of this necessary

(and desired) interaction with the outside world?" (55). Although the writers of this period "treat the Ukrainian immigrant in basically the same negative stereotypes [...]" (Aponiuk 59), their characters, who wish to assimilate, cannot simply adopt the Anglo-Saxon ways because they feel split; they cannot become "completely *of*" Canadian culture (Aponiuk 59). *The Green Library* belongs to a new—third—stage in Canadian literature dealing with ethnicity. The novel seems to rebel against the traditional negative view of Ukrainians in Canada; it goes back in time in order to discover the truth about these people. Eva's return to the Old Country, like Keefer's own return, helps her overcome the stereotypes imposed by the dominant culture and feel proud of being *Ukrainian*-Canadian.

After their visit to Babyn Yar, Alex takes Eva to the Opera house to watch *Swan Lake*; here Eva encounters an unexpected but essential change in both her attitude towards the Old Country and her perception of herself as a Ukrainian. During intermission, when Eva is watching little girls doing pirouettes, one of them "loses balance and topples against" her (*The Green Library* 187). Eva picks the girl, kisses, and gives her back to the parents. "It makes her absurdly happy, this small gesture of connection; suddenly, she feels so much less of a stranger in this city" (187). Eva's journey, which started with her discovery of a photograph of a child who looked exactly like her son Ben and who turned out to be Eva's father, has now made a full circle. Picking up the girl in the Opera house, Eva realizes that her identification, both as an individual and as a member of society, is not only rooted in the past but also shaped by her expectations of the future. This turn from the past

to the future is important for Eva's identification because she can now start thinking about Canada in terms of the future; it is also important, on a larger scale, for the ethnic community in Canada because, as Raymond Breton points out, "[t]he symbolic construction of Canadian society [...] entails representation of its future" ("Collective Dimensions" 8). Eva starts dreaming of a "black-haired daughter" she and Alex might have, the daughter "they'd take to the ballet, watching her twirl and twirl in the marble alcoves of the theatre" (*The Green Library* 188); this daughter Eva dreams of brings together two countries and two worlds.

Nevertheless, it is not until Eva learns the story of Ivan Kotelko, her father, from his old friend and Alex's neighbour, Mykola Savchuk, that she finally realizes how strong her link with the Old Country is. Although Eva has accepted Lesia Levkovych as her grandmother and is proud to be a granddaughter of such a woman, she learnt about Lesia and Ivan when still in Canada and could not fully relate them—and herself—to Ukraine. She was coming to the country as a visitor; her intention was to discover the place and not who she is, but once Mykola Savchuk confirms Ivan's and Lesia's—and thus Eva's—belonging to this place, she is "no longer the stranger, the permanently foreign visitor [...] but a prodigal [...]. Someone who's had to return to the place where she came from, however little she belongs to it" (*The Green Library* 197). This moment of realization becomes for Eva a step towards accepting the Ukrainian part of her self-identification. Eva's experience of her return to the Old Country allows her to look at herself and at her life from a different angle; she admits that "she never felt more Canadian in her life

than walking through the streets of Kiev, riding the subway, applauding *Swan Lake* at the Opera and Ballet Theatre" (222). As her position as an outsider in Ukraine shifts to being an insider, so does her position in Canada shift from being an insider to becoming an outsider: "now she feels like a tourist in her own city [...]" (222). This shift in self-perception makes her reassess the world she has been living in as Eva Chown, "a WASP princess from rich man's row" (22), from a minority perspective, but in order to do so she needs to find out how the minorities construct their identity.

CHAPTER TWO

"The Little Matter of Babi Yar":

Place of History in the Construction of Identity

In her article "History, Community, Ethnicity, and the Thrust of Technology in Canada," Leslie Armour argues that ethnicity is, first of all, "the way of looking at things in relation to the past" (157), in relation to history. Some ethnic groups in Canada have attempted to retain their distinct cultural features; some, like Ukrainians, have even fought to have schools where Ukrainian would be the language of instruction (Armour 170), but the immigrants' experience in the new country shows that nevertheless "*some* part of the past is to be *rejected*" (Armour 160). Moreover, today many people consider their economic state more important than their past or their history (Armour 169). Although Leslie Armour presents a well-grounded argument that ethnicity "has no place in the future" (173), in *The Green Library* Janice Kulyk Keefer questions this statement and suggests that the past cannot be sacrificed for the future, for there is no future without the past. In fact, the novel's heroine, Eva Chown, believes that the past is "something that won't go away just because it's had to be abandoned" (*The Green Library* 234). By analyzing Keefer's rendition of the experiences of the three generations of Ukrainian-Canadians, the present chapter will show how, and to what extent, history and the past—both of the country of origin and of Canada—become a part of a transnational experience which defines their identity.

History, as a construct of Canadian identity, can never be seen as continuous or homogenous, first of all because Canadian history itself is not a continuity but a series of histories interwoven and sometimes replaced by each other. Desmond Morton sees Canadian history as a "process of enforced change," where Native history had been forcibly replaced by the French, while the French history, in its turn, was replaced by the British in 1780s, which "ignore[d] not only Indians but also the French presence [...]" (31); "restarting Canadian history with each successive arrival is quite Canadian," he writes (Morton 31). The discontinuity of Canadian history creates clashes between ethnic groups in Canadian society who, in the words of Morton, "often want history used as a weapon" (Morton 54).

In his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Michel Foucault distinguishes between two types of historical studies, the first being the traditional one which sees history as continuity, and the second being what he calls "effective" history (154). He suggests that history becomes "effective" when "it introduces discontinuity into our very being—as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our bodies and sets it against itself" (Foucault 154). If traditional history, Foucault argues, attempts to build "an ideal continuity" of events reduced to their initial or ultimate meaning, then "effective" history "deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations"; the whole world becomes "a profusion of entangled events" (154-55). Moreover, if traditional history aspires to "a contemplation of distances and heights," then "effective" history turns its attention "to those things nearest to it—

the body, the nervous system, nutrition, digestion, and energies [...]" (155); it has no need to look upon historical facts in prospect but "studies what is closest" (156). Finally, unlike traditional history which sees its task in erasing any details that can point to "a particular time and place," "effective" history is free to become personalized (Foucault 156-7). In *The Green Library*, when Eva Chown does her research on Displaced Persons after having learnt that her biological father might be one, she does it the way the "effective" history suggests: going through one of the books, she "flips to the section where the pictures are, trying to find faces that can't possibly be there" (77)—faces of people she knows personally and loves.

In his essay, Foucault argues that "effective" history will no longer recognize "monumental history" with its historical heroes and "high points of historical development" but will instead "emphasize that 'monumental history' is itself a parody" (Foucault 160-1); hence the haste with which Eva pushes aside "densely footnoted essays on immigration policies in Canada, Australia, and the United States" (*The Green Library* 75-6) and turns her attention to the personal interviews of the immigrants. Further in his essay Foucault states that one of the uses of history is "the systematic dissociation of identity" (161). While we try to maintain a unified but weak identity, "effective" history teaches us that identity is plural. "The purpose of history [...] is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation," Foucault believes (162). Thus, when Eva starts her journey into Ukrainian history, she finds her old identity broken into pieces; now she needs to learn that identity is plural and ever changing.

Foucault's "effective" historical study provides a good framework with which we can read both the discontinuity of Canadian history and the complicated entanglement of events and various perspectives employed in *The Green Library*; Keefer herself emphasizes that for her—and for the heroine of her novel—ethnicity "has to do with history in a twofold sense: personal and public, private and collective" (" 'Coming Across Bones' " 84), where public history is shaped by the fragments of personal histories. As Elisabeth Mårald notes, Keefer sees history as a process, not product (27). The many layers of *The Green Library* belong to different time periods and different places, and yet they all are happening simultaneously, in some kind of a virtual reality where the history itself lives. The events of November 1941 in Kyiv, Ukraine open and close the book, but the story that frames the novel is not self-contained: its meaning and its symbolism would not be clear without our knowledge of the events that happen fifty years later in both hemispheres—in Europe and North America. The personal histories compiling *The Green Library* cannot be read outside of the context of the public history of World War II, Displaced Persons, and their adaptation in the New World.

The introduction to the book refers to the story told as the "Chronicle of Bygone Years," named after the chronicle written by the famous monk Nestor in a deep cavern of Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. Nestor's *Chronicle of Bygone Years* is a compilation of several older chronicles; it attempts to give a continuous history of Kievan Rus but in fact is a mosaic of various fragments, "a profusion of entangled events" (Foucault 155). The chronicle started by the monk is still being written—by

an "old man, with bad eyes and a heart that ticks as tinnily as a cheap alarm-clock" (*The Green Library* 37)—because history is an everlasting process that interferes with life even when committed to paper and forgotten. The chronicler "picks up his pen, turns to a new page in his notebook, and begins to write" (*The Green Library* 38). The story unfolds.

If placed in the context of public history, the dates that Keefer chooses to narrate the personal stories of her characters acquire more significance. The summer of 1933, which Lesia Levkovych, Pavlo Bozhyk, and their son Ivan spend in Soloveyko, is called in *The Green Library* the time "just before the worst of the purges" (99); 1933 was the year of the Kremlin-made famine in Ukraine—a Soviet genocide of Ukrainians as a nation. Orest Subtelny believes that this famine "was to be for Ukrainians what the Holocaust was to the Jews and the Massacres of 1915 for the Armenians" (413). It was the year "when the Famine ended and the Terror began" (*The Green Library* 193), the Great Terror that took the lives of half a million of Ukrainian intellectuals and sent millions to labour camps. 1941, the year of Lesia's death in Babyn Yar, was the year of the Nazi occupation of Ukraine (then a part of the Soviet Union) marked by mass executions of Jews and later on Ukrainian nationalists. 1963, the year when thirteen-year-old Eva Chown meets the Moroz family and falls in love with Alex, is also the year when Alex and his father return to Ukraine where Khrushchev, who acquired the name of the "Hangman of Ukraine" (*The Ukrainian Weekly* 1: 207), has already started another war against Ukrainian nationalism. In Canada, it will be remembered as the year of

establishment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and emergence of the issue of multiculturalism (Lupul 183).

Finally, 1993, the year when Keefer herself visited Ukraine and when Eva Chown sets out on her *rites de passage*, brought another tragedy for Ukraine: in the former Yugoslavia, where Ukrainians "have constituted a minority of about 40,000 people," between mid-1991 and March 1992,

> 747 [Ukrainians] were killed or executed, 592 were put into concentration camps, 682 were tortured, abused, or otherwise maltreated, 900 disappeared without a trace and 4,551 were banished from their homes. [...] This is a conservative number and by early 1993 this number can be estimated to have multiplied by at least three times. (Isajiw "The Ukrainian Canadian Community" 89)

With her choice of dates, Keefer emphasizes that tragedy marks identity for the Ukrainian characters of *The Green Library*: as Alex tries to explain in a letter to Eva, "*Sometimes I think this country* [Ukraine] *has no history, just a chain of disasters that people have turned into songs and stories*" (263). Keefer deliberately makes Eva learn to accept her Ukrainian heritage by trying to identify with the people from the old photograph made in 1933 in Soloveyko, Ukraine, just before most of them died, were murdered, or committed suicide.

The public history in *The Green Library* serves as a background for the personal histories, histories no less tragic or important than those inscribed in thick

historical volumes for future students to study. These histories keep "bleeding into the present and won't be staunched" (*The Green Library* 198), and although at times the interconnectedness of all the characters in the book seems far-fetched—Ivan Kotelko, Eva's father, turns out to be Oksanna's lover; when it is time for Eva to find out the truth about Ivan Kotelko, all she has to do is to knock on Alex's neighbour's door, for Mykola Savchuk, a historian, happens to be Ivan's childhood friend—this interconnectedness draws attention to the simultaneous existence of the past, present, and future, to the discontinuity of what Foucault calls "effective" history.

The three generations of Ukrainian-Canadians in *The Green Library* have their particular relations with history. The first generation, Olya Pavlenko (Mrs. Moroz) and Ivan Kotelko, will always look back at Ukrainian history and identify with it; both Olya and Ivan seem unwilling to find their places in Canadian history. In 1993, after having lived in Canada for over forty years, Olya Pavlenko still calls Ukraine "my country" (*The Green Library* 98); she remembers its tragic history because, as she explains to Eva, "'[t]hat is the only way we have kept ourselves alive—by remembering'" (102). Ivan Kotelko dreams of returning to the Old Country and therefore is involved in political activities that have "to do with changing things so he'd actually have a homeland to return to" (*The Green Library* 240). They, this first generation, feel themselves in exile, and although most of them understand that return to the Old Country is impossible, they continue to dream of going back one day, of "dying home." The best example of the exile is

Oksanna's and Alex's father, Mr. Moroz, who taught Alex that the "*worst thing that can happen to a Ukrainian* [...] *is to die in a foreign country*" (*The Green Library* 263).

However, once the first generation immigrants come to Canada, they—albeit unwillingly—become a part of Canadian history; they shape it. In history books their lives are now reduced to statistics: the first Displaced Persons (the third wave of Ukrainian immigrants) arrived in Canada in 1947. By 1952, the number of Ukrainian immigrants was over 32,000. Most of them found themselves in northern Ontario since this wave was mostly funded by mining and forestry companies (Gerus and Rea 16). Keefer's task in *The Green Library* is to show her readers that every single person out of these 32,000 has a face and a fate. These people lose their home but cannot immediately acquire a new one because the host society often resents them. Olya Pavlenko, who had a university degree in Ukraine and used to work as a librarian, is now forced to make her living by scrubbing floors; Ivan Kotelko, who had "to spend a month roughening his hands to pass the examination" (*The Green Library* 246) and be admitted into Canada, is locked up in a lumber camp where the first word he learns is "bohunk" (247).

The painful transnational experiences of the first generation immigrants in Canada make the second generation resent their ethnicity: for this generation, represented by Oksanna Moroz (or Susan Frost later on in her life), Ukrainian history seems not to exist at all. As Oksanna confesses to Eva, she "wanted to get away from anything to do with Ukraine, from all those Ukrainians who were so

busy trying to get back home they had no time for their own country, this country [Canada]" (*The Green Library* 240). She refuses to speak Ukrainian; she changes her name so that it will sound English, although it is simply a translation from Ukrainian; she moves to downtown Toronto. However, Oksanna, who has reached the second phase of her *rites de passage* as defined by Turner, is stuck between the two cultures and thus is not capable of rejecting her origin completely. When Ivan Kotelko, who once was in love with Oksanna's mother at a DPs' camp in Europe, finds them she falls in love with him. "'He carried himself like a soldier [...],'" Oksanna explains (*The Green Library* 258), and this image becomes for her the symbol of the Old Country. When Eva points out to Olya Pavlenko how successful her daughter is and how proud Olya must be of Oksanna, Olya gives a very strange reply: "'My daughter is a very strong woman. She scares me, sometimes, how strong she is'" (*The Green Library* 94). Olya's emphasis on Oksanna's strength signifies that her daughter has not fully integrated into Canadian society; she is still struggling to be accepted by it.

The third generation, represented by Eva Chown, feels much more comfortable in the Canadian environment than its two predecessors did and has no need of either desperately holding on to the heritage or completely rejecting it. However, when constructing her identity Eva will need to reconcile the two polar views on Ukrainian heritage and thus to (re)discover ethnic history, though it might involve a struggle before this history can be accepted. The first thing Eva does as soon as she learns that she might be a daughter of a Ukrainian is to go to a library

and dig into history books. The book she sets her eyes on "is thinner than any others: through interviews, it tells the stories of some of the hundreds of thousands who found themselves homeless at the end of the war" (*The Green Library* 76). Eva chooses it over thicker volumes giving statistical data because here, again, personal histories become the foundation for the public history. This scheme, though, works two ways: it is public history that changes Eva's personal relationship with Dan who is a Jew and whose grandparents fled Poland for Canada. Like Ukrainians, Jews consider history an important construct of their identity. Speaking on behalf of all the members of Jewish community—probably not only in North America but around the world—history professor David Green says: "My feeling both as a Jew and as a history professor is that a Jew who does not have ... a Jewish identity that is rooted in Jewish history, is surely not in a position to have a ... sense of where he or she wants to go as a Jew" (qtd. in Hollenberg 123).

The tragic history of persecution and oppression of Jews in Europe throughout past centuries gets between Eva and Dan, when he learns that she is in all probability half Ukrainian:

> 'It's not just Easter eggs and perogies, being Ukrainian. It also happens to be things like pogroms. Your national hero, Khmelnitsky, [...] was one of the great pogrom-makers of all time, and if you don't know that, it's time you learned. [...] We have the little matter of Babi Yar, and all those jolly Ukrainian guards at the death camps, some of whom are alive and well and living in

> friendly, all-Canadian towns the length and breadth of this fair land. Just what did he do in the war, this long-lost daddy of yours? Are you sure you want to find out?' (*The Green Library* 112-13)

As Eva hears Dan's accusations, she starts "shaking her head, a gesture she is not aware she is making" (113). She still needs to reveal all the dark pages of the history that has suddenly become hers; that has been, to adopt the words of Roman Onufrijchuk, given to her as inheritance (4). The Khmelnytsky uprising of 1648-1656 Dan is referring to, as Orest Subtelny puts it, "is considered by Jews to be one of the most traumatic events in their history" (128). In strictly historical terms, the uprising was caused by social rather than racial conflict, but it was directed against what the rebels saw as their oppressors—the nobles represented by Poles, in the first place, and Jews. For example, a secret 1890 Habsburg police report about West Ukrainian peasants argues that, although the relations between Ukrainians and Jews were never simple, "it would be a mistake to speak of a prevalence of anti-Semitism in the sense of racial hatred" (qtd. in Subtelny 312). However, no matter what the official history has to say about it, from Dan's point of view the tragic experience his people had to go through can neither be explained nor forgiven because he cannot see the history from a distance: it is here and it is personal.

Eva is shaking her head at what Dan has said, but she cannot dismiss it. Her personality is split; she has not yet accepted the idea that she is "ethnic," but she already feels part of the culture she "hardly knew about until a month ago" (*The Green Library* 112), so she instinctively takes a defensive position. Eva is not the

first Ukrainian who wants to cast off the stereotype of the Ukrainian "hereditary dislike for Jews" (Betcherman 62); modern historians have tried to provide an alternative view on the pogroms against Jews, which took place on the territory of present-day Ukraine, by revealing more historical facts about them. As Orest Subtelny argues, in 1881 and 1903-1905, as a consequence of the official governmental policy of anti-Semitism in Tsarist Russia that included even the accusations of the ritual murder (the Beiliss case), in Right-Bank Ukraine (where Jews made up 12.6% of the population), a series of pogroms were organized by ultra-right Russian nationalists (277). After the 1905 revolution, the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers' Party created several party units to defend Jewish communities against pogroms (Subtelny 297).

The years of Civil War following the revolution of 1917 witnessed another wave of anti-Jewish pogroms. The White Volunteer Army was to blame for the most brutal ones; however, while Symon Petlyura, the head of an alternative Ukrainian government called the Directory, tried to establish friendly relationships with an eminent Zionist Vladimir Zhabotinsky and to prevent pogroms in every possible way, the Directory's Army was responsible for a number of mass Jew murders inflicted by its irregular troops. Petlyura put to death *otaman* Semesenko, the ringleader of one of the bloodiest pogroms, but achieved little success in stopping the slaughter of Jews (Subtelny 363-64). The major problem of this alternative reading of history is that it appears to see the only way to clear Ukrainians of accusations in blaming someone else.

In his angry speech, Dan also mentions something much more dreadful than the pogroms. However tragic was the experience of the Jews who perished in the Khmelnytsky uprising, it was the Holocaust that nearly wiped out the whole nation. If the history of pogroms kept the Jews and Ukrainians in two different "camps" in Europe, the history of the Holocaust was brought over the Atlantic and would not let them reconcile in the New World. In *The Green Library*, the personal conflict between Dan and Eva is a fragment of the public conflict between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities of Canada over the Deschênes Commission and its investigation on the Nazi war criminals that was being held from September, 1985 to September, 1987. The conflict started when the *Toronto Star* published a front-page article stating that "218 former Ukrainian officers of Hitler's SS (elite guard) which ran death camps in Eastern Europe are living in Canada" (qtd. in Ilyniak 380). Once the commission had been formed, it began an investigation which the Ukrainian community in Canada called a "witch-hunt"; at the same time, the Israel trial of John Demjanjuk[2], a Ukrainian, who was accused of operating the gas ovens of the death camps in Treblinka but who himself denied it, "put a whole nation on trial" (Ilyniak 379).

The issue caused several racist incidents: "the defacement of two Ukrainian monuments and a storefront of a Ukrainian newspaper, [and] a bomb threat against a Ukrainian family [...]" (Ilyniak 384), among others. The Ukrainian community

[2] For recent developments in the John Demianjuk case see "Demjanjuk Stripped of U.S. Citizenship." *The Ukrainian Weekly* 3 March 2002: 1, 14.

was supported by Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Croatians, Germans, and Slovenians, who formed a coalition "Canadians for Justice" in April, 1985 (Ilyniak 383). The Deschênes report was submitted the last day of December, 1986; the bill based on this report became law in September, 1987. Out of 150 suspects, only three "have been charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity, of whom only one has gone to trial. None of them is Ukrainian" (Ilyniak 389). Nonetheless, even when the conflict between the two communities in Canada subsided, it could not mean an immediate forgiveness granted by both parties to each other; that is why for Dan, who as a member of the Jewish community sees the Holocaust as one of the major events influencing the formation of his identity (Vigod 17), it is not easy to accept that Eva is half Ukrainian. The tragic Ukrainian history Eva has just learnt from Olya is now being retold by Dan from the Jewish perspective, for "[t]here are stories Dan has to tell, stories he'd heard as a child [...]. Only they were more than stories for the family who stayed behind when his grandparents left Poland for Canada" (*The Green Library* 113). As a result, the public history is reenacted in the story of Dan's and Eva's relationship.

After the quarrel with Dan, Eva is further away from herself than ever, although her whole life she has been hiding from herself, even as a child "always hanging her head, looking down at the floor, hiding the startling blue of her eyes" (*The Green Library* 81). Her decision to go to Ukraine is motivated by her desire to have a history—no matter how disagreeable it might be; what she is seeking in the Old Country is, to use the definition of Bohdan Kordan, "the place that would offer

[her] legitimacy, that would legitimize [her] existence [...]" (39). Eva's life, even prior to her discovery of her partly Ukrainian origin, can be a symbol of Ukrainian culture which, for most of its history, was in "a state of siege"—the metaphor first articulated by Ukrainian historian Yuri Badzio and used by Marco Carynnyk in relation to the Ukrainian community in Canada (Carynnyk 42). To be able to break free from this "state of siege," Eva needs to establish Ukrainians as a distinct nation with cultural traditions, history, language and to legitimize her place in this nation.

Eva's arrival to the Old Country is preceded by what Maxim Tarnawsky calls "a tourist's concise history of Ukraine" (105); it encompasses over fifteen hundred years—from the foundation of Kyiv until the Chornobyl disaster. Particular events from Ukrainian history given in this "concise" rendition are all marked by tragedy: the murder of Borys and Hlib who were canonized by the church as saints; the death of a handful of students at Kruty who stood up to defend the short-lived Ukrainian republic; the Chornobyl meltdown which caused numerous deaths (*The Green Library* 121-24). At this point in *The Green Library*, Ukrainians are seen as both victimizers and victimized, and this creates even more confusion for Eva because now she cannot deny her Ukrainian part of self even if she wanted to: victims, unlike victimizers, cannot reject their tragic history.

Eva needs to visit Babyn Yar—the place where thousands of Jews were slaughtered during the Second World War—to be able to put herself for a moment in the position of those who perished and, through this, to achieve balance in her new life. Eva cannot view Ukrainian history from a distance as a traditional

historical study described by Foucault would do: when looking at the monument in Babyn Yar, she is instantly horrified by the picture in her mind: "among those tens of thousands of Jews marched into the ravine, Dan and Julie [Dan's daughter]. And then she is ready to cry out for two imagined victims instead of the countless bodies buried here" (*The Green Library* 185). For Eva, the history is taking place here and now instead of in a foreign country and fifty years ago; it is personal and subjective.

Eva is taken to Babyn Yar by her Ukrainian lover, Alex, but their visit there causes conflict and eventually their break-up: when Eva points out to Alex that there were Ukrainian guards at the concentration camps during World War II, Alex takes a defensive position, just as Eva did not long before:

> 'O yes. They were there. [...] But Eva, more bloody Dutchmen were recruited by the Waffen-SS than Ukrainians. Three times as many. Did you know that—does anybody know? And yes, five days after the Khreshchatyk was destroyed, the Nazis rounded up all the Jews in Kiev, and yes, everyone watched them walk to their deaths down this very street. Because if they'd done anything to stop the Nazis, they'd have ended up exactly where the Jews were headed. Tell me, what would you have done?' (*The Green Library* 184)

Alex is not trying to excuse anything—at least, this is what he tells Eva—but for him the facts of Ukrainian history that make Ukrainians as a nation seem anti-Semitic are as difficult to accept as they are for her. For Eva, this shift from being

an accused (by Dan) to becoming an accuser is very important: by it she lays claim to Ukrainian history; she accepts it as something that belongs to her. That is why it is now easier for Eva to learn that Ivan Kotelko, her grandfather, was a member of the *Nachtigall* division fighting on the side of Germany during World War II. Soloveyko (Nightingale), the summer camp outside Kyiv where Lesia Levkovych takes her son Ivan in 1933, is tied with the *Nachtigall* (Nightingale) division, just as Roland of Toronto's Roncesvalles (*The Green Library* 160) is tied to the *Roland* division (195). Through the names of Nightingale and Roland, Keefer shows the reader that history is both a continuity and discontinuity, that every coin has two sides: there is no "monumental history" and no heroes to look up to; the peaceful Soloveyko will always coexist with the military *Nachtigall*; the medieval hero Roland will reappear as a negative image in the war and will once again reappear to give a name to a part of the city "crowded with immigrants desperate for a new world" (*The Green Library* 160), and these all are the fragments of reality no matter how hard people try to reject any of them.

The controversial figure of Ivan Kotelko can be read as a symbolic representation of Eva's split personality. Ivan sacrifices his mother because he wants to change his country for the better; he is still playing a childhood game called Secret Army: "Freedom for [his] homeland—this is the cause [he] must defend" (*The Green Library* 171), unable, it appears, to realize that this is no longer a game. He turns away from his mother, just as Eva at first tries to reject the fact that she belongs to the past as much as to the present and future. Oksanna Moroz

insists that Ivan is "not a war criminal" (*The Green Library* 240), but what he does to his mother cannot be justified by any good intentions. Ivan Kotelko might be just one of the *Polizei* murdering people in Babyn Yar, though an eyewitness account of the executions in Babyn Yar in 1941 argues that the Ukrainian police were not able to help Nazis to execute Jews—and Ukrainians—in Babyn Yar because by this time the police units had not yet been formed (Pysachenko 5), while the *Nachtigall* and *Roland* divisions were formed with a different purpose. In *The Green Library*, however, Keefer uses the information taken from Anatoli Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar*, a highly biased rendition of the Kyiv occupation by the Nazis based on his personal memories of what happened in Kyiv when he was twelve years old. Although Kuznetsov himself quotes the announcement from the *Nove Ukrainske Slovo* newspaper—"RECRUITS WANTED FOR UKRAINIAN POLIZEI" (258)—and in his notes section explains that the announcement appeared in the May 1942 issues of the paper, one of the scenes in the book describes how the Ukrainian police helped the Nazi officers during the execution of Jews in late September of 1941:

> Ukrainian *Polizei* (not local men but, judging by their accents, from the Western Ukraine) seized the people coarsely, beat them and shouted:
>
> "Undress! Quick! Quick!"
>
> Those who dallied were forcibly stripped, kicked, beaten with brass knuckles and clubs by the *Polizei*, with drunken viciousness and in a strange sadistic frenzy. (Kuznetsov 73)

Kuznetsov, in the very first sentence of his book, claims that "[e]verything in this book is *the* truth" (xii; my emphasis), and Keefer takes it as *the* truth, but a critical reader must not forget in what environment (the Soviet Union of Leonid Brezhnev) and what time period (1966) the book was published. Keefer's decision to turn to this particular book for a description of the 1941 events in Kyiv emphasizes the fact that often the immigrants' descendants in Canada, in their vision of the Old Country, are very much influenced by ethnic stereotypes; they accept the book as "*the* truth" because they have been told to by the dominant culture. Thus, like Keefer herself, Eva needs to exorcise her shame of being partly Ukrainian.

On the last pages of *The Green Library*, Ivan Kotelko has come to take his mother—most probably—to Babyn Yar, to that enormous tomb she will share with thousands of others where there will be no more conflicts, no more hatred, no more racism. Her "son's been made to think that she's his enemy," Lesia Levkovych says to herself as she walks with her son down the Khreschatyk (*The Green Library* 271), and so he probably has, because as an old man all he needs is to tell his story to a boy, to his grandson, and let him judge his grandfather's deeds. By slipping his picture as a child in Eva's mailbox, Ivan Kotelko is not simply claiming his grandson Ben as Eva and Oksanna believe; he needs somebody with whom to share his guilt and the tragedy of his life, to ask not for forgiveness, but only for a chance to be understood—to be able to come to terms with the past and to claim a future. The boy miraculously given to him legitimizes his existence in the country that has

never become his home; the boy gives him a chance to transmit the history of the Old Country and make it a part of the history of the New World.

When Eva learns that Lesia Levkovych, her Ukrainian grandmother, was executed in Babyn Yar, for the first time she consciously knows that Ukrainian history is hers, that it is a part of what she is. She is ready to accept the public history because of "the minute fraction of those bones that belong to her" (*The Green Library* 186). The main idea Keefer is communicating to her reader through the historical narratives in *The Green Library* is that if people are ever to establish some kind of identity, they need to come to terms with the past; they must stop pointing at what others did wrong, "acknowledge, and perhaps even [...] atone for uncomfortable and often heretofore denied aspects of [the] history" (Ilyniak 389), and, most importantly, not only ask for forgiveness but forgive themselves.

"*Home is where your dead are buried,*" Eva remembers hearing once from Olya Pavlenko (*The Green Library* 225), and although Ukraine would never overshadow Canada, her true home, she now starts realizing that being born into two cultures and two histories does not automatically cause a split in personality. This moment becomes for Eva a step towards reconciliation with the past, towards accepting the fact that identity can be plural, and towards learning what a Canadian identity is—the identity of the person "who is rooted in two historical narratives" (Kostash "Domination and Exclusion" 59). Here, the novel suggests that multiculturalism involves the desire of the communities not for a parallel coexistence (Breton "Commentary" 21) but for exchange and acceptance of each

other's culture; that the transnational construction of identity will require the retelling of history from a different perspective. This, though, can only partly resolve Eva's problem of identification; apart from being a Ukrainian in Canada, she also needs to learn what it means to be a Ukrainian *woman* in Canada.

CHAPTER THREE

"My Father Choosing My Brother Over Me": The Issue of Gender

In an article devoted to Ukrainian-Canadian women, Marusia K. Petryshyn claims that in order to paint a true picture of the women's status in Canada, scholars have to combine "feminist and ethnocultural perspectives" (189), since most Canadian feminist studies have focused on the experiences of women of the dominant cultures, without acknowledging the fact that ethnic minority women have faced more challenges and a double level of discrimination. Although the article was published in 1980 and seems outdated, it provides a good frame through which *The Green Library* can be read. In the novel, the stories of Olya Pavlenko, Oksanna Moroz, and Eva Chown, for whom gender is one of the major markers of identity, seem to mirror the general pattern of Canadian society. Using, as Petryshyn invites us to, both feminist and ethnocultural perspectives, this chapter will examine how transnational experiences of immigrants in Canada influence the gendered construction of their identity.

If for the first-generation immigrants identification process is directly related to the cultural baggage they bring over from the Old Country, for the third-generation ethnic Canadian women, who have very little knowledge of the actual situation in the country of emigration, gendered construction of identity cannot be rooted in the Old World's gender relations more than in the New World's. The difference between the first, second, and third generations' perception of

themselves as women in society depends on the extent of their belonging to one place more than to the other; in *The Green Library*, the difference between Olya's, Oksanna's, and Eva's "inventions" of Ukraine and Ukrainian gender relations shows the shift from an ethnic towards transnational construction of identity. However, even the third generation's gendered identification is influenced by its ethnic background, and in order to understand how Eva constructs her identity, once she realizes that she is half Ukrainian, it is necessary to examine gender relations in Ukrainian community in Canada. When Frances Swyripa wrote her major study *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity, 1891-1991*, she was challenged by a schism in Ukrainian-Canadian women's studies: on the one hand, some writers, such as Helen Potrebenko and Myrna Kostash, claim that Ukrainian community in Canada is essentially a patriarchal one where woman is inferior to man in every aspect of life; on the other hand, such writers as Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak and Savella Stechishin argue that a woman's exceptional role in Ukrainian society is rooted in "the matriarchy believed to exist in ancient Ukrainian culture" (Swyripa 120). Such polar views on Ukrainian gender relations foreground the "invention" of the Old Country by the immigrants' descendants; the more removed is the generation, the more mythologized is the country of origin.

Although gender relations in the novel are presented through the experiences of three different generations, both the Ukrainian community in Canada and Canadian society itself seem to be portrayed as male-dominated, where a woman

has to struggle in order to establish a meaningful identity. A Ukrainian-Canadian reader, who reads the novel through the lens of his/her cultural background, can challenge Keefer's presentation of gender relations in the Ukrainian community as one of the "inventions" of the Old Country; other Canadian readers do not have the advantage of being familiar with both cultures and thus need to be provided with a brief historical account of gender relations in Ukraine. It would not be true to say that there has never existed any problem of male domination in Ukraine, but an average Ukrainian woman has enjoyed much more freedom and respect than any other European woman. The recognition of this freedom was inscribed in the Constitution as soon as the Ukrainian People's Republic proclaimed its complete independence in 1918: "The law of the UNR does not recognize any difference in the rights and duties of men and women" (qtd. in Bohachevsky-Chomiak 134). In her study *Wedded to the Cause*, Frances Swyripa quotes Savella Stechishin as saying that the Ukrainian statesmen granted women equal rights "without women having to fight for them as in other countries" (120). Although it can be argued that the recognition of the women's equal rights was, to a certain extent, formal, since the Ukrainian People's Republic was more concerned with national than women's issues, this attempt at establishing equality cannot be disregarded.

The foundation was laid in earlier times, and historical evidence shows that throughout centuries in many spheres of life women maintained a high position. Marian Rubchak claims that "there is strong evidence for a matrifocal order [in Kievan Rus] which accorded women considerable influence and prestige" (321); it

is only with the introduction of Christianity that the woman's position started changing. As Rubchak explains,

> women [of Kievan Rus] vigorously opposed what was essentially masculine faith, rooted in the principles of patriarchal authority. They remained intractable and continued to ward off the incursion of a misogynistic clergy by resisting Orthodox Christianity. [...] Demands on the part of the Byzantine clergy that the father act as head of the family also met with little success [...]. It is this legacy that Ukrainian women have inherited. (321)

It comes as no surprise, then, that the history of Ukrainian secular literature begins *de facto* with the poem of Olena Kopot-Zhoravnytska of Lutsk written in 1575 (Zabuzhko 173); "Sofiia Kovalevska (née Korvin-Krukovska, 1850-91), born in the Poltava region, was the first modern female mathematician to teach at a university (Stockholm)" (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 17); Sofiia Okunevska, a Galician Ukrainian, "became the first Austrian woman to earn a medical degree (in Zurich and Cracow, in 1894 and 1900 respectively), and also the first woman in Galicia to practice medicine" (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 63)—and this is in the oppressive environment of the Austro-Hungarian empire; Lesia Ukrainka, a Ukrainian poet whose dramas in verse form, as Oksana Zabuzhko notes, became a "cultural revolution" in literature, "re-wrote" the core texts of Classical and Judeo-Christian mythology so that every text turned from a patriarchal one into one written from a female point of view and where a woman is the hero (Zabuzhko 174). Thus, if

viewed from a historical perspective, Ukrainian society can hardly be accused of always maintaining "patriarchy with its [...] monologic approach to women and children" (Mårald 31).

However, Keefer's portrayal of gender relations in Ukrainian society may be based on gender relations of her own family—peasant immigrants from Galicia. In order to understand what makes Keefer depict Ukrainian culture as essentially patriarchal, it is necessary to turn to the history of Ukrainian emigration to North America. In the 19th century, the Ukrainian state had been non-existent for several centuries; the parts of the country were under different rules. Left-Bank and part of Right-Bank Ukraine were under the Tsarist Russia rule, while Galicia was under the Austro-Hungarian rule. The dissimilarity between the status of women in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires can be best described by the words of Lesia Ukrainka who lived in the part of Ukraine under the Russian rule:

> As far as I know the situation of the Galician women in their community, it can best be called captivity, and if I had to live like that I would rather be serving a sentence in a labour camp. [...] It is true that establishment of universities as well as rights and patents etc. depend on the government, but community traditions are not governed. [...] Here lies the reason why the Galicians who came to [Greater] Ukraine "to look for a bride" became [...] "the talk of the town"! Our men pick hats in such manner but not women. (11: 119; my translation)

One of the reasons for the dissimilarity of women's position in Tsarist Russia and Austro-Hungary lies in the political systems of the two empires. Not only were they "radically different from those to which [Ukrainians] had been accustomed" (Subtelny 201); they differed greatly from each other. Although in Tsarist Russia Ukrainians found themselves in a highly disadvantageous position, in Austro-Hungary the situation was even worse. As Orest Subtelby explains, "One word summed up conditions in the Ukrainian-inhabited areas of the Habsburg Empire: poverty" (213). The hard economic situation caused the spread of marriages of convenience here (Ponomaryov 236); the lack of jobs made women stay at home. Moreover, the Western Ukrainian Catholic intelligentsia feared the idea of woman's independence and stressed the importance of "the ideal devout mother performing her God-given biological functions in the warmth of the family [...]" (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 197) for the preservation of the nation.

The first two waves of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada consisted mostly of Western Ukrainians (Galicians) who brought their customs with them. However, the gender relations carried by immigrants over the Atlantic are only one of the reasons why heritage is seen by Keefer as something "which most eastern-European Canadians have yet to come to terms with—it is so much safer and pleasanter to ignore the prejudices we have had bred into us" (Keefer "In Violent Voice" 44). Another reason is the general perception of Eastern Europeans in Canadian society of the late 19th century that continues into the early and even mid-twentieth century: "men in sheepskin coats" were seen as endangering the values of the Canadian

society; their women contradicted the idea of "Christian womanhood" (Owen 14). "There are some Indians in the Northwest," Keefer quotes the 1899 issue of the *Guelph Daily Herald* in an article, "who are pretty low down in the scale of humanity, but they appear to be above associating with the kind of Galicians Mr. Sifton has introduced" (" 'Coming Across Bones' " 97). Thus, the situation of Galician women, who had already been in a disadvantageous position in their home country, worsened once they arrived in Canada.

In *The Green Library*, all female characters seem to face inferiority, marginality, and inequality; it is a constant challenge for them to establish themselves as women in Canadian society. In the novel, Keefer explores gender relations based on the three generations of Ukrainian-Canadians. All the three generations are brought together by Keefer twice, in 1963 and 1993, to prove once again that history is comprised of both public and private stories. It comes as no surprise that Keefer chooses the year 1963 as her first setting in *The Green Library*, some of whose female characters attempt to convey feminist ideas and for whom gender becomes an important construct of identity: besides the birth of multiculturalism, 1963 witnessed a new wave of feminism in North America. The 1963 Kennedy Commission on the Status of Women in the United States had a great impact on the women's movements both in the United States and Canada, notwithstanding its "mixed success" (Freeman 15). For the main characters of *The Green Library*, the year 1963 becomes a turning point. Olya Pavlenko (Mrs. Moroz) loses her husband who goes back to Ukraine; she now needs to learn how

to survive in a strange and not always friendly environment. Oksanna, Olya's daughter, loses her father, and for her it is one of the most traumatic experiences because, as she confesses later in her life to Eva, "'I would have cut off my right arm to return to the place where I should have been born'" (*The Green Library* 242). For her, the trauma is doubled by the fact that her father chooses to take her brother Alex; he "never dreamed of asking [her] to go back with him" (242). Her parents' decision makes Oksanna feel inferior as a woman and project the relationship in her particular family onto Ukrainian society in general. Alex goes back to Ukraine never to see Canada again, and his life is shaped by this involuntary return.

1963 becomes also a turning point for Eva Chown, a WASP born into a rich family, who falls in love with Alex—a son of a Ukrainian immigrant working as a cleaning woman at the Chowns' house. Eva's infatuation with the boy whose mother Mr. Chown pays "a pittance for cleaning his house" (*The Green Library* 63) pushes Eva from the center towards the margin; it is the first instance in the novel when Keefer suggests the possibility of living simultaneously in the center and on the margin. Later, Eva Chown, who owns a twelve-bedroom house, turns out to be a daughter of a *bohunk* from a lumber camp, while Olya Pavlenko, Alex's mother, turns out to have two university degrees—one obtained in Ukraine and not recognized in Canada because of Olya's poor knowledge of English in the early years of her immigration, and another obtained in Canada, from the Department of Slavic Studies of the University of Toronto. Thus, in *The Green Library*, to use the

words of Eva Beautell, "the binary, oppositional logic of centre and margin is turned upside down and finally dismantled in favour of a decentred view of the world" (20).

Although all the three generations of Ukrainian-Canadians find themselves in flux where they change roles and establish temporary/plural identities, their experiences differ greatly. The first generation, represented by Olya Pavlenko, can boast a certain degree of internal integrity. Although Olya can, at times, be read as a typical mother/educator figure, a transmitter of traditions, who bakes a poppy seed cake, whose house is full of kilims, pottery, and embroidery, who complains to Eva that she has "no one to pass them on to" (*The Green Library* 116), she should not be reduced to this limited role. In the early chapters of the novel, through Eva's recollections of Mrs. Moroz working as a cleaning woman at her parents' house, Keefer describes how Olya, unnoticed, once leaves the room so as not to jeopardize her son's future, when Mr. Chown recognizes Alex as "a like-minded *man*" (63; my emphasis) and allows him to examine the rock samples in his study. The woman capable of the "self-consuming manner of withdrawal, that way of turning your whole body into something less than the floor on which everyone is standing" (63), is much different from the bold and self-respecting woman whom the reader meets later in the book. This contradiction in Olya's behaviour suggests that what she was in the Chowns' house was just a role played involuntarily due to the circumstances, an identity imposed on her. Though Olya has spent half of her life in Canada, she does not feel Canadian; she feels herself a part of the nation she has been torn from.

Speaking about Ukraine she says, "We are the people [...]" (102), and the pronoun "we" she uses is the most vivid manifestation of who she is and where she belongs.

Gender relations, however, do not seem to be as important marker of Olya's identity as they are for other women in the novel; there is too much left out for the reader to be able to draw any certain conclusions. When her husband leaves for Ukraine, Olya is never given a chance to speak for herself; first, the reader hears Mrs. Chown speaking: "'He can't just go off and abandon you. You're his wife, you have legal rights. [...] How does he expect you to support yourself? Especially if he's taking Alex with him'" (*The Green Library* 66). Holly Chown adopts the right to judge the decisions of the "lower class" people and pronounce what is right or wrong. Her assumptions parallel these of the Protestant women's missionaries in rural Canada who adopted the right to judge the values of Slavic immigrants admitted into Canada in the late 19th century, whom they saw as barbaric, backward, and pagan. Although those immigrants were Christian, as Michael Owen explains, "few Protestant denominations accepted their traditions as legitimate expressions of Christian faith" (3). The missionaries saw their task in educating and "elevating" the newcomers, in converting them to Protestantism, and were puzzled by the immigrant women's reluctance to assimilate. They blamed their failure on the Ukrainian women's illiteracy, "by which they meant an inability to read, write, and speak English properly" (Owen 13). They also blamed the Ukrainian family which, according to the Anglo-Canadian stereotype, was selling daughters out through arranged marriages instead of educating them. In her memoir about the

mission's activities in Ukrainian communities, women's rights activist Nellie McClung writes,

> Many a promising pupil had her education cut short when some grizzled old widower thought a good strong red-cheeked young girl would be right handy around the house and it would be cheaper to marry her than to have to pay her wages... Women and children did not count for much in the grim battle for existence. (qtd. in Swyripa 78)

This particular stereotype was used by the missionaries as an excuse for their failure as educators/assimilators, but the statistics can easily dispel the myth of an older groom and a child bride as "typical" for Ukrainians. As Frances Swyripa shows on the example of the Mundare mission, in the prewar years most Ukrainian men married in their mid to late twenties, while the average age for a girl to marry ranged from seventeen to nineteen years (87). Anybody will agree that a man in his late twenties can hardly be called "some grizzled old widower." Moreover, the myth of the Ukrainians' reluctance to educate themselves is challenged by the fact that the immigrants, who started arriving in Canada in the late 19th century, established by 1916 the Petro Mohyla Institute in Saskatoon, which accepted both male and female students. As well, researchers point to the rapid decrease of illiteracy among Ukrainian-Canadians between 1921 and 1931 (Petryshyn 193-94). Nevertheless, the imposed stereotypes influence the immigrants' perception of themselves; in the case of the first-generation Canadians, these stereotypes are one

of the reasons why the immigrants do not want to see Canada as their true home, do not want to identify with it.

In *The Green Library*, Holly Chown—when explaining to Olya that the latter has "legal rights," and so "educating" her—assumes that, since Olya speaks poor English, she is generally backward, and thus it is Holly who has to voice Olya's problems. If the reader can trust Eva's judgment at this point, Holly is "lying, pretending to Mrs. Moroz that she wants to help her [...]" (*The Green Library* 67); Holly's words intend to make Olya feel inferior both in gender and social relations. By introducing this conversation (or, rather, Holly's monologue) into the novel, Keefer wants to point at one of the reasons why the second generation, ashamed of the low status of the parents, wants to assimilate into the dominant society and thus resents the Old Country's culture. Later in the book, the reader also hears Oksanna's opinion on her parents' separation, and it does not differ from Holly's: "'my father walked out on us,'" Oksanna says (*The Green Library* 257). Although Oksanna acknowledges that her mother was never in love with her father and married him because he was a working man and could pass the Canadian immigration procedure more easily, she does not seem to recognize that her parents' decision to separate might have been caused by this fact; she blames her father for abandoning them instead. The reasons why Mr. Moroz decides to take his son back to Ukraine and leave his daughter behind are unclear, and Oksanna's explanations are not particularly convincing.

The one time that we do hear Olya talk about her marriage is when she is speaking with Eva long after her husband's death: "'I carried my husband's name for twenty-seven years,'" she says, "'did that tell anyone who I really was?'" (*The Green Library* 101). This phrase seems to suggest that she was not content with her inferior role as a woman, but later in the passage Olya poses the problem of naming in general, of the names that veil the true nature of people, thus pushing aside the gender issue. The woman's taking her husband's name, just as the forced change of the immigrants' names by the authorities no sooner than the former cross the border, is, in the words of Alkis Kontos, "the first rape of identity" (in Angus *Ethnicity* 45). As if in an attempt to return to her true self, Mrs. Moroz reverts to her maiden name Olya Pavlenko, but does so only when her husband dies and there is no need to be faithful to him anymore—and thus no revolt against this "rape of identity" is involved.

The situation with the second generation is quite different. Born in Canada, sons and daughters of immigrants who could barely speak English and spent their lives on farms, in foundries and lumber camps, they did not want to be restricted to the choices their parents had; neither did they want to be restricted to the choices their parents expected them to make. In the Ukrainian-Canadian press of the turn of the century, this generation was condemned for turning away from the Old Country's culture. Frances Swyripa reprinted in her book the Jacob Maydanyk cartoon from *Vuikova Knyha* featuring a peasant Ukrainian girl (long dark hair, kerchief, long skirt) turning into a young Canadian lady (short blond hair, mini-

dress, long slim cigarette in her fingers) with a message saying, " 'Nasha Meri [Our Mary].' The world turns and is turning upside down and in a single year our Maria Perih has turned into Meri Porydzh [Mary Porridge]—forgetting Ukrainian and limited to 'yes' and 'no' in English" (Swyripa 63). Although nobody can expect second-generation Canadians not to be fluent in English, the ironic message is clear: young Ukrainian women who rebelled against traditional laws and practices in their family were, in the eyes of Ukrainian nationalists in Canada, "jeopardizing the future" (Swyripa 63) of the Ukrainian community.

Unfortunately, while condemning the young women for their "betrayal" of national interests, the nationalistic press did not attempt to look at the reasons for women's choices. In Canada, their experience of being Ukrainian women was limited to their small communities, usually in rural farms where the church and the post office—the weekly gathering place of the farm wives while waiting for letters from their husbands gone off to work at factories (Swyripa 28)—were the only entertainment and relief from back-breaking labour on the farm. As Anna Feldman argues, "The position of Ukrainian immigrant women [...] worsened under pioneering conditions. They had to perform heavier work and spend more time in the fields than they did in the old country" (64). Women were left alone on the farms doing most of the men's work and tending to children, with their husbands away trying to make money as workers; this unusual situation, coupled with their marginalized position as immigrants and the limited choices Canadian society provided for women in general, let alone ethnic minorities, resulted in the second

generation's impulse to escape to the cities in search of better paid jobs and entertainment. In Keefer's novel, this movement is exemplified in Oksanna's aspiration to eliminate any indication of her Ukrainian heritage, to become a respected medical doctor, "Dermatologist, MD, FRCP(C), BSP" (*The Green Library* 87), and to win a place in Canadian society denied to her mother.

A Ukrainian-Canadian scholar, Myrna Kostash, writes about her experience as a young woman in her community:

> To serve my people in their struggle for cultural specificity, I would have to live as a traditional Ukrainian woman. That woman goes directly from her father's house to her husband's, devotes her time to the rearing of Ukrainian children and the keeping of a Ukrainian home [...], provides her husband with an oasis of serenity, deference and loyalty, and goes to church where she is reconfirmed in her chaste, selfless, and complacent Ukrainian identity. I turned and ran. (64)[3]

What Kostash does not indicate here is that the situation of a "traditional" Ukrainian woman significantly changed once she crossed the Canadian border; on the new territory, surrounded by inequality and ethnic prejudice, Ukrainians tried to use the only tool they had to keep from assimilation into the mainstream culture:

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[3] I would argue, though, that Ukrainian woman goes directly from her mother's to her mother's-in-law house. In a Ukrainian tradition, it is the mother who gives away the bride and the mother-in-law who receives the couple in her house after the wedding.

the family. The family became the battle ground for survival of Ukrainian identity, and both mother and father were to pass down the Ukrainian language and traditions to their children. Moreover, Kostash does not recognize the fact that the young men of her community might also have been expected to subordinate their own desires to the community needs. In *The Green Library*, however, the Moroz family does not seem to belong to any Ukrainian community, and Oksanna, when rebelling against Ukrainian culture, is rebelling more against her ethnic minority status than ethnic community expectations.

Oksanna Moroz, the representative of the second generation of Ukrainian-Canadians, can be read as typical "Nasha Meri" who cuts her dark braids and changes her Ukrainian name "Moroz" to its English translation "Frost," thus becoming an invisible Susan Frost of mainstream culture—quite unlike Keefer's own aunt who refused to change her name "Solowska" to "Smith" when invited to "join a prestigious pediatric practice at the Medical Arts Centre at St George and Bloor" (Keefer " 'The Sacredness of Bridges' " 106). Even though she was born in Canada, Oksanna encountered prejudice throughout her childhood and teenage years, but she readily blames the Old Country's culture for it; she adopts feminist ideas but does not want to see that her feminism might be rooted more in what she has to deal with in Canada than in Ukrainian traditions. " 'In our culture, being female doesn't count for much, except for bearing sons to carry on the name,' " Oksanna explains to Eva (*The Green Library* 242). Here, Keefer argues that preference for boys over girls is traditional in Ukrainian society because of its

patriarchal nature. However, as Margrit Eichler points out, "there is an *international* preference for boys as only or first children [...]" (in Pierson et al. 1: 138; my emphasis), and although this statement is arguable, it shows that the preference for boys has nothing to do with the specificity of Ukrainian culture.

Oksanna Moroz is forced to carry the baggage of the prejudice the mainstream Canadian culture has against her country of origin, but, instead of trying to fight the prejudices, she adopts the mainstream ideas about Ukrainian culture and dismisses it altogether. Susan Frost, whom Oksanna chooses to become, shares with Eva what she knows about being a Ukrainian, but the reader might be hesitant to accept it as the truth, since Oksanna's behaviour throughout the book as well as her own words show how easily she can lie: "'[my mother is] a terrible liar. And I'm a very good one'" (*The Green Library* 238). The message conveyed through the experiences of Olya Pavlenko and Oksanna Moroz is that a woman's possible disadvantages in the Old Country are doubled by her placement on the margin in the country of immigration. However, Keefer's choice of the Moroz family as a particular example can hardly be convincing. Olya Pavlenko does not belong to the Galiacian peasantry, while the idea of male domination in Ukrainian society, as shown above, can only be drawn by Keefer from the traditions governing the life of Ukrainian peasant immigrants to whom Keefer's own parents belonged. No wonder Alex teaches Eva to say *shalata* for "salad" (*The Green Library* 161)—not everybody in present-day Kyiv would guess the meaning of this old dialectal word, let alone use it.

It is also interesting to examine Keefer's choice of words marking gender relations in the novel: Ivan *abandons* Holly (106), Olya Pavlenko's husband *deserts* his wife and daughter (80) and *walks out on* his family (257); Ivan Kotelko never calls Eva *daughter* but only *the boy's mother* (255); Garth Chown marries Holly because she is *beautiful* (no other attributes are important), and later Alex, who dreams of becoming a man like Garth, wants to marry "so *beautiful* a wife [as Holly]" (151; my emphasis). Most of the male characters of the book are exaggeratedly negative and thus unrealistic; their portrayal undermines, instead of emphasizing, Keefer's message that the patriarchal nature of Ukrainian society is still affecting those who immigrated to Canada and that it should be challenged and overcome.

If the second generation revolts against the Old Country's culture still maintained in Canada, Eva, the third-generation Canadian, needs to (re)discover what it means to be a *Ukrainian*-Canadian woman. Her understanding of what it means to be a woman in Canadian society is informed, first of all, by the experiences of her own mother. Holly Chown, Eva's mother, is described in the novel as a woman "from a family that had once had money, and lost all but the taste for it" (*The Green Library* 26). Her arranged marriage was loveless: she wanted a husband who would rescue her from home and then would be always "off digging somewhere under the ground, leaving you free as the gulls wheeling over the lake" (26), while Garth, the groom, found her "outrageously beautiful" (27) and bought this beauty with gold mines that his family owned.

Holly's one other relationship with a man has possibly caused her mental illness (if her constant state of self-reflection in her old age can be so called) and is no more successful than her marriage. This man is Ivan Kotelko, a Ukrainian DP from a lumber camp near her house in the forest; he spends about two weeks in her tent and then flees leaving her pregnant with Eva. When Eva discovers her partly Ukrainian origin and comes to her mother to confirm (or better deny) it, Holly, figuratively speaking, slaps Eva in the face: "'If you'd been a boy, he would never have gone: he wanted a son'" (*The Green Library* 106). Here, again, Keefer foregrounds preference for girls over boys as traditional among Ukrainians; however, this particular case is not convincing. The reader can hardly believe that a man, who stayed in Holly's shelter for *two weeks* (this is something Eva learns from Phonsine, a Native woman in Porcupine Creek and a friend of Holly Chown), would use her pregnancy with a daughter instead of a son as a reason for abandoning her. Holly's words seem more of an excuse she invented for what she considers her failure as a woman. Besides, after the death of her first child, a boy, Holly wants another boy to replace her lost child; as Phonsine tells Eva, during delivery Holly "'was holdin' out for a boy, she wouldn't believe me when I yanked you out and showed you off'" (*The Green Library* 45-46). She seems to be projecting her own obsession with a son onto Ivan Kotelko.

In her own relationships with men, Eva cannot feel equal and thus is never truly intimate with anybody. Her first sexual experience is described in the novel as a passive submission to male power: "At a graduation party somewhere in

Rosedale, she's introduced to a boy from Upper Canada College, a perfectly nice boy named Colin. When, less that a month later, he deflowers her in the back of his father's BMW, she is pleased to feel nothing" (*The Green Library* 86). Eva's short-lived marriage to Jimmy ends when she becomes unable "to pretend anymore"—to assume a role that would fit a man's expectations of her. Later in her life, "she's learned to pretend with Dan. For the kids' sake: to give them a sense of family, security" (72). In her relationship with Dan, "Dan [...] talked, and Eva [...] listened" (17)—passively listened and was always ready to support, serve, help—asking nothing in return. When Eva sets on her "return journey" in an attempt to reestablish who she is, Dan simply walks away: no longer receiving all of Eva's attention, he marries another woman, another caregiver.

It comes as no surprise to the reader that Eva "decided that the only way she could survive was by making herself as inconspicuous as possible. Self-less, the way she conceived God to be" (*The Green Library* 25). When she was still a child, Eva pictured God as "an enormous, unblinking eye, larger than the earth itself, and able to take in everything, everyone on the planet" (25). This gaze of the supernatural being from whom she tried to hide silenced her and affected all her future relations with people. As Rey Chow explains, "Watching is theoretically defined as the primary agency of violence, an act that pierces the other" (qtd. in Kamboureli 240). Continuing her selfless existence as an adult, all she can do is to be in everybody's service, keep "[t]elling stories to children; listening to the story of everyone else's life, while her own falls farther into silence" (*The Green Library*

25). Her behaviour symbolizes her adoption of a traditional woman's role of caregiver. It is not until her world is upset and decentred that Eva is ready to reclaim her self: her discovery of the fact that she is not who she thought she was helps Eva try to break the silence of her existence.

When Eva learns of her partly Ukrainian heritage, she begins to reassess her position as a woman in Canadian society. She compares her life with the lives of the only Ukrainians in Canada she knows—Olya Pavlenko and Oksanna Moroz. In fact, it is through the eyes of Eva that we see the Moroz family and learn about their experiences in Canada; it is also through Eva's recollections of the Moroz family that we are first presented with the gender relations in Ukrainian community. What Eva sees as undervaluation of women traditional to Ukrainian culture ultimately influences her own position as a Ukrainian-Canadian woman. She even projects this view of Ukrainian culture onto her relationship with her father Ivan Kotelko: talking to Oksanna, she angrily refuses to meet him: "'Why should I know him? It isn't me he wants to see, anyway; it's Ben. That's why he sent me the photograph—to let me know, right from the start, what his intentions were. They had nothing to do with me, though I was too stupid to understand'" (*The Green Library* 239). Knowing next to nothing about Ivan (except for what Holly has told her), she immediately assumes that he can never be interested in her because she is a daughter, not a son. Thus, unable to establish a link with Ukrainian culture through her father, and unable to find a stable position in her now upset world, she needs someone else to hold on to.

The person who becomes, for Eva, the road towards recognition and acceptance of the multiple parts of her identity is her Ukrainian grandmother, Lesia Levkovych. The strong connection established between Eva and Lesia—the image in the old photograph, "the minute fraction of [the] bones" hidden inside the earth Eva stands on in Babyn Yar (*The Green Library* 186)—is the connection between *baba* (grandmother) and grandchild. This connection is not something exclusive to Ukrainian culture, but it is indeed one of the most important links that tie generations, and for most Ukrainian immigrants in Canada, to use the words of Frances Swyripa, *baba* is "the spiritual and physical link to their [...] heritage, the medium through which they underst[and] themselves as both Canadians and Ukrainians" (216); this *baba* is a symbol of Ukrainian culture itself. For Eva, Lesia becomes a symbol of the culture she is ready to accept as hers. Lesia's strength, during the hardest and most horrible times, gives Eva the strength to fight for herself.

However, being a Ukrainian is a challenge for Eva; there are too many things about the country "she neither loves, nor understands" (*The Green Library* 209) that she cannot accept. Her first encounter with the past that crept into her silent world is reminiscent of her childhood fears: "a stranger watching her" (*The Green Library* 35), making her feel defenseless, unarmed against his male gaze. The gaze of the stranger is something that haunts Eva; it is the opposite, dark side of the watching game Eva and Alex played as teenagers, although at that time Eva could not understand that Alex was really watching her mother Holly, "the most

beautiful, the most desirable [...] woman, the wife of the man he could wish were his father" (*The Green Library* 150). For Eva, the first small step towards shaking off the silent gaze is to speak to Alex, since as a child she never spoke to him, never heard his voice (129). Once she has spoken to him—first on the phone, and then tête-à-tête—she has, symbolically, broken the silence of her life; she is ready to break the silent watching of the stranger who turns out to be her father, Ivan Kotelko.

For Eva, a meeting with her father is the proof of her right to existence. It is not, though, because of the reunion of the prodigal father and the lost child (Eva holds on to the thought that to Ivan she is "not a daughter but the woman who has given him his grandson" [*The Green Library* 252]), but because it inspires her to dream about her future. Her dream is that she might gather under her roof, she might shelter all those whom she loves making a *happy family* (253-4) where all the generations are united. She realizes that she can embrace both hemispheres of the world, that she is the successor of her grandmother Lesia Levkovych and her mother Holly Chown: "Holly, Lesia: their lives, their stories—she carries them in her bones, in whatever she makes of herself" (261). This realization becomes, for Eva, another step towards establishing her identity and accepting its plurality, towards obtaining a "self with a face she'll never get to see, knowing only the direction in which it's turned, the direction in which desire, all the pain and joy and risk that make desire, keeps pushing her" (261).

CHAPTER FOUR

"The Very Place of Identification is a Space of Splitting": From Ethnic Towards Transnational

Eva Chown, a third generation Canadian and a person of mixed ethnic heritage, has come to a close of her *rites de passage*; she has returned to Canada to reaggregate into Canadian culture and, at the same time, to claim her distinct place in it. All of a sudden she finds out that the place she has known since her birth has irreversibly changed: "when she goes past her favourite corner of the park on her evening walk, she sees no one she knows: even the bag lady seems to have disappeared for good" (*The Green Library* 223). The question Eva is now faced with brings her back to where she started her journey: which culture is she going to reaggregate into—mainstream (read Anglo-) Canadian or Ukrainian-Canadian? As Homi Bhabha writes, today the "very concept of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, the 'organic' ethnic communities—*as the grounds of cultural comparativism*—are in a profound redefinition" (5). On the one hand, in the New World, the mainstream culture is being constantly challenged by minority discourse. On the other hand, the ethnic understanding—and definition—of identity can no longer be marked simply by a person's belonging to a particular ethnic community; the adoption of the dominant language by minority groups facilitates the interaction between them and blurs their differences; intermarriages make self-identification based on ethnic belonging even more problematic.

Ethnicity, as defined by Francesco Loriggio in his article "History, Literary History, and Ethnic Literature," means "the process by which individuals identify with a group, a group that ascribes to itself or has been ascribed by others certain characteristics, and that is seen as occupying a certain position when compared to other groups" (579-80). Further, Loriggio explains that ethnic identification can be either "voluntary or involuntary, can be maintained or not maintained, and, by virtue of internal and external pressures, can exist over a longer or shorter time-span" (580). However, such a definition of ethnic identification implies the existence and maintenance of the border surrounding any ethnic community, while more and more often in the New World this border is crossed and obliterated, especially by younger generations. Cultural border crossing, widely explored in recent Canadian fiction, has acquired the label "transcultural travel," defined by Kaarina Kailo as "mental, spiritual, academic, psychological and geographical migrations through spaces of thought, experience and consciousness that challenge dominant Western thought and assumptions [...]" (19).

Although the term "transcultural" appears to describe the present situation with ethnic literature in Canada well enough, Mari Peepre-Bordessa is not completely satisfied with it. In her essay "Beyond Multiculture: Canadian Literature in Transition," she offers another term: "intercultural." Intercultural travel, in intercultural writing, she believes, "not only peers over barriers or negotiates the space between cultures but [...] also blends and integrates the cultural diversities at play in a multi-ethnic society" (55). The term "intercultural,"

as defined by Peepre-Bordessa, implies that Canadian culture has reached "a point where it is becoming comfortable to think in terms of interactive cultural experience" (55). When introducing this new term, Peepre-Bordessa makes a quick remark that she does not want to sound too idealistic: "I am not suggesting that Canadian society has reached a utopian level of brotherly love and acceptance [...]" (55); but the very term "intercultural" she proposes suggests exactly this. At the present moment, however, Canadian minority writers are still establishing their *right* for ethnicity, where ethnicity is understood as something deeper than a difference in food or folk clothes, and Keefer's *The Green Library* is a vivid example of this. In his study *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha offers another term—"transnational." The present time, Bhabha writes, is the time "at which a transnational, 'migrant' knowledge of the world is most urgently needed" (214). This transnational knowledge of the world, extending beyond national borders and requiring cultural translation, informs the modern New-World understanding of identity.

Homi Bhabha's reading of the transnational/translational identity is grounded in the postcolonial setting with its antagonism between the colonizer and the colonized. His model of "the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal," in order to break the binary opposition of "the 'pure' identity of authority"/discriminatory identity of the colonized (112), and to rewrite "the history of the modern Western nation from the perspective of the nation's margin and migrants' exile" (139), cannot fully answer the issue of identity in the modern

multicultural Canada where the opposition exists both between dominant culture(s) and ethnic communities and among ethnic groups themselves. In *The Green Library*, when Keefer introduces the conflict between the Jewish and Ukrainian communities in Canada as well as the tension between Anglo-Canadians and Ukrainian-Canadians, the question raised is who is perceived as the Other. Moreover, once Eva Chown learns that she belongs to two cultures, the distinction between Self and Other becomes even more problematic. What Eva is experiencing is "a difference 'within'," as Bhabha aptly calls it (13), which, by definition, rejects the possibility of a unified identity. Thus, Keefer's ultimate task is to prove that identity *is* plural and that even with a plural identity a person can still "be at home": "It seems to me anomalous that in Canada, a nation of immigrants, we're so preoccupied with creating for ourselves a unified identity, and that we possess such a fear of difference, of what Rushdie celebrates as 'hotch-potch'—the antithesis of absolutes and purity," she writes (in Delbaere 39).

The plurality of identity in Canada, however, cannot simply be based on the country's ethnic diversity. What is Eva's ethnic heritage? Ukrainian, Anglo-Canadian—is it what she chooses it to be or is it formed irrespective of her desires? If we look at the origin of the word "ethnicity"—*ethnos*—we discover that it means "nation," but today, when the New World ethnic minorities no longer speak their old languages—the main indicator of a nation, when the Old Countries have lost some traditions still maintained by diaspora around the world, ethnicity has become quite a tricky notion. "Ethnic" identity, implying the existence of distinct borders

between ethnic communities, which in reality are no longer kept, appears to be too limited to answer the problem of identification in Canada. It is, rather, a "transnational" identity, to borrow the word from Homi Bhabha, that Eva is looking for. Influenced by global migration and involving constant cultural translation, suggesting development rather than stagnation, identification process in the transnational world is based on at least three factors. First, the migrants "construct their culture from the national text translated into [the New World]" (Bhabha 38), which means that no ethnic community in the New World can stay unaffected by the mere fact of its (dis)placement onto the new ground. Secondly, a transnational narrative, as Peter Dickinson explains it, "will accommodate the lived experiences of minority peoples [...]" (44). Thirdly, the term "transnational" implies a two-way interaction: if the Old Country plays a great role in the shaping of identity of immigrants and their descendants in the New World, then the immigrants, when traveling back to the Old Country—often on a short tourist trip but sometimes to establish a business and thus become involved in its every-day life—influence their abandoned homeland almost as much as it influences them. Hence the ending of *The Green Library*: the letter from Alex Eva receives when she no longer hopes for it suggests the possibility of not only traveling *back* (as Eva did), but also of traveling *between.*

Traveling in general, and traveling back to the Old Place by immigrants' descendants in particular, has a special importance for modern Canadian writing, which is "obsessed with social, psychological, and physical displacement"

(Hutcheon 193). The search of identity—both for the writers and their characters—is, first of all, a search for a place where they can feel, and be, at home. In *The Green Library*, Eva's ultimate dream is of a home where she can house all the people whom she loves:

> Eva thinks of her house in Toronto—a mansion, a palace compared to the apartments in Kiev. She imagines all of them living there together: Ben and Julie and Katia, Olya and Holly; Oksanna, and even Ivan-Mykola, for whatever time is left to him. And because this is a vision bound by no logic, only possibility, she adds on rooms, lavishly: for Daniel and Rache and their baby, Jimmy and his wife and daughters.
>
> And Alex.
>
> Wanting only this—that the people she loves and needs most in the world, whose lives are unstoppably connected with hers, should all be gathered under her roof for as long as they might wish to stay; that she might shelter them all. (253)

However, this search for a home may not necessarily result in acquiring it as a physical place; the notion of home in the transnational age, when "the disjunctive, displaced everyday life [...]" (Bhabha 13) has nearly become a norm, is itself a problematic one. Thus, it is the psychological dimension that matters more: as Deborah Keahey states in the Prologue to her study *Making it Home*, being at home

means "an acceptance of who you are, and a sense of inner peace with yourself" (ix).

In *The Green Library*, all the three generations of immigrants are in search of a home—both in its physical and psychological sense. Olya Pavlenko, whose family has been split for thirty years, can acquire "a sense of inner peace" with herself as soon as the family is reunited: although her reconciliation with her son Alex does not necessarily mean that her daughter Oksanna will ever forgive her brother (for what their father actually did), Olya's trip to Ukraine sets up such a possibility. The ending of the novel is open; the reader will never find out whether Olya is staying in Ukraine or returning to Canada, and thus will never know whether Olya has been able to make a home (and for her, as shown in the previous chapters, longing for a home means longing for her lost home in the Old Country). Olya's identity, although informed by her transnational experience, has not yet crossed the borders of her national belonging (national[4] rather than ethnic because Olya identifies both with the people—Ukrainians—*and* the Old Country—Ukraine). In Canada, she can never go beyond the first phase of her *rites de passage*—separation, as described by Victor Turner, and thus is stuck between the two countries.

No matter how difficult it is to find a home for Oksanna (and Oksanna, as the second generation, is the most problematic character in the book), she does attempt to start building it. When she learns that Alex's daughter is sick, she lets

[4] For the discussion of nation, nationality, and nationalism see Anderson 26-31.

her mother go to Ukraine and even pays for her ticket (*The Green Library* 260); more importantly, she recognizes that a person cannot live a life deprived of colour (as are the white leather sofas in her house)—a life that does not need interaction with other people: "'I'm tired of hating my father, and hating Oleksa [Alex] for being the one my father chose over me,'" she confesses to Eva. "'My bones are a bundle of knives, they're always cutting me or anyone who comes too close'" (259-260). Nonetheless, when Eva tries to make a gesture of forgiveness and reconciliation, putting "her arms round Oksanna," she feels "like putting [her] arms round an iron pole, there's nothing that hugs you back" (260). The development of Oksanna's character in the novel shows that it is the second generation for whom the displacement (physical as much as cultural) is most painful: unable to identify with the Old Country, they are not yet ready to accept a transnational identity. Thus, the second generation, reaching the second phase of Turner's *rites de passage*, slips onto the margin and is unable to move further.

It is only Eva, the third generation, for whom "a sense of inner peace" with herself becomes possible once she establishes—or recognizes—her plural, transnational identity. The process she goes through in order to find out who she is and what she identifies with can be examined based on the model offered by Homi Bhabha. "Three conditions," Bhabha writes, "underlie an understanding of the *process of identification* [...]" (44). The first condition implies that "to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look or locus" (44). To paraphrase this statement, if the Self looks at the Other and recognizes his/her otherness, then

the Other dreams of taking the place occupied by the Self. While this dichotomy seems appropriate in the case of visible minorities (a look is enough for the recognition of otherness), the recognition of otherness becomes more complex in the case of "audible" minorities whose skin colour does not immediately give out their difference from the dominant group(s) and who, as Keefer believes, "would find that their children, or perhaps only their grandchildren, would be able to pass, should they so choose, for unhyphenated, 'established' Canadians" (" 'The Sacredness of Bridges' " 98). Here, for Keefer, lies a danger that these "audible" minorities, once "established," "may just as easily become part of the anti-immigrant backlash currently extended to immigrants of colour" (" 'The Sacredness of Bridges' " 100). This is one of the possible reasons why, in *The Green Library*, Keefer decides to assign so many "visible" differences to her characters of Ukrainian origin. When Phonsine, Holly's Native friend from Porcupine Creek, describes to Eva the men from a lumber camp, the "visible" difference is foregrounded: " 'You know, their faces were a little like ours—they had these wide, wide cheek-bones, and black eyes' " (*The Green Library* 49). As Eva, in her memory, goes back to her school days when she first met Oksanna, she remembers how alien Oksanna seemed then: "there is something foreign about the way she looks, the way she walks down the hallway, her head high on the long, delicate neck, her braids drawn up in a thick black crown on her head" (80). Dan, when shown a picture of Lesia Levkovych, immediately recognizes her as different, looking like the women from the ethnic districts of the city: "She has the same wide

cheekbones, the cast of face he calls Slavic" (52). The visible difference of the Ukrainian characters in the novel makes them the Other in the eyes of Eva; however, Keefer's task is to subvert the dichotomy of Self/Other.

The subversion of this dichotomy, what Homi Bhabha calls "the dream of the inversion of roles" (Bhabha 44), is very important for Eva's self-identification. For Eva, who is searching for her identity in a world of global migration, the watching game she plays with Alex Moroz becomes this first condition of the process of identification. In Alex, Eva recognizes the Other: she is WASP, whereas he is of ethnic minority; her family is rich, whereas his mother is a cleaning woman at the Chowns' house; she is in the centre, whereas he is on the margin. On the other hand, their roles can be reversed: she is a woman and thus marginalized in her society; he is a man and thus, if only in the eyes of Mr. Chown (*The Green Library* 65), occupies a higher position. Moreover, "the dream of the inversion of roles" can turn into reality: when Eva is invited into Oksanna's house, their once established roles of the "rich heiress"/"poor DPs' daughter" switch; more importantly, Eva, upon learning of her partly Ukrainian origin, becomes the Other in her own eyes.

The second condition identified by Bhabha reads that "the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting" (44). Keefer uses every possible occasion to convey to her readers the crucial importance of "splitting" for our understanding of postcolonial identity. The first hint the reader receives is the name of Dan's travel agency which specializes in trips to the Old Country for immigrants, their children and grandchildren:

> He named it after the Roman god of thresholds and doorways, convinced that Janus, with his two faces looking in opposite directions, was a far better logo for his multicultural clients than St. Christopher. All of them split like the god's face between the place they'd had to leave and the one they'd gambled everything to find. (*The Green Library* 12)

This "splitting" in identification is directly related to "the inversion of the roles." On the one hand, Eva's mother, an Anglo-Canadian coming from a rich family, "didn't know what to do with the minister's wife, and the bank manager's wife, and the wife of the collectin' officer from the finance company" (*The Green Library* 46); she could not relate to the people of her class and felt much more comfortable in a shack of a Native woman, Phonsine (who apparently became her only friend). On the other hand, Olya Pavlenko combined a university degree and a "career" as a cleaning woman. Keefer also suggests that split identity is a problem not only in the New World: one of the moments that created most tension between Alex and his former wife was his insistence that Katia, their daughter, should speak Ukrainian, while his wife, a Russian, did not want Katia to "grow up with the two languages [...]" and wished the family "to move away, to Moscow or any other Russian-speaking place. So Katia would feel no split in her tongue, no tug of war as to who she was, what she belonged to" (*The Green Library* 211). All these hints are used by Keefer as a background for the understanding of the split in the character of Eva

Chown, whose main goal in the novel is to arrive at an understanding of who she is and where she belongs.

The third condition necessary for our understanding of the identification process is related to the transformation of a person when s/he is assuming a certain identity. As Homi Bhabha suggests, "the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a *self*-fulfilling prophecy—is it always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (45). When Eva undertakes a journey to the Old Country to discover for herself what it means to be of Ukrainian origin, to be a Ukrainian, she neither completely rejects her Canadian self nor fully adopts her Ukrainian self: "Home is somewhere in between, a borderline, not a country—or so she thinks [...]" (*The Green Library* 225). Her trip to the place she both belongs and does not belong to helps her rethink what identity means; it helps her recognize the possibility of being at the same time Self and Other, here and there, in the present and in the past. Furthermore, Eva's trip also seems to symbolize that a person's self-identification is never constant; it can change at different stages of the person's life. When Eva accepts that she is half Ukrainian, she assumes a new image which, in turn, causes her inner transformation.

Eva learns that her father was Ukrainian when she is forty-three; she thought her identity was set and she knew who she was—though she was never particularly happy with her own picture of herself. Nonetheless, the inversion and explosion of the set rules of reality Eva has been used to make her realize that her assumed

identity did not represent who she was. Eva's instant loss of "home," of her home ground, sends her on a search for her new self. Once a stranger sends her an old photograph as a sign that ties Eva to the place and past and culture hitherto unknown to her, she finds herself "unhomely"—a state which Homi Bhabha explores in his *The Location of Culture*:

> To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you find yourself [...] taking the measure of your dwelling in a state of 'incredulous terror'. [...] The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. [...] [T]he borders between home and world become confused [...]. (9)

Eva enters this "unhomely" state suddenly, but once she does so, she realizes that her own life, from its very beginning, has been, in fact, "unhomely" and that there are more people for whom this state is a permanent condition. She discovers that Olya Pavlenko is living more in the past than in the present; although Olya has learnt to speak fluent, almost unaccented English, the degree she receives from the University of Toronto is in Slavic Languages—as if, in an attempt to move from margin towards center in Canadian society, she did not want to betray those who were not as successful. Eva's visit to Oksanna's faceless house makes her once again enter an "unhomely" space—a space where an individual is "neither here nor

there" (Turner 232). What is more important, however, is that Eva realizes that "each 'unhomely' house marks a deeper historical displacement" (Bhabha 13), because it signals the displacement not of one family (in this case, the Moroz family), but of the whole culture. Eva herself has to go through the process of displacement in order to find her home.

Eva's trip to the Old Country, on the one hand, sets her on the borderline between countries and cultures; this experience is painful, and she "wonders whether her fall into another country [...] has left scars on her" (*The Green Library* 223). On the other hand, it helps her move from her "unhomely" space towards a transnational home, no matter how difficult it may be or how long it may take. In her "travelogue" *Bloodlines: A Journey into Eastern Europe*, Myrna Kostash asks a question which might be asked by thousands of immigrants' descendants who find themselves searching for home in two places at once: "How do you go back to where you've never been?" (162). For Eva, it is the collective memory of the people that allows her to go back to where she has never been; this collective memory is stored in Olya Pavlenko's and Alex's stories, in the poem by Lesia Levkovych, and in memoirs of Displaced Persons. Keefer uses the story-telling, the oral narratives as opposed to the written ones, to emphasize the interconnectedness of public and personal histories that inform and transform Eva's understanding of her emerging transnational identity.

Ukrainian history, which Eva has to discover during her search for self, brings her to another "unhomely" space: she finds out that behind the official

narratives in historical volumes there are concealed the denied and repressed histories of people silenced by their marginal position in society. As Keefer herself admits, it was "the insistent pressure of history [that] led me to reexperience and transform my understanding of my own ethnicity" (" 'Coming Across Bones' " 94), and the novel's heroine, Eva, has to undergo the same transformation. If, at the beginning of her search for self, Eva resists, even rejects, the history that she discovers, the deeper she looks into it, the clearer it becomes to her that history is never set and uniform; it is instead an entanglement of stories which can be told and interpreted differently, which can be rewritten from different perspectives. In order to accept the history that she discovers, she has to rewrite it from a new, transnational perspective; as she does so, she, to adopt Bhabha's words, "renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living" (7). The very fact that Eva cannot simply tear the picture of the unknown boy who looks like her son and "flush it down the toilet" as Dan offers (*The Green Library* 23) forces the reader to recognize the impossibility of the present (and, more importantly, of the future) without the past.

The poem "Kindness of Strangers" by Lesia Levkovych, translated for Eva by Olya Pavlenko, is another bridge between the past and the present. "Out of this maze of streets a stranger walks towards me" (118), Eva reads; she knows, though maybe only subconsciously, that the "I" and the stranger of the poem are the same person, and it is herself, the hybrid which is "the split screen of the self and its

doubling" (Bhabha 114), who finds herself in the in-between space: "Together we walk to a bridge over a great river. / We do not cross but stand looking down [...]" (*The Green Library* 118). The emphasis on *not crossing* the bridge suggests that neither Eva nor a multicultural Canada are ready for intercultural experience and exchange of all ethnic groups and communities, but the presence of the bridge connecting the past and the present, here and there, "us" and "them" is the sign that transnational knowledge of the world might help resolve the many problems caused by cultural displacement.

In Lesia's poem, the stranger is "he," while the "I" is a woman; by counterpoising them, Keefer brings the gender question into the dichotomy of Self/Other. The "hermaphrodite" Self that emerges in the poem, the hybrid, again, both split and double, "breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside" (Bhabha 116) and allows the inversion of gender roles. However, before the gender problem can be resolved, it must be brought to light and recognized; Keefer does so by exploring gender relationships in the Ukrainian community. As she herself admits in her interview with Cherry Clayton, when writing *The Green Library* "I [...] wanted to bring in a formative aspect of Ukrainian culture *as I knew it*, [...] which reflects *certain* truths about Ukrainian cultural experience, and that is the *extreme overvaluation* of the male, and the *extreme undervaluation* of the female" (194; my emphases). As shown in Chapter Three of this thesis, Keefer's "truths about Ukrainian cultural experience" are not necessarily true from the point of view of a Ukrainian living in Ukraine. The gender

component of Olya's, Oksanna's, and Eva's identity, though seemingly based on gender inequality brought over to Canada from the Old Country, is in fact shaped more by what the immigrants have to deal with in the New World and further aggravated by ethnic/racial inequality. Nonetheless, although at some points in the novel the gender relations, as depicted by Keefer, will leave the reader unsympathetic, the way Eva moves from her selfless, subordinate existence (subordinate not only to males but to everybody else's wishes and whims) towards recognition of who she is—as an individual as well as daughter and granddaughter—becomes a celebration of female independence and strength.

Besides helping Eva establish who she is as a woman, her female ancestors act as her link with reality. For her, as for many other second and third generation immigrants, ancestors become "at once the totems, the great genealogical, physical body the speakers interpose between themselves and the world and the cultural ambit by which they identify themselves" (Loriggio 583). Eva's grandmother Lesia Levkovych and her mother Holly Chown are not only totems for Eva, links between the past and the present, the Old and New Worlds, but also the symbol of her hybrid self which is, once again, split and double. In other words, Eva is split between her two cultural heritages, but simultaneously embraces them both; and as soon as she realizes that to be *split* is to be *double*, meaning to be *richer*, she is ready to accept the past as it is and to look forward to the future. Eva's reconciliation with the past is symbolically conveyed in the scene when her son Ben hands his kitten to Eva's father Ivan Kotelko, "putting it into the old man's arms with a graveness, a

tenderness that signals that it is his to keep" (*The Green Library* 262). As soon as this gesture of forgiveness and acceptance of the past is performed, Eva receives a letter from Alex as a sign of the possibility of a future.

This moment in the book is significant because it can be read as a symbolic ending of Eva's *rites de passage*; as soon as she forgives her father, she no longer needs to maintain a border between Self and Other, Canadian culture and Ukrainian culture, the past and the present. The "homogenous and horizontal view associated with the nation's imagined community" (Bhabha 144) is challenged and upset. Eva does not need to choose between the two parts of her self but instead recognizes the plurality of her identity; she no longer feels split as she comes to realize that it is possible, as Joseph Pivato believes, to "accept Canada without denying" the Old Country, that it is possible to "value [...] Canadian experience without forgetting [the] roots" ("Effects on Italian Communities" 264). Marked by transnational narratives of ethnic minorities as well as by the presence of Native people whose experience may be the most powerful representation of cultural displacement, the Canadian culture into which Eva will reaggregate can neither be homogenous nor closed, and thus Eva's identity is open to multiple readings.

CONCLUSION

Eva's return to Canada, after "her fall into another country" (*The Green Library* 223), ends her *rites de passage*. She comes back home, though now she seems no longer sure where her home is: she "spends hours drawing with the children, teaching them the Trypillian figures she'd seen in the ethnographic museum in Kiev. [...] And she tells them some of the stories Alex had given her [...]"—the stories from Ukrainian history (223). Eva is now discovering how it feels to be split and double and what it means to be Janus-faced. Notwithstanding the open ending of *The Green Library*, we can argue that the completion of Eva's *rites de passage* has been successful and "that things worked out for the best—especially for Eva's sake" (*The Green Library* 15). As Julie tells Ben in the novel, "She [Eva] had no self—does he see that? No self, no life of her own, till that year when everything fell apart" (16). The "fall into another country" has given Eva the possibility to recognize the existence of multiple narratives in Canadian culture, reassess her former life, and reestablish who she is.

Eva herself might view her reaggregation into Canadian culture as painful and hard: when she learns that Olya is going to Ukraine she feels "[e]nvy, and stranger still, something she can only call homesickness. Not that the country Olya's rushing to is home for Eva now. But neither is this huge, empty house, or this city with its well-lit, cared-for streets" (225). However, once Eva has gone through the stage of seeing her Self as Other, once she has accepted the plurality of her own identity, she is ready to accept the plurality of Canadian identity. Watching

Ben playing with his newly-found grandfather, Eva "thinks how wrong she's been [...] to think she could hold onto him [Ben], keep him for herself. As if there were only one Ben, the one she's fashioned for herself" (261). Ben, who later in his life becomes a painter, who "has a rash of stamps and visas in his passport; [who] does odd jobs until he makes enough money to settle somewhere and paint for six months, and then he's off again" (16), this Ben represents, to use the words of Marie Vautier, the "creative *making*" (48) of Canadian culture and nation.

Moreover, if Arnold Itwaru states that many Canadian writers "see the attraction of Canada through the ideological lenses of the United States—the fetish of materiality, technological rationality, notions of progress which leave people confused, dissatisfied, empty [...] Canada is thus invented as a composite *other*" (145), Keefer refuses to set a binary opposition of Canada and the United States; in *The Green Library*, she arrives at a conclusion that if Canadians recognize the difference *within* themselves, *within* their own country, there will no longer be a need to search for the Other in order to be able to find a Self. This new, transnational understanding of identity, which Homi Bhabha calls cultural hybridity, becomes in the modern world "the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging *national, anti-nationalist* histories of the 'people'" (38-39; my emphasis). Thus, Canadian "national, anti-nationalist" history will grow out not of the opposition and clash but of recognition and acceptance of multiple histories of the people living in Canada.

The Green Library, if read as a Canadian national narrative, suggests that the modern understanding of nation as people of the same descent sharing the same history and living in the same country cannot be fully applied to Canada and therefore must be revised. We can argue that the novel, to adopt the words of Deborah Keahey, "offers an alternate nationalism based not on homogeneity but on pluralism, not on exclusion but on inclusion, not on conquering outside territory but on developing an internally cohesive and immediate [...] sense of community" (34). By making the novel's heroine, Eva Chown, partly WASP and partly Ukrainian, Keefer declares that Canadian identity can be informed by neither exclusively minority nor exclusively dominant discourses; it is only the balanced combination of the two that can produce a distinct Canadian nation.

"*Home is where your dead are buried*," Keefer wants her readers to remember (*The Green Library* 225). Hundreds of generations of the dead buried in the Old Country inevitably tie the immigrants and their descendants to that land; however, Keefer's phrase, just as the novel itself, has more than one meaning. More and more generations of immigrants are buried in the Canadian soil, and for their children the New World is the only true home. They must not forget their past, the novel argues, but it is only when they turn to the future that they will be able to establish themselves as a nation.

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