

Representation of Canada in Latvian Émigré Writer Irma Grebzde's Prose Fiction

Ingrīda Kupšāne, Sandra Meškova

Daugavpils University, Latvia

Abstract

The paper regards the peculiarities of representing Canada in the prose fiction by Latvian émigré writer Irma Grebzde (1912–2000). Like many Latvians, I. Grebzde left Latvia in 1944 for Germany where she stayed at Wurzburg refugee camp and in 1948 moved to Canada. Having worked in New Brunswick, Ottawa, Montreal, in 1973 the writer settled in Toronto. I. Grebzde has produced about 30 short prose fiction collections and novels. An important theme in Latvian émigré literature is the lives of Latvian émigrés in lands of settlement. Their fiction is generally autobiographically marked, encoding the authors' own experience in fictional form. The same is characteristic of the short prose fiction texts and novels by I. Grebzde. Canada in her works is depicted as a land of welfare, not affected by World War II. European refugees are safe there, though they face low social status and condescending attitude of Canadians. Both in Latvian émigré literature and in I. Grebzde's works, exile consciousness is presented as urban, with prevalence of urban spatial model. Canadian city is positioned as a comfortable environment for consumer society, with posh resident areas, shops, advertisements, cafes, whereof just a small share may be enjoyed by European refugees. The sphere of nature functions as the space whereby exiles can develop dialogical relations with the foreign land searching for similarities with Latvian rural environment.

Keywords: emigration; exile consciousness; Latvian émigré literature; spatial model; urban consciousness