

Special Section: Placing Lemko Literature: Debating Helena Duć-Fajfer's *Treading Paths*

Edited by

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When the first English-language history of Carpatho-Rusyn literature, *Straddling Borders: Literature and Identity in Subcarpathian Rus'* (2003), appeared, its author Elaine Rusinko described the “excitement of discovering an entire literature, hitherto unrecognized by western scholarship” (Rusinko 2003, 3). Helena Duć-Fajfer's *Treading Paths: Lemko Literature in the Years 1848–1918* (2023) can make a similar claim. First published in Polish, the English translation of Duć-Fajfer's monograph is the first comprehensive history of Lemko literature from its emergence in the mid-19th century to the interwar period in the 20th century. It surveys the major Lemko authors of late Austrian Galicia, their most prominent literary genres (including the rise of the Lemko novel), and how they explored their Lemko identity in *belles-lettres* and beyond.

At the 2024 Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) annual convention in Boston, Massachusetts, a roundtable of cultural historians evaluated the merits of *Treading Paths*. The roundtable featured

scholars of Carpatho-Rusyn literature (Elaine Rusinko), Russian literature (David Powelstock), Polish literature (Agnieszka Jezyk), and Lemko history and culture (Bogdan Horbal), all of whom responded to the book in a *pro et contra* format. They analyzed Duć-Fajfer's methodological approach to Lemko literature, the unique features of the golden age of Lemko writing, and the potential impacts of Duć-Fajfer's work on Lemko studies and neighboring fields. Their comments on *Treading Paths*—along with Duć-Fajfer's response to the roundtable—are included below in this special section of *Ruska Bursa Annual*.

The English translation of *Lemko Literature in the Second Half of the 19th and Beginning of the 20th Century* (*Literatura lemkowska w drugiej połowie XIX i na początku XX w.*) (Duć-Fajfer 2001), *Treading Paths*, establishes the canon of what we could call “the golden age of Lemko literature” (Kupensky 2024, 336) as it reveals itself across multiple genres, media, and modes. While there are brief biographical capsules of individual writers in the major encyclopedias and histories of Carpatho-Rusyn culture, *Treading Paths* is the only study that treats Lemko literature as a system unto itself—an aspect debated by the pan-elists. In her response, “Treading Paths and Straddling Borders: Approaches to New Literatures,” Elaine Rusinko compares her study of Subcarpathian Rusyn literature south of the mountains with Duć-Fajfer’s survey of Lemko literature north of the them. Rusinko contrasts her postcolonial approach with Duć-Fajfer’s genre-based approach, which, she argues, reveals “an extensive range of modes and forms” but also can be “difficult to follow,” especially for newcomers to Lemko literature. Likewise, in his response, “*Treading Paths* between Philology and Poetics: Lemko Literature’s Prosaic Origins,” David Powelstock describes Duć-Fajfer’s methodological approach as philological in nature for its prioritization of discourse over poetics.

By eschewing close reading, Duć-Fajfer is able to exhaustively catalogue the dominant genres and forms of Lemko literature. In fact, Rusinko contends that the most significant finding of *Treading Paths* is that the vast majority of Lemko literature classics are in prose, not poetry, which is unique among minor literatures. Powelstock emphasizes the same point, noting that Lemko literature’s origins in prose distinguish it not only from most Western literary traditions, which coalesced around narrative epic poetry, or Eastern ones, such as Chinese literature, which emerged with an emphasis on the lyric, but also from Subcarpathian Rusyn literature south of the slopes. Why is this the case? Was this due to aesthetic factors? Historical factors? Political factors?

Treading Paths does not speculate on these questions, which, hopefully, will be taken up by future scholars.

While Rusinko and Powelstock focus primarily on questions of method and aesthetics, Agnieszka Jeżyk emphasizes the influence that *Treading Paths* should have on narratives of Polish literature. In her response, “Towards a Multicultural History of Polish Literature: *Treading Paths* and Polish Studies,” Jeżyk argues that Duć-Fajfer’s work not only allows Polish scholars to “broaden [their] understanding of Polish culture beyond texts produced in the Polish language,” but also challenges the formation of the Polish canon, which all too often only “marginally acknowledges minority voices.” *Treading Paths* poses a similar challenge to Ukrainian studies, as Duć-Fajfer includes in her history the work of Bohdan Ihor Antonych, whose writings are most often included into the Ukrainian canon.

For scholars of literary studies, *Treading Paths* may also raise similar questions about the evolution and shape of the Russian novelistic tradition. In fact, the most noteworthy 19th-century Lemko writer—Vladymir Khylia—*not only* enjoyed a reputation in Galicia that in his day surpassed the Ukrainian writer Ivan Franko (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 208), but his work was also known and discussed in Russian literary circles (Пыпинъ 1888). Even if Duć-Fajfer herself does not take up these questions, scholars of Russian literature could benefit from comparing the major Russian novels of the 1870s and 1880s—Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Demons* (1872), *The Adolescent* (1875), and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880); Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1878) and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886); Ivan Turgenev’s *Virgin Soil* (1877); or Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin’s *The Golovlyov Family* (1880)—to their contemporaries written in *iazychie* in the Lemko tradition, such as Khylia’s *The Polish Patriot* (1872), *Gallows Hill* (1877), *Rusyn Fate* (1880), and *Little Big Traitor* (1881), or Petro Polianskii’s two-volume collection *Carpathian Novellas* (1888). Not only will these types of comparisons better illuminate the distinctive structural and thematic features of the Russian and Lemko novelistic traditions, but they may also complicate narratives about the exceptional nature of the golden age of the so-called “great Russian novel.”

Finally, in his response “Finding Lemko Literature: *Treading Paths* as Bibliography,” Bogdan Horbal tracks the dissemination of *Treading Paths* across the world’s libraries, which reveals the potential global impact of Duć-Fajfer’s work—from the United States and Canada to Botswana and the United Arab Emirates. At the same time, he emphasizes that the book’s greatest achievement

will not be its interpretive history of Lemko literature but its “bibliographic tool” for future scholars. In doing so, he draws attention to the challenges of studying minor literatures, for scholars in Carpatho-Rusyn and Lemko studies are always forced to wear many hats: advocate, anthropologist, bibliographer, close reader, curator, ethnographer, historian, linguist, nation builder, promoter, political scientist, sociologist, theorist, and more.

In other words, the scholar of minor literatures is always fighting a Hydra of critics. Establish a corpus of texts that you do not have time to meaningfully read. Close read some exemplary works that your audience cannot place in a tradition. Develop a theory of literature that abstracts a highly localized phenomenon. Compare your tradition to European or world literatures to face accusations of cosmopolitanism and doubts about whether you really are a Carpatho-Rusyn patriot. Thus, in her response, Duć-Fajfer insists that, if given the chance to reconceive *Treading Paths*, she would change nothing. Before a scholar of literature can undertake other forms of analysis, she argues, it is first necessary to have “a foundational text corpus,” which is what *Treading Paths* ultimately and unapologetically provides. For this reason, Powelstock proposes that, just as Helen of Troy’s beauty launched a thousand ships, Helena of Lemkovyna will be the scholar whose work “launched a thousand research projects.” The challenge to Duć-Fajfer—and Carpatho-Rusyn studies more broadly—is to ensure that enough scholars of Lemko literature are eager and willing to pursue them.

Public Release

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force Academy, the Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. PA Number: USAFA-DF-2024-748.

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Elaine Rusinko 
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Treading Paths and Straddling Borders: Approaches to New Literatures

In his description of Helena Duć-Fajfer's book, *Lemko Literature in the Years 1848–1918*, Professor Kupensky draws a parallel between my literary history of Subcarpathian Rus', *Straddling Borders*, and Duć-Fajfer's *Treading Paths*. Kupensky cites my comment about "the excitement of discovering an entire literature, hitherto unrecognized by western scholarship" as a common feature of our studies (Rusinko 2003, 3). But the parallel is not exact. Duć-Fajfer's book appeared in Polish two decades before mine was published, and for her, Lemko literature was not a "discovery," in the same sense that all Carpatho-Rusyn literature was for me. She describes Lemko literature as the "voice of a community that previously had not had direct representation in general cultural discourse" (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 7). The "community" she speaks of is *her* community, speaking *her* language, expressing from a first-hand perspective "the memories, traumas and experiences passed down through generations of the Lemko community" (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 7). Helena Duć-Fajfer is thus the ideal guide to lead us down the uncharted paths of Lemko literature.

To be sure, many aspects of *Treading Paths* resonate with my research in *Straddling Borders*. Duć-Fajfer begins by establishing the definition and scope of Lemko literature as all literary texts written in the Lemko language, but also texts by acknowledged Lemko authors written in other languages. Similarly,

I included texts in Church Slavonic, Rusyn, Latin, Russian, Ukrainian, and *iazychie* in my study of Subcarpathian Rusyn literature. While she does not use postcolonial theory to explore identity formation as I did, she makes the point, with which I agree, that “if we were to apply the symptomatic reading of Lemko literature with referring to the conceptual research tools of post-colonial studies, we could also emphasize the phenomena of straddling borders” (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 350). Duć-Fajfer refers to the emergence of a “Lemko self-stereotype.” I use the term “auto-ethnography,” but we are talking about the same pursuit of cultural and ethnic identity through literature. In our studies of minor literatures, we both recognize that many of the works we analyze are of “insignificant artistic quality” (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 203), while we focus on their social, cultural, and political contexts.

Straddling Borders follows a roughly chronological framework, tracing the role of literary culture in nationality building and identity formation. Duć-Fajfer’s book is structured in three sections. A comprehensive historical outline introduces the ethnic, cultural, and religious profile of Lemkovyna, with attention to self-identifying factors, such as the layout of villages, church architecture, agriculture, handicrafts, and Lemko attire. The book’s central section focuses on the main types and genres of Lemko literature. Here the author provides an exceptionally thorough catalog of the literature, demonstrating both the broad scope of her knowledge and the depth of her research. She covers an extensive range of modes and forms—ethnographic essays, poetry, religious sermons, didactic literature, memoirs, diaries, travel narratives, and children’s literature. Finally, the author provides summaries, general conclusions, reflections on potential future developments, and author biographies. Throughout the book, extracts from poems and long paraphrased summaries of novels introduce the literature to new readers and beg for English translations. This salient observation resonated with me: “The general mood of sadness, longing and grief resulting from loss is important in the continuity of the development of Lemko literature as an ethnic one” (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 207). A more extended examination of this theme within and across genres would be welcome. On this point, the chapter on prose fiction is especially interesting. The dominance of prose fiction over poetry and drama in Lemkovyna is unusual for minor literatures. Duć-Fajfer attributes it to the creative talent of Vladymir Khîliak, the author of short stories, essays, and novels.

Duć-Fajfer describes her intent as presenting “more than a mere presentation of literature written by Lemkos. It is a presentation of literary life in its

effect on the development of the unique Lemko cultural space, on the shaping of that community's ethnic awareness and the course of its struggle in defining and maintaining its identity" (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 14). However, the segmentation of the book into these historical and genre-based sections makes it more difficult for the new reader to integrate "the unique Lemko cultural space." The author might have synthesized and incorporated the texts more clearly in her analysis.

As a reader new to Lemko writers, I found the genre-based organization difficult to follow, as the sections often felt overly self-contained, lacking clear connections to one another or to an overarching theoretical framework. At times, analysis is set aside in favor of lists of names and titles. For example, the author acknowledges that a detailed analysis of individual religious works is impractical, opting instead to focus on those with a high degree of "literariness" and to "discuss certain categories" (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 159). Yet the section essentially lists the names of clergy and the titles of their sermons, interspersed with occasional quotations and comments. Many of these points are intriguing, for example, "No one values a Rusyn less than another Rusyn" (Malyniak, quoted in: Duć-Fajfer 2023, 171). But the reader is left wanting background and context. Perhaps a representative sermon or two might have been presented in full, with analysis, leaving the names and titles for the bibliography. The section on educational and didactic literature consists primarily of promotional and informational titles. Texts range from historical and political information to guidebooks on farming. This kind of catalog could be of bibliographical benefit, and the entire book is so rich in detail that it could serve as a reference book for scholars of Lemko literature. However, the lists of names and works throughout the book point toward "the unique Lemko cultural space" (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 14) without fully exploring or analyzing it.

As an English-language reader, I expected that Duć-Fajfer's book, the first English-language history of Lemko literature, would be directed to an international English-language audience. But the author took a different path. In her conclusion, she states that "the methodological assumption of this work is the study—as profound as possible—of a certain phenomenon as such, through a broad presentation of texts that express it, and not a comparative study" (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 348). In a footnote in the chapter on travel narratives, she draws a parallel between the essays, notes, and memories penned by Lemko writers and the contemporary trend of European sentimentalism, citing works by Sterne, Goethe, Karamzin, and Turgenev (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 132, fn. 403;

268, 347). Not comparing, but contextualizing Lemko literature within the broader scope of European and other Slavic literatures helps new readers better understand and assess it. More of this would have been helpful.

English is now a *lingua franca* for many European scholars, and *Treading Paths* will surely have a following in many fields. But it may not easily reach western scholarship beyond a small Carpatho-Rusyn audience. Duć-Fajfer's insular concentration on texts and genres may be abstruse for outsiders and general readers, as are the Cyrillic titles throughout the text.

Taking a different approach, I set out to write *Straddling Borders* with the intention of making this undiscovered literature known to western scholarship, and for that reason I chose to use postcolonial theory as a theoretical foundation. Of course, I was writing in English, and the book has still not been translated into a Slavic language, so I do not know whether it would indeed straddle those intellectual and linguistic borders. But the postcolonial framework provided a coherent lens and perspective that guided my analytical focus and pinpointed the attention of readers.

Lacking a clear theoretical framework, Duć-Fajfer's book does not quite come together for western readers. But I have no doubt that *Treading Paths* will be the definitive study of Lemko literature from 1848 to 1918 in the Slavic world and a major step forward in promoting Lemko literature.

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David Powelstock 

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Treading Paths between Philology and Poetics: Lemko Literature's Prosaic Origins

It is an honor to participate in this roundtable, with such distinguished colleagues in the area of Carpatho-Rusyn and Lemko studies—especially since I am very much a newcomer to it, having specialized primarily in the study of Russian and, to a lesser extent, Czech literature most of my career. It feels a little like being a first-year graduate student again—which, at this stage of life, is actually quite refreshing. I mention these facts just to frame my remarks as those of a beginner in the field encountering a resource on a topic of interest. Accordingly, I will evaluate the book from this perspective and leave it to my more knowledgeable colleagues to put Professor Duć-Fajfer's book in its scholarly context. In addition, I will conclude with some questions for discussion, which the author, the panelists, and the audience might take up if they find them interesting enough.

From the perspective of a beginning researcher in this field, Professor Duć-Fajfer's book is a priceless resource. Reading it together with the socio-political history of Lemkovyna and the history of its cultural institutions gives a rich picture of the region in this period. In part this is because it does not strictly limit itself to *belles-lettres*, but rather expands its purview to encompass virtually all kinds of Lemko writing in the period—ten in total. We might characterize this approach as more in the tradition of philology than of poetics. Given that the literary discourse in question is, in an important sense, incipient, this is wholly appropriate, not only from the standpoint of broader cultural history, but also from that of poetics proper. Most of the writers discussed produced texts across the range of types of writing. Including these writings provides important context for historicizing their belletristic production both collectively and as individual writers.

I also greatly appreciate the inclusion of biographical notes on the writers discussed, 22 in all. A bibliography is given for each, separate from the book's global bibliography, making it easy to pursue research on individual figures. Having these notes all in one place also reveals, at a glance, who was producing Lemko writing. There is but one woman. And of the 20 authors for

whom social class origin is noted, seventeen are the children of Greek Catholic priests, and one of a cantor whose wife was from a clerical family. No big surprises here, but striking nonetheless. The situation invites comparison with other Eastern Rite cultures, where the institution of the married priesthood was crucial to the development of secular written culture. In Russia, for example, the *popovichi* played a crucial role in the democratization of literature in the 19th century. The book's global bibliography is also an excellent resource, made all the more useful by being broken down into reference works, secondary literature, primary texts, and Lemko periodicals.

Last but far from least among the book's virtues is its inclusion of substantial excerpts in their original languages from a wide range of writings, many of them difficult to find. Of course, the term "original" here actually refers to a range of linguistic practices, from Church Slavonic to Russian and Ukrainian to the Lemko vernacular, as well as combinations and blendings thereof. To see the entire range of these practices laid out in one place is both fascinating and invaluable.

As these comments suggest, among its other contributions, Professor Duć-Fajfer's work provides a strong and broad foundation for further research both on Lemko literature and its writers *per se* and in the area of comparative Slavic studies. With apologies to Helen of Troy, *Treading Paths* seems destined to be known as the book that launched a thousand research projects—although we may have trouble rounding up enough scholars of Lemko studies to produce them all.

As I turn to my questions, I hope they will be taken very much in this spirit. They are not criticisms in disguise, nor do they necessarily fall entirely within the scope of Professor Duć-Fajfer's book, so there is no reason to expect them to be addressed there. Nor do I expect Professor Duć-Fajfer to respond to them today, except to the extent that she may wish to do so. Rather, they fall into the category of extensions—possible avenues of discussion and study that *Treading Paths* suggests and facilitates.

My first question concerns the literary relations between the Lemkos and their cousins on the other side of the mountains, in the Prešov and Subcarpathian regions. How did they perceive one another? In what ways, if any, did they communicate or cooperate? The ties to the land were clearly a very strong element of identity for each group, but were there other ways in which they defined themselves in relation to these closely related others? Did the intelligentsia address the question of difference, or were their commonalities so great that it was not felt to be relevant?

As primarily a student of poetry, I was fascinated by the observation that Lemko poetry from this period was relatively underdeveloped—both by comparison with Lemko prose fiction and with the poetry of the Lemkos' cousins on the other side of the Carpathian crest. From the perspective of comparative literary history, this raises many questions. There are literary traditions that begin with an emphasis on narrative, specifically the epic, as in the case of Western Europe, and those that begin with the lyric, as was the case in China, for example. Professor Duć-Fajfer's book touches on the differing social and political conditions on the two sides of the mountains, but I would really like to understand better why the two literatures developed so differently during this period. Some considerations around this question include the relationship between the writers and the local oral tradition; the audience for written works, in terms of social class and nationality; and writers' assessments of what types of writing best serve the work of identity building.

Next, in recent decades, comparatists have paid attention to the cultural politics of language choice in the case of writers whose "mother tongue" is marginal with respect to more powerful surrounding official languages with already established literary traditions. Should one write in one's mother tongue? Or in the language of the hegemon? The choice is rife with contradictions and tradeoffs. Writing in one's mother tongue is the patriotic option. It supports the survival and intellectual development of one's people. In this case, there is also the question of translating, so to speak, a predominantly oral culture into a written one. The tradeoff, as Professor Duć-Fajfer points out in the case of Vladymir Khylia, is that the patriotic choice tends to make the literature less available to the wider world. To the extent that national identity work involves both an inward appeal to the people in question and an outward appeal for recognition by others, this is a profound conundrum. My question, then, is this: How aware were the writers themselves of this tradeoff? Do we have any evidence that they struggled with it?

In this region, we also encounter the phenomenon of *iazychie*, an organic albeit uncoordinated and frequently scattershot attempt to develop a literary language by combining elements of the vernacular with those of existing literary languages. It seems significant that the accepted term for these efforts—*iazychie*—is itself an exonym with pejorative origins. Did Lemko writers themselves have a name (or names) for what they were doing? Did they address it explicitly?

It is probably the case that some of these questions have been addressed in research that I am not familiar with. In those cases, I would be glad to know of

that work. Otherwise, I want to thank Professor Duć-Fajfer for her outstanding work, for producing an English version, and for joining us today to discuss this neglected topic. I hope this discussion—and her work—will help remedy that neglect.

Agnieszka Jezyk 

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Towards a Multicultural History of Polish Literature: *Treading Paths and Polish Studies*

Twenty years ago, I was a freshman in the Faculty of Polish Literature and Language at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, where I decided to specialize in cultural studies. Among the required courses was Professor Duć-Fajfer's class "Ethnic and National Minorities." At that time, I had to admit that I knew very little about the topic. I had read some works by Isaac Bashevis Singer and Julian Stryjkowski's *Austeria* (1966). Being aware of my Jewish roots, I knew that Poland had once been multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious. However, it was not until I attended Professor Duć-Fajfer's course that I began to understand the many layers of ethnic and linguistic diversity in both historical and modern Poland. I also learned about the rich cultural contributions and complex identities of minority groups in the country. The exam for that class was the longest I had ever taken—until I faced my job interview at the University of Washington decades later. It goes without saying that Professor Duć-Fajfer's impact on the way I think about Polish culture has been profound, and I am certainly among many other students touched by her passion and charisma.

The exceptional work that Olena Duć-Fajfer has done—and continues to do—in popularizing Lemko culture is evident not only in her teaching but also in her book *Treading Paths: Lemko Literature in the Years 1848–1918* (Duć-Fajfer 2023). This work offers a strong synthesis of knowledge about Lemko textual culture. It is also a poignant testament to the struggle to maintain identity and distinctiveness amid dominant cultures, particularly Polish and Slovak. Moreover, it narrates political choices and ideological positions that

are universally relevant to minority groups. It addresses questions of self-perception, interactions with dominant cultures, assimilation challenges, and the preservation of ethnic identities.

Treading Paths is significant and groundbreaking in many ways. It symbolically highlights the needs of minority communities in Poland—needs that require more substantial support than the superficial assistance provided by post-communist governments. For instance, minority education remains a critical area for development. The book's educational implications and the idea that we should consider cultures in Poland beyond literature written in the Polish language are more relevant now than 20 years ago, as the ethnic and national makeup of the country begins to change.

From the perspective of a professor of Polish studies in the United States, teaching Polish culture has become increasingly challenging. We are facing the gradual defunding of the humanities, a crisis in Slavic studies and regional studies, and the closure of many programs across the country. With the paradigm shift brought by AI, the value of learning foreign languages is being questioned more frequently. As educators, we need to rethink how and what we teach, what type of questions we ask, what technologies we use, and how we navigate the complex web of changes in education—all while keeping issues of identity and belonging in mind. Our responsibility is also to broaden our understanding of Polish culture beyond texts produced in the Polish language. Unfortunately, this shift is not yet reflected in textbooks authored by Polish writers. For instance, Anna Nasilowska's *A History of Polish Literature* (2024) traces the Polish textual tradition from the Middle Ages to the present but only marginally acknowledges minority voices, focusing primarily on Jewish authors who wrote in Polish.

In this context, *Treading Paths* fills a significant gap by providing not only a historical narrative of Lemko literature but also texts translated into both Polish and English, which is very helpful for instructors in the United States, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. This makes Professor Duć-Fajfer's monograph an invaluable resource for courses designed to inform about and promote rich and historically diverse multilingual culture in Poland. Thanks to the publication of *Treading Paths*, both the literary texts and the critical and historical analysis provided by Olena Duć-Fajfer are now available to broader audiences and can significantly enrich courses focusing on minority cultures in Poland, ethnic diversity in Central Europe, the history and evolution of Lemko identity through literature, and related topics.

On a personal note, in the fall of 2024, the Polish Studies Association (PSA) introduced an award for the best syllabus that showcases effective and creative teaching in Polish Studies. One of the goals was to design a course illustrating how Poland and Polish culture fit into larger global transformations. The syllabus I submitted—which won the award—focused on the theme of otherness in Polish culture. I included representations of more distant “others,” such as depictions of Blackness and Asian subjectivity in various Polish works, alongside materials about ethnic and national minorities in Poland. Thanks to Professor Duć-Fajfer’s book, I will now have solid material to complement my session on Krzysztof Krauze’s film *My Nikifor* (2004) and Epifaniusz Drowniak’s paintings with varied and intriguing textual material.

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Bogdan Horbal 
New York Public Library

Finding Lemko Literature: *Treading Paths* as Bibliography

Congratulations to Olena on the English-language edition of her groundbreaking work. Today, I will briefly touch on three key points. First, as a librarian, I am especially interested in its publishing details, pricing, distribution, and how libraries can acquire this important title. Second, I will offer a few thoughts on the nuances between a straightforward translation and a translated new edition. And third, I will examine why this work also serves as a vital bibliographic resource.

Treading Paths was published by V&R unipress, a respected academic press and part of Brill Deutschland. The imprint date is 2023, with an official release date of 11 March 2024. It became available for shipping on 19 May 2024. In case anyone might need this information, in the United States, the book is distributed from a warehouse in Tennessee. It is available in both print and electronic formats, the latter as a PDF file. The print edition is priced at USD 87—a reasonable cost for a 533-page scholarly work featuring 70 illustrations. For context: comparable monographs from publishers such as Routledge often run over USD 200 while being half the length.

The *Treading Paths* eBook is now available through two major academic platforms: EBSCO and ProQuest. While ProQuest offers a slightly lower price, both versions remain on the higher end of the pricing scale typical for academic eBook providers.

1. Ebook pricing for *Treading Paths*

| | EBSCO | ProQuest |
|----------------------|---------|----------|
| 1 user | USD 199 | USD 186 |
| 3 simultaneous users | USD 299 | USD 280 |
| Unlimited users | USD 499 | USD 467 |

The book is now available through GOBI Library Services, one of the largest distributors of English-language materials in the United States and the United Kingdom. It can also be purchased from Amazon and Barnes & Noble, both offering it for USD 87 with free shipping. The Harvard Book Store—a Boston-based independent bookstore not affiliated with the university—lists it at USD 104.40, despite not having it in stock.

It is still too early to make a comprehensive comparison between the distribution of the Polish original and its English translation across libraries, but we can briefly touch on the topic. First, it is important to note that WorldCat (also known as OCLC) does not provide a complete picture of library holdings, though it remains our best available source—especially for North America. Based on this partial data, the Polish version is well represented in academic libraries in Poland, as expected. However, it is unlikely that many copies of the English version will be added to those collections.

2. Library holdings of the original Polish edition and the English edition of *Treading Paths*

| | Polish ed. | English ed. |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Poland (per Nukat) | 20 | 1 |
| United States | 14 | 13 |
| Canada | 2 | 1 |
| Germany | 6 | 25 |

Single copies of Polish ed. in France, Hungary and Sweden, plus two in England, and three in Slovenia

On the other hand, the 14 copies of the Polish-language version held by United States libraries indicate limited interest in the topic when the material is not available in English. However, it is worth noting that major libraries with significant Slavic collections—such as Columbia, Harvard, the Library of Congress, Stanford, and, of course, the New York Public Library—do hold the Polish edition. The number of American institutions acquiring the English translation is likely to increase in the coming months, hopefully quite substantially.

In Canada, the only two libraries listed in WorldCat as holding the Polish edition are the usual suspects: the University of Toronto and the University of Alberta. I expect the English translation will be acquired by several additional libraries north of the border. In Germany, the Polish edition is held by at least six major libraries. The presence of 25 copies of the English edition in German libraries reflects not only Germany's efficiency in acquisitions but also a strong interest in Slavic studies. The fact that the book was published by a German publisher has undoubtedly contributed to its availability.

While library acquisitions often follow predictable patterns, some titles find their way to unexpected—or even exotic—locations. This holds true for both the original Polish and the English editions of this book. The Polish edition is held by Reichman University, Herzliya, Israel, and by the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates; while the English edition is held by the Botswana International University of Science and Technology; Mercy High School in Farmington, Michigan; and Sharp Memorial Hospital Library in San Diego, California. I am not sure how or why these libraries acquired the book, but it is wonderful that they did.

Let us now explore the concept of an unchanged translation versus an updated and translated edition. In the introduction to the English translation, the author explains: “Despite the long time that has passed since the publication of its Polish edition, I decided that no amendments or changes in content and composition were necessary, except for some updates concerning the present-day situation of the Lemkos included in the introduction” (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 7). Indeed, the main portion of the work, which addresses literature, unfortunately requires no additions. I say “unfortunately” because one would hope that in the two decades since its original publication, at least some new scholarly contributions to this field would have appeared.

While I do not specialize in Lemko literature, I am not aware of any substantial works on pre-World War I Lemko literature beyond the translated editions of Vladymir Khyliaik’s four-volume works and Petro Polianskii’s two-volume set of *Carpathian Novellas*—both of which, unsurprisingly, Olena contributed to.



1. New edition of *Carpathian Novellas* by Petro Polianskii (Полянський 2011a, 2011b)

Olena is not only a pioneer in Lemko literary studies but also remains the sole scholar to have worked extensively on Lemko literary and cultural studies

from the Austro-Hungarian period. She is fully aware of this distinction and emphasized it in the introduction to the English edition: “This monograph has been, and continues to be, the only work which explores the consciousness, views, esthetic and ideological choices, creative potential, possibilities of expression, quality and nature of the literary works of a particular group of Rusyn intelligentsia in the last six decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire” (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 8).

As I mentioned earlier, Olena chose to make some changes in the introduction regarding what she describes as “the present-day situation of the Lemkos” (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 7). However, these additions extend beyond that topic and are scattered throughout roughly 60 pages in the section titled “Historical Outline,” which addresses the territorial, ethnographic, cultural, and religious profile of Lemkovyna. While it is generally better to include these updates rather than omit them, they are not comprehensive on the one hand and, on the other, create a somewhat challenging reading experience.

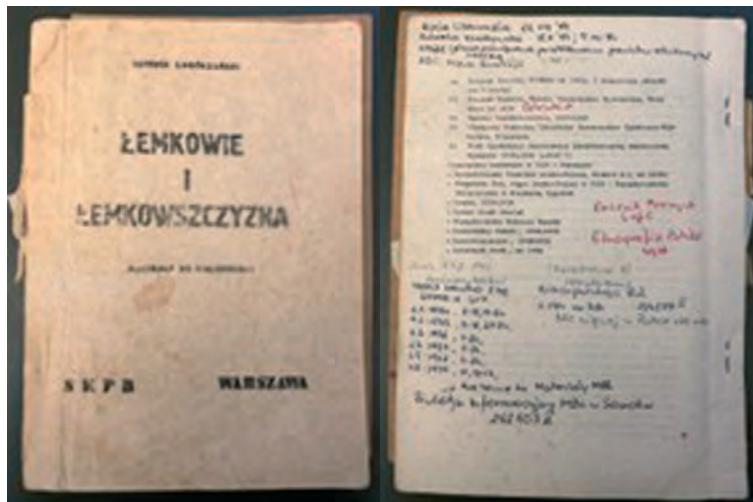
For example, Olena writes, “Language was an important factor differentiating Lemkos from their neighbors” (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 22). She includes a footnote citing several previously mentioned works along with some more recent studies. While I believe linguistics should be distinguished from socio-linguistics, both are grouped together in this footnote. Furthermore, although the footnote is extensive, much more research has been published on both topics since the original Polish edition of Olena’s book appeared.

By incorporating these newer works, Olena has produced a text that is only partially updated—even the revised sections are updated only in part. This raises the question of how the work should be categorized. On the verso of the title page, it states that the text was “Originally published in Polish in 2001 under the title *Literatura łemkowska w drugiej połowie dziewiętnastego i na początku dwudziestego wieku* by Polska Akademia Umiejętności.” However, it is not exactly the same text.

I mention this issue because Olena’s work is more than just a literary or cultural study; it also serves as an important bibliographic resource. In the introduction, she writes: “I would like to underline the basic feature of this monograph—the collection and presentation, either in descriptive fragments or bibliographic references, of a very large volume of texts from a defined time, territory, and cultural reality” (Duć-Fajfer 2023, 9). This is significant because, at the time of its publication, the original Polish edition included the most extensive bibliography on Lemko literature, as well as, to some extent, culture and history.

Since this book is also a bibliographic tool, I wish the English translation did not follow the practice of using initials instead of full author names. Including page numbers for newspaper articles and publishers for monographs would also have been helpful—though perhaps I am asking too much.

Despite these imperfections, the bibliography in this book represents a significant improvement over the resource Olena and I used when we first began researching Lemkos in the 1980s. I am referring to the indispensable stitched booklet *Lemkowie i Lemkowszczyzna. Materiały do bibliografii* by Tadeusz Zagórzański (the pseudonym of Tadeusz Kiełbasiński), published by SKPB (Studenckie Koło Przewodników Beskidzkich) in 1984.



2-3. My copy of *Lemkowie i Lemkowszczyzna. Materiały do bibliografii* by Tadeusz Zagórzański (Zagórzański 1984)

My copy was so heavily used that the title on the cover has partially faded, and the back cover is missing. The booklet contains 1,097 entries—some difficult to decipher, and some still incomprehensible or hard to locate even today. I annotated my copy extensively, using a system I can no longer fully understand myself. It was an invaluable bibliographic tool that got us started, but thankfully, we no longer have to rely on it. This progress is due in no small part to Olena and her pioneering, foundational work in Lemko literary, cultural, and bibliographic studies, now available in English translation.

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Treading Paths as Corpus: The Author Responds

I would like to sincerely thank all the panelists and organizers for the opportunity to participate in this meeting, which offers a unique occasion to discuss Lemko literature and its study.

The original version of the book that is the starting point for today's discussion was, as you know, written more than two decades ago. Since then, I have gained greater scholarly maturity, expanded my insights through a number of modern literary, cultural, and anthropological theories, and re-evaluated many issues within engaged humanities. However, as I was preparing the English edition of this earlier work, I decided to preserve its original structure, updating only certain factual and bibliographic details. I also added an introduction that reflects my current perspective. What led me to this decision? Above all, the nature of the book itself. This is a thoroughly material-based book. It delves into literature in its foundational form, filled with many extensive quotations, detailed notes on publishing nuances, reflections on societal functions and significance, information about authors and the condition of Lemko intelligentsia in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Literature has been my passion for many years. My work on capturing the phenomenon of Lemko literature began with contemporary poetry, which was the focus of my master's thesis. For my doctoral dissertation, I intended to present the entire Lemko literature, from its early emergence around the mid-19th century to the present. However, my meticulous search for texts, often unstudied and absent from any literary history, convinced me that these texts needed to be presented and made accessible both to scholars of literature and culture, and to the community that they shaped and represented. I decided not to limit this material excessively or to reduce it to selected themes or interpretations. I wanted to present the texts in a manner that allowed them to speak for themselves, through their own nature and form, collected, cited, and grouped by genre. As a result, my doctoral work focused only on the literature of the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, with plans to explore interwar and post-resettlement literature as subsequent stages of my research.

The book published in Polish in 2001 is an expanded and refined version of that dissertation. It encapsulates the core of my research explorations and discoveries to this day, as I continue to investigate the phenomenon of Lemko identity across various levels and through different forms of self-expression. By this I mean a collective identity often regarded as a certain hypostasis, where cultural texts serve as a vehicle of foundational self-awareness. This is precisely how I read and present these texts.

Therefore, today, I would write this book in a similar way. For this reason, I decided that the English edition would remain true to the original—with only necessary updates. Perhaps I would now place greater emphasis on certain social phenomena, such as the challenging process by which the intelligentsia of the time identified with the broader community or how they positioned their voices within the polyphony of Galician society in a probing, self-ironic manner. Yet, my primary method remains an in-depth, culturally nuanced reading of texts. Various literary theories, including postcolonialism, emerge from discourses that are quite distant from Lemko heritage. I am not a proponent of studying literature through the lens of prosody or universalist paradigms. Comparative analyses are also not very significant from my perspective. These methods, tools, and concepts can indeed serve as higher-level perspectives, and I do use them in some of my other works. However, such perspectives require a foundational text corpus, which is precisely what the book *Lemko Literature* and its updated English version, *Treading Paths*, provide. I intend to present Lemko interwar and contemporary literature in a similar manner. This will

make the developmental line of this literature—closely tied to the community’s experiences and challenges at various times—even more evident.

Following your reviews, I will certainly reflect on the issues you raise, as I still plan two additional volumes dedicated to Lemko literature. I hope that your highly appreciated interpretations of my book will enrich my work with the critical perspectives of its readers, revealing how Lemko literature appears to them in the form I have presented it—and how it might appear when viewed through your research perspectives and experiences.