

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
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**ESTONIANS IN CANADA:
IDENTITY IN SALME EKBAUM'S NOVEL
KÜLALISEKS ON OOTUS
BA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis analyses Salme Ekbaum's novel *Külaliseks on ootus* in an attempt to explicate the problems that immigrants have with accommodating to a new country and identifying themselves. The main aim of the thesis is to find out the reasons for the two protagonists' personal identity issues and determine what facilitates and complicates their process of adaption to Canadian society.

The thesis consists of four parts: the introduction, two chapters and the conclusion. The introduction gives an overview of Estonian literature in Canada and states the importance of Ekbaum's novel from the diasporic as well as the Canadian perspective. It introduces the author and the main characters in the novel *Külaliseks on ootus*. It also presents the research questions and defines the terms migration trauma and liminality.

The first chapter is a literature review. First, it gives a historical and social background to the Estonian immigration to Canada. Then it provides an overview of Ekbaum's biography and works. Finally, it elaborates on the traumatic experiences of migration and its reflection in literature, and on liminality of an immigrant in a host society.

The second chapter is the empirical part of the thesis dealing with the novel. It analyses the identity and experiences of two female characters of the novel in terms of migration trauma and liminality.

The conclusion summarises the findings of the thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Teame kõik, milline on pagulase elu, üks laine pühib teise. Liiga paljudest paikadest oleme läbi käinud, liiga palju inimesi kohanud, et neid katsudagi alal hoida. Tänaastest kaaslastest ei tea me homme enam palju, igäühel on oma niigi kirju ja katsumusrikas tee. (Ekbaum 1952: 251)

Elul, mida olen elanud, ei ole kompositsiooni, ta ainsaks komponendiks on olnud Ootus. Kohtasin neid teel ja kaotasin jälle. Nad aitasid mind üle halvemast, sest nad aitasid mind lähemale inimese mõistmisele. Ma ei tea ühestki, mis neist on saanud. Nad olid puudustega ja vigadega nagu ma ise. Kõik nad olid inimesed Suurest Tuuleveskist, mis ei käi meie tahtmise järele ringi. Neil ühelgi ei olnud kodu. (Ekbaum 1952: 260)

Every immigrant has a story to tell – of joy or despair, leaving their homeland and loved ones and crossing into a new culture. Salme Ekbaum (born Neumann) was an Estonian writer who lived most of her life in Toronto, Canada. She knew well the immigrants' life both in Sweden and Canada and through the eyes of her characters, readers can see the struggles of everyday life and acculturation. Her books often deal with the initial hardships of immigrants, the loss of homeland, re-establishing one's self-esteem and adapting in a new, often hostile society. As a prolific writer Ekbaum is the author of poetry collections, novels, short stories and plays. *Külaliseks on ootus* is the third novel in her trilogy *Ilmapõllu inimesed* (Vadstena, 1948), *Lindpree talu* (Göteborg, 1951), *Külaliseks on ootus* (Toronto, 1952). *Külaliseks on ootus* is a novel about immigrants who have left Estonia, some of whom have settled to Canada and who long for their lost home. I have chosen this novel as a basis for the thesis because the author, herself an Estonian immigrant, has well captured the problems that the immigrants have with establishing themselves in a new country and identifying themselves.

Throughout *Külaliseks on ootus* the characters are in search for their identity and belonging. The issues of ethnicity and different identities are especially well reflected in the novel. This search is expressed in the characters' choices, behaviour and principles. In a sense, the novel could be called autobiographical. It is written in a diary-form and parts of it seem to reflect the writer's struggles. But at the same time, it is a work of fiction with

the elements of history. The diary-form and the historical accuracy leave the reader a feeling as if it is a true story. Õnne Puhk (2000: 26) suggests that Ekbaum juxtaposes the Estonian immigrants who came to Canada between the two World Wars and after World War II. She reveals that Canadian immigration policy did not take immigrants' previous education nor career into account and thus immigrants had to start from the beginning with their personal and professional fulfilment. They had to balance their self-identity while maintaining their national identity. Puhk goes on to argue that a person's self-identity only starts to value oneself in contact with other people. One's *self* is identified in a suitable form of national identity, but in the case of immigrants this belonging is incomplete (Puhk 2000: 15-16, 26).

Janika Kronberg states that the Estonian diaspora in Canada neither liked being called displaced persons nor treated as "aliens speaking a strange language" (2006: 103). Exile literature can be characterized by the tension between being free and safe and the lack of homeland. At first, it was not easy to find a publisher or a reader who would be interested in immigrants' stories – what it feels like to leave their home and to rebuild their life in Canada. Estonian authors wrote for the people who shared their native language, in Canada and elsewhere. This literature of immigrants helped to preserve and recreate a lost homeland and a lost past while offering encouragement for their readership (Kronberg 2006: 104). Ekbaum's *Külaliseks on ootus* is an important novel that served this purpose for the Estonians in Canada as they were accommodating to the host country.

Ekbaum's novel has a significance also from the Canadian perspective. Although it is not available in the English translation like the first part of the trilogy, *Külaliseks on ootus* represents a Canadian experience of the second and the third wave of immigrants from Estonia. As such, the novel gives a fictional account of the journeys of two first generation immigrants who come to Canada about a decade apart. Canadian immigration

history reveals that immigrants' experiences in Canada depend on their background, including ethnicity and occupation, the time and the circumstances of their entry as well as the current immigration policy and employment opportunities on the job market (From *The Contributions of Other Ethnic Groups*). In terms of its themes and issues, Ekbaum's novel has similarities with what Birk and Gymnich (2016: 523) call "fiction of arrival", a strand in multicultural writing that deals with immigrants' reasons for immigrating to Canada, and their expectations and the challenges of accommodating to the host country. Ekbaum's novel has also aspects that Carolyn Redl (1996: 22) points out as common characteristics in the fiction by transcultural writers published before the 1988 Multiculturalism Act – it is almost always set in Canada, its community is described in detail and it very often describes the conditions that led to immigration and the experiences of the settling process. Furthermore, it frequently depicts a clash of values and related discrimination and shows that "denying ethnicity and assimilating fully into Anglophone-Canadian society" does not necessarily lead to success or happiness (Redl 1996: 22).

The two first generation immigrants that the novel portrays, Ida Mölder and Aino Rünk, are Estonian women who have come to Canada before and after World War II, respectively. The female protagonists are struggling with their personal identity and sense of belonging. Moreover, they are caught between preservation of their ethnic Estonian identity and assimilating into the Anglophone-Canadian society. The aim of my thesis is to find out the reasons for their personal identity issues and determine what facilitates and complicates their process of adaption to Canadian society. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

How is the identity of Estonian immigrants in Canada affected by their belonging to different waves of immigration?

What contributes to the assimilation of Estonian immigrants in Canada?

What contributes to the Estonian immigrants' preservation of their ethnicity in Canada?

I am going to answer the questions by analysing the experience of the two female characters of *Küülisteks on ootus*. In order to provide a theoretical background for the analysis, the first chapter concentrates on Estonian immigration to Canada, migration traumatic experiences and their reflection in literature, and liminality. Liminality is a state of ambiguity, a transitional period where a person changes from one identity to another (Cucarella-Ramon 2015: 29). Immigrants have to face multiple stressors. Miriam George identifies three phases that are important when discussing migration traumatic experiences: pre-migration, migration and post-migration (2012: 429). Susan Coutin adds that “during the actual movement of refugees, when they are imagined to be at their most liminal, they are viewed as non-human, which often leads to extremely dehumanizing treatment” (2005: 199 quoted in Mannik 2016: 7). The second chapter analyses the questions of belonging and identity of the heroines of the novel through the concepts of migration trauma and liminality.

1. ESTONIAN IMMIGRATION TO CANADA, SALME EKBAUM, MIGRATION TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES AND LIMINALITY

In order to better understand the issues that are going to be discussed in the thesis, it is necessary to give some background information about Estonian immigration to Canada. I am also giving a brief overview of the writer Salme Ekbaum. As I am going to discuss the identity of two female characters in *Külaliseks on ootus* in the empirical study, the chapter will also deal with migration traumatic experiences and liminality, to provide a theoretical backing to the analysis.

1.1 Estonian Immigration to Canada

The 2016 Census of Canada (Statistics Canada: 2016) shows that 24,530 people were of Estonian ethnic origin and when excluding institutional residents, for 5,445 people Estonian is their mother tongue. According to Priit Aruvald (N.d.: chapters 1-4) and Hill Kulu (1992: 90-99), three waves of Estonian immigration to Canada can be identified.

The first wave: the end of 19th century till World War I

Since the end of the 19th century, Estonians have moved to Canada. Janika Kronberg (2006: 95) notes that the first Estonian settlement in Canada was founded in the province of Alberta in 1899 and was named Livonia. Estonian settlers established seven identifiable settlements. People left their homeland for North America seeking economic independence, freedom and land. Most of the people were peasants.

The second wave: the end of World War I till World War II

During the First World War, about 1,500 Estonians were living in Canada (Kronberg, 2006: 95). Because of the Great Depression Canadian Government set restrictions to the number of immigrants. Some immigration took place and *The Estonians in Canada Volume I* (Aruvald, N.d.: chapter 3) states that people were sent to Prairie provinces and without acknowledging their skills or desires they had to work in agriculture.

According to Kulu (1992: 90), from 1922 to 1940 only 649 Estonians officially immigrated to Canada.

The third wave: World War II till after World War II

Before the second Soviet occupation during World War II, in September 1944, more than 70,000 Estonians fled from Estonia. Many people thought it to be a temporary displacement but it turned out to be a permanent exile. The Soviet occupation lasted almost 50 years. For the majority of the people, it was impossible to return to their homeland and many of the refugees left their initial shelter in post-war Europe for the USA, Canada and Australia.

Kronberg points out that Canada saw the highest number of Estonian immigrants after WWII, during the “secondary flight”, mostly from Germany and Sweden. The reason for this massive migration was mostly political – at the end of the 1940s, the refugees did not feel safe either in Western Europe or in Scandinavia (Kronberg 2006: 95). From 1947 to 1960, after the Canadian government had agreed to accept political refugees from European countries in 1947, a total of 14,310 Estonians arrived in Canada (Raag 1999: 67 quoted in Kronberg 2006: 95). According to some sources, the total of Estonians arriving in Canada after World War II was 25,000 (Peepre 1993: 31 quoted in Kronberg 2006: 95). Kulu (1992: 92) states that this is how a relatively large community of Estonians settled in Canada and one of their characteristics was viability – most of the Estonians immigrants had been in their 20’s or 30’s when leaving their homeland. Upon arrival to Canada, their first job was usually one of manual labour. According to *The Estonians in Canada, Volume I*, Estonians moved into larger cities with more opportunities when they had met the requirements of their immigration agreements (Aruvald, N.d.: chapter 4).

Kulu observes that the second characteristics about Estonians in Canada is that they grouped mainly into one (or up to three) big settlements. The vast majority of Estonians

lived in the province of Ontario, most of them in Toronto and the second largest settlement was in the province of British Columbia, most of them in the capital city Vancouver (Kulu 1992: 92). Kulu also writes that in 1961 there were 18,550 first and second generation Estonian immigrants in Canada and in 1971 the number was already 18,810 – he explains that the number had risen because of Estonian-Canadian intermarriages and second generation immigrants (1992: 92). By 1986, because of intermarriages, in most cases a general assimilation had taken place and people had started to use English as their main language. Only the older generation used Estonian as their mother tongue but with younger people English or French was used (Kulu 1992: 99).

What characterises the experience of the third wave of Estonians who came as refugees is that at first, the immigrants' main goal was to survive. After their initial struggle, people tried to fit into the new society while at the same time keeping their Estonian culture and language alive. According to Sirje Olesk, Estonian newspapers, schools, choirs and other organisations were founded. Publishing activity had already begun in Sweden, Stockholm, when the Estonian Writers' Union Abroad and in Lund the Estonian Writers' Cooperative were established in 1945 and in 1951, respectively (Olesk 2014: 134). About 300 books were published in Toronto by the publishing house Orto (Kronberg 2006: 97). According to Kronberg, in its first years, Orto organized a few novel-writing competitions and as it also had an office in Sweden, its books were spread throughout the free world (Kronberg 2006: 97). Sweden and Canada were the major centres of diaspora literary life.

This short overview of Estonian immigration to Canada gives a necessary basis for the further discussion of the research questions.

1.2 Salme Ekbaum

To better understand the heroines of *Külaliseks on ootus*, it is necessary to give an overview of the novel's author as well. The lost world had to be replaced with something. It is with intensity, criticism, satire, but also with liberating humour and especially with tenderness that Salme Ekbaum describes the milieus, the daily life and situations (Aser 1987: 200). Eeva Park emphasises that while living in Canada, Salme Ekbaum was still strongly connected with Estonia. The centre of her thoughts, works and even in daily life was Estonia (Park 1995: 1577).

Ekbaum was born on the 21st of October, 1912 in Aidu Parish, Viljandi County and lived in a small village that only had three farms. She had seven siblings, one of them, Minni Nurme later became a well-known poet, prose writer and translator. She studied in Viljandi Educational Society Gymnasium for Girls and continued her studies in Tartu University, in the Department of Pharmacy. After graduating, she worked as a pharmacist in Kuressaare, Karuse and in the pharmacy in Tõnismäe, Tallinn. In 1941 she married Artur Ekbaum who worked as an agronomist.

In 1944 the Ekbaums fled to Sweden. As Artur Ekbaum had still connections with the Swedes he had studied together in Berlin, Germany, their life was quite good. In Stockholm she worked in a pharmacy and at home they entertained guests, Marie Under, August Mälik and Gustav Suits, to name a few (Tavaste 1997: 4). In 1949, they immigrated to Toronto. There she started her career as a full-time writer and she became the member of the Estonian Writers' Union Abroad and also of the PEN-club¹ (Suurvärv 1995: 5).

Her first novel *Valge maja* was published in Sweden in 1946. She became known with her trilogy *Ilmapõllu inimesed* (Vadstena, 1948), *Lindprii talu* (Göteborg, 1951), *Külaliseks on ootus* (Toronto, 1952) (Suurvärv 1995: 5). The trilogy is about a homestead,

¹ an association of writers

Iimapõllu, before World War II, it continues with the destruction of the farm when Bolsheviks took power and about the life of Iimapõllu girls and their life as immigrants. The trilogy took Salme Ekbaum only some years to write. The 1930's farm, its life and even some of the characters that are portrayed in the first novel have their roots in Ekbaum's homely landscapes and milieu.

The first novel in the series mainly describes Iimapõllu family's separation during the time of war. One of the sons died fighting for the Red Army, the other son was part in the Self-Defence (a military organization in Estonia) and died as a "forest brother" (an Estonian patriotic partisan), both daughters fled with a small fishing boat to Sweden, but as the sea was stormy and rough, the son-in-law Kaarel Kajari drowned. The fate of Iimapõllu people was quite dramatic, the one who stayed on the farm is the daughter-in-law Maret who came from the family of "reds". *Lindprie talu* is about the downfall of Iimapõllu farm and about the secret accusations that were common during that period. For example, the militia took away a chestful of books claiming them to be forbidden literature and the War of Independence veteran Jakob was arrested (Kruus 1996: 181). The last book in the trilogy *Külaliseks on ootus* is about the fate of Iimapõllu farmer's daughters, Aino and Leena and their life as immigrants. The book is written as Aino's diary.

Her other novels *Süteoja* (Lund, 1957) and *Õigusnõudja* (Lund, 1962) depict village life in Viljandi county. She has also published short prose, several collections of verse and five plays. In 1970 her documentary novel *Ristitants* (Lund, 1970) was published (Suurvärav 1995: 5).

Oskar Kruus writes that most of Ekbaum's novels are about Estonian immigrants' lives in Canada. She is a calm storyteller who relies on the pre-war traditions of realist novels. Her female characters are very life-like and she has impressively rendered their struggles with exile, jealousy and intermarriages. Kruus also mentions that the right-wing

groups of exile Estonians prohibited the Ekbaums from having any contacts with Estonia (1995: 8).

Mari Aser observes that Ekbaum is a sharp and excellent storyteller when writing in the first-person narrative about her personal experiences about the joys, miseries or hardships of life and also when depicting the difficulties of relationships. Still the world she creates is neither pessimistic nor hopeless. The beautiful nature that God has created and that she so often mentions and returns to, can compensate for and fill in the gaps in a person's life. A writer, a creative person has often been the designer of her nation's consciousness, the one who shows the way, like a lighthouse in the dark. The background of Ekbaum's works is often autobiographical, she talks about extraordinary experiences, wanting to free herself from the unpleasant events of her life. Ekbaum's topics often include the loss of courage when being homeless, about the hardships an immigrant faces when explaining the political reasons for immigrating and about the conflicts with new customs and beliefs. Through the eyes of a peasant, she has painted her readers a vivid picture of an Estonian farm. After all the hardships, a person has to return to one's roots to regain lost strength. A farm had meant "my room, my rules" and it had been an idyllic place (Aser 1987: 198-199). According to Aser, Ekbaum's strongest side is describing the milieu of a farm life. In a sense, her novels are like historical documents (Aser 1987: 199). Aser also notes that her novels offer pleasant reading experiences, they do not preach or moralise. The reader can identify oneself with her characters as individuals and as part of the society. Through them the reader will get a better understanding of oneself, one's surroundings, nation, the nation's victories and losses and its hopes for the future (Aser 1987: 200).

Ekbaum's last letters to relatives were a goodbye long before the real goodbye. Even in her letters she was still positive and optimistic. She wrote, "Noh olgu! On saadud koerast üle, peab saama sabast ka. Võtan seda nagu viimast eksamit ja lehvitan teile" (Park 1995:

1578). Salme Ekbaum died in Canada on the 10th of September, 1995 and she was buried in Paistu, Viljandi County on the 14th of October, 1995.

1.3 Migration Traumatic Experiences and their Reflection in Literature

Refugees can be described as uprooted people who belong nowhere, many of whom do not feel comfortable moving backward or forward. Each stage of refugee journey has its own unique characteristics. Z. Steel et al (2006 quoted in George 2012: 429) have found that “The effects of refugees’ traumatic migration experiences are immeasurable, long lasting, and shattering to both their inner and outer selves”. Miriam George (2012: 429) identifies three phases that are important when discussing migration traumatic experiences: pre-migration, migration and post-migration. In the pre-migration phase, homelands are often in some sort of chaos or suffer from oppression. Refugees have to leave their country to escape danger that could befall on them. In the migration period, refugees move to another country. Besides losing their homeland, many of them are separated from or have lost contact with their families and friends, which adds to their anxiety. In that phase some refugees start accepting their losses and develop a new sense of hope. In the post-migration phase, some refugees start to understand that they have lost their culture, identity and habits, some face culture shock and feel nostalgic or isolated. For some, the feelings are so strong that they want to return to their homeland despite the fear of consequences (George 2012: 429-430).

Salman Akhtar (2011: 3-9) points out four factors that add to immigrants’ distress and mourning. Firstly, the loss of non-human environment can cause the feeling of un-belonging and people have to adapt in new landscapes and climates. Secondly, the loss of personal possessions. Even the loss of a small object can cause distress and rob the person of the “relational bridges” that they had (Akhtar 2011: 7). The third thing is the alteration of

man-animal relationship, which causes pain, often unnoticed by others. It is especially common for people who move from rural societies to more industrialized ones or whose relationship with animals was a part of their daily life. Finally, Akhtar points out encountering new objects, which in the case of immigrants means that they meet too many new things in a very short period of time. These four cause the changes in identity and a “heightened awareness of one’s whereabouts” (Akhtar 2011: 9). He also notes that “constantly speaking in a new language” causes disturbances in a person and when immigrants have to assimilate, they often do not feel that the nonhuman environment is something meaningful (Akhtar 2011: 10).

To diminish anxiety and to rebuild oneself, Akhtar (2011: 12-17) points out five R’s:

- 1) Repudiation – Immigrants deny the change, for example, they may distance themselves from the local community;
- 2) Return – Meaning the hope of returning home in a distant future or the fantasy of burial in the homeland;
- 3) Replication – Immigrants try to re-create their home or homeland, for example, decorating their new home with items from their previous home or to live in a similar non-human environment;
- 4) Reunion – Idealising something that is lost and although the loss causes pain, the hope of a fantasied reunion brings peace;
- 5) Reparation – Leaving home causes feelings of remorse and this pushes people to creativity.

The way Estonians escaped in the autumn of 1944 and had to leave their homeland behind is definitely a traumatic experience both on the individual and community level (Kirss 2002: 1871). For many it was a shocking and scary journey – some escaped using small fishing boats, the sea was rough and stormy, many people drowned. At first, the

refugees hoped to return home, but soon it became clear that the Soviet era would not end soon (Kirss 2006: 86). Tiina Kirss, who has studied the escape and trauma of Estonians, observes that the consequences of the 1944 traumatic experiences started to show when people understood that they were unable to return home and living in exile would be a permanent situation, and this realization brought along suicides, mental illness, psychological problems as well as alcoholism (2002: 1872).

Mari Peepre states that the passage of refugees was not an easy one. Some were able to become wealthy while others struggled, some were able to keep their cultural heritage and sense of belonging to a community alive while others lost both their language and traditions (1999: 42). Peepre also notes that the loss of cultural traditions and mother tongue can be threatening to a migrant's identity and self-esteem (1999: 56). Kirss agrees, saying that belonging to a diaspora gives a refugee shelter and support and helps to withstand the psychological consequences of exile (2018: 27).

An immigrant's journey does not end when they arrive in a new country. This might be the end of a physical journey, but not necessarily the end of a mental one. Kirss (2006: 91) states that there are two modes of acceptance with exile. On the one hand, "there are those who allow themselves to be torn apart by oscillation of loss", they struggle "between what is no longer and what can never be", they "are consumed by that process and turn into purveyors of irony". On the other hand, there are those "who keep alive and maintain intentional vector of longing, who hold onto the dream of the promised land" (Kirss 2006: 91).

According to Kirss (2002: 1874), trauma theory helps to have a closer look not only to the content of novels or the theme of migration, but also to the symbols that are hidden in the text. Besides the most common subjects found in exile literature (the escape, the boat on a stormy sea), she also points out some aspects of refugee literature that are important

when analysing *Külaliseks on ootus*:

- 1) Nostalgic feelings for homeland, the tenderness when talking about home;
- 2) The characters are quite numb or neutral towards intense and significant events in their lives;
- 3) The content, function and timing of dreams.

As Ekbaum's novel deals with the initial difficulties of immigrants adapting in a new, even hostile society, the Canadian experience of Estonian immigrants in *Külaliseks on ootus* can be seen an example of the "fiction of arrival" in the terms of Birk and Gymnich (2016: 523). Such novels are about the "initial stages of contact with the unfamiliar Canadian environment, which may turn out to be indifferent or even hostile", and this fiction often portrays the contrasts between Canada and the immigrants' homeland, whereas the immigrants' emotions are "predominantly negative" (Birk and Gymnich 2016: 523).

1.4 Liminality

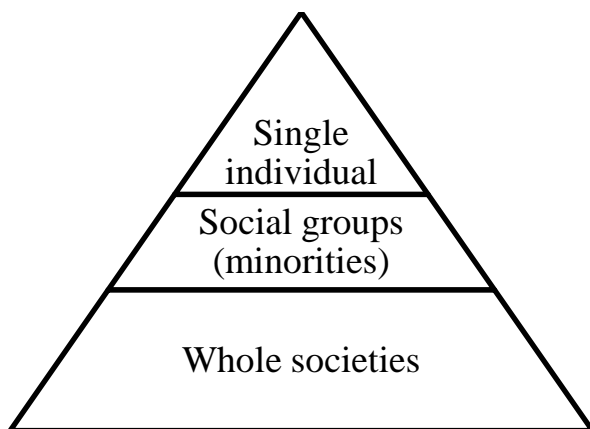
People have more than one identity, and during one's lifetime these identities can change and develop greatly. The state between these identity constructions is of importance in general and in the experience of immigrants in particular. The notion of liminality is not a new one and already in the 19th century Arnold Van Gennep formulated a three-part structure for transition into adulthood: "firstly, separation, secondly, the liminal period, and finally, reassimilation." (Cucarella-Ramon 2015: 29). Liminality is the transitional period where a person changes from one identity to another. According to Cucarella-Ramon (2015: 29), liminality can be described as a period of transition from separation "to the construction of proper self".

Carolyn Redl argues that the characters of transcultural fiction are neither here nor there, meaning in Canada or their homeland (1996: 34). A liminal period is when an individual has already partly separated from one's original identity but has not yet entered the new one, the person is in-between, as if standing on a threshold. In the 20th century, Victor Turner studied Gennep's theory and according to him, a liminal subjectivity means "neither here, nor there" (Turner 1969: 95 quoted in Cucarella-Ramon 2015: 29).

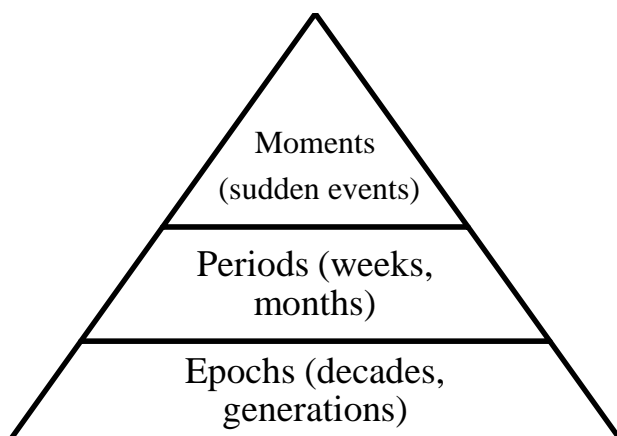
Liminality can be used to explain the in-between identities of immigrants. According to Bjørn Thomassen (2009: 14), Victor Turner understood that the concept of "liminality" is useful for stating the significance of in-between periods and their effect on human beings, among other things "the way in which personality was shaped by liminality." Thomassen (2009: 16), who expands on Turner's ideas, writes that "liminality is applicable to both space and time" /.../ and he goes on to suggest that liminality has multiple dimensions within three areas which "can function together in a variety of combinations".

These dimensions of liminality can be presented as follows:

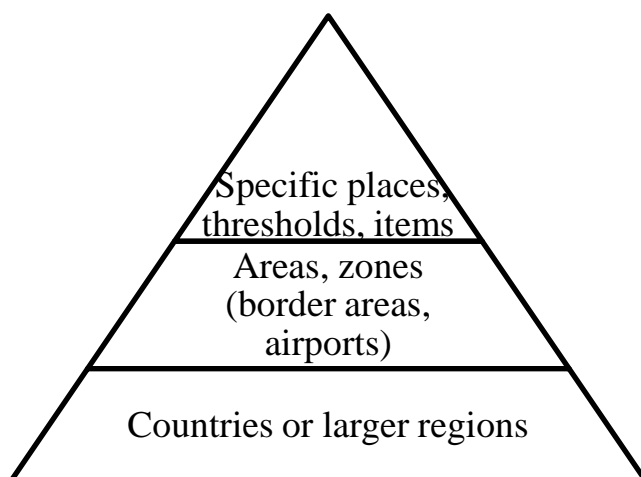
Three different types of subject:



The temporal dimensions of liminality:



The spatial dimensions of liminality:



Thomassen emphasises that these distinctions can overlap and that there is no clear line between them, for example, it is quite difficult to distinguish moments from periods. He also states that one more variable can be introduced – “scale” meaning “the intensiveness of the liminal moment or period” in a person’s life. The level of intensity depends on a person and it is only natural that the high intensity dissolves in time (Thomassen 2009: 17). As people are different, their feelings and emotions towards a liminal period in their life are also different.

In his discussion of how the concept of liminality can be applied, Thomassen (2009: 19) argues that “minority groups may be seen as taking up liminal positions /.../. To a degree, immigrant groups or refugees are liminal, being betwixt and between home and host, part of society, but sometimes never fully integrated”.

With identity change, a person’s connection with a community or society also changes. Nic Beech (2011: 289-290) explains that liminality in identity work can comprise one of the following practices or of a mixture of them:

- 1) Experimentation – It is an internal practice where a person makes alterations in one’s identity or builds a new one and tries it out;
- 2) Reflection – It is a combination of internal and outside-in dialogue where a person self-questions oneself and also regards the views of others;
- 3) Recognition – It is an outside-in practice where a person reacts to an identity that is imposed on him/her. It can be a gradual version of dawning that things are different or an epiphany when the realisation comes all at once.

He also emphasises that liminality can either be a short-term transformation where identity is recreated or a longer “experience of ambiguity and in-between-ness” within a changeful context (Beech 2011: 288).

2. TRAUMA AND LIMINALITY IN *KÜLALISEKS ON OOTUS*

The knowledge of the historical background of Estonian immigrants, including Salme Ekbaum, the theoretical aspects of traumatic migration experience and their reflection in literature, and liminality have laid a basis for the analysis of *Külaliseks on ootus*, as the novel mainly deals with the questions of belonging and identity. Several characters question their identity in the novel. Through the concepts of migration trauma and liminality, the following analysis focuses on the two female protagonists and seeks to find answers to the following questions:

How does belonging to the second and the third wave of Estonian immigrants in Canada affect Ida's and Aino's identity, respectively?

What makes Estonian immigrants assimilate and become Canadian?

What makes Estonian immigrants preserve their ethnic identity and remain Estonian?

2.1 Aino Rünk (née Kütt)

Aino Rünk, maiden name Kütt, is one of Ilmapõllu daughters. Born and raised in Estonia, in a big farm, Ilmapõllu is the cornerstone for her. Aino, her daughter Virge and sister Leena escape to Sweden during the time of World War II as refugees. Their escape to Sweden in a small fishing boat was traumatic, the sea was rough and Helena's husband dies during the crossing. Aino compares their experience to the Swedes: "Nemad ei ole sõda näinud ega tunda saanud, ei ole väikese paadiga sügiseõöl merel olnud, ei ole pidanud oma kodusid maha jätma" (Ekbaum 1952: 49).

The novel opens with Aino's birthday in Sweden when her sister gives her a present – a blue, leathery guestbook. Aino says "Mis teen külalisraamatuga mina – lahutatud naine, keda endised tuttavad ei tunne, mina, kodutu, kelle ainsaks külaliseks oli – Ootus" (Ekbaum 1952: 10-11). Leena suggests using the guestbook as a diary, until the guest that Aino waits,

arrives. Aino loves Edgar Parve, a man who had escaped to Germany. As Miriam George (2012: 429-430) states, losing contact with loved ones adds to immigrant's anxiety. Aino had no contact with the people left behind nor any information about Edgar. During this period of migration, she develops a hope of seeing him again and starts writing letters to him.

In Sweden, Aino is in constant search for her true identity. She works in an office as an accountant. She has also worked as a caretaker, but she dislikes both jobs. Aino feels that her co-workers resent her for being an immigrant.

On kerge jagada kepihoop sellele, kes on võõras ja kodumaata. Keegi ei ütle sulle otse midagi, aga nii palju varjatud üleolekut, et see sööb su lõpuks läbi nagu rooste. /.../ Olin tähtsusetust tähtsusetuim, võõras ühiskonnas, puuduliku keeleoskusega, raskesti kohanev. Ja kas tahtsingi kohaneda, kuigi oli selge – tuli kohaneda. (Ekbaum 1952: 27, 7)

Before the last summer in Sweden, Aino resigns from her job and decides to go to the countryside to work as a caretaker. The first conflict there arises when she has to explain to Virge why they have to eat in the kitchen and are not allowed to eat with the family in the dining room. Their former home in Estonia had a dining room and everyone ate there. It is not easy to accustom to the fact that they are on the level of servants now. The second conflict arises when Aino was invited to a party. She overdresses by wearing a new silk dress, leathery shoes and jewellery while most of the others wear national costumes. She gets too much attention and admits “oleks mu välimus olnud alandlikum ja teenijalikum, arvatavasti oleks mind koheldud siirama poolehoiuga ja vähem vormilise viisakusega” (Ekbaum 1952: 95). Aino's change of jobs and the conflicts show her inner struggles. She is not the privileged farm daughter anymore, but an immigrant and has the same position as a servant. She tries to belong to a group, be it her colleagues or the people in Elinholm, but is rejected.

In Elinholm, Aino befriends with an Estonian artist, Siim Kivirist. They bond a special kind of friendship that is common for people who share a common experience:

“Olime kodutud inimesed, kel ei olnud õiget jalgealust, ja saime teineteisest aru” (1952: 79). Aino agrees to model for the artist and he creates several paintings, all of which he leaves unfinished. Together they go to a harvest party and when returning, Kivirist makes a move on Aino and tries to molest her. Aino escapes and under the shower she thinks that there is no shower that is able to clean her properly. Despite the experience, Aino is not very traumatized but disappointed – she had hoped to find a friend. According to Tiina Kirss (2006), neutrality is one of the aspects in refugee literature. Undoubtedly, leaving Estonia by boat and being sexually attacked are intense and traumatizing events, but Aino does not show much emotion and seems numb.

Both Tiina Kirss (2006) and Cucarella-Ramon (2015) emphasize the importance of dreams. Aino often dreams of Ilmapõllu. One of the dreams leaves her shattered and she shares it with her sister. Aino dreamed of being ill at home, in their farm, and her father who went to pick cherries for her. But the red cherries fell on him and buried the father. She also saw their old sauna and its black benches. Leena, who is a big believer and interpreter of dreams thinks it is good that Aino did not step onto the black benches and also believes that the red cherries mean nothing good as it is already their third spring away from home.

Cucarella-Ramon (2015: 41) claims that dreams can be the outcome of a traumatized psyche. According to Dale Mathers (2001: 116 quoted in Cucarella-Ramon 2015: 41), dreams are also “liminal, between phenomena occurring on the threshold of consciousness”. When one thinks back of that time in Estonia, the 1940’s, the “red” Soviet Army is most likely portrayed as cherries in her dream. “Nägingi isa vanas marjaaias, mille külmal venelaste tuleku aastal ära võttis. Sääli oli nii palju punaseid lihavaid kirsse, neid sadas nagu suuri veriseid piisku tuulega viltu ja isa kadus nende alla...” (Ekbaum 1952: 68).

Through the novel, Aino hopes of returning home. As in real life this is impossible,

the night and the dreams are her only means of going there. The summer nights in Canada are too warm and Aino is disappointed that “*elu ei kingi enam isegi unenägusid /.../ võtab sult isegi leina*” (Ekbaum 1952: 216). Towards the end of the book, Aino says that her dreams have become “*unekarjatuseks*” (Ekbaum 1952: 252). There were two recurring dreams. In one of them, she sees horse carriages and people on them wear black shawls and Aino herself is like a night bird, tries to follow them, but no one sees or hears her. The way the protagonist describes the appearance of the people and the silence, it most probably is a funeral procession. In the second dream she is back home, in Ilmapõllu. She runs through the farm searching for others, but there is no answer and finally she finds their graves. By that time, she had lost hope of returning home and the hope of finding Edgar was fading. Aino’s dreams reflect her fears of never seeing her loved ones again.

Aga kui lähen ise – Virge pärast ja enda pärast ka. /.../ Mida on kaotada sel, kes juba kõik on kaotanud! See maa siin ei ole minu kodumaa, et peaksin tast ihu ja hingega kinni hoidma. Ilmapõllu võtan enesega igale poole kaasa, Idagi mäletab Ilmapõllut – on palju unustanud, aga Ilmapõllut mäletab, sest Ilmapõllu on säärane paik, mida ei saa unustada. (Ekbaum 1952: 128-129)

An unknown critic who calls himself Ar-gi writes in a review of the novel that Aino has not much decisive or upsetting to write about into her diary. The only bigger event that divides the book both physically and stylistically is Aino’s moving to Canada. The only tension that is in the book is – waiting, waiting for Edgar (Ar-gi 1952: 4).

The second part of the novel starts with the voyage to Canada. “*Võib-olla oli see suur mõttetus, mis mind tõukas liikvele, tean, ta üheks nimeks oli – Ootus, teiseks – Rahutus* (Ekbaum 1952: 148). The sea was rough and stormy and at first, Aino felt like dying but already looking at the sunset, she thinks of the new beach.

The voyage to Canada is the most obvious liminal period in the heroine’s life. This liminality affects both Aino and her daughter. In the novel, there are different spatial dimensions of liminality – first of all the ship, then New York with the border check, the train to Canada where they felt safe and Ida’s farm. But where and when does her liminal

period end? As the crossing took nine days, it could be said that the temporal dimension is also that long. I would say that Aino's journey does not end upon arriving to the new world. Although she is in Canada, she is mentally still on the threshold and her journey continues until the end of the novel.

“Laeval olin olnud reisija, mul oli olnud pilet nagu teistelgi /.../sadamasse jõudes muutusin taas pagulaseks. Tuli jälle hakata sibama, trügima, naerma, noogutama ja koogutama” (Ekbaum 1952: 152). Õnne Puhk comments that Aino feels like a dispensable person, a drifting iceberg who is unable to adapt (2000: 16). When she sees how people and also Ida live, she has a culture shock. The immigration board in Canada has ordered Aino to live with Ida for a year and she is bound by a one-year job contract. She has to be Ida's maid and work on her and her husband's farm. This absence of choice reflects well the situation that many refugees encountered – their skills or previous work experience was not important and they had to work in agriculture.

As Aino arrives to Canada during World War II, she is a third-wave immigrant. Before her, many Estonians had already settled there. Aino also has conflicts with Ida, her husband and with some of the Estonians who have come to Canada before World War II and lived in Canada for some time. Many of them are communists, they rarely have anything good to say about Estonia, yet Aino tries to understand them.

Ja ometi kandsid needki siin selle maa märki selgesti oma näos ning kõnelesid tema rahva keelt. Ning taipasin sedagi, nad ei olnud suutnud teda unustada ega temast lahti öelda, nii väga kui nad seda vahest soovisidki ja olid kanadalased. Miski valutab neis, mis oli vanem kui nad ise, sest veri on paksem kui vesi. /.../ Kas ei olnud see ainult tarbetu eneseõigustus, et kord sünnimaale selg oli keeratud, mis sundis neid siin rääkima tema vastu? (Ekbaum 1952: 167)

Aino also surrounds herself with other Estonians who belong to the third wave of immigrants. They share the same values as Aino, they also try to preserve their Estonian heritage and culture. For example, they sing *Saaremaa valss* and other well-known Estonian songs. As Nic Beech (2011: 289-290) states, reflection is one of identity work practices, so identity is reconstructed through the interaction with others. With the help of

her friends, Aino's sense of being and staying an Estonian finds a steadier base. According to Ekbaum "eneses selgusele jõutakse enamasti ikkagi kellegi teise kaudu" (1952: 61). Recognition helps an immigrant to accept the changed life and a new identity (Beech 2011: 289). For Aino, the first time she feels connected with her new homeland is when she is on Lake Ontario, looking at the sunset. She compares the lake with Lake Peipus, but she starts to see Canada in a more positive way.

For Aino, language is the very essence of identity. Both in Sweden and in Canada she befriends with people who consider Estonian culture, heritage and language important. Mari Ann Kelam (2004: 203-204) comments that "the preservation of the language, culture and education was an activity which united these crushed people, dropped into a foreign society, and gave them dignity and emotional support". Tiina Kirss (2018: 27) agrees by saying that national identity gives immigrants shelter and support and helps to resist the damaging psychological consequences of exile.

In Sweden, although she is tired after work, she still manages to read books. In Canada she finds friends in Juta Merendi and Meta Selli. They love to sing Estonian songs and also help to organize a Mother's Day ceremony where Virge performs with a poem. In the hall there is a small Estonian flag and a vase of violets. For this event both Virge and Aino wear Estonian national costumes. Juta tells Aino of an incident when she heard a person yelling "tont oli must ja karvane, karja Krantsi sarnane" and how this silly phrase improved her mood and made her long for Estonia (Ekbaum 1952: 182). Juta emphasises that it is difficult to live when no one understands your language and who regards you as a person. "Ühtegi hingelist ei ole, kes sinu keelest aru saab /.../ needki puistati igäüks ise kanti, et oma keele lõhna ei kuuleks" (Ekbaum 1952: 182). According to Aino Lepik von Wirén (2004: 217), "The preservation of the Estonian identity abroad depended on the opportunities that existed to meet other Estonians and the desire to find opportunities to speak and read

Estonian”.

In Canada Aino borrows English books from a library to improve her level of language. Her child learns to read from *Kukeaabits*. For Aino, the issue of language is very important. Her goal was to preserve her national identity and hand it down to her daughter, “Ma ei ole oma tüdrukut veel sinna unustamiskooli saatnud” (Ekbaum 1952: 176). Reimo Raag (2004: 182) emphasises that “language was, and still is, the base on which an Estonian identity is built, as well as the most important expression and symbol of being Estonian.” Raag (2004: 185) further argues that “handing down Estonian identity from one generation to the next occurs, to a large extent in the home, because of the language spoken there”.

Aino understands that Canada is a free country, but freedom costs dollars. She tries to keep her head down, help Ida and she still thinks of Edgar. Because Edgar is part of homeland and when she gets Edgar back, she will, in a sense, get her homeland and Ilmapõllu back. Edgar belonged to her cloudless days. The only thing that she had was the wait.

Minevik on sulle lastiks, oled nagu reisija, kes on varustanud end liigsete kohvritega ja tassib neid nõrkemiseni, kartes käeotsast lasta – keegi varastab ära. Tulevikku ei ole sinu jaoks olemas. /.../ Pane oma minevik pagasi, keegi ei saa seda sinult võtta, võti on ainult sinul. (Ekbaum 1952: 222)

In Canada Aino feels like a bystander, she does not get used to the people or the culture. In her letter to Leena, she questions leaving Sweden, feeling homeless and she also says that she feels that Canada is not her country. To some small extent, she is accustomed and believes Canada to be the “country of her fate”. Towards the end of the novel when the guestbook, which Aino has used as a diary as advised by Leena, is almost written full, Aino admits that the “guest” she has been writing to is Edgar. Edgar comes to look for her and although the novel does not say so, it implies that they get together and ends with an optimistic feeling towards the future. The unknown reviewer Ar-gi suggests that Aino keeps waiting for Edgar until he arrives. Although the meeting does not happen in the book,

there is the knowledge that the wait is finally over (Ar-gi 1952: 4).

More than once Aino dreams of being buried in Estonia “Nüüd ei olnud enam vendi ega olnud Ilmapõllut – kui sinna mulda unelegi pääseks...” (Ekbaum 1952: 218). “Ikka kui mõtlen Jumalale, pean mõtlema Ilmapõllu kaudu. Olen säält teele tulnud ja tahan sinna, kui võimalik – enne õhtut” (Ekbaum 1952: 102). Here the writer reflects her own deepest wish. “Kirjaniku soov on alati olnud koju saada, see igatsus läbis kõiki ta viimase aasta kirju (S 1995: 1).

An immigrant’s journey does not end upon arrival to the new country. For some, the journey never ends as the acculturation period may be a very long one. At the end of her diary, Aino compares her life with a road “mis ei ole lõpuni käidud” (Ekbaum 1952: 260). According to the classification of immigrants by Kirss (2006: 91), Aino belongs to the second category “living neither before nor now but beyond” and “who hold onto a promised land”. For Aino the promised land, her anchor, is Ilmapõllu. Ilmapõllu is her beginning and her end, above God and she often returns there in her thoughts and dreams: “Elu ei kingi isegi unenägusid /.../ elu võtab sult isegi su leina” (Ekbaum 1952: 216) and “Varsti ei julge enam Ilmapõllu nime suhu võtta, ta on muutunud unekarjatuses” (Ekbaum 1952: 252).

2.2 Ida Mölder (née Lellep)

The second part of the novel introduces Ida Lellep. She was born and raised in Estonia. She was a town girl, her parents had a small house in Kantreküla (a district in Viljandi) and her father worked as a carter. She was Aino’s classmate during their school years. Ida spent one of the summers in Ilmapõllu, not so much for fresh air but more because of a boy, named Lembit. The summer did not end well and Aino’s mother sent Ida back to town before the beginning of autumn.

Right after graduation, being the first in their class, Ida had a big and a grand wedding with Jaan Mölder. Jaan Mölder was an Estonian who lived in Canada and was visiting Estonia. Ida left Estonia and according to the novel, the step was a bit imprudent and taken out of obstinacy, to show her former classmates and especially Lembit Aamann, who at that time graduated from Reaalkool, her superiority.

In Canada Ida has her own house and also a farm. She lives with her husband, now called John Molder and two sons. Her husband works in a factory and Ida has the main role helping out in the farm. They often entertain guests at their house and have parties with other Estonians. According to Hill Kulu's classification, Ida belongs to the second wave of immigrants. Her migration to Canada was voluntary because of her marriage. She had the freedom of choice.

At first, Ida seems to be well adapted with her new life. In her letters she had left the impression that her husband is wealthy and when she goes to the station to meet Aino, she looks like a real lady. They live in a small house with tiny bedrooms and it turns out that Jaan Mölder is a turner of metal in a factory and not as rich as Aino had thought him to be. Ida explains "Siin maal on teine elustiil /.../ Kel auto garaazhis ja dollar taskus, on härra, võib teha mis tahes. Keegi ei küsi, mitu aastat ta koolis on käinud ja kes ta on. See on vabadus, mulle see meeldib" (Ekbaum 1952: 157).

As for heritage language retention, Ida, alongside with her husband, is Aino's opposite. She married Jaan Mölder, but in Canada, his name changed to John Molder. John speaks Estonian, but sometimes he uses a mix of Estonian and English, for example, *õlle-case*. Ida and John emphasize that it is important to recognize the customs of the host country. "Noh, kui siin maal, siis tuleb siitmaa kommetega kohaneda" (Ekbaum 1952: 162). Ida says that some of the Estonians in Canada have already forgotten their mother tongue and when Aino asks if she raises her sons to be Canadians, she replies "Eks me söö siin kõik

selle maa leiba /.../Uued tulevad, tahavad häid kohti ja on kanged eestlased. Näis, kaua see eestlus neil vastu lööb. Ilma inglise keeleta oled siin ainult teiste tallata” (Ekbaum 1952: 159). Her sons are named Tom and Mati, which leaves a feeling that one of the boys got a Canadian name and the other an Estonian name. In the first evening, before dinner, Tom says grace in English. Tom has forgotten Estonian in school, Mati understands a bit of it. For Ida, speaking two languages is not that important, first of all everyone should learn English. “Õppigu enne inglise keel selgeks, siis uhkustagu” (Ekbaum 1952: 159).

The voluntary second-wave immigrants seem to be condescending to Estonia, yet despite their behaviour they have not forgotten Estonia as Ekbaum writes “Ja ometi kandsid needki siin selle maa märki selgesti oma näos ning kõnelesid tema rahva keelt” (1952: 167). Reimo Raag (2004: 190) explains that those people have a hidden Estonian identity – they do not take part in Estonian life, but still sometimes show their national identity.

Neither Ida nor another character in the novel, Kalda Tooni, realize that by raising their children only as Canadians, they create a new generation of immigrants who are uprooted and belong nowhere. Kalda Tooni’s son was brought up as a Canadian, at home and at school he spoke English and he only learned Estonian from other immigrants. Rommi does not belong anywhere, for Canadians he is a stranger: “Ei kuulu mitte kuhugi, on veel kodumaatum kui meie, kuigi ta sellest ise aru ei saa, sest kuidas võib ta teada, mis tähendus on kodumaal, kui tal pole seda kunagi olnud” (Ekbaum 1952: 191). Although Canadians should be accepting and welcoming, the novel says that Rommi was an alien: “Koolis on teda peetud, kui just mitte neetud välismaalaseks nagu meid Saksamaal, siis välismaalaseks ikkagi” (Ekbaum 1952: 191).

Ida has multiple identities. A big part of her tries and wants to be Canadian. She is unwelcoming towards newcomers and mentions that they should accustom to this society: “parem kui rutem harjub” (Ekbaum 1952: 158). This is the face she shows to her family

and friends. A hidden part of her is still Estonian and it mostly shows through her actions, not her words. Her values, even her hidden identity is reflected in her friends. They are negative towards Estonia and praise Canada, yet there are moments when their deep-buried love for Estonia shows.

As Salman Akhtar (2011: 12-17) claims, replication is one way a person can rebuild oneself and that is what Ida has done. She still has some items of her former life in her house. Some of the things Aino recognizes from Ida's school years and home from Estonia, for example, are old sofa pillows, an old coffee cup, a tankard, a handmade bread basket, and also a silver beaker. Akhtar (2011: 12-17) further explains that the loss of personal possessions can cause anxiety. Ida admits she had had a set of cups from Estonia but her boys broke them. The silver beaker is the most important possession from Estonia because it had belonged to Lembit Aamann. "Seda ma hoian, kallist mälestust" (Ekbaum 1952: 158). The items that she values and keeps are examples of spatial liminality.

When the women look through old photo albums, Ida shows her third face – the one she has for Lembit. Ida asks if Aino knows anything about Lembit and wonders if Lembit would have married her if she had left John. "Oleks ta siis kas või üheainsa sõna ütelnud, oleksin kiriku uksele ümber keeranud" (Ekbaum 1952: 170). Her wedding is a temporal dimension of liminality – until the last moment she was waiting for Edgar. Before the war she had made plans to visit Estonia and she admits having kept a diet. But now, for John, she does not need to look that good. Because of World War II she is unable to visit her homeland and, in a sense, is trapped in Canada. Akhtar (2011: 12-17) notes that immigrants often have heightened awareness of their whereabouts. Ida is a prime example of that. She often mentions *nagu siinmail kombeks, meil Kanadas...* It gives the impression that she tries to convince everyone, first and foremost herself, how well she has assimilated to Canada and that she has accepted her changed life.

Both Tiina Kirss (2006) and Miriam George (2012) point out that immigrants feel nostalgic and this also applies to Ida. When the Estonian-Canadians have parties, she makes up stories about their school years and about Ilmapõllu, stories that are so distorted that have nothing to do with the truth. When Aino tries to correct her, she feels offended.

When Ida talks about their farm, she admits that “minus on ikka veel seda vana maa verd” (Ekbaum 1952: 158). Ida has the main role in the farm – she has to trade, bargain and sometimes also flirt with the bulk buyers. They also grow vegetables well known to Estonians, like cucumbers or tomatoes. With the farm, she has recreated a familiar non-human environment. Ida also tries to preserve the human-animal relationship by having a dog and two cats.

Ida is a mixture of the old and new, she has more than one face. Ida’s behaviour shows that she is still on a liminal phase. She has lived in Canada about a decade and considers herself a Canadian, yet she is not fully integrated into the society. Mentally she is still on a threshold.

Üldse oli temas kummaline segu vana ja uut Idat – kumb neist oli pesueht? Või ei ole niisugust olemaski? Kõigume kõik kahe maailma vahel – olnu ja oleva.” (Ekbaum 1952: 158) Ennist ajas kanget kanadalase juttu, nüüd hoidis minu poole. Milline oli tema õige nägu – või on inimesel nii mitu nägu? (Ekbaum 1952: 168)

According to the classification of immigrants by Kirss (2006: 91), Ida’s acceptance of exile is of the first mode, or to use Ekbaum words, “balancing between two worlds – the past and the present (1952: 158). This is Ida’s temporal dimension of liminality when she is “between what is no longer and what can never be”, to apply Kirss’s (2006: 91) formulation. This is a longer period that probably started when she moved to Canada. Mentally she is torn into three. A big part of her is Canadian, a smaller part is still Estonian and a hidden part only shows when speaking about Lembit.

2.3 Comparative Analysis of the Two Heroines

The anchor that helps Aino to get through the hardships is Ilmapõllu. When she starts to doubt Ilmapõllu, she also doubts herself: “Ilmapõllut ei ole enam olemas, ütleb hääl minus, ja ma hakkan kahtlema enese olemasolus” (Ekbaum 1952: 177). Ilmapõllu is the foundation of her identity. Ilmapõllu is more important than God. The dreams about Ilmapõllu are a much needed consolation, they give her strength to redefine herself and Ilmapõllu keeps her “myth” of returning home alive. Also the people she has met on her journey, have helped her. Aino has a very strong identity and a sense of who she is and where she belongs. First and foremost, she is an Estonian and she does not let that go. Ekbaum says “Vaid võõrsil tead, mis tähendab kohata saatusekaaslasi, tunned, nagu oleks tehtud vereülekanne” (1952: 184). Although at the end of novel Aino admits that she will never see Ilmapõllu again, she says that she is connected with it by a “maa-alune kaabel” (Ekbaum 1952: 232). And even though she feels like balancing between two worlds and her thought is in “maatasa tehtud uksekünniste ja varemete vahel”, she does not let the long period of liminality break her (Ekbaum 1952: 173). Ilmapõllu gives Aino a sense of confidence that Ida lacks.

The other character in the novel, Ida, does not have such a strong basis for her identity. Ida is a person who is “tuulde hajutatud” (Ekbaum 1952: 260) but even she does not know who she really is. Ida’s liminal period has shattered her personality into three different ones. Those three identities are like masks and according to the need, Ida puts on one of her “masks”. From the novel it seems that she is content with it and maybe only the reader feels that Ida lives in a lie. It could be that Ida is better able to adapt in new situations and in order to survive in the new environment that sometimes is hostile, she has hidden parts of her identity.

According to Kulu’s (1992) categorization of the waves of immigrants, Ida belongs to the second and Aino to the third wave. Both women are first generation immigrants.

Aino's migration was a traumatic one; she may be called a boat refugee. Ida seems to be Aino's antithesis. Her migration was voluntary, a pragmatic step out of necessity after her marriage. Although Ida had the freedom of choice to decide about the move, at the time, she did not know that one of the consequences would be never seeing Estonia again. Ida seems well acculturated to life in Canada and on her way to assimilation. At first, Ida shows negativity towards Estonia and emphasises that immigrants have to adapt to Canadian culture and society, even when it means forsaking her past. She is also quite ironical about Estonia and Estonians, not understanding why they even come to Canada if they do not want to become Canadians and thinking that first of all, they should learn English. Her children are brought up as Canadians, her husband has changed his name and the family values the Canadian way of life. Aino, on the other hand, is proud of her Estonian heritage and tries to preserve her and Virge's ethnic identity. For her, their past, Estonian language and culture are of utmost importance.

Ida seems to be Aino's opposite, but her analysis shows that she has preserved some aspects of her Estonian identity. She has kept some items of her former life, most of all she values the item given by Lembit. With her friends and husband, she uses Estonian. Ida still speaks of Estonia and Ilmapõllu. On the surface, she leaves the impression that she has assimilated to Canadian society, but deep down she still is an Estonian. It could be that Aino's arrival awakens Ida's longing for the lost homeland. Aino is an Estonian living in Canada. Ida is Estonian-Canadian.

CONCLUSION

Identity is the way a person defines oneself. This includes the values, the beliefs and the personality of a person. Besides a personal identity, people also have an ethnic and a national identity. Having a strong sense of who one is and where one belongs are some of the key elements in human existence. Many people who find themselves in a new society face an identity crisis. As this thesis has demonstrated, immigration was the path to freedom during turbulent times, but one of the main issues for immigrants was the question of identity.

The aim of the thesis was to find out how the two female protagonists in Salme Ekbaum's novel *Külaliseks on ootus*, who both belong to the first generation but to different waves of Estonian immigrants to Canada, identify themselves and what helped or complicated their road of assimilation. It also tried to explicate how belonging to different waves of immigration affects the two protagonists' identity. The question of preserving one's culture and heritage after relocating to a new country was of importance to many immigrants. As the protagonists in *Külaliseks on ootus* were caught between preserving their ethnic Estonian identity and assimilating into the Canadian society, the study sought to answer what contributed to Aino's and Ida's preservation of ethnicity in Canada.

The first chapter of the thesis established the theoretical framework for the analysis, consisting of four sub-chapters which gave an overview of the main terms in the context of the thesis. The first one provided a historical and a social background to the Estonian immigration to Canada. The second one outlined Salme Ekbaum's biography and works. The following two subchapters elaborated on the traumatic experiences of migration and its reflection in literature, and on liminality of an immigrant in a host society to lay the foundations to the discussion of the experiences of the two protagonists in *Külaliseks on ootus*.

The second chapter of the thesis explored the questions of belonging and identity of Aino Rünk and Ida Mölder, the two heroines of the novel. The sub-chapters provided a study of Aino's and Ida's experiences of the settling process and the challenges of accommodating to the host country. As the two women belong to different waves of immigrants, their reasons for migration appeared to be dissimilar and thus their experience. The analysis showed that belonging to different waves of immigration greatly affects their assimilation to Canadian society, their identity as well as their attitude to preserving their ethnicity.

The analysis of the characters of Aino and Ida has another important finding. It makes a difference whether a person has arrived due to voluntary or forced immigration. If the migration has been voluntary, the immigrants' experiences are less traumatic and their adaptation to a host society is easier. Yet, the analysis has revealed a poignant detail that while Aino has to leave her homeland due to World War II, Ida has not been able to revisit Estonia due to the same war and has had to stay permanently in Canada. This observation complicates Puhk's (2000) juxtaposition of the two waves of the immigrants in terms of trauma and liminality.

Moreover, the analysis showed that if the migration has been involuntary and the migration journey traumatic, immigrants try to keep their cultural heritage, mother tongue and a sense of ancestral belonging alive. Aino and Ida are still in-between – they are not fully assimilated into Anglophone-Canadian society. Both characters try to find a balance between two worlds and they are still in search for their place and identity. As Ida has lived in Canada for ten years, she has found certain stability and in some ways has adapted to her new life. Aino has been in Canada less than a year, so it is natural that the acculturation takes longer.

The exploration of a fictional account of the journey of Estonians in Canada on the

basis of Ekbaum's novel confirms that immigrant experience heavily depends on when, why and how immigrants come to Canada and what the current situation is in Canadian society at the time of their arrival. Furthermore, the Estonian diasporic perspective taken in this thesis highlights that besides generational belonging, also belonging to a different wave of immigrants of the same generation affects the accommodation in Canada.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Relika Maripuu

Estonians in Canada: Identity in Salme Ekbaum's novel *Külaliseks on ootus*

Eestlased Kanadas: Identiteet Salme Ekbaumi romaanis *Külaliseks on ootus*

Bakalaureusetöö

2020

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Annotatsioon:

Antud töö peamiseks eesmärgiks on mõista, mis mõjutab immigrantide identiteeti ja mis aitab kaasa nende assimileerumise teekonnale või raskendab seda. Töö vaatlleb lähemalt, kuidas immigrandi kogemus mõjutab sulandumist uude ühiskonda ja kuidas see mõjutab identiteedi kujunemist.

Töö koosneb neljast osast: sissejuhatuses, kahest peatükist ja kokkuvõttest. Sissejuhatuses on esitatud töö taust ning välja toodud antud teema olulisus. Samuti annab sissejuhatus informatsiooni romaani *Külaliseks on ootus* autori Salme Ekbaumi ja teose kohta. Siin on ka püstitatud uurimisküsimused, kuidas kuulumine erinevatesse immigratsioonilainetesse mõjutab antud teose naispeategelaste identiteeti, mis aitab kaasa immigrandi assimileerumisele Kanada ühiskonda ja mis aitab immigrandil säilitada oma rahvuslikku identiteeti ning jääda eestlaseks.

Esimene peatükk on töö kirjandusülevaade. Selle esimene alapeatükk keskendub eestlaste immigratsioonile Kanadasse. Teine alapeatükk annab ülevaate teose autori, Salme Ekbaumi biograafiast ja töödest. Järgnevad alapeatükid defineerivad mõisteid, mis käsitlevad põgenikuteekonna traumaatilisust ja pagulase liminaalsust uues ühiskonnas.

Teine peatükk on töö empiiriline osa. See on pühendatud romaani kahele naispeategelasele ja nende Kanada eestlaseks olemise analüüsile. See toob välja peamised tegurid, mis mõjutavad nende identiteeti, nende Kanada ühiskonda sulandumist ja samuti nende katseid säilitada eestlust.

Kokkuvõtteks võib öelda, et kuigi peategelased on sarnase taustaga ja kuuluvad samasse immigrantide põlvkonda, siis nende identiteet ja selle säilimine Kanadas on erinevad. Uurimus näitab, kui suurel määral mõjutavad peategelaste identiteeti nende põhjus migratsiooniks, põgenikuteekonna kogemused, side Eesti ja eestlusega. Analüüsi tulemusena selgus, et kui põgenemine on olnud sunnitud ja teekond on olnud traumaatiline, siis assimileerumine uues ühiskonnas on raskendatud ja immigrandil on suurem tahe säilitada oma etnilist ja rahvuslikku identiteeti.

Märksõnad: Kanada eestlased, etniline identiteet, trauma, pagulus, liminaalsus

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

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