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1991: Narratives of (Non-) Return in the Ukrainian Diaspora in Canada

Elisa Lucente

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Abstract

This paper delves into the multifaceted theme of return within the framework of Ukrainian migration to Canada, particularly focusing on the so-called “third wave” of immigration that occurred from European displaced persons (DP) camps up until 1991. It investigates how the notion of return—encompassing both physical repatriation and emotional reconnection to homeland—has shaped the collective memory of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada. The year 1991 is pivotal in this analysis, as it signifies not only the achievement of Ukrainian independence but also the centennial anniversary of Ukrainian migration to Canada, thereby acting as a focal point for reflection and renewal. Furthermore, this preliminary study situates Ukrainian identity-building within the context of Canada’s official multiculturalism policy, which promotes the preservation and celebration of diverse cultural heritages. This framework has allowed Ukrainian Canadians to navigate their identities in a multicultural landscape, fostering a sense of belonging while simultaneously encouraging connections to their roots. By utilizing oral history interviews alongside a rich tapestry of cultural expressions, including memoirs and novels, the research highlights the complexities of memory and belonging. Through this lens, it reveals how Ukrainian Canadians have crafted their identities in relation to both their past experiences and the broader multicultural ethos of Canada.

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Introduction

This paper critically examines the concept of diasporic return within the Ukrainian Canadian community, focusing on the "third wave" of Ukrainian migration to Canada, which refers to the post-World War II influx of displaced persons. The study spans the period from 1945 to 1991, a significant era marked by the resettlement of displaced Ukrainians in Canada and the evolving construction of Ukrainian diasporic identity in response to historical and political changes. Through this lens, the paper explores how the notion of "return"—literal and symbolic—was understood, experienced, and expressed by these Ukrainian immigrants and their descendants.[1] The study investigates the constructed nature of diasporic identity and the complex interplay between mobility, memory, and the idea of home. The term "diaspora" is used in this paper not as a static or universally accepted label but as a conceptual lens that interrogates the layered meanings of migration, belonging, and memory. Rather than assuming a singular, fixed definition, the paper draws on the evolving scholarly discourse surrounding diaspora to understand how Ukrainian immigrants and their descendants navigated relationships with their ancestral homeland and their adopted country. As mentioned, central to this analysis is the concept of "return," explored not simply as a physical act of repatriation but as an emotional, symbolic, and cultural phenomenon. This approach challenges conventional diaspora frameworks—such as the triangular model that links homeland, host country, and global diaspora—by advocating for a more fluid and context-sensitive understanding of diasporic experiences. The period under investigation—from 1945 to 1991—offers a rich historical backdrop for examining the Ukrainian Canadian experience. This timeframe captures the resettlement of displaced persons after World War II, their integration into Canadian society, and the profound transformation marked by Ukraine's declaration of independence. By focusing on the third wave of Ukrainian migration, this study highlights a unique generational perspective shaped by displacement, Cold War geopolitics, and Canada's evolving multicultural policies. The centennial of Ukrainian migration to Canada in 1991 provides additional depth, as the community's reflections on this milestone coincided with Ukraine's sovereignty, shifting both national and diasporic identities. While this paper does not have the space for a comprehensive analysis of Canadian multiculturalism, it is crucial to recognize the transformative impact of Canada's multiculturalism policies. Initiated in the 1970s and cemented by the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, these policies established a framework enabling ethnic communities, such as Ukrainian Canadians, to preserve their cultural heritage through funding and cultural initiatives, while actively shaping Canada's broader national identity as a mosaic of diverse "ethnic tiles." This context is duly acknowledged in the present discussion.

Drawing on oral histories, cultural texts, and community narratives, this study examines how these policies shaped responses to both Ukraine's independence and the centennial commemoration of Ukrainian migration. These responses offer critical insights into how the meanings of "home" and diasporic identity evolved during this period. The work is structured as follows: After a methodological overview, I provide a brief examination of the concept of "return" in diaspora studies, considering its varied interpretations and relevance to the Ukrainian Canadian experience. This is followed by a discussion of the "third wave" of Ukrainian migration

[1] The Ukrainian migration to Canada unfolded in three distinct waves, each shaped by unique historical contexts. From 1891 to 1914, the first wave brought primarily peasant immigrants from Western Ukraine seeking economic opportunities and land in the Prairie provinces. The second wave, during the 1920s and 1930s, consisted of political refugees and intellectuals fleeing Soviet repression and the upheavals of the Russian Revolution, leading to the establishment of cultural and political institutions. Following World War II, the third wave saw displaced persons and survivors of Soviet control arriving between 1945 and the 1960s, contributing to the further consolidation of Ukrainian Canadian communities and the preservation of their cultural heritage.

(1945–1991), in which the concept of return is explored in relation to the experiences of displaced persons and their descendants. The study then focuses on the significant turning point of 1991, analyzing immediate reactions to Ukraine's independence, the centennial of Ukrainian migration to Canada, and the long-lasting consequences of these events for the Ukrainian Canadian community. Finally, while this research remains ongoing, it acknowledges that the questions of identity and belonging remain open, constantly shifting in response to new political realities. The ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine has once again challenged these dynamics, prompting renewed reflection on the meaning of "home," the role of memory, and the evolving relationship between the Ukrainian Canadian community, Ukraine, and Canada.

Methodology

This study investigates the complex dynamics of (non-) return within the Ukrainian Canadian community amid Ukraine's independence in 1991, utilizing a multi-method approach that integrates archival research, oral history interviews, and analysis of cultural production.

Archival research serves as a foundational component of this study, drawing on materials from numerous institutions across Canada and the United States to contextualize the narratives of (non-) return. In British Columbia, records were accessed at the BC Royal Museum Archives and the University of Victoria Archives, offering regional insights into Ukrainian Canadian experiences. In Toronto, key resources were examined at the University of Toronto, the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre, the Shevchenko Museum, and the Provincial Archives of Ontario, which provided a wealth of documents related to community activities, cultural preservation, and responses to Ukrainian independence. In Halifax, materials from the Pier 21 Museum illuminated the broader context of migration and settlement experiences, while in Ottawa, the National Archives of Canada contributed critical governmental and community records relevant to the centennial celebrations and narratives of return. Winnipeg-based institutions, including the University of Manitoba Archives, Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre Archives, and the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians Archives, offered unique perspectives on the community's historical and cultural evolution. In Edmonton, the Provincial Archives of Alberta, the Bohdan Medwidsky Ukrainian Folklore Archives, and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Archives provided additional documentation on cultural production and identity-building.

Internationally, the United Nations Archives in New York supplemented this research, offering a transnational dimension to the examination of diasporic return narratives. Online resources such as the Diasporiana website also enriched the archival framework, allowing access to rare publications and diaspora-focused materials. Collectively, these archives provided a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the community's evolving relationship with the concept of return in the immediate post-1991 period.

Oral history interviews were conducted to capture personal and collective reflections on the idea of return, emphasizing the voices of those connected to the "third wave" of Ukrainian immigration and their descendants. Participants were selected through a snowball sampling technique, starting with contacts from Ukrainian community organizations and expanding to include diverse perspectives from within and beyond the mainstream community. The interviews focused on their experiences during the pivotal period of Ukrainian independence, exploring the emotional, psychological, and practical dimensions of (non-) return.

In total, 30 interviews were conducted between September 2021 and September 2022, with participants providing rich narratives about their connections to both Canada and Ukraine. Special attention was given to capturing the perspectives of individuals who considered returning to Ukraine, those who chose not to, and those who engaged in symbolic or emotional

acts of return. The interviews reveal how notions of home and belonging have been negotiated in light of both Ukrainian independence and Canada's multicultural framework.

The study also examines cultural production as a lens to explore how narratives of (non-) return are expressed and negotiated. Diasporic communities often use cultural artifacts, including memoirs, novels, poetry, films, and artistic works, as mediums for reflecting on identity, belonging, and the interplay between homeland and hostland. This analysis focuses on works produced by Ukrainian Canadians that grapple with themes of longing, integration, and the evolving relationship with an independent Ukraine. Cultural production serves as a dynamic vehicle for both preserving heritage and adapting to new socio-political realities. Within the Ukrainian Canadian community, such works reveal how the idea of return functions not only as a geographical aspiration but also as a symbolic and emotional process. These artifacts provide insights into the community's collective memory and identity formation, particularly as shaped by the dual milestones of 1991: independence and the centennial of migration to Canada.

By integrating extensive archival research, personal narratives from oral history interviews, and the rich tapestry of cultural production, this study provides a multi-dimensional exploration of (non-) return within the Ukrainian Canadian community after 1991. This methodology highlights the interplay between historical documentation, lived experience, and cultural expression, offering a nuanced understanding of how diasporic identities evolve in response to transformative events such as national independence.

"There is no happiness in a foreign land"[2]

To set the stage for a comprehensive analysis of the subject of diasporic (non-) return, it may be instrumental to journey back to the genesis of this migration movement—specifically to postwar East Germany. Here, in March 1955, after Stalin's death, an appeal that was directed to all Soviet citizens scattered outside the USSR was broadcasted from an office within the German Democratic Republic named *Komitet za Vozvrashchenie na Rodinu* (translated from Russian: "Committee for the Return to the Homeland"). Six months later, in September, the Soviet government proclaimed an amnesty absolving all Eastern European emigres who were under suspicion for war crimes or collaboration with the Nazis,[3] a strategic move attempted to project an image of benevolence towards those citizens who have migrated and resided overseas. The efficacy of this tactic was amplified through various propaganda materials designed to resonate with the personal emotions of the emigres, such as the distribution of newspapers and booklets.

While conducting a first examination of the material related to the repatriation of Soviet citizens from the DP camps,[4] I chanced upon this appeal. I found it interesting to observe the vocabulary associated with "return" that was employed within the context of this text, mainly when it addressed those who sought refuge in the West–before and after the war,

> We know how hard it is for you. Many of you suffer from malnutrition, do not have living quarters fit for man, and don't have the main thing that a man needs – honest work. [...] Others may not know, but we know perfectly well that no one is interested in people like you in foreign lands. Is there someone there who will understand all the depth of your

[2] Roberts & Cipko, 2008, p. 38.
[3] Department of External Affairs. (1955–1957). *Return to Homeland campaigns of Iron Curtain Governments* (Fonds RG25, vol. 7609, file 11327-40, part 4.3, 1025-1029). Library and Archives Canada.
[4] Department of External Affairs. (1957–1960). *Return to the homeland campaign of Iron Curtain countries* (Fonds RG25, vol. 5439, file 11327-40). Library and Archives Canada. The English version is based on the translation of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada.

> suffering, your homesickness? Are they familiar even to some extent to your childhood memories? […] Who needs you there? And if you are wanted then it is only to use you for the most exhausting and most dishonest work. […] We know well that many of you harbour in the depth of your souls the cherished dream of return to the homeland but cannot decide to realize it. […] We also know what hinders your return: You are held back by fear. Yes, fear spread by the propaganda of the overseas lord and their despicable myrmidons.[5]

This plea was deftly crafted to resonate with the everyday struggles of the emigrants, highlighting the hardships, poverty, and discrimination they might face in their new residence. Moreover, another objective was to paint a picture of the Soviet Union as a workers' paradise that would forgive them and accept them back, even those who fought against "the motherland." It was explicitly addressing Ukrainians, Belarussians, and nationals of the Baltic states,

> Some people believed the enemy slandered, were frightened of the new life, and threw themselves headlong into the camp of the foe. […] Whatever the reasons every one of you might have had, you must know only one thing: Return, and the homeland will receive you! […]. The homeland will receive even those who joined military organizations, which were hostile to our country, […] and even those who are guilty before the Homeland.[6]

Prominently featured amongst the signatories of the appeal is Ihor Leontiovich Muratov, a Soviet poet hailing from Kharkiv. Scholars Glenna Roberts and Serge Cipko, who have delved deeply into this subject, report that Muratov also served as editor for the Ukrainian-language propaganda organ of Committee.[7] This underscores the pivotal role language plays within these communities, and the necessity of a dedicated platform tailored to specific national groups within the soviet republics, among which were Ukrainians. The necessity of a dedicated platform for specific national groups within the Soviet republics becomes apparent when considering the diverse experiences of these communities. In the case of Ukrainians, their unique linguistic and cultural heritage demanded representation that could articulate their narratives and concerns. Muratov's involvement illustrates how language was not merely a tool for communication but also a means of asserting identity and agency within a larger Soviet framework that marginalized minority voices.

The campaign took on significant overtones when one considers how much the "return to the motherland" was harboured by the people seeking refuge overseas, particularly throughout the initial three decades after the end of WWII. Those who were politically engaged, especially among the DPs, were aware of the propagandistic motives driving the campaign, and regardless, they did not view Soviet Ukraine as a homeland to return to. This sentiment is reflected in the anti-communist perspectives prevalent in diaspora newspapers of the time.[8] However, the question was far more complex if we consider those DPs who were not interested in politics nor aware of ideologies. The historian Cipko's research found at least 300 returnees

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[5] Department of External Affairs. (1957–1960). *Return to the homeland campaign of Iron Curtain countries* (Fonds RG25, vol. 5439, file 11327-40). Library and Archives Canada.

[6] Department of External Affairs. (1957–1960). *Return to the homeland campaign of Iron Curtain countries* (Fonds RG25, vol. 5439, file 11327-40). Library and Archives Canada.

[7] Roberts & Cipko, 2008, p. 25

[8] Ukrainian Weekly. (1955, October 8). *Return to Soviet homeland: Emigres flee back to free world*. Ukrainian Weekly, 62(194), 1.

of different nationalities who left Canada for the USSR in the 1950s, 65 of which were postwar DPs. It is not a considerable number, nor is it hardly unexpected that most of those swayed by this appeal were individuals aligned with pro-Soviet associations who had migrated to the New World during the first half of the twentieth century. Yet, the existence of DPs within this group, who expressed remorse over their decision to leave the USSR, highlights the complex dynamics of this migration wave. It serves as a reminder that sweeping generalizations can often miss the unique experiences of individuals, like the ones who, despite being in Canada, could not lay down familial, communal, or professional roots. It breaks down any idealization of migration processes in diasporic communities, unveiling the challenges endured by those who "do not make it". For these individuals, the call of the USSR convinced them that returning was the right thing to do.[9] Although there are additional sources about the Ukrainians who were among those DPs from Canada who went back to the Soviet Union, I decided to start this paper with this specific experience because they were the first ones who indeed returned.[10] The headline of one of the letters published in the *Za povernennia na Batkivshchynu,* is exemplificatory of the dynamics underlining the diasporic return, "There is no happiness in a foreign land" (Roberts & Cipko, 2008, p. 38). When individuals decide to return, they are often driven by a profound sense of disconnection from their country of residence. Consequently, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the choice to return—or not—in Ukraine after independence has been proclaimed, it is crucial to consider this initial perspective. Doing so makes it possible to reframe the research questions and delve deeper into the motivations behind one's choice: Can a foreign land ever truly shed its foreignness? Or, in a twist of irony, can the place one has always called home transform itself into a foreign country?

The concept of "return" in diaspora studies

An analysis of the concept of return within diaspora studies finds the Jewish experience especially relevant, mainly due to the significant shift in definition with the rise of Zionism. The relationship between Zionism and the diaspora is far more intricate than commonly perceived. If Zionism's ideology originates from the diaspora, as opposed to popular belief, it distinguishes itself by rejecting the idea that reliance on the diasporic condition is necessary for establishing a state where Jews can find security (Dufoix, 2009). This political belief contrasts with the traditional religious view, which holds that only God can orchestrate the return of the Jews to the Holy Land. Following the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, the concept of "return" transitioned into human action, encapsulated by the *aliyah*—namely, the migration to Israel. This shift led to discord between the newly formed state and the diaspora, particularly with groups like the American Jewish Committee, which opposed the law of return promulgated by the Knesset in 1950 alongside the right not to return (Feldstein, 2007). Stéphane Dufoix has discerned four meanings of diaspora within Jewish history, each pivoting on the concept of return: advocating for a return—whether eschatological within Judaic Rabbinism or political within Zionism—or opting not to return but instead establishing connections as a minority or transnational community (Cohen & Fisher, 2018, pp. 13-21). However, this paper does not specifically address return migration—the physical act of returning to Ukraine after 1991. Instead, it focuses on the broader concept of "return," exploring the narratives within the community and their connections to identity building. Since my sources are limited to the Canadian context, as mentioned in the introduction, I aim to uncover how experiences of displacement and memory shape identification processes within this specific landscape.

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[9] Motivations of these returnees are analyzed in Roberts & Cipko, 2008, pp. 70-75.
[10] Roberts & Cipko (2008) highlighted that, according to the resettlement information gathered, among 26 family groups of postwar DPs, 8 had roots in Ukraine.

As research into diaspora expanded within cultural studies, the meaning of return grew in scope. I find Faist's conclusion particularly enlightening, suggesting that scholars should challenge the idea that diasporic self-consciousness resides solely in cultural distinctiveness from the hostland (Faist, 2010). The issue of return is multifaceted, encompassing not just one's place of origin but also their current residence. Returning and establishing a new home are inextricably linked phenomena; an individual can leave and come back to different places, both physically and symbolically. This concept of return involves reflections on both the original community and the "new" community where one lives and seeks to belong. The dynamics of return and homemaking encompass diverse forms and meanings, extending beyond geographical notions to include emotional and psychological dimensions (Hirsch & Miller, 2011). Individuals within a diaspora may experience a "double absence" (Bourdieu & Sayad, 2004), feeling alienated in their host societies while also feeling detached from their homelands. Conversely, they can experience a "double presence," balancing the ancestral homeland with their current residence. This dual perspective is a delicate interplay between longing for a familiar "home" and the need for a tangible space to claim as one's own.

Additionally, it is crucial to highlight the experience of the "returnees who never left"—subsequent generations born and raised in a different country from their diasporic roots. Despite never living in their ancestral homeland, they too embark on a journey of return, driven by a desire to reconnect with their roots and cultural heritage. The second generation often grapples with a complex sense of identity, caught between the culture of their birth country and the narratives of their ancestral lands. Fundamental to this experience is the concept of "postmemory," coined by Marianne Hirsch, which describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the trauma and experiences of those who came before them—experiences they have not lived through directly but that still profoundly impact their lives (Hirsch, 2008). This form of memory can fuel the desire to reconnect with roots while highlighting the significant gap between past and present. Such gaps can lead to challenges like projection, where the second generation might distort historical perceptions, or appropriation, where they oversimplify their cultural heritage. Understanding these nuances is vital when approaching the topic of diasporic return. The range of return can include physical relocation, symbolic engagement with cultural heritage, or psychological return in the form of postmemory. Factors prompting this return may include a longing for belonging or the influence of familial narratives. Ultimately, the narratives of return or non-return shape the homemaking process, significantly impacting how individuals construct their sense of home and belonging. This multidimensional approach allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the vital aspects of diasporic experience.

The first step in this analysis involves reassessing the nostalgic yearning for return that arose during resettlement, as revealed in various collected sources. Following this, I will delve into the critical turning point of 1991, when Ukraine was "put back on the map of Europe." Ukrainian independence transformed the narratives of return and homemaking, opening new possibilities and challenges. What form does this return take? How do stories of returning or choosing not to return shape how people create a sense of an old—or a new—home?

"Sitting on a Suitcase"[11]

When examining the concept of return in the third wave of Ukrainian migration to Canada, the first crucial aspect to consider is the feeling of "exile" that individuals experienced. This sense of nostalgia creates a backdrop for the desire to return, where the act of returning symbolizes both the reclamation of lost heritage and the challenges of confronting a transformed homeland. This

[11] Hwyoron, Z. (2022, June 22). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Winnipeg, Canada.

group of migrants was deeply impacted by a sense of loss, not only because they were forcibly removed from their homeland as usually studied, but also because they grappled with the realization that their longing for a homeland was based solely on imagination. The abovementioned notion of duplicity plays a significant role when discussing Ukraine in this context. On one hand, the physical Ukraine did exist but was part of the Soviet Union. Although it was technically possible to return there, it was not desired as it was depicted as a place to escape from. On the other hand, the idea of Ukraine as the homeland is often mentioned in nostalgic memories of a bygone era. However, the desire to return to this imagined homeland was inherently unfulfilled. How can one go back to a place that never truly existed? To be clear, memories are not bogus. They often revolve around Ukrainian cultural practices that were carried out within households. However, these customs developed within political entities that were not the independent state of Ukraine. In contemporary accounts of the immediate postwar era, especially those aimed at showing the condition of Ukrainians as political refugees, a potential return is indeed described as “worse than death.”[12] For example, the article “The Uprooted Population,” published in the Ukrainian Weekly in 1946, outlines the different feelings animating “Western” and “Eastern” DPs,

> We are witnesses in Western Europe of a curious phenomenon (which to Western Europeans makes an appeal to curiosity if not to conscience) of American citizens rioting because they “wanna go home” (westward). In contrast, in the same street, Soviet citizens and others claimed by them as such, killed themselves in amazing numbers. […] They are prepared to work anywhere in any capacity rather than return.

The phrase “wanna go home” effectively emphasizes the longing for the familiar comforts and freedoms of one’s country. Conversely, the stark description of Soviet citizens committing suicide rather than returning home illustrates the profound fear and desperation they feel towards the oppressive regimes in their countries. The juxtaposition between the East and the West follows the Cold War narrative. Similarly, feelings of despair and solitude emerged in “Why I can’t Return,” a pamphlet published by the philosopher Wolhodymyr Shayan. In his writing, Shayan captures the essence of being coerced into exile from one's birthplace and the indifference experienced, “You cannot hear the cry of millions of suffering hearts that roars in my soul: we can’t return” (Shayan, 1950). When leaving the camp, the “where” of the resettling decision says something about “return.” For the majority who decided to migrate, Canada entails the realization that returning to their country of origin may not be feasible. For example, Mikola Kocijowsky, a former DP who openly acknowledged his affiliation with the OUN-B, radically motivated to fight against the Soviet Union, initially opted to remain in the United Kingdom due to its geographic proximity to Ukraine. However, he decided to immigrate to Canada in 1952, admitting, “I did so when I gave up hope of returning to Ukraine.”[13]

Once established in Canada, the persistent narrative of “being unable to return” to evade forced repatriation gradually lost its centrality. Ukraine’s plight continued to feature prominently in the community’s discussions. However, the theme of return was not approached as part of a potential or explicit plan for a “return to the homeland”; rather, it was reframed as the “return” of Ukraine to democracy. From a quantitative perspective, in the publications of both the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and the Canadian League for the Liberation of Ukraine—the most nationalistic DP organization in Canada—there are countless references to “the family of the

[12] The Ukrainian Weekly. (1946, March 23). *The uprooted population*. *The Ukrainian Weekly, 64*(58), 2.
[13] Kocijowsky, M. (1982, May 14). *Personal interview*. Conducted by L. Luciuk. In *MHSO oral history collection* (UKR-13329-KOC).

freedom-loving people," "democracy," "human rights," and "independence."[14] Alongside this perspective, there was a shift towards emphasizing the symbolic significance of the "homeland" in Ukraine's nation-building process. This involved incorporating the concept of "invented tradition" proposed by Hobsbawm (1983) and Anderson's (1984) idea of an "imagined community" into the cultural output of the diaspora. The yearning to return to this homeland and the complex feeling of longing have been incredibly intense when expressed through literature and poetry. This is evident if one considers the substantial body of writing produced by emigre writers in the decade after the Second World War. As noted by scholars of Ukrainian Canadian literature, writers who emigrated during the third wave, such as Volodymyr Skorupsky, Ulas Samchuk, Ivan Bondarchuk, Svitlana Kuzmenko, Borys Oleksandriv, and Yar Slavutych, utilized the Ukrainian language to explore themes centred around their longing for their homeland and the unfulfilled desire to return. This narrative, however, is intertwined with their experience in Canada.[15] The exploration of exile and dispersion in Ukrainian poetry offers profound insights into the emotional and spiritual dimensions of displacement. The poem "Original Sin" by Volodymyr Skorupsky poignantly encapsulates this theme with its opening line, "From Eden into exile we went" (Balan & Klynovy, 1987, p. 249). This metaphorical journey evokes the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve, suggesting that the experience of exile is not just a physical removal from one's homeland but also a profound loss of innocence and connection to a once-sacred space. The use of religious imagery here underscores the idea that exile is a fundamental rupture, likening it to a fall from grace that affects not only individual identities but also collective cultural memory. By framing exile in this way, Skorupsky elevates the experience to a universal human condition, where the longing for a lost paradise becomes a shared narrative among displaced individuals. Similarly, Oleska Hay-Holowko's poem "I Fled from Home" further illustrates the complexities of exile through the lines, "I fled from my home not to be mute. Not to be silent like a rock in the desert" (Balan & Klynovy, 1987, p. 60). Hay-Holowko's assertion emphasizes the struggle for voice and identity amidst the overwhelming silence that often accompanies displacement. The metaphor of silence as a "rock in the desert" evokes a stark image of isolation, where the absence of sound and presence signifies a deeper existential crisis. The act of fleeing, then, becomes not just an escape from physical danger but a necessary journey toward self-expression and the reclamation of agency. This highlights a critical aspect of diaspora literature: the inherent tension between the desire to belong and the need to assert one's identity in foreign lands. Hay-Holowko's personal history enriches this

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[14] Regarding the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), I refer primarily to the All-Canadian Congresses of Ukrainians in Canada, which exemplify the political stance of the umbrella organization. Notably, the VI Congress of Ukrainian Canadians (1959), VIII Congress of Ukrainian Canadians (1965), and IX Congress of Ukrainian Canadians (1968) are highlighted. The conference proceedings discuss the fate of the Ukrainian state and, in relation to the Ukrainian community, focus on multicultural issues. The published proceedings are available for consultation at the Library and Archives Canada (LAC). Addresses from the IX Congress are also archived at LAC, Ottawa, in Jaroslav Rudnyckyi's collection (MG31-D58, Vol. 89).
For the position of the Canadian League for Ukraine's Liberation (CLLU), consult *Truth on March* (1953) published by Homin Ukrainy, and articles in *ABN Correspondence*, of which the CLLU was a part. Key articles include: "The mission of the emigrants" (*ABN Correspondence*, 1954, Vol. 5, No. 5–9), "Second Conference of the ABN in Canada" (*ABN Correspondence*, 1959, Vol. 10, No. 7–8), "Diefenbaker for Ukraine's right to independence" (*ABN Correspondence*, 1971, Vol. 22, No. 3), and "We must be ready to defend our freedom" (*ABN Correspondence*, 1982, Vol. 33, No. 4–5).

[15] On Ukrainian Canadian literature and poetry, I refer to the following anthologies: Balan, I., & Klynovy, I. (Eds.). (1987). *Yarmarok: Ukrainian writing in Canada since the Second World War*. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. Mandryka, M. I. (1968). *History of Ukrainian literature in Canada*. Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences. Marunchak, M. H. (1982). *The Ukrainian Canadians: A history*. Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences. *Yarmarok* is a fundamental source since it includes selected works by emigre writers of the third wave and more detailed biographical information about these writers.

narrative further. Born in Kyiv in 1910 to a Greek Orthodox priest, Hay-Holowko was steeped in cultural and spiritual traditions that shaped his worldview. His migration—first to the American zone in Austria, then to Germany, England, and finally Canada in 1951[16]—was fraught with upheaval and uncertainty. In his memoir, "Duel with the Devil," Hay-Holowko reflects on the traumatic experience of being labelled a traitor, "They expelled us from our homes! I was labelled a traitor to my Fatherland because I dared to defend myself, my family, my countryman, our freedom" (Hay-Holowko, 1986, p. 67). This powerful statement reveals the multifaceted nature of exile, blurring the lines between victimhood and agency. The term "traitor" itself evokes the complexity of loyalty and belonging, raising questions about national identity, personal integrity, and the often harsh realities faced by those forced to leave their homeland. The blurred distinctions between being a displaced person, a political refugee, and an exile add layers to our understanding of migration. How forced was Hay-Holowko's migration? How voluntary? His narrative suggests a spectrum of experiences—while he fled to escape persecution and maintain his family's safety, the implications of that flight resonate with feelings of guilt, loss, and alienation. The emotional turmoil inherent in such decisions complicates simplistic categorizations of migration, challenging the notion of choice in contexts of oppression. Moreover, the juxtaposition of Skorupsky's and Hay-Holowko's works illustrate how exile shapes not only personal identities but also broader cultural narratives within the Ukrainian diaspora. Their poetry embodies the struggle for continuity and belonging in a world marked by dislocation. The religious overtones in Skorupsky's depiction of exile serve to frame the experience as a communal plight, while Hay-Holowko's emphasis on the need for self-assertion highlights the individual's fight for voice within that collective narrative. An intriguing observation lies in the imagined homeland's healing effect. It serves as a refuge where individuals can confront the challenges of unfamiliar and foreign environments while also gaining a deeper understanding of their condition. A condition that for some have been cruelly inhospitable, "The sea that eventually rejects all foreign objects"[17]; "If evermore, without a home, I roam,"[18] while for others meant a constant balance between two worlds: "In one – there echoes the call of his homeland. In the other – he hears the cry of his children. Who remains whole when dual worlds already exist within?"[19] The poem "A Song About Canada" by Hay-Holowko is relevant regarding the specific migration to Canada. When analyzing the poet's tone and vocabulary, how Canada is depicted exemplifies the trends emerging among the DPs. He loved and appreciated "her"[20] for the refuge she provided and the way of life she allowed. However, the lingering sense of not fully belonging is apparent. By contrast, there is a genuine admiration for the act of extending warm hospitality.

Another viewpoint on Canada emerges from the experiences of a boy who lived through World War II during his teenage years. As a result, he was at an age where he could vividly recall his homeland, yet still lacked the deep roots that come with being older. In his memoir, Serge Radchuk recounts his arrival in Canada. He landed in Halifax without his family, who stayed in Ukraine, and then embarked on an extensive train journey, which saw him reaching Winnipeg on December 24, 1947. Following this, Radchuk set out for the final leg of his trip, which was intended for Saskatchewan. His initial impressions, formed at the Winnipeg train station, were less than favourable,

> I was almost at my destination and, feeling a bit homesick, eagerly boarded my train, bound for "home" in Saskatchewan. I arrived soon

[16] Obituary. (2006, September 20). *Winnipeg Free Press.*
[17] Jendyk, O. "From the Prairie" in Balan & Klynovy, 1987, p. 139.
[18] Mazepa, B. "My songs" in Balan & Klynovy, 1987, p.141.
[19] Klynovy, Y. "The emigrant" in Balan & Klynovy, 1987, p. 110.
[20] I am using the "gendered" vocabulary employed by the poet himself.

> after 10:00 p.m. and quickly discovered that I was inappropriately dressed for the outside temperature: a shocking 30°C below zero! […] All my life I avoided Siberia, and where I have voluntarily ended up? (Radchuk, 2001, p. 19)

It is clear from this insight that the author has yet to come to regard Canada as his home. This is evident from the quotation marks around the word "home" and the ongoing feeling of homesickness Radchuk mentioned. Interestingly, a striking juxtaposition is observed in the climatic conditions of his new home, Canada, with those of Siberia breaking the narrative norm of the vast prairies being a common ground between Canada and Ukraine. Then, the story goes on with the first night, spent struggling to sleep while his mind is teeming with doubts. Specifically, Radchuk questioned if he had made the right decision to move so far away from home, and the absence of his parents was felt more keenly with every passing minute. This element carries great significance since "home" took on the guise not of an imagined or real country, but the ones of his own family, which he left behind when he fled westward. His upbringing, with its traditional Christmas celebrations, had not prepared him for the cultural shift of commemorating an English Christmas, ordinarily observed on December 25. Usually of no particular significance to Radchuk, this day took on a new meaning, symbolizing the substantial changes in his life. The protagonist found the notion of returning to his homeland increasingly unfavourable. However,

> Although I was happy and doing well, I constantly missed my parents and worried about their well-being. We kept in touch by regular correspondence, but my ultimate goal was to bring them to Canada. When I learned that there was a Ukrainian member of Parliament representing a Social Credit federal riding in Alberta, I decided to write to him. I explained to Anton Hlynka the whole story about my mother's rejection by Canadian medical authorities and asked him to intervene. He was extremely sympathetic and acted quickly to arrange for my parents to be re-examined. This time, my mother passed, and they were allowed to join me in Canada (Radchuk, 2001, p. 25).

His efforts pivoted towards family reunification; he was determined to facilitate his parents' emigration to Canada. This shift in focus underscores the importance of familial ties in the immigrant narrative, illuminating the protagonist's struggle to establish a sense of belonging in his new environment while maintaining strong connections to his past.

The narratives that have surfaced from oral sources of individuals who experienced the camp and the subsequent "exile" during their childhood are equally fascinating. Generally speaking, the theme of return has not emerged in the interviews I have conducted, if not in remembering the post-independence era.[21] One notable exception was the interview with Zorianna. During our conversation, she reflected on her childhood in Canada and the dynamics of her relationship with her parents. Zorianna candidly expressed, "My parents, along with many others of their generation, lived as if they were sitting on a suitcase. It was not a symbolic statement! My mother never unpacked our belongings. They were always waiting for the call to return home."[22] And it is perhaps not secondary that Zorianna's connection with Europe was one of the most powerful that emerged, manifested in her frequent visits to Germany, Austria, and Ukraine following Ukraine's independence and her relentless efforts to reconstruct the

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[21] One of the specific questions I asked was, "Have you ever considered returning to Ukraine?" This question may have influenced the development of the testimonies' narrations.

[22] Hwyoron, Z. (2022, June 22). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Winnipeg, Canada.

history of the DP camp where she resided. Vicki Karpiak, the daughter of Senator Yuzuk and a third-generation first-wave immigrant, further validated this perspective. She mentioned, "The third wave was obsessed with return."[23] In this respect, Roman Fedoriw told me that a frequently heard toast during Christmas or Easter festivities was, "Next year in a free Ukraine,"[24] which seems to rephrase the iconic Jewish motto "Next year in Jerusalem" (Greenspoon, 2019).

To pull the strings of this first analysis, the theme of returning home is a recurrent motif, predominantly surfacing in camp memoirs and narratives from the early years of settlement in Canada. Since the physical act of return was impossible, cultural works during the Cold War often depict a shift from the inaccessible Soviet Ukraine to the idealization of an imagined homeland. This idealization served as a coping mechanism, offering comfort and a sense of identity amidst the unfamiliarity of life abroad. Yet, as time passed and the unique Ukrainian experience in Canada began to shape itself within multicultural politics, the narrative focus evolved, with different outcomes from the Sixties onwards. For many, the emphasis shifted towards redefining a Ukrainian Canadian identity, a transition that underscores the complex dynamics of immigrant identities. Notwithstanding, the issue of generational postmemory further complicates the picture.

1991: The Dawn of a New Era

While the Cold War started to lose steam in the late 1980s, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was not a straightforward process. It was the culmination of many intertwined economic, political, social, and cultural variables, both within the Soviet Union and beyond its borders. These factors created a complex and intricate tapestry that is not easily condensed into a straightforward narrative. The USSR economy was spiralling into a severe crisis, with a multitude of factors exacerbating its condition, such as the expensive and unsuccessful war in Afghanistan, which only concluded in 1988-1989, the massive financial burden of managing the aftermath of the Chornobyl disaster in 1986, coupled with the strain of a devastating earthquake that hit Armenia in 1988. Political changes were also pivotal in the dissolution of the federation. The policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* introduced under Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership had far-reaching social implications. Gorbachev's reforms, designed to modernize the Soviet economy and political system, unintentionally unleashed forces that eventually led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Miller, 2016). Also instrumental was the ideological stagnation and the gradual delegitimization of Marxism-Leninism, particularly Stalinism, due to glasnost and newly revealed "blank spots" in Soviet history. This contributed to a growing disillusionment and loss of faith in existing ideologies. The turbulence within the Soviet Union was further amplified by the rise of nationalist movements both within its republics and in Eastern Europe. These movements challenged the unity of the Soviet bloc and the USSR itself. The desire for self-determination and independence among various ethnic and national groups grew more robust.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, other personalities such as United States President Ronald Reagan and United Kingdom Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher rallied against the "Evil Empire," the media also played a critical role in disseminating information and ideas that challenged the communist ideology. As for Gorbachev, his reputation remains contested. In

[23] Karpiak, V. (2022, May 3). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Ottawa, Canada.

[24] Fedoriw, R. (2022, September 22). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Edmonton, Canada. Also mentioned in the interviews conducted by Lalande, J. (2006). *Building a home abroad: A comparative study of Ukrainian migration, immigration policy, and diaspora formation in Canada and Germany after the Second World War* (Doctoral dissertation). Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky.

some circles, especially in the West, he is regarded as the peacemaker who ended the Cold War, almost singlehandedly stopped the arms race, and declined to respond with force when the East Europeans and the Soviet republics broke free. In the Russian Federation, Gorbachev's popularity remains low. He was, after all, human and unable to control forces that he had helped to set in motion. There is no indication at any point in his career that he sought the end of the Soviet Union or that he understood fully why it had happened. But by dismantling the party's authority, Gorbachev played his role in the empowerment of the constituent republics and the rekindling of nationalist sentiments that had been fostered in part by the very structure of the USSR as formed in 1922 but lain dormant for several decades. Eventually, the events unfolded in the Eastern Bloc. Aptly likened to a domino "effect" infamous illustrations, they culminated in the Soviet Union's flag being lowered on Christmas in 1991. The period spanning from August to December 1991 was teeming with intense passion and commitment within the Ukrainian community worldwide. The Ukrainian Weekly, in recognition of this achievement, opened the December 8 edition with an announcement of the Kyiv Press Bureau that was not only triumphant but also symbolic, "On the map of the world, a new European state has emerged—its name—Ukraine" This statement underscored two recurring themes that had been central to the mission of the diasporic community that I have studied in Canada. First, Ukraine has firmly established its place on the international map, and second, it identifies as a European nation. Moreover, it is worth noticing the adjective "new." The statement does not challenge the idea that Ukraine already existed beforehand. Still, it may indeed signify a break from the past and draw attention to the transformative nature of Ukraine's journey toward independence. It underlines the idea that Ukraine has emerged as a separate entity on the international stage, distinct from its previous association with the Soviet Union, devaluing the significant continuities in the transition. These emphases highlight not only the geographic location of the country but also its cultural and political alignment with Europe.

Not the land of Shevchenko anymore

Some of the community members decided to go back to Ukraine and witnessed the overwhelming emotions of the declaration of independence and the subsequent referendum. One of them, Lonhin Pencak, an architect who was part of the third wave, went there for two months to see if he could have been of some help.[25] His impressions in Kyiv were the following,

> I hear now and then Ukrainian, but very rarely; mostly, it's all Russian. That used to bother me, that used to really bother me, but people said: Well, you have to understand and all this. [Then] I go after the referendum, same streets, same voices, same language, and I understood. Because at that time I said 92% of those people voted for independence of Ukraine, I get a little emotional about that, you know…sorry guys.[26]

The memoirs of Taras Hunczac, a member of the American Ukrainian community, also raise the issue of language barriers. Although Hunczac's experience is situated within the US community, I mentioned it here because his travel to Donets'k provides an additional geographical

[25] Pencak, L. (2016, June 30). *Personal interview*. Conducted by K. Luciuk, Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre, Toronto, Canada.
[26] Pencak, L. (2016, June 30). *Personal interview*. Conducted by K. Luciuk, Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre, Toronto, Canada.

perspective on this challenge; moreover, Americans and Canadians who went to Ukraine in 1991 were often part of the same team.[27]

> In Kiev, when someone spoke to me in Russian, I said I could not understand and asked that they translate into Ukrainian. But in Donetsk I had to understand the language in which these people were speaking, in order to tell them about the history of Ukraine and to convince them why they should aspire to be masters of their own land. At the beginning of my stay in Donetsk I had a good impression because Maria took me to the only Ukrainian schools in Donetsk. Going to classes where the children were 12–13 years old, I greeted them with, "Glory to Ukraine!" They all got together and said, "Glory to the Heroes!". It was then that I realized that all was not lost on this Ukrainian land (Hunczak, 2016, p. 120).

Next, there is Maria Rosa Filijowycz, who was born in Canada. Her father, of Ukrainian descent, went through the DP camp in Austria. On the other hand, her mother migrated from a small village near Rome in 1952. Maria Rosa recalls,

> I first came [to Ukraine] in late October 1991. Our team, made up of Americans and Canadians, was to canvass for the December 1 referendum. It was a very difficult period for Ukraine—well, I know that now, but my first impression was that gray was the dominant color. The buildings looked ramshackle and there was suffering in people's eyes. What struck an especially painful chord was sugar ration tickets. I also remember buying a can of Coca Cola, by force of habit, on Independence Square. I had hardly emptied it when several youngsters ran up and asked for it. They wanted an empty can.[28]

A peculiar memory with deep religious undertones is then the one of Stefan Horlatsch, a teacher born on January 1921 in Kyrylivka, Ukraine,

> When Ukraine became independent, only because it was something new, something soft, helpless, we had to do everything, so I found a friend and we decided to baptize independent Ukraine, because everything newborn should be baptized and the same with Ukrainian independence. I found myself a friend, Petro Skyba, we went to Ukraine, and we crossed Ukraine from the Belorussian border to Odesa, from the Polish border to the border of the Rostov oblast, Luhansk-Rostov border, we walked there for three and a half months. From that time on, I had returned…I visited Ukraine over 20 times.[29]

Since then, community members have undertaken various journeys to rediscover their ancestral heritage. It is common for individuals to experience a range of emotions when they find

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[27] Filijowycz, M. R. (2020, February 24). *Personal interview*. Conducted by R. Slywynska, Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC), Toronto, Canada.
[28] Filijowycz, M. R. (2020, February 24). *Personal interview*. Conducted by R. Slywynska, Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC), Toronto, Canada.
[29] Horlatsch, S. (2017, February 6). *Personal interview*. Conducted by Z. Kilyk, Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC), Toronto, Canada.

themselves in a situation where they are returning to a place they have never known or after being separated from it for many years. This can be seen in Lohnin's disappointment upon hearing Russian spoken on the streets or the bleak landscape that struck Maria Rosa. Sophia Kachor recognized that the Ukrainian language had undergone a process of "Russification," which was quite evident due to the regular interaction between the Ukrainian and Russian languages during the Soviet Union. She also recalls instances where people in Ukraine mistook her for being from Western Ukraine instead of Canada, which she thought, "It was the ultimate compliment for me."[30] Given the testimonies I received during my interviews, it became apparent that there were frequent mentions of short trips and journeys back to Ukraine.[31] A question naturally arose: "Have you ever considered permanently returning and relocating there?" With hindsight, the subject caused both nostalgia and a bitter smile. Marta Waschuk, in a flash, answered, "Oh, when we came, we hope"[32] confirming that the third wave was deeply rooted in the idea of that return. However, revisiting the place that was always referred to as home brought about a particular cultural shock to most of the people interviewed. Marta, for example, recalled,

> My mother said: "Marta, let's go home". But that wasn't home anymore. Other people, and people changed. Even my sister. They were caring only for their own family … to survive. The system changes and you change. We are not the same in here that they are there in Ukraine. When I go there, they do not think the same way I do. There is a different way of looking […] Certain things irritate me! I want to do the things I want to do; speak the things I want to speak. The way in which I behave, they behave differently. Not wrong, but not the way I was raised.[33]

Iroida Wynnyckyj instead remembered, "Since 1989, we have been traveling to Ukraine twice a year. I enjoy being there. It's a nice European country."[34] Notwithstanding, "Once I buried my parents in the Canadian soil, I'm here. I will be next to them."[35]

I would argue that these two testimonies demonstrate the evolution of the homemaking process: on the one hand, the suffering realization of Ukraine "no longer being home," and on the other, Canadian soil becoming home due to the family ties that were brought there. The notion of home, which once provided solace amidst the unfamiliarity of a new country, became more complex as they returned to their homeland. This return emphasized that, in the meantime, a new sense of home had been established elsewhere. The return to independent Ukraine evoked various emotions within individuals. It reignited a deep connection to their ancestral land and provided an opportunity to reconnect with their roots. Whether it was reuniting with family members or walking along familiar streets that held significance for them or their parents and grandparents, these experiences were filled with nostalgia and a sense of belonging. However, the return also revealed that they had established a life and a strong sense

[30] Kachor, S. (2022, June 24). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Winnipeg, Canada.
[31] Especially: Waschuk, M. (2021, December 8). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Toronto, Canada; Wynnyckyj, I. (2021, December 8). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Toronto, Canada; Melnycky, P. (2022, September 13). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Edmonton, Canada; Waschuk, R. (2022, December 22). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Toronto, Canada; Hwyoron, Z. (2022, June 28). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Winnipeg, Canada and Bell, I. (2022, March 23). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Ottawa, Canada.
[32] Waschuk, M. (2021, December 8). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Toronto, Canada.
[33] Waschuk, M. (2021, December 8). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Toronto, Canada.
[34] Wynnyckyj, I. (2021, December 8). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Toronto, Canada.
[35] Wynnyckyj, I. (2021, December 8). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Toronto, Canada.

of belonging in the foreign land the majority had come to call home. This interplay between the homeland and the "adopted" country underscores the complexity of their identities and the unique journey they have embarked upon. Moreover, the framework is complicated because a specific Ukrainian heritage has been preserved in Canada and developed in a unique "Ukrainian Canadian" way from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. It is thus difficult to say with certainty if the "Ukrainian" traditions they refer to are indeed "Ukrainian" or "Ukrainian Canadian."

The year 1991 marks a significant milestone for the Ukrainian Canadian community, not only because of the declaration of Ukrainian independence but also due to the meaningful centennial celebrations organized to commemorate the Ukrainian immigration to Canada, which symbolically began in 1891. This convergence of celebrations presented a unique opportunity for self and community reflection. On the one hand, the newfound independence of Ukraine symbolized a triumphant assertion of their national identity, igniting a sense of pride and joy within the community. On the other hand, the centennial celebrations were a remarkable reminder of the long-standing ties that bind the Ukrainian community to Canada. It is a narrative of a community that has played a significant role in shaping the multicultural mosaic of Canada. During the seventeenth congress of the UCC, which took place in October 1992, Vsevolod Isajiw, a sociology professor at the University of Toronto, emphasized the following point in his keynote speech, "Ukrainian Canadian Community at a historic turning point: its goal revested"[36], "Today the Ukrainian Canadian community stands at an important turning point of history: both its adopted homeland and Canada, and it's original homeland—Ukraine—is going through profound changes that are giving both countries a new character and a new lease on history." [37] He articulated several changes, encompassing constitutional modifications in Canada, shifts in the ethnic makeup of the country, alterations in the economic and cultural connections with neighbouring countries, and the independence of Ukraine and its subsequent political and economic consequences (Hryniuk & Luciuk, 1993, pp. 82-85). Much space was dedicated to the "Centennial of Ukrainian Settlement in Canada" among the subjects addressed in the initial proceedings. The Congress emphasized that this occasion, particularly for third- and fourth-generation individuals, rekindled a sense of identity and reminded them of their ancestral roots.[38] However, which ancestral roots did they refer to, Ukrainian or Ukrainian Canadian ones? It is of significance to examine how the Centennial celebrations were executed, the narratives that arose from them, and the subsequent effects on the reconfiguration of the process of self-identification to understand how personalities such as Lubomyr Luciuk, part of that wave "obsessed with return," indeed admitted—looking back at the community experience, "We are all here, and probably always were, here to stay." (Hryniuk & Luciuk, 1993, p. 280)

Thus, celebrating Ukrainian independence was a significant moment for introspection, prompting individuals to contemplate their sense of belonging and its transformation throughout their lives. In this concluding section, I have decided to analyze narratives that have emerged from two oral sources collected by the UCRDC, which I have selected because they are instrumental in integrating the points that arose about the question of self-identification and self-belonging in the community.

The first is the answer of Maria Rosa Filijowycz, to the question of how she would describe herself:

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[36] Wynnyckyj, I. (2021, December 8). *Personal interview*. Conducted by E. Lucente, Toronto, Canada

[37] The speech has been also translated to English by the author in: Hryniuk, S. M., & Luciuk, L. Y. (1993). *Multiculturalism and Ukrainian Canadians: Identity, homeland ties, and the community's future* (p. 82). Multicultural History Society of Ontario.

[38] *Seventeenth Congress of Ukrainian Canadians: Proceedings*. (1992, October). Ukrainian Canadian Congress fonds, R3729, vol. 195, file 12. Library and Archives Canada.

> I think that has gone through various stages in my life for various reasons, probably Ukrainian Canadian at one point and now Canadian Ukrainian, why the change? Because I've gone to Ukraine, and I've been there about three times. The first time obviously it was under the Soviet occupation, then I've gone there twice since then. I'm Canadian there's no question about that, I am Canadian. And that I think has sort of changed, the people who I talk to, I primarily talk about my Ukrainian heritage. "I went to this Ukrainian function or that", but I think that is sort of becoming the forefront that I am Canadian and I'm happy that I am.[39]

Upon analyzing the interview excerpt, it becomes clear that the person's perception of their own identity has transformed. Initially identifying as Ukrainian Canadian, she referred to herself as Canadian Ukrainian. This shift in identity can be attributed to her multiple visits to Ukraine and her firsthand experience of the country's transition from Soviet occupation. As a result, Maria Rosa had come to embrace their Canadian identity fully. Additionally, when asked about the role of the Ukrainian Canadian community, she noted that the community is an essential part of her life because it provides "a sense of belonging."[40] Taking both factors into account, it became apparent that Ukrainian independence resulted in no longer being associated with the national community of the "homeland." However, to be acknowledged as a member of Canadian society, it was imperative to identify oneself with one of the mosaic tiles, in this case, to belong to another "Ukraine," the one existing in Canada. Interestingly, Irene Solomon answered the question on self-belonging using similar categories,

> The question of my identity has always been a big part of my life and, unlike some people, some people who embraced their dual identities I always struggled with it. When I was younger, I was definitely Ukrainian Canadian. When I got older, I became Canadian Ukrainian because I felt that there were issues in Canada, that I was born here and that really, I was a Canadian with a Ukrainian heritage. And I almost felt like saying Ukrainian Canadian did not recognize the fact that I was born in this country.[41]

The excerpt reflects the author's journey and struggles with her identity. Irene discusses how the question of how to define herself has always been a significant part of her life, and unlike some people who embraced their dual identities, she has always struggled with it. When she was younger, she "definitely" identified as Ukrainian Canadian. However, as she grew older, she felt that being born in that country, she was primarily a Canadian with a Ukrainian heritage. It is fascinating how she almost felt that saying Ukrainian Canadian did not fully acknowledge her Canadian birthplace. Unlike Maria Rosa's interview, here the self-reflection started before Ukrainian independence, and it originated when Irene discovered more not about Ukraine or the Soviet Union but about the primary "other" of Canadians, the US,

> I was born in Canada and Canada accepted my parents and other immigrants and when we grew up, we heard very much about the fact

[39] Filijowycz, M. R. (2020, February 24). *Personal interview*. Conducted by R. Slywynska, Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC), Toronto, Canada.
[40] Filijowycz, M. R. (2020, February 24). *Personal interview*. Conducted by R. Slywynska, Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC), Toronto, Canada.
[41] Solomon, I. (2020, February 20). *Personal interview*. Conducted by the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC), Toronto, Canada.

> that the United States was a melting pot. And so, they were all American first and Canada was multicultural and so we were allowed to have our heritage, which we did. But when I got older and traveled to the United States, I found that ethnic groups also kept their heritage. There were Ukrainian churches, Ukrainian organizations in the United States. People kept their traditions, but they were very much united along the fact that they were Americans. And so, when I got older, I started to question this thing about saying I was Ukrainian Canadian when, really, I was Canadian with a Ukrainian background and also a German background. So, things got a little bit confused.[42]

It is fascinating to observe how, despite the confusion and the layers of her identity, Irene still tries to define herself within the framework of national and ethnic lines. This highlights the significance and influence of societal constructs, such as nationality and ethnicity, on one's sense of self. In the momentous year of 1991, we can observe that the Ukrainian community in Canada underwent a transformative process of self-identification. Despite each individual's journey, there was a growing trend of the Ukrainian community embracing and solidifying its Canadian identity while simultaneously cherishing and utilizing its Ukrainian heritage to belong within the Canadian context. However, while the dynamics of self-identification in 1991 may be interpreted as a "non-return" to Ukraine, the question of whether something, if anything, at all, returned to the newly established independent Ukraine remains open.

A final glimpse in this belonging negotiation is most brought home in "Lunch Hour with a Soviet Citizen" by Kathie Kolybaba, the story ending the 1998 collection, "Two Lands, New Visions: Stories from Canada and Ukraine," edited by Janice Kulyk Keefer and Solomea Pavlychko. The story takes place during lunch, as the narrator hosts a girl visiting from Ukraine. From the beginning, the visitor's sense of entitlement rubs the narrator incorrectly—however, the foreign girl's pronunciation of English most troubles and angers her. When the girl speaks, the guttural sounds of her accent seem to chop apart the language that the narrator holds so dear. By the end of the lunch, resentment is seething within the narrator. She admits that while this visitor hails from another country, the earth beneath her fingers is the one she loves. She says, "All the harshness of my ancestry falls like broken glass between the syllables on the foreign girl's tongue" (Kolybaba, 1998, pp. 293-294). This bitter acknowledgment that being a Canadian of Ukrainian ancestry is not the same as being a Ukrainian from Ukraine painfully articulated what in the earlier decades could only hint at.

Conclusion

Even though I acknowledge that the sources mentioned warrant further expansion, my aim with this working paper is to provoke thought and generate questions for future exploration. The first conclusion is that the discussion surrounding return and homemaking underscores the necessity to extend diaspora studies beyond the conventional triangular framework, which typically focuses on the relationships between the homeland, the host country, and the global diaspora network. Each "dot" within this network represents much more than a mere location on a map; it possesses its dynamics and specificities shaped by the unique characteristics of the country in which it is situated. I would argue that this traditional model falls short of capturing the intricate interplay of multiple interconnected spaces essential for a deeper understanding of migratory experiences. It tends to oversimplify the dynamic processes of identity formation, cultural adaptation, and emotional ties that shape how diaspora communities engage with their

[42] Solomon, I. (2020, February 20). *Personal interview*. Conducted by the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC), Toronto, Canada.

homelands and host countries. A critical aspect of this discourse is the dual nature of the homeland. The conceptual homeland acts as a repository of the diaspora’s collective memory, cultural heritage, and emotional ties to Ukraine. This imagined space is often infused with nostalgia and idealized visions of the past, fostering a sense of belonging despite physical distance. In contrast, the political entity of Ukraine has undergone significant transformations, evolving from a Soviet republic to an independent state. This shift complicates how members of the diaspora navigate their identities, as they must reconcile idealized perceptions of their homeland with the realities of a post-Soviet Ukraine. Moreover, the "hostland" also has a dual nature; it serves not only as the backdrop for daily life and personal experiences but also as a space where minorities can actively shape and redefine their characteristics. In Canada, the resettlement landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for the Ukrainian diaspora. While it offers new beginnings, it also engenders complexities related to feelings of belonging and the intricacies of integrating into Canadian society, where official multiculturalism shapes identity formation. This landscape necessitates that individuals negotiate their identities in ways that honour their cultural heritage while also conforming to the expectations of their new environment. Distinguishing between everyday experiences and the performative aspect of national identity becomes crucial, particularly given the fluidity of nationhood in Canada.

The pivotal year of 1991 serves as a focal point in problematizing and challenging the diasporic identity of the Ukrainian community in Canada. This year marked the centennial of Ukrainian immigration to Canada and Ukraine's hard-won independence, reshaping narratives around return and identity. The significance of 1991 lies not only in its political implications but also in its ability to invoke a collective identity among Ukrainian Canadians. The initial research question investigated whether community members returned to their ancestral homeland following its liberation; however, I quickly recognized the need to focus on those who chose to remain in Canada. Their decision is understandable, and influenced by various factors, including age, established lives, and a sense of belonging in their adopted home. The phenomenon of genealogical tourism also emerged as a relevant topic in my exploration. While it allows members of the third wave and their descendants to reconnect with their roots, it complicates notions of identity and belonging. Visiting ancestral lands can evoke nostalgia and a profound emotional connection to history, yet travellers often confront the reality that their true "home" lies elsewhere. This experience can lead to feelings of dislocation and alienation, as the ancestral homeland may not align with the memories and narratives passed down through generations. The interplay between Ukrainian independence and the immigration centennial fosters reflections on the complex dynamics of homeland and adopted country in shaping identity as individuals navigate the tension between their past and present. Furthermore, Anderson’s (1998) notion of long-distance nationalism serves as a tool for diaspora communities in Canada, raising questions about its efficacy and limitations. While it enables individuals to maintain ties to their homeland, it can also create an unrealistic burden of responsibility. The narrative of nation-building from abroad becomes fraught with contradictions, particularly for the second generation, who navigate cultural conflicts between their ancestral homeland and their Canadian upbringing. These conflicts can manifest in various ways, prompting essential inquiries about when a location transitions from a temporary residence to a site of legitimate belonging. Further exploration is needed to understand how multicultural policies can also foster nationalism within diasporic communities. While these policies are designed to promote inclusivity and diversity, they can inadvertently create environments where individuals emphasize their cultural identities as a form of national pride. This dynamic can lead to a reinforcement of nationalistic sentiments as communities seek to preserve and celebrate their heritage in the face of a multicultural landscape. However, this emphasis on ethnic identity can also complicate and risk the notion of being part of a mosaic. Individuals may feel pressure to conform to specific ethnic narratives or stereotypes, which can marginalize those who do not identify strongly with any particular ethnic label. Examining the interconnectedness of nation-

building efforts for Ukraine and integration into Canadian society reveals how the mythologizing of Ukraine's independence allows migrants to reconcile their sense of "otherness." The ongoing negotiation of identity shows that defining one's Canadian identity can reshape diasporic identities rooted in both Canada and their countries of origin. As we engage with these multifaceted narratives, we enrich the discourse surrounding diaspora studies, advocating for an understanding of belonging that honours the complexities of both heritage and adaptation. This exploration highlights the importance of examining the interconnectedness of the past, the present, and the future, shedding light on the journeys of individuals and communities as they navigate their “here and now”, especially as the ongoing conflicts shape their collective memory.

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