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Chapter 6

From Family Lore to a People's History: Ukrainian Claims to the Canadian Prairies

NATALIA KHANENKO-FRIESEN

When in 1932, Ivan Pylypiw recounted his coming to Canada to Professor Ivan Bobersky,¹ neither of them could have predicted that Pylypiw's story would acquire a life of its own, serving, in more than one way, not only the Pylypiw descendants but also the history of Ukrainian Canadians at large.² It was early spring when the Winnipeg-based professor set out to visit Pylypiw on his rural Alberta farm. The train took him the majority of the distance, but Bobersky still had to travel by sleigh for the last three-quarters of an hour after leaving the town of Lamont. For Bobersky, the locale and the rural western Canadian frontier's ambience were as memorable as the stories he was about to record:

The snow was melting so the sleigh had to cross puddles of water and mud ... The farm house was a two-storey building. I found the lady of the house in a well-heated room. She felt very weak and did not want to talk. Her face was pale from illness and her hands had no strength ... The rooms were spacious but untidy. The almanac *Kanadiisky farmer* lay on the table. The yard was big. So was the barn and the stable, even though in Canada farmers get by without them ... The whole area was covered in deep snow. A wide road, which ran parallel to the farm in both directions, led to the railway station. Telephone poles ran alongside the road and a line from one of them carried electricity to the house. This distant farm in the midst of a snow-covered expanse was connected to the world.³

Only at dusk did the professor make it back to town, just in time to take a train to the community of Chipman, where the next day he interviewed another early Ukrainian settler, Wasyl Eleniak, who, as the academic noted, 'told his story calmly and sincerely, choosing his words carefully.'⁴

The two men Bobersky sought out on that spring, Eleniak and Pylypiw, had long ago been pronounced the 'trailblazers of the Ukrainian immigration to Canada' by some Ukrainian-Canadian writers.⁵ One can assume that this encounter – forty-one years after their arrival in Canada – was not the first time the two Ukrainian farmers had spoken to others of their move to the new country. In talking to a professor from Ukraine, Eleniak was solemnly reconstructing his life story. So was Pylypiw. As Bobersky wrote, 'a friend of Ivan Pillipiwi's, a farmer from Star, listened to our conversation and helped him remember different things.'⁶

It may also be expected that by 1932 not only had the words already been assigned their positions in the men's respective stories but also the ideas – the social and folkloric commentary they used in their stories – had long been sequenced in a particular narrative order. Together they presented the listener, in that case a professor from Ukraine, with an already structured account of a particular moment in their past. It happened that Bobersky published only Pylypiw's story, choosing it over Eleniak's. Although Eleniak's recollections were also eventually publicized, it is Pylypiw's story that travelled further into the world of Ukrainian-Canadian history.⁷

In this chapter I explore the Ukrainian-Canadian mechanics of myth-making and the narrativization of history by analysing the life and organization of Ivan Pylypiw's story of coming to Canada. I place Pylypiw's account within the context of other similar oral and written stories recounted on the prairies throughout the twentieth century, with the idea to demonstrate that the narrative principles of orality played an important role in creating and maintaining Ukrainian-Canadian society's cultural memory, history, and identity.

My approach to this question is informed by the disciplines of folklore and anthropology. Both, especially as practised in North America, have been shaping my understanding of the world for more than a decade. As a folklorist I cannot bypass the oral principles behind the organization of life story narratives such as Pylypiw's. As an anthropologist I must explore the relationship between these principles and the mechanisms of further narrativization – and mythologization – of the beginnings of Ukrainian-Canadian culture on the Canadian prairies.

Let me return to the story and to Mr Pylypiw himself. First I will briefly discuss the historical contexts into which both the man and his story were born. Then I will look at the organization of the story in order to underpin its oral and vernacular nature and to look at its further

mediation and post-oral life. Since Pylypiw's experience of coming to Canada was similar to the experiences of many others, my analysis will be made against the background of the vast numbers of other accounts of Ukrainian immigration and settlement that were voiced, documented, reproduced, and gradually storied in various forms throughout the twentieth century as Ukrainian Canadians progressively tried to shape their family and public histories. The two different levels of analysis, one of a story itself and the other of a collectively storied memory of 'the Move,' shall be employed jointly to facilitate an understanding of the self-maintenance mechanisms of an ethnic culture; mechanisms that continue to rely on oral and vernacular modes of communication even in times of late modernity.

The Man and His Time

A farmer in western Ukraine, Ivan Pylypiw was born in 1859, a time when Europe was experiencing mass emigration to what was called the New World. Until the last third of the nineteenth century, Pylypiw's home village of Nebyliw, as well as the rest of his province of Galicia, then a part in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was on the fringe of the major migration thoroughfares. Starting in the 1860s the situation changed, with thousands of Ukrainian peasants taking off for the Americas lured by promises of free farmland. In the 1890s the Canadian government decided to recruit prospective immigrants from eastern Europe to set up farms in western Canada. Galicia was hit hard by the aggressive Canadian campaigning, particularly because it promoted the idea of free land to the short-of-land Ukrainian peasants. After learning about the free lands on the prairies from German acquaintances who had emigrated there earlier, Pylypiw did not miss an opportunity to explore Canada for himself.

Pylypiw was endowed with a profound sense of agency, which he successfully utilized throughout his life to better his lot. This occasion was no exception. In this case, however, his and his family's relocation to a new world coincided with, if not contributed to (as community speakers would often have it), yet another profound turn in the course of Ukrainian history.

Having been among the very first officially registered immigrants from Ukraine to settle and farm the 'lands beyond the ocean,' Pylypiw and Eleniak were inevitably linked by future researchers to the starting point of Ukrainian-Canadian culture. Being the first served them well;

as trailblazers both took high positions in the symbolic pantheon of Ukrainian-Canadian history makers. Being entrepreneurial and successful farmers, who never abandoned their community, most certainly helped them to achieve such high placement. Had their stories been ones of immigration failure or community desertion, their lives would not have been celebrated in such a hagiographic fashion, as Ukrainian-Canadian grassroots annalists have done for over a hundred years.

As an outcome of such self-positioning in history, Ukrainian Canadians are routinely informed that it is due to the actions of Pylypiw and Eleniak that the Ukrainian exodus to Canada ultimately swelled to 170,000 immigrants between 1891 and 1914. Such an interpretation of history has also found its way into the Canadian cultural mainstream:

Ukrainian immigration commenced in 1891 when Ivan Pylypow of Nebyliv, Kalush district, Galicia, learned about the 'free lands' available on the Prairies ... After investigating settlement possibilities in Manitoba and Alberta with Wasyl Eleniak, a fellow villager, Pylypow returned to Galicia to bring back both men's families and as many friends and relatives as could be persuaded to accompany them. Although he was arrested and tried for sedition by the Austrian authorities, and prevented from making his way back to Canada until 1893, the publicity generated by his trial advertised Canada more effectively than he himself could have done. By 1894 a Ukrainian settlement had emerged in the vicinity of Star, Alberta.⁸

Let me return to the Pylypiw's story itself. By the time of Bobersky's interview, Pylypiw was seventy-three years old and had been in Canada for forty-one years. He was a successful farmer with many ambitions. His family had added several generations to the one that arrived on the North American continent, and his story of coming over had been retold repeatedly in various circles of family members, neighbours, and friends. On the larger scale of things, the Ukrainian-Canadian community had accumulated by now the additional shared experiences. During the First World War they were interned by the Canadian government and, between 1924 and 1932, derided as 'bohunks' by Anglo-Protestant Canadians. Pylypiw and others of his generation who had weathered these challenges lent support to the 40,000 second-wave Ukrainian immigrants who arrived on the Canadian prairies during that time. In addition to advice and assistance, Pylypiw and others of his generation offered up their own personal immigration and settlement stories. Over time these

narratives assumed ever greater public weight and in the process they were transformed from personal narratives into normatized and shared cultural commodities. And in the process, they began to be written down.

The form and the aesthetic 'packaging' of Pylypiw's story attest to both his skills as a storyteller and to the narrative principles of oral culture of which he was a bearer. When relating his experiences to a professor from afar, in order to impress a visiting historian, Pylypiw appears to have made a special effort to present his story in a coherent, normative manner that would be appreciated and understood by the outsider. As a Ukrainian Pylypiw possessed a culturally specific way of organizing, and speaking about, his experiences. He was, in short, a product of his culture, and ordered his recollections according to the narrative forms and folkloric principles with which he had been inculcated throughout his life.

Almost eighty years later, we are denied the opportunity of participating in the Pylypiw/Bobersky storytelling event. What is left to us, the twenty-first century curious, is only the written text of Bobersky's interview. It is a record of Pylypiw's own reminiscences that throughout the remaining years of the twentieth century migrated from one publication to another, from one language to another (Ukrainian to English), and eventually seeped back to the old country, Ukraine, as Ukrainians in the early 1990s began celebrating the hundredth anniversary of their – that is Pylypiw's – settlement in Canada.

Although Bobersky did not have a tape recorder with him, he carefully transcribed the detailed notes he took during his conversation with Pylypiw, thus preserving most of the original wording and cadence of Pylypiw's speech. Throughout its life as captured oral literature, the story has been abridged many times to suit the needs of subsequent Ukrainian-Canadian publications. Still, in its fullest versions, from 1937 and 1978, the text attests to the vitality of oral tradition as well as oral principles of composition, narrative organization, and plot development in the face of rising literacy and emerging modernity. In what follows I discuss the genre and the content of the story and look at the oral principles behind its narrative organization.

The Story

Had folklore scholars analysed Pylypiw's account, they would have labelled it either a *memorat*,⁹ a *true experience story*,¹⁰ a *family saga*,¹¹ or an

immigrant tale. All would have agreed, though, that the account is held together by many folkloric threads common to Ukrainian oral tradition. On one level this loose application of established principles of orally composed narratives, according to Robert Klymasz, is the defining feature of a *memorat*, in our case a story of an immigrant's move from one world to another.¹² On another level it is an indication of orality's vitality and adaptability to dynamic modern contexts.¹³ Such stories follow a particular line of content development. The account starts in the 'old country,' as the narrator provides a historical rationale for his emigration. The structuring depends on threefold repetition, dramatized dialogues, and endings signalled by a sudden and explosive climax. Yet no matter how loose the structure and how flexible the framework of these stories, they do follow certain organizational principles.

The first-person accounts, and the dialogues inserted in them, are often conveyed through direct speech and the present tense. Other narrative devices these stories rely upon include hyperbole – 'Even if it rained [as far as away] in Winnipeg, everything would already be floating in the house' – and the constant juxtaposition of 'then' and 'now,' the 'old' and the 'new,' the 'good old days' and the evils of 'today.'¹⁴

Inserted within the interview with Bobersky, Pylypiw's tale unfolds in a similar fashion. As an immigration tale it clearly stands out from the rest of the interview material. It starts with the fairy-tale-like beginning of a 'once upon a time' kind:

One day I asked one of the Germans, 'Do you have the address of your relatives?'

'I have.'

'Write it down for me.'

'Very well.'

Harvey wrote the address of his son and daughter, and I wrote them a letter. They answered, 'Leave *the hills and the valleys* behind and move here.'¹⁵

The tale progresses, observing many formal principles of orally composed narratives at the level of both *composition*, where particular 'laws' of oral narrativity typical of the Anglo-European vernacular epic are observed, and *morphology*, where scene and character development follow rules characteristic of folk tales observed in Slavic contexts.¹⁶ The vernacular and oral nature of his narrative is readily apparent at the composition level. Pylypiw-the-storyteller followed the established ways of telling a story, relying on traditional speech patterning (stock

phrases, epithets, and so forth) and repetition. Throughout the whole story, the tale utilizes common stock phrases, expressions like 'the hills and the valleys' and 'simple folk,' characteristic of the Ukrainian vernacular storytelling, although nowadays seen as clichéd expressions. The story also relies on repetition of words and phrases. 'Very well,' for example, is often repeated, as are whole expressions as reflected in the following excerpt:

People asked me all kinds of questions: where I had been and what I had seen. [Pylypiw recalls his encounters with his co-villagers after returning from Canada to Nebyliw to get his wife]. I told them many stories about Canada and urged them, '*Flee, flee this place, for here you have nothing, and there you will have free land and be your own boss.*'

The curious ones would stay around me. I would tell them all they wanted to know. I would say, '*Flee, flee, for here you have no land, and there you will have plenty of land. Here you are drudges; there you will be masters.*'¹⁷

Combinations of three – as in number of people, objects, actions, and repeated phrases – is another principle demonstrated:

But my wife did not want to go. She had a fear of the oceans and foreign countries. Every day she would repeat to me, 'I will not go, I will not go, I will not go.'

'Very well, then stay here.'

... Three of us set out: Wasyl Eleniak, Yurko Panischak, and myself.¹⁸

One of the key folkloric principles of story development is repetitive enlisting of peoples and geographic names. Every time he describes his travel to and from Canada, for example, Pylypiw enlists the names of all cities and towns in the order in which he travelled through them. In a similar fashion he names all his co-travellers on each of those journeys – a method of repetitive enlisting that also helps to extend the content of the narrative.

In addition, Pylypiw's story tends to present (and preserve) events that took place in real time in the past in the 'once upon a time' indefinite historical setting of a folk tale, even though the storyteller was routinely prompted during the interview to recount the facts about the real past, its details, and exact dates. His past, as it emerges in the tale apart from the other interview material, has the tendency to remain indefinite

and is marked by such time markers as 'one day,' 'one morning,' the 'third day after Easter,' and so on.¹⁹

Within his narrative, these principles of formal story organization served Pylypiw as mnemonic devices. Thus they ensured the storyteller's skills at remembering and reintegrating the elements of his past into the elements of the story he was telling. They also served as internal laws of oral storytelling, called 'epic laws' by Axel Olrik.²⁰ In print they remain important elements of Pylypiw's accounts of coming to Canada, reminding us of the forty years' distance between the real events and the storytelling event.

Apart from folkloric conventions discussed above, the Pylypiw story is also disciplined by principles that hold the tale together at its morphological level. Vladimir Propp, analysing the extensive body of European, and especially Slavic, traditional fairy tales, compares the morphological organization of these fairy tales to that of language. The rules of grammar regulate and limit the combination of various elements of speech used in the text, producing specific meanings from these combinations. Just as grammatical rules govern the rendition of sentences, morphological rules govern the composition of fairy tales. As in the case of a fairy tale, the meaning (the message and the moral lesson) of Pylypiw's story, and of course the future understanding and interpretations of it, is generated and encoded not just through the application of principles of oral narrativity but at its morphological level, remaining true to the emergent genre of the immigrant tale in the Ukrainian-Canadian tradition. These meanings are created in the expected actions of characters, the juxtaposition of their initial and final positions in the story, their expected moves within the story and between the settings, and their expected interactions with other characters, with forces external to them, and with the environment.

Narratives are never, of course, simply the creation of their narrators. Historical and cultural context both constrain and breathe life into any story that finds resonance with an audience. The fixed narrative order of its formal and internal elements has the propensity to provide a more fixed meaning at a given historical moment. Thus the sequencing of the hero's actions as well as the description of his encounters with others and of his systematic overcoming of numerous obstacles on the way to his goal speak not of narrative representation of a real experience but, more important, of a particular kind of narrativization of immigration experience. I will return to this point after a discussion of the morphological organization of Pylypiw's story.

Propp has long been credited with discovering the structural foundations of the vitality of the fairy tale as a genre. When Propp looked at the organization of fairy tales, he was interested not in their formal qualities but in the actions and interactions of their characters, their initial and resulting positions, and the changes in their status in between. These he calls functions of the fairy tale, claiming that there is a limited number (thirty-one) of them.²¹

For example, according to Propp, each tale begins with the statement of an initial situation: 'In the remote village, once there was a young lad.' Such an introduction points out the status of the hero, describes his family situation, thus, outlining his initial position before the hero ventures out into the outside world in search of his goal (the princess, the lost sister, or, in Pylypiw's case, the free land in Canada). Not all tales fulfil all thirty-one functions, but the same basic line of plot development, Propp claims, is followed in all cases.

Given Propp's scenario, in any given fairy tale, the hero takes off in pursuit of some noble and hard-to-achieve goal. The path toward the goal is never straight and easy, and it takes the hero away from the comfort and safety of the home environment and into the dangerous and unknown outside world. In pursuit of his goal, the hero is presented with numerous tests, which he has to pass in order to proceed further on his journey. These tests are often set up by the villains who oppose the hero. Often, while trying to overcome an obstacle, the hero is helped unexpectedly (to him) by a stranger (if not one, then three, seven, or thirty-three helpers). Typically, the hero's path winds through the wild forests, 'no man's land,' or across immense waters, the latter being a common folk motif representing the fine line between life and death. In most cases the hero cannot reach his goal in one set of trials or in a single effort. He is made to repeat the journey again (usually three times). Each time he might be helped by helpers, or donors might endow him with some magical objects or useful advice.

Often, if the hero is accompanied from the very beginning by two other companions, he ends up being the only one to make it to the world of beyond. At the end of all these ordeals and trials, the hero is rewarded with the realization of his goal, and the tale ends with reference to a 'life to be lived happily ever after,' in which the hero enjoys what he sought from the beginning. Propp argues that this is the basic line of the plot development for all fairy tales; it becomes more complex not by the invention of new functions but by embedding and utilizing the same functions over and over again.

Similar to this outline of fairy tale actions and happenings, the actions and experiences of Pylypiw-the-hero depict comparable challenges. Thus, at the beginning, he sets off from Nebyliw along with two other villagers. Quickly, the one with the least money is left behind as a result of the first test:

We arrived to Stryj, and then went to Peremyshl, and from there to Oswienci [Auschwitz]. Here our papers were checked.

'Show me your money,' one official demanded.

I had 600 rynsky, Eleniak had 190 rynsky, and Panischak had 120 rynsky.

The officials ordered Panischak to go back home to his village ... Only two of us reached Hamburg.²²

The two continued the journey through lands and cities foreign to them, by the big waters, and through the wild forests:

There, an agent put us on a big ship which took us across the ocean. We traveled for twenty two days, it was pretty fair voyage. The ship crossed the ocean and sailed up a river to a big city. It was Montreal. We disembarked in the morning, and in the afternoon we boarded a train and were on our way across Canada. The trip was quite long, time dragged for two and a half days as we traversed rocks, lakes, and open spaces where *no one lived*. It was quite clear that we were traversing a wilderness.²³

Throughout the story, many 'helpers' and 'donors' come to the foreground to help the two in their search for the good land. In a classical fairy tale, the helpers assist the hero to get to the destination faster, sooner, before others, and so on, and the donors provide him with magical objects or with the wise words that bring him closer to his goal. In Pylypiw's story, as in a fairy tale, the helpers remained unnamed: 'an agent came to us,' 'we stayed at the farmer's place for a whole week,' 'a German who spoke Ukrainian told us,' and so forth. As well, 'One German fellow, a shoemaker from Winnipeg, who also came from Kalush, said to me, 'In Alberta, it is warmer; go there and see for yourself.'"²⁴

Accepting the advice from this donor, Pylypiw-the-hero takes off for Alberta in search of his goal, good farming land. After a search there, he returns to Winnipeg to receive another piece of advice from another donor: 'Here we met some Jews from Russia. They said to us: "Go to Gretna in Manitoba, not far from here. There you will find good land.'"²⁵ This was the third place where the hero and his companion went in

search of their goal, and the last one. Eleniak stayed there while Pylypiw set off to the old country to get their wives and children and, they hoped, some other families.

Upon his return to his village, no one believed, at first, that he had been in Canada. As he himself recollects – and this is where the story breaks away from the fairy tale format and introduces the element of reflection – people did not know how to treat his return or the news he brought. His news of the world ‘out there’ – real and inhabited by people like the villagers themselves – matched neither the locals’ traditional folk interpretations of the world beyond theirs as unreachable and uninhabitable nor their understanding of economic freedom. They were not ready to believe the news:

The peasants did not understand that across the ocean free lands were available, without landlords, which could actually be acquired for little or no money. They listened to my stories and wondered.

The news spread around that a man had arrived from God only knew where and wanted to lead the people out to some sort of place called America.²⁶

In any fairy tale the hero undergoes a number of trials (usually three). Often the hero is summoned to meet the high powers (such as the king of the kingdom where the action takes place) and is requested to solve three riddles (or fight three dragons, and so forth). Pylypiw’s story tells us that such a trial took place. Notably, three testers question him, and Pylypiw bravely withstands the tests:

One day the magistrate of the village, the priest, the clerk, and a trustee of the church paid me a call. They spread a map on the table and told me to stand aside.

The clerk asked me, ‘Where were you?’

I answered, ‘In America.’

Very few knew where this country was, and even today it is difficult to tell someone who has no knowledge about the world.

‘Which way did you go?’ the magistrate asked.

I answered, ‘I went to Cracow, from there to Berlin, then to Hamburg. Then I traveled across the ocean to Montreal and from there by train to Winnipeg. I went by rail and by ship.’

I stood aloof, talking, while they were searching the map.

‘Where exactly have you been?’ asked the priest.

I answered, 'The country is called Canada. I was in Winnipeg, in Calgary, in Gretna. Wasyl Eleniak stayed behind in Gretna, at a farmer's place.'²⁷

He is let go, but soon faces another, non-metaphorical, trial. Arrested on the grounds of enticing villagers to leave their villages and to go to Canada, he appears in court:

The judge asked me: 'What do you need land for? Don't you have enough here?

I replied, 'We have too little land.'

The judge said, 'You are enticing people to leave.'

I answered, 'No, they want to go themselves.'

The judge lashed out at me, 'Why don't you hold your tongue? You should have gone alone without dragging others along with you. You sold out the people to the agent. Our most illustrious emperor once helped to bring our people back from Argentina, thirty families at his own expense; do you expect him to come to the rescue again should anything go wrong?'

The trial lasted about *three* hours. We were sentenced to one month in jail.²⁸

According to Pylypiw's story, the judge speaks only three times, and the trial lasts three hours. The hero's high and moral qualities are tested again, and the hero withstands this test successfully. To the listener it is clear from the very beginning that the hero and the hero's morals will persevere and he will be rewarded for his search.

After his imprisonment was over Pylypiw prepared his family for the long journey across the ocean, and they departed in the spring of 1893: 'On the *third* day of Easter, I set out. With me were my wife and four children. The youngest, Anna, was six months old.'²⁹

In the remaining part of his story, Pylypiw describes his second journey across the ocean, listing all geographic points he passed on his way to Canada and naming all his fellow villagers who travelled with him, repeatedly omitting the names of his and other men's wives. In a fairy-tale-like fashion Pylypiw gives his version of a 'life happy ever after,' providing a concise and detailed outline of how the good land he was searching for rewarded him throughout the years. The story ends with his pontificating on the subject of how good, or bad, the two worlds – the old country and the new one – have been for the Ukrainian people.

All in all, when analysed from the perspective of Propp's functions of fairy tales, Pylypiw's story conforms closely to most of the rules of morphological organization of a fairy tale.

From Story to History

Pylypiw's story intrigued the folklorist in me not for its uniqueness but for its universality. The story can be easily compared to the myriad other personal accounts of immigration, scattered by now throughout numerous publications by Ukrainian Canadians. In each of these accounts the narrative proceeds in one way: from the old country to the new, from oppression to freedom, and from poverty to prosperity. A traditional fairy tale is made up of a particular number of 'functions,' the building blocks of the story. These blocks are selected, in order, from a long chain of all possible actions, interactions, and moves for the hero to make. Thus, a tale emerges consisting of some but lacking other functions. In a similar way, Pylypiw's account presents us with an example of what a Ukrainian immigrant tale from early-twentieth-century western Canada can be like. Other, similar Ukrainian-Canadian stories of immigration and settlement consist of their own limited number of story elements but maintain the same progressive sequence in which their contents are presented. Although Pylypiw's story – elaborate and rich in folkloric detail – is similar to many others, it stands out for its complexity and its proximity to the traditional folk narrative. Therefore, I see it as a representative example of its genre.

As outlined above, the fixed ordering of events and actions, with its propensity to create a fixed meaning and message for the narrative, speaks of a particular kind of narrativization of the immigration experience as it happened throughout the twentieth century in the Ukrainian-Canadian context. Overall, in the first half of the twentieth century, immigrant tales of exodus to Canada were a highly productive genre of the Ukrainian-Canadian vernacular oral culture, competing only with pioneer settlement stories.³⁰ Both were often combined in personal narratives. Unfortunately, little systematic scholarly attention has been paid to the collection and analysis of these immigration tales, though occasional Ukrainian-Canadian folklore anthologies have included examples of or excerpts from such stories.³¹ During the first three or so decades of the twentieth century, if these stories appeared in print, as Pylypiw's did in the 1930s, they were published in the Ukrainian language in various Ukrainian-Canadian community almanacs, calendars, and newspapers.

Some time after the Second World War, and especially in the sixties, new interest in these stories arose in the communities in which they had earlier circulated as oral lore. At that time many communities in Canada found themselves in a commemorative mood, producing local history books, first in conjunction with Canada's centennial in 1967 and then for the seventy-fifth anniversaries of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1980. These were times for these communities to formulate and tell their own stories of origin. Personal sagas of immigration and settlement, once mere folklore, came in handy, gaining a new public profile. Another resurgence of these stories in local discourses can be linked to the 1991 centennial celebration of Ukrainian-Canadian culture. Since that time, many of the oldest Ukrainian-Canadian clans have officially marked the hundredth year of their own residence in Canada, publishing in family history books their once personal stories of coming to Canada. In 2000 in the community of Mundare, for example, the local Ukrainian museum even set up a special exhibition of Ukrainian-Canadian centennial family history books.³²

Eventually, as family history books were compiled and local histories written, family immigrant tales entered a new stage of their life as written texts. With their firm incorporation into various family and local histories, the typical characteristics of orally composed tales are less observable in most cases, since their presentation began to be governed by literary modes of content 'storing.' Ironically, although it can be seen as a death of a storytelling tradition, this shift in discursive practices allowed the stories to take on a second life. This new life has been marked by a great degree of defolklorization of the *formal* properties of once oral stories. Nowadays family historians usually make an effort to restore an air of historicity to the accounts of their predecessors, in order to lay out their family claims to 'History.' Thus the original time markers of the 'once upon a time' kind tend to be replaced by specific dates (of arriving in Canada, acquiring a farm, building a new house, buying a first car, bearing a first child, and so forth).

The ongoing reproduction of numerous accounts of 'the Move' in various public discursive spaces of Ukrainian Canadians has been an important step toward their further formalization. Often, their abbreviated versions, stripped of details and local specifics, appear in community museum displays, newsletters, school textbooks used in bilingual Ukrainian-Canadian schools, and more recently, on Ukrainian-Canadian websites. Of course, the family gatherings for dinner on the prairies may still involve listening to the family elders' reminiscences,

including their stories of family beginnings at the turn of the twentieth century, but these occasions involve the original settlers less and less.

The two different lives of an immigration tale speak of two distinct modes of reflexivity, one privileging orality and the other literacy, as primary modes of communication.³³ For some time now, Ukrainian Canadians have been fully involved in modern ways of reflecting upon their past, ways that rely to a great extent on written narratives, new technologies such as printing, faxing, home computing, photography, photocopying, audio, video, and the internet.

From a historical perspective the invention of new means of communicating and preserving knowledge has affected modes of human thought as profoundly as the did the technologies of writing and printing.³⁴ In times of late modernity, especially in the Western world, the mass availability of new technologies has been responsible for the further reorganization of people's ways of reflecting upon themselves and the world around them. Ukrainians in Canada have been certainly more privileged than have villagers in Ukraine in their access to modern technologies for preserving their memories: producing family photo albums, computerized genealogies, and local, community, and family histories; and establishing museums. The availability of these modern sites of documented memories has also affected the ways in which people remember their personal and communal pasts. In my own ethnographic work, many of my informants resorted to their own copies of local history books or family histories to relate to me, the ethnographer, their personal histories.

Still, modern vernacular reflexivity continues to favour oral principles of narrative composition. When dealing with their family history most family historians resort to the same principles as those on which Pylypiw's narrative rests. In speaking of what once happened, the authors continue to employ the narrative and impose order on reality by sequencing the heroes' actions, discussing heroes' encounters with others, and outlining the obstacles on their way to their goals.

Since narratives always convey certain moral or ideological stances of their times, they speak not only of narrative representation of a real experience but also of a particular kind of ideological narrativization of an experience, in our case, the way in which Ukrainian-Canadian history portrays its own beginnings. One can say that despite the invention of modern technologies, oral culture continues to have a strong hold over the vernacular narrativization of Ukrainian-Canadian history. First, the texts of many local family histories, and to a great degree the displays of

many Ukrainian-Canadian museums, all sequence the past into a well-defined beginning, a main part of a story, and an end. Such sequencing is the most characteristic aspect of the formal qualities of a narrative. Second, the texts usually do not reveal the identity of the narrator, and therefore, as in a traditional historical narrative, the facts presented in the stories seem to speak for themselves.³⁵ Third, the narrative dictates a particular order in which the events are mentioned, thus suggesting, if not imposing, particular meanings and interpretations of the past. Another main hero, apart from the family ancestor(s) profiled in the story, emerges in such texts, construed as 'our people,' or 'Ukrainian people.'³⁶

Through these numerous stories dealing with immigration and settlement in Canada, the grand story of the Ukrainian Canadians' beginnings emerges. The master narrative emerges in the reader's mind through repeated exposure to the same motifs of Ukrainian immigration at the turn of the twentieth century. The sequence of motifs – departing from the known world into the unknown, enduring the journey, overcoming obstacles, and finally conquering 'no man's land' and making it 'the lived' world – echoes the underlying organizational principles and motifs of many traditional narratives, especially those of fairy tales. Speaking of the morphology of the fairy tale, Propp maintained that despite the vast number of plots, characters, and settings, the narrative progresses, albeit with some variations, along the same sequence.³⁷ Various kinds of representation – family history books, museum displays, and community histories – follow the same morphological principles in their narratives of Ukrainian-Canadian history on the prairies. Their local worlds, both Ukrainian Canadian and western Canadian, worlds are defined in terms of beginning at a well-defined point in history and of mutual territorial and genealogical continuity. Thus, an archetypal story of all stories emerges in these writings, clearly speaking of the beginning of a new mythology of Ukrainian Canadians.

Such narrative representations have another important property in common: they were created selectively. The materials included in history books and museum displays were meant to produce one particular picture of history. Events and facts that did not contribute to the overall grand picture of Ukrainian success in Canada were exiled from the pages of such history books. Neither the family history books, the local histories, nor the Ukrainian-Canadian museums refer to the alcoholism, family abuse, racial prejudices, or denominational disagreements that were present in the earlier days of Ukrainian settlement in Canada.³⁸

This non-representation is not surprising, since the narrative serves to communicate collective histories, memories, and destinies, forging group identities of those who believed and shared those histories. Anthony Smith points out that narratives are capable of accomplishing such identity projects because of the presence within those groups of 'potent ethnic myths, memories, and symbols.'³⁹ These myths – of origin, return, and descent, to name a few of the central motifs – were as responsible for mobilizing ancient populations into 'nationalisms' (Smith's word) as contemporary local narratives of emigration, settling in the new country, and so on are responsible for the creation, maintenance, and assertion of ethnic identities in the new world.⁴⁰

For contemporary cultural groups that are still in the process of historical formation, such myths may not yet be fully developed. In such cases the experiences of individual members of the group must underpin the formation of the archetypal story, or mythology, for the group to pursue its sense of territorial association, common ancestry, shared history, and solidarity. This is accomplished first through their ongoing narration or storytelling (in which the accounts are in a continuous process of development) and then through their narrativization (in which the accounts come to be somewhat fixed and structured according to narrative principles).⁴¹

Thus, Pylypiw's account of coming to Canada and its post-oral life speak of a culturally unique intersection of ethnic history and folklore in times of modernity. The story closely observes the formal and morphological rules of a folk narrative and serves as an example of a particular narrativization of the Ukrainian-Canadian experience on the prairies. In the recreation, retelling, and rewriting of this originally personal and then public story, we can see the strong hold of orality and folklore on Ukrainian-Canadian culture and identity throughout the twentieth century. The post-oral life of this story also invites us to consider how many other published contributions to Ukrainian-Canadian history – personal memoirs and community and family histories – attest to the vitality of these modes of cultural knowledge transfer in times of late-modern reflexivity.

NOTES

- 1 Ivan Bobersky (Iwan Boberskyj), born in Dobrohostiv, western Ukraine, graduated from Lviv University, where he became a professor

- of German language and gymnastics. In 1920, he was sent to Canada by the Western Ukrainian People's Republic in exile, to act as its plenipotentiary. When that government ceased to exist, he remained in Canada until 1932. There he actively participated in various Ukrainian organizations.
- 2 As is evident from the titles of publications that follow, Ivan Pylypiw's name has been spelled in various ways by various writers. Like some of them, I follow the most common transliteration of his name.
 - 3 As cited in Vasyl A. Czumer, *Recollections about the Life of the First Ukrainian Settlers in Canada* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Studies, 1981), 18.
 - 4 Ibid.
 - 5 Marshall A. Nay, *Trailblazers of Ukrainian Emigration to Canada: Wasyl Eleniak and Ivan Pylypow* (Edmonton: Brightest Pebble, 1997); Mitch Sago, 'They Were Trail Blazers (Ivan Pylypiw and Wasyl Eleniak),' *Generations* 7, no. 4 (1982): 3–8.
 - 6 Czumer, *Recollections*, 18.
 - 7 Detailed information on Ivan Pylypiw (1850–1936), as well as on commemorative Ukrainian-Canadian projects related to these two men, can be found in Nay's thoroughly researched *Trailblazers of Ukrainian Emigration*. According to Nay, both Pylypiw and Eleniak were interviewed numerous times throughout their lives. References to those interviews and their coverage in the media can also be found in Nay's notes and bibliography (163–203).
 - 8 Cited from Library and Archives Canada, *Canada's Digital Collections*, Alberta Past to Present, 'Alberta: Home, Home on the Plains,' Settlement, Ukrainian settlers, <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca>.
 - 9 Robert B. Klymasz, *Folk Narrative among Ukrainian-Canadians in Western Canada*, National Museum of Man paper no. 4 (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, 1973).
 - 10 Linda Degh, *Folktales and Society: Story-Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).
 - 11 Mody Coggin Boatright, *The Family Saga and Other Phases of American Folklore* (Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 1958).
 - 12 Klymasz, *Folk Narrative*, 12.
 - 13 Folklore theorists such as André Jolles, Albert Wesselski, Mark Azadovskii, Linda Degh, and Richard Dorson long ago pointed out the continuing creation of new folk narratives in everyday experiences.
 - 14 Klymasz, *Folk Narrative*, 12.
 - 15 Harry Piniuta, *Land of Pain, Land of Promise: First Person Accounts by Ukrainian Pioneers, 1891–1914* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), 27–8, emphasis added.

- 16 As discussed by Vladimir Propp in his study of Russian folk tales, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, Publications of the American Folklore Society, Bibliographical and special series 9 (1928; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).
- 17 Piniuta, *Land of Pain*, 31–2, emphasis added.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 28.
- 19 Bobersky omitted his numerous questions from his transcript of their conversation. In the account, it is easy to see where the otherwise naturally flowing story was interrupted by the interviewer's questions seeking precision.
- 20 Axel Olrik, *Principles for Oral Narrative Research*, trans. K. Wolf and J. Jensen (1921; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 41–61.
- 21 Propp worked with Russian fairy tales, but scholars like Alan Dundes and others promoted his ideas in the English-speaking world, suggesting the universal applicability of his theory.
- 22 Piniuta, *Land of Pain*, 28.
- 23 *Ibid.*, emphasis added.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 33, emphasis added.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 33–4, emphasis added.
- 30 These first began to be collected by the Alberta Pioneer Association, established in 1941.
- 31 Robert B. Klymasz, *Ukrainian Folklore in Canada* (New York: Arno Press, 1980); Robert B. Klymasz, *Sviëto : Celebrating Ukrainian-Canadian Ritual in East Central Alberta through the Generations* (Edmonton: Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, Historical Resources Division, 1992); Jaroslav B. Rudnyc'kyj, *Materi'î aly do ukraïns'ko-kanadiis'koï folkli' orystyky i di'î alektolohii* (Winnipeg: Ukraïns'ka vil'na akademiia nauk, 1956); Jaroslav B. Rudnyc'kyj, *Readings in Canadian Slavic folklore* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1958).
- 32 Natalia Shostak, 'Local Ukrainianness in Transnational Context: An Ethnographic Study of a Canadian Prairie Community' (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 2001), 80–2.
- 33 The first kind of reflexivity is more characteristic of rural communities of Ukraine, while I found the latter to be more common in the Ukrainian-Canadian communities throughout the prairies.
- 34 Goody distinguishes between oral and literate cultures and has also looked at literate cultures in which orality continues to play a significant role. Goody also notes that both literate and oral traditions are necessarily

partial in writing societies. Jack R. Goody, 'Oral Culture,' in *Folklore: Cultural Performances and Popular Entertainment*, ed. Richard Bauman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 13; Jack R. Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982).

- 35 Hayden V. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 3.
- 36 Shostak, 'Local Ukrainianness,' 49–51.
- 37 Propp, *Morphology*, 23.
- 38 Myrna Kostash, *All of Baba's Children* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1977).
- 39 Anthony Smith, 'Ethnic Myths and Ethnic Revivals,' in *European Journal of Sociology* 25 (1984): 289.
- 40 Smith addresses the question of ethnic myths, memories, and symbols while dealing with the larger issue of ethnicity and ethnic survival. In his work, ethnicity is treated as 'a named social group with alleged common ancestry and shared history, one or more elements of distinctive culture, a sense of territorial association and an active solidarity' (ibid., 284). Ethnicity can persist through time if it relies on collective myths and symbols of origin, descent, a heroic age, and at times, on myths of migration, communal decline, and finally of rebirth (292).
- 41 Hayden White discusses narrativization in his work on history writing. White, *The Content of the Form*, 26–57.