

Dagmara Drewniak

" Les Lieux de Mémoire and Postmemory: After/Images of Polish Towns in Canadian Literature"

ABSTRACT

This lecture is an attempt to explore the position of the memory and postmemory of Central and Eastern Europe in contemporary Canadian literature. We will trace Marianne Hirsch's idea of "postmemory" and Pierre Nora's "les lieux de mémoire" in selected works of contemporary Canadian authors who are the first, second and even the third generation immigrants from Poland and Eastern Europe to North America. In this context, the presentation offers an overview of after/images of Central European towns and cities as seen from a truly transcultural, Canadian perspective and filtered through the experience of migration, trauma, and spatial and time distance.

The texts in question, both novels and memoirs, are all published in Canada at the turn of the 20th and 21st century and recreate the images of 'Old Places' in the new or newly discovered contexts. The two concepts, which are mentioned in the title of the lecture and the leitmotifs of my presentation, capture the broad spectrum of attitudes to the past, remembering and forgetting, and sites of memory. While all of the chosen novels and memoirs explore the problem of post/memory and un/belonging caused by immigration, poverty, and the trauma of World War II, they try to address the question of identity of immigrants (or their descendants) created on the border between the memory and postmemory of the past and the contemporary reality of transcultural Canada. As a result of this, the post/memory and the recreated after/images of Central European towns offer both therapy and consolation as well as testimony to the past and its sites of memory.

BIO

Dagmara Drewniak, Ph.D., D. Litt. She teaches American and Canadian literature at the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. Her research interests include: multiculturalism in English Canadian literature, images of Poland and Eastern Europe in Canada and Canadian literature, literature by immigrants from Poland and Eastern Europe, Jewishness in Canadian literature, life-writing, and postcolonial literature in English. She has published essays on Janice Kulyk Keefer, Eva Stachniak, Eva Hoffman, Salman Rushdie, Michael Ondaatje, Lisa Appignanesi, Apolonja M. Kojder and other contemporary writers. She co-edited (with Anna Branach-Kallas, Piotr Sadkowski and Renata JarzębowskaSadkowska) a second number of *TransCanadiana Canada and Its Utopia/Canada et ses utopies* (2009). In 2014 she published a book entitled *Forgetful Recollections: Images of Central*

and Eastern Europe in Canadian Literature. She is currently a Vice-President of the Polish Association for Canadian Studies.