Maps of Memory

Trauma, Identity and Exile in Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States

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Violeta Davoliūtė

'Ve Are All Deportees':
The Trauma of Displacement and the Consolidation of National Identity during the Popular Movement in Lithuania

'We were deported not only from our homeland but from our language, customs, religion, respect for ourselves and our earth.'

– Vytautas Landsbergis, 1990

The popular movements that emerged throughout Central and Eastern Europe during the late 1980s continue to fascinate and perplex. It was an era of iconoclasm, marked by massive rallies, the burning of flags and the toppling of statues, broadcast to the astonishment of the entire world. And behind these sensational images, political transformation was driven by a deeper cultural process that scholars describe as the 'return of memory', manifest in the lifting of censorship, the opening of sealed archives, and the telling of traumatic life-stories long suppressed.

Alfred Senn's first-hand account of the period singles out the publication of Dalia Ginkviličiūtė's memoirs in 1987 as an event that 'shocked the reading public and immediately took an important place in the collective memory of Lithuanians as an oppressed nation.' Dovilė Budrytė writes that the 'political thaw... instantly awakened memories of the displacement' and highlights the role of ceremonies commemorating the mass deportations. According to Tomas Venclova, the return of memory 'brushed aside all social and individual distinctions and ensured a dramatic national consolidation that led Lithuania into independent existence.'

The idea that the return of deportee memory contributed to the consolidation of national identity is now taken for granted, a standard paragraph in school history books, but the actual process by which this took place has not been closely researched. This chapter takes a closer look at when and how the memoirs of individual deportees were published and received by the community, analyzes the presentation and interpretation of the deportee texts, and seeks to demonstrate how they were assimilated into a discourse of trauma based on a myth of universal deportation; i.e., the notion that all Lithuanians were deported in one way or another, and that they were deported not only from their homeland but also from their language, their culture and deracinated from the land.

The enduring significance of Grinkevičiūtė's work is confirmed by the large number of academic studies devoted to her testimony produced over the last decade, including a number of contributions to this volume. But while these have been large enough to provide original interpretations of the text, demonstrating the depth and range of potential readings, this chapter will seek to reconstruct the interpretations that were actually made of it by readers and critics in real time during the popular movement against Soviet rule. In this respect, Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs played an operative role in the return of deportee memory because they were the first to be published, causing a sensation which established the pattern for the reception of other deportee memoirs and the social construction of deportee memory in Lithuania.

In particular, I argue that the shape of this memory during the critical years of 1988–1991 derived not only from the texts written by the deportees themselves, but also and more directly from the meta-narratives about the deportations crafted by leading members of the Lithuanian Writers Union. The pattern for the interaction between the deportees and the professional writers as agents of memory was established by the personal encounter of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (1927–1987) with Justinas Marcinkevičius (1930–2011), a poet and writer widely considered the most popular and influential representative of the Soviet Lithuanian creative intelligentsia. Marcinkevičius helped to publish the text in the official press, thereby introducing it to a wide readership, while promoting and framing its reception through his own analysis and commentary.

By weaving the deportee narratives into the background discourse of trauma and loss that was already strongly encoded in Soviet Lithuanian culture, the Soviet Lithuanian intelligentsia established a parallel between the trauma of deportation and the trauma of the various forms of physical and cultural displacements that characterized Soviet modernity in Lithuania: from collectivization to industrialization and from urbanization to Russification.

The notion that Lithuanians were all deportees, deported from their land, language and culture – a myth of ‘universal’ deportation – came to be accepted as a self-evident basis for collective identification and political action. The social transformation and sense of solidarity that brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets was powerfully reinforced by mass rituals of return (sugrišimas) and reburial of deportees who perished in the camps. The myth of universal deportation and the discourse of cultural genocide were key to transcending the social divisions of Soviet Lithuanian society and to welding the people together in the heat of the popular movement, but only for a short time. The slow unravelling of the myth in the post-Soviet era is gradually creating space for a more objective approach to the social history of Soviet Lithuania, a more comprehensive appreciation for the real experience of deportation in all of its diversity and force.

The Return of Memory and Role of Testimony

Milan Kundera's aphorism that the 'struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting' came to life throughout the Soviet bloc in the late eighties as previously suppressed materials about the past were published in large circulation newspapers, pamphlets and books. In Lithuania the lifting of censorship and the first open criticism of official history unleashed an enormous wave of interest in documentary materials about the past (i.e., 'authentic' materials that were not tainted by Soviet ideology or censorship), especially concerning Lithuania's incorporation into the USSR, the post-war resistance and the deportations.
Starting in 1987, Lithuanians began to queue early in the morning to buy the latest issue of *Komjaunimo tiesa*, the leading reformist newspaper that printed a lot of materials on history, and reached a phenomenal daily circulation of a half million issues in 1988.\(^9\) History books and memoirs published at the time had circulations of 50,000 - 75,000.

with the more popular reaching 100,000. For example, 90,000 copies of the memoirs of Juozas Urbys, *Lithuania During the Fateful Years 1939-1940*, were published in 1989, followed by serial publication in the journal *Nemunas*. Alfred Šapoka’s *History of Lithuania*, written in the interwar period, was first serialized in *Kultūros Banai* and then printed in book form with a circulation of 100,000.\(^10\)

The memoirs of deportees played a critical role in fulfilling this need for 'documentary' materials about the past. For example, the memoirs of Valentinas Gustaitis *Be kalities*, sold out almost immediately upon publication in 1989 with a print-run of 100,000 copies. However, the return of deportee memory cannot be measured by the number of copies of books put into circulation; it needs to be understood in terms of how these texts were received by Lithuanian readers within the cultural codes of the time. Studies of textual reception start from the assumption that textuality is not fixed at a single moment in time, and that the ontology of the text is historically dynamic. The meaning of a text does not inhere in itself alone, but comes to life through its interaction with the background of knowledge, experience, and the other texts, the culturally specific intertext that the reader brings to the act of interpretation.\(^6\) As a result, the text of testimony needs to be understood as a process where the reader assumes an active role in the completion of the text's meaning. Reception theory is of particular importance to the interpretation of testimonies to historical trauma and political violence, where the author's intention to intervene in history and to see justice done is so strongly marked. In the highly contested environment in which such testimonies are made, there is often a political struggle to determine their meaning, raising important questions about the gathering, editing, framing and delivery of testimony, i.e., parties in addition to the writer and reader.

The conventions of genre are also critical to framing the reception of a text, and the analysis of this chapter draws on the insights of three major theories of testimony that have elaborated the mechanisms by which the experience of an individual becomes appropriated by a collective as part of the shared, public memory. The first and probably best known is the

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\(^10\) L. Truska, *Origins of the Lithuanian Reform Movement* (*Sigutis*), in *The Sources of the Recent Research* (Vilnius: Vilnius Pedagogical University, 2006), pp. 158. By way of comparison, the average history book published during the late Soviet period before *Sigutis* would have a circulation of about 50 thousand copies, while history books published in the post-Soviet period rarely surpass 50 thousand copies and are more printed in runs of one or two thousand.
trauma theory of testimony as applied to the memoirs of Holocaust survivors. The second is the theory of Latin American testimonio, and the third is the modern hermeneutical theory of religious testimony as developed by Paul Ricoeur. Taken together, these three schools of criticism offer considerable insights that can help to develop a framework for the understanding of the return of deportee memory as a part of the communicative cycle of testimony.1

For trauma theory, the truth of the historical event is internalized as the experience of trauma, and it is to this trauma that the witness testifies. The word ‘trauma’ means ‘wound’ in ancient Greek, and originally it referred to a physical injury inflicted on the body. In medical and psychiatric literature it came to be understood as an injury inflicted upon the psyche, and refers not just to the original injury, but to its after-effects. Trauma is now understood in the clinical context as a delayed response to an overwhelming event, a response which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams and particular patterns of behaviour stemming from the event.

In their highly influential application of trauma theory to Holocaust testimony, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub emphasize that the experience of trauma is represented through indirect, non-referential means, and that this mode of communication entails a special mode of reception, which they call ‘sympathetic listening’. Because Holocaust survivors are often unable to tell their story in a coherent narrative, the listener is required to look ‘behind’ what is being said to understand the original trauma.2

The understanding of trauma as a mode of communication, as the transmission of an experience that is prior to thought and language, is fundamental to this approach to testimony, where the notion of ‘secondary witnessing’ takes on a key role in the receiving and passing on the message that inheres in the original event to an increasingly broad circle of witnesses. For Cathy Caruth, trauma is transmitted from speaker to listener, and from that listener/speaker to another listener as a sort of ‘contagion’. Projecting the model of traumatic communication from the clinical to the cultural sphere, she suggests that testimony can play a role in post-conflict situations in reconciling individuals and communities that have been alienated from one another: ‘This speaking and this listening do not rely on what we simply know of each other, but on what we don’t yet know of our traumatic pasts’.3

The ‘contagious’ nature of trauma and the idea of secondary witnessing has led theorists to underscore the universal or at least transnational nature of Holocaust memory. Caruth posits the experience of historical trauma, or ‘history as Holocaust’, as an existential common denominator among all peoples living in the post-war era, and proposes ‘sympathetic listening’ as the new ‘lingua franca’ among peoples. Living as we do in a ‘catastrophic age’, she suggests that ‘trauma may itself provide the very link between cultures’. And while the universalist ambitions of trauma theory have been subject to frequent criticism, the broad acceptance of Holocaust remembrance as a universal obligation in Europe and North America speaks for itself.

Meanwhile, theorists of Latin American testimonio have by and large rejected the universalist pretensions of trauma theory, which they describe as rooted in the culture of the metropolis and having little to do with the political realities in the periphery.4 Emphasizing the cultural specificity of every historical trauma, they nonetheless place a strong emphasis on the collective nature of the testimonial enterprise. Indeed, Latin American testimonio is rarely the product of a single author, but the result of a creative partnership of an editor, who assumes the role of a maestros or midwife of meaning, with a member of the subaltern community, i.e., the indigenous victim of压迫 who does not speak the language of the coloniser and urban society, to produce a written text.5

In this manner, testimonio not only occasions the transformation of the former object of oppression into the subject of a narrative of liberation, but it transforms the very nature of the subject from individual to collective: ‘...the protagonist who gives testimonio is a speaker who does not conceive of him/herself as extraordinary, but instead as an allegory of the many, the people’. Collective traditions and memories are valorized and offered as a resource for transformative politics: testimonial writing also emphasizes a rereading of culture as lived history and a profession of faith in the struggles of the oppressed’.6


3 Cathy Caruth, Trauma: Explorations in Memory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996), p. 11, 156.


The idea of testimony as implying the intention of the author to bring about a political or ethical transformation of the reader is developed most fully in Paul Ricoeur's theory of religious testimony, which serves as a useful reminder of the ancient provenance of many notions advanced in the theories of trauma and testimonio. For example, the idea of secondary witnessing is central in the Christian tradition, where the witness attests not only to events seen but also to beliefs held, as in the saying, 'we bear witness to the faith'. Moreover, the word for martyr, a person who 'voluntarily undergoes the penalty of death for refusing to renounce the Christian faith' (OED), derives from the ancient Greek word for witness — 

Moreover, the concept of collective transformation at the heart of testimonio echoes ancient conceptions that link the revelation delivered by testimony to the notion of the apocalypse — a catastrophe which occurs within history, but which transcends history by bringing one era to a close and inaugurating the new. As with trauma theory, the fact that one 'witnesses' not just events but other people's testimony to events means that witnessing and testimony are points in a cycle of communication, conceived as the transmission of knowledge, experience, or revelation. For Christians, the text of Scripture is 'produced' as testimony and 'received' as revelation by the reader, who as a believer goes on to live the revealed truth as testimony, for others to witness and believe, building the community of faith.

The Emergence of Testimony

The practical thrust of these three theories of testimony is to decenter traditional notions of authorship and text, pointing to the range of additional factors that make up the social significance of testimony as a process: the practice of multiple authorship, the distinction of the physical text and the 'text' of testimony, the modalities of transmission and the transformation of identity as an inherent part of the act of reading and writing, of listening and speaking. Indeed, a close examination of the emergence of Grinkevičiūtė's testimony into the public sphere of late Soviet Lithuania shows the limits of the traditional, linear model of communication from the author to the reader through the transparent medium of the text.

Quite apart from these considerations, a preliminary care needs to be taken when considering which text to analyze, in view of this chapter's aim of discerning the actual, historically operative interpretations of the testimas opposed to its potential meanings. Grinkevičiūtė wrote the first version of her memoirs in 1949–1950, after she had escaped to Lithuania from the Gulag with her sick mother. She was arrested in 1950 and sent back into exile, but not before she buried the manuscript of her first memoirs in the yard of their house. This version of her text was discovered only in 1991, the year Lithuania regained its independence and several years after Grinkevičiūtė's death in December 1987. While the discovery of this text serves as a moving metaphor of the return of deported memory, Sąsiūnaitė had already achieved its chief political aim, and the peak of interest in the deportation had passed. For all of its inherent value, Grinkevičiūtė's childhood memoir played no significant role in the popular movement against Soviet rule, if only because it appeared too late.

After Grinkevičiūtė finally returned to Lithuania in 1956, she was unable to find the text she buried in 1950, and so she wrote a second version. This text, written in Russian and entitled 'Litovskie sylsye v Yakutii' ('Lithuanian Exiles in Yakutsk'), was published in 1979 by the underground Moscow-based journal Pamiat'. It was circulated through samizdat, and underwent continual mutation as it was manually copied and recopied. It was eventually smuggled abroad and published in French and English. However, within Soviet Lithuania, this text was read by a very small number of people and had a negligible social impact.

Some time in the early eighties, Grinkevičiūtė rewrote the 1979 version into Lithuanian. Her roommate and friend, Aldona Šulskytė, a Russian language teacher and a member of a repressed family herself, assisted in the writing process, not only in terms of editing and recopying but also carrying the manuscript on her person or hiding it at times when Grinkevičiūtė was being interrogated or when the apartment was searched by the police. Grinkevičiūtė called this last text the basic or fundamental version of her testimony. It was this version of her memoirs that would emerge into open discourse and exercise such a powerful effect on Soviet Lithuanian society.

Unlike the other versions of her testimony, none of which has a title, this last manuscript has what appears to be the beginning of a title. The word 'Our' is followed by ten dots, suggesting that she may have intended to call it Mūsų mažoji žemė ('Our Small Land'), as an ironic reference to the title of Leonid Brezhnev's memoirs Nasha malaya zemlya. But while the reference to Brezhnev is speculative, the epigraph just below the title: 'Their Innocence Was Their Guilt,' was taken from the poem "Blood and Ashes" by Justinas Marcinkevičius.
Like most Lithuanians living in the USSR at the time, Grinkevičiūtė was a great admirer of his work, especially Mindaugas, Matydas, and Katedra, the trilogy of historical dramas that had gained the status of a national epic, and given him the status of the national bard. She had never met him before but trusted him implicitly, hoping that he would help bring her own writing to Lithuanians. By the same token, the gap between the two in terms of social standing was immense, and so Grinkevičiūtė had prepared a special pretext to justify a meeting. She called him several times, proposing to give him some precious artefacts of Bishop Motiejus Valančius, one of the leaders of the first Lithuanian national awakening of the late nineteenth century.

This ruse was necessary because Grinkevičiūtė’s status as a dissident and a former deportee meant that she still lived on the margins of society. And even though the deportees would soon be elevated to the status of national heroes themselves, the largest part of the establishment intelligentsia continued to look upon them and upon dissidents with considerable irony and even derision. Gender and professional status also raised barriers in what was still a highly parochial society. The great prestige accorded to professional writers in Soviet Lithuania had a negative side in the derision shown to amateur writers who were not part of the club and jeered as ‘graphomanics’. Amateur female writers were the subject of special scorn, and were most often referred to as ‘scribbling women’. 

Nevertheless, by 16 July 1987, Grinkevičiūtė had secured her appointment and travelled from the small provincial town where she resided to Vilnius. She died shortly thereafter, in December 1987, just a few months before the first instalment of her memoirs was published in the August 1988 issue of the monthly journal Pergalė.

Her testimony had a strong impact on the reading public. ‘Until now we have read nothing so horrifying on this subject’, stated writer Vytautas Martinkus. Saulius Žukas described the text as the source of the ‘moral rejuvenation’ of the Lithuanian nation. Professional writers like Juozas Apučis called on their peers to ‘put down their pen’ and ‘give their place to deportee literature and memoirs’.

However, the mass publication of other deportee memoirs that came in 1989 did not dislodge the professional writers from their positions of social influence. In fact, the encounter of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė and Justinas Marcinkevičius shows how the social and moral role of the Soviet-Lithuanian writers was only enhanced by the free publication of formerly repressed works. Drawing an analogy with the history of testimonio, the transmission of memory from Grinkevičiūtė through Marcinkevičius to the Lithuanian nation recalls the autochthonous tradition of the Maya-Quiche peoples, in which a dying person recounts his or her life and advises a relative or friend on how to resist the imposed culture of the colonizer.

Marcinkevičius received the testimony of a critically ill deportee who died shortly after their meeting. By entrusting her manuscript to Marcinkevičius, Grinkevičiūtė secured the transmission of her memory to the Lithuanian nation and symbolically bridged the gap between those who cooperated with the regime and those who were brutally repressed. ‘I know that you will understand me,’ read a little note attached to the notebook which Marcinkevičius took into his hands. This exchange enacted the testimonial process by which the individual ceases to exist in order to give birth to the collective through discursive self-representation.

Moreover, in a manner that recalls the testimonio relationship between the autochthonous subaltern who tells a tale of oppression and the Spanish-speaking editor who serves as the translator and midwife of its meaning, the Soviet Lithuanian reading public was first exposed to Grinkevičiūtė’s memoirs in the form of an article written by Marcinkevičius about his encounter with her and about his own experience of reading her text. Although glansiatu was gaining speed, deportee memoirs were still
Having established his own personal connection to the deportation, Marcinkevičius proceeds to widen the scope of the represented experience from the individual to the collective. The figure of the teacher, the carrier of national knowledge, language and traditions to the next generation, is amplified when the narrative returns to the present, and is invested in Grinkevičiūtė: 'and in front of me there sat a woman whose father was the teacher of a Kaunas gymnasium'. The murder of Grinkevičiūtė's father is given a collective significance because of his status of a teacher. With the same motion, her text is presented as a testament to the timeless suffering of the nation.

Marcinkevičius then alludes to the anecdotes that used to circulate about how some deportees did quite well for themselves in Siberia as farmers and had to be forced to return to Lithuania, an ironic and repeated 'dekulakization'. By contextualizing the reception of Grinkevičiūtė's testimony against the background of social stereotypes, the article preemptively addresses potential sources of scepticism, before asking how such an injustice could have been allowed to happen, and by extension how it could be allowed to pass without remorse or repentance, thus turning the ethical gaze squarely on contemporary Lithuanian society.

The text then turns to the testimony itself, reproducing the following fragment from Grinkevičiūtė's manuscript that represents the experience of displacement as a defining aspect of Lithuanian identity:

Trotskius Island now is empty and uninhabited again. During storms the waves of the Laptev Sea with enormous force are beating against its shore and are persistently destroying it. When in 1949 the last deportees were transported for fishing to other places the waves already started destroying the end of the joint grave and it started disintegrating. There is no doubt that all the corpses are long ago already washed away. In what seas and oceans are they still travelling and searching for the path to their far away homeland?

He closes by articulating a path for social redemption. Although society has up to now neglected the memory of the deportees, and did not do enough to make amends to the survivors, Lithuanians could now, at least 'take in their souls, which is their memory'. As a postscript he calls for the construction of a monument to the victims of Stalinism. By recounting the steps of his own coming to terms with the person of Grinkevičiūtė and with her testimony, Marcinkevičius set the pattern for the popular reception of her work, and launched the process of appropriating deportee memory for the collective.
The Tragic Symmetry of Two Lives

The political significance and consequences of Grinkevičiūtė’s decision to approach Marcinkievicius to assist with the publication of her work becomes apparent in the context of the social history of postwar Lithuania. The tragic symmetry of their two life stories dramatically illustrates the deep social divide between the deportees and mainstream Soviet Lithuanian society. The two were born less than three years apart and belonged to the same generation, but their social origins were starkly different. She was born in Kaunas, the provisional capital city, into the intelligentsia family of a high government official. She went to one of the best schools in the country, the Aušra girl’s gymnasium, where her father taught mathematics and physics. The household was cultured, and Dalia was constantly exposed to music, books and the theatre. Marcinkievicius, on the other hand, was born to a poor farmer in a small village, and the Bible was practically the only book to which he was exposed in his early childhood.

The arrival of Soviet power would change their fate irrevocably. Grinkevičiūtė lost everything, and was sent as a child to probable death. Marcinkievicius witnessed the trauma of war and the brutal guerrilla struggle in the countryside. But with the help of good grades in school and Soviet educational policies that promoted the entry of workers and poor farmers to institutions of higher education, he was able to enter Vilnius University and study literature. In 1949, the year when Grinkevičiūtė escaped from the Gulag and was hiding in Kaunas, forced secretly to dig the earth with her own hands to bury her mother in the basement of their former family home, Marcinkievicius and his cohort were living a reality beyond his most daring dreams.

Algimantas Baltakis, a classmate of Marcinkievicius at Vilnius University, describes their feelings at the time as follows: “We were young, we were happy that the war was over, that we could go to university. We bought hats, we rubbed our cloth shoes with chalk until they were shining white, and walked up and down the streets singing Lithuanian folk songs. Some Poles passed by us on the street and I heard them whisper: ‘Lituvių spijūnas, the Lithuanians are singing’.34

Marcinkievicius also recalls the joyful mood in 1949, at the very peak of Stalinism, the same singing on the streets, though he notes that it was a feeling of exhilaration mixed with terror, a kind of historical sublime that swept them along:

When I think about it, I cannot understand or explain why we were singing so much. But we were... Perhaps it had to do with sense of relief that we had escaped from the village, and that we were in Vilnius. That Vilnius was ours, and that it was Lithuanian... We gave to Stalin what was Stalin's and took for ourselves what was ours. People would disappear. I was in a choir, and one day two boys simply didn't show up. Nobody asked any questions, where they were, whether they were sick... 35

When Stalin died in 1953, Marcinkievicius and his cohort were graduating from university and taking up jobs. They came to be called the Generation of 1930 and were seen as a lucky cohort of charmed youth. Having largely escaped the violence of war, they came of age just as the postwar reconstruction created opportunities for upward social mobility. They quickly assumed leading positions as members of the new Soviet Lithuanian cultural elite, and came to be revered as popular and respected writers, leaders of the controlled cultural renaissance made possible by the Soviet state's extremely generous, though politically instrumental, patronage of the arts.

Meanwhile, Grinkevičiūtė was released from prison after Stalin's death but still forbidden to travel west of the Ural Mountains. In 1954 she started her medical education in Omsk, and after Khrushchev's amnesty of 1956 was finally allowed to return to Lithuania. She obtained a medical degree from Kaunas University in 1960 and took up a job in the hospital of the small provincial townlet of Laukuva. Grinkevičiūtė was bitter but not broken by the experience of exile and was outspoken in her criticism of the regime. She became an active participant in the Soviet dissident movement, which meant that she was subject to regular police surveillance and harassment by the authorities for the rest of her life, which ended shortly after she entrusted her testimony into his hands. The tragic symmetry between the life stories of Grinkevičiūtė and Marcinkievicius – two lives in which everything was opposite except for the common experience of displacement – provides a dramatic illustration of the deep divide in Soviet Lithuanian society between the few who suffered direct repression and the many who one way or another accommodated themselves to Soviet rule.

34 Interview with the author, conducted in September, 2010.

35 Interview with the author, conducted in January, 2010.
Displacement and the Two Nations of Soviet Lithuania

Peter Gatrell has done much to disclose the critical role of displacement in the shaping of individual and collective identities in Eastern Europe. Jan Gross was another to argue that the mass killing and displacement that took place during WWII under the successive Nazi and Soviet regimes had a cumulative effect on the societies of East Central Europe. With specific reference to the Baltic States, Gatrell argued that the pronounced local preoccupations with deportations should be expanded to include other forms of displacement to produce a more comprehensive narrative of the contemporary history of the region.

Indeed, the need to historicize the commonplace distinction between 'free' and 'forced' migration seems particularly apt in the case of the Soviet Union, where one or another form of compulsory displacement was common even after the end of the mass deportations. While approximately one in twenty Lithuanians were deported, the vast majority were displaced in other ways.

To begin with, since about 85 per cent of the population in 1945 lived in the countryside, collectivization clearly affected the bulk of the population through displacement, either by relocating them to the kolkhoz or forcing them to migrate to the cities. In subsequent years, the consolidation of rural population into larger settlements (a process known as melioration), military service and other forms of assigned employment, mobilization campaigns to drive the rural population into the cities, or to work for extended periods in the far northern and eastern reaches of the Soviet Union, were all life-changing events that served to define the Soviet experience for the majority of Lithuanians.

In Soviet Lithuania, urbanization after WWII proceeded at a rate unmatched anywhere in the USSR aside from Moldova and Belarus. In quantitative terms, the exodus of Lithuanians from the country to the city far exceeds any estimate of the numbers of those deported to the Gulag or exiled to the West. By one count, over 700,000 Lithuanians picked up and left their homesteads and small villages between 1951 and 1976 to resettle in towns and cities. The overall level of urbanization in Lithuania grew from an all-time low of 15 per cent in 1945 (down from the 23 per cent before the outbreak of hostilities) to reach 50 per cent in 1970 and a peak of 68.1 per cent in 1989. From 1949 to 1965, urbanization affected the lives of some 105 to 115 thousand individuals per year. The net migration to Lithuania from other parts of the USSR between 1959 and 1979 was only 115,000 persons, or 16.8 per cent of the overall population increase.

This speed of urbanization in Lithuania knows no parallel in Western Europe. Soviet urbanization processes were on the whole much more rapid than in the West, reflecting the brutality of forced modernization, particularly under Stalin. Russia, for example, went from 13 per cent urbanization just before WWI to about 70 per cent in 1989. In Lithuania, the same transformation occurred in just half the time. The process caused an enormous, traumatic level of social dislocation, but for many thousands of young Lithuanians, the opportunity to move to the city was also an unprecedented opportunity for upward social mobility.

The question of accommodation is a highly contested issue among experts and for a long time was virtually a taboo for the broader public. Indeed, the universality of the armed resistance has been reinforced as a key element of Lithuanian national identity since the popular movement. In 1999, the Lithuanian parliament recognized a document issued by the leaders of the resistance movement in 1949, the Declaration of the Council of the Movement of the Struggle for Freedom of Lithuania, as a legal act of the State of Lithuania, proof of its continuity on the grounds that a universal, organized, and armed resistance was active in Lithuania from 1944–1953.

However, 1949 probably marked the turning point after which Soviet power in Lithuania was consolidated. Collectivization, which stood at just 4% at the beginning of 1949, went up to 60% by the end of the year. After 1949, the armed resistance was hardly universal and organized, but increasingly desperate, disintegrating and doomed. As the Soviets consolidated power, the partisans resorted increasingly to violent retribution.
and even terror against the rural population. As more and more Lithuanians came to accept the inevitability of Soviet rule, the violent reprisals of the guerrillas were less and less seen as acts of legitimate resistance.

As argued by Aleksandras Štromas, a noted Lithuanian émigré political scientist, the post-war resistance should be viewed not simply as a liberation movement, but as a civil war, and not only because some Lithuanians took the Soviet side for ideological reasons, but because it involved the clash of ‘two forms of Lithuanian political consciousness’, i.e., those who decided to resist at all costs, and those who sought to preserve what they could in the face of an unavoidable fate. Indeed, by 1949, most Lithuanians had come to accept Soviet power as a given, and they sought above all to just get on with their lives.

Štromas notes that even during the Stalinist period, the regime was able to co-opt what he calls ‘a certain segment of Lithuanian society’:

There was, however, a certain segment of Lithuanian society, especially among the youth, who went over to the Soviets with completely sincere motives. Some of them, especially among the lower classes (mostly, but not exclusively young people), were offered by the Soviet regime opportunities for higher education, active participation in the life of society, and a more significant role in society – in other words, they were given a chance for upward mobility that they had not even dreamed of in the traditional Lithuanian social structure.

Štromas is highly critical of this layer of society, which he describes as completely compromised by its dependence on the regime. ‘By recruiting a fraction of the lowest classes in the population to form the new establishment – a “practitioner guard” fully devoted to the regime and easily manipulated by it’.

However, the process of accommodation cannot be reduced to the calculation and manipulation of interests. The notion of interest need not be jettisoned, but it must be recognized that accommodation to Soviet rule was driven by the widespread transformation of individual and social identities during a historical period of unprecedented displacement and change. The recollections of those who lived through these times frequently invoke the terror and thrill of the sublime transformation of the self in the fact of overwhelming historical forces. Marcelijus Martinaitis, a popular poet and writer who was just a few years younger than Marcinkевичius and who was associated with the ‘non-conformist’ group of intellectuals, describes the ambiguous and tortuous process by which he gradually became accommodated to Soviet life, admitting that he was indeed the product of the system in spite of his consistent efforts to remain separate from it:

I could even put it this way: that horrible, repressive regime took me where I would not have gone myself... Sometimes, jokingly or after a drink, we would repeat the prayer: I thank Soviet power for providing me, a son (daughter) of a peasant with little land, with food and clothes, for opening paths to education and a bright future.

Despite the irony of the ‘prayer’, the fact is that Martinaitis, Marcinkевичius, and the bulk of the intellectual class formed during the afterwar period really were drawn from the sons and daughters of peasants with little land. They were created as a class by the system and its incentives, by the displacement from the country to the city, and their integration into a new way of life.

Meanwhile, just as the deportees were created and defined as persecuted group by being subjected to forced displacement, their subsequent identity and place in society was shaped by their experience of return. During the five year period after Stalin’s death, about four million prisoners were released from the Gulag, shrinking the imprisoned population throughout the USSR by five times. The problem of social reintegration for so large a population was felt throughout the USSR, as local communities generally treated the Gulag returnees as criminals and pariahs, devising a multitude of measures to ensure their continued marginalization, in spite of directives from Moscow stating that they were to be given housing and employment within two weeks of their return.

Former deportees started to return to Lithuania in 1956, with the initial release of about 17,000 people. These numbers would grow starting in 1958 to reach 80,000 by 1970. The communist Lithuanian leadership and the local security services were strongly against Khrushchev’s decision to amnesty and to allow the return. The First Secretary of the LCP Antanas Sniečkus was livid at what he described as the careless experimentation of Khrushchev. A declassified report of the local KGB made...
it clear that the deportees were 'erroneously and prematurely released from incarceration.' The security services believed they 'had not renounced their hostile views of Soviet power' and 'exerted negative influence on unstable segments of the population,' and who would resume 'their efforts to form an anti-Soviet nationalist underground.'

As a result, the returnees were subject to continuing surveillance; they were allowed to travel abroad only in exceptional cases, and their movements within the LSSR were often watched. If there was any suspicion of involvement in subversive activities, the deportee was often subjected to public denunciation and compromise in the local press, reinforcing their exclusion from society.

It should be emphasized that the exclusion faced by returnees was very much a Lithuanian affair; not only or even primarily imposed from above. This reflected the radically altered values and historical perspective of Lithuanian society subject to decades of Soviet-style reconstruction and development. When the deportees began to come back after the death of Stalin, the communities to which they returned were not the same as before. Already in 1946, Algimantas Indriūnas, who returned illegally to Lithuania even before the death of Stalin, wrote: 'Having returned to Lithuania I felt that here life moved a couple decades ahead but I not only did not stay in the same spot but moved some decades back.' Indeed, both groups had undergone a profound transformation, and there were now clearly two nations of Soviet Lithuania, both shaped by displacement.

Those who returned in the fifties or later felt the schism in even stronger terms. The deportees were met with broad suspicion and were generally looked upon by the regional authorities, labour unions and most members of society as a source of unnecessary trouble. People were afraid that they would lay claims to their former property, and that they would disrupt their lives and the new stability that had recently been established. Some deportees who did not have relatives to support them and who could not find employment were left in a dire condition. For example, Kazys Saja tells about his personal encounter with a woman deportee who was terminally ill and left to fend for herself. Aside from offering her some money for immediate sustenance, he said there was nothing that he could do to help her. There was also widespread suspicion of the criminal ways that the deportees had allegedly adopted during their incarceration; they were seen as no better than the criminals whose company they had kept.

The stigma of criminality extended to the deportees, and even to their children. Joanna Jaktaitė-Kurmelavičienė, who was deported with her family and returned in 1958, recalls how many parents would complain at meetings that the school 'took in all sorts of bandits, and now they will harm our children.' Algirdas Janulevičius describes how the propiska system of registering one's place of registration was abused to keep returnees marginalized: 'I could not register for half a year. I did not register because I was not employed. Nobody wanted to employ a deportee because he is not registered. (...) We were lepers although we were not told so directly.' Some were forced to move or were recruited to work outside of the LSSR, like the family of Birute Mickevičaitë-Biliūkaitė, deported in 1947 as a teenager. After an unsuccessful attempt to integrate in Lithuania after her return in 1952, she had to settle with her family in Kaliningrad.

Indeed, a report of a commission sent by the USSR Council of Ministers to investigate the integration of returnees took note of the extent to which Lithuanian municipalities created artificial administrative barriers to the reintegration of Gulag returnees. Similar measures were noted in Gorky, Baku and Yerevan, but the Lithuanian municipalities were singled out for the range of measures they deployed. Duplicating the function of the existing police passport bureau, special municipal commissions were created to review requests for registration; the minimum 'sanitary norm,' or minimal living space per person, was arbitrarily raised, and returnees were issued only temporary registration instead of permanent cards that were necessary to secure employment, etc.

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48 Interview with Kazys Saja, November 2012.

Paradoxically, the incredible receptivity of Lithuanians to the testimony of deportees during the popular movement seems to have erased the memory of their indifference and even hostility that was shown to them throughout the Soviet period. Sulsłyte emphasizes that Grinkevičiūtė's travails did not end with her return from exile. Indeed, she was persecuted in her homeland for her determination to testify openly of her experience and speak out against the regime. She lost her job, was accused of forging her credentials, loitering, and was slandered in newspaper articles. Sulsłyte describes the collective outpouring of sympathy for Grinkevičiūtė after her death with irony: 'Now all of Lithuania is writing and talking about poor Dalyte. Finally people understand. When America and Europe went eleven years ago [over the publication of her late testimony abroad], Dalytė herself was being kicked around and tortured in her native land... Now, Lithuania is shocked.'

The Authority of the Author

In the Soviet context, Foucault's insight that discourse is power and discourse is power is discourse seemed too obvious to be of any analytical value. In the ideal form of totalitarianism, knowledge, discourse and power are held to be virtually identical. Only that which was permitted was written, and everything that was written carried the authority of truth. And with the advent of the popular movement, the disintegration of totalitarianism implied a revolutionary hiatus where power and discourse were somehow separate, a time when speech was free not only from the blatant censorship of the authorities, but from the pervasive power that inheres in and shapes human interaction.

But like the 'return of memory,' the 'power of the powerless' is a myth that reflected the revolutionary, utopian mindset of the late eighties. In reality, power never left the stage. With the collapse of the regime's legitimacy, real power came to be accumulated in the establishment intelligentsia of Soviet Lithuania – especially the leading members of the Writers Union, whose status as the voice of the oppressed nation had been developing gradually since the mid-sixties. At that time, when Khrushchev pushed forward with the meiorisation of the countryside throughout the Baltics, the discourse of traumatic lamento over the separation from the

land was rapidly gaining ground. By the early 1980s, well before the onset of glasnost, this discourse of physical and cultural displacement, expressed most strongly in literature, had sensitized Lithuanians to the trauma of uprooting as a basic condition of Soviet modernity, priming them for a ready identification with fate of the deportees.

Marcinkovičius was by far the most prominent of writers who gave expression to this cultural mode. Poems like Blood and Ashes, the trilogy called 1946, which portrays the trauma of the youth who witnessed the postwar upheavals without becoming their direct victim, as well as other more nationally-minded literary works, were more than just popular and memorized by schoolchildren, but enjoyed a truly cult status. These works influenced other artists (like Gedas, Aputis, Martinaitys, Kutavičius, Graunas and others) who worked with the same motifs in literature, music and the visual arts.

In 1986, Romualdas Graunas wrote The Homestead Under the Maple Tree, perhaps the culminating work of the discourse of traumatic uprooting. Serialized in Pergalė two years before the publication of Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs, it evoked the same existential concern with questions of ethics and repentance, collective identity and ecology that was erupting throughout Soviet literature at the time, such as Chingiz Aitmatov's Plakha (The Executioner's Bloc) published in Novy Mir that same year. It also echoes the classics of Russian village prose like Rasputin's Farewell to Matyona or Solzhenitsyn's Matryona's House by portraying an old woman, the last resident of an abandoned village, as the sole survivor of a vanished world, with a deep sense of attachment to the land, an idealized ethical commitment to communal relations, and centuries-old traditions in the context of social destruction and degradation.

But as distinct from the literature of the sixties and seventies, Graunas crossed the line towards open social and political critique, focused on the tragedy of collectivization, of urbanization, and what was called the 'melioration' or consolidation of agricultural settlements in the late 1970s, which dealt the final blow to the last remaining traditional villages.

We have seen many wars and upheavals, fires, floods and plagues. Our lives and destinies are in flux, but one thing never changes. Come what may, your patch of land will not burn. It cannot be arrested or deported, or blown to pieces. Come what may, you can rest upon its surface. It may be small and inferior, but still you wrap your arms around your children, pressing their small heads to your chest, and calmly watch how the world is thundering and trembling all around you.'

Granauskas wrote the book over the course of a month, almost in a single draft. Somewhat raw as a literary text, it was highly effective in capturing and transmitting the cultural mood of the time. The apocalyptic sensibility of this work, together with an autochthonous sense of national identity based on a post-traumatic attachment to and identification with the land, became a core element of Lithuanian cultural and political discourse in the late 1980s. Arvydas Juozaitis, one of the founding members of the popular movement, told Granauskas that he wrote the speech for the founding session of Sąjūdis 'in a single breath,' the moment he had finished reading the Homsedt Under the Maple Tree.44

As Gorbachev's policy of glasnost enabled a more open and public discussion of previously forbidden topics, the public role of writers was grew in strength and expanded in scope, encompassing non-literary areas such as environmentalism, social issues and politics through essays, opinion pieces, and public speaking engagements.

Marcinkevičius, Martinauski, Sigitas Geda and many other leading members of the official intelligentsia were active leaders of the popular movement, making key speeches at mass rallies and mobilizing the populace. In late Soviet Lithuanian society, ruled by secretive bureaucrats, the cultural intelligentsia served as a surrogate for public politicians. They alone enjoyed the public visibility and trust that could mobilize the population towards any political goal.

Moreover, the establishment writers were a cohesive group with significant organizational resources. In 1986, the Writers Union had 216 members, of whom 45 per cent (97) were members of the Communist Party of Lithuania.45 The communist party organization of the Writers Union used its authority to hold open meetings which were the vanguard of glasnost in the republic, radically expanding the envelope of acceptable political discussions.

In the political discourse of the time, a threshold was passed on 4 April 1988 at one of the meetings organized in the Palace of Artists (one of the most prestigious buildings in Vilnius, which now serves as the Presidential Palace). The delegates passed a number of resolutions on strengthening the role of Lithuanian and limiting that of Russian in public life and education that would have been unthinkable just a year or two before.46

On 5 May 1988, Alfonas Maldonis, a classmate of Marcinkevičius and Baltakas at Vilnius University in 1949, addressed the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party in his capacity of Writers Union board chairman. Copies of his speech which criticized the falsification of history and Moscow's control over cultural issues in Lithuania were widely circulated in manuscript form, copied by hand and passed around. The popular movement was initiated and driven by many members of the creative and technical intelligentsia, but the leading role of the writers was recognized.

For example, the geographer Česlovas Kudaba (1934-1999), a leading member of Sąjūdis whose own writings on ecology and nature were extremely influential at the time and who would be one of the signatories of the act of independence, asserted that the writers proved to be 'the most courageous and ahead of the rest. We all trusted them.'47

That said, not all agreed with this sentiment. In 1986, Algirdas Patakas, a geologist working for the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, was imprisoned for editing a samizdat journal. He lost his job and upon his release in 1987 he had to work as a labourer, though he soon entered politics as part of Sąjūdis and would later become a signatory of the act of independence. For people like Patakas, who risked his career to engage in active opposition to the Soviet regime, the Soviet Lithuanian writers were seen as conformists: 'Marcinkevičius was never our man. Nobody in my circle either admired or respected him.'48

Vytautas Ališauskas, a Catholic philosopher who also became active in the politics of Sąjūdis, was even more outspoken in his criticism: 'All those lines about goodness, spirituality and nature made my stomach turn,' he recalls, referring to the sublime pastoralism of Marcinkevičius' late poetry. 'The regime was doing what it needed to do, and all that was fully incorporated in it. To use the Soviet expression, it was opium for the masses.'49

For people like Ališauskas or Patakas the true face of moral resistance and authority was not the writer who gave expression to the sorrows of the nation in the Soviet press, but the fighter and martyr

44 Vytautas Rublys (b. 1931) read out a report entitled 'Who Can Revive National Dignity.' The meeting passed resolutions calling for giving Lithuanian the status of an official language.
45 'Pokažis ate Sąjūdis' ([Conversation about Sąjūdis], Akražas, 10 (1988).
who continued to fight. This flank looked for role-models beyond the establishment circle, such as in the tragic but talkative figure of Justinas Mikiūnas (1922–1988), a vagrant, eccentric former deportee who frequented informal soirées in Vilnius, giving impromptu lectures about philosophy, Christianity and art — and who was highly critical of Marcinkevičius.48

However, by entrusting her testimony to Marcinkevičius, Grinkevičiūtė bridged the social divide that separated them and took a step towards the mending of the division between the ‘two nations’ of Soviet Lithuania. Subsequently, Marcinkevičius and other leading members of the Writers Union took it upon themselves to bridge this social gap in discourse. They assumed the role of editors, presenting her memoirs and those of other deportees, representing the process of reception that would be followed by their readers.

Thus, when the deportee memoirs began to be published in 1988, their narratives were read against the background of the pre-existing discourse of traumatic displacement, which had already drawn an explicit equivalence between the minority experience of deportation with the other forms of displacement that were experienced by the many. The very idea of deportation was subject to metaphorical expansion synchronically and diachronically to include all living Lithuanians and Lithuanians throughout history, and not only to individual Lithuanians but to all aspects of Lithuanian identity. Even Lithuanians who emigrated to the West were identified as deportees. For example, in the opening article for the literary ‘Deportee Archive’ in Pergale, Liudvikas Gadeikis encouraged members of the émigré community to contribute their testimonies.49

Viktorija Daugotyvė, one of Lithuania’s leading critics, extends the memory of deportation beyond the beginnings of recorded history. Referring to the work of the historian Antanas Tyča, she says that deportation was ‘the method of our extermination, perhaps, for the past seven and a half thousand years’.50 Approaching the more recent past, she notes that Lithuanians were driven from their homeland during the Crusades, and deported again during the partitions of Poland. Deportation was systematized as a means to defeat the rebellions of 1794, 1830 and especially, 1863, peaking in the unprecedented Soviet deportations 1940–1941 and 1945–1953, with the twenty year period of independence between the wars, and the two hundred years following the Battle of Grunewald as the only moment of reprieve.

And in the trope that was by this time almost a cliché of the discourse of Sąjūdis, Lithuanian culture and identity are seen in the light of deportation: ‘Together with people, many words which were dear to Lithuanians were deported: God, God’s mother, Homeland Lithuania, Cross, Crucifix, prayer, Easter, Christmas, holy hymns were deported’.51 Following Marcinkevičius’ reading of Grinkevičiūtė, Daugotyvė constructs the moment of return as offering the possibility of redemption: ‘The poems of the deportees are approaching us as the ice mountain of pain from the Lapter sea which has not fully emerged yet. Deportee poems are emerging from oblivion and desecration like white bones from the land of eternal frost’.52

Marcinkevičius would continue the process of abstracting the experience of deportation into the more general concept of displacement in the political speeches he made as a leading member of Sąjūdis. For example, at a session of the Supreme Council of the LSSR, he made a call to declare Lithuanian the state language and to restore other key symbols of Lithuanian statehood. Characteristically, the title of the speech references the moment of return from deportation, and the text of his address extends the experience of deportation as aspects of Lithuanian culture and identity: ‘Our language has experienced much abuse, discrimination and injustice, now it is like returning from deportation and is returning to itself what was taken away from her, what belongs to her by the natural and constitutional law’.53

The immersion of Lithuanians in the cultural discourse of displacement was reinforced and channelled into rituals of personal transformation through mass rallies and ceremonies of commemoration. Starting in 1986, Lithuanians took advantage of the lifting of restrictions to visit the distant sites of the Gulag system. Thousands of families organized expeditions to visit the camps where their relatives once lived, and in many cases to recollect the remains of the deceased, for reburial in Lithuanian soil.

51 Ibid., p. 128.
52 Ibid., p. 178.
53 Justinas Marcinkevičius, ‘Tartum gyvenamis ir tremtine’ (As though we had just returned from deportation), Speech delivered at a session of the Supreme Council of the LSSR on 28 November 1988, See, Palaidės šventė (The Promised Land) (Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2003), pp. 40–41.
The reburial ceremonies were often made into elaborate, mass rituals in city centres, with tens of thousands of people in attendance, and broadcast on television to the entire nation.

Films like *Lithuania Between Past and Future* and *The Return* (Petras Abukevičius, 1990) document the commemorative rituals of Gulag deportees and their descendants during the twilight of the USSR. The cinematic representation of pilgrimages to Siberia to recover the remains of ancestors for reburial in the homeland of Lithuania explores the denaturing effects of displacement on identity even while it reinforces ties of kinship and an ethos of autochthony. *Lithuania between Past and Future* puts some of the central political rituals of the era on the screen, like the consecration of the remains of deportees brought back from Siberia to Lithuania.

Scenes of people digging up graves in Siberia and the return of coffins draped in Lithuanian flags and met at the airport in Vilnius by huge crowds are framed by an extended discussion by the ethnographer Norbertas Vėlius on the mythology and culture of the ancient Lithuanians. Vėlius notes that 'our ancestors' have lived on the same territory for over four thousand years. The scene of reburial is juxtaposed with the image of Vėlius pointing to a fresco on Baltic mythology, explaining how the symbol of the world as a tree symbolizes the autochthonous connection of the Lithuanian nation to the earth. Shifting back to images of the crowds of people watching a procession of coffins for re-consecration in the main Cathedral of Vilnius where the nation's ancient rulers were buried, Vėlius comments: 'Lithuanians are inseparable from their land. Even after death they return to their homeland... And they could never understand a person who voluntarily chooses to live outside of their home country.' These rituals of return were thus made to build upon the most ancient and deeply rooted Baltic myths and beliefs.

They instilled a deep sense of identification among Lithuanians at large with the trauma of deportation. In spite of the potential for a clash between the 'two nations' of Soviet Lithuania, the cohesion of the popular movement was maintained through the progressive identification of all Lithuanians with the trauma of displacement. This association built on the discourse of displacement that was such a significant part of Soviet Lithuanian culture for two decades before glasnost. At the peak of the popular movement, parallels between collectivization and the migration to the city and the deportations of the Stalinist years were no longer simply implied. The trauma of collectivization, urbanization, Russification and other forms of physical and cultural displacement were identified as one with the trauma of deportation.

Conclusions

Sajūdis capitalized on the publication of deportee memoirs by cultivating a collective sense of Lithuanian selfhood based on a sacred and inseparable relationship between the people and their territory. The individual works of Gulag survivors were essential, but not sufficient to articulate the experience of trauma in a manner that could be appropriated by the majority of Lithuanians who had more or less accommodated themselves to the Soviet regime.

The return of memory based on historical trauma and the charting of a new future for the nation involved a repudiation of the past. But this repudiation raised a host of difficult questions: who was to blame for what happened? Beyond the police and security forces responsible for political repressions, should the list include government officials, party members, members of Komsomol, the establishment intellektualistai? And who precisely were the victims of the regime? Was it only those who were deported, imprisoned, or killed? Those mobilized into the army, those forced to work in a specific location, those prevented from working in their chosen profession?

The collectivization of deportee memory played a critical role in resolving such intractable problems by raising the question to a higher

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64 During the time of popular movement, filming and chronicling was virtually an obsession. Amateurs as well as documentary film gurus like Robertas Verba took thousands of metres of footage of various commemorative public rituals and events. Paradoxically, these materials today are rather poorly documented and organized. For example, the national library of Martynas Mažvydas does not contain a comprehensive and systematized collection of these materials that would allow the researcher to thoroughly familiarize himself/herself with them. Conversation with staff of the Mažvydas Library, January 2011.

65 Vėlius was a university professor and one of the key figures of the ethnocultural movement that promoted the preservation and revival of folk culture that started in the mid-sixties and rapidly spread across Lithuania.

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66 In a public speech at the Seimas in 2008 on the 60th anniversary of the Great Deportation, Algimantas Capiškas stated: 'One can say that all of Lithuania was deported. Not only those thousands of unfortunate ones who were deported to the unknown during all the waves of deportations but also all those who remained in their country. Why do I claim this? Because the relatives of those deported drowning in grief and fear that they can experience the same fate were in spiritual deportation. Those who denounced, reported, helped to organize deportations deported themselves with their own hands because they suffered not only the reproaches of consciousness and control of the regime they served but also the crushing condemnation of society. And those remaining who by force were brought to the kolhoz, which resembled concentration camps? Why should those Lithuanians who so sincerely loved their land be forced to become completely indifferent to it? The knowledge killing the respect towards work and land, the knowledge that you do not have anything of your own - that is the fate of deportees self.'
level of abstraction, allowing for almost all Lithuanians to free themselves from any association with the regime. The social transformation and sense of solidarity that brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets was cemented by the myth of universal deportation and inculcated by rituals of return that were filmed and broadcast to the entire population, accompanied by a highly emotive discourse of trauma and appeals to an indigenous sense of national identity.

The euphoria that accompanied the Soviet collapse was short lived. The consolidation of the nation unravelled quickly upon the achievement of independence, as internal social divisions resurfaced in the pluralist atmosphere of democratic politics. Debates over collaboration and accomodation gained ground, and the myth of universal deportation and return began to unravel, although slowly. The sense of national history as a history of suffering is deeply entrenched, but it is ill-adapted to the demands of building a democratic polity in an independent state. It obstructs social reflection on the experience of other groups, namely Poles and Jews, and it leaves many blank spots in the memory of the Soviet period, notably where Lithuanians were not so much the victims, as the agents of history.

The affective reception of the deportation testimonies played a role in the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence. But at the same time it obscured the plurality of experience and any differentiation among the historical actors within the category of the nation. To this day, the notion of memory's 'return' implies a non-comparative, totalizing approach to history as the history of either heroism of victimhood. Perhaps because of this reason there is still relatively little academic, comparative and analytical studies into the body of deportee testimonies. With the unravelling of the myth of universal deportation, this rich literature continues to beckon intensive study.

Dovilė Budrytė

War, Deportation and Trauma in the Narratives of Former Women Resistance Fighters

A growing number of works focusing on collective trauma acknowledges the crucial role of gender in remembering, expressing and memorializing events. In the literature focusing on the Holocaust, there is a clear understanding that traumatic history would be incomplete without the addition of women as victims, perpetrators, resisters and bystanders. In the words of Yehuda Bauer, 'if all human experience has a gender-related agenda, as women's studies tells us, the Holocaust can be no exception. Indeed, it seems to me that the problems facing women as women and men as men have a special poignancy in an extreme situation such as the Holocaust.'

By way of contrast, the literature focusing on the repression that took place under Stalin has only recently started paying attention to the role of gender and women's experiences. For example, in Carrying Linda's Stones, an anthology of the life stories of five Estonian women who were deported to Siberia, the editors give the following reasons for applying a gender perspective to study traumatic memories: 'We have chosen to focus on women because the majority of life stories written about World War II and its aftermath were published by men who often have a different perspective.... Women's and men's lives differed considerably during this period. Women's stories not only concentrate on themselves, but on broader family relations.' Gender-sensitive perspectives have compelled researchers of Soviet-era repression to pay attention to women's bodies and women's issues.
