

The Difficult Fortune of Polish Artists and Writers in Canada

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Abstract

Modern day Canada is perceived as a country that is open to immigrants, or even actually in need of migrants who would be willing to settle there. However, in the twentieth century, some immigrants of creative profession (artists, painters, writers, poets, journalists) who wanted to continue their professional activity in Canada faced different problems: both in adaptation with the host society and one's own ethnic group. In this paper I would like to focus on the examples of some Polish emigrants (e.g.: Michał Choromański, Rafał Malczewski, Zofia Bogdanowiczowa, Jadwiga Jurkszus-Tomaszewska, Adam Tomaszewski, Waclaw Iwaniuk, Florian Śmieja, Bogdan Czaykowski, Roman Sabo, Edward Zyman, Marek Kusiba) to present the peculiarity of the life of emigrant creators – the issues and obstacles they encounter both in Canadian society and in the Polish diaspora, as well as different individual strategies of avoiding or overcoming these problems.

Keywords: Polish emigrant artist, Polish emigrant writers, Polish diaspora in Canada

Research and studies on migrants and migration processes mainly focus on mass movements and related issues. Most publications concerning these problems describe specific periods of history, directions of migration or issues related to the movement and adaptation to new conditions of specific national, ethnic, religious or professional groups. The emigration fates, problems and experiences of artists of international renown (writers, poets, musicians, painters, actors) are of great interest to both scholars and readers. In the history of Poland there were many such interesting figures writing and creating abroad. It is known that emigrant publications and also ideas arising in

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the circles of exiles penetrated into the Polish lands and significantly influenced the opinions, views and actions of Poles. Thus, there is no need to convince anyone that the achievements of artists functioning abroad are a part of Polish culture. There are numerous publications, monographs and historical, literary and also sociological analyses on the subject. They show the whole range of various complex emigration experiences and their impact on the fate and attitudes of both poets, writers, visual artists and representatives of other fields of art (See for example: *Pisarz na obczyźnie* 1985; Ligęza 2001; Święch 2004; Sienkiewicz 2012). The authors of these works describe and analyse the various motives for departure, their complex conditioning and the impact of the change of their country of residence on the views, works and various spheres of life and activities of artists-emigrants in the new everyday reality. The difficulties of their existence are also presented, as well as the barriers operating both in the diaspora and in the entry of Polish writers or artists into the cultural environment of the country of settlement. Like all immigrants, they clash with unfamiliar traditions and cultural codes and forms of expression. For those working in the cultural sphere, however, this creates additional challenges. Reconstructing the cultural, historical and social contexts of emigrant works facilitates their proper reception and understanding. Often exploited and compared is also the attitude of artists to their old and their new homeland and functioning at the intersection of the two worlds, as well as various forms concerning loneliness and the feelings of alienation of artists who found themselves in exile. Publications on this subject mostly focus on figures belonging to the largest waves of Polish emigration, mainly those associated with the uprising of 1830–31, the events of World War II, or the period of Polish transformation in the 1980s.

The interest of researchers is mostly limited to the largest and most important centers of Polish emigration which are at the same time the centers of world culture: Paris, London, Berlin or New York (For example: A. Rudek-Śmiechowska 2021; Ferenc 2017; Ferenc 2020; Dobosz 2013). Polish artists active in Italy or South America are cited less frequently. Those who were thrown by fate to Canada are known almost exclusively to a narrow group of specialists. The purpose of this sketch is to draw attention to the last mentioned region and to show its peculiarities and compare the problems of Polish writers and artists living there in different periods and continuing their work under changed conditions in the new country. I want to record and retain the memory of the figures active in Canada. Among them we can find both those who had a significant output before leaving Poland, but also those whose work developed only outside their native country. This text, due to the dispersion of materials and existing gaps in the sources, does not pretend to be a comprehensive analysis of the creative environment in the Polish diaspora in Canada. It is a case study based mainly on reconstructions of the biographies of authors whose names recur in the few existing studies on the Polish ethnic group in Canada (Radecki, Heydenkorn 1976; Makowski 1987; Kaczmarczyk-Byszewska 2012; *Literatura polska* 2010; Nęcka

2011). Excerpts from works in which Polish artists living in Canada depicted their own condition have also been used. Literature and materials on individual characters will be cited in footnotes.

Canadian immigration laws introduced in the 1960s were intended to eliminate discrimination against newcomers, and most recent changes have been even more friendly and bring some assistance programs for the newcomers. In the past, Canadian immigration legislation had been much more restrictive. Some groups (mainly Asians and Jews) were not allowed in or were hindered from entering. Economic emigrants, arriving since the late 19th century from the Polish lands, as well as in the interwar period from Poland, were only tolerated in Canada due to the fact that they cleared forests, settled prairies, took jobs in cities and industrial centres that were unattractive to local residents. Most of the Polish newcomers from those waves of immigration, and often even their descendants, spoke only a language incomprehensible to Canadians, their clothes and also their customs surprised them and even caused fear. In rural areas, Poles mostly lived far from their neighbours. In cities, however, they formed their own isolated communities. In general, most Canadians treated both the entire Polish community and its individual representatives with distrust and even contempt (Matejko 1979: 30–31). This attitude had been changing very slowly. The breakthrough came only with World War II, in which Poland and Canada became allies and a new wave of Polish immigrants came to Canada. It was relatively small (it is estimated at about 800 people), but quite different from the previous one, as most of the Polish war refugees came from the Polish elite. Among the new Polish arrivals there were about 600 specialists in the armaments industry, a group of military officers who were supposed to recruit for the Polish Army in Canada, and dozens of other people, mainly the wives and children of high-ranking officers and government officials (Reczyńska 1997: 122–124). Several artists, significant to Polish culture, also received permission to stay in Canada during the war.

Immigrants with technical professions in general adapted quickly and found well-paid jobs. The military – after the failure of recruitment – quickly returned to Europe. On the other hand, a group of women, especially those who came with children, found themselves in a difficult situation. They were accustomed to a high standard of living in Poland, and despite allowances from the Polish consulate and the Canadian Red Cross, they struggled to make a living. Some taught music or French. They avoided, however, manual labour, so they found neither understanding nor sympathy among Polish economic immigrants who had arrived in Canada earlier. Barriers resulting from social differences created mutual resentment. War emigrants appreciated the conveniences of everyday life in America, but tended to complain about everything, from the ugliness of shop windows to the Canadian winter. Many of them considered Canada and its major cities to be peripheries. They were mostly isolated and focused on self-help. Some of them, mainly those who knew French, were involved in activities

to help Poland and in promoting knowledge about Poland, its history, culture and war problems among Canadians (Reczyńska 1997: 127).

In 1943, a popular Polish writer Michał Choromański (1904–1972), author of the novel *Jealousy and Medicine*, reached Canada. He tried to write comedies in French, but failures drove him into depression and creative impotence (Sołtysik 2022). His existence, not without complications, was provided by his wife Ruth Sorel (opera dancer and choreographer), who opened a ballet studio in Montreal (Friedrich 2007). Both of them stayed in Canada after the war, but in 1957 they decided to return to Poland. Choromański, despite publishing several books, was not appreciated, did not regain his fame or position in the literary world and remained a castaway for the rest of his life (Sołtysik 2022).

Even more complicated was the fate of painter and writer Rafał Malczewski (1892–1965), a friend of Choromański, who came to Canada in late 1942. He was 50 years old at the time. He was known in Poland partly due to the fame of his father (leading symbolist painter Jacek Malczewski), but also due to his own work and connections with the artistic elite. With the help of Polish envoy in Ottawa Wiktor Podolski, Malczewski secured a contract with Canadian railroads CNR and Pacific Railways, under which he traveled by train across Canada in 1943–46 and painted watercolors depicting Canadian landscapes (Szrodt 2020: 39–40). Those paintings were exhibited by respected art dealer Dr. Max Stern in several Canadian and US cities (Nowotnik, Władysiuk 2017: 9–11). They were also used as advertisements in railroad cars and at stations. Cheerful and in bright pastel colors, Malczewski's watercolors combined elements of magical realism, surrealism and German expressionism (Szrodt 2020: 40–41). They were interesting for critics, but proved too avant-garde for Canadians and did not bring the author popularity. Interest in Malczewski's works died out with the end of sponsor patronage and art dealers' care. In the 1940s, the Canadian art market was relatively limited and decidedly traditional. The innovative European art trends were neither known nor appreciated in Canada at the time. Malczewski, however, did not even establish contacts with the small and divided communities of artists and intellectuals in Montreal, Quebec or Toronto. Nor could he find an audience either among Polish economic émigrés or among Polish displaced persons arriving after the war (Kaczmarczyk-Byszewska 2012: 49). Relations, especially in the Polish community, were certainly not made easier for the painter by the fact that he did not formalize his relationship with Zofia Mikucka, whom in Canada he used to introduce as his wife, until 1953, after the death of his first wife whom he left behind in Poland. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Malczewski still attempted to create a series of large works on biblical themes, but even those failed to bring him success or the expected royalties. He painted mainly watercolors depicting bouquets of flowers – realistic and subdued in color, but sold them for only a few dollars each. The financial situation and health problems, when he suffered a stroke, made him plan to return to Poland. A visit to Warsaw in 1959, however, disappointed him. Embittered and frustrated,

he returned to Canada. He wrote radio features for Radio Free Europe and memoir texts published in Polish émigré magazines printed in Paris and London. However, this work was known only in narrow circles of Polish political emigration. It did not bring him income either. Despite an allowance from the Quebec government and support from Polish émigré organizations and his daughter, who lived in the US, Malczewski until his death (in 1965) struggled with financial problems. His work, both painting and literary, has been almost forgotten both in Canada and in Poland².

The two artists described above had had a significant body of work in Poland before the war, and were well-known and respected. They had an easier start in Canada as they enjoyed the support of the Polish consulate during the war. They spoke French, which was used mainly by residents of the Quebec province. Even there however, despite their efforts, they were unable to attract the interest of the local, rather hermetic artistic elite, or to secure their own livelihood. Nor could they count on either extraordinary recognition or material support from the indigent Polish diaspora. They actually lived on the margins of both Canadian society and their own group, which undoubtedly deepened their frustration and bitterness. Malczewski, despite his hesitations, remained in Canada, while Choromański returned to Poland, although he never regained his popularity here. Both found themselves among the artists virtually forgotten.

At the end of 1947, another specific wave of Polish emigrants began arriving in Canada, consisting of veterans of Polish units fighting in Western Europe during the war, former forced labourers of German labour camps, Warsaw insurgents and others who were unwilling or unable to return to Poland. It is estimated that by 1952 Canada had taken in more than 55,000 Polish DPs, with more arriving in subsequent years, mainly from England. This group also included artists, poets and writers. The younger ones made their debut in Polish publications on the British Isles. The older ones had significant output still in Poland. An interesting example from the latter group is Zofia Bogdanowiczowa (1898–1965), a writer and poet; author of works for children and teenagers. She spent the war years in Romania, France and Great Britain. After the war she lived in a Polish settlement in Wales. In 1960, at the age of over 60, she came to Canada to join her son. In exile she published exclusively in Polish, in the Polish ethnic press and publishing houses.

Some of Bogdanowiczowa's poems relating to Canada reflect the feelings and moods very well, not only of the poet herself, but also of other Polish emigrants:

Canada scattered with radiance
On two oceans lying,
Does not hear nor see me,
A blade hanging on her shores.

² Rafał Malczewski, despite attempts to recall his artistic and literary work, remains in the shadow of his father Jacek Malczewski. See: Kaczmarczyk-Byszewska 2012: 49; Pecka; Wieczorek.

She is a wing and a hurricane
 And the singing saga of the gale
 And I – windblown from the dusty roads
 An untrodden tuft of grass³.

The poet suggests that she ended up in Canada by accident. Evidently, she was overwhelmed by the vastness and affluence of this country. However she was convinced that, like other immigrants, she functioned on the margins of Canadian society and no one paid attention to her. Bogdanowiczowa's other poems also contain criticism of Canadian winter, cities made of concrete and the pursuit of wealth. She could neither accept it nor get used to it (Danielewicz-Zielińska 1985: 128). Such bitter opinions about Canada are not to be found in the works of other Poles, but the biographies of many immigrants, including poets, confirm their enormous problems with adapting and finding their way in Canadian reality.

Artists coming from the younger generation of Polish DPs also had a hard time finding their way in Canada. Adam Tomaszewski (1918–2002), a Warsaw Uprising insurgent and prisoner of war, came to Canada in 1948, worked off a farm contract and completed his Slavic studies in Ottawa. He wrote 11 books and about 150 reportages, but supported himself by working physically as a packer for a mail-order company. His wife Jadwiga Jurkszus-Tomaszewska (1918–1996) was also a Warsaw insurgent. After the war, she studied journalism in Belgium and earned a doctorate in Polish literature in Montreal in 1951. For 25 years, however, she worked for the Department of Employment and Immigration in Toronto, while also writing reportage and memoir pieces. The Tomaszewskis were very involved in the cultural and editorial activities of the Polish community in Toronto, but published exclusively in Polish diaspora publications and magazines. They were both rooted in Canada, but retained their Polish identity and lived in a world of their own creation. They traveled a lot and also described Toronto and the changes taking place in the city, but always as if from the position of tourists or outside observers. They were Poles living in Canada, but not Polish-Canadians or Canadians with Polish roots (Pasterska 2010: 336–337).

Interestingly, among the Polish artists who came to Canada in the post-war wave of Displaced Persons, poets and writers were the most prominent. None of them, however, made a living as literary artists. They varied in age, education and

³ Kanada blaskiem rozsypana
 Na dwóch leżąca oceanach,
 Nie słyszy mnie i nie dostrzega
 Żdźbła wiszącego na jej brzegach.
 Ona jest skrzydło i huragan
 I śpiewająca wichrem saga
 A ja – przewiana z dróg kurzawy
 Niedodeptana kępka trawy.

war experiences. Despite being scattered in very distant Canadian cities, they lived in English-speaking provinces. They all spoke English, and some (W. Iwaniuk, B. Czaykowski, F. Śmieja) also had publications in that language, but there is no evidence of their ties to significant Canadian creative circles. In Canada they printed their works in small editions, mainly in Polish-language publications and presses. The marker of success and the measure of recognition for them, however, was publication in the Paris-based *Kultura* and London-based *Wiadomości*. They did not feel fully linked to Canada and also maintained – although each to a different degree – a distance from the Polish diaspora living there. Thus, they functioned as émigré poets and writers, appreciated by a relatively narrow circle of Polish-speaking readers in Canada and their Polish literary contemporaries living in other countries. In Poland, even after 1989 – when some works by emigrants, including those from Canada, began to be published and texts about them appeared – they attracted the interest of mainly a few scholars of emigrant literature.

A different attitude was represented by Waclaw Iwaniuk (1912–2001), considered a leading figure in Polish artistic and literary life in Toronto. During the war he fought in Norway and France. He lived in Canada since 1948 and upon arrival had a brief but rather unusual episode of manual labour (in a slaughterhouse). Later – until his retirement – he was employed as a traffic accident clerk and a sworn interpreter for Justice Ontario. He was mainly, however, preoccupied with poetic works and translating American poetry into Polish. He published more than 20 volumes of poetry, two books and many other texts in magazines of the Polish diaspora. He also published in Poland, first in the underground circulation and since 1990 in literary periodicals. He was also respected in the Polish community in Toronto for his long-standing involvement in Polish literary societies and clubs. Iwaniuk, however, felt to be an exile. In one of the interviews, he stated that he had come to Canada to wait for the end of communist Poland (Zyman 2010: 454). In fact, he did not identify himself with his country of residence. Having lived there for 35 years (which by then was longer than in Poland), he wrote in one of his poems:

I settled at the ends of the earth
My continent asks no questions
We live in friendly relationships
He for himself and I for myself⁴

The poet was actually neither embittered nor surprised by this separation. In another poem, he even admitted to a certain sentiment towards Canada: “ I was

⁴ Zamieszkałem na końcu świata
Mój kontynent o nic mnie nie pyta
Żyjemy w przyjaznych stosunkach
On dla siebie a ja dla siebie.

The poem in Polish was quoted by Jerzy Święch in: *Pomyślane przelotem, Akcent* 3/2002: 33.

not born here, I have not tasted the fruits of this land / But my voice trembles when I speak of Her"⁵. Yet, Iwaniuk remained an outsider, largely alienated, living as if in two worlds, neither of which was complete (Mielhorski 2010: 242–256).

It is also worth mentioning the two other Polish poet-DPs creating their works in Canada: Florian Śmieja (1925–2019) and Bogdan Czaykowski (1932–2007). Both of them – although in different circumstances – experienced the trauma of war, and both graduated in the UK after the war (Czaykowski in literature and history, Śmieja in English and Iberian studies). They even co-founded a Polish poetry group in England. They both became university lecturers in Canada: Czaykowski in Vancouver, and Śmieja in London, Ontario. So they were not typical immigrants and had a good financial background. Śmieja wrote poems, sketches and essays, mostly in Polish, but also in English and Spanish. He was, however, strongly connected with Polish cultural life in exile. He published mainly in Toronto, but also in Paris and London, and after 1956 in Poland. He identified himself with Silesia, where he came from, but he was at the same time firmly rooted in Canada. Nevertheless, in one of the interviews he said:

... when I am asked about the downsides of emigration ... I usually mention loneliness as the greatest drawback, the lack of another human being, no suitable environment, no proper friends and mates, no congenial company within which one develops advantageously both spiritually and emotionally....⁶

The poet clearly missed the Polish intellectual environment, although he probably idealized it.

Bogdan Czaykowski was younger than Śmieja. He remembered Polish reality only from his childhood. He published in all the most significant centers of the Polish diaspora and maintained contacts with many Polish émigré writers and artists. Those relationships, however, were marked by a certain distance that was most likely influenced by the combination of his personality traits and the fact that he lived far from larger Polish communities. In the relatively small and divided Polish diaspora in Vancouver, he developed a position as an arbiter and neutral authority supporting Polish causes. The poet was perfectly bilingual. He wrote most of his works in Polish, although in this output he also has lyrics and translations from and into English. Czaykowski had grown into Vancouver and Canada over the years, was well settled down and appreciated there, but felt no attachment to either the country or the city. He did not, however, accentuate his ties to Poland. He defined his own identity using a neologism that is difficult to translate: "Ziemiec" (meaning an inhabitant of

⁵ Nie urodziłem się tu, nie kosztowałem owoców tej ziemi
Ale głos mój drży kiedy mówię o niej
(in: Świąch 2002: 33)

⁶ Florian Śmieja quoted by Zbigniew Anders (2010:112). The collection of articles published in 20221, which discusses and analyses the work of Bogdan Czaykowski, comprises more than 720 pages in a large format (*Kontynenty*: 2021).

the Earth) he also declared: “I would have been happy to be simply born in grass / Grass grows everywhere.” (Budzik 2013: 53) In one of the interviews, however, he said that Canada is a country where: “like nowhere else – you can enjoy solitude.” Czaykowski evidently valued the country of settlement precisely for this, although it proves his rather peculiar estrangement (Budzik 2013: 61).

From the late 1960s to the mid-1990s, another wave of Polish immigrants, estimated at more than 100,000, arrived in Canada (Reczyńska 2006: 162–3). Among the newcomers were artists, painters, sculptors, graphic designers, artists, writers and poets. Their exact number cannot be determined⁷. Some were political refugees, others came to improve their livelihoods. For some – especially at the beginning – language was a barrier, but some spoke English or French, and some quickly filled in the gaps. There were also those who – after 1989 and the changes in Poland – returned to their homeland. Most of them, however, for various reasons, chose to remain in Canada. Only a few won the recognition of Canadians and popularity in the Polish community. Painter, graphic designer and satirist Jerzy Kołacz (1938–2009) was among them. He had lived in Toronto for 30 years since 1978. His drawings and prints were published by respected Canadian and American journals, and in 1983 he became a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (Szrodt 2020: 116–17). Professional successes were achieved for example by conductors Maciej Jaśkiewicz and Andrzej Rozbicki (Kaczmarzyk-Byszewska 2012: 157–165), photojournalist Andrzej (Andrew) Stawicki (*Galeria* 2015: 209–221) and architect and set designer Teresa Przybylski (Kaczmarzyk-Byszewska 2012: 154, 251). Kazimierz Gład (1931–2023) painter, graphic artist and writer came to Canada in 1968 but he was almost completely isolated from the Polish diaspora. Initially, he taught graphic art and drawing, and then devoted himself to promoting contemporary art in schools and public institutions at the Toronto Center for Contemporary Art, which he created himself (Kaczmarzyk-Byszewska 2012: 94–95). Ewa (Eva) Stachniak is considered a Canadian writer. She has lived in Canada since 1981 and publishes in English, writing short stories and novels using European historical contexts. The author has received many awards and honors, and translations of her works have been published in several countries, including Poland (Kaczmarzyk-Byszewska 2012: 208–9).

Among the Polish writers working in Canada at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, Jarosław Abramow-Newerly has a special place. He is a well-known journalist, satirist, playwright, composer and songwriter in Poland, and has been operating between Toronto and Warsaw since 1985. In several of his books he used the stories of Polish emigrants and his own observations about their Canadian experience⁸. *Pan*

⁷ Ryszard Piotrowski’s publication (1994) contains about 50 biographies of people associated with arts. Katarzyna Szrodt (2020) names 55 people and not all names repeat themselves.

⁸ Jarosław Abramow-Newerly’s books with Canadian wallows: *Alianci* (1990), Białystok: Versus; *Pan Zdżich w Kanadzie* (1991) Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Polonia; *Kładka przez Atlantyk* (1995), Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie; *Nawiało nam burzę* (2000), Warszawa: Twój Styl; and *Młyn w piekarni* (2002), Warszawa: Rosner&Wspólnicy.

Zdżich w Kanadzie in particular brought him great popularity. Subsequent chapters were printed first in the Toronto-based Polish-language weekly *Związkowiec* and were also read on Polish-language broadcasts of Radio Free Europe and in the 90s on the Polish Radio. The whole book, however, was published in Poland (*Galeria*: 11–29). Liliana Arkuszewska's extensive work of over 500 pages has a completely different character. The author, a geodesist by training, engaged in graphic design and printing in Canada, and wrote her novel on the basis of the story of her own emigration. She vividly portrayed the dilemmas, entanglements and emotions accompanying this process, both her own and her family's. The book was published in Poland (Arkuszewska 2012.) and it was printed in episodes in Toronto in the Polish-language weekly *Gazeta*, arousing great interest. With the help of the New York Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (PIASA) and The Polish Heritage Foundation of Canada, the text was translated into English and also published in the United Kingdom in 2019 (Bonikowska 2019).

The success of the three Polish emigrant writers described above can be considered exceptional. Several other writers and poets who ended up in Canada in the 1980s and tried to make a living from their literary activities were not so lucky. Despite their considerable efforts, they were unable to find their own place either among Canadians or in the Polish community. Such an example can certainly be the recently deceased Edward Zyman (1943–2021) poet, prose writer, literary critic, publicist with an interesting body of work before 1983, when – as a political refugee – at the age of 40, he emigrated with his family to Canada (Pisulak 2021:67–73). In the Polish community, he was involved in various spheres of cultural activity: he was an editor in Polish-language periodicals and also an author of Polish-language radio and television programs in Toronto. He published nine volumes of poetry and numerous short stories, columns, biographical studies and books. Zyman did also a lot of editorial work. However he wrote exclusively in Polish, published mainly in Canada, and since 2005 also in Poland. Despite being very active, he constantly struggled with the problem of inadequacy and underestimation. His poems relating to the Canadian experience are full of bitterness and sadness:

Each passing day meets waning illusions.
 The former empire of dreams
 Shrinks
 The longed-for world of freedom
 From the Thames, the Seine or Lake Ontario
 Lives a life of its own
 I am always a stranger
Here constantly **yet**
There a l r e a d y far **distant**.⁹

⁹ Z każdym dniem ubywa złudzeń
 Wcześniejsze imperium marzeń

Zyman also transferred his experiences to other immigrants and extended them to other countries. He was disappointed with Canada and the Polish community living there. He mocked the graphomania of amateur poets and criticized the Polish diaspora's lack of interest in Polish literature. Zyman seems not to have noticed that most of this group were concerned with other, more mundane problems. In a 2017 interview, he even admitted that he falls into the category of people who should not emigrate. He also realized that if he returned to Poland he would no longer feel at home there either. It can be said that he was – to some extent – a tragic figure.

Disillusionment and confusion are also evident in the works of poet, essayist and translator Roman Sabo. He lives and works in Vancouver, where he defended his doctoral thesis in Slavic literature. Sabo publishes his Polish-language texts in Canada and Poland. However, he works in a completely different profession and lives suspended between Canada, Poland and, in addition, Ireland, where his wife comes from. He expressed his sense of otherness and alienation, among other things, in the poem, fragments of which I would like to quote here:

We entered a house built by others
 People unknown to us
 In a country created by others
 People unknown to us

 It was neither promised land
 Nor one dreamt of. Decided by: need,
 Market laws, banking decisions

 We dance a quirky dance of strange figures
 Actually subconscious of the magic of gestures

 With which we enchant space to make it close" (Sabo 2002:37)

It should be noted that among Polish immigrants there are also people who, since the late 1990s, have been trying to unite the two worlds separated by the Atlantic Ocean. Among them there are also people of letters. Marek Kusiba, a political émigré, poet, reporter, writer and translator lives in Canada, but often visits Poland. He writes in Polish and English, but mainly on Polish topics. He publishes in Polish ethnic magazines and publications in Canada and the US, but also in Poland. He has developed a strategy (or perhaps a mask) of a wanderer, a person functioning

Kurczy się
 Wytęskniony świat wolności
 znad Tamizy, Sekwany czy Jeziora Ontario
 żyje własnym życiem
 Jestem zawsze obcy
 Tu ciągle jeszcze
 Tam już nieobecny. (Zyman 2002: 125)

simultaneously in Poland and overseas; he is constantly on the road, on hold, temporarily everywhere. He values Canada because he feels free there and is fascinated by the country's multiculturalism. Remaining in exile and in the position of a traveler allows him to maintain a distance and a critical attitude towards everything that concerns Poland and the Polish diaspora (Wejs-Milewska 2014: 201–216).

The examples cited here show how different the life stories of Polish writers, artists and other creators who became immigrants in Canada were. Their fates, like those of other immigrants, depended on the period and circumstances of their arrival. They were shaped by the personality traits of the artists themselves and the attitudes they adopted, but often also by chance. Emigration meant a loss of stability and prestige for some of them. Only a few managed to continue their own creativity and make a living from it. Many had to find a new profession and treated artistic creativity as a hobby. In the country of settlement, however, most Polish artists, writers and poets, functioned in isolation from Canadian artistic circles. It is worth noting that only sometimes the main barrier was ignorance, or poor knowledge of English (or French). Rather, more often the deciding factor was the lack of contact with social and cultural elites and patrons. The different experiences of Poles and Canadians mean that, with some exceptions, both sides also lacked understanding and mutual interest. Writers who published in Polish remained ethnic artists, and rarely appreciated and took advantage of cross-cultural contacts. As a result, they are located entirely on the margins of Canadian literature. The interest of Canadian elites and the Canadian public in Polish themes passed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1984, within the current of Canadian multicultural politics, even an English-language anthology of poetry written in Polish was published in Canada (*Seven Polish*). At present, however, attention is mainly attracted to texts written by and about Canada's Indigenous peoples and immigrants of Asian, African and Latin American descent. Works written in Polish, which explore complex Polish problems and are tinged with a sense of European superiority, are not translated into either English or French, and consequently are unknown even to specialists in Canadian literature. This is best demonstrated by the fact that in the *Ethnic Literature* entry included in the Canadian Encyclopedia, available online, only three Polish names are listed. The first of these is Melchior Wańkowicz. In 1950, he merely traveled across Canada collecting material for his book *Tworzywo*, published in New York in 1954, depicting the fate of Polish emigrants in Canada at the turn of the 20th century¹⁰. The other two Polish authors mentioned in the encyclopedic entry are the poet and literary scholar Louis Dudek (Granowski), who was born and lived in Montreal between 1918 and 2001 and wrote in English¹¹ and Wacław Iwaniuk, the only one of the poets I mentioned earlier (Palmer, Rasporich).

¹⁰ The English version of this text, under the title *Three Generations*, was published in Toronto in 1973, thanks to the efforts of the Polish diaspora.

¹¹ According to Dudek, ethnic cultures can become part of Canadian culture only if they adopt and adapt one of the Canadian official languages (Śmieja).

One of the reasons may be perhaps the fact that the Polish-language works being written in Canada are decidedly dominated by themes concerning distant Poland rather than Canada. In the works of Polish émigrés, apart from some examples of admiration for Canadian nature and landscape, the authors' disillusionment with the country of settlement, the difficulties of adaptation and a sense of loneliness and alienation prevail. Similar assessments and sensations – paradoxically – can also be found in the works of Polish immigrant writers in relation to broad circles of the Polish diaspora. These artists believe that they are not valued and supported enough by their own group and that their works are of interest to only a small percentage of the Polish ethnic group living in Canada (and this is true). Writers have little contact with readers, critics and, above all, with patrons. This adds to their loneliness and alienation (Sojka 2010:315–316). Living outside their homeland, on the other hand, means that in Poland too, they are mostly neither known nor recognized. Such experiences caused many artists to feel a kind of stigma of emigration. They thus remain strangers among strangers but also strangers among their fellow-countrymen, both in Canada and in Poland.

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