https://doi.org/10.15388/vu.thesis.279
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7079-2168

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF LITHUANIAN LITERATURE AND FOLKLORE

Laima Vincė
SRUOGINIS

Memory and Postmemory in the Writing of North American Writers of Lithuanian Descent

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Humanities
Philology (H 004)

VILNIUS 2022

The dissertation was prepared between 2016 and 2020 at Vilnius University. The research was supported by the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies.

Academic supervisor – Prof. Dr. Regina Rudaitytė (Vilnius University, Humanities, Philology – H 004).

https://doi.org/10.15388/vu.thesis.279
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7079-2168

VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS
LIETUVIŲ LITERATŪROS IR TAUTOSAKOS INSTITUTAS

Laima Vincė
SRUOGINIS

Atmintis ir postatmintis Šiaurės Amerikos lietuvių kilmės rašytojų literatūroje

DAKTARO DISERTACIJA

Humanitariniai mokslai,
Filologija (H 004)

VILNIUS 2022

Disertacija rengta 2016–2020 metais Vilniaus universitete.
Mokslinius tyrimus rėmė *Association for Advancement of Baltic Studies*.

Mokslinė vadovė – prof. dr. Regina Rudaitytė (Vilniaus universitetas, humanitariniai mokslai, filologija – H 004).

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Object of the Dissertation

Since Lithuania's period of national rebirth in the late 1980s, almost a hundred works of literature written in English by North American writers of Lithuanian descent have been published by commercial and university publishers in the United States and Canada.[1] These works of literature include the following genres: fiction, memoir, literary nonfiction, essays, collections of poetry, and drama. Thematically these works of literature are mostly concerned with cultural and historical trauma that has affected Lithuania, ranging from events such as the 19th century efforts of Tsarist authorities to Russify the Lithuanian population, the first and second Soviet occupations (1940–1941 and 1944–1991) and the related violence, deportations, and resistance, the plight of the displaced persons and immigration, and the Nazi occupation and Holocaust in Lithuania (1941–1944). Additionally, these essays, memoirs, historical novels, autobiographical novels, literary fiction, short stories, and drama mostly engage with and reflect on collective, public, shared cultural memory events, such as the reinstatement of Lithuania's independence in 1990, immigration, the culture of the North American Lithuanian diaspora communities, and rite of return journeys to Soviet and post-Soviet Lithuania. This group's writing explores familial and individual trauma, silence, secrets, the rite of return, cultural memory, and haunt memory. Nine works of literature written by North American writers of Lithuanian descent have been translated into Lithuanian and published in Lithuania.[2] However, because this

[1] Please see the appendix for a bibliography of books written in English by North American writers of Lithuanian descent published in North America.

[2] Bak, Samuel (2020) *Nutapyta žodžiais* (Lithuanian translation of *Painted In Words*). Vilnius: LGGRTC. Cassedy, Ellen. 2013. *Mes esame čia* (Lithuanian translation of *We Are Here*). Vilnius: Media Incognito Press. Guilford-Mačiulytė, Irena. 2003. *Glėbys* (Lithuanian translation of *The Embrace*). Vilnius: Versus Aureus.
Šileika, Antanas. 2019. *Laikinai jūsų* (Lithuanian translation of *Provisionally Yours*). Vilnius: Baltos Lankos. Šileika, Antanas. 2018. *Basakojis bingo pranašėjas* (Lithuanian translation of *The Barefoot Bingo Caller*). Vilnius: Baltos Lankos. Šileika, Antanas. 2014. *Pirkiniai išsimokėtinai* (Lithuanian translation of *Buying on Time*). Vilnius: Baltos Lankos. Šukys, Julija. 2016. *Epistolofilija: Užrašytas Onos Šimaitės gyvenimas.* (Lithuanian translation of *Epistolophilia: Writing the Life of Ona Šimaitė*) Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla. Vincė, Laima. 2018. *Tai ne mano dangus* (Lithuanian translation of *This Is Not My Sky*). Vilnius: Alma Littera. Vincė. Laima. 2019. *Mūsų nepalaužė* (Lithuanian translation of *Journey into the Backwaters of the Heart*). Vilnius: Alma Littera.

body of literary work is written in English and published abroad, it remains largely inaccessible to readers in Lithuania.

Tsarist oppression, the Stalin-era mass deportations of Baltic people to Siberia, the Nazi and Soviet occupations, the Holocaust, the armed postwar resistance, the Soviet occupation, and the independence movement are topics that are an ocean away and almost a century in the past. The struggles of DPs immigrants in Canada or the United States is closer to home, but also more than half a century old. Yet, these are the predominant topics discussed in these writers' work. Thus, the greater part of these works of literature are postmemory narratives.[3] Additionally, cultural and historical trauma experienced by Lithuanian émigrés and their descendants is documented in this growing body of literary work published outside of Lithuania.

From 2016 through 2021, the author of this dissertation conducted written, face-to-face, and virtual interviews with twenty North American writers of Lithuanian heritage, after those writers had responded to survey questions. The interviews and survey included questions about demographics, citizenship, family heritage and background, participation in North American Lithuanian community organizations and events, education, literary influences from Lithuanian literature and from North American or world literature, literary themes, publishing experiences, etc. Writers were asked to list their literary influences both from English language and Lithuanian language literature. This survey was used as part of this dissertation's background research to establish prevailing topics, background on the writers, and to gauge the significance of cultural memory in the North American Lithuanian diaspora. An article was published based on the survey and interviews.[4] This dissertator read and considered the collective body of literary fiction, historical fiction, poetry, literary nonfiction, and memoir written by twenty writers identified in the survey as North American writers of

---

[3] The introductory essay to *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*,[3] edited by Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller, describes the relationship the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before the experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors they grew up with. Hirsch developed the theory of postmemory concept in the early 1990s after she realized that art, literature, and film about the Holocaust, written by the children of Holocaust survivors and published several decades after the Holocaust in the seventies and eighties, resonated deeply with her own experience as the daughter of Jews who survived the Holocaust in Europe.

[4] See: Vince, Laima, 2019: "The Question of Identity: Lithuanian-American/Canadian Writers", *Lituanus, Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Volume 65, No. 4. p. 47-96.

Lithuanian descent. Five memoirs out of this body of work were selected for inclusion in this dissertation.[5] This dissertation analyzes these five memoirs written in English by North American writers of Lithuanian descent, published in the United States and Canada between 2000 and 2017, through the lens of postmemory and trauma theory.

The five selected memoirs are: *Painted in Words—A Memoir* (2001) by Samuel Bak, *The Barefoot Bingo Caller* (2017) by Antanas Sileika, *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life* (2010) by Daiva Markelis, *A Guest At the Shooters' Banquet* (2015) by Rita Gabis, *Siberian Exile: Blood, War, and a Granddaughter's Reckoning* (2017) by Julija Šukys.[6]

The five memoirs include stylistic elements of life-writing, journalism, and literary nonfiction. Two of these works are preoccupied with reflection on one's individual life within the context of shared cultural memory in the Lithuanian diaspora (*The Barefoot Bingo Caller* and *White Field, Black Sheep*), and three (*Painted in Words*, *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet, and Siberian Exile*) are reflections on individual, familial, cultural, and historical trauma within the context of Lithuania's experience of the Holocaust. These five memoirs studied together in this dissertation represent a cross-section of the greater body of literature written in English on Lithuanian topics by North American writers of Lithuanian descent.

The selected memoirists represent three generations, ranging from Samuel Bak, born in 1933 in Vilnius, Lithuania, a Holocaust survivor and displaced person, to Julija Šukys, born in 1972 in Toronto, Canada to parents displaced by the Soviet occupation. Four of the five authors of these memoirs are the children and grandchildren of Lithuanians who fled the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1944, namely Antanas Sileika, Daiva Markelis, Rita Gabis, Julija Šukys (Samuel Bak fled Soviet-occupied Lithuania in 1945 at the age of twelve). Three of the writers from this group of memoirists are North American writers of ethnic Christian Lithuanian heritage, one is of Litvak heritage, and one is of mixed Jewish and Lithuanian heritage. This dissertation defines people of Lithuanian descent as people who have ancestral roots and heritage in Lithuania, whether their religious faith is Catholic,

[5] Criteria of selection are explained in Chapter Two. A bibliography of the literary work of the writers from the body of literary work from which these five were selected is in the appendix.

[6] Of the five memoirs studied in this dissertation, two have been translated into Lithuanian - Bak, Samuel (2020) *Nutapyta žodžiais* (Lithuanian translation of *Painted In Words*). Vilnius: LGGRTC. Šileika, Antanas. 2018. *Basakojis bingo pranašėjas* (Lithuanian translation of *The Barefoot Bingo Caller)*

Protestant, Jewish, Pagan, or agnostic. The memoirs are interacted with in the work of Cathy Caruth,[7] Ross Chambers,[8] Shoshana Felman,[9] Dori Laub,[10] Gabriele Schwab,[11] Gabriele Rosenthal,[12] and others.

Four of the five writers of these memoirs came of age in North America during the postwar or Cold War periods, when travel to Soviet-occupied Lithuania was controlled by the Soviet totalitarian regime. Therefore, their experience of Lithuania was formed predominantly through participation in the social, cultural, and educational activities of the Lithuanian émigré diaspora communities, and by reading literature written by Lithuanian diaspora writers, rather than by direct experience through travel to Lithuania. After Lithuania regained independence in 1990, all five memoirists embarked on rite of return journeys to Lithuania. They write about the emotional and cultural aspects of their return in their memoirs. Manifestations of individual trauma, family trauma, and cultural and historical trauma are dominant themes in these memoirs' narratives. Therefore, this dissertation employs the theoretical tools of cultural memory, postmemory, trauma theory, historical trauma, cultural trauma to analyze these five memoirs.

The five memoirs discussed in this dissertation are both memory and postmemory narratives. These texts serve as memory narratives because the memoirists narrate their own life stories and individual and familial trauma experiences. Additionally, they research the impact of Lithuanian historical trauma (the Holocaust) and Lithuanian cultural trauma (deportations to Siberia, World War II, the postwar experience, the refugee experience,

---

[7] See: Caruth, Cathy, 1996: *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.

[8] See: Chambers, Ross, 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004: *Ultimate Interventions: AIDS Writing, Testimonial, and the Rhetoric of Haunting.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

[9] See: Felman, Shoshana and Laub, Dori, 1992: *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York: Routledge.

[10] See: Felman, Shoshana and Laub, Dori, 1992: *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York: Routledge.

[11] See: Schwab, Gabriele, 2010: "Haunting legacies: trauma in children of perpetrators", *Haunting legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Traumas,* New York: Columbia University Press.

[12] Rosenthal, Gabriele, 2000: "Social transformation in the context of familial experience: biographical consequences of a denied past in the Soviet Union. In R. Breckner, D. Kalekin-Fishman, & I. Miethe (Eds.) *Biographies and the division of Europe: experience, action, and change on the "Eastern Side."* Opladen: Leske u. Budrich, p. 115-137.

immigration) and reflect through their writing upon the impact of those historical events on their ancestors, themselves, and their descendants.

The thematic consistency of this group's literary output, published by university and commercial publishers in Canada and the United States over a sixteen-year span from 2001 to 2017, strengthens the argument that these literary works reflect a unifying cultural and historical experience.

This dissertation consists of eight chapters. The introduction and the first few chapters of the dissertation are concerned with pertinent topics, such as criteria for selection of the authors and literary works analyzed in this dissertation, biographies of the authors, summaries of the content of the memoirs, and a brief overview of previous research on Lithuanian diaspora literature. The following major topics are introduced: The significance of the mother tongue, cultural trauma in the North American Lithuanian diaspora, memory and postmemory narratives, cultural memory in the North American Lithuanian diaspora, rite of return journeys to Lithuania and the search for identity, silence, failed coping mechanisms and expressions of trauma, religion, inherited guilt. Additionally, to provide a historical framework for the literary works discussed in the dissertation, a brief overview of the following historical events is presented in a separate chapter: Lithuanian migration to North America and the three waves of immigration, the history of displaced persons from Lithuania, and the German occupation of Lithuania.

1.2. Previous Research

Although some critical reviews of Bak's *Painted in Words* appeared in German, only one review was written in English by art historian Kimberly Socha. In her essay, "Outside the Reign of Logic, Outside the Reach of God: Hester Panim in the Surreal Art of Paul Celan and Samuel Bak"[13] Socha claims a connection between the imagery of surrealist art and the memoir *Painted in Words*.[14]

---

[13] See: Socha, Kimberly, 2002. "Outside the Reign of Logic, Outside the Reach of God: Hester Panim in the Surreal Art of Paul Celan and Samuel Bak", *War, Literature, and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities.*

[14] She cites a scene in the memoir when Bak and his mother are escaping Lodz, Poland and traveling to Berlin. Bak describes total blackness and the dim light of dawn emerging as Red Army soldiers reeking of vomit and alcohol lay on the carriage floor snoring.

A few researchers have published studies on Sileika. For example, Lithuanian-Canadian literary critic Professor Dr. Milda Danytė has written about the literary output of Antanas Sileika, as well as a lesser known Lithuanian-Canadian writer of the first wave of Lithuanian economic immigrants Magdelana Raškevičiutė Eggleston. Danytė's 1999 essay, published in the journal *Lituanus*, titled "Ambivalence About Lithuania in Lithuanian-Canadian Fiction" argues that a desire to blend into Canadian culture dominates both Sileika's and Eggleston's novels.

Dr. D. Jovaišienė wrote her PhD dissertation on the literary work of Lithuanian-Canadian writers Antanas Sileika and Irene Guilford: *Antanas Sileika ir Irene Guilford: Tautinio tapatumo raiška naujasiuose lietuvių autorių svetur parašytuose tekstuose (Irenos Mačiulytės-Guilford, „Glėbys", Antano Šileikos, „Bronzinė moteris"),* (The Expression of National Identity in Contemporary Texts Written by Lithuanian Authors Abroad (Irena Mačiulytė-Guilford's *The Embrace* and Antantas Sileikas's *Woman in Bronze*)).

Violeta Kelertas's review of Markelis's memoir, *White Field, Black Sheep*, with the tongue-in-cheek title, "Deviant Sheep" appeared in the Lithuanian Writers' Union online English language magazine, *Vilnius Review*.[15] Markelis was also reviewed by James Morrison. An interview with Ellen Cassedy was published in *Vilnius Review.* Kelertas, Morrison, Cassedy all agree that Markelis, who uses a humorous narrative tone and voice, crafting incongruent humorous scenes to accurately assess the disconnect of DP life, has composed a narrative "laced with humor" (Kelertas, 2016). They argue that humor seems to help second-generation North Americans Lithuanians integrate the idyllic and romantic visions of prewar Lithuania that their parents and the émigré community seek to instill in them with cultural landscapes of North America. Šukys's *Siberian Exile* was reviewed in *Fourth Genre, Brevity, The Phoenix, Draugas, Canadian Jewish News.*[16] With the exception

[15] Kelertas, Violeta, 2016: "Deviant Sheep", *Vilnius Review*, August 2, 2016, accessed online at: www.vilniusreview.lt.

[16] *Siberian Exile* won the 2018 AABS Book Award, Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, the 2018 Vine Award for Canadian Jewish Literature, Nonfiction, and was a finalist for the 2017 Indies Award for Autobiography & Memoir. Šukys's other postmemory work of literary nonfiction, *Epistolophilia,* was reviewed in *Publishers Weekly* (starred review), *Biography, Montreal Review of Books, Foreword Reviews, Canadian Jewish News, Baltimore Jewish Times, Montreal Gazette, PLOP!, Lituanus, Women's Review of Books.*

of a few local book reviews that are mainly plot summaries, to date there are no critical reviews of *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet.* [17]

1.3. Object of the Research

The five memoirs written in English by North American writers of Lithuanian descent studied in this dissertation are memory and postmemory narratives that reflect on individual, familial, historical, cultural, and intergenerational trauma, as well as the effects of trauma on cultural memory in the North American Lithuanian diaspora community. These memoirs are written from the perspective of descendants who belong to the first, second and third postmemory generations. These writers have conducted research on family stories, Lithuanian historical trauma and cultural trauma, and have embarked on rite of return journeys to Lithuania. Cultural memory and heritage topics are an integral aspect of these memoirs.

1.4. Aims of the dissertation

1. Consider the role heritage plays in the narratives of all five memoirs, and how the memoirists honor their ethnic heritage in tandem with a North American identity. Note how topics of identity, cultural memory, collective memory, and heritage evolve in the narratives of the memories under consideration. Reflect on the ways in which all the memoirs address topics of identity, split identity, and dual identity.

2. All five memoirs are perceived as memory and postmemory narratives. Thus, one of the aims of this dissertation is to explore how these memoirs address themes of family and affiliative kinship memory that are geographically, historically, and culturally distant to writers on the North American continent. Consider how rite of return journeys to Lithuania, in which the writers travel to their parents' and grandparents' homeland in search of their identity and roots, seeking

[17] Media coverage for *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet* includes C-Span's Book TV, *Guernica* magazine, USC Shoah Foundation, NYT News: New York Times Closeup, Westport Library, and Histrocrats. Literary awards include residencies at Yaddo and the Fine Arts Work Center of Provincetown, grants from the Connecticut State Arts Foundation, and the New York State Arts Foundation.

psychological and emotional reconciliation with the family's past, change their relationship with the past, or help overcome familial and cultural traumas. Explore whether the rite of return journeys to Lithuania described in the memoirs bring about catharsis, post-traumatic growth, or help heal unresolved trauma.

3. Consider whether the emotional tone and resonance of the first-generation of Lithuanian diaspora writers' poems, memoirs, and prose bear a literary influence on the writing of the second and third generations. Postulate whether literature produced by this group of writers is relevant to the topical concerns of contemporary Lithuanian literature. Consider whether writing produced by this group is a purely a North American literary phenomenon.

1.5. Goals

1. Analyze how these five memoirs function both as memory and postmemory narratives. Examine reasons why these writers explore topics of familial and affiliative memory that are geographically, historically, and culturally distant for writers living on the North American continent and within a North American cultural construct.

2. Analyze how the five memoirists construct, report, and position themselves as narrators and storytellers within their family stories and Lithuania's historical and cultural trauma narratives, while taking into consideration issues of self-representation and representation of the shared collective cultural memory community.

3. Examine how expressions of trauma are consistent in the narratives of this body of writing, including alcohol abuse, depression, survivor's guilt, silence, and reliance on religion as a coping mechanism.

4. Reflect on rite of return narratives in each of the memoirs that describe the narrator's return to Lithuania (also Siberia and Israel) to seek answers about stories of family origin, to attempt to better understand the history and culture of Lithuania, to research historical events that took place during and after World War II and in its aftermath. Consider how rite of return journeys contribute to a better understanding of the narrators' ethnic Lithuanian or Litvak identities.

1.6. Methodological Principles: Theoretical Tools

This dissertation focuses on literary nonfiction, specifically on memoir that reflects on the impact of historical and cultural trauma on a nation, and on its subsequent generations living in a diaspora. The theoretical tools that best serve such an analysis are trauma theory, cultural memory, and postmemory. Therefore, the focus of this dissertation is placed on sociological, psychological, cultural aspects of these five memoirs that are analyzed through the lens of postmemory.

Eva Hoffman and Marianne Hirsch initially developed **postmemory** concept as a means of describing the preoccupation of the second and third generations born to Holocaust survivors (also called the first generation) with the historical trauma of the Holocaust. According to the work of Hirsch, postmemory describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before and to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. Postmemory thus may be considered the memory of another's memory, so much so that these memories become memories in their own right, creating a deep personal connection of the previous generation's memory, notwithstanding the "generational distance."[18] The concept of postmemory is useful for discussing these memoirs precisely because the work of these selected writers is directly related to the cultural and historical traumas suffered by their parents and grandparents. Therefore, **postmemory** is applied as a research tool to these memoirs because these writers' work is preoccupied with cultural and historical trauma experienced by their parents' and grandparents' generation. Their memoirs reflect on the loss of ethnic identity, confusion over identity, and the bewildering psychological symptoms of belonging culturally, socially and historically to a "post" generation.

---

[18] It is said that Hirsch created the term "postmemory" as reaction to Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, a two-volume set which won the Pulitzer Prize and many other awards. Speigelman was born in Sweden in 1948 to Polish survivors of Auschwitz. He himself was not a direct victim, but the family trauma had haunted him. Hirsch wrote that his life "is dominated by memories that are not his own." Hirsch, Marianne, 1997: *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*, Boston: Harvard University Press, p. 26. Also see: Hirsch, Marianne, 2012: *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, New York: Columbia University Press."

The concepts of collective memory and cultural memory are applied to the reading of these five memoirs. The concept of **cultural memory** was developed by Jan Assmann based on the grounding work of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. He defines cultural memory as "that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image."[19] When analyzing memoirs about the Lithuanian diaspora communities in North America, it is important to understand what is included in this group's collective cultural memory and what is excluded (as well as what is silenced).

Literary scholars Gabriele Schwab, Ross Chambers, and others have developed the concept of **haunt memory** to explain the sense of being haunted by violent memories of the past committed by one's predecessors and also experienced by them.[20] Two of the memoirs studied in this dissertation in particular focus on a granddaughter's sense of being "haunted" by a grandfather's wartime role as a perpetrator.

Rite of return is a term used to describe memoirs and other narratives that describe the narrator's journey of return to their parents' land of birth in search for identity, community, and closure.[21] The concept of the rite of return journey is particularly important in the analysis of the memoirs studied in this dissertation because all five writers embark on right of return journeys to Lithuania after independence is reinstated seeking to understand their parents and grandparents legacy and their own connection with Lithuania.

Cultural trauma is a term used in the social sciences to describe a "culturally interpreted wound to cultural tissue itself" (Sztompka, 2000, 458). Cultural trauma is intertwined with individual trauma but is linked to

---

[19] See: Assmann, Jan and Czaplicka, John, 1995: "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", Spring–Summer, 1995, No. 65, *Cultural History/Cultural Studies* (Spring–Summer, 1995), Duke University Press, p. 125-133.
See also: **Assmann,** Jan, 2008: "Communicative and Cultural Memory" in **Erill,** Astrid, **Nünning**, Ansgar, **Young,** Sara, Eds., 2008: Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook, Germany, De Gruyter, Inc. p. 109 – 118.

[20] For more on the concept of haunt memory, see: Schwab, Gabriele, 2010: "Haunting Legacies: Trauma in Children of Perpetrators", *Haunting legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Traumas,* New York: Columbia University Press. See also: Chambers, Ross, 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004: *Ultimate Interventions: AIDS Writing, Testimonial, and the Rhetoric of Haunting*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. See also, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's theories of psychic haunting, transgenerational trauma, and the crypt.

[21] See: Hirsch, Marianne and Miller, Nancy K., 2011: *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory.* New York: Columbia University Press.

collective historical events experienced by a nation or people. **Historical trauma** is "the collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide" (Panasiewicz, Mark, Tribal Law and Policy Institute).[22] In their article "Historical Trauma as a Public Narrative: A Conceptual Review of how History Impact Present-Day Health," researchers Nathaniel Vincent Mohatt, Azure B. Thompson, Nghi D. Thai, and Jacob Kraemer Tebes describe historical trauma as complicated, shocking events experienced over a long period of time by a large group of people who are unified by a single identity that is dependent on this group or circumstances (Mohat, Thompson, Thai, and Tebes, 2014).

Trauma theory is applied to the analysis of these five memoirs to unlock the traumatic aspects of memory, while postmemory is applied to discern how those frozen memories have been passed down the generations. Expressions of **cultural memory** within the North American Lithuanian diaspora communities include men', women's, and children's roles and responsibilities in that society, and rules regarding who is included and who is excluded in collective cultural memory. Rules of inclusion and exclusion also decide which cultural and historical events or traumas are included or excluded from collective cultural memory.

This dissertation does not attempt to analyze these memoirs for poetics, style, and literary artistic expression. However, these literary tools of craft are used where tone, irony, style, metaphor is relevant to the discussion of postmemory, and expressions of individual, familial, cultural, historical trauma, and cultural memory.

1.7. Relevance, Novelty, Practical Significance

Although significant research has been conducted on the generation of Lithuanian diasporic writers who wrote literary works in Lithuanian published in North America, few researchers or literary critics have studied literature written by North American writers of Litvak and Lithuanian descent who write in English. No researcher has written about this body of work collectively nor considered it through the lens of postmemory or trauma theory. The literary output of North American writers of Lithuanian descent has not been studied together as a cultural expression within the context of

[22] See: www.wellnesscourts.org, accessed May 23, 2020.

North American literature or Lithuanian literature. The five memoirs analyzed in this dissertation have not been regarded together critically as a group. Very little criticism about each of these literary works has been published.

This dissertation focuses on Lithuanian diasporic works of literary nonfiction written in English, which reflect upon the experiences of Lithuanians in World War II and the postwar period. Thus, as already mentioned, these memoirs invite readers to reflect on individual and family traumas within the general context of Lithuanian historical and cultural traumas.[23]

When the expression of cultural and historic trauma is not studied, the damaging effects of a pact of silence within society, and within families, may continue to erode society. Recognizing trauma is the first step towards healing trauma. By identifying trauma in these literary texts, this dissertation opens a greater dialogue on the nature of trauma and how cultural and historical trauma impacts individuals and the collective society both in Lithuania and in the Lithuanian diasporic communities abroad.

These memoirs invite readers to reflect upon individual and familial trauma within the greater context of historical and cultural trauma. There are powerful life lessons to be gleaned from reflecting on the experiences of these five writers. Their memoirs may help members of the second and third postmemory generations of the Lithuanian diaspora understand the trauma experienced by the first generation and, hopefully, integrate that trauma. An analysis of these memoirs may help contemporary Lithuanians better

[23] On March 6, 2020, the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vilnius, Lithuania, hosted a landmark conference on postmemory and historical and cultural trauma: "Dealing with the Trauma of an Undigested Past." Speakers featured distinguished guests from various countries, including Nobel prize winner Svetlana Alexievich, who has collected survivor testimonials from victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and Russian soldiers who fought in the Soviet War in Afghanistan; Director of the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation in the Hague, Timothy Ryback; Head of the Holocaust Survivors' Supporting Organization AMCHA Germany, Lukas Welz; Professor Danutė Gailienė, the founder of the Lithuanian Association of Suicidology; Former President of Lithuania (1998–2003 and 2004–2009) Valdas Adamkus, and others. A remarkable accomplishment of the conference was a document titled the "Vilnius Declaration on Dealing With Consequences of Collective Trauma." This declaration, which distinguishes itself as having been drafted on the eve of the 30th Anniversary of the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence, acknowledges for the first time, on the governmental level, the ongoing effects of cultural trauma on the people of the Republic of Lithuania. The declaration emphasizes key points relevant to Lithuania's experience of historical and cultural trauma.

understand the cultural trauma and postmemory experience of North American Lithuanian writers of Lithuanian descent.

Furthermore, a lack of understanding, and empathy toward the trauma memory of the North American Lithuanian diaspora left unexplored can lead to a further split between the descendants of people who were once one nation during the interwar period of Lithuanian independence. Postmemory literature that addresses collective cultural trauma opens necessary dialogue that may lead to healing. Another important goal is linking and understanding the historical and cultural trauma of two groups – Christian Lithuanian and Lithuanian Jewish – to work towards healing and posttraumatic growth.

The effects of historical trauma and cultural trauma on contemporary Lithuanian culture is an area in need of study and attention. This dissertation aims to foster an understanding of Lithuanian cultural and historical trauma through a close reading and analysis of memory and postmemory narratives written by the first, second, and third generation North American writers of Lithuanian descent. Through their heritage, they are inheritors of cultural trauma. By unlocking unifying topics throughout this body of work, this dissertation offers insights into understanding Lithuanian cultural and historical trauma through the medium of literature.

1.8. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of eight chapters. The introduction and early chapters are concerned with pertinent topics, such as criteria for selection of the authors and literary works analyzed in this dissertation, biographies of the authors, summaries of the content of the memoirs, theoretical tools, and a brief overview of previous research on Lithuanian diaspora literature. Additionally, to provide a historical framework for the literary works discussed in the dissertation, a brief overview of historical events is presented in a separate chapter. These topics include: Lithuanian migration to North America and the three waves of immigration, the history of displaced persons from Lithuania, and the German occupation of Lithuania.

Chapter Five introduces the major topics that are analyzed in the narratives of the memoirs: The significance of the mother tongue (in the family and in the collective diaspora community), concern over preserving a sense of cultural heritage in the diaspora community, cultural memory relationships with the historical past and Lithuanian history, cultural trauma in the North American Lithuanian diaspora, (analyzed as memory and postmemory narratives), cultural memory in the North American Lithuanian

diaspora, rite of return journeys to Lithuania, and the search for identity, silence, failed coping mechanisms and expressions of trauma, religion, inherited guilt.

The following three chapters delve into analysis of the five memoirs and make up the main body of the dissertation.

The chapter, "Catharsis Through Memory—Samuel Bak, *Painted in Words—A Memoir*" analyzes the painter Samuel Bak's paintings and memoir.[24] Samuel Bak was born in 1933 in Vilnius (at the time the Vilnius region was occupied by Poland and Vilnius was called "Vilna"). Bak experienced a happy childhood, but then in 1941, at the age of eight, he was arrested together with his mother and incarcerated in the Vilnius ghetto. Mother and son survived the Holocaust, hiding twice with the nuns at the Benedictine Convent. However, the rest of Bak's family perished. Bak and his mother and a surviving aunt and cousin fled Soviet-occupied Lithuania at the end of World War II when he was twelve.

The chapter examines expressions of survivor's guilt in the memoir as Bak delves into the landscape of memory and postmemory to reconstruct fragments of his experience as a child Holocaust survivor in his native Vilnius.

Significant realizations, impressions, moments of epiphany, unfold through associations in the writer's mind, linking disparate events through meaningful symbols. Bak's memories are analyzed using trauma theory because after early chapters that describe an idyllic childhood in Vilnius, he describes his experience of the Holocaust, based on his own and his mother's stories and memories. The memoir's narrative is constructed from associative memories that shift across the span of the artist's life.

When considering Bak's work as a writer, it is vital to also consider his body of work as a painter, and in particular his Holocaust paintings, as part of his language of expression. Bak began his career as an abstract painter, but over the decades his work shifted to represent symbolic imagery, memories of the Holocaust, biblical scenes, sometimes within a post-apocalyptic landscape. The process of writing the memoir enables Bak to work through trauma and survivor's guilt to a place of catharsis. He embarks on a rite of return journey to his native city of Vilnius, fifty-six years after he fled the city at the end of World War II. There he finds healing and closure. The work of

[24] Samuel Bak's artistic work has been the subject of hundreds of articles, scholarly works, and books. However, his Holocaust memoir, *Painted in Words,* (Indiana University Press, 2004) is the single work of literature written by this internationally acclaimed painter.

Cathy Caruth, Gabriele Schwab, Judith Herman and Ross Chambers are woven into the theoretical discussion of Bak's memoir.

The chapter, "Cultural Memory in Two Lithuanian Diaspora Memoirs: Antanas Sileika: *The Barefoot Bingo Caller: A Memoir*, Daiva Markelis: *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life"* analyze two memoirs written by the second generation. Canadian Antanas Sileika and American Daiva Markelis were born in the Cold War years to parents who fled the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1944 as adults. Both Sileika and Markelis grew up and came of age within the North American Lithuanian diaspora community, Sileika in Weston, a suburb of Toronto in Ontario, Canada, and Markelis in Cicero, a suburb of Chicago in the United States. These two memoirs describe life within the Lithuanian diaspora communities in the two major cities in the United States and Canada where populous concentrations of Lithuanian DPs and their descendants lived. These memoirs are analyzed through the lens of Jan Assman's cultural memory theory.

Sileika's *The Barefoot Bingo Caller* narrates the coming-of-age story of a young Lithuanian-Canadian man growing up in a DP family in Canada during a time of economic upward mobility. Sileika reflects on his shared collective cultural memory experiences in the Canadian Lithuanian diaspora community, describes his rite of return journeys to Lithuania, and through postmemory recreates the cultural trauma of his DP parents' displacement from Lithuania and their struggles as immigrants in Canada.

Markelis's *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life* narrates the coming-of-age story of a young Lithuanian-American woman during the Cold War era before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Chicago-born Lithuanian-American writer and academic describes her attempts to balance a traditional Catholic Lithuanian-American female identity, and all the traditional roles that identity would have cast her in as mother, homemaker, Lithuanian patriot, against the American societal influences of the sixties, seventies, and eighties during the feminist era and the Women's Rights movement. Markelis reflects on her shared collective cultural memory experiences in the North American Lithuanian diaspora community in Chicago, and examines the effects of intergenerational trauma, alcoholism, and depression within that community. Through postmemory strategies she recreates her parents' prewar lives in Lithuania, internalizing and reflecting on family and community cultural trauma experiences.

White Field, Black Sheep and *The Barefoot Bingo Caller* reflect cultural memory constructed out of cultural trauma experienced by the first generation, the war refugees from prewar independent Lithuania, as experienced in the two most populous North American Lithuanian diasporas, Chicago and

Toronto. The three main components of cultural memory – memory, culture, society – are used to instill societal cohesion in Lithuanian-émigré culture second and third generation descendants. Both writers describe similar cultural memory experiences—a romanticized nineteenth and twentieth-century Lithuanian history, omission of the German occupation (and the collaboration of Lithuanian perpetrators) from the historical narrative, placing emphasis on cultural trauma events, such as Soviet atrocities. They stress acculturation into the group, or society, through the cultural memory rituals of Lithuanian diaspora organizations, such as the folk-dance ensembles, Saturday School, scouts, etc. Both memoirists use humor, an ironic tone, and at times a voice ripe with sarcasm to highlight cognitive dissonance between collective Lithuanian cultural memory or postmemory and the culture of mainstream American or Canadian society. Both memoirists note how the culture of the Litvaks, their presence in Lithuanian history and culture, and the destruction of Jewish heritage and culture by the Holocaust in Lithuania, is omitted from the cultural memory of the Lithuanian diaspora.

These memoirs reveal that Lithuanian-American and Lithuanian-Canadian diaspora communities remained cohesive in the second half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century as a culture and society with a shared collective memory that was based on shared experiences of cultural trauma. However, the memoirs also show that shared cultural trauma and cultural memory lead to expressions of post-traumatic growth both for individuals within those communities and for the cultural memory community as a whole. The formative educative experience of Lithuanian dance festivals, Saturday Schools, clubs, scouts, etc., may be viewed as expressions of post-traumatic growth because they honored postmemory cultural trauma narratives and create a cohesive community. The retention of a cultural memory narrative of an independent Lithuania created hope for the future during the Cold War years.

Expressions of cultural memory in the diaspora community also enabled the educative formative experiences that produced a second and third generation culturally literate in both Lithuanian and North American culture. Members of the Lithuanian diaspora community, as Sileika records for posterity in his chapter, "The Church Basement versus the Kremlin" were thus able to take an active positive role in the Lithuanian independence movement as cultural translators, serving as volunteer journalists, translators, public relations experts for *Sąjūdis*. The memoir also shows that in the decades since independence members of the Lithuanian diaspora have volunteered their educational and professional expertise, time and resources, to help rebuild Lithuania and to advocate for Lithuania in the West.

Ultimately, both memoirists negotiate a balance between their North American lives, professions, families and relationships and the cultural memory constructs of the Lithuanian émigré diaspora. Both writers make rite of return journeys to post-Soviet independent Lithuania. Both honor the memory of Lithuanian Jews, write frankly about the Holocaust in Lithuania, and mourn their loss. These two memoirs describe how initially during adolescence and young adulthood the second generation pushes back from the cultural memory instilled by the first-generation. However, eventually the narrators accept and adopt values in adulthood and middle age formed through empathy and understanding for the first generation, which they then pass on to their children and grandchildren.

Participating in the collective cultural memory of the North American Lithuanian diaspora becomes more complicated for the third generation. The chapter "Postmemory as Historical Reckoning: Complicity in the Holocaust in Lithuania: Rita Gabis: *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet* and Julija Šukys: *Siberian Exile: Blood, War, and a Granddaughter's Reckoning"* examines how the invisible emotional and psychological shadow of an ancestor's complicity in war crimes is passed on to descendants and expressed through postmemory writing. Both writers transform informal family knowledge about a grandfather's complicity in Nazi war crimes during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania, archival research, and travel into a long-term process of working through the inter-generational transfer of trauma. Writing serves as a memory space for these two writers' unhealed historical and familial trauma.

Both Julija Šukys (born 1972) and Rita Gabis (born 1957) had parents who fled the second Soviet occupation of Lithuania as children, lived in DP camps in Germany in the postwar years, and then immigrated to North America.[25] Šukys grew up in the Lithuanian-Canadian diaspora community. Gabis was born in the United States and participated in the Lithuanian diaspora community in Chicago as a child. Šukys and Gabis represent the third postmemory generation because their memoirs reflect on and research the lives of their grandparents, who belonged to the first generation who experienced cultural trauma. Technically, by virtue of her birth year, Gabis belongs in the same generation as Markelis and Sileika. However, because in her memoir, *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet,* she focuses not on the experience of her mother, who was a child DP, but on her grandfather, who was a Chief of Security Police under the Nazi occupation of Lithuania, and

[25] In the case of Šukys, her father and his family emigrated first to England, and then later to Canada.

who was a perpetrator her work is considered in this dissertation as representative of the third generation.

The second-generation writers' parents had personalities that were fully formed in Lithuania; however, the third generation's parents experienced trauma as children and had to adapt to North American culture as young immigrants. Šukys's paternal grandmother was deported to Siberia in 1941 and only after great effort on the part of the family, was allowed to leave the Soviet Union and immigrate to Canada decades after the war. Gabis's maternal grandmother was deported to Siberia in 1941 as well. Her daughters were able to obtain an exit visa for her from the Soviet Union and brought her to the United States in the 1970s. Gabis's father was Jewish with family roots in Ukraine.

In *Siberian Exile*, Šukys embarks on a rite of return journey to learn what happened to her grandparents during and after World War II. She employs postmemory to recreate scenes from their lives and reflects on them, often posing questions about choices and consequences of choice. Šukys's discovery through archival research that her grandfather was a security police officer during the German occupation of Lithuania leads her to deep reflections on familial and cultural collective guilt, collaboration, and inheritance.

Gabis sets out on a rite of return journey to unlock the silence surrounding her grandfather's actions as Chief of Security Police in the Švenčionys region during the German occupation of Lithuania. Gabis conducts research in the archives of YIVO in New York, the KGB archives, and other State archives in Vilnius, and finally finds evidence that her grandfather signed off on the murders of hundreds of Jews. Researching Polish archives, she learns that her grandfather played a key role in ordering the murders of 500 Polish men in Lithuania. Gabis uses postmemory strategies to reflect on and understand her parents' and grandparents' family and cultural trauma narratives.

In their memoirs, Sileika, Markelis, Šukys, and Gabis address the dichotomy between the first-generation (the DP generation) motivation both through patriotism and survivor's guilt to instill values based on their memories of interwar Lithuania into their North American-born children and grandchildren. This life experience during their formative years created in their psyches a postmemory experience of the first-generations memory of Lithuania. In the narratives of these memoirs, this postmemory experience of Lithuania is often expressed more strongly than the writers' firsthand experience of contemporary Lithuania during their rite of return journeys.

This chapter is followed by the conclusions, bibliography, and an appendix.

1.9. Defended Findings

1. In their memoirs, these five writers – Samuel Bak, Antanas Šileika, Daiva Markelis, Rita Gabis, Julija Šukys – explore and reflect on Lithuanian historical and cultural trauma narratives interwoven with individual and family trauma narratives. Some of the narratives are inspired by the discovery of a hidden secret in the family that is related to some aspect of Lithuania's cultural or historical trauma (as in Šukys's and Gabis's memoirs). Post-traumatic growth and catharsis are experienced and described after family secrets are resolved. Post-traumatic growth and catharsis is also achieved after rite of return journeys are completed and emotional reactions to cultural and historical trauma are processed.

2. The writers studied in this dissertation engage with the questions raised by cultural and historical trauma, how that trauma is passed down intergenerationally, and the significance of the rite of return and haunt memories. These literary works perform several functions: they bear witness, they provide a space for cultural and historical trauma narratives to be narrated and heard, and and as result, create the opportunity for post-traumatic growth to occur.

3. These memoirs explore expressions of survivor's guilt in the individual and in the community. For example, in Samuel Bak's memoir *Painted in Words*, Bak works through his lifelong survivor's guilt over surviving the Holocaust while most of his extended family died. The memoirs of Šileika and Markelis describe collective cultural memory experiences in the ethnic Lithuanian North American Lithuanian diaspora, such as Saturday schools, song and dance festivals, summer camps and religious rituals. However, topics in these two diaspora memoirs, based on recognizable realities in the Lithuanian communities in North America, include survivor's guilt, as well as alcohol abuse and the effects of depression in the ethnic Lithuanian diaspora community and in families.

4. The preoccupation in the memoirs with identity, cultural trauma, historical trauma, cultural memory, and postmemory are not an anomaly, and not the isolated topical concerns of five individual writers, but reflect the focus of works of literature that belong to a growing body of literary work written in English and published in North

America that concerns itself with Lithuanian postmemory, memory, cultural trauma, and historical trauma topics.

5. These five memoirs function both as memory and postmemory narratives. The work of the group of writers analyzed in the dissertation is connected by close family, historical and cultural memory. However, their memories are not only stories of memory but also postmemory. Postmemory topics are consistent in this body of writing and include rite of return journeys, geographic displacement, guilt by association, reflections on identity and split identity.

6. These writers explore topics of familial and affiliative memory that are geographically, historically, and culturally distant for writers living on the North American continent, yet vitally important to them. There is a belatedness to these memory narratives, which in part is caused by the divisions of the Iron Curtain and Cold War politics, and in part because of the amount of time needed to process and heal from extreme trauma (the first generation) or come to terms with inherited postmemory traumas (the second and third generations).

7. Writers of the second and third postmemory generations dare to take on sensitive emotionally difficult topics that were taboo in the Lithuanian diaspora community, such as moral accountability for those Lithuanians who collaborated with the German occupiers (1941–1944) during the Holocaust in Lithuania and who later found safe harbor in the United States and Canada, where they lived out the remainder of their lives peacefully. This is especially true of the thematic focus and preoccupation of the two memoirs by Gabis and Šukys.

8. Writing in English about Lithuania, these writers translate their postmemory experience for an audience of North American readers. Through their literary work they strive to create a context to Lithuanian historical trauma and cultural trauma for an audience of North American readers. This audience of readers take on the roles of witness and listener for the writers.

9. Emotionality is a key component of the collective cultural memory of the Lithuanian diaspora community in the United States and Canada. Three of the five memoirs studied in this dissertation reflect on postmemory emotionality in the diaspora community as expressed through cultural memory. These writers have written memoirs about the

émigré communities of Toronto and Chicago, where shared cultural memory was built from intergenerational recollections passed down from the first generation in an attempt to recreate the imagined "golden age" of prewar independent Lithuania.

10. Literary styles range from writing rich with survival humor, irony, and the absurd (Bak, Sileika, Markelis) to reflective, soul-searching, sensitive prose (Gabis, Šukys). With the exception of Bak, who was born in present-day Lithuania, these writers were born on the North American continent, and completed their educations, started their careers, and raised their families in Canada or the United States. Therefore, the influences of North American culture on their narratives are strong. Their literary work is predominantly influenced by North American stylistics and North American (and Jewish) humor. These writers are influenced more by the literary canon and traditions of the English-speaking world than Lithuanian literature or even Lithuanian diaspora literature written in Lithuanian. Among their literary influences this group of writers cite Joan Didion, Raymond Carver, Graham Greene, and Joyce Carol Oates, to name a few.[26]

[26] See: Vince, Laima, 2019: "The Question of Identity: Lithuanian-American/Canadian Writers", *Lituanus, Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Volume 65, No. 4. p. 47-96.

2. CRITERIA, BIOGRAPHIES, CRITICISM

2.1. Criteria for Selection

To better understand collective, public, and shared cultural memory, and to gain a deeper understanding of how cultural memory and heritage function in the Lithuanian diaspora, this dissertator read, analyzed, then organized by themes and topics the collective body of published work written in English by North American writers of Lithuanian heritage who write about Lithuanian memory and postmemory topics.[27] The dissertator read and considered the collective body of literary fiction, historical fiction, poetry, literary nonfiction, and memoir written by twenty writers identified as North American writers of Lithuanian descent. Five memoirs were selected for study in this dissertation based on the dissertator's wide reading of literary works centered on Lithuanian topics published in North America.

The search for writers was conducted through a library database search of all works of literature published in the United States and Canada about Lithuania, Lithuanian history, or the Lithuanian diaspora. Referrals between writers proved helpful, as did participation in conferences hosted by the Association of the Advancement of Baltic Studies, which brings North American writers and scholars of Lithuanian descent into one intellectual space.

To formulate the field of study, and to place the five memoirs studied in this dissertation within a relevant historical context, the dissertator created a bibliography of literary works on Lithuanian topics written in English and published in North America. Public statements made by North American writers of Lithuanian descent in interviews, the insights of critical reviewers, and close reading and analysis, reveal that Lithuanian cultural and historical trauma narratives of the twentieth century are this group's predominant narrative focus. These findings led to the conclusion that written mostly by American- and Canadian-born writers descended from Lithuanian World War II displaced persons (DPs),[28] but also by writers descended from the first wave of immigrants from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[29] or

[27] For a full list of these writers, see the bibliography in the appendix.

[28] Daiva Markelis, Karolis Gintaras Žukauskas (Gint Aras), Antanas Šileika, Lina Ramona Vitkauskas, Kęstutis Nakas, Medeinė Liuda Tribinevičius, Julija Šukys, Rita Gabis, Silvija Kučėnas Foti, Milda De Voe, Laima Vincė, Ruta Sepetys.

[29] Jocelyn Bartkevičius, James Joseph Brown.

writers of Litvak[30] (Lithuanian Jewish) heritage, much of this group's collective body of work may be considered as postmemory writing as defined by Marianne Hirsch[31] and Eva Hoffman.[32]

The following criteria were used for selection to create a bibliography of literary works by North American writers of Lithuanian heritage:

1. Writers born in Lithuania who as children or young adults fled in the final years of World War II or shortly thereafter, lived in DP camps, and eventually emigrated to the United States or Canada. The writers whose work was considered for study in this dissertation who belong to this group are: Algirdas Landsbergis (born 1924), Birutė Putrius (born 1946) and Samuel Bak (born 1933).

2. Writers born in the United States to DP parents. The writers whose work was considered for study in this dissertation who belong to this group are: Kęstutis Nakas (born 1954), Jon Landsbergis (born 1956), Daiva Markelis (born 1957), Rita Gabis (born 1957), Audre Budrys (born 1966), Ruta Sepetys (born 1967), Milda DeVoe (born 1968), Rimas Užgiris (born 1970), Gint Aras (Karolis Gintaras Žukauskas) (born 1973), Lina Ramona Vitkauskas (born 1974).

3. Writers born in Canada to DP parents. The writers whose work was considered for study in this dissertation who belong to this group are: Irene Guilford (born 1950), Antanas Sileika (born 1953), Julija Šukys (born 1972), Medeinė Liuda Tribinevičius (born 1979).

4. Writers born in the United States whose ancestors emigrated from Lithuania in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the first wave of immigration.[33] The writers whose work was considered

[30] Samuel Bak and Ellen Cassedy.

[31] See: Hirsch, Marianne, 2012: *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, New York: Columbia University Press.

[32] See: Hoffman, Eva, 2004: *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, New York: Public Affairs.

[33] Almost no one in this group had two Lithuanian parents. Some had only one Lithuanian grandparent. However, in their responses they still self-identified as Lithuanian-Americans. Their Lithuanian language skills tend to be limited. In most responses to the survey, the writers revealed that they retain a strong sense of patriotism towards Lithuania.

for study in this dissertation who belong to this group are: Jocelyn Bartkevičius (born 1955) and James Joseph Brown (born 1970).

5. Writers with Litvak ancestry whose ancestors emigrated from Lithuania in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The writers whose work was considered for study in this dissertation who belong to this group are Ellen Cassedy (born 1950).

Writers also had to meet the following professional requirements:

- Have published a literary work of fiction, nonfiction, drama, or poetry with an American or Canadian commercial or university press.
- Write and publish predominantly in English (although some of the participating writers also write in Lithuanian, French, Yiddish, and other languages).

Although self-published literature and life-writing written by North American writers of Lithuanian descent was read and the topics of those narratives considered, in the end none of these literary works were included in the dissertation because the first professional criteria could not be applied.

Another group of writers whose literary work was not considered for this dissertation are Lithuanian immigrant writers who were born, grew up, and completed their education in Soviet-occupied Lithuania or post-Soviet independent Lithuania, and who as adults emigrated to North America since Lithuania became independent in 1991. The experience of these writers is altogether different than that of North American born writers of Lithuanian heritage. Their literary work typically reflects an immigrant narrative. Also, their audience is entirely different. They write in their native Lithuanian to an intended audience of Lithuanian readers back home. With very few exceptions, their literary output is written and published in the Lithuanian language and in Lithuania. Most of their writing deals with their experiences as a Lithuanian abroad. They do not share the experience of being raised and educated in the United States or Canada with the North American writers of Lithuanian descent. English is not their native language. Few, if any, of these writers write in English.[34]

[34] For example, Zita Čepaitė's memoir about immigrating to London as a middle-aged woman to find work, *Emigrantės Dienoraštis* (An Immigrant's Diary) reads like a

2.2. Biographies of the Selected Writers

Samuel Bak was born in 1933 in Vilnius (Vilna) during the years in which the Vilnius region was occupied by Poland. Bak experienced a happy childhood and in his memoir describes his childhood as the beloved spoiled son of loving parents and four doting grandparents. However, his idyllic childhood came to an abrupt end in 1941, when at age eight, he was arrested together with his mother and incarcerated in the Vilnius ghetto. Out of their large extended Litvak family only mother and son survive the Holocaust. In 1945, when he was twelve, Bak and his mother and a surviving aunt and cousin fled Soviet-occupied Lithuania, making their way to Lodz, Poland, and from there to the Landsberg Displaced Persons camp in Germany.

The Holocaust memoir, *Painted in Words*,[35] is the single work of literature written by the world-renowned painter Samuel Bak. However, Bak's artistic work has been the subject of hundreds of articles, scholarly works, and books.[36] Bak's first painting exhibition took place in the Vilna ghetto when he was nine. Over the span of half a century, Bak has participated in numerous exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout Israel, Europe, and the United States. Bak began his career as an abstract painter, but over the decades his work shifted to represent symbolic imagery, Holocaust memories, biblical scenes, sometimes within a post-apocalyptic landscape.[37] Bak represents both the first generation – Bak is a child Holocaust survivor – and the second generation, as three chapters in the memoir are dedicated to the remembrance of his parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents' generations who died in the Holocaust.[38]

---

sociological study on the life of the average working-class Lithuanian immigrant in London and at the same time as a primer for Lithuanians considering immigration. There is even a chapter that describes how to negotiate the London Tube system.

[35] Bak, Samuel, 2004: *Painted in Words: A Memoir*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

[36] Twelve books have been published about Samuel Bak.

[37] See: "Illuminations: The Art of Samuel Bak" at https://www.facinghistory.org/illuminations-art-samuel-bak. Accessed: February 8, 2021.

[38] Chapter Three, "Aunt Yetta's Magic," Chapter Four, "On Father's Side: The Baks", Chapter Eight, "On Mother's Side: The Yochels and the Nadels."

The other five writers studied in this dissertation are university professors and academics, as well as working writers who publish regularly. Except for Sileika, who earned a BA in English, the four other writers all have earned either a PhD in literature, or an MFA in Writing, or as in the case of Šukys, both an MA in Writing and a PhD.

Canadian Antanas Sileika and American Daiva Markelis represent the second postmemory generation in this dissertation. Both were born in the Cold War years to parents who fled the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1944. Sileika and Markelis grew up and came of age within the North American Lithuanian diaspora community, Sileika in Weston, a suburb of Toronto in Ontario, Canada, and Markelis in Cicero, a suburb of Chicago in the United States. *The Barefoot Bingo Caller* (2017) by Antanas Sileika and *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life* (2010) by Daiva Markelis describe life within the Lithuanian diaspora communities in the two major cities in the United States and Canada where populous concentrations of Lithuanian DPs and their descendants had lived. Other North American cities where the Lithuanian diaspora had strong communities during the Cold War decades were New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, Cleveland, and Montreal.

Antanas Sileika was born in 1953 in Weston, Ontario, Canada. He completed his undergraduate degree in English at the University of Toronto. Together with his wife, Snaigė, an artist, he lived in Paris for two years. Sileika wrote extensively as a journalist about Lithuania's re-establishment of independence during the collapse of the Soviet Union and received the Order for Merits to Lithuania from the Lithuanian government in 2004. Sileika taught creative writing and served as head of the creative writing department at Humber School for Writers in Toronto until his retirement in 2017. Five of his six novels are about Lithuanian historical and cultural topics. He published his first novel, *Dinner at the End of the World*, in 1994. In 1997 he published a collection of linked stories, *Buying on Time*, which was nominated for the City of Toronto Book Award and the Stephen Leacock Award for Humor. The stories were serialized for the Canadian CBC Radio program, "Between the Covers." Stories from the book were anthologized in *Dreaming Home, Canadian Short Stories*, and the *Penguin Anthology of Canadian Humour*. *Buying on Time* was translated into Chinese, and into Lithuanian as *Pirkiniai išsimokėtinai*. This book was shortlisted for the Lithuanian book of the year contest in 2014. In 2004, Sileika published *Woman in Bronze* (*Bronzinė moteris*), a novel that compares the seasoned life of a young man in Tsarist Lithuania with subsequent attempts to succeed as a prominent sculptor in Paris in the 1920s. He published *Underground* (*Pogrindis*) in 2011. The novel is a love story set in the underground resistance in the Soviet Union in the 1940s.

In 2019, Sileika published *Provisionally Yours* (*Laikinai Jūsų*), an espionage novel set between 1921 and 1923 in Lithuania and inspired by liberator of the Memel region, Jonas Budrys.

Sileika's memoir, *The Barefoot Bingo Caller* received a starred review in Quill & Quire. In 2018, Antanas Sileika was awarded the Lithuanian National Television and Radio Prize for the best work in Lithuanian literary nonfiction for his memoir, *The Barefoot Bingo Caller*, which was published in Lithuanian translation as *Basakojis bingo pranešėjas.*[39] This prestigious prize is one of the highest accolades in contemporary Lithuanian culture. However, it is interesting to note that the prize in Lithuanian literary nonfiction was awarded to a second-generation Canadian writer of Lithuanian heritage, who identifies himself as a Canadian writer working within the literary traditions of Canadian literature.

Daiva Markelis was born in 1957 in Chicago. She earned a master's degree in the Program for Writers at the University of Illinois at Chicago and later a PhD in Language, Literacy, and Rhetoric. Her dissertation deals with the literacy habits and oral traditions of Lithuanian immigrants. Chapters from her dissertation were published in *Written Communication* and *Lituanus* and in the edited volumes of *Ethnolinguistic Chicago* and *Writers Across Borders*. Her nonfiction has been published in the following literary journals: *New Ohio Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The American Literary Review*, *Oyez*, *The Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine*, *Writing on the Edge*, *Women and Language*, *The Chicago Reader*, *Mattoid*, and the *Fourth River*. Her short stores were published in *The Cream City Review* and *Other Voices*. In 2010 the University of Chicago Press published her memoir, *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life.* Before the publication of Markelis's memoir, there was no literary voice in American literature that reflected the soul searching of the generation of Lithuanian-American women who were born in the United States and Canada in the sixties, seventies, and eighties. These generations of women balanced their Lithuanian-American upbringings and community ties with a personal and professional life in feminist and post-feminist America.

Both Julija Šukys (born 1972) and Rita Gabis (born 197) were born to parents who fled the second Soviet occupation of Lithuania as children, lived in DP camps in Germany in the postwar years, and then immigrated to North

[39] Sileika, Antanas, 2018: *Basakojis bingo pranešėjas,* Vilnius, Baltos Lankos.

America.[40] Šukys grew up in the Lithuanian-Canadian diaspora community. Gabis was born in the United States and participated in the Lithuanian diaspora community in Chicago as a child. Šukys and Gabis represent the third postmemory generation, as their memoirs reflect on and research the lives of their grandparents, who belonged to the first generation to have experienced cultural trauma. Although technically by virtue of her birth year Gabis belongs in the same generation as Markelis and Sileika, in her memoir, *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet,* she focuses not on the experience of her mother, who was a child DP, but on her grandfather, who was Chief of Security Police under the Nazi regime in Lithuania and a perpetrator. Thus, her work is considered in this dissertation as the memoir of a representative of the third generation. Gabis's father was Jewish with family roots in Ukraine.

The second-generation writers' parents came of age in prewar independent Lithuania; however, the third generation's parents experienced war, displacement, postwar trauma, and the challenges of immigration and adaption to a new culture and language as children. This generation had to adapt to North American culture while fostering their Lithuanian identity.

Šukys's paternal grandmother was deported to Siberia in 1941 and after great effort on the part of the family was allowed to leave the Soviet Union and immigrate to Canada decades after the war. Gabis's maternal grandmother was deported to Siberia in 1941 as well. Her daughters were able to obtain an exit visa for her from the Soviet Union and brought her to the United States in the 1970s.

Gabis is a professor of Poetry at Hunter College in New York. She published a collection of poems, *The Wild Field*, a book on teaching creative writing, *Portable MFA in Creative Writing*, and a memoir, *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet*. Her writing has been published in *Harvard Review, The Massachusetts Review*, *Poetry*, *Salamander*, and in the anthology *Lit from Inside: Forty Years of Poetry from Alice James Books*.

Šukys earned a Master's degree and a PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Toronto. She has published three books, *Siberian Exile: Blood, War, and a Granddaughter's Reckoning, Epistolophilia: Writing the Life of Ona Šimaitė,*[41] and *Silence is Death: The Life and Work of Tahar*

[40] In the case of Šukys, her father and his family emigrated first to England, and then later to Canada.

[41] Šukys's *Epistolophilia: Writing the Life of Ona Šimaitė* narrates the story of the librarian Ona Šimaitė[41] through her correspondence. Šimaitė rescued Jews in the Vilnius ghetto, brought them food and supplies, hid precious Jewish books, and

Djaout. She has published numerous essays in some of the top literary journals in the United States and Canada and is the recipient of prestigious awards and grants. She is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri.

The academic professional careers of these writers and their dedication to the craft of writing and to a life of letters, and the deep thinking and descriptive visual writing of Bak, all speak to a balance between the literary space of the personal realm and the rigors of academic training and thought that shape their literary work.

2.3. Brief Introduction to the Memoirs

Bak's memoir describes his idyllic childhood in Vilnius, the Holocaust, and then transitions into postmemory re-imaginings based on his mother's stories and memories of his extended family who were lost in the Holocaust. The memoir documents Bak's artistic evolution as a painter and his life in Israel, Europe, and the United States.

Bak describes in his memoir how after surviving the Holocaust his mother seeks to instill in him a strong sense of Jewish identity. She achieves this by emigrating with him to Israel. Year later, Bak emigrates to the United States. Bak documents in his memoir how through post-traumatic growth and catharsis he overcomes the trauma he experienced during the Holocaust in Lithuania. He returns to Lithuania in his middle age and donates several hundred of his best paintings to the Tolerance Center in Vilnius to foster cross-cultural understanding.

Sileika's *The Barefoot Bingo Caller* narrates the coming-of-age story of a young Lithuanian-Canadian man growing up in a DP family in Canada during a time of economic upward mobility. Sileika reflects on his shared collective cultural memory experiences in the Canadian Lithuanian diaspora community, describes his rite of return journeys to Lithuania, and through

---

delivered letters. Researching this book prepared Šukys to understand that her grandfather's position as a security police officer was not insignificant. *Epistolophilia* won the 2013 Canadian Jewish Book Award for Holocaust Literature (National Canadian award) and was shortlisted for the 2012 Mavis Gallant Prize in Nonfiction (Province-wide award, Quebec) and long-listed for the 2013 Charles Taylor Prize in Literary Nonfiction (National Canadian Award). It was named a "Best Book of 2012" by *Maisonneuve Quarterly* (National magazine). *Silence is Death* was reviewed in *Choice*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Complete Review*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*.

postmemory recreates the cultural trauma of his DP parents' displacement from Lithuania and their struggles as immigrants in Canada.

Markelis's *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life* narrates the coming-of-age story of a young Lithuanian-American woman during the Cold War era before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Chicago-born Lithuanian-American writer and academic describes her struggles to balance a traditional Catholic Lithuanian-American female identity, and all the traditional roles that identity would have cast her in as mother, homemaker, Lithuanian patriot, against the American societal influences of the sixties, seventies, and eighties during the feminist era and the Women's Rights movement. Markelis reflects on her shared collective cultural memory experiences in the North American Lithuanian diaspora community in Chicago, and examines the effects of intergenerational trauma, alcoholism, and depression within that community. Through postmemory strategies she recreates her parents' prewar lives in Lithuania, internalizing and reflecting on family and community cultural trauma experiences.

In *Siberian Exile*, Šukys embarks on a rite of return journey to learn what happened to her grandparents during and after World War II. She employs postmemory to recreate scenes from their lives and reflects on them, often posing questions about choices and consequences of choice. Šukys's discovery through archival research that her grandfather was a security police officer during the German occupation of Lithuania leads her to deep reflections on familial and cultural collective guilt, collaboration, and inheritance.

Gabis sets out on a rite of return journey to unlock the silence surrounding her grandfather's actions as Chief of Security Police in the Švenčionys region during the German occupation of Lithuania. In *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet* Gabis takes a meandering journey through the archives of YIVO in New York, the KGB archives, and other State archives in Vilnius, and finally finds evidence in Polish archives that her grandfather had signed off on the murders of hundreds of Jews and also the murders of 500 Polish men in Lithuania. Gabis uses postmemory strategies to reflect on and understand her parents' and grandparents' family and cultural trauma narratives.

Sileika, Markelis, Šukys, and Gabis address the dichotomy between the first-generation (the DP generation), whose aim was to to instill values based on their memories of the society of interwar Lithuania into their North American-born children and grandchildren, and who employ patriotism and survivor's guilt to achieve this end, with their North American coming of age stories of the second and third American and Canadian born generation. This cultural memory experience that takes place during their formative years, and

is mirrored between the family and the diaspora community, creating a postmemory experience that reflects the first-generation's remembrances of Lithuania and wartime and postwar trauma. In these narratives, postmemory perceptions of Lithuania often supersede actual firsthand experiences of contemporary Lithuania.

These memoirs describe (often through humor and irony) how initially the second and third generations push back from the cultural memory narratives and traditions inculcated by the first-generation. However, eventually empathy and understanding for the first generation prevails.

2.4. Previous Research on Lithuanian Diaspora Literature

Books, scholarly studies, and articles about Lithuanian diasporic writers who write in Lithuanian have been published both by Lithuanian diasporic publishers in the United States and Canada, and in Lithuania. An encyclopedic anthology of criticism and commentary on the work of Lithuanian DP diasporic writers was compiled in 1992 by both Lithuanian and Lithuanian émigré writers and literary scholars. Each chapter was written by a different writer or researcher about a Lithuanian writer. This extensive, impressive volume, titled *Lietuvių Literatūra Egzode* (*Lithuanian Literature in Exile*)[42] at the time of its publication had significant cultural impact on the literary world of a newly independent Lithuania. It was regarded as a literary homecoming for the Lithuanian exiled diasporic poets, playwrights, and writers of the World War II generation. Their literary work had been banned in Lithuania during the half-century long Soviet occupation, and could only be read in secret through underground publications. This book is still an important resource for acquiring a broad overview of Lithuanian diasporic writers who wrote in Lithuanian and were active in the Lithuanian North American diasporic communities.

In his 1988 article, "Baltic Émigré Publishing and Scholarship in the Western World," David Crowe writes about how in the early years of the Lithuanian diasporic community much of the literary output was didactic and nationalistic, but as the years went on, the writing of Lithuanian diasporic writers became more sophisticated, though their work remained laced with

[42] Bradūnas, Kazimieras, 1992: *Lietuvių Literatūra Egzode* (Lithuanian Literature in Exile), Chicago: Lituanistikos Institutas.

nostalgia and a sense of longing for the lost homeland. Crowe mentions in his article some of the émigré literary publications that served to showcase the writing of Lithuanian diaspora writers.

Publishing for over four decades, the English-language Lithuanian émigré journal, *Lituanus*, presents the poetry and prose of the Lithuanian diasporic writers translated into English, or written, as in the case of bilingual writer, Algirdas Landsbergis and a few others, in English. As second and third generation Lithuanian diasporic writers became active from the early eighties onward, *Lituanus* published their literary work, as well as book reviews and scholarly articles on the literary work of North American writers of Lithuanian descent. Another important Baltic American scholarly humanities journal is the *Journal of Baltic Studies*, which is the journal of the Baltic organization, *Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies* (AABS). Also worth mentioning is the former Lithuanian language humanities magazine of liberal-minded Lithuanians (Santara Šviesa) *Metmenys*, which published work by DP generation Lithuanian diaspora writers as well as poetry, prose, nonfiction, and reviews by North American writers of Lithuanian descent. This journal has been publishing for nearly half a century.

Researchers have researched and written about Lithuanian diaspora literature as an expression of post-colonialism. Professor Dr. Violeta Kelertas[43] was the first to apply postcolonial theory to contemporary Lithuanian literature in the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and during the reinstatement of Lithuania's independence. She is the author and editor of numerous scholarly publications on Lithuanian literature, including her seminal work, *Baltic Postcolonialism.*[44] Another important contribution is her edited and introduced anthology of Lithuanian prose, *"Come into My Time": Lithuania in Prose Fiction*.[45] Although the majority of Kelertas's research and scholarly writing is on Lithuanian writers who write in Lithuanian, she has also written reviews on literature written in English by North American writers of Lithuanian descent. Most recently, she has

[43] Professor Kelertas is the former Lithuanian World Community (Pasaulio Lietuvių Bendruomenė) Endowed Chair of Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and currently Affiliated Professor at University of Washington, Seattle

[44] Kelertas, Violeta, 2006: *Baltic Postcolonialism*, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi. This book was nominated for the Heldt prize in 2006.

[45] Kelertas, Violeta, 1992: "*Come into My Time": Lithuania in Prose Fiction*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

reviewed the poetry collection of the Lithuanian-American poet Rimas Uzgiris, in *Lituanus*: "North of Paradise: Dancing Poetry."[46]

Also worth noting is Dr. Rūta Šlapkauskaitė, who in her doctoral dissertation, *Multikultūrizmo Problema Kanados Literatūroje: Egzotikos Diskurso Apraiškos* (The Problem of Multiculturalism in Canadian Literature: Manifestations of the Discourse of the Exotic) considered problems of multiculturalism in her analysis of the novel *The Embrace* by Lithuanian-Canadian writer Irene Guilford.

Dr. D. Jovaišienė wrote her PhD dissertation on the literary work of Lithuanian-Canadian writers Antanas Sileika and Irene Guilford: *Antanas Sileika ir Irene Guilford: Tautinio tapatumo raiška naujasiuose lietuvių autorių svetur parašytuose tekstuose (Irenos Mačiulytės-Guilford, „Glėbys", Antano Šileikos, „Bronzinė moteris"),* (The Expression of National Identity in Contemporary Texts Written by Lithuanian Authors Abroad (Irena Mačiulytė-Guilford's *The Embrace* and Antantas Sileikas's *Woman in Bronze*).

Dr. Aušra Paulauskienė has written and published two books that delve more deeply into the representation of Lithuania in English-language writing: *North America: Lost and Found: The Discovery of Lithuanian in American Fiction* (2007) and *Undiscovered Jewish-American Writers from Lithuania: Ezra Brudno and Goldie Stone* (2007). Paulauskienė notes that Litvaks, Lithuanian-Jews who emigrated to North America, have written far more about Lithuania than Christian Lithuanians:

> …The most substantive representation of Lithuanians in American letters can be found in the legacy of Jewish-American literature produced by writers of Jewish extraction. Differently from other white ethnics in nineteenth-century America, Lithuanian Jews spoke for themselves and spoke in the new language of their adopted country. (Paulauskienė, 2007, 11)

Indeed, a library data base search in English of the word "Lithuania" turns up mostly references to Jewish Lithuanian culture. However, Paulauskienė concedes that most of the writing produced and published in North America by North American Lithuanian immigrants is written in Lithuanian, and not in English, thus rendering it inaccessible to North

[46] Kelertas, Violeta, 2020: Rimas Uzgiris, "North of Paradise: Dancing Poetry," *Lituanus,* Winter 2020.

American readers. Her research reveals that few authors developed themes of immigration and integration in their literary work. Paulauskienė cites the work of William Wolkovich-Valakavicius, who claims that out of the small group of competent writers at the turn of the nineteenth century, most of them devoted their attention to writing about the homeland:

> World War II refugees were even more homeland-oriented. Their political goal was the restoration of Lithuania's independence, while their cultural goal was the preservation of Lithuanianess. They did not consider themselves immigrants but rather refugees and exiles. (Paulauskienė, 2007, 11).

However, Paulauskienė's research culminated with her publication in 2007 claiming the Lithuanian diaspora produced a limited number of literary works written in English about Lithuania. Over the past decade, many more books about Lithuania written in English by North American writers of Lithuanian heritage have been published, including the memoirs analyzed in this dissertation.

Dr. Žydronė Kolevinskienė has researched and written books and articles about Lithuanian diasporic writers. Of note is her book: *Lietuviškumo ribos: tautinių vertybių kaita XX amžiaus pabaigos–XXI amžiaus pradžios lietuvių (e)migrantų autorių literatūroje* (*The Boundaries of Lithuanian Identity: Changing Ethnic Values at the End of the Twentieth Century and Beginning of the Twenty-First Century in the Literature of Lithuanian Émigré writers*). Together with co-editor Loreta Mačianskaitė, in 2019 Žydronė Kolevinskienė published an anthology of literary work by Lithuanian writers living abroad: *Egzodika: Pasaulio lietuvių rašytojų antologija* (*Exodus: An Anthology of International Lithuanian Writing*).[47] Included in this anthology are three North American writers of Lithuanian descent: Antanas Sileika, M. M. DeVoe, and Laima Vincė. The writers included in this anthology were invited to attend a conference on Lithuanian diasporic writers at the Institute for Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius in May 2019. Also, worth mentioning is the work of Dalia Kuizinienė, who published a chapter titled "Lithuanian Émigré Literature and Press" in the book, *History of Lithuanian Culture*.

---

[47] Kolevinskienė, Žydronė, Mačianskaitė, Loreta, 2019: *Egzodika: Pasaulio lietuvių rašytojų antologiją (Exodus: An Anthology of International Lithuanian Writers)*, Vilnius: The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore.

Several research institutes in Lithuania study Lithuanian diasporic literature, both the DP émigré generation and the subsequent generations. Part of Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, the Lithuanian Emigration Institute, under the leadership of its director, Dr. Egidijus Aleksandravičius, dedicates itself to the study of the cultural, political, and scientific heritage of Lithuanian émigrés. Researchers in this institute also conduct research on the history of Lithuanian exile, culture, and literature. They analyze the contemporary migration of Lithuanians abroad. The Lithuanian Emigration Institute publishes books, articles, and collections of documents on Lithuanians abroad, including writing about their literary work and output. Since 1999 the Lithuanian Emigration Institute has published the journal, *Egzodo archyvas* (*The Exile Archive*). Since 2006, they have published the scholarly journal, *Oikos: Lietuvių migracijos ir diasporos studijos* (*Oikos: Lithuanian Migration and Diaspora Studies*).

2.5. Lithuanian Cultural Memory as an Expression of American Multiculturalism

In his introduction to *Not English Only: Redefining "American" in American Studies,* Orm Overland points out that the blind spot of multiculturalism in North America is that it "has not led to much awareness of the role of the many culture-specific languages in a multicultural United States" (Overland, 2001, 2). He argues that "those who study and teach the cultures and literatures of a variety of ethnic groups in the United States often promote a view of the country as monolingual" (Overland, 2001, 2). He observes that if "American culture means the culture of all those who live within the borders of the United States regardless of race, ethnicity or place of birth, then multiculturalism may be regarded as a temporary stage of reorientation, a preparation for a new understanding of what is "American" about American culture" (Overland, 2001, 6). The nine scholarly essays in his book explore the American cultural experience as expressed in languages such as Swedish, Polish, German, and Spanish (to name a few). This scholarly work and discussion open the possibility for Lithuanian language texts and expressions of culture and society that occurred in the Lithuanian language to be considered as an expression of American culture rather than homeland-oriented Lithuanian culture. It is also important to note here the subtle differences between Canada and the United States' views on immigration: Canada celebrates a society that is a mosaic of culture, while the United States prides itself on being a cultural melting pot. The implication is that there are more opportunities to preserve

one's culture of origin in Canada than in the United States, where one is expected to integrate into mainstream American culture.

2.6. Lithuanian Diaspora Centers

Lithuanian community infrastructure, established in the early twentieth century by the first wave of Lithuanian immigrants in major Lithuanian-American and Lithuanian-Canadian population centers, such as Chicago, New York, Toronto, and Montreal, was transformed into the ethnic communities of the DPs.[48] These cities, and the contrast between the culture and world of those North American cities with insular communities of the Lithuanian diaspora, become the settings and backdrop for fiction and literary nonfiction written by second and third generation Lithuanian diaspora writers. For example, Toronto and Weston are key settings in Sileika's *The Barefoot Bingo Caller*. Chicago, with its Lithuanian communities in Marquette Park and Cicero, play a central role in Markelis's memoir, *White Field, Black Sheep*. Predominant trauma topics in these writers' body of work include survivor's guilt, depression, alcohol abuse, religion as a coping mechanism, and silence.

2.7. First Generation Lithuanian Diaspora Writing

Among the refugees who fled the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1944 and headed for the democracies of the West were talented young writers and poets, like Bernardas Braždžionis, Kazimieras Bradūnas, Liūnė Sutema, Birute Pūkelevičiūtė, and others.[49] Some of these writers had already established themselves as literary figures in interwar Lithuania, when culture, education, and the arts thrived in a democratic society.[50] As noted by Wyman, the vibrant, politically, culturally, and socially active Lithuanian diaspora evolved first in the Displaced Persons Camps of the Allied Territories of Germany and Austria. The émigré writers of the DP generation – in the language of

[48] See Markelis, Daiva, 2010: *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life*. p. 26-27.
[49] See: Bradūnas, Kazimieras, 1992: *Lietuvių Literatūra Egzode (Lithuanian Literature in Exile)*.
[50] For example, by the time he fled Lithuania Brazdžionis had already published six collections of poetry. Bradūnas was also already established as a poet.

postmemory, the "first generation"[51] – wrote in Lithuanian and published with Lithuanian émigré publishing houses.[52] Their literary work was banned in Soviet Lithuania, limiting their readership for the greater part of their lifetimes to the Lithuanian diaspora. Much of the émigrés' writing reflects a longing for the lost homeland, idealized memories of prewar Lithuania, and expresses the desire of one day finally going home.[53] For example, in 1945 Lithuanian poet Kazys Bradūnas wrote a lyric poem, *The Alien Bread*, in which he depicts vignettes of home – a bend in the river, a flower. These images comfort a traveler until he realizes that this flower does not grow in his home country, and that the river bears a strange German name. This iconic poem came to symbolize for many Lithuanian DPs their sense of loss, longing, and homesickness. These sentiments of romantic longing for the lost homeland were passed on to the second and third generations born to DP families not only through the literary work of the first-generation diaspora writers, but also through Lithuanian diaspora organizations, publications, summer camps, and schools.

The émigré community continued its activities during the postwar and Cold War years in North America, South America, and Australia, the United Kingdom and Europe, where the DPs and their families resettled

---

[51] The generation that experiences cultural and/or historical trauma firsthand.

[52] The success of the DPs to preserve Lithuanian culture and language outside of Lithuania after Soviet Lithuania was sealed off behind the Iron Curtain for over half a century was largely due to the work of Lithuanian émigré intellectuals. In his book, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*, Mark Wyman noted that "…a Lithuanian who toured thirty of his countrymen's camps in September 1945 reported that intellectuals were the most numerous classification. Some 75 percent of the university, high school, and grade schoolteachers had fled Lithuania, he reported, as well as 80 percent of the doctors and 'a large part of those who worked directly to augment our cultural heritage: writers, painters, musicians, artists, etc." Seventy-five percent of Lithuanian DPs in the camps were from the intellectual classes of Lithuania. As the years in the camps progressed, Lithuanians established 16 Lithuanian language publishing presses throughout the DP camp system in Germany. They printed folklore and national history, as well as memoirs and newly created works. Literary events and poetry readings, as well as theater performances, were held regularly from 1944 through 1950, when the camps began closing down after large numbers of the DPs were given permission to emigrate to Canada, Australia, South America, and the United States. A Lithuanian literary review, *Aidai (Echoes)* was launched and continued publishing for decades in the diaspora. Wyman, Mark, 1989, 1998: *DP's: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. p. 38-60 and 208-209.

[53] See: Wyman, Mark, 1989, 1998: *DP's: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. p. 208-209.

permanently.[54] Some of these diaspora communities, such as those located in Chicago, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Toronto, and Montreal, were built on the foundations of previous Lithuanian immigrant communities, who had established churches, schools, and social organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries. The first wave Lithuanian immigrants sponsored Lithuanian displaced persons and helped them adapt to a new life in North America by helping the refugees secure jobs and manage challenging economic conditions in the United States and Canada.

The largest percentage of postwar DPs relocated to North America. Among their descendants the writers whose work is studied in this dissertation self-identify as North Americans (citizens of Canada and the United States) while at the same time regarding themselves as ethnic Lithuanians strongly invested in their Lithuanian heritage.[55] This group tends to live as transnationals who move between at least two worlds, two or more languages, two or more realities. Their multicultural worldview is reflected in their writing and draws from both their North American roots and their Lithuanian heritage.

The Lithuanian diaspora in North America participates in the cultural conversation of contemporary Lithuania. They are bicultural, multilingual, and possess a unique point of view on identity, history, and community, which is informed by their cultural inheritance, cultural memory, and the inheritance of cultural and historic trauma.[56] Their worldview is also shaped by the diaspora's half-a-century-long desire for the reinstatement of independence in Lithuania.

Today Lithuanian diaspora communities exist in North and South America, Australia, South Africa, Europe, and Asia. According to a 2014 Statistics Lithuania report, 619,600 people who identified as citizens of the Republic of Lithuania live abroad.[57] However, this number does not include descendants of Lithuanian Nineteenth and Twentieth century economic immigrants to North America or the descendants of Lithuanian World War II

---

[54] See: Wyman, Mark, 1989, 1998: *DPs Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951.*

[55] Vince, Laima, 2019: "The Question of Identity: Lithuanian-American/Canadian Writers", *Lituanus, Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Volume 65, No. 4. p. 47-96.

[56] Gailienė, Danutė, 2008: *Ka jie mums padarė: Lietuvos gyvenimas traumu psichologijos žvilgsniu* (What They Did To Us: The Trauma of Lithuanians from a Psychological Perspective), Vilnius: Tyto Alba. p. 76.

[57] Official Statistics Portal: The Lithuanian Department of Statistics (Statistics Lithuania) https://osp.stat.gov.lt/informaciniai-pranesimai?articleId=3046777.

displaced persons (DPs).[58] Most of the descendants of these first and second waves of emigration reside in the United States and Canada.[59] Descendants of Nineteenth and Twentieth century immigrations from Lithuania, the first and second wave of migration, continue to self-identify as people of Lithuanian heritage despite the number of decades that have elapsed since their parents or grandparents left Lithuania.[60] Although North Americans of Lithuanian heritage may not have Lithuanian citizenship or have been born in Lithuania, or have even visited Lithuania, they take pride in their Lithuanian heritage by participating in Lithuanian world dance and song festivals, sending their children to Lithuanian Saturday language schools and summer camps, participating in Lithuanian diaspora activities, and maintaining memberships in Lithuanian community organizations, like the Lithuanian World Community.[61]

[58] People who are forced to leave the place where they live because of war. See: Wyman, Mark. 1989, 1998. *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

[59] Lithuanian Americans today were still a relatively small ethnic group in 1990, since there were 842,209 Lithuanian Americans according to the U.S. Census; of these, 30,344 were foreign-born and 811,865 were born in the United States. This number was up from the 1980 figure of 742,776. The five states with the largest populations of Lithuanian Americans in both 1980 and 1990 (in descending order) were Illinois, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and California. See: Schaefer, Richard T. 2008. *Encyclopedia of race, ethnicity, and society*. SAGE Publications. p. 854–85.

[60] Ciubrinskas, Vytis. "Diaspora as a Resource of Homeland Nationalism Forged Overseas and Contested Back Home: The Case of Lithuanian-Americans."

[61] The Lithuanian World Community was established in 1949 (in Lithuanian: *Pasaulio lietuvių bendruomenė*). This non-profit organization unifies Lithuanian communities abroad. The Lithuanian World Community is active in 42 countries. In 1949, Lithuania's Supreme Liberation Committee (VLIK) established the Lithuanian Charter, which pledged to unite all Lithuanians outside Lithuania's borders and to promote Lithuanian culture and language abroad.

3. THEORETICAL TOOLS

3.1. A Brief Overview of Trauma

Lithuanian psychologist Dr. Danutė Gailienė has researched historical trauma and cultural trauma in Lithuania since the 1990s. Her seminal work, *Ką jie mums padarė: Lietuvos gyvenimas traumų psichologijos žvilgsniu*[62] (What They Did To Us: The Trauma of Lithuanians from a Psychological Perspective) is a study of the long-term effects of cultural and historical trauma on contemporary Lithuania. According to Gailienė, "the theory of cultural trauma was developed by studying collective traumas in various social contexts in different regions: reflections of critical American historic events in the public consciousness (Neal, 1998; Alexander, 2004); experiences of the negative aspects of social transformations in post-communist Poland and other Eastern European countries (Sztompka, 2000); connections between the social and individual level of cultural traumas in post-Soviet Estonia (Aarelaid-Tart, 2006)" (Gailienė, 2015, 13).

Psychiatrist Sandra Bloom[63] traces trauma reactions back to our prehistoric ancestors. She states: "It is impossible to fully understand human behavior and the human response to trauma without grasping key insights about the way our evolution has affected us" (Bloom, 1999, 2). The way in which humans respond to trauma originates in what Bloom refers to as "our mammalian heritage." Basic psychology has established that all humans have a fight-or-flight reaction that is activated when danger is present. Adrenaline, a hormone that is secreted by the adrenal medulla in response to stress, which increases heart rate, pulse rate, and blood pressure, and raises the blood levels of glucose and lipids, is activated when who we are as an individual personality instantly shifts to react to the danger present (Bloom, 1999, 3). At this point, the individual under stress will either fight off the danger or flee for safety. However, trauma occurs and is embedded into the brain when the victim of a traumatic situation cannot escape or survive the situation unharmed

---

[62] See: Gailienė, Danutė, 2008: *Ka jie mums padarė: Lietuvos gyvenimas traumu psichologijos žvilgsniu* (What They Did To Us: The Trauma of Lithuanians from a Psychological Perspective), Vilnius: Tyto Alba. p. 87.

[63] Bloom, Sandra L., 1999: "Trauma Theory Abbreviated" From: The Final Action Plan: A Coordinated Community-Based Response to Family Violence, Attorney General of Pennsylvania's Family Violence Task Force, October 1999. The Sanctuary Model. Web. April 27, 2013. Access online:
http://www.sanctuaryweb.com/bloom.php.

(Bloom, 1999, 9). Helplessness, according to Bloom, is intolerable and is a source of trauma:

> If a person is able to master the situation of danger by successfully running away, winning the fight or getting help, the risk of long-term changes are lessened. But in many situations considered to be traumatic, the victim is helpless, and it is this helplessness that is such a problem for human beings. As a species, we cannot tolerate helplessness—it goes against our instinct for survival. (Bloom, 1999, 3)

The first time the word "trauma" was used to refer to "a deeply distressing experience" was in the late 19th century in Europe. The French neurologist, Jean Martin Charcot, was one of the first physicians to investigate the relationship between trauma and mental illness. Charcot was predominantly interested in hysteria, a mental illness believed at the time to mostly affect women. Charcot's view that the causes of hysteria ought to be traced back to a psychological malfunctioning rather than to a physical one was in opposition to the beliefs of his fellow physicians[64] (Brandell and Ringel, 2012). This theory was further developed by Charcot's student, Pierre Janet, who continued Charcot's research. Sigmund Freud, together with his colleague Josef Breuer, was also influenced by Charcot's theory and adopted some of Charcot's findings into his *Studies on Hysteria*, published in 1893 (Brandell and Ringel, 2012). By the late nineteenth century physicians began to agree that trauma was not limited to the physical human body, but also affected the psyche.

3.2. Defining Trauma

A postmemory reading of a literary work relies on understanding the theoretical framework of trauma theory. To understand trauma theory, it is necessary to first define trauma. Over the past few decades, as society has delved deeper into the study of trauma, and its consequences on the individual and society, psychologists and psychiatrists have offered definitions. In her seminal book on the problems of the identification and treatment of trauma,

[64] Brandell, R. Jerrold and Ringel, S. Shoshana, 2012: *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice and Research,* California: Sage Publications, Inc..

Trauma and Recovery,[65] psychiatrist Dr. Judith Herman writes about how the study of psychological trauma has "led into the realms of the unthinkable and foundered on fundamental questions of belief" (Herman 1992, 1). Bessel Van der Kolk, perhaps one of the most well-known psychiatrists to write on trauma, in his book, *The Body Keeps the Score*,[66] writes that humans are resilient, and that humanity has recovered from countless natural and man-made disasters, as well as personal violence and betrayal. Yet, on the interior trauma leaves a scar.

> But traumatic experiences do leave traces, whether on a large scale (on our histories and cultures) or close to home, on our families, with dark secrets being imperceptibly passed down through generations. They also leave traces on our minds and emotions, on our capacity for joy and intimacy, and even on our biology and immune systems. (Van der Kolk 2014, Prologue)

Trauma shares the following features: trauma is repetitious, trauma is belated, trauma impacts individual lives, families, cultures, and histories, and despite human resilience, trauma leaves emotional scars over a lifetime.

3.3. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

The term "post-traumatic stress disorder" came into use in the 1970s in large part due to the diagnoses of United States military veterans of the Vietnam War. After World War I, as soldiers returned from this particularly brutal war fought in the close quarters of trenches, a new phenomenon emerged called "shell shock." The symptoms of soldiers suffering from shell shock were consistent and manifested themselves as "incontrollable weeping and screaming, memory loss, physical paralysis, and lack of responsiveness" (Herman, 1992).[67] After soldiers returned from the Vietnam War with these same symptoms, it became widely accepted that soldiers who survived any

---

[65] Herman, Judith, M.C. *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror*, New York, Basic books, 1992.
[66] Van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*, New York, Penguin Book, 2014.
[67] Herman, Judith, M.C. *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror*, New York, Basic books, 1992.

war may suffer from these same symptoms.[68] PTSD was officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.[69] The psychologists Chaim Lifton and Robert Shatan identified 27 symptoms under the diagnosis "post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" (Van der Kolk, Weisaeth, et al., 1996). The fifth and most recent edition of the DSM[70] defines post-traumatic stress disorder as follows:

> Persistent, distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event (s) that lead the individual to blame himself/herself or others. Persistent negative emotional state (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame). Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities. (DSM-5)

Based on the classifications of the DSM-3, Van der Kolk states that in addition to avoidance-based reactions, the traumatized person may experience symptoms that are intrusive, such as nightmares and flashbacks.[71] In 1889, Pierre Janet was one of the first psychiatrists to suggest that there are two different types of memory, which are categorized differently in the brain. Everyday experiences that are perceived consciously are stored as "narrative memories" that are easily remembered and narrated. However, traumatic experiences are stored in another area in the brain as "emotional or traumatic memories" (Janet 1889). It is precisely these traumatic memories that are not consciously accessible for the victim, unlike the everyday memories. Janet makes the claim that these memories are "visceral sensations or visual images" (Janet 1889). Van der Kolk claims that these memories have an

---

[68] Van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*, New York, Penguin Books. Chapter One: Lessons from Vietnam Veterans, 2014.

[69] American Psychiatric Association. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Third Edition, Washington, DC, London: American Psychiatric Publishing, 1980.

[70] American Psychiatric Association. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Third Edition, Washington, DC, London: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013.

[71] Van der Kolk, B. A., Weisaeth, L., and Van der Hart, O. "History of Trauma in Psychiatry." In *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on the Mind, Body and Society*. Ed. B. A. van der Kolk, A. McFarlane, and L. Weisaeth. New York: Guilford, 1996.

enduring quality and are less subject to distortion.[72] Van der Kolk suggests that traumatic memories become "engraved in the mind."[73] Thus, the trauma victim is never freed of the reliving of the experience of trauma, even decades later.

Freud's "talking cure," or psychotherapy, was one of the earliest methods used to help victims of trauma cope with symptoms. Freud emphasizes the role of the patient and that of the analyst are of equal importance for the success of the healing process.[74] According to Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist, Dori Laub, there is a need for Holocaust survivors to tell their story: "Yet it is essential for this narrative that *could not be articulated* to be *told*, to be *transmitted*, to be *heard*" (Laub 1995, 69). Being heard, being listened to, takes on special significance in the trauma recovery process. When the opportunity to be listened to and heard is absent, the trauma may persist.

Freud's method of psychotherapy has remained the predominant method of addressing trauma; however, van der Kolk and others have developed additional methods of healing trauma, including yoga, massage, and EDMR. In an interview with David Bullard, van der Kolk states: "From my vantage point as a researcher we know that the impact of trauma is upon the survival or animal part of the brain. That means that our automatic danger signals are disturbed, and we become hyper- or hypo-active: aroused or numbed out. We become like frightened animals. We cannot reason ourselves out of being frightened or upset."[75] He believes that "talking can be very helpful in acknowledging the reality about what's happened and how it's affected you," but he does not believe talking is effective as a cure because "it doesn't go deep enough into the survival brain."[76] Understanding how trauma affects the brain is integral to understanding trauma theory.

---

[72] Van der Kolk, B. A. "The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Post Traumatic Stress." *Harvard Review of Psychiatry.* Vol. 1. No. 5. 1994. p. 253-265. Print.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol II* (ed Strachey, J.). London: Hogarth Press, 1955.

[75] Bullard, David. "Bessel van der Kolk on Trauma, Development, and Healing," Psychotherapy.net, 2014, See: https://www.psychotherapy.net/interview/bessel-van-der-kolk-trauma, accessed March 29, 2021.

[76] *Ibid.*

3.4. Trauma Theory

After PTSD was recognized as an authentic mental illness that required psychological treatment, researchers from many different fields, including literary theorists, began delving deeper into aspects of trauma. Their work laid the foundation for the field of trauma theory.

Trauma theory is preoccupied with the effects of trauma and the symptoms of trauma on the individual and on the traumatized culture as it is expressed in a written text. Trauma theory is clustered under the umbrella of psychoanalytical criticism and is an interdisciplinary area of Western scholarship that melds the disciplines of psychology and the humanities. Trauma theory borrows tools and concepts from sociology, psychology, and history and is concerned with how traumatic experiences affect and shape literature through the representation of traumatic experiences.

The work of Sigmund Freud and Hannah Arendt lay the groundwork for the further development of the field of trauma theory, when researchers such as Cathy Caruth, Steph Craps, Dominick LaCapra, and others built and expanded on the initial work done by Freud and Arendt. Caruth was one of the first theorists to suggest that literature lends itself to the discourse of trauma. Caruth establishes trauma theory in her book, *Unclaimed Experience*[77]:

> It is in the literary dimension of the discourse of trauma, I would suggest—in the theory's refusal to be exhausted by a simple conceptual translation—that the language of trauma, both as testimony and as theory, first powerfully spoke to, and continues to address, so many people from different fields and different cultures. (Caruth 1996, 2016, 117)

Caruth argues that the standard textualist approach to the analysis of a work, which claims that all references are indirect, should not necessarily direct our reading away from history and what she has coined as "political and ethical paralysis" (Caruth 1996, 10). She claims that considering history's impact on the production of a text may aid the reader in fully understanding the text in a way that would otherwise not be possible or would generate a superficial reading of the text.

---

[77] Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Caruth writes: "Through the notion of trauma […] we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at re-situating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not" (Caruth 1996, 11). The claim that trauma opens "realms of the unthinkable" and questions belief adds emotionality to the study of trauma. Caruth's work contributes another level of understanding trauma by identifying trauma as a belated experience:

> The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life. (Caruth 1996, 7)

Caruth emphasizes that trauma impacts a life endlessly: trauma is continually chasing its own tail because the experience of trauma is circular rather than linear.

In the embryonic phases of trauma study, trauma theorists concerned themselves with applying trauma theory to literary texts that referred directly to the Holocaust. Pierre Nora and others opened the discourse about public monuments and memorials as "Sites of Memory." French documentary filmmaker Claude Lanzmann was interested in oral histories and in recording the voices that bore witness to the Holocaust, which led to the Shoah project. Others followed in their footsteps, further developing new projects and ideas. However, since the late 1990s, critics like Stef Craps[78] have argued for a broader inclusion of cultures to which trauma theory can be applied. Craps opens the door for memory work on the experience of the Soviet occupation, communism, the postwar anti-Soviet resistance, and other 20th century phenomena. Craps adds his perspective to trauma theory as a tool for the analysis of literature, arguing that trauma theory brought researchers closer to a real-world interpretation of literary texts than tools that are "indifferent or oblivious," such as deconstructionism or poststructuralism. In his pivotal publication on trauma theory, *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criteria*,[79] Craps argues for greater relevance:

---

[78]See: Craps, Stef. *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism,* "Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma theory in the global age", London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

[79] See: Craps, Stef. "Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma theory in the global age", *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism.* Eds.

> Amid accusations that literary scholarship, particularly in its deconstructive, poststructuralist, or textual guise, had become indifferent or oblivious 'to what goes on in the real world' (the world outside the text: history, politics, ethics), trauma theory confidently announced itself as an essential apparatus for understanding 'the real world' and even as a potential means for changing it for the better. (Craps 2014, 45)

Another important theorist in the field of trauma theory studies is Geoffrey Hartman. He states that "trauma was now the motivating 'nature of the negative' that provokes symbolic language" (Lockhurst 2006). He argues that the experience of trauma is embedded deep within an individual's psyche and can be expressed through symbols and metaphors more easily than in obvious narratives. Hartman's theoretical input emphasizes the importance of symbols in literary works to unlock expressions of individual and cultural trauma.

Trauma occurs against the will of the one experiencing the trauma. According to Caruth, Craps, and LaCapra, a text written by a survivor of traumatic events that is a retelling of those traumatic events should be read as a historical document that reveals aspects of the psychology of extreme traumatization that would otherwise be unavailable to the reader.

Bueler, Gert, Durrant, Sam, Eaglestone, Robert, London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

3.5. Cultural Trauma and Historical Trauma

The terms cultural trauma[80] and historical trauma[81] are often used interchangeably; however, there is an important distinction between the two. Where cultural trauma describes traumatic experiences shared together by a nation, group, or people, historical trauma refers specifically to the historical genocide of a people. For example, Lithuania's Jews, the Litvaks, experienced historical trauma during the Holocaust in Lithuania. During and after World War II, Lithuanians and Litvaks experienced cultural trauma during the Stalin-era deportations to Siberia.

Caruth argues that individual trauma is closely linked to cultural and historical trauma. According to Gailienė, cultural trauma affects an entire culture, and that culture's future generations, initiating the breakdown of cultural order "manifested in the collapse of collective identity" (Gailienė 2015, 13). Piotr Sztompka also argues that cultural trauma affects an entire culture; therefore, cultural trauma cannot be understood as a psychological difficulty that affects a person individually.[82] In his article, "Cultural Trauma:

---

[80] Cultural trauma is a term used in the social sciences to describe a "culturally interpreted wound to cultural tissue itself" (Sztompka, 2000, 458). According to psychologist and researcher Professor Danutė Gailienė, "the theory of cultural trauma was developed by studying collective traumas in various social contexts in different regions: reflections of critical American historic events in the public consciousness (Neal, 1998; Alexander, 2004); experiences of the negative aspects of social transformations in post-communist Poland and other Eastern European countries (Sztompka, 2000); connections between the social and individual level of cultural traumas in post-Soviet Estonia (Aarelaid-Tart, 2006)" (Gailienė, 2015, 13). Cultural trauma is intertwined with individual trauma, but is linked to collective historical events experienced by a nation or people. The Holocaust, the Soviet occupation, World War II, the displacement of refugees during World War II are all catalysts for cultural trauma. These topics are central themes in the memoirs studied in this dissertation.

[81] In their article, "Historical Trauma as a Public Narrative: A Conceptual Review of how History Impact Present-Day Health"[81] researchers Nathaniel Vincent Mohatt, Azure B. Thompson, Nghi D. Thai, and Jacob Kraemer Tebes describe historical trauma as complicated, shocking events experienced over a long period of time by a large group of people who are unified by a single identity that is dependent on this group or circumstances (Mohat, Thompson, Thai, and Tebes, 2014). Another working definition of historical trauma is "the collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide." Panasiewicz, Mark, Tribal Law and Policy Institute, www.wellnesscourts.org, accessed May 23, 2020.

[82] Sztompka, Piotr. "Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change." *European Journal of Social Theory 3 (4):* 2000, p. 449-466.

The Other Face of Cultural Change" Sztompka defines cultural trauma as a culturally defined and interpreted shock to the cultural tissue of a society. He presents a model of the traumatic sequence, describing typical conditions under which cultural trauma emerges and evolves. Cultural trauma bonds a nation through common experience, but sometimes also through a common experience of post-traumatic growth.

In a community that has collectively experienced historical and/or cultural trauma, the second generation of members of the community are tasked with the complex burden of listening to the trauma survivors' stories describing their experience. When the narrator and the listener are share a blood bond, the boundaries between reality and imagination become blurred because the teller of the trauma story may be a parent or other close family member. Through trauma narratives, subsequent generations who have not directly experienced the trauma inherit the wound of the trauma, and the experience of historical and/or cultural trauma is passed down in the form of re-living another's experience.

3.6. Postmemory

In her memoir, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*,[83] Eva Hoffman writes about the impact the memory of the historical trauma of the Holocaust has on the second and third generations who have not experienced the Holocaust themselves, but who are born to parents and grandparents who survived. Hoffman reflects on how the haunted images of the historical trauma of the previous generation play out continuously in the imaginations of the second generation:

> The pursuit of powerless people, bent silhouettes running desperately through an exposed landscape, trying to make it into the bordering woods. ("We were hunted from all sides. There was nowhere to escape to.") Fields, trenches, pits of death. For others, barbed wire, skeletal figures, smoke, intimations of mass death. Every survivor's child has such images available right behind the eyelids. (Hoffman 2004, 12)

[83] Hoffman, Eva. *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

Hoffman confides that the horrors of her parents' experience is transmuted to her by the power of her imagination. She admits: "Irrational as the world that my parents endured had been, I made it something more utterly irrational still" (Hoffman 2004, 12). She argues that because the second generation has grown up in another country or on another continent, and in another time and historical reality, they lack factual knowledge about the source trauma, thus creating anxiety. Hoffman argues that individuals born to Holocaust survivors, as well as to those who escaped or were rescued during the Holocaust, are unified as a generation through experiences that began during the impressionable and formative years of childhood:

> At the same time, it seemed to me that if I wanted to understand the significance of the Holocaust inheritance for those who come after, then I needed to reflect on my own and my peers' link to that legacy, to excavate our generational story from under its weight and shadow—to retrieve it from that "secondariness" which many of us have felt in relation to a formidable and forbidding past. In a sense, I needed to address frontally what I had thought about obliquely: the profound effects of a traumatic history, and its paradoxical richness; the kinds of knowledge which the Shoah has bequeathed to us, and the knowledge we might derive from it. (Hoffman 2004, 12)

Familial trauma along with shared cultural and historical trauma, and cultural memory, influences the second generation, who express familial and affiliative trauma in their writing. Marianne Hirsch describes the impact of postmemory on the psyche in her essay, "The Generation of Postmemory."[84]

> Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grew up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of previous generations shaped by traumatic events that can neither be understood nor recreated. (Hirsch 1997, 22)

---

[84] Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Hirsch reflects on memory:

> If "memory" is such a capacious analytic term and "memory studies" as a field of inquiry have grown exponentially in academic and popular importance in the last decade and a half, they have, in large part, been fueled by the limit case of the Holocaust and by the work of (and about) what has come to be known as "the second generation" or "the generation after." "Second generation" writers and artists have been publishing artworks, films, novels, and memoirs, or hybrid "postmemoirs" (as Leslie Morris [2002] has dubbed them. (Hirsch 2012, 105-106)

In an interview with Phillipe Mesnard and Luba Jurgenson as part of the Foundation Auschwitz 2015 *Portraits: Memories-Testimonies* series, Hirsch explains the process through which she developed the term and concept of postmemory. Hirsch shares she was inspired after reading Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, a graphic novel that tells the story of his father's incarceration in Auschwitz and how the historical trauma of that experience is then transformed into intergenerational familial trauma. The utter authenticity of experience in *Maus* led Hirsch to explore the concept of something she conceived of as postmemory, the phenomenon of how the memories of the first generation of Holocaust survivors are passed on to the second generation, and how those memories live on in the second generation's consciousness with all the vividness of the actual memories. Hirsch stresses she was struck at how the subsequent generations who were born to Holocaust survivors lived with the symptoms of trauma decades after the traumatic events of the Holocaust. They feel compelled to write about their parents' and grandparents' traumatic experiences in literature and express it visually through art.[85]

Hirsch notes that as a daughter of Holocaust survivors from Romania, she has also experienced postmemory because her parents' memories overshadow her own:

> Why could I recall particular moments from my parents' wartime lives in great detail and have only very few specific memories of my own childhood, I began to

[85] Interview with Phillipe Mesnard and Luba Jurgenson as part of the Foundation Auschwitz 2015 *Portraits: Memories-Testimonies* series.

> wonder? Why could I describe the streets, residences, and schools of pre-World War I Czernowitz and interwar Cernauti, where they grew up, the corner where they evaded deportation, the knock on the door in the middle of the night, the house in the ghetto where they were to wait for deportation waivers—all moments and sites that preceded my birth—when I had lost the textures, smells, and tastes of the urban and domestic spaces in Bucharest where I spent my own early life? (Hirsch 2012, 3)

Delving back into her own experiences and that of other children of Holocaust survivors, Hirsch develops the concept of postmemory and applies it to the analysis of visual arts, photography, and literature.

3.7. The Second and Third Postmemory Generations

In a community that has experienced cultural and historical trauma, it is the second generation who experience the complex burden of listening to the trauma survivors' stories. Often these listeners are close family members. Hirsch reflects:

> It took a long time for me to recognize and to name these symptoms—the magnitude of my parents' recollections and the ways in which I felt crowded out by them. These moments from their past were the stuff of dreams and nighttime fears for, as a child, it was at night, particularly, that I imagined myself into the lives they were passing down to me, no doubt without realizing it. (Hirsch 2012, 3)

The term "second generation" refers to the children of trauma survivors in the familial postmemory group but may also refer to the affiliative group. Hoffman reflects on how the haunted images of the experience of the historical trauma of the previous generation play out continuously in the imaginations of the second generation:

> Later, through literature and film, through memoir and oral testimony, these components of horror became part of a whole generation's store of imagery and narration, the icons and sagas of the post-Holocaust world. In retrospect, and as knowledge about the Holocaust has grown, we can see that every survivor has

> lived through a mythic trial, an epic, an odyssey. (Hoffman 2004, 12)

Recognizing that the first-generation experienced historical and/or cultural trauma, the second generation must cope with the aftereffects of trauma while having little to no knowledge about the nature of the original trauma event. The second generation is burdened with traumatic painful memories of events that they did not participate in but feel very real to them. In Hoffman's view, in these circumstances reality and imagination merge into one:

> But in the aftermath of the Shoah, the traces left on the survivors' psyches were not so much thoughts or images as scars and wounds. The legacy they passed on was not a processed, mastered past, but the splintered signs of acute suffering, or grief and loss. (Hoffman 2004, 34-35)

Although Philippe Codde argues that postmemory can be extended to all generations that follow the original cultural trauma event, he recognizes that the third generation has less access to direct knowledge of their family and community's past than the second generation.[86] According to Codde, "the inaccessibility of the past leads to an obsession with that past and with attempts to 'fill in the missing pieces' via their imagination" (Codde 2010, 1). It is only through their imagination that the third generation forges a link to the original trauma events. In literature this imaginative link is expressed through the writer's creative imaginings based on some knowledge of the original trauma event.

3.8. Affiliative and Familial Postmemory

Efraim Sicher argues that the definition of the term "second generation" should be extended to describe an affiliative postmemory group with the inclusion of "[…] the generation contemporaneous with children of survivors

---

[86] Codde, Philippe, 2010: "Postmemory, Afterimages, Transferred Loss: First and Third Generation Holocaust Trauma in American Literature and Film", *The Holocaust, Art, and Taboo: Transatlantic Exchanges on the Ethics and Aesthetics of Representation,* Ed. Sophia Komor and Susanne Rohr. Heidelberg: Winter, 2010. p. 61-72. Print.

who may share many of their psychological, ideological, and theological concerns" (Sicher 1998, 7). Hirsch builds on her concept of postmemory to include two distinct types of postmemory: familiar and affiliative. According to Hirsch, familial postmemory is the trauma experience of people who have not directly experienced the original trauma event, but who learn about it from the elder generation of trauma survivors. In her interview with Mesnard, Hirsch talks about how after first recognizing the trauma that the second or third generation experiences by bearing witness within the intimate space of family to historical trauma, like the Holocaust, she and other proponents of postmemory came to the realization that members of the same generation who do not bear a direct familial link to Holocaust survivors, but who also experience extreme empathy and connection with the Holocaust generation, are part of that postmemory generation. She terms this phenomenon affiliative postmemory. Hirsch explains that she differentiates between familial and affiliative postmemory partly in response to criticism received from descendants of Holocaust survivors, who argue that the trauma experience of affiliative postmemory is different than that of familial postmemory because they inherited their parents' trauma within the family while those who belong to the affiliative postmemory group did not.[87]

3.9. Rite of Return and Postmemory

Hoffman describes the phenomenon of second and third generation descendants of Holocaust survivors returning from the safe havens of North America to the Old World to delve fully into a journey of understanding and to uncover their family trauma narrative as a unifying generational feature. Hoffman argues that the postmemory Holocaust generation consists of transnationals[88] who have grown up "in different countries and cultures, under very different circumstances and within different political systems" (Hoffman 2004, 28) and claims that it is not shared geography and sense of place that forms a generation, but a shared generational experience.

---

[87] Mesnard, Philippe and Jurgenson, Luba (Interviewer) & Marianne Hirsch (Interviewee), Portraits: Memories-Testimonies, 2015, Foundation Auschwitz. YouTube.

[88] For a definition of transnationals, please see: Kaplan, Caren. *Questions of Travel*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996.

> We have grown up, in the postwar Jewish dispersion, in different countries and cultures, under very different circumstances and within different political systems. There have been no great events or public milestones to mark our own histories. The defining event we have in common belongs not to our allotted time on this planet, but to our prehistory. (Hoffman 2004, 28)

The genre of memoir became popular in the 1990s and has served as fertile ground for "exploring the meaning of family, generational identity, and ethnicity, as well as one for researching a past marked by historical calamity and the losses caused by the vicissitudes of violence, war, and genocide" (Hoffman 2012, 10). Hirsch and Miller note that "the emotional effects of diasporic dislocation and relocation also have led many of us in the twenty-first century to recapture, in writing, family memories and stories, in order to rescue lost legacies, to restore connections suspended by time, place, and politics" (Hirsch, Miller 2011, 10). The rite of return has thus become an integral feature of the postmemory memoir.

3.10. Postmemory Ethics

When examining the emotional aspects of postmemory in literature it is important to recognize that postmemory is not the actual memory of the people who experienced the trauma. As such, postmemory, like firsthand memory, is subjective; however, postmemory reimagines the experiences, which are often traumatic, of generations who lived in the past, within the context of history. Therefore, postmemory narratives may vary from the memories of first-hand witnesses. Also, the conclusions that the second and third generation draws through postmemory encounters, research, and rite of return experiences may differ from those of their ancestors who actually lived the cultural or historical trauma or cultural memory experiences.

3.11. Haunt Memory

Literary scholars Gabriele Schwab, Ross Chambers, Nicholas Abraham, and Maria Torok and others have developed the concept of haunt memory to explain the sense of being haunted by violent memories in the past that were

committed by one's predecessors.[89] Chambers creates the term "a hauntology of discourse" in an attempt to the sense of haunting in trauma aftermath writing.

> Because trauma repeats and returns even when it is supposedly over, aftermath writing as a hauntedness that haunts has a double character of untimeliness. It is both an exploration of survival as the experience of untimeliness—that is, of a baffling experience of time as, conjointly, the separation of past and present and their continuing copresence (e.g., in the form of flashback)—and an art of untimely intervention, seeking to introduce an awareness of untimeliness into a culture that prefers to live in time as if the past had no place in the present and did not haunt (i.e., inhabit) it. It thus turns survivorhood into survival for those who become its engaged readers. A hauntology of discourse, then—and this is as true for discourses of extremity when they are read as it is for the larger category of aftermath writing—will be a rhetoric of untimeliness as an art of the inopportune and the impertinent (cf. the meanings of the French *intempestif*), grounded in a symptomatology of what in German could be called *Unzeitsgemassigkeit*. (Chambers 2004, 191)

The hauntings of the survivor, and the perpetrator, are recreated through text as a secondary trauma experience. Dreams and the power of the imagination are key features of haunt memory.

---

[89] For more on the concept of haunt memory see the work of Gabriele Schwab, see: Schwab, Gabriele. "Haunting Legacies: Trauma in Children of Perpetrators", *Haunting legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Traumas,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. See also: Chambers, Ross,: *Ultimate Interventions: AIDS Writing, Testimonial, and the Rhetoric of Haunting*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004. See also Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's theories of psychic haunting, transgenerational trauma, and the crypt.

3.12. Cultural Memory

The concept of cultural memory was developed by Jan Assmann[90] based on the grounding work of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs's[91] theory of collective memory. Halbwachs claims that collective memory constitutes the field of oral history and includes everyday communication that "is characterized by a high degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganization" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 126). Such memories include jokes, gossip, etc. They are described as follows:

> There are occasions which more or less predetermine such communications, for example train rides, waiting rooms, or the common table; and there are rules – "laws of the market" – that regulate this exchange. There is a "household" within the confines of which this communication takes place. (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 126-127)

In Halbwachs' era, the scholarly consensus was that human collectives were based on a biological framework. However, Assman asserts otherwise:

> According to Nietzsche, while in the world of animals genetic programs guarantee the survival of the species, humans must find a means by which to maintain their nature consistently through generations. The solution to this problem is offered by cultural memory, a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation. (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 125)

---

[90] Assmann, Jan and Czaplicka, John. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", Spring-Summer, 1995, No. 65, *Cultural History/Cultural Studies* (Spring-Summer, 1995), Duke University Press, 1995, 125-133 See: Assmann, Jan, 2008: "Communicative and Cultural Memory" in Erill**,** Astrid, Nünnin**g**, Ansgar, Young, Sara, Eds., 2008: Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook, Germany, De Gruyter, Inc. p. 109–118.

[91] Halbwachs, Maurice. *Das Geddchtnis und seine sozialen Bedingungen*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1985.
Halbwachs, Maurice. *La memoire collective,* ed. J. Alex-andre, Paris: PU de France, 1950.

Assman defines the concept of cultural memory as "that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image."[92](Assman, Czaplicka, 1995, 125-133) However, Assman points out that this seemingly informal banter forms common memory.

> Through this manner of communication, each individual composes a memory which, as Halbwachs has shown, is (a) socially mediated and (b) relates to a group. Every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others. These "others," however, are not just any set of people, rather they are groups who conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of their past. Halbwachs thinks of families, neighborhood and professional groups, political parties, associations, etc., up to and including nations. Every individual belongs to numerous such groups and therefore entertains numerous collective self-images and memories. (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 126-127)

Halbwachs does not take the concept of a collective memory further than the realm of everyday communication between people in a shared societal space. Assmann builds upon Halbwachs' research and ideas:

> For in the context of objectivized culture and of organized or ceremonial communication, a close connection to groups and their identity exists which is similar to that found in the case of everyday memory. We can refer to the structure of knowledge in this case as the "concretion of identity." With this we mean that a group bases its consciousness of unity and specificity upon this knowledge and derives formative and normative impulses from it, which allows the group to reproduce its identity. In this sense, objectivized culture has the

---

[92] See: Assmann, Jan and Czaplicka, John. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", Spring-Summer, 1995, No. 65, *Cultural History/Cultural Studies* (Spring-Summer, 1995), Duke University Press, 1995, p. 125-133.
See also: Assmann, Jan. "Communicative and Cultural Memory" in Erill, Astrid, Nünning, Ansgar, Young, Sara, Eds., 2008: Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook, Germany, De Gruyter, Inc. 2008, p. 109–118.

> structure of memory. (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 128)

Assmann argues that groups with a shared cultural, social, historical, linguistic experience engage in “communicative memory.” However, “just as the communicative memory is characterized by its proximity cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 129), where everyday memories are constructed casually in commonplace settings. According to Halbwachs’s work, this memory is something “a society can reconstruct within its contemporary frame of reference” (Halbwachs 1985). Based on the idea that “no memory can preserve the past” there is a capacity to reconstruct memory.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1. Lithuanian Migration to North America: Three Waves of Immigration

To better understand the shared collective cultural memory, cultural, familial, and individual trauma of the first-generation displaced persons (DPs) and their second and third generation descendants, it is helpful to remember the history of Lithuanian emigration to North America.

Both Christian Lithuanians and Litvaks[93] began immigrating from Lithuania to North America and other continents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the first wave of immigration[94] both Christian

[93] https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Litvak The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe. Litvak is the (pl., Litvakes), Yiddish term for a Jew of historical, or "greater," Lithuania. The Litvaks' territory of origin is significantly larger than the borders of both the independent Lithuanian Republic of the interwar period (1918–1940)—which did not include the center of Litvak culture, Vilna (Vilnius)—and the contemporary state of Lithuania. From a Jewish cultural and historical perspective, Lite (Yiddish for Lithuania; Heb., Lita) includes large swaths of northeastern Poland (notably the Białystok and Suwałki regions), northern and western Belarus (notably the Grodno [Hrodna], Minsk, Slutsk, Pinsk Brisk [Brest Litovsk], Shklov, Mogilev [Mohilev], Gomel [Homel'] and Vitebsk [Vitsyebsk] regions), southern Latvia (notably the Dvinsk [Daugavpils] region), and northeastern Prussia (notably the region of the Baltic port city Memel [Klaipėda] This expansive definition of Lithuania in Jewish historiography and culture corresponds roughly to the large territory under the jurisdiction of the Lithuanian Jewish Council (Va'ad Medinot Lita), which governed Lithuanian Jewish communal affairs from 1623 to 1764.

[94] The disturbances of the 19th century forced some of the Lithuanian people to immigrate to America. Two uprisings (1830–1831 and 1863–1864) were lost. The tsarist repressions against the participants of rebellion forced some of them to retreat to the West. A massive emigration of Lithuanian peasants began after 1868. We can treat this wave of emigration as an economic one although the political events in the Russian Empire also had some influence. The beginning of the National Movement and Russification politics encouraged political emigration, although it was not numerous. It is necessary to single out the emigration of men who avoided military conscription in the Russian army. Economic and political emigrations were strongly interrelated, making it impossible to find a clear ridge between them. The biggest emigration rise was in 1904–1914, when the Russian-Japanese war began. At that time, a necessary number of conscripts was not collected. Repressions of the tsarist

Lithuanians and Lithuanian Jews emigrated to North America.[95] Three major periods of Lithuanian migration to North America took place at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the middle of the twentieth century, and in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. The second wave of Lithuanian emigration to North America took place in the

government against the participants of the 1905–1907 revolution and the violence of the punitive squads stimulated a new wave of emigration. The emigration increased in the eve of the First World War. In 1912, 14,071 Lithuanians immigrated to the USA. In 1913 – 24,647 and in 1914 – 21,584. Emigration slowed at the time of the First World War. The process renewed after the war as the country encountered economic problems after the reestablishment of independence. … These reasons triggered the third wave of emigration to the USA and South America. Massive emigration of Lithuanians because of the economic world crisis stopped after 1931. The third wave of emigration was also economic. … Information of the Ministry of Internal Affairs showed that greatest emigration from Lithuania was to the United States of America in 1920–1923. About 22,325 persons left Lithuania and went to the USA at that time. 10,2511 persons emigrated in 1920–1940. 30,869 persons went to the United States of America, 24,982 to Brazil, 16,794 to Argentina, 7,942 t to Canada, 4,437 to Uruguay, and 5,264 went to other countries. 7,215 emigrated to the Union of South Africa (now the Republic of South Africa) and 5,008 immigrated to Palestine. The vast majority who went to South Africa and Palestine were Jews. See: Kasperevičiūtė, Vitalija. Summary of Doctoral Dissertation Humanities: "The Emigration Politics of the Republic of Lithuania in 1918-1940".

[95] See: Balkelis, Tomas, 2010: "Opening Gates to the West: Lithuanian and Jewish Migrations from the Lithuanian Provinces, 1867-1914", Ethnicity Studies 2010/1-2, p. 41-66. Also: Shapiro, Philp S. 2020: "The Lithuanian Jewish Community of Telšiai, *Atminities Knyga: Miesto Žydų Gyvenimas / Memorial Book for the Jewish Community of Telšiai*, edited by Dr. Hektoras Vitkus, Telšiai: Žemaičių muziejus "Alka", The Samogitian Museum, "Alka", p. 101-136.

postwar years after World War II.[96] The third wave has been taking place since Lithuania reinstated its independence in 1991.[97]

4.2. The History of Displaced Persons from Lithuania

Before Lithuania re-established independence in 1991, the Iron Curtain separated those who remained in Lithuania after the second Soviet occupation in 1944 and those who fled to the democracies of the West. Studies on displacement were made by the generation who in 1944 fled westward from Lithuania in fear of the consequences of the second Soviet occupation of Lithuania. In his 1964 article, "Demographic Changes and Structure in Lithuania," published in the Lithuanian-American scholarly journal *Lituanus*,[98] Lithuanian émigré Pranas Zundė made a detailed study of Lithuanian population changes between the middle of 1940 (when the Soviets took control of Lithuania) and early 1959. Although at that time, because of Cold War inaccessibility to archives in Lithuania, there were limitations on the accuracy of the research. However, these numbers are still worth considering from the distance of time. Zundė calculated that in 1944, 60,000

---

[96] According to the Migration Law Center an estimated 100,000 Lithuanians evacuated from Lithuania in 1944 at the time of the second Soviet occupation, but not all of them reached the West. In total, more than 250,000 Lithuanians were more or less forced to leave their homeland during World War II. On 31 December 1946, 58,805 Lithuanians were patronized by UNRRA in Germany, about 6,500 Lithuanians were in other regions. Most of them consisted of refugees of 1944. There were also refugees from the Klaipėda region, that until 1939 was the territory of Lithuania. Part of those refugees should be considered Lithuanians, even though they had German citizenship and were not accepted to camps. Again, as discussed earlier, there is much historical debate about the accuracy and details of these numbers. See: https://www.migration.lt/lithuanian-refugees-dual-citizenship-to-them-and-their-descendants

[97] See: https://123.emn.lt/en/#chart-14-desc European Immigration Network Lithuania. According to the European Immigration Network Lithuania:
"Since 1990 the number of residents living in Lithuania has dropped by 899,500 people, which constitutes about 24 percent of the entire population. It is worth noting, that 189,500 can be referred to natural causes (births/deaths), but the vast majority (710,000) is due to emigration. ..."

[98] Zundė, Pranas, 1964, "Demographic Changes and Structure in Lithuania," *Lituanus*, Fall and Winter 1964, http://www.lituanus.org/1964/64_34_01_Zunde.html. Accessed March 17, 2021.

Lithuanians "fled from the Soviets to the West" (Zundė, 1964). He estimated that another 9,800 Lithuanian citizens were "deported to Germany for forced labor and did not return." Some of these may have been Lithuanian-Jewish survivors[99] of Nazi slave-labor camps and others Lithuanian youths conscripted during the German occupation and sent to Germany to work as forced laborers. Zundė's detailed list also included 105,000 people who were living in Memelland (the Klaipėda region) in 1944.[100] In March 1939, when Lithuania returned the region to Germany, these people were no longer Lithuanian citizens. Between mid-1940 and 1959, other ethnic groups left Lithuania, either by force or by their own choice. Twenty years later, Lithuanian historian Raymond G. Krisciunas, in his 1983 *Lituanus* article, "The Decision of Lithuanian Refugees to Emigrate, 1945-1950," used similar figures for the number of Lithuanian citizens who fled West in 1944. He estimated that "at the end of World War II there were approximately 60,000 Lithuanians in Western Europe," of whom "nearly 50,000 were refugees who fled in the summer of 1944." [101]

---

[99] "Murder of the Jews of the Baltic States," Yad Vashem Website, https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/final-solution-beginning/baltic-states.html
Accessed March 24, 2021. ("In July 1944, […] the ghettos in Kovno and Swieciany were liquidated and many of their inhabitants were sent westwards to camps in areas still under German control, including Stutthof, Dachau, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Approximately 10,000 Lithuanian Jews were still alive when Germany surrendered in May 1945, […]")

[100]

(a) Between January and May 1941, during the period when Stalin and Hitler were allies under the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreement, 52,000 ethnic Germans living in Lithuania left for Germany.
(b) Between 1945 and 1958, 200,000 ethnic Poles living in the Vilnius region left Soviet Lithuania and went to Poland.
(c) Between 1955 and 1959, 10,000 ethnic Germans left Soviet Lithuania and emigrated to Germany.

[101] The Soviets had controlled Lithuania from June 1940 until June 1941, and during this period of time most private organizations were disbanded, many businesses were nationalized, and perhaps 20,000 citizens were deported to Siberia. At that time, the population of Lithuania (including the Vilnius region) was approximately 3,000,000. A mid-20th century Lithuanian historian estimated that of this number about 60,000, or about 2%, were in Western Europe at the end of the war. Of those 60,000, "nearly 50,000 were refugees who fled in the summer of 1944" and the remainder were

In contrast to these 20th century conclusions of Lithuanian émigré historians that some 50,000 Lithuanian citizens fled to the West in 1944, statements made later by historians give different numbers. For example, contemporary Lithuanian historian Arvydas Anušauskas (born 1963) has stated that "In 1941–1958 about 490,000 people fled from Soviet-occupied Lithuania. Because of terror, conditions of war, and decisions made by the occupiers, they repatriated to Germany, Poland, or were forced to flee. In 1944, 120,000 people fled to the West."[102] While a number of people who were living in Lithuania in the middle of 1940 did flee to the West, others were pressured to leave, left out of fear, or were expelled by Soviet Lithuanian authorities, the assertion that 120,000 "fled" west in 1944 cannot be reconciled with the studies made by 20th century Lithuanian historians. This example is offered simply to show that the emotionality of postmemory can produce assertions that may differ from the claims made by members of the first generation closer to the original trauma event.

4.3. The German occupation of Lithuania, 1941–1944

Analysis of these memoirs hinges on some understanding of the Holocaust in Lithuania. Although most historians agree with Lithuanian historian Adolfas Eidintas's claim that ninety-five percent of Lithuania's Jews were murdered during the Nazi occupation and genocide, it is difficult to pinpoint an exact number.[103] However, it is clear that such a violent history in recent historical

---

"individuals who had been liberated from Nazi concentration camps." See: Krisciunas, Raymond G., 1983: "The Decision of Lithuanian Refugees to Emigrate, 1945-1950," *Lituanus* (Summer 1983).
http://www.lituanus.org/1983_2/83_2_03.htm. Accessed March 16, 2021.

[102] Anušauskas, Arvydas, 1996: *Lietuvių tautos sovietinis naikinimas 1940-1958 metais*. (The Destruction of the Lithuanian Nation by the Soviets, 1940-1958). Vilnius: Mintis.

[103] In his book, *The Holocaust in Lithuania*, historian Arūnas Bubnys writes: It is very difficult to answer the question how many Lithuanian Jews were killed during the years of the Nazi occupation. Historians differ markedly on this issue. Numbers of Holocaust victims in Lithuania vary from 165,000 to 254,000. Neither full statistical records nor lists of the dead survive in archives. The present author bases himself on the following calculations: according to data from the Department of Statistics, on 1 January 1941 there were 208,000 Jews (6.86 percent of the total population) in Lithuania. At the beginning of the war around 8,500 Jews went to Russia. During the Nazi occupation 1,500 to 2,000 escaped from the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettoes, and

memory is bound to have a powerful effect on a nation's psyche. Lithuanian historian Arūnas Bubnys writes in his book, *The Holocaust in Lithuania*, that "the role played in the Holocaust by Lithuanian police battalions was particularly significant. Although almost every type of Lithuanian police force (public police, security police, auxiliary police, partisan (white armband) took part in the persecution and murder of Jews, their role in the Holocaust was not as important as that of the police battalions (or "self-defense" units)." Bubnys states that the "self-defense" units (known commonly as the "white-armbanders") were most active in persecuting Lithuania's Jews, while other types of Lithuanian police from public police to security police also collaborated and were thus complicit (Bubnys, 2008, 15). Bubnys was one of the first historians in post-Soviet Lithuania to research Lithuanian police complicity in the Holocaust in Lithuania and to raise the question of Lithuanian participation in the mass killings. According to Bubnys, Lithuanian guards held prisoners in captivity and marched them back and forth to labor sites.[104] The Germans had "command-and-control" of the Holocaust in Lithuanian in operational terms.

Initially in 1941, Lithuanians hoped the Germans would reinstate their independence after the especially brutal Soviet occupation of 1940–1941, which culminated in mass deportations of Lithuania's intellectual elites, government workers, teachers and professors, and wealthy farmers to Siberia (both Christian Lithuanians and Lithuanian Jews were targeted in these deportations). One might consider that the collaboration of Pranas Purlonis and Antanas Šukys as described in Gabis's and Šukys's memoirs, were based on the desire to fight for Lithuania's independence and the misguided belief that the Germans would bring about the reinstatement of Lithuanian independence. However, neither memoir offers any insights on the two grandfathers' motivations other than to gain employment and support their children after the mothers in each family were deported to Siberia. The implication is that material gain merged with nationalism motivated these two Lithuanian men to serve the German occupiers. Lithuanian historians write about the material gain of collaboration as does American Holocaust historian

---

2,000 to 3,000 lived in concentration camps to the end of the war. Thus around 195,000 Lithuanian Jews and several thousand Jews from abroad (Poland, Germany, Austria, and France) were murdered.

[104] See: Bubnys, Arūnas, 2017: *Lietuvių policijos batalionionai 1941-1945 m. (Lithuanian Police Battalions 1941-1945)*, Vilnius: Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania.

Timothy Snyder.[105] Lithuanian historian Algimantas Kasparavičius,[106] like Snyder, alludes to financial gain, the opportunity to claim businesses and housing, as part of the motivation for individuals to participate in the shootings.

> Lithuanians quickly grasped that the Judeobolshevik myth amounted to a mass political amnesty for prior collaboration with the Soviets, as well as the general possibility to claim all of the businesses that the Soviets had taken from the Jews. (Snyder, 2015, 162)

The moral question regarding the participation of ethnic Lithuanians in the shootings of Jews remains a thorny issue in Lithuania. Rukšėnas attributes the participations of Lithuanian battalions in the German-ordered killings of Jews to the fear of not obeying orders: "The *fear* of the consequences of not obeying orders was more or less typical for each member of the self-defense battalions. That was because when they joined the self-defense battalions, they made an oath not to follow orders but to accept responsibility if they did not follow orders, in other words, to answer to a war time court" (Rukšėnas, 2012). Rukšėnas also cites other factors, such as the use of alcohol before, during, and after the shootings, monetary rewards, revenge, and propaganda used to incite hate.[107]

Stanislovas Stasiulis argues in his article published in *Sage Journals*, "The Holocaust in Lithuania: The Key Characteristics of its History, and the

---

[105] See: Snyder, 2015, p. 162.

[106] Kasparavičius, Algimantas, 2017. "Lietuvių politinės iliuzijos: Lietuvos laikinosios vyriausybės 'Politika' ir Holokausto pradžia Lietuvoje 1941 metais" (Lithuanian Political Illusions: The Temporary Lithuanian Government, "Politics" and the beginning of the Holocaust in Lithuania in 1941"). Lietuvos Žydų Litvakų Bendruomenė (Lithuanian Jewish Litvak Community). Online journal, 2017-1-15. Accessed: https://www.lzb.lt/2017/01/05/lietuviu-politines-iliuzijos-lietuvos-laikinosios-vyriausybes-politika-ir-holokausto-pradzia-lietuvoje-1941-metais/ Seen: April 7, 2021.

[107] Rukšėnas, Alfredas, 2012: "Savaitės Pokalbis. Alfredas Rukšėnas. Jie Pakluso Įstatymui, o ne sąžinei." (They listened to orders rather than their conscience), Bernardinai.lt, Accessed: https://www.bernardinai.lt/2012-01-17-savaites-pokalbis-alfredas-ruksenas-jie-pakluso-isakymui-o-ne-sazinei/ Seen: April 8, 2021.

Key Issues in Histiography and Cultural Memory,"[108] that the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) in Berlin incited violence against Jews in Lithuania and that these actions were based on "the myth that Jews betrayed independent Lithuania and collaborated with the Soviet administration en masse" (Stasiulis, 2019). Stasiulis's article explains that on the ground, loosely organized units of men known as the "white armbanders" collaborated with the German occupiers, and Lithuanian security police participated in the killings of Jews. Eidintas makes a similar claim.[109]

Snyder's research reveals that Nazi Germany never intended to reinstate Lithuania's independence. Snyder dubs Eastern Poland and the Baltic States the "zone of double occupation," a region where the state was destroyed first by the Soviets and then the Nazis in two consecutive violent occupations. He postulates that it was the tragedy of the loss of statehood that lay the groundwork for the murders of millions of Jews, because in the Baltic States the Germans could kill Jews in large numbers:

> It was in the zone of double occupation, where Soviet rule preceded German, where the Soviet destruction of interwar states was followed by the German annihilation of Soviet institutions, that a Final Solution took shape. (Snyder, 2015, 117-118)

The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact created the conditions for the Soviets to destroy Lithuanian statehood, independence, rule of law, and to eliminate the governing and educated class. Lithuania became a nation without a head. The power vacuum after the destruction of Lithuanian statehood and governance created the conditions for the murders of Jews in Lithuania. Snyder claims that the Nazis manipulated the Soviet annihilation

---

[108] Stasiulis, Stanislovas, September 16, 2019: "The Holocaust in Lithuania: The Key Characteristics of its History, and the Key Issues in Histiography and Cultural Memory," Sage Journals. See: sagejournals@sagepubcom, accessed March 15, 2021.

[109] In the chatper, "Killers—What Motivated Them" in his book, Jews, Lithuanians, and the Holocaust, Lithuanian historian Adolfas Eidintas writes: "Clearly, the total number of directly engaged killers was not great—they were about 200 calloused murderers, scorned by Lithuanians from the start, who belonged to the special forces at Kaunas (Hamann Flying Squad) and Vilnius (SD Sonderkommando Special Police Squad). These were the primary participants of actions during which most of Lithuania's Jews were murdered. They belonged to the Security Police and SD, gave oaths, and loyally served the occupier of their country." (Eidintas, 2003, 253) See: Eidintas, Alfonas, 2003, *Jews, Lithuanians, and the Holocaust,* Vilnius: Versus Aureus.

of Lithuanian statehood and cloaked their true intentions beneath the guise of appearing as seeming liberators:

> In 1939, when Hitler made his alliance with Stalin, he was undertaking to destroy states by proxy. Hitler had a vivid idea of what Soviet rule would mean for the places granted to Moscow by the German-Soviet Treaty on Borders and Friendship: the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia; and the eastern half of Poland. If anything, his notion of Soviet terror was exaggerated: the total elimination of all thinking people, the murder of tens of millions by starvation. (Snyder, 2015, 117)

Tragically, these circumstances also created the special conditions for the choice of some Lithuanians to participate in those killings. In an interview published in 2012 in the online journal *Bernardinai.lt* Lithuanian historian Alfredas Rukšėnas[110] explains how the conditions for the participation of ethnic Lithuanians in the killings of Lithuanian Jews played out under the conditions of the German occupation:

> Overall, during the time-period of the German occupation no less than 26 self-defense battalions were formed. Twelve to thirteen thousand soldiers served in these battalions. The saddest fact is that these Lithuanian battalions, like other Lithuanian structures of public life, whose organization, as I mentioned earlier, were the result of the activities of members of the Lithuanian resistance movement in 1940–1941, did not achieve the power to act independently, although that had been their initial goal. If that were not tragic enough, individuals who belonged to these Lithuanian structures were involved in the murders of innocent people. (Rukšėnas, 2012, Translation by Laima Vincė Sruoginis)

[110] Rukšėnas, Alfredas, 2012: "Savaitės Pokalbis. Alfredas Rukšėnas. Jie Pakluso Įstatymui, o ne sąžinei." (They listened to orders rather than their conscience), Bernardinai.lt, Accessed: https://www.bernardinai.lt/2012-01-17-savaites-pokalbis-alfredas-ruksenas-jie-pakluso-isakymui-o-ne-sazinei/ Seen: April 8, 2021.

The double treachery of two totalitarian regimes colliding in the Baltics spelled catastrophe. According to Snyder, this collision set the groundwork for the Nazi subjugation of Lithuania:

> Himmler wrote of the "Bolshevik method" of the "physical extermination of a nation." Hitler, in making his alliance with the Soviet Union, was always planning to invade the lands that he granted his ally. His invitation to Stalin in 1939 to destroy states would precede his own campaign in the same lands to follow in 1941. The German *führer* was therefore contemplating the double destruction of states: first the crushing of interwar nation-states by Soviet techniques, seen as extraordinarily radical, and then the elimination of newly created Soviet state apparatus by Nazi techniques, still in the making. (Snyder, 2015, 118)

Snyder claims that by destroying states a "political resource" was created. Understanding this political resource is key to understanding why the German occupiers were initially perceived as liberators in Lithuania:

> As fragile and flawed as the Polish, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian states might seem, they were the homelands of tens of millions of Europeans. The wholesale destruction of modern states with fully fledged political nations was an extraordinarily radical step. Of course, not all of the (former) citizens of these (former) states cared deeply about national independence, but many did. Insofar as the Soviets removed states that people wanted, and insofar as the Germans could pose as an ally of those who wished to restore them, the Germans could manipulate a powerful desire. The nature of this opportunity depended, of course, upon what leaders of national groups believed that they could gain or lose from occupiers. (Snyder, 2015, 129)

Snyder argues that "the truly spontaneous score settling that followed the arrival of German troops was politically rather than racially motivated and killed a very small number of Jews – and also killed people who were not Jewish" (Snyder, 2015, 148). Snyder writes:

> If the killing of 1941 involved locals, then perhaps it was a result of local antisemitism rather than German

> politics? This is a popular way to explain the Holocaust without politics: as a historically predictable outburst of the barbarity of east Europeans. This sort of explanation is reassuring, since it permits the thought that only peoples associated with extravagant antisemitism would indulge in disastrous violence. This comforting and erroneous thought is a legacy of Nazi racism and colonialism. The racist and colonial idea that the Holocaust began as an elemental explosion of primitive antisemitism arose as Nazi propaganda and apologetics. The Germans wished to display the killing of Jews on the eastern front as the righteous anger of oppressed peoples against their supposed Jewish overlords. (Snyder, 2015, 148)

Conclusions that Lithuania welcomed the Germans as liberators because the country was antisemitic are not entirely accurate according to Snyder's research. He writes that "by the standards of Europe in the late 1930s, Lithuania was a refuge for Jews. In 1938 and 1939, some 23,000 Jews fled to Lithuania, some from Nazi Germany, some from the Soviet Union" (Snyder, 2015, 138). Snyder describes conditions for Jews in prewar Lithuania, stating that "before the consecutive Soviet-German occupation, Lithuanian and Latvian Jews had little reason to expect the fate that would befall them" (Snyder, 2015, 137). He writes about interwar Lithuania:

> Interwar Lithuania was a right-wing dictatorship, but not an antisemitic one. The dictator, Antantas Smetona, warned at home and abroad against racial and religious discrimination, and he campaigned in particular against what he called the "zoological nationalism and racism" of the Hitlerian variety. His enemies on the Far Right called him the "king of the Jews." Such people he generally had imprisoned. Not a single Jew was killed in a pogrom in interwar Lithuania. The one major case of anti-Jewish violence led to arrests, a trial, and prosecution. (Snyder, 2015, 137)

Snyder writes that "the instructions conveyed to the Einsatzgruppen commanders were to create the appearance of local spontaneity, which, of course, suggests that the reality was absent" (Snyder, 2015, 148). Key to understanding this sentence is the suggestion that "the reality was absent." In

a disconnect between appearances created for posterity and propaganda, and reality, Snyder postulates:

> In practice, the Germans concluded within a few weeks that the stimulation of pogroms among people who had been ruled by the Soviet Union was not the way forward to a Final Solution. In consecutively occupied Lithuania, where the Holocaust began, less than one percent of the Jews who were murdered were victims of pogroms. For that matter, Germans were present at every single pogrom. (Snyder, 2015, 148)

The far more complex reality is related to Soviet propaganda according to Snyder:

> After the war, Soviet propaganda repeated the Nazi case. One unpleasant reality with which Soviet propagandists had to contend was that the Holocaust had begun precisely where the Soviet Union had brought its own new revolutionary order in 1939 and 1940. A second was that Soviet citizens of all nationalities, including considerable numbers of communists, had collaborated with the Germans in the killing of Jews everywhere that contact with Germans was made: both in the territories that the Soviets annexed in 1939 and 1940 and in the territories of the prewar Soviet Union, including Soviet Russia. (Snyder, 2015, 148)

Snyder claims that ultimate responsibility for the Holocaust in Lithuania lies within the political structures of both the Soviet and Nazi regimes.

> Thus, Soviet propagandists tried with Orwellian precision to ethnicize history and to limit responsibility for the Holocaust to Lithuanians and Latvians, precisely the people whose states the Soviet Union had destroyed in 1940, and to west Ukranians, whose national aspirations were also crushed by Soviet power. This exported moral responsibility for the killing of the Jews to the countries they both invaded. (Snyder, 2015, 148)

Snyder writes in *Black Earth* that "the timing of the Soviet annexation of Latvia and Lithuania led to a tragic coincidence" (Snyder, 2015, 141). Nazi propaganda that the Jews who were responsible for the Soviet occupation of

Lithuania and the deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia proved powerful among people in the fateful year of 1941, especially since the Soviet deportations to Siberia that took place in June had destroyed many families. He writes:

> By the time the Soviets had readied the trains for their major deportations of Lithuanian and Latvian citizens to the Gulag, the Germans had prepared their trains for an invasion of the Soviet Union. The deportations from Lithuania began in the early morning of June 14, 1941. About seventeen thousand people were loaded onto boxcars (of whom only about a third ever returned). The German invasion came a week later. Because the Soviets were preparing major repressions when the Germans invaded, the prisons were full. (Snyder, 2015, 141)

Snyder alleges that Stalin "raged until the very last moments that all reports of a German invasion were propaganda" (Snyder, 2015, 141). Stalin's denial led to confusion regarding what to do with local prisoners. In the end, most Lithuanian and Latvian prisoners were shot by their Russian guards. Snyder claims the corpses were then used for Nazi propaganda:

> As a result, Germans who arrived in Lithuania and Latvia were able to display the fresh corpses as palpable evidence of Soviet terror. (Snyder, 2015, 141)

Snyder contends that "[i]n June 1941 in the Baltics the Soviet project of state destruction met the German project of state destruction in time and place" (Snyder, 2015, 141). These conditions tragically enabled the Germans to further their propaganda myth of what Snyder dubs *Judeobolshevism.* This myth equated communism with Judaism.

Snyder also claims that a darker complication was that those Lithuanian men who agreed to shoot Jews were mostly the same individuals who had formerly collaborated with the Soviets:

> If the Jews were to blame for communism, then the Lithuanians could not have been. Individual Lithuanians who killed Jews were undoing their individual past under the Soviet regime. Lithuanians as a collectivity were erasing the humiliating, shameful past in which they had allowed their own sovereignty to be destroyed by the Soviet Union. The killing created a psychological

> plausibility with which it was difficult to negotiate: Since Jews had been killed they must have been guilty, and since Lithuanians had killed they must have had a righteous cause. (Snyder, 2015, 164)

Snyder argues that this need to "erase their shameful past" led to tragic outcomes:

> Lithuanians had been involved with Soviet rule, and so Nazi Judeobolshevism offered them an opportunity that the Germans themselves did not fully grasp. Members of all national groups in Lithuania, and not just Lithuanians and Jews, but also Poles and Russians, collaborated with the Soviet regime. Jews were somewhat more likely to do so than Lithuanians, but since Lithuanians were far more numerous, their role in the Soviet regime was much more important. (Snyder, 2015, 162)

These historians' findings show the complex nature of the Soviet and German occupations of Lithuania during World War II and reveal the lies, propaganda, and confusion that led to mass murder in the region. Research on the public structures of Lithuania under the German occupation, and ethnic Lithuanian involvement in the killings during the Holocaust, by historians such as Snyder, Sužiedėlis, Rukšėnas, Eidintas, Bubnys, and others, reveals a painful, complex, and ultimately tragic portrait of deception, manipulation, collaboration, betrayal. Snyder, however, argues that the tragedy of the Holocaust in Lithuania cannot ultimately be attributed to ethnicities:

> What happened in the second half of 1941 was an accelerating campaign of murder that took a million Jewish lives and apparently convinced the German leadership that all Jews under their control could be eliminated. This calamity cannot be explained by stereotypes of passive or communist Jews, of orderly or preprogrammed Germans, of beastly or antisemitic locals, or indeed by any other cliché, no matter how powerful at the time, no matter how convenient today. (Snyder, 2015, 150)

Ultimately, Snyder postulates: "This unprecedented mass murder would have been impossible without a special kind of politics" (Snyder, 2015, 150). Politics is based on ideology and the racist ideologies of the mid-twentieth

century that birthed the politics of genocide. Reflecting on how each individual fit within the history deeply shaped by the politics and ideology of that era, and how the experience of the bloodlands is passed down to the second and third postmemory generations, is not only the work of historians, but also the work of literature.

5. MAJOR TOPICS IN THE FIVE MEMOIRS

5.1. The Significance of the Mother Tongue

Language provides intimate access to culture. In the twentieth century, the languages spoken in Lithuania were Lithuanian, Russian, Polish, German, and Yiddish. The majority spoke Lithuanian. Beginning with the first wave of emigration to North America, the Lithuanian diasporic community has managed to nurture Lithuanian language and culture through an international network of schools, summer camps, churches, and other social organizations while at the same time embracing the languages and cultures of their adopted homelands.[111]

The Lithuanian community grew out of the Lithuanian Charter, a "document adopted in the late 1940s in Germany and in use until now in the United States" (Sidrys, 1996, Saldukas, 2002). The active promotion of the Lithuanian language by Lithuanian Saturday language schools and summer camps, and its use as the primary language in organizations and cultural and sports events, ensured that Lithuanian was passed down to subsequent generations who were born and brought up outside of Lithuania.

In North America, during the postwar years and throughout the Cold War, the Lithuanian émigré literary tradition centered around the Lithuanian language. The émigré writers used the Lithuanian language as their primary tool of communication in their publishing houses, journals, newspapers, radio programs, literary conferences, and seminars. This linguistic effort was not only cultural, but also political. The DPs believed that under Soviet occupation, the Lithuanian language would be replaced with Russian, and that there was a danger that the Lithuanian language would become extinct. Every North American Lithuanian diasporic community belongs to an organization called the Lithuanian Community (*Lietuvių bendruomenė*), founded and maintained almost entirely by DPs and their descendants.[112] In recent decades, members of the third wave of Lithuanian immigrant groups from independent Lithuania have taken over the leadership of the Lithuanian Community and have become active members. According to diaspora historian Algis

[111] For a comprehensive list of Lithuanian émigré organizations see: Simutis, Anicetas, 1953: New York. Pasaulio lietuvių žinynas (Lithuanian World Directory).
[112] Kokot, Waltrand, Giordano, Christian**,** Gandelsman-Trier**,** Mijal, 2014, "Diaspora as a Resource of Homeland Nationalism Forged Overseas and Contested Back Home: The Case of Lithuanian-Americans", Diaspora As a Resource: Comparative Studies in Strategies, Networks, and Urban Spaces, Berlin: Lit Verlag. p. 105.

Budreckis, one of the purposes of the Lithuanian Community, among others, is to "preserve Lithuanianism" along with "to support the fight for Lithuanian liberation and the suffering of the Lithuanian nation."[113]

The Lithuanian diasporic community in North America has maintained an unbroken literary tradition with the publications of émigré newspapers written in Lithuanian, such as *Draugas*, *Darbininkas*, *Naujienos*, *Tėviškės Žiburiai*, *Akiračiai*, and others.[114] *Lituanus* is another English language scholarly journal that was started in Chicago and still publishes today. According to David Crowe, in the early years of the DP diaspora, cultural life Lithuanian émigré publications "centered almost exclusively on nationalistic topics that decried the loss of Baltic independence and attacked the Soviet Union for its role in the matter" (Crowe, 1988, 225). However, Crowe continues, with the passing of years "serious scholarship began to replace some of the passionate outpourings, and a strong, academic field of Baltic scholarship emerged in the West that dealt with all aspects of Baltic history, politics, culture, language, and other matters, regardless of its political or nationalistic implications" (Crowe, 1988, 225). One group that has encouraged Lithuanian writers writing in English to share their work and build community have been the biannual conferences of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS).[115] Three of the writers studied in this dissertation are members of AABS. Many diaspora writers have found support for their literary and scholarly work within that organization.

In an émigré publication, *The Lithuanian Woman*,[116] published in 1968 (just 18 years after most DPs arrived in New York, Chicago, Toronto and other North American cities) by the Federation of Lithuanian Women's Clubs and printed by the Franciscan Press at the Lithuanian Franciscan monastery in Brooklyn, New York, the DP woman is described in an introduction that stresses "preservation of the native language and cultural traditions" linking culture and tradition with religion.

---

[113] *Ibid.*

[114] Crowe, David, 1988: Baltic Émigré publishing and scholarship in the Western World, Nationalities Papers, 16:2, p. 225-241.

[115] The Association of the Advancement of Baltic Studies was founded on December 1, 1968, at the first conference on Baltic Studies at the University of Maryland. The Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS) is an international educational and scholarly non-profit organization.

[116] Novickis, Birutė, 1968: *The Lithuanian Woman*, Brooklyn, New York: The Federation of Lithuanian Women's Clubs, printed by Franciscan Press.

> Driven from home by the ravages of war, the Lithuanian woman began a new life in the strange and harsh environment of exile. Yet even here she remained true to her duties and ideals. Mother and child welfare, alleviation of the hard physical surroundings—these were among the immediate tasks. Preservation of the native language and cultural traditions were the means of expressing her spiritual self. But the man objective of all her work was the restoration of her country's freedom. (Novickis, 1968, 61-62)

Interpreted as a cultural memory text, the main objective of the community is established: "the restoration of her country's freedom." Throughout *The Lithuanian Woman* the restoration of independence and the return to the homeland is continually linked with the Lithuanian language.

Although many North American writers of Lithuanian descent grew up speaking Lithuanian at home, and their Lithuanian language skills were reinforced by formal training in Lithuanian Saturday language schools and summer camps,[117] they have expressed that they are more comfortable with English rather than Lithuanian. As with any language, their level of fluency varies. Some of the second and third generation Lithuanian diaspora writers, like Markelis, Sileika, De Voe, Žukauskas or Šukys, are more or less fluent in Lithuanian.[118] Others, like Sepetys or Bartkevičius, do not speak Lithuanian.[119] Litvak-American writers Cassedy and Bak do not speak Lithuanian. Bak's memories of Lithuania are rooted in his native Yiddish and Polish. Cassedy has traveled to Lithuania to study Yiddish.[120]

---

[117] The following writers responded in interviews that they attended Lithuanian language Saturday schools: Birutė Putrius, Daiva Markelis, Karolis Gintaras Žukauskas (Gint Aras), Lina Ramona Vitkauskas,
Julija Šukys, Silvija Kučėnas Foti, Milda De Voe.

[118] The following writers responded in interviews that they are fluent in Lithuanian: Birutė Putrius, Daiva Markelis, Karolis Gintaras Žukauskas (Gint Aras), Antanas Šileika, Lina Ramona Vitkauskas, Medeinė Liuda Tribenevičius, Julija Šukys, Silvija Kučėnas Foti, Milda De Voe, Kęstutis Nakas, Rimas Užgiris.

[119] The following writers responded in the survey that they do not speak Lithuanian: Jocelyn Bartkevičius, James Joseph Brown, Ruta Sepetys. Jocelyn Bartkevičius and James Joseph Brown studied Lithuanian in Vilnius University language courses.

[120] In her interview, Cassedy reflected: "I like being included in the group of Lithuanian-American writers when that seems to imply that Jewish heritage is becoming a part of the Lithuanian narrative."

5.2. Cultural Trauma in the North American Lithuanian Diaspora

In the North American Lithuanian diaspora community, the second generation of survivors of cultural trauma (those whose parents and grandparents experienced a loss of statehood, deportations to Siberia, the postwar anti-Soviet resistance, Soviet occupation) is mostly made up of the children and grandchildren of World War II displaced persons. They grew up absorbing their parents and grandparents' trauma in the home, but also within the collective memory trauma of the diaspora community. The first generation's superimposed memories re-enacted in a foreign land and spoken in a foreign language are a thread that runs throughout these writers' memoirs, fiction and literary nonfiction. Writing about Lithuanian historical events of the twentieth century, like the deportations to Siberia or the postwar armed resistance against the Soviet Union, Lithuanian-American and Canadian writers are not writing from a place of lived experience, but from historical memory, affiliative postmemory and/or familial postmemory.

The émigré writers of the DP generation, in the language of postmemory, the first generation, wrote in Lithuanian and published with Lithuanian émigré publishing houses. Some of the émigré poets and writers, such as the poets Bernardas Braždžionis and Kazimieras Bradūnas, had already begun publishing their work in interwar independent Lithuania and emigrated to the West as already established literary figures. While others, like Liūnė Sutėma and Birutė Pūkelevičiūte, were just in their infancy as poets and writers when they fled Soviet-occupied Lithuania at the end of World War II.

The success of the DPs to preserve Lithuanian culture and language outside of Lithuania, after Soviet Lithuania was sealed off behind the Iron Curtain for over half a century, was largely due to the work of Lithuanian émigré intellectuals. These efforts were passed on to the second and third generations not only through family stories, but also through the literary work of the first-generation diaspora writers, and Lithuanian diaspora organizations, publications, summer camps, and schools. In his book, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*, Mark Wyman documents that a Lithuanian who toured thirty displaced persons camps which housed Lithuanian war refugees in September 1945 reported that intellectuals were the most numerous group:

> Some 75 percent of the university, high school, and grade schoolteachers had fled Lithuania, he reported, as well as 80 percent of the doctors and a large part of those who worked directly to augment our cultural heritage:

> writers, painters, musicians, artists, etc. Seventy-five percent of Lithuanian DPs in the camps were from the intellectual classes of Lithuania. (Wyman, 1998, 208-209)

Wyman describes that over the roughly five years that Lithuanian DPs had lived in the camps in Germany, they established sixteen Lithuanian language presses that printed "folklore and national history, as well as memoirs and newly created works" (Wyman, 1998, 208–209). According to Wyman:

> Literary events and poetry readings, as well as theater performances, were held regularly from 1944 through 1950, when the camps began closing down after large numbers of the DPs were given permission to emigrate to Canada, Australia, South America, and the United States. A Lithuanian literary review, *Aidai (Echoes)* was launched and continued publishing for decades in the diaspora. (Wyman, 1998, 208-209)

According to Wyman, much of the émigrés' writing reflects a longing for the lost homeland, idealized memories of prewar Lithuania, and expresses the desire of one day finally going home.[121] Because their literary work was banned in Soviet Lithuania, the émigré writers' readership for the greater part of their lifetimes was limited to the Lithuanian diaspora.

5.3. Memory and Postmemory Narratives

Hirsch, Hoffman, and Miller initially developed postmemory as a means of discussing the intergenerational historical trauma born of the Holocaust; however, Hirsch advocates that the postmemory concept can be applied to any large-scale historical and/or cultural trauma.

---

[121] For example, in 1945, Lithuanian poet Kazys Bradūnas wrote a lyric poem, *The Alien Bread,* in which he depicts vignettes of home – a bend in the river, a flower. These images comfort a traveler until he realizes that this flower does not grow in his home country, and that the river bears a strange German name. This iconic poem came to symbolize for many Lithuanian DPs their sense of loss, longing, and homesickness. Wyman, Mark, 1989, 1998: *DP's: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. p. 208-209.

> […] I am also sensitive to the fact that at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century—after the brutal dictatorships in Latin America; after Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur; during the aftermath, globally, of the events of September 11, 2001; and in the midst of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict—the Holocaust can no longer serve simply as a conceptual limit case in the discussion of historical trauma, memory, and forgetting. Certainly, my analysis is in dialog with numerous other contexts of traumatic transfer that can be understood as postmemory. (Hirsch, 2012, 18)

In her interview with Mesnard, Hirsch explains that postmemory can be applied to all groups that have experienced historical and cultural trauma.[122] Hirsch expresses enthusiasm for postmemory being applied more broadly:

> […] It is precisely this kind of resonance I was hoping for in developing the idea of postmemory throughout my writing on this subject, and, in the book's last section, I explicitly engage in such connective and intersecting analyses that I have come to see as absolutely necessary if we are to move forward in the field. (Hirsch, 2012, 18)

Hirsch's statement gives permission to consider literature written about Lithuanian twentieth and twenty-first century cultural trauma through the lens of postmemory.

North American writers of Lithuanian descent express the memory of trauma in a "voice that precedes us" and in "language that cries out from our wounds" (Caruth, 1996). Gailienė has researched historical trauma and cultural trauma in Lithuania since the 1990s. In her work, Gailienė makes the following statement regarding postwar Lithuanian displaced persons and their descendants: "To date little is known about Lithuania's people who against their will became émigrés and experienced the trauma of forced migration. We quietly consider them lucky because they ended up in the free world where they appear to live well. What they lived through and how they survived we don't know" (Gailienė, 2008, 87). As the decades of the Cold War slipped past, because of restrictions on travel to Soviet Lithuania, a widening cultural

[122] Mesnard, Philippe and Jurgenson, Luba (Interviewer) & Marianne Hirsch (Interviewee), Portraits: Memories-Testimonies, 2015, Foundation Auschwitz. YouTube.

gap emerged between diaspora Lithuanians and those who lived in Lithuania under Soviet occupation. This gap has led to questions of identity. In an interview, Sileika commented on his split identity[123]:

> I hesitate to call myself a Lithuanian writer because I have lived outside the country for virtually my entire life and write in English. I have a window into Lithuania because of access to the language. But the question is complicated because I seem to become more and more Lithuanian with every passing year since I go there more and more often, and my son and his family now live there. (Sruoginis, 2016)

Gailienė's statement suggests that contemporary Lithuanians know little about émigré Lithuanians and their descendants and rely on the assumption that "because they ended up in the free world" that the émigrés' "appear to live well." The émigrés' perspective is less often included in research and conversations on historical and cultural trauma in Lithuania. The proliferation of Lithuanian-American and Lithuanian-Canadian memoirs, historical novels, stories and poems, written in English in the past three decades, narrating historical and cultural trauma events of the twentieth and twenty first centuries in Lithuania may be considered as postmemory narratives and may serve to help contemporary Lithuania better understand the North American Lithuanian diaspora.

In the North American Lithuanian diaspora community, the second postmemory generation is mostly made up of the children and grandchildren of the World War II displaced persons. In terms of Hirsch's postmemory concept, the Lithuanian DPs who experienced the trauma of war and relocation as refugees, and the Litvaks who experienced the Holocaust in Lithuania and who were able to resettle in North America, are the first-generation trauma survivors. The second generation are their children, those who experienced the traumatic effects of familial and affiliative postmemory. Hoffman writes the following about how indirect knowledge is expressed through postmemory:

> The paradoxes of indirect knowledge haunt many of us who came after. The formative events of the twentieth

[123] Sruoginis, Laima Vincė (Interviewer), Sileika, Antanas (Interviewee) 30 December 2016.

> century have crucially informed our biographies, threatening sometimes to overshadow and overwhelm our own lives. But we did not see them, suffer through them, experience their impact directly. Our relationship to them has been defined by our very 'post-ness' and by the powerful but mediated forms of knowledge that have followed from it. (Hoffman 2004, 25)

Hoffman is writing about the generations that came after the Holocaust; however, her concept of haunt memories may be applied to the experience of the descendants of the Lithuanian World War II displaced persons as it is reflected in the memoirs of the second and third postmemory generations.

Although they have not experienced the trauma directly, nor witnessed the trauma firsthand, according to Hirsch, the psychological effects of PTSD and anxiety can nonetheless be overpowering for the second postmemory generation:

> To be sure, children of those directly affected by collective trauma inherit a horrific, unknown, and unknowable past that their parents were not meant to survive. Second-generation fiction, art, memoir, and testimony are shaped by the attempt to represent the long-term effects of living in close proximity to the pain, depression, and dissociation of persons who have witnessed and survived massive historical trauma. They are shaped by the child's confusion and responsibility, by a desire to repair, and by the consciousness that her own existence may well be a form of compensation for unspeakable loss. Loss of family, home, of a sense of belonging and safety in the world "bleed" from one generation to the next. (Hirsch, 2012, 34)

According to Codde, the third generation is left with an "inaccessibility of a traumatic past which they can only witness in a highly mediated form (via written or visual documents) but which continues to haunt them" (Codde, 2010, 1). The third generation, the grandchildren of the first-generation trauma survivors, may also suffer from secondary trauma similar to the second generation's experience; however, their experience of familial and affiliative postmemory may be stronger because of the distance of time from the original traumatic events and because of the lack of direct knowledge. Hirsch argues that these experiences leave such a deep impression on the second generation that they "*seem* to constitute memories in their own right" (Hirsch, 2012, 5).

It is this dichotomy between remembrance, story, and imaginings that creates postmemory:

> But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and effectively as to Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. (Hirsch, 2012, 5)

Much of the writing produced by North American writers of Lithuanian descent reflects their parents' and grandparents' experience in Lithuania during and after World War II, their flight as refugees to the Allied territories of the West, their experiences living in displaced persons camps, and then later in Lithuanian diaspora communities during the Cold War period.[124]

5.4. Cultural Memory in the North American Lithuanian Diaspora

After World War II, Lithuanian DPs faced the challenges of building a new life, often without access to the tools to heal from cultural and historical trauma, such as psychotherapy or counselling. The community created its own collective rituals of remembrance, such as commemorating prewar Lithuanian Independence Day on February 16th or mourning those lost in the first Siberian deportations of June 1941 in annual gatherings of remembrance. These dates, and others of historical significance, were remembered in shared collective gatherings in all of the North American Lithuanian diaspora communities. They are reflected in the literature of North American writers of Lithuanian heritage.

---

[124] See: Vince, Laima, 2019: "The Question of Identity: Lithuanian-American/Canadian Writers", *Lituanus, Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Volume 65, Number 4, p. 47-96.

Another source of collective emotional support were religious ceremonies, like the Catholic mass or Protestant service, which in the Lithuanian diaspora were politicized and linked to the movement for Lithuanian independence.

The diaspora community was essentially a community of survivors of war, many of whom were coping with few emotional and psychological resources to heal from survivor's guilt and displacement. While trying to build a life in a new country on a new continent, they passed down stories of their trauma to the second and third generations. In an interview, Gabis recalls:

> Because my mother's mother, Ona Puronas, was imprisoned in the gulag when I was a child, I was very aware of efforts to free her and others and of the history of the Communist purges throughout Lithuania both before and after WWII. My Lithuanian grandfather was a staunch anti-Communist and I remember many after dinner conversations with family and Lithuanian friends who commiserated angrily about the fate of post-war Lithuania. These are not really "activities" but represent an ongoing dialogue among the Lithuanian diaspora community that I, as a child, was privy to. (Sruoginis, 2020)[125]

The five writers studied in this dissertation transform their familial and shared collective trauma "ongoing dialogue," or narratives, into memoirs, novels, plays and poems, written in English about cultural trauma that took place in Lithuania. The communities they belonged to were bound by a sense of shared historical and cultural trauma, as well as shared silences over taboo subjects. These reflections, and others, testify to the second and third postmemory generations' North American identity while at the same time revealing a nostalgia for a Lithuanian identity that seems elusive.

5.5. Rite of Return Journeys to Lithuania and the Search for Identity

First, second and third generation North American writers of Lithuanian descent began journeying back to newly independent Lithuania in the 1990s and 2000s. Often, their goal was to recover and reconstruct lost family

[125] Sruoginis, Laima Vincė (Interviewer), Gabis, Rita (Interviewee), 16 July 2020.

narratives. The desire to research one's incomplete family narrative within the context of Lithuania's cultural and historical trauma events motivates much of this group's writing during this period. Bak's, *Painted in Words*, Šukys's *Siberian Exile*, Gabis's, *Guest at the Shooters' Banquet,* and Sileika's *The Barefoot Bingo Player*, and Markelis's *White Field, Black Sheep* all describe rite of return journeys to Lithuania. In *Painted in Words*, Bak writes about his emotional return to Vilnius, the city of his birth, and the place where he spent his idyllic childhood before he was incarcerated as a child during the Holocaust. It is also the place from which he fled at age 12, eventually ending up in Israel after spending a few years in a displaced persons' camp in Germany.

Sileika is drawn back to Lithuania by the stories, and reflects on how the "suburban angst" of his generation of Canadian-born writers is "pitiful" compared with the suffering of his parents' generation:

> So why this ongoing return to Lithuania, a land of rolling green hills so similar to Southern Ontario? For one thing, the stories here in the old country were more brutal, the takes so much higher than back in Canada. Placed beside the gulag, suburban angst is pitiful. (Sileika, 2017, 212-213)

Šukys's rite of return journeys to Lithuania and Siberia allowed her to come to terms with her lost Lithuanian family narrative and redefine herself as a Canadian writer, scholar, professor, and mother[126]:

> I write about the Vilna (Vilnius) Ghetto, about Siberian deportation, about the Nazi occupation of Lithuania, and about the mass killing of Jews in Lithuania. In the past, I've written in a more scholarly way about contemporary Lithuanian literature. I also write about family, matrilineage, memory, and the problems (for me) of inheritance, which (by virtue of who I am and who my family is) all lead to Lithuanian themes.

Šukys's rite of return journeys are described and reflected on in her book, *Siberian Exile*, where Šukys writes about her return to Lithuania, the homeland of her DP parents and grandparents, to research answers about her

[126] Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Šukys, Julija (Interviewee), 17 May 2017.

grandfather's role as a security police officer during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania. She also seeks out relatives to tell her more about the circumstances of her grandmother's exile to Siberia, and to learn about details that had been kept silent in her family narrative. Šukys takes the concept of rite of return postmemory journey one step further and travels East to Siberia, to visit the place of exile where her paternal grandmother was a prisoner for over a decade.

In her memoir, *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet*, Gabis describes how she journeys back multiple times to the Lithuania of her DP mother and grandfather to research her Lithuanian grandfather's involvement in the Holocaust.

Gabis's and Šukys's rite of return journeys to uncover the truth about family narratives leads them to research archives, and then on journeys to Lithuania, Siberia, Israel, Poland. Both memoirists mourn their grandfathers' victims, mourn their own loss of innocence, and through the ritual of writing move towards a future-oriented integration of the past.

The five memoirists discussed in this dissertation construct, report, and position themselves as narrators within their family stories, and within Lithuania's historical and cultural trauma narrative. Issues of self-representation are important. In their narratives they tend to self-identify not as victims, but as survivors who ultimately experience a personal catharsis. According to Gailienė's work, this process could be considered post-traumatic growth.[127] In an interview, Bak[128] reflected on his Jewish-Lithuanian identity as rooted in his memories of his childhood in Vilnius:

> When I think of myself, I think that maybe because I have lived in so many different countries and represent different things for different people that others construct my identity for me. But the happy childhood I had in Vilnius has shaped my inner identity. I am the perfect wandering Jew. (Sruoginis, 2019)

Experiencing post-traumatic growth and catharsis after visiting independent Lithuania is stressed in Bak's *Painted in Words*.

---

[127] Gailienė, Danutė, 2008: *Ka jie mums padarė: Lietuvos gyvenimas traumu psichologijos žvilgsniu* (What They Did To Us: The Trauma of Lithuanians from a Psychological Persprective), Vilnius: Tyto Alba.

[128] Sruoginis, Laima Vincė (Interviewer), Bak, Samuel (Interviewee), 27 December 2019.

Sileika explained in an interview why in his writing he is drawn to writing about Lithuanian cultural and historical trauma events[129]:

> Because the language gives me access to a place which is remote enough to be distant from my everyday experience, but close enough to be comprehensible and in focus. It is a dramatic place where the choices people had to make were far more complicated than armchair moralists in North America ever imagine. In a way, I was born into exile from Lithuania, and exile has proven useful to some writers. (Sruoginis, 2016)

Sileika writes in his memoir, *The Barefoot Bingo Caller*, about returning to Lithuania in the late eighties and early nineties as a journalist to report to Canadian newspapers on the independence movement in Lithuania. Involvement in Lithuania's movement for independence is an important theme and a source of pride in Sileika's memoir *The Barefoot Bingo Caller*.[130] He describes his participation in the independence movement:

> It was January 1989 and Lithuania was trying to break away from the Soviet Union. Canada and America didn't like it because separatists were going to undermine Gorbachev. Five church basement ethnics from Toronto were going to do our best to bring the Canadian government along. Hundreds more were doing their bit across North America. (Sileika, 2017, 186)

Although Sileika describes the efforts of North American Lithuanians assisting Lithuania's independence movement in an ironic tone as the efforts of "church basement ethnics" the sense of commitment and pride is evident. He and the other "church basement ethnics" possessed both North American and Lithuanian cultural literacy and understand how their role was to ensure that the right message was passed on to the Canadian government regarding Lithuania's independence movement. They understood that to the Canadian

---

[129] Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Sileika, Antanas (Interviewee), 30 December 2016.
[130] Sileika, Antanas, 2017: *The Barefoot Bingo Caller*, Toronto: ECW Press.

and American governments, the *Sąjūdis*[131] activists were "separatists" who "were going to undermine Gorbachev." It was politically expedient at the time for the independence movement to establish their principles in the West and to make their position clear.

Šukys reported that a period of professional productivity followed the completion of her memoir. Šukys discussed her choices of topics in her writing. Šukys talks about how she embraces hybridity in her interview:

> I was born in Canada to a Lithuanian family. I now live in the United States, but I probably won't live here forever. In the past I've even been described as a Quebec writer (when I lived and wrote in Montreal), which felt weird. But in the end, that was fine too… If anything, I embrace hybridity.[132]

The second and third generation diaspora's emotional experience of their Lithuanian heritage was shaped by the diaspora's half-a-century-long desire to reinstate independence in Lithuania.[133] Their unique multicultural worldview is reflected in their writing and draws from both North American sensibilities and Lithuanian heritage.

Sileika raised his two sons in the Lithuanian community in Toronto, and he and his wife only spoke Lithuanian at home. Sileika's son, Dainius, returned to his grandparents' homeland to fulfill his DP grandparents' dream of returning to Lithuania. Sileika reflects in his memoir on his son's decision to build a life in Lithuania:

> Unlike a few of his unlucky comrades in arms, my Canadian soldier in Afghanistan finished his tour, returned to Canada, and completed his studies, and then moved to live in Vilnius. So now I continue to be pulled toward that city where my parents were married and one son lives with his family. The question not only of how should I live but where should I live continues to haunt me as I stand on the doorstep of retirement. I have a grandson in Vilnius and his parents as well, so it would

[131] The Lithuanian grassroots independence movement.
[132] *Ibid.*
[133] Vince, Laima, 2019: "The Question of Identity: Lithuanian-American/Canadian Writers", *Lituanus, Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Volume 65, No. 4. p. 47-96.

> be natural for me to "return" there too. This, after all, had been the dream of my parents for a decade or two after World War II, at least until they gave up hope of liberation from the Soviet Union, grew old, and found their own children and grandchildren fixed in Canada. (Sileika, 2017, 218-219)

Homecoming to Lithuania enacted by members of the second and third generations is an important rite of return in these memoirs by North American writers of Lithuanian descent.

5.6. Silence

In these memoirs, silence serves as a coping mechanism in families and in the diaspora communities. Silence surrounds family secrets and historical revisionism.

In Bak's *Painted in Words* silence is alleviated during informal storytelling sessions in the Landsberg Displaced Persons' Camp, when survivors find solace by telling their stories to those who can understand them – other survivors.

> For endless hours I listened to tales of survival, to the interpretation in the intimacy of my newly re-created home. Many years had to pass before I realized that some of the stories were wishful fantasies. Even this impulse to remake the past was proof that we were all returning into the ordinary stream of life. (Bak, 2001, 427)

Silence is finally broken after the Holocaust through the process of sharing stories.

In *Siberian Exile* Šukys describes how the years of the Nazi occupation of Lithuania (1941–1944) were omitted from her family narrative when she was growing up in Canada. Gabis describes how she does not know that the grandfather she idealized as a child was a Chief of Lithuanian Security Police during the German occupation until decades after his death, when she casually asks her mother over lunch what her grandfather did during World War II and her mother admits, "He was a police chief" (Gabis, 2015, 15). In *White Field, Black Sheep* Markelis's mother shrouds the story of her mother sheltering a Jewish mother and son in her home during the Holocaust.

5.7. Failed Coping Mechanisms and Expressions of Trauma

Family narratives about the DPs in Canada and the United States, the collective cultural memory of these communities, historical trauma and cultural trauma passed down intergenerationally are prevalent in the memoirs of Bak, Sileika, and Markelis, Šukys and Gabis.

Sileika ironically observes in his memoir that if several Lithuanians gathered socially, alcohol would be present. In *White Field, Black Sheep*, Markelis describes her father's alcoholism when she was a child.

> My mother's explanations about my father's drinking contradict each other, depending on her mood or frame of mind. "Your father never really had a problem. Everyone drank in those days. Certainly everyone in *our* crowd," she'd say. Or, "Oh, I suffered with your father. How I suffered. He'd have too much to drink and then he'd start putting me down, calling me a snob. And then there were those times he'd pass out on the steps and I'd have to drag him in." (Markelis, 2010, 5)

As an adult, Markelis struggles with alcohol and describes her relationship with alcohol in her memoir:

> That summer I tried to keep intact my crumbling self with white wine and vodka, spending weekends with my non-Lithuanian boyfriend, Tom. I moved out of the house, against the wishes of my parents, to an apartment in Berwyn several miles away. Buying place mats and posters and coffee mugs, arranging books on an old bookcase I'd found in the alley, sneaking in a runty cat I named Mimi (after the heroine of La Boheme)—all these served as temporary distractions from my mental and emotional troubles. After the newness of independence wore off, I felt more miserable than before. Coffee gave me a lift; I drank gallons. When I couldn't sleep I drank wine and popped Nytols. I tried cocaine with the hope that it would stabilize my falling spirits. (Markelis, 2010, 148)

Markelis writes about how she rejected her American boyfriend of many years, Tom, to marry a Lithuanian-Canadian she'd only recently met at a drunken wedding party (Markelis, 2010, 162). Markelis and her Lithuanian-Canadian husband's marriage is marked by a shared drinking problem and not

much else. She divorces and marries a second time, this time happily. Her second husband is an ethnically unmarked American. Markelis's mother calls her second husband, whose name is Marty, "Martynas." Markelis wonders if her mother has renamed her husband "perhaps in an effort to fool herself that he is Lithuanian." (Markelis, 2010, 20) In *White Field, Black Sheep* Markelis describes her depression and her DP mother's despair:

> My parents were reluctant to acknowledge depression as the cause of changes in my behavior. My mother believed my problems would be solved if I married a nice Lithuanian boy with a bright future and moved to the nearby Chicago suburbs. (Markelis, 2010, 147)

With the ironic tone and survival humor that is integral to both Markelis and Sileika's voice, Markelis adds a touch of humor to the scene:

> She even looked up the word "depression" in the English-Lithuanian Dictionary. *Įdubimas.* "A hollow," she said, "an indentation. A really big hole." (Markelis, 2010, 147)

In *Painted in Words*, Bak describes his stepfather Markusha's depression after surviving the Holocaust, who had lost his first wife and children. Markusha succumbs to Alzheimer's disease. Bak considers that Alzheimer's disease released his stepfather from the burden of painful memories.

> In the late 1960s, Markusha started to die. More exactly, the part of him that did not die in the ghetto and in the camp, the part that somehow kept him with us, started to wane. Today we would speak of an Alzheimer-like haze. […] The fog of his mind protected him from an awareness that might have been too much to bear. (Bak, 2001, 101)

The sense of existing as the "living dead" is a theme throughout Bak's memoir. However, the story of Markusha, the Holocaust survivor from Kaunas, shows how loss of memory brings comfort to one who has lost his family. In *Untimely Interventions*, Chambers discusses the plight of the survivor among the living:

> And such identification *with* the dead amounts finally, for many victim-survivors, to a self-identification *as* dead. Dead because one's personal history, vividly

> present as it is to oneself, is bafflingly irrelevant and unreal in the eyes of others. But strangely, weirdly dead too because, unlike the real dead, one has in common with the living survivors the fact of being still alive, and of suffering all the pain of survival. (Chambers, 2004, xxiv)

This sense of living as the dead among the living, and the dead, emerges throughout Bak's memoir; however, perhaps most poignantly with the story of Markusha, the Holocaust survivor from Kaunas, Lithuania.

Gabis's memoir opens with descriptions of two recurring dreams that reveal hidden violence against victims. In one of the dreams, the narrator is the perpetrator. In Chambers' terminology, this dream could be understood as a special type of knowing the unknowable – in his terms, "haunt knowledge." A scene with a therapist follows the dream descriptions:

> "You're very angry," a therapist I was seeing at the time said. Her name was Eva Brown.
>
> Eva Brown. Eva Braun. Hitler's mistress is your shrink. (Gabis, 2015, xviii)

Gabis describes episodes of battling depression in *A Guest At The Shooters' Banquet* and scenes with her psychotherapist, who helps her negotiate haunt knowledge locked in her recurring dreams.

5.8. Religion

Strong Catholic and Protestant faith combined with patriotism serves as a coping mechanism for the DPs and subsequent second and third postmemory generations. The significance of the Catholic and Protestant Church as the glue that held community together for the first, second, and third waves of immigrants cannot be underestimated. The traditions of Christianity are linked to the suffering of the occupied Lithuanian nation. In these communities religion functions as a trauma response.

Bak describes how the Jewish faith, which played only a small role in his secular Litvak family before the war, becomes significant after the Holocaust, when his mother insists that he give up a scholarship to an Art school in Paris to emigrate to Israel, so that he may learn Hebrew and live as a Jew. From the distance of time, Bak admits that he is grateful for this decision:

> From my vantage point today, I am glad her will prevailed and that we left Landsberg in 1948 for the Jewish state. The years I spent in Israel, enriched my life and gave me the knowledge of a language that is indispensable to the immense culture of which I am a part. It helped me forge a sense of my own identity. Identity, ethnicity, nationality, justice, religion, faith, allegiance—it was not an easy endeavor to find one's way among all these concepts at an age that yearned for clear-cut answers. (Bak, 2001, 433)

This example reveals the importance of religion in building identity and cultural belonging. However, present in Bak's narrative are displays of postwar cynicism towards organized religion as people grappled with it after the catastrophe of World War II. Bak describes a fight with his mother when he refuses to learn about Judaism from a rabbi, who he believes is a hypocrite. In a bitter argument, Bak's mother takes a traditional religious position. Bak then proves his point by using a trauma wound from the Holocaust:

> I told Mother to remember her own mother, the only religious member of our family, Grandmother Shifrah, who on every Yom Kippur used to spend all day in the synagogue crying her eyes out and taking on herself all the sins of the other members of our "worldly" family. Shifra was shot by the Germans on Yom Kippur. (Bak, 2001, 434)

Bak speaks here as an adolescent. However, his adolescent reasoning and narcissism reflects the mentality of Europeans after the devastation of World War II, which, in view of the human depravity they experienced, left much doubt in people's minds as to the existence of a God.

5.9. Inherited Guilt

The burden of inherited guilt and of guilt by association with family members who collaborated with the Nazi or Soviet regimes are reflected in Šukys's *Siberian Exile* and Gabis's *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet*. Their postmemory ruminations reflect Chambers' writing on haunt knowledge.

> …I would like to reframe the discussion and ask what it means for a culture of aftermath to be haunted

> by a collective memory—the memory of painful events, if any, living members of the culture may have directly perpetrated or suffered from in their own persons. In particular I want to raise the issue of what it might mean for an individual to confuse the collective historical consciousness concerning outrageous events with painful personal memories; and to confuse them to the point of being *inhabited* (i.e., haunted) by the events *as though* he or she had actually lived through them. (Chambers, 192)

Gabis and Šukys mourn the dead victims of their perpetrator grandfathers. Their emotions merge with those of the survivors who they have interviewed. Through their writing they inhabit the "culture of aftermath." Both write about experiencing hauntings of the historical trauma of the Holocaust. The roles of survivor, victim, perpetrator blur, allowing each to reimagine the others' role.

6. CATHARSIS THROUGH MEMORY SAMUEL BAK: *PAINTED IN WORDS – A MEMOIR*

6.1. Memory as Testimony

The narrative of *Painted in Words* does not follow a linear chronological order; rather, it is constructed from associative memories that shift across the span of the artist's life. Significant realizations, impressions, and moments of epiphany unfold through associations in the writer's mind, linking disparate events, seeking greater understanding. The associative process writing of the memoir resembles Bak's work at his easel:

> Yet after almost four decades I still start my morning in front of the easel, thinking that I understand what I am doing and arrive at evening's pleasurable feeling of closure having learned again that I can never work from a pre-established plan. I have no doubt about my larger intention. My paintings are meant to bear personal testimony to the trauma of surviving. … (Bak, 2001, 129)

When considering Bak as a writer, it is vital to also consider his body of work as a painter. In an interview, Bak reflects on the connection between his painting and writing:

> My memoir is closely related to my paintings. I did not write with the self-consciousness that the professional writer has. I desired to bring back to life something that I knew existed in my memory. (Samuel Bak, Laima Vince, Weston, MA, December 27, 2019)

Over his lifetime, Bak has narrated his Holocaust survival story through the creative mediums of painting and writing. In this regard, his memoir truly is painted in words. Bak reflects on the fragmentary nature of his trauma memories and the emotional challenge of weaving them into a cohesive whole.

> Alas, that past must instead be recomposed from fragments of an aching and irksome memory. Like the images I paint, its fragments belong to a complex reality that cannot be contained within the narrow boundaries of any single canvas or even the output of a lifetime. But unlike my painted statements, my written recollections

> do not call for transformation into metaphors. They are raw, they are real, and they still hurt. (Bak, 2001, 6)

Bak delves into the landscape of memory to reconstruct fragments of his experience as a child Holocaust survivor in his native Vilna:

> Memory is a creative process. It is a collage of different things. It always comes back in different ways. My paintings are made from bits and pieces of things that resemble other things. My memoir is not written in chronological order, but through association. … It is part of the huge storehouse of memories my mother had. I thought to myself: All these people will disappear completely unless I write about them from my memory. The memoir is directly related to my painting of the family, which is housed at the Pucker Gallery in Boston. (Samuel Bak, Laima Vince, Weston, MA, December 27, 2019)

The creation of Bak's memoir resembles his daily meticulous work as an artist at his easel:

> With time my art language gained transparency and I began to perceive certain reasons for the choices I was making. Yet after almost four decades I still start my morning in front of the easel, thinking that I understand what I am doing and arrive at evening's pleasurable feeling of closure having learned again that I can never work from a pre-established plan. I have no doubt about my larger intention. My paintings are meant to bear personal testimony to the trauma of surviving. They depict troubling images of a world shadowed by the dissipating clouds of yet another universal flood. (Bak, 2001, 129)

Like with his experience as a painter, for Bak writing his memoir proves cathartic. Bak moves chapter by chapter out of an experience of extreme trauma into a space of personal catharsis that leads to a period of productivity. Bak's vivid descriptions, his sense of humor and empathy, visually recreate the world of the Holocaust, but also the gift of survival and a productive life.

In *Testimony*, a seminal book on testimony and witnessing of the Holocaust, written by psychologist Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, in her

authored chapter, "The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann's Shoah" Felman makes an appeal to the collective consciousness of bearing witness:

> To bear witness is to take responsibility for truth: to speak, implicitly, from within the legal pledge and the juridical imperative of the witness's oath. To testify—before a court of law or before the court of history and of the future; to testify, likewise, before an audience of readers or spectators—is more than simply to report a fact or an event or to relate what has been lived, recorded, and remembered. Memory is conjured here essentially in order to *address* another, to impress upon a listener, to *appeal* to a community. (Felman, 1992, 204)

Felman's appeal to memory is that it must "address another" and "appeal" to a community. Memory does not concern itself with remembrances for their own sake alone, but for the sake of the community and the extended human family.

The memoir of this Holocaust survivor takes the reader on a journey through trauma and survival of extreme violence. Integral to the memoir is the need to bear witness, to tell the story of survival. According to Felman, in the documentary film *Shoah*, Claude Landzmann "persistently asks the same relentless questions: what does it mean to be a witness? What does it mean to be a witness to the Holocaust? What does it mean to be witness to the process of the film? What does testimony mean, if it is not simply (as we commonly perceive it) the observing, the recording, the remembering of an event, but an utterly unique and irreplaceable topographical *position* with respect to an occurrence? What does testimony mean, if it is the uniqueness of the *performance of a story* which is constituted by the fact that, like the oath, it cannot be carried out by anybody else" (Felman, 1992, 205). In his book, *Untimely Interventions: AIDS Writing, Testimonial, and the Rhetoric of Haunting,* Ross Chambers writes the following about the need to testify:

> In order to testify one must first survive—or one's story must survive. The nonsurvivors who haunt survivor testimony do so precisely because it is both surviving testimony and the testimony of survivors. It is the memory of the nonsurvivors that so-called survivor guilt acknowledges. (Chambers, 2004, 197)

In this sense, Bak's memoir transcends the genre of writing, and serves as a monument to not only his lost family, but to a lost people.

The memoir *Painted in Words* reads as a race against time and memory. Time threatens to erase the last traces of those who lived before the Holocaust. Bak's desire to recreate his lost family through writing was one of the impulses that made him lay his brushes aside:

> I wanted to recreate my family before all the memories are gone. I wanted to bring back to life to some degree people who would have been otherwise forgotten. I never forgave myself for not insisting my mother write the histories of our family. I try to keep her memories alive. (Samuel Bak, Laima Vince, Weston, MA, December 27, 2019)

Bak's desire "to bring back to life something that I knew existed in my memory" helps him tap into the "huge storehouse" of his mother's memory to tell his family story.[134] Bak has expressed that *The Family* (1973) is "probably one of my most complex and ambitious paintings… In it I attempted to reconstruct a family portrait from fragments of memory" (Bak, 2001, 133). Painted in sepia tones, the painting depicts six rows of upper torsos with an unfinished painting on an easel in the background. Behind the painting within a painting, there are a multitude of smaller figures extending all the way back to a distant city with several smokestacks emitting smoke into a dreary sky. Two women are decked out in stylish hats. One wears a fur mantle. Some of the figure's heads are bandaged, others are wooden cut-outs, others wear masks, and the tops of some of the other heads have been sliced off. Except for a one-eyed soldier and two bandaged heads, all the figures' eyes are closed or semi-closed, revealing the whites of the eyes, as though they were already dead. *The Family* is essentially a collage of Bak's individual family members, each of whom the reader becomes acquainted with reading *Painted in Words.*

Chapters are dedicated to different branches of Bak's family. For example, the first chapter of the memoir, "The Pinkas: A Book of Records" introduces the reader to Bak's mother, whom he respectfully addresses as "Mother" throughout the memoir. The reader first encounters "Mother" in the subchapter "The Six-Day War." "Chapter Two: How All This Writing Began" tells the story of Bak's stepfather, Markusha, a survivor of Dachau who lost his entire family. Bak reflects from the expanse of decades on his relationship with Markusha:

---

[134] Samuel Bak, (interviewee), Laima Vince, (interviewer) Weston, MA, December 27, 2019.

> I wish I could have told him, or maybe it is my way of telling him now, how sorry I am that I never opened for him the space of my lost father. Nor have I ever dared to invade the space of his lost children, since the wound that they left in him was sacred territory. We were, after all, a typical family of survivors, living with our much too present ghosts, in an arrangement of civilized tolerance. There was a lot of love among us, but we were at pains to deal with it properly. (Bak, 2001, 102)

Another survivor is Bak's mother's younger sister, Aunt Yetta. "Chapter Three: Aunt Yetta's Magic" tells the story of Yetta. In his attempt to bring his dead family back to life, he opens the chapter with a lively characterization of his aunt:

> Yetta loved to play cards and to read magazines. She loved to hear and tell stories of ghosts and of magic. Although she would never have admitted to it, somewhere deep in herself she possessed uncanny powers. Mother saw through her thoughts. "Rubbish," she would say, "that is the typical gibberish of my sister." (Bak, 2001, 111)

After describing Yetta and his mother's family, Bak describes his father's family in Chapter Four, "On Father's Side: The Baks." Then, Bak describes his beloved paternal grandparents and the times he would visit them in their spacious apartment. In Chapter Eight, "On Mother's Side: The Yochels and the Nadels" Bak describes his mother's extended family.

Bak can only reimagine images from an old Jewish Vilna. His postmemories include men in dark hats with beards, many engaged in arguments: the quintessential stereotype of prewar Jews. His description of that memory reads like a painting crafted from words:

> In my inner eye I see a procession of men: men in long coats, dark hats, wearing all sorts of beards; a few carry canes; some sneeze or cough; others sigh, and many are engaged in arguments. Several must have been telling jokes because many of the men laugh out loud. Gradually they are obscured by an advancing crowd of boisterous and vigorous women. High over the two corteges hang leaden clouds, but the horizon is still clear and red blotches of a setting sun flicker over the entire

> throng. Along the road that leads them to some mysterious place, old trees humbly bend their trunks.
>
> Their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, some of whom I must have encountered in my far-off days, peacefully rest now in Ponar, Vilnius's lovely wood. (Bak, 2001, 494-495)

All that he has are these imagined images because the Jewish inhabitants of the city are dead.

Indeed, the memory reads as a haunting, as the memoirist struggles to hold onto his precious prewar childhood memories of his extended family before they slip away into the vacuum of timelessness. As the memoir opens, Bak reflects on the nature of writing a memoir:

> Probably anyone who undertakes to write a memoir faces similar challenges. A text seems to acquire a life of its own, and it takes hold of the entire person. The story writes itself through the one who summons the recollections, and not the other way round. It is a journey into memory that is more than an attempt to save the past from oblivion; it searches for some kind of restoration or mending. Probably aspiring for a *tikkun haolam*, "the repair of the whole world." (Bak, 2001, 6)

Through the process of writing, Bak seeks to "restore" or "mend" his traumatic past. Essentially, his memoir is more than "an attempt to save the past from oblivion" but an act of healing and catharsis. However, beyond personal redemption, the memoir aspires to "tikkun haolam, 'the repair of the whole world.'" Hence, from the opening of the memoir, Bak establishes his desire for his writing to lead beyond self-reflection and self-healing into a universal plane of healing for all of humanity. This is an ambitious project, and a generous one.

As with his painting, Bak's writing proves cathartic, providing that "pleasurable feeling of closure." As the 500-page memoir progresses, Bak moves out of a space of trauma into a space of personal catharsis that leads to greater productivity. The visual aspects of Bak's writing, the humor and empathy of his voice, lead the reader into the horrors of the Holocaust as experienced by a small boy, and then into the gift of survival. Bak seeks to reconstruct through memory the extended family he lost as a child in the Shoah. In so doing he comes to terms with his own trauma as a child Holocaust survivor. He finds the courage through the process of writing to revisit his

childhood in cosmopolitan Vilna, to relive his arrest and incarceration in the ghetto, and later the Heereskraftfahrpark (HKP)[135] labor camp, to return in his memory to his miraculous escapes, to his experience of hiding in the Benedictine convent, and ultimately his survival and escape from Soviet occupied Lithuania.

Together with his wife, Josée, he makes a rite of return journey to his childhood Vilna (Vilnius) where he experiences catharsis, hope for the future, and takes an active role in the fledgling democracy's cultural narrative by donating a collection of his paintings to the Tolerance Museum. At the close of the memoir, Bak has made his peace with his native city of Vilna. He returns to the city of his birth twice in 2001 when invited to exhibit his paintings there in a major retrospective show.

6.2. Caught in the Double Zone of Occupation

Samuel Bak was born in 1933 in Vilna (Vilnius) at a time when the city and surrounding region had been incorporated into Poland. "I spoke a beautiful Polish," Bak recalls, "burnished by young female students from the University of Vilna" (Bak, 2001, 287). As a boy, Bak was affectionately called by the Polish diminutive, Samek. As the only son of two parents and four doting grandparents, he experiences a happy childhood in prewar Vilna. His childhood plays out against the backdrop of "The Jerusalem of the North":

> Vilna was a magical place for hundreds of thousands of Jews. It has generated an endless flow of memories and reflections, mountains of books, and pages of sacred and secular texts as innumerable as the stars in the sky. (Bak, 2001, 91)

[135] The HKP forced labor camp was located on Subačius Street built originally to house poor Jewish families. The camp was used by the Nazis as a forced labor camp from September 1943 until July 1944. Major Karl Plagge was in charge of managing the camp, which was run by a Wehrmacht engineering unit, Heereskraftfahrpark (HKP). Plagge and some of his men made efforts to protect the Jews working in the camp from the SS. Partly due to the covert resistance to the Nazi policy of genocide toward the Jews that over 250 Jewish men, women, and children survived the final liquidation of the HKP camp in July 1944. This was the single largest group of Jewish Holocaust survivors in Vilnius.

Vilna is sacred to Jews, and at the same time, Vilnius (the Lithuanian name for the same city) holds historic significance for Lithuanians as the ancient capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was a geopolitical blow in 1919 for the fledgling democracy (Lithuanian became independent from tsarist Russia in 1918) to lose its capital to Polish occupation. Kaunas became Lithuania's capital during the nation's brief period of independence (1918–1940). In 1940, Lithuania regained Vilnius as its capital when the country entered into a duplicitous agreement with the Soviet Union: in exchange for stationing Soviet troops on Lithuanian soil, the Soviets would return Vilnius to Lithuania from occupied Poland. A year later, in 1941, Nazi Germany invaded Lithuania, driving out the Soviets. The Nazi occupation lasted until 1944, when Lithuania was occupied a second time by the Soviet Union.

In his book, *Black Earth,* American historian Timothy Snyder identifies German occupied Lithuania and Latvia as the place where the Holocaust began:

> It was in the consecutively occupied lands of Lithuania and Latvia that the Holocaust began. Unlike in eastern Poland, in Lithuania and Latvia the apparently chaotic killing did escalate to a systematic Final Solution. At the end of 1941 the vast majority of Polish Jews were still alive, but almost all Lithuanian and Latvian Jews were dead. (Snyder, 2015, 161)

Snyder dubs Eastern Poland and the Baltic States the "zone of double occupation," a region where the state was destroyed first by the Soviets and then the Nazis in two consecutive violent occupations. He postulates that it was the tragedy of the loss of statehood that lay the groundwork for the murders of millions of Jews because in the Baltic States the "Germans found the conditions where 'one could do as one pleased,' where one could kill Jews in large numbers for the first time, in 1941, as they invaded the Soviet Union" (Snyder, 2015, 117). Snyder claims:

> Almost all of the two million or so Jews who came under German rule in 1939 would die. The same was true of the two million Jews who came under Soviet rule in 1939 and 1940. Indeed, the Jews who initially fell under Soviet rule were the first to be murdered *en masse* by the Germans. (Snyder 2015, 117-118)

This vacuum of power created the conditions for the murders of Jews in Lithuania. The genocide of Lithuania's Jews, in terms of its scale and speed, was unique in Lithuanian history.

Ethnic Lithuanians and Jewish Lithuanians experienced vastly different histories during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania (1941–1944). For Jewish Lithuanians, the Nazi occupation of Lithuania meant death. Jewish Lithuanians experienced historical trauma on a catastrophic scale during the Holocaust in Lithuania: It is estimated that ninety-five percent of Lithuania's Jews were murdered during the Nazi occupation and genocide.[136] Lithuanian historian Algimantas Kasparavičius made the following public statement on the online Lithuanian Jewish Litvak Journal: "The greatest tragedy of Lithuania's twentieth century occurred not in June 1940 when the nation lost its freedom and statehood, but one year later, when the Holocaust began in Nazi-occupied Lithuania."[137] The Lithuanian-American Holocaust scholar Dr. Saulius Sužiedėlis writes: "the extent of the violence in 1941 […] had no historic parallels either in the quantitative or qualitative sense. October 28, 1941, stands out as a brutal record. On that day […], nearly 10,000 Lithuanian Jews were slaughtered at the Fort IX in Kaunas by the Nazis and their local collaborators. Never had so many been killed on Lithuanian soil in so short a time. It is small wonder, then, that the painful record of 1941 continues to

---

[136] See: Bubnys, Arūnas, 2011. *Holokaustas Lietuvoje 1941 – 1944 m.* (The Holocaust in Lithuania) Vilnius: Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania. In his book, *The Holocaust in Lithuania,* Lithuanian historian Arūnas Bubnys writes: "It is very difficult to answer the question how many Lithuanian Jews were killed during the years of the Nazi occupation. Historians differ markedly on this issue. Numbers of Holocaust victims in Lithuania vary from 165,000 to 254,000. Neither full statistical records nor lists of the dead survive in archives. The present author bases himself on the following calculations: according to data from the Department of Statistics, on 1 January 1941 there were 208,000 Jews (6.86 percent of the total population) in Lithuania. At the beginning of the war around 8,500 Jews went to Russia. During the Nazi occupation 1,500 to 2,000 escaped from the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettoes, and 2,000 to 3,000 lived in concentration camps to the end of the war. Thus around 195,000 Lithuanian Jews and several thousand Jews from abroad (Poland, Germany, Austria, and France) were murdered."

[137] Kasparavičius, Algimantas, 2017. "Lietuvių politinės iliuzijos: Lietuvos laikinosios vyriausybės „Politika" ir Holokausto pradžia Lietuvoje 1941 metais" (Lithuanian Political Illusions: The Temporary Lithuanian Government, "Politics" and the beginning of the Holocaust in Lithuania in 1941." Lietuvos Žydų Litvakų Bendruomenė (Lithuanian Jewish Litvak Community). Online journal, 2017-1-15. Accessed: https://www.lzb.lt/2017/01/05/lietuviu-politines-iliuzijos-lietuvos-laikinosios-vyriausybes-politika-ir-holokausto-pradzia-lietuvoje-1941-metais/ Seen: April 7, 2021.

confront, embarrass and annoy Lithuanian society." Sužiedėlis further observes: "The units which spewed forth death in the forts surrounding Kaunas were not manned by Martians: these were young Lithuanian men who had been raised in a country which was, after all, predominantly Catholic and oriented towards the West."[138] Lithuanian security police and shooters participated in the killings.[139] Lithuanian guards held prisoners in captivity and marched them back and forth to labor sites.[140] In her book, *After Such Knowledge*,[141] Eva Hoffman reflects on extreme violence and survival:

> "Trauma" is the contemporary master term in the psychology of suffering, the chief way we understand the personal aftermath of atrocity and abuse. The survivors of such events, we take it for granted, have been traumatized; and Holocaust survivors are the chief exemplars of such damage. "Trauma" is our culture's way of extricating one set of meanings from the Holocaust legacy, and from genocide. (Hoffman, 2004, 34-35)

The experience of trauma became inevitable for Bak when the Nazi occupation ended his blissful childhood. He and his mother were arrested and incarcerated in the Vilna ghetto.

---

[138] Sužiedėlis, Saulius, 2001: "The Burden of 1941," *Lituanus* (Winter 2001), http://www.lituanus.org/2001/01_4_04.htm, seen, March 17, 2021. See also: Sužiedėlis, Saulius, 2018: "The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania: successes, challenges, perspectives," Journal of Baltic Studies, 49: 1, p. 103-106.

[139] In the chapter, "Killers—What Motivated Them" in his book, *Jews, Lithuanians, and the Holocaust*, Lithuanian historian Adolfas Eidintas writes: "Clearly, the total number of directly engaged killers was not great—they were about 200 calloused murderers, scorned by Lithuanians from the start, who belonged to the special forces at Kaunas (Hamann Flying Squad) and Vilnius (SD Sonderkommando Special Police Squad). These were the primary participants of actions during which most of Lithuania's Jews were murdered. They belonged to the Security Police and SD, gave oaths, and loyally served the occupier of their country" (Eidintas, 2003, 253). See: Eidintas, Alfonas, 2003, *Jews, Lithuanians, and the Holocaust*, Vilnius: Versus Aureus.

[140] See: Bubnys, Arūnas (2017) *Lietuvių policijos batalionionai 1941-1945 m. (Lithuanian Police Battalions 1941-1945)*. Vilnius: Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania.

[141] Hoffman, Eva, 2004: *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, New York: Public Affairs.

> Chased from our homes, we dragged our soaking feet between the puddles of the road, trying to find a hold on the slippery cobblestones. Rude voices continued incessantly to give orders and a hard rain drenched us to the bones. "The sky is crying," said the people who walked in front of me. (Bak, 2001, 330)

This pivotal moment in the memoir serves as the demarcation line between Bak's happy childhood with his Jewish family and the next four years of living in terror and hiding.

Although there were people who rescued Jews for a monetary reward, there were also Lithuanians, Poles, and Russians in Lithuania during the years of the Nazi occupation who risked their lives to save Jewish lives and asked for nothing in return.[142] Some of these self-sacrificing rescuers were intellectuals, others ordinary villagers, and still others were members of the Catholic clergy, priests and nuns, or devout Christians. Others, like the librarian Ona Šimaitė,[143] had moral beliefs that dictated their actions and choices during the Nazi occupation.[144] According to Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, 916 Lithuanians have been honored as Righteous of the Nations[145] for rescuing and saving the lives of Jews during

---

[142] The late Professor of Pharmacy, Alexander Gringauz, who was Bak's friend in the Landsberg DP camp, was rescued as a child from the Kaunas ghetto by Konstancija Bražėnienė, mother-in-law of the leader of the anti-Soviet postwar resistance, Juozas Lukša. See: Vince, Laima, 2012. *Journey into the Backwaters of the Heart: Stories of Women Who Survived Hitler and Stalin*, New York, Amazon Publishers. P. 136-146.

[143] See: Šukys, Julija, 2012. *Epistolophilia: Writing the Life of Ona Šimaitė,* London and Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. Šimaitė's life is chronicled in this postmemory work of literary nonfiction first published in the United States and then translated into Lithuanian and published by the Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishing House. See: Šukys, Julija, 2016. *Epistolofilija: Užrašytas Onos Šimaitės gyvenimas.* Trans. Marius Burokas. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla (The Lithuanian Writers' Union Press).

[144] In his book, *The Holocaust in Lithuania,* historian Arūnas Bubnys writes: "Although the greater part of the Lithuanian population reacted quite passively during the period of the mass killings in 1941, several hundred people appeared who saved or helped Jews being imprisoned and killed in other ways. Such people occurred in different social layers and professions. The Lithuanian middle classes, priests, and simple farmers were particularly active in saving Jews. From 1953, on the initiative of the Yad Vashem museum in Israel, people who saved Jews were granted to title of Righteous among the Nations. Every year more and more inhabitants of Lithuania (frequently posthumously) are granted this honourable title." (Bubnys, 2008, 47)

[145] Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center. See: https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/statistics.html Accessed March 15, 2021

the Holocaust.[146] When she was still a teenager, Professor of German literature, theater critic, human rights activist, Dr. Irena Veisaitė, was saved from the Kaunas ghetto by a network of Christian Lithuanians.[147]

Bak and his mother were rescued by Catholic nuns and a priest who sought no compensation for saving their lives. Bak vividly describes his Polish and Lithuanian rescuers in his memoir. He recalls that Father Statkauskas, wearing a dark gray trench coat that "must have replaced his robe" (Bak, 2001, 359), brought young Samek, his mother, and the other Jews hiding in the Benedictine convent "hidden carrots, a few dried fruits, or a piece of cheese" (Bak, 2001, 359). Yet, Bak stresses, the most important thing that Father Statkauskas brought them were his words of hope:

> It was a question of a few weeks or maybe a month or two. We had to hold out. The intensification of Soviet air raids confirmed our hope that the end was nearing. (Bak, 2001, 359)

Bak recalls how one of his guardian angels, as he called his rescuers, Sister Maria, prayed continually for their safety. On the last day of the German occupation, as Nazi and Soviet soldiers fought each other street by street in Vilnius, the Baks' hiding place was blasted open, and their group of Jews who had been living in hiding together were confronted by a zealous fireman who shouted, "Keep guard on these dirty kikes. I'll get the Germans" (Bak, 2002, 361). Those turned out to be his last words. Bak describes what he viewed as divine intervention that saved them:

> He had taken a few steps in the direction of the courtyard when another round of machine-gun fire dropped him to the ground in contorted convulsions. His bleeding hands were clutching his intestines. The men

---

[146] Yad Vashem stresses that "The numbers of Righteous are not necessarily an indication of the actual number of rescuers in each country but reflect the cases that were made available to Yad Vashem."

[147] She was eventually adopted into the home of Stefanija Ladigienė, the widow of General Kazimieras Ladiga, who was executed by the Soviets in 1941. Throughout her life, Veisaitė spoke publicly about the generosity and heroism of the Ladiga family, who not only sheltered her, but included her, an orphan, as one of their family. See: Švedas, Aurimas and Veisaitė, Irena, Transl. Karla Gruodis, 2020, *Life Should Be Transparent,* Budapest: Central European University Press.

> left us and ran to bring him help. Framed in the opening of the shattered window stood Sister Maria. She must have been praying. Her hands were making the signs of the cross. (Bak, 2002, 361)

Although it is not clear in this scene whether Sister Maria was praying for the dead fireman or the Jews hiding in the convent, or both, the reader may intuit from previous descriptions of the loving relationship that Sister Maria had with Bak as a child that for young Samek those prayers were a comfort.

Bak describes several escapes he and his mother made from the Vilna ghetto, noting that "it takes many miracles to survive." Bak's father, grandparents, and extended family were all killed. Finally, Bak and his mother find refuge in the Landsberg displaced persons camp in Germany. Later they emigrate to Israel, where he begins his career as a successful painter.

The Litvaks who survived the Holocaust and who started new lives in Israel and the United States experienced a wall of silence in the postwar years. Bak has shared how after World War II, Holocaust survivors were made to feel shame for what they had been through during the war. Bak describes the lukewarm reception Holocaust survivors received in Israel and how he struggled to hide his accent when speaking Hebrew. Having experienced this wall of silence, it took many years to find the courage to write his memoir.[148]

6.3. A Mother's Voice and the Lost Jewish Family

The close relationship Bak shares with his often overbearing, overprotective, but doting mother, is one of the memoir's themes. Postmemory narratives in his mother's voice are woven into Bak's remembrances. The voice of Bak's mother often breaks into Bak's narrative, scolding and commenting:

> Mother's repeated warnings resonate in my memory: "The trouble with child prodigies is that the prodigious stuff evaporates with time, and only the child remains." She has been dead for three decades, but her sayings continue to haunt me. (Bak, 2001, 8)

[148] Bak, Samuel (interviewee), Sruoginis, Laima Vincė, (interviewer) Weston, MA, December 27, 2019.

Despite her scolding, Mother (as Bak's mother is called in the memoir) does everything she can during war, the Holocaust, and postwar displacement in the Landsberg DP camp, to ensure her son receives a well-rounded education. Initially, the education Bak receives as a small child is not interrupted by the violence enfolding in Europe.

> Too small to read the papers, I had no idea that at this very time hoodlums in Nazi Germany were breaking Jewish shop windows and that the Polish parliament in Warsaw was debating whether to let the Jewish population retain its Polish citizenship. I was being well prepared for a world that hardly existed. Should I have suspected in my parents' plans a trace of snobbishness? They were far from being naïve. Was it on their part a sort of denial? If so, they were soon to be cured of it. (Bak, 2001, 287-288)

Paradoxically, little Samek, whose life is in constant danger, experiences a strong sense of security that he receives from his parents. Bak stresses how protected he felt by his parents' unconditional love while hunted by the Nazis and Lithuanian Security Police in Vilna during the Holocaust, how he felt certain his parents would protect him:

> My personality at age eight was already formed when my mother and I were arrested by Lithuanian policemen and marched to the Vilna ghetto. I truly believed that my parents would protect me. I had the privilege as a child that I was so sure of the love that surrounded me. (Samuel Bak, Laima Vince, Weston, MA, December 27, 2019)

Bak is twelve at the end of World War II. He admits that many of his remembrances are those of a child; however, writing the memoir, his memories blend with those of his mother. Bak is a first-generation Holocaust survivor; however, he notes that the full impact and understanding of the Holocaust in Lithuania were experienced by his mother, whose stories, anxieties, and reminiscences Bak incorporates into his memoir as part of his own experience. Bak seeks to recreate through the written word his ancestors, some of whom he vaguely remembers, and others he knows only through his late mother's stories. Bak's Mother experiences the death of her husband, her parents, her husband's parents, her entire extended family. Only a few relatives survive the Holocaust. She loses her entire prewar Jewish community. Alone with her young son, she bravely makes her way into the

postwar world, always concerned with her son's education, with nurturing his artistic talent. Bak's mother's stories become his lifeblood, his only tie to all his relatives, to his family's heritage, their past, to his sense of who the Litvaks were as a people.

However, given the chance to escape, Bak's mother chose not to:

> In later times, not only under Nazi rule—in the convent, the ghetto, or the camp—but even after the war in Landsberg and Israel, Mother would return to this episode and retell it, again and again. She would start by saying how stupid she had been, how shortsighted, how stubborn. Then she would compose for every new edition of her story a new speech that she believed had been given to the two brave men who proposed to save her, her husband, and her child. These speeches were composed of lists of all the important bonds that tied her to Vilna, to her family, to her friends, and her possessions. Lists of weighty reasons that meant she had had no choice. Of course, it was herself she had to convince. (Bak , 2000, 325)

Her bonds to her family and native city were too strong for her to leave them behind. Over the years she chastises herself, only to ultimately realize that her stubborn love for her native home saved them: "…had we left we might well have been among the thousands of refugees whom the Germans bombed or gunned down on the crowded roads of escape" (Bak, 2001, 325). The unanswered question hangs over the trauma narrative: did staying in their native land save them or condemn them? In some ways, the memoir reads as a rumination over this question, which has no answer. Or perhaps Bak's memoir is the answer.

6.4. A Fusion of Painting and Storytelling: Painting as a Portal

Bak continually returns to painting as a portal that allows him to re-enter into the historical trauma narrative of the Holocaust:

> It took me some time to this morning to pass through the painting's physical surface of thick color patches and transparent glazes and enter its imaginary space. It may have been a concealed longing that finally transported me there. (Bak, 2001, 4)

Bak employs the visual tools of painting to maneuver through the dark catacombs of his Holocaust and postwar memories.

> When I am at work, the paper or canvas, carrying the traces of pencil or brush loses its concrete presence and become metaphysical space. The materialization of my vision fascinates me as if I were the first man to witness the birth of a new world. For this revelation to occur, I must turn my studio into a base or station from which my mind departs every day to the world of my making. On my nomad's road as Wandering Jews, the Landsberg sojourn was all-important. It first gave me the physical and mental space to build my worlds. (Bak, 2001, 435)

Through fragments of memories, images, portraits of people long gone, private views into a corner of the artist's personal history set against the larger landscape of the history of World War II and the Holocaust, the artist and memoirist work through the trauma of his experience of the Holocaust.

Often sections of a chapter are linked thematically through symbols that emerge like images out of Bak's paintings. For example, a simple burlap sack links two significant memories of Bak's father, who dies when Bak is ten. Before their arrest, facing starvation, Bak's mother barters with a rough peasant, exchanging his father's good tuxedo for a sack of potatoes. Two years later, after the murder of the children in the HKP camp, as Bak is hiding under a bunk, he reflects on that potato sack:

> Perhaps it was the potato-man's passage through our home that finally made these things clear to me. It was the first time I fully understood that nothing was going to be the way it had been. When I reflect about it today, I realize that it must have been the moment in which I started to say goodbye to Father. (Bak, 2001, 220)

A few years later, Bak's father carries him out of captivity in the HKP camp in a sack on his back:

> Two years later it was again a burlap sack that entered Father's and my lives and severed them forever. My last memory of Father is the image of his hands, once perfectly manicured but now rough from labor, holding open a large patched-up sack full of sawdust so I could step into it and be smuggled on his strong and loving back out of the labor camp from which there was to be

> no escape for him. This was indeed our final farewell. But I did not cry. I was ten years old, and I was an adult. (Bak, 2001, 220)

Scenes, such as this tragic one of escape and loss, rich with imagery created through symbolic visual language reveal the scars of the Holocaust, the loss, the trauma. War-torn landscapes live on in the painter's imagination throughout the remainder of his life:[149]

> Under a leaden sky, incinerated buildings surround an open yard. Distant smoke darkens the horizon. A wet ground reflects the entire perspective, and on it, two stains like two small figures seem to be passing. They could be a mother and a child; they could be my mother and me. (Bak, 2001, 4)

Through the portal of his paintings, Bak gains access into the trauma world "under a leaden sky" in which "two small figures seem to be passing." He claims the two figures as "my mother and me" and as the scene develops, he describes the war-torn landscape of the city that was once Vilna, the Jerusalem of the North. He conveys the terror and isolation the mother and child experience, having survived, and first coming out of hiding. The image of the mother and child hesitantly stepping out into a war-torn postwar landscape continually returns over many decades:

> The Jerusalem of Lithuania—this Vilna that I painted so "abstractly" in the sixties in Rome, with its leaden sky, its incinerated buildings, and its two small stains that move across the smoke-darkened landscape—this Vilna is embedded with chronicles. In me they are the tales of

---

[149] See: "Illuminations: The Art of Samuel Bak" at https://www.facinghistory.org/illuminations-art-samuel-bak. Seen: February 8, 2021. Also: "Outside the Reign of Logic, Outside the Reach of God: Hester Panim in the Surreal Art of Paul Celan and Samuel Bak by Kimberly Socha. Socha writes: 2001 autobiography *Painted in Words: A Memoir* clearly demonstrates the ways in which events of ghetto and camp life mirror the use of the extraordinary and paradoxical images that dominate surrealist art. Bak writes of an "Exhibition of Art" that took place in the ghetto: "A waiting room for the horrors of the death camps seems an unlikely setting for something meant to liberate the spirit and bring joy. Yet it is not an unusual conjunction, as we know from many books about the Holocaust."

> my people, stories of forefathers, captivating figures of my close family, and haunting accounts of struggle and survival. (Bak, 2001, 91)

This war-torn landscape takes on a grotesque sort of beauty for Bak years later as he gazes at the painting in his studio:

> My "abstract" painting of wartime Vilna hangs from a sturdy oak beam that bridges the space of our upper floor. Back to back with this painting, so as to be visible from the other side of the gallery, I have suspended another semiabstract painting created in the same period. For me this second image represents a fragment of a landscape devastated by some universal flood. Now the water has receded, and many vertical strokes, like marking poles, suggest plans for reconstruction. They speak of human resilience and hint at a possibility of renewal. (Bak, 2001, 91)

The imagery of the painting speaks to human resilience, like the narrative of the memoir. This sense of resilience is inherent in the memories of Vilna that the painter returns to throughout his life as an artist. In Bak's paintings destruction and the hope for renewal coexist side by side. In his memoir death and life, destruction and hope, are always in contrast with one another.

Descriptions of color, composition, and detail add depth and additional layers of interpretation and perception to the memoir. Through fragments of memories, images, portraits of people long gone, private views into a corner of the artist's personal history set against the larger landscape of the history of World War II and the Holocaust, the artist and memoirist works through the trauma of his experience of the Holocaust.

6.5. The Pinkas as a Palimpsest

The memoir opens with the chapter "The Pinkas: A Book of Records." Bak structures his memoir around the symbol of the heavy, ancient, religious tome, the *Pinkas*. The *Pinkas* serves as a touchstone throughout the memoir. The *Pinkas* is given to Bak by two young poets, Shmerke and Are Avrom, who are preparing to escape the Vilna ghetto and join the partisans. They encourage Bak, then a nine-year-old aspiring artist, to draw in the margins, instructing him, "…when all this is over and I am grown, the book will be a unique and precious document" (Bak, 2001, 27). Incarcerated in the Vilna ghetto, the

Pinkas becomes the young artist's palimpsest: "I was happy to add my childish drawings to its yellowing pages if for no other reason than that sheets of paper had become very scarce. Often on my lap for drawing, or next to me on my bunk when I was asleep, the *Pinkas* became a faithful friend and a guardian of my art" (Bak, 2001, 5–6). The *Pinkas* travels to the HKP forced labor camp with young Samek and is separated from him on the day of the children's *Aktion* (German term indicating murder of the camp's children) on March 27, 1944.

Yet, the *Pinkas* lives on in Bak's memory as a murky image left behind in the past, taking on reality and shape in the present that summons both Bak and the reader to enter inside the landscape of memory.

> Sometimes in daydream I have imaged the *Pinkas* provided with eyes that would have registered moments of my life and the lives of those dear to me, retaining the crucial events that miraculously saved me from annihilation. How I would love to revisit the *Pinkas* and watch such events "fade in" on its pages. Perhaps that would have spared me what I am about to undertake—a long, arduous, and emotion-laden journey into my past. (Bak, 2001, 6)

For years, the artist wondered about this lost book from his stolen childhood. The process of writing his memoir becomes intertwined with the memory of recording his life in the ghetto through the act of drawing in the *Pinkas*:

> I close my eyes and see the *Pinkas*. I see it as if I were holding it in my hands. The book smells of its age. I open it carefully. Whatever was chronicled a century and a half ago, by the well-trained hand of a meticulous clerk, is inscribed in beautiful Hebrew letters. The scholarly texts were incomprehensible to me as a child, full of wonder and mystery. Now that I could read and understand them, they are gone. (Bak, 2001, 6)

Then, in 2000, the *Pinkas* returns into Bak's consciousness through an unexpected visit by a parliamentarian from Vilnius, Rimantas Stankevičius. His visit leads to a rite of return journey back to Vilnius in 2001, over half a century after he had fled the city with his mother, aunt, and cousin. The return to Vilnius helps Bak begin to heal his wounds with the past.

> Only a few months before, such a visit had seemed unimaginable—a return to the city of my birth after 56 years of absence and so much loss. It was perhaps another step in the endless process of healing, a "tikun" that has evolved through my paintings, this memoir, and now a pilgrimage to the land of my abbreviated childhood. (Bak, 2001, 498)

Again, the *Pinkas* serves as the artist's palimpsest as Bak writes his way into a new life of catharsis and reconciliation within the margins of his former life as a child victim of the Holocaust:

> I soon realized that these themes had not emerged fortuitously; they must have been triggered by my recent writing. Indeed, as I told of my lost Vilna, of the ghetto, the camp, and the hiding, a better memory of the *Pinkas* began to emerge. Its pages, covered by endless Hebrew letters, carefully handwritten, reminded me of a Torah parchment. In recollection it all felt very "biblical." This may explain why one day I reached into the gentle chaos of art books on my bookshelves and, browsing among the volumes, stopped to look at reproductions that depicted man's creation. (Bak, 2001, 487)

The act of drawing in the *Pinkas* was the artist's solace as a child living in incarceration. The act of writing his trauma story leads to new inspiration. Triggered by the memory of the handwritten Hebrew words of the *Pinkas*, Bak discovers new artistic themes.

> Setting aside my personal additions to the *Pinkas*, I am now struck by the arcane calligraphy and the contents of its texts. When I began my memoir, I thought the *Pink*as contained historical records, but I was wrong. Instead it lists all sorts of rules and regulations concerning a Jewish organization for charity. On endless pages the Hebrew letters spell names of members, names of advisors, names of arbitrators, names of benefactors long since deceased—a cemetery of names. Hundreds if not thousands of names, and all of them sound familiar. (Bak, 2001, 494-495)

Bak's survivor's guilt is triggered when he is reunited with the *Pinkas:*

> So: whether I like it or not, the *Pinkas* is a document. At present, when I look at the energetic lines that my childish hand left on its many pages, I try to be more forgiving to that boy. Shouldn't I leave him alone? (Bak, 2001, 493-494)

The *Pinkas* opens an examination of conscience and guilt on the part of the narrator. Seeing his actual drawings in the *Pinkas,* Bak revises his own memory of the process of drawing in the margins of this ancient book, his palimpsest:

> I was baffled to think that my beloved family had seen in me such "extraordinary talent." Would I, as a parent, have been so supportive? My reaction made me wonder. Why this unease, why these qualms? Had my expectations from these poor pages been too high? I should have known that what memory amplifies, reality is bound to shrink. (Bak, 2001, 493-494)

Is Bak's reaction of self-disgust to seeing his boyhood drawings in the *Pinkas* half a century later actually a trauma response? What type of a brave boy could he possibly have been trapped in the ghetto at age nine? The sense of guilt, of not measuring up, occurs repeatedly in the memoir's narration, even in the most unexpected scenes, where the reader would expect a kinder view of the self.

> Or perhaps my unease had a different source. It seemed to me—or maybe it was only the product of my later imagining—that as a child I had been expected to turn the *Pinkas* into an extraordinary document. And right now, viewing what I had in my hands, I felt I had failed the friends who gave it to me. Instead of depicting the horror of our imprisoned conditions, I had filled the precious book with insignificant images, illustrations of stories or films that only attested to a cowardly desire to escape. How disappointing! I wasn't the brave boy I would have liked to be. (Bak, 2001, 493-494)

Bak's memoir closes with the final chapter titled, "Closure." In this chapter, the *Pinkas* returns into Bak's narrative half a century after he left it behind when his father carried him out of the HKP camp in a potato sack and the volume was left behind on his bunk.

> There [in the National Museum], in a spacious and elegant room among the archives, carefully spread open on an ancient table, my old Pinkas lay patiently waiting for me. It was larger and heavier than I remembered. (Bak, 2001, 499)

The *Pinkas* weaves the opening and closing of the memoir together. Losing and recovering the *Pinkas* over the span of sixty years frames the narrative and grounds the setting of the memoir in Vilnius as the place where the narrator begins his life, and where he returns at the end of the memoir. The *Pinkas* also is a trauma document that records Bak's childhood trauma experienced in the Holocaust.

6.6. The Memoir as a Trauma Document

According to Dori Laub, the need to tell survivor stories, and the need for someone to listen, is at the core of healing: "Yet it is essential for this narrative that *could not be articulated* to be *told*, to be *transmitted*, to be *heard*"(Laub, 1995, 69).[150] Being heard, being listened to, takes on special significance in the trauma recovery process.

Bak describes the process of sharing Holocaust survival stories that took place during informal storytelling sessions in the Landsberg Displaced Persons Camp after the war. The ritual of telling stories of survival and loss, and being heard, was a vital step towards post-traumatic growth.

> But underneath all that simmered a need to speak out, to unload, to tell the most horrendous tales of death and survival. This was possible only among people who shared similar terms of reference. Only we, the survivors, were able to guarantee the storyteller conditions of total safety. (Bak, 2001, 427)

While Bak's mother continually seeks out tutoring and art instruction for her son, no psychiatric care, counselling, or therapy is ever made available to him or any of the survivors. Bak describes the storytelling sessions in the

---

[150] Laub, Dori, 1995. "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle", *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Ed. Cathy Caruth, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Landsberg DP camp that serve as informal counselling sessions for Holocaust survivors.

> Many people who in the camp immersed themselves in liberating catharsis, chose later, when confronted with the outer world, to shut up. Who would believe them? But we believed. (Bak, 2001, 427)

That the listener of the story also be a survivor was an important component of the healing process. As Bak notes, when confronted with the outer world, the compulsion of the survivor was to "shut up" because "Who would believe them?" But in the world of the DP camp, where everyone had experienced the dehumanizing horrors of the Holocaust, "we believed." Bak notes, in keeping with Laub's contention that telling the trauma narrative out loud is part of the healing process, that "this impulse to remake the past was proof that we were all returning to the ordinary stream of life." In the same way that through the process of storytelling the Jewish DPs in the Landsberg DP Camp were engaged in the process of healing their trauma wounds, writing his memoir, Bak is engaging storytelling as his path into healing. Bak's storyteller's voice builds tension and suspense as miraculous stories of survival unfold:

> I was hardly thirteen when I first saw that my art is a fusion of painting and storytelling, the two pursuits I still love above all others. These have kept me whole through the traumas and recoveries of my journey and permitted me to lead a life I can be grateful for. (Bak, 2001, 435)

Bak's healing process is shared with a community of readers through the ability to tell his story. Laub emphasizes the special significance of the listener of the trauma narration:

> To a certain extent, the interviewer-listener takes on the responsibility for bearing witness that previously the narrator felt he bore alone, and therefore could not carry out. It is the encounter and the coming together between the survivor and the listener, which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing. This joint responsibility is the source of the emerging truth. (Laub, 1995, 69)

When considering the literary work produced by trauma survivors, one may ask whether these works of literature fulfill the need to tell the stories and to be listened to? How we "listen," or how we understand and absorb what we are hearing, is a vital component of unlocking and understanding contemporary writing about the Lithuanian and Litvak experience during World War II.

Cathy Caruth asks the reader to consider, "How do we listen?"[151] In her essay, "Addressing Life," she reflects on how readers perceive literary texts that come from communities that have experienced collective cultural and historical trauma:[152]

> …How do we respond, Freud's texts likewise enquires, to the challenge of traumatic realities that come to us through the wound of intersecting histories? These questions are raised every time we encounter the language of trauma—in the words of survivors or the conceptual articulations of theory. Neither the questions nor the answers can be identified with a single voice, nor articulated in a single language. Nor can the speaker or listener be identified prior to the complex action that constitutes the acts of addressing and of listening. (Caruth, 1996, 2006, 139)

Beyond healing individual trauma through the process of telling and listening, there is the necessity of tolerance for uncertainty.

> It is urgent, however, to remain open to this task, and to tolerate the uncertainties that arise from it. From the place of this uncertainty, and in the power of literary resonance, the theory of trauma addresses us ultimately, I would suggest, with the possibility of life, but in a voice we cannot always identify, and in a language, enigmatic

---

[151] Caruth, Cathy, 1996, 2016. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 139.

[152] The terms cultural trauma and historical trauma are often used interchangeably; however, there is an important distinction between cultural and historical trauma. Where cultural trauma describes traumatic experiences shared together by a nation, group, or people, historical trauma refers specifically to the historical genocide of a people, historical trauma refers to the genocide, or total physical destruction of an ethnic group.

> and resonant, that we must still learn to hear. (Caruth, 1996, 2006, 139)

In addition to being listened to, Laub stresses that "[w]hat ultimately matters in all processes of witnessing […] is not simply the information […] but the experience itself of *living through* testimony, of giving testimony" (Laub, 1995, 70). Through this process, the trauma survivor "reclaims his position as a witness" (Laub, 1995, 70). The narrator and the listener exchange places. The trauma survivor, who was a participant, is now a witness. This role is played out through literature as well. The reader and writer exchange places. Through writing about his or her trauma as memoir or prose or poetry or drama, the trauma survivor engages his or her audience as witness. Before ultimately arriving at catharsis, the narrative of the memoir unfolds as a trauma document. The endless impact of the trauma wound of the Holocaust is prevalent, while at the same time the light irony of the writer's voice and his eye for the absurd distances the reader from the deeper impact of emotional pain. Hoffman writes about the indelible nature of memory, while acknowledging its fluidity:

> "Memory" in all its guises is the most slippery and Protean of human faculties. Even for survivors, for those who lived through terrible events, it is a fluid process rather than a fixed entity. The acuteness of some recollections may subside with the passage of time; others resurface with redoubled force from thickets of carefully erected defenses or camouflage. Still, even if interpretation of personal experience changes under the pressure of internal reworking or re-viewing, surely the substance of survivors' memories—of memories that powerful—is indelible and irrevocable. Their content cannot be extracted from their minds, or decisively altered. (Hoffman, 2004, 163)

Hoffman acknowledges the value of survivors' memories even when "reworked" or "reviewed." Thus, the memoir of a survivor contains a special knowledge that is valuable to the collective, because through surviving extreme trauma it contains a special lesson.

Caruth postulates that a text written by a survivor of traumatic events that is a retelling of traumatic events should be read as a historical document that reveals aspects of the psychology of extreme traumatization that would otherwise be unavailable to the reader (Caruth, 1996, 4). This is evidenced in

Bak's memoir through how narrations in the memoir are organized through association rather than a linear chronology.

Gabriele Schwab, in her book *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*,[153] writes that "[t]elling is an act of reclaiming life and self" (Schwab, 2010 175). While the memoirist reclaims life and self through the telling of personal histories, *Painted in Words* is also an act of reclaiming a lost family history through the act of telling the stories of a family that has vanished and can no longer tell those stories themselves.

Schwab further argues: "Words and other forms of witnessing, trauma theorists argue, help the victim survive and live with a pain that can never be healed because they "re-signify" and reintegrate an unspeakable experience into the symbolic order" (Schwab, 2010, 176). Through humor and a voice ripe with self-irony, as well as by viewing trauma scenes through the gaze of the artist in the language of color and composition, Bak takes us through a memoir that is essentially about surviving torture – both individual torture as a child prisoner of the Nazi death machine, and collective torture, resulting in the loss of his father, grandparents, relatives, and the entire Jewish community. "The pain of torture—physical, psychic, and mental—hides in language" (Schwab, 2010, 175), Schwab writes. The narrator's pain is embedded within language that is peeled away, layer by layer, until there is no longer any scab left over the wound to pick at.

Bak transforms the "banality of evil," as famously described by Hannah Arendt, into "some kind of restoration or mending." Thus, he re-enacts his trauma through writing, described by Caruth as the "repeated possession of the one who experiences it" (Caruth, 1996, 4). Caruth claims that the story of trauma is a "voice that precedes us" written in "language that cries out from our wounds:"

> The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life. (Caruth, 1996, 7)

Through his sense of "restoration or mending" Bak's memoir invites us to listen to his story of survival, to hear "the address of a language we cannot fully know." In this regard, *Painted in Words* may be read as a trauma document.

---

[153] Schwab, Gabriele, 2010. *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, New York: Columbia University Press.

The "survivor's legacy" is described by Judith Herman in her seminal work on trauma, *Trauma and Recovery*:

> The trauma story is part of the survivor's legacy; only when it is fully integrated can the survivor pass it on, in confidence that it will prove a source of strength and inspiration rather than a blight on the next generation. (Herman, 1992, 207)

Through the process of writing, Bak works through his survivor's legacy, so that he may pass on a lesson of survival to the next generation. However, in the process Bak succumbs to the fragmentary nature of trauma memory as defined by Caruth:

> Suddenly I became projected into a faraway time. Ancient, seemingly forgotten recollections started to emerge and linger, refusing to recede. Floating on the surface of my consciousness they began hampering the regular flow of my daily life, disrupting my well-organized daily routine of long hours in the studio, painting and drawing. (Bak, 2001, 103)

Having suffered historical trauma and the destruction of the Jewish civilization in Lithuania, Bak's memoir serves as a memorial built from words, bringing alive those who were lost. In the chapter, "Sailing on Rachel's Wet Floor" Bak describes the lives and various occupations of his relatives. His grandfather is a tailor. His two employees, Alter and Berl, work out of a room in the family apartment that serves as a workshop. This scene both foretells the mass death yet to come and brings the dead back to life.

> Little Samek walks down a poorly lit corridor. Chayim's hand lays gently on his shoulder. They pass the room where Alter and Berl have spent innumerable hours of their lives. In three or four years, they, as well as their children, spouses, relatives, neighbors, employers, and tens of thousands of other men, women, and children, will be taken by force to Ponar and turned into dead bodies dumped in a pile. The sheer weight of cadavers will flatten them into an anonymous similarity. The Nazis will call them *figuren* and will force Jewish prisoners, in leg-irons, to dig them out and burn them, transforming their remains into smoke and ashes. The dead will

> achieve a degree of equality that does not exist in the most egalitarian of societies. (Bak, 2001, 178)

By shifting his view in time and space, the narrator both sees through the innocent eyes of a child the tailors Alter and Berl, working hard at their craft, unaware of the fate that will befall them and their families very soon, and at the same time impresses upon the reader the utter devastating loss of humanity that occurs when people are reduced to *figuren* (figures) and condemned to timeless anonymity. This scene serves the purpose of bringing the dead back to life and animating them, returning to these men the humanity that they had been robbed of.

6.7. Humor: A Voice of Cathartic Joy

"There is humor in my memoir. I think that humor is indispensable. It is a part of despair,"[154] Bak said in an interview. Despite the horrors that Bak describes, the tone of his memoir reflects his whimsical nature as an artist. There is a gentle self-irony in his writer's voice. No anger or hatred comes through in the writing, only a need to reflect upon the enormity of his experience. Israeli writer and journalist, Amos Oz, emphasizes the uniqueness of Bak's joyful voice in the face of horror in his preface to *Painted in Words*:

> *Painted in Words* is not merely another painting, done with a different brush. Among the tens and hundreds of books I have read about the pre-*Shoah* and post-*Shoah* period, including novels, memoirs, documentation, and philosophy, Bak's book is unique. Despite being suffused with a sense of loss, horror, degradation, and death, it is ultimately a sanguine, funny book, full of the love of life, rocking with an almost cathartic joy. At times I found myself bursting out laughing. It is the only time in my life that I have felt sensual pleasure in reading a book seemingly dedicated to the tragedy of the Jewish people; to the destruction of the city, community, and family; to the devastation of childhood and the memory of a murdered world. (Bak, 2001, vii-viii)

---

[154] Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Bak, Samuel (Interviewee), 27 December 2019.

This "cathartic joy" Oz describes meshes with a naughty childlike sense of humor. An example is Bak's childhood musings over circumcision:

> I knew that Jews urinated with something very different from what was used by the Gentiles, and I imagined that the police made people urinate before they listened to their prayers, in order to tell who was who. I could not explore this question with Mother because of a strange and unexplainable embarrassment that I felt when it had to do with my "peepee," my *pisher*, best translated as my urinator. There had been some strange sensations of pleasure that came to me sometimes from this area, and they had to do, of this I was sure, with Adam and Eve and their mismanagement of eternal paradise. (Bak, 2001, 305)

Bak reflects on an absurd world in which the rules regarding who lives and who dies viewed through a child's limited perception and childish musings are revealed through the grotesque:

> Meanwhile, the Lithuanian police continue to chase the Jews with the assiduity of rat hunters. Whenever they find a boy or a man they make him drop his pants to be sure about the nature of the prey. (Bak, 2001, 305)

The innocence of this perception throws into shadow the sinister nature of an anti-Semitic regime that identified religious orientation by forcing men to drop their pants. In two sentences, two systems of religious belief – Judaism and Christianity – are reduced to men being forced to drop their pants. Survival humor is an important aspect of the memoir.[155] Bak comments in his interview: "I think that humor is indispensable. It is a part of despair."[156] Often

---

[155] In a similar vein, Holocaust survivors have tried to make sense of what they endured and of how to live thereafter with the memory of what they witnessed, such as Elie Wiesel, *Night* (1972), the English translation *La Nuit* (1958); Dr. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1959), the English translation of *Ein Psycholog erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (1946); and Dr. Edith Eva Eger, THE CHOICE: Embrace The Possible (Simon and Schuster, New York, 2017).

[156] Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Bak, Samuel (Interviewee), 27 December 2019.

the narrator's tone shifts to irony and humor. When telling the story of his paternal great-grandfather, Bak playfully reflects on his long life and on his death:

> The idea of having had a great-grandfather who diligently procreated for sixty uninterrupted years has always fascinated me. He believed that husbands and fathers had obligations as well as rights. (Bak, 2001, 236-237)

Bak's ironic tone emerges as a contrast to his reflective and sensitive prose. This contrast is revealed through the thoughts of the child narrator as he reflects on the nature of God while incarcerated in the Vilna ghetto:

> What God? Jewish? Christian? That may have been when a tiny seed of disbelief started to germinate in my confused head. I wondered: what if God has nothing to do with how things end up? I am being told that he will forgive the Soviets who destroyed his churches and did not believe in him. He will make them win the war in order to liberate all the Jews from all the ghettos and camps and help them return to their homes and reunite their families. Those words are spoken with little conviction, and I can't help doubting that they are really believed. (Bak, 2001, 305)

This childlike musing over which side God will take in the war between the Soviets and the Nazis reveals how Bak's writing resonates with the irony of the absurd. We witness decent citizens transformed into hunted fugitives while at the same time, despite ourselves, we are invited to laugh at the absurdities of the situation. After pulling off an ingenious escape out of the Benedictine convent after the Nazis had stormed the convent and arrested all the nuns, and having nowhere to hide, the Bak family is forced to take shelter in the Vilna ghetto. As a returning work brigade of ghetto prisoners close rank around the family, Bak recalls this conversation between his parents:

> "Look how you are trembling. Why did you give away your coat?"
>
> "I told the janitor that we were fugitive priests and sisters who had disguised ourselves to escape the Gestapo's grip. But when he saw Samek—"
>
> "You should have mentioned the Immaculate Conception." (Bak, 2001, 346)

Bak's use of humor to describe the indescribable brings a deceptive sense of levity to devastating scenes, inviting the reader to consider the absurd nature of human cruelty. By using humor to relieve the tension of an otherwise tense and traumatic story of escape that culminates in yet another captivity, Bak invites the reader to absorb the senselessness of institutional hatred against the Other.

6.8. Survivor's Guilt

Perhaps the best-known image of the Holocaust is the photograph, known as "The Warsaw Ghetto Boy." Bak admits to obsessively painting this image over the course of many years. He writes that seeing the image for the first time triggers a return to the past:

> That day his slender legs that were stretching out from under his short pants and his feeble knees must have been trembling in the horrendous circumstances in which the snapshot was taken. They triggered in me a chain of associations and uncontrollable reflections that projected me far, far off. (Bak, 2010, 299)

That "chain of associations and uncontrollable reflections" invade the peace of Bak's painting studio, triggering trauma reactions in him. Bak is one of few Lithuanian Jews who survived the Holocaust. Yet, that burden rests heavily on him.

This sense of survivor's guilt is explored in the chapter, "Samek and Samek." As a small child, Bak has a best friend who shares the same name. They often play together as their mothers are close friends. A memory of playing under a solid dining room table as their parents socialize reads as a premonition of the fate both boys are about to experience:

> We know that it is only a game, but we pretend so well that we feel the tension in the air. There is the imminent danger of being discovered and maybe even being killed by our enemy. I am reassured and comforted by the friendly presence of the menacing claws that belong to the wooden feet of the dining table's sturdy legs. This monster is our coconspirator. Such heavy furniture is made to protect its owners. It is as reliable and permanent as all the long corridors, the brilliantly waxed

> floors, and the heavy drapes that shelter so well their confident proprietors from the invasion of the hostile world. (Bak, 2001, 300)

These gentle furnishings provide the two little boys with a sense of security in their game of hiding; however, as the chapter soon reveals, the security of childhood is soon destroyed for both. Only one Samek survives:

> The Lithuanian police dragged a crying Samek to the courtyard, shot him, and left him lying in a pool of blood. It was intended to serve as a lesson to the Jews who tried to remain outside the ghetto and to all those "Christian criminals" who dared to hide Jewish children. The building's terrorized inhabitants remained barricaded in their flats until much later when some other men of the Lithuanian police removed the body. (Bak, 2010, 302)

The adults in Bak's world try to protect him from this news, but he overhears their whispers. Throughout his life, he returns to his memory of his friend Samek, as though he were his alter ego, a shadow of the fate that could have been his own:

> I try to imagine Samek after his death. My breathing accelerates. Tears burn my eyes. It is hard to be a man and not cry. My heart searches for some comfort, and I try to imagine what the nuns of the convent who hid me would have told me to think of all this. The reality is too frightening. I had heard too many inspiring words, but I can hardly turn my thoughts to what I was taught. (Bak, 2001, 302)

Herman writes about the torments of illogical guilt experienced by survivors:[157]

> Feelings of guilt are especially severe when the survivor has been a witness to the suffering or death of other people. To be spared oneself, in the knowledge that others have met a worse fate, creates a severe burden of conscience. Survivors of disaster and war are haunted by

[157] Herman, Judith, 1992. *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror*, New York: Basic Books.

> images of the dying victim they could not rescue. (Herman, 1992, 54)

The tears that burn in Bak's eyes, the futility of his feelings expressed in his words, "It is hard to be a man and not cry" express "the sense of shame and defeat" that Herman uncovers in her research on trauma:

> The sense of shame and defeat comes not merely from his failure to intercede and also from the realization that his captors have usurped his inner life. (Herman, 1992, 84)

Bak despairs, "I had heard so many inspiring words, but I can hardly turn to what I was taught." According to Herman, he is experiencing a crisis of faith:

> Traumatic events, once again, shatter the sense of connection between individual and community, creating a crisis of faith. (Herman, 1992, 55)

Bak reveals how as a survivor, he is haunted by those who did not survive, in this case his double, his friend Samek. Chambers writes about the hauntedness of survivors, claiming that survivors "*know* themselves to be haunted" (Chambers, 2004, XXV) thus burdening them with the task of witnessing for those who are dead. Chambers writes:

> As a matter of loyalty to the dead, the task is to give them the presence among the living that is denied them (the presence to which the survival of victim-survivors, the living dead, is witness), but as matter of duty to the living (with whom survivor-victims share the fact of survival) it is to make perceptible to the living, despite the power of denial, the presence of the dead—and hence of death—among the living, a presence that signifies the continuance in aftermath of pain. (Chambers, 2004, XXV)

Chambers explains that the survivors must become themselves ghosts who haunt the living, and that this state of mind embodies the actual cost of surviving trauma. Bak seeks to resolve his own haunt memory by obsessively painting the image of the Warsaw boy in the photograph, who transforms into his friend Samek, or into himself. "I have painted many canvases about the

well-known image of the Warsaw ghetto boy, the child with arms uplifted as if they were nailed to a cross," Bak writes in his memoir. (Bak, 2001, 306) For years, Bak considered these series of paintings of the Warsaw boy as a "kind of self portrait" (Bak, 2001, 306). Bak reflects:

> It might have been a slightly presumptuous idea. We do not know if the authentic boy survived or not, while I did. True, in my ghetto in Vilna I was his age and I looked—as did thousands of other children—exactly like him. Same cap, same outgrown coat, same short pants. He was my alter ego, my counterpart. (Bak, 2001, 306)

In Caruth's terms, Bak compulsively returns to his original trauma wound. Bak claims a loss of belief that occurred with the death of his friend Samek:

> I must have lost my best pal Samek and my unquestioning belief in the certitudes of the adult world at the same time. Have I indeed lost him? The soul plays strange tricks on me, which I shall never fully understand. (Bak, 2001, 306)

Eventually, Bak copes with his guilt by feeling that every painting he paints brings meaning to his friend's senseless death.

> Whenever at present I look at these paintings I see Samek. And when he has eyes, which in many of my paintings he does not have, Samek looks back at me. We mirror each other. What would he say, had he had the power of speech? Would he send me a message? Or is his presence an eternal reminder that very little, yes very little, separated me from the destiny that was his. It gives me comfort to think that in some way I can live today for the two of us and that his future wasn't totally obliterated, since by living in me he is still being remembered and he helps me to remember all of Them. For how much longer? (Bak, 2001, 306)

Bak finally integrates his guilt over his survival and his friend Samek's death by thinking "I can live today for the two of us." This comfort means that "his future wasn't totally obliterated." As long as there is one person alive who remembers and lives for Samek, he is still alive. Schwab writes about this compulsion of return:

> If torture attacks memory and language, it would seem that telling torture helps the process of healing. Telling is an act of reclaiming life and self. Yet there are complicated issues of confession and spectatorship that may create resistance to telling one's story and enforce complicity in secrecy. (Schwab, 2010, 175)

Painting Samek's image, reimagining him in the form of the Warsaw ghetto boy, and telling Samek's torture story helps the process of healing, according to Schwab. Yet, even with this comfort, Bak admits to struggling for decades with survivor's guilt. The children are rounded up at the HKP labor camp and murdered, but Bak survives through the help of Christian friends who hide him. Decades later, in his memoir, he reflects on the guilt that he felt then and the fear that guilt triggered in him:

> I feel guilty for having escaped the fate of those other children. The bereaved parents may justly think that their kids died in my place. They will not hesitate to deliver me into the hands of the Gestapo. King Solomon's trial bears proof that a bereaved mother is capable of cutting up another woman's living baby. Having some ruling authority perform the execution makes it all the easier. (Bak, 2001, 83)

At the end of the war, after Bak's father smuggles him out of the HKP labor camp, together with his mother he once again hides at the Benedictine Convent. The first time he and his mother hid with the nuns was when the Jews were first confined to the Vilna ghetto in 1941 and they managed to escape. During that first period of hiding, the nuns baptized him.

> It happened at a dramatic moment, between the hiding in the convent and the departure to the ghetto, when the loving hand of Janina had reached out for some dripping water from a faulty faucet. Holy water would have been preferable, but in cases of emergency like this it did not matter. She sprinkled it on my head and pronounced some magic words. A personal blessing reinforced the well-known phrase that mentioned the Holy Trinity. Her voice was trembling with emotion. I try to believe that this even has put me in a very advantageous situation. I hope that in the matter of guardian angels, I have become much more privileged than Samek. (Bak, 2001, 303-304)

After the impromptu baptism, Bak struggles with guilt over betraying his Jewish faith. However, he struggles even more with his sense of guilt that the baptism placed him in a more advantageous position than Samek or any of the other Jewish children. The double protection of the baptism becomes a psychological burden and a trauma wound. Bak is granted the privilege to live, even provided with a guardian angel, but his childhood friend was destined to die:

> … A troubling thought passes my mind. At present, in the ghetto, in the most horrendous of situations, I am permitted to live more safely because angels are taking particular care of me. But does that mean that I shall remain separated from my best friend for ever and ever and up to the end of all time and beyond? It is a difficult idea to accept. (Bak, 2001, 303-304)

Even decades later, almost as an afterword, an adult Bak rushes to provide a justification:

> My thought may sound egotistical, but it was a time in which one had to do everything possible in order not to die. (Bak, 2001, 303-304)

Bak's guilt over seeming to have special privileges given to him by the nuns, the gift of survival, continue to haunt him even as an adult in Israel. He describes his guilt over choosing to leave Israel during Israel's six-day war in the sub-chapter, "The Six-Day War." As Israel is under siege, and Bak is planning his escape with his young family, he argues with Mother, who refuses to leave the country. The attack brings up past emotions from the Holocaust. As Bak prepares his departure, Mother insists on staying, arguing: "The world shall never allow! The Americans are going to act, they…" Bak interrupts her, reminding her of the Holocaust they both survived together: "You don't really believe it! It happened before. Jews were taken to slaughter and no one moved his little finger" (Bak, 2001, 15). This heated scene between Bak and his mother brings up the trauma of the Holocaust they survived together, which is always with him:

> …It was Mother who had brought me to the newly established Israel and tied my destiny to it. Instead of becoming one of the many struggling foreign painters begging for recognition in the cruel arena of Parisian arts, I was supposed to grow up in a Jewish state, a proud

> and invincible fighter in khakis. But I was a handicapped Israeli. My past had taken from me the capacity to deal with aggression. Now, I told myself, Mother is devoured by feelings of guilt. Therefore, she would like to see us gone. My childhood's old tendency to blame her for whatever went wrong had never fully subsided. (Bak, 2001, 16)

As war becomes inevitable, young Bak struggles with his feelings of inadequacy and again, with his guilty sense of privilege as a survivor, as the one who is spared while other lives are lost:

> War seemed imminent, and it was important to see how things evolved. I stayed in Tel Aviv with my insomnia, gnawing stomach, and fantasies of catastrophe. I would have loved to be a hero like my father, but cowardly tremors ran through my body. Sending my loved ones to safety should have given me relief but instead was tearing me apart. Was I right to send them away? Where was my solidarity with all the other Israeli families that had no such option? I felt awful. (Bak, 2001, 16)

After the Israeli army officials assure him that he will not be needed as a soldier, and that he is free to travel to Italy, Bak's ever-present feelings of guilt subside, and he embraces painting once again.

> Reunited with Anna and the girls in a comfortable country house north of Rome, I reflected on the frenetic impulse that had made me send them away. I was thinking of my father carrying me on his back in a sack, removing me from the labor camp's deadly terrain. For shame! It was an absurd analogy. (Bak, 2001, 17-18)

This reprieve is only temporary, however, when guilt resurfaces with acute anxiety:

> I gulped, put away my brushes, and sat down. Over the radio, a self-confident specialist in that region's politics was giving the latest news. The Middle East had erupted in war. Tel Aviv was burning. An uncontrollable shivering seized me. My stomach became a huge spasm of pain. Mother, Markusha, all my dear friends in Tel

> Aviv in flames! While here was I, unwitting, stupid, in a lovely Italina house sheltered by huge Roman pines, pointlessly transferring dumb colors from idiotic tubes to asinine linen on moronic stretchers. (Bak, 2001, 17-18)

Trauma becomes a lens through which experiences are narrated, experienced emotionally in adjectives: *pointlessly* transferring *dumb* colors from *idiotic* tubes to *asinine* linen on *moronic* stretchers.

Bak soon learns that the news report was created as a decoy and that in fact his family was safe in Israel. Yet, the gnawing feelings of guilt remain with him, triggered over and over again throughout his life. Bak survived the Holocaust through a miracle, but the trauma of his experiences, and the trauma of survival, remain with him.

After a visit to the opening of the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, Bak accepts that the fact that he has survived the Holocaust is in and of itself an accomplishment. At first, he is overwhelmed by the memories brought on by the Holocaust exhibit. He excuses himself from his group and walks to the museum exit. Suddenly, on a video screen, he sees a film of himself as a thirteen-year-old boy painting an imaginary *shtetl* while living in the Landsberg DP camp. He is overwhelmed with emotion:

> Unexpectedly I was seized by an almost shameless elation. My sadness and sense of oppression had evaporated. Never had I felt more alive! What was happening to me? I realized that I was confronted for the first time in my life with an objective and undeniable proof of my survival. (Bak, 2001, 422-423)

In the moment that Bak sees himself as a child Holocaust survivor in the film footage in the Holocaust Museum two disparate parts of his life are connected. In an instant, he experiences freedom from the burden of his trauma memories: “I realized that I was confronted for the first time in my life with an objective and undeniable proof of my survival” and in the next moment, Bak claims his place as “a representative of the few who did manage to escape and were spared.” He admits that such a state is “a real rarity” and ought to be celebrated (Bak, 2001, 422-423). The film footage triggers in him belatedly the feelings of joy of having survived and being alive that he could not fully experience at the time of its happening.

Lithuanian psychologist Dr. Danutė Gailienė[158] writes about the significance of the completion of mourning, of ritual, of culture, which create a framework for processing incomplete emotions. Citing DeVries and Herman, she paraphrases: "Cultural values and norms help to regain a feeling of self-worth and confidence in the meaning of life and integrate the experience into a historical context; they also maintain the perception of continuity of life, even under conditions of traumatic shock (DeVries, 2007; Herman, 1992)." She stresses how the flow of everyday life and rituals buffer an individual from trauma, but lacking those buffers, trauma has long-term effects.

> Under normal circumstances, culture significantly protects its members from the potentially destructive effects of traumatic events, because cultures are usually very resistant to environmental stresses and changes. Culture provides security, order, and community (Bronfenbremmer, 1979, 1994). Social support and justice institutions, cultural traditions, family and religion form a medium which ensures that the traumatized persons return to the normal flow of life and provides strength to overcome the trauma. (Gailiene, 2005, 67)

Having lost the protection of his culture, of his extended family, Bak's incomplete mourning is completed when the film footage on display in the Holocaust Museum helps him identify his place as a Holocaust survivor within the context of the larger historical trauma.

> I felt they were asking from the world some sort of repair, or *tikkun haolam*. Was the world ready to meet that challenge? (Bak, 2001, 422-423)

The visit to the Holocaust Museum brings about this closure for Samuel Bak, although half a century needed to pass for that closure to come, once again, invoking Caruth's statement about the belatedness of trauma.

---

[158] Gailienė, Danutė, Kazlauskas, Evaldas, 2005. "Fifty Years on: The Long-Term Psychological Effects of Soviet Repression in Lithuania". Gailienė, Danutė, ed. *The Psychology of Extreme Traumatisation: The Aftermath of Political Repression*, Vilnius: Akreta: The Genocide and Resistance Center of Lithuania, p. 67.

6.9. New Families and New Beginnings

One of the familial trauma narratives of this memoir is the loss of family and the incomplete process of replacing the lost family with a new family. Bak describes how in the Landsberg Displaced Persons Camp people rushed to remarry and to rebuild the relationships and families they had lost in World War II and in the Holocaust. Bak's mother marries a man they fondly call Markusha. He is a camp administrator, a Litvak from Kaunas who survived Dachau, but lost his entire family there. Markusha becomes young Samek's stepfather. Bak's series of chess paintings are dedicated to the memory of his stepfather. However, this postwar marriage paled in comparison to the passionate marriage of his parents that Bak remembers from when they were young in Vilna. Bak describes his mother's and Markusha's postwar marriage:

> My parents settled down to a quiet life in which Mother was the driving force. Markusha loved her, accepted her overpowering personality, and was most accommodating. Mother was totally dedicated to his needs and to the façade of their life, but she kept on nurturing, deep in herself, that feeling that tying herself to him might have been a mistake. There was a gap of seventeen years between their ages. This difference became more and more obvious with the passage of time. Shortly before her death Mother confessed these feelings to me. I had always suspected them. Who knows if she had ever admitted them to herself before? These two had been considered an exemplary, loving couple and only I felt the claustrophobic effect of the life between their four walls. (Bak, 2001, 100)

Markusha succumbs to Alzheimer's and Bak sadly watches him disintegrate. The series of chess paintings become "a clear tribute to Markusha's memory and the tragic death of his mind" (Bak, 2001, 102). The paintings come to represent a world that – like Markusha's mind – is disintegrating.

> I keep examining a world where things disintegrate, with the intent of seizing the moment before it is too late and all proof is lost. I think of Markusha and of his departure. (Bak, 2001, 102)

Bak considers whether Markusha has somehow chosen the sanctitude of Alzheimers to escape painful memories. Bak writes, "The fog of his mind protected him from an awareness that might have been too much to bear" (Bak, 2001, 101).

6.10. Post Traumatic Growth

Gailienė comes to the following conclusions regarding post-traumatic growth[159] in her study of the effects of twentieth century cultural and historical trauma on Lithuanian society: "The people who experience more post-traumatic disorders also indicate more coping factors. It is probable that the heavier traumatization forces towards better mobilization of personality resources. In a society that has experienced long-term historical traumas what is important is not only personal, but also social coping with traumas."[160] We see these coping mechanisms at work in Bak's memoir through the process of painting and writing:

> There followed months of long and intense sessions of painting, in which for me time seemed to evaporate. Indeed, having completed most of my work on the memoir gave me a new sense of freedom. It prepared me for a new *bereyshiss*, as it is called in Yiddish, a new "In the Beginning." My studio walls began to be covered with a multitude of fresh canvasses, all candidates for a forthcoming show. (Bak, 2001, 488)

This new beginning occurs when Bak and his wife are invited to contemporary Lithuania in 2001 to host a retrospective exhibition of his paintings. In contemporary Lithuania Bak integrates his past with the present, experiencing catharsis and a renewed energy to dive back into his work. This new beginning opens the painter up to a fresh productive phase of his work. Freed of his past through the process of writing his memoir, Bak moves

---

[159] Post-traumatic growth is defined as positive psychological change experienced as a result of adversity and other challenges in order to rise to a higher level of functioning. Psychology Today. www.psychologytoday.com Accessed on May 23, 2020.

[160] Gailienė, Danutė, 2008. *Ka jie mums padarė: Lietuvos gyvenimas traumu psichologijos žvilgsniu* (What They Did To Us: The Trauma of Lithuanians from a Psychological Perspective), Vilnius: Tyto Alba, p. 227.

forwards creatively. At the close of the memoir, Bak has made his peace with his native city of Vilna. Although Bak admits that his "past horrors" must remain "part of my being," having worked through the catharsis of writing his memoir, he experiences a form of post-traumatic growth that enables him to experience his native city anew:

> As I walked the streets of the old city a pleasant sensation settled in my soul: the Vilnius of today felt very familiar. Moreover, after half a century of trying to keep its old images alive in my head, I expected their reality to be disappointingly small and different. Not so. The ancient city with its winding streets, old buildings, and many restored churches, was more beautiful than I had dared to hope. It had a different tonality; the prewar shades of gray have been replaced by joyful pastels. (Bak, 2001, 499)

In his return to his native city, decades after the devastation of the Holocaust, Bak expresses through a shift in color the positive transformation on his native city brought about by independence and democracy. Bak's childhood experiences of incarceration in the Vilna ghetto, his escape, the depravations of the postwar years, are remembered in gray tones, but the future is one of "joyful pastels." Having written his way through the trauma of the past, at the end of the memoir, Bak embraces a future of new possibilities.

The closing chapters of Bak's memoir reveal that for the artist the act of delving into the past and engaging in storytelling about the past through the written word lead to a period of immense creativity and emotional well-being. Through the process of writing his memoir, Bak experiences a personal catharsis. Upon completing the memoir, Bak experiences epiphany, catharsis, and post-traumatic growth that results in greater productivity in his art studio:

> The memoir completed, I went back to a daily routine of painting. This return to my rolls of canvas, stretchers, brushes of various sizes, creamy oil colors, and odorous mediums plunged me into a familiar yet almost forgotten sensual pleasure. A series of new works began to emerge. Most of these paintings explored biblical themes, post-Holocaust visitations of the tales of Genesis. Others dealt with the repair of a broken world, a *tikkun haolam*. … (Bak, 2001, 499)

Having been expelled out of the cultural and historical context of Lithuania as a Jew during World War II, in 2001 Bak is welcomed back into an independent and democratic Lithuania's historical and cultural narrative as an honored guest. He finally finds peace with the trauma narrative of his past and acceptance of a contemporary Lithuania where anti-Semitism is punishable by law.

> I did not travel to Vilnius to rekindle the memory of past horrors; these are, and they must remain, part of my being. What I feared was that this pain would block my access to new experience. But my fear proved ungrounded. (Bak, 2001, 499)

On his visit to Vilnius, Bak is again given the opportunity to return to his childhood when he revisits his early artwork at the Jewish Museum:

> … I saw that dozens and dozens of my early works had been miraculously extricated from under the ruins of the ghetto and later salvaged from the hands of the Soviets. Now taken from their folders, they were shown to me with trepidation and pride. The works surprised me with their expressionistic boldness, childish imagination, and adult audacity. (Bak, 2001, 499)

Bak's Lithuanian friend, Rimtanas Stankevičius, becomes his guardian angel:

> Wherever we went, Rimantas's reassuring and discreet presence made him a kind of guardian angel. He took us to the building where I had lived as a child, walked us through the streets that had been the ghetto, and explored my old hiding place in what had been a convent of the Benedictine sisters. We visited the former HKP camp with its small memorial erected on the spot where Nazi gallows had once stood. Lithuanian children were playing ball and joyfully chasing one another. (Bak, 2001, 499-500)

Bak closes the memoir with a visit to the site where his family members died.

> Finally, Rimantas drove us in silence through the lovely woods of Ponar, place of terrible memory. A large memorial stands there for the many tens of thousands buried below in mass graves. Nearby a single stone indicates the burial place of HKP's last victims. Here I

> placed the token of my own remembrance, a pebble that must have been touched by the hands of many other visitors. (Bak, 2001, 499-500)

This final act of placing a pebble on the site of the mass grave of Holocaust victims, though seemingly but a small gesture, symbolizes for Bak the beginning of a "repair of the world."

7. CULTURAL MEMORY IN TWO LITHUANIAN DIASPORA MEMOIRS: ANTANAS SILEIKA: *THE BAREFOOT BINGO CALLER: A MEMOIR,* DAIVA MARKELIS*: WHITE FIELD, BLACK SHEEP: A LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN LIFE*

7.1. Cultural Memory

The relocation of displaced persons from Lithuania during World War II brought Antanas Sileika's and Daiva Markelis's parents to the New World in the early 1950s. As refugees move across borders, languages, societies, culture, traditions, and new systems of governance merge and are reinvented. These shifts affect not only the first generation – those who experience the trauma of displacement, loss of homeland, and immigration firsthand – but also the second and third generations. Family and community rituals keep the postmemory of the homeland alive. Through memory and postmemory narratives, in their memoirs, *The Barefoot Bingo Caller: A Memoir* by Antanas Sileika and *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life* by Daiva Markelis, these two North American writers of Lithuanian descent seek to make sense out of an identity passed on to them formed through cultural memory constructed from romanticized remembrances of prewar independent Lithuania handed down to them from their elders while chronicling the act of searching for their own American life. The two memoirs are personal narratives of growing up in North American Lithuanian diaspora communities while at the same time they function as postmemory narratives because the memoirists' personal experiences are intertwined with their parents and grandparents' cultural trauma.

The second and third generations of the Lithuanian diaspora in North America belong to both affiliative and familial postmemory groups. They grew up with their parents and grandparents' familial trauma in the home, but also experienced cultural trauma reflected through cultural memory in the diaspora community. The diaspora community socialized the second and third generations through cultural memory memorials, schools, and cultural institutions never to forget the first generation's experience of cultural trauma, Soviet occupation, Siberian exile, the postwar anti-Soviet resistance, displacement to the West. However, what was often omitted from this narrative was the history of Lithuania's Litvaks and the brutal nature of the Holocaust in Lithuania.

This chapter applies Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory to these two memoirs. Both memoirs describe cultural memory experiences growing up in the insular Lithuanian diaspora communities of the two largest North

American diaspora cities, Toronto and Chicago. Both invite the reader inside an insular culture with its own worldview. Sileika and Markelis write about the social, cultural, and educational institutions of the North American Lithuanian diaspora, constructed first in the displaced persons camps in Europe, then later transplanted to North America, where they continued to instill cultural memory into new generations through the three main components of cultural memory: memory, culture, society.

7.2. Collective Memory

In his seminal essay, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," Assmann defines cultural memory as "that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 132). He distinguishes cultural memory from what is named "communicative" or "everyday memory" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 126). Cultural memory has a "fixed point" which does not change with the passing of time (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 129). A culture's fixed points, according to Assman are significant:

> These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance). We call these "figures of memory." (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 129)

He identifies aspects of cultural formation and institutional communication more specifically as festivals, rites, epics, poems, images etc. (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 129) that form what he refers to as "islands of time" suspended from time: "In cultural memory, such islands of time expand into memory spaces of 'retrospective contemplativeness'"[161] (Assmann and

[161] This term is attributed to Aby Warburg who argues that "a collective experience crystallizes, whose meaning, when touched upon, may suddenly become accessible again across millennia" (Assmann and Czaplicka, 1995, 129).

Czaplicka 1995, 129). The experience of the Lithuanian diaspora may be interpreted as one of cultural memory with its own unique shared fixed points. Assmann examines the relationship between cultural heritage, memory, and the past:

> Through its cultural heritage a society becomes visible to itself and to others. Which past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and tendencies. (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 133)

Assman's theory of cultural memory contains three interrelated concepts: memory (the contemporized past), culture, and the group (society). (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 129) Often there is considerable overlap between these three categories as each category functions to uphold the other. At the core of culture and society, which are expressed through clubs, schools, commemorative events, there is always memory. Therefore, if one could imagine three interlocking circles, the middle circle would represent memory and culture and society would overlap over both. Further delineations define who belongs to the group and who does not and culturally specific group rules and expectations. Assmann argues that "cultural memory preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity." There is a distinct delineation between "we are this" and "we are not that."

The formative texts of the North American Lithuanian diaspora, such as the Saturday school primers, émigré newspapers and journals, the patriotic literary texts of the first generation, were attempts to socialize younger generations born into the diaspora to the cultural values established by the first generation. For the most part, these texts reveal that Lithuanian diaspora cultural memory is constructed from a romanticized fantasy of interwar Lithuania as an idyllic agrarian society consisting solely of ethnic Christian Lithuanians, excluding the populous local Jewish *shtetls*, and the small minority population of Russians, Germans, Poles.

7.3. The Intergenerational Transmission of Cultural Trauma Narratives

The need of the first generation of cultural trauma survivors, the Lithuanian displaced persons, to be heard in Laub's terms was passed down to the second and third generations of the Lithuanian diaspora in North America. The DPs

faced the challenges of building a new life in the diaspora and often did not have the tools to initiate their own healing from cultural trauma. However, at the same time, Lithuanian diaspora community rituals, such as commemorating prewar Lithuanian Independence Day on February 16th or commemorating and mourning those lost in the Siberian deportations of June 1941 served the function of the ritual of collective healing and are expressions of cultural memory. The diaspora community, which was essentially a community made up of survivors of war, many of whom were coping with few resources to heal survivor's guilt and displacement while trying to build a life in a new country on a new continent, passed down stories of their trauma to the second and third generations.

7.4. Structure and Content

Markelis's memoir *White Field, Black Sheep* consists of twenty-one chapters that narrate Markelis's Lithuanian-American life as the daughter of DPs. Time is linear and chronological in the memoir. The chapters document the memoirist's early childhood in the chapter, "I Was the Child of Teepees" to her final chapter, "The Lithuanian Book of the Dead." The memoir concludes the with the death of Markelis's mother, who is the bearer of the values and culture of the first generation from the Old World to the New World. As the two chapter titles suggest, an ironic tone and a tasty turn of phrase is integral to the voice and style of Markelis's writing. In "I Was the Child of Teepees" Markelis playfully describes her confusion over her heritage because of the mispronunciation of the "t" and "d" sounds in English:

> Growing up in Cicero, though, I heard only D.P., or, more accurately, T.P.—both my parents pronounced the *D* as a *T*. In first grade we had learned about the Plains Indians, who'd lived in tent-like dwellings made of wood and buffalo skin called *teepees*. In my childish confusion, I thought that perhaps my parents weren't Lithuanian at all, but Cherokee. I went around telling people that I was the child of teepees. (Markelis 2010, 3)

However, she is compelled to emphasize her parents were just like any other people, dispelling stereotypes about DPs.

> For the most part, our teepee life was an ordinary, somewhat solitary endeavor. My father worked as a draftsman during the day and went to school at night to

> study engineering, a career he had little interest in and aptitude for. In Dusetos, he had been a teacher of Lithuanian. My mother cooked and sewed and read American decorating magazines and Lithuanian novels. At the University of Vilnius she'd written papers on the East Prussian poet Agnes Miegel, and had planned to write her thesis on the Lithuanian elements in Miegel's work when the war broke out and changed everything. (Markelis 2010, 3)

In adulthood, this cultural confusion and sense of cognitive dissonance is expressed through excessive drinking. Markelis describes the emotional release of drinking in the diaspora community. The chapter "The Lithuanian Book of the Dead" plays off of the title of the popular Indo-Tibetan Buddhist book, "The Tibetan Book of the Dead." Perhaps in one of the most shocking scenes in the memoir, while making funeral arrangements for her mother, Markelis recognizes the funeral home director as one of the many Lithuanian men she had slept with after a bout of drinking in the years that she was an alcoholic:

> As we continue talking I realize, with a slowly growing sense of horror, that years ago I had gotten drunk with this man at one of the bars on Sixty-Ninth Street or maybe at some South Side party. More than that, I had known him, or had almost known him, in the biblical sense, had drunk the liquor of his generous kisses, had run my fingers through his now-thinning blond hair. (Markelis 2010, 202)

As in most of the writing in the memoir, Markelis's tone is ironic. For example, the choice of the phrase "in the biblical sense" referring back to "I had known him" serves to distance the narrator from the emotional pain of her past struggles with alcohol. However, this scene offers closure and redemption as well. Markelis makes funeral arrangements for her mother with her beloved American husband, Marty, at her side. She no longer drinks. She has made peace with displacement to America. She ends the memoir with comforting thoughts of her mother's soul having found a final resting place on American soil:

> This coming autumn acorns will skitter across our roof like tiny feet, and I will hear my mother's voice. In December the morning snow will settle on the branches

> of the oak, shifting lightly with the slightest wind. I will see my mother in the brittle shadows of winter birds. (Markelis 2010, 205).

Between these chapters Markelis switches from speaking Lithuanian as a child to speaking English, comes of age steeped in the cultural memory of the Chicago Lithuanian community of the sixties, seventies, and eighties, while battling debilitating depression and alcoholism. Postmemory narrations of her mother's childhood and youth in her native Lithuania, her experiences in Nazi Germany, her years in the DP camp, and her early years as an immigrant in the United States, weave between Markelis' memories of her own life. The postmemory and memory narratives are intertwined in each chapter, the space of memory and postmemory, daughter and mother, weaving together into one narrative.

7.5. Symbols of Memory, Culture, and Society

Markelis describes the many ways in which she feels displaced while growing up in the city where she was born in. Latina writer, Gloria Anzaldua, describes the parallel worlds of the immigrant as a "borderland" where "we get multiple, often opposing images. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision."[162] Anzaldua's "cultural collision" is familiar to any Lithuanian-American who has had to find their way between the opposing societal norms of home and the society. This battle is often played out through cultural symbols and images. Markelis' memoir opens with an experience of negotiating "cultural collisions" describing the neighborhood where she grew up:

> The markers of my childhood: the varnish factory looming like a giant domino against the sooty sky, the rat-infested coal yard north of the Burlington tracks, the air of huge red Magikist lips jutting out and above the Eisenhower Expressway. Coming back from summer trips to Indiana, my sister and I would spot them and know we were home. They were a woman's lips, curving gracefully at the edges. Set against the gray industrial

[162] Anzualdua, Gloria. *The Gloria Anzaldua Reader*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005.

> landscape of northern Cicero, Illinois, they seemed to me heartbreakingly beautiful. (Markelis 2010, 1)

Rather than Lithuanian fir trees or the Baltic Sea or baroque architecture emerging in her daughter's consciousness as symbols of home, these symbols of cultural memory are replaced with the provocative lips of a tawdry woman looming over a dirty skyline and a depressing industrial landscape. From these very first linguistic disconnects and visual perceptions Markelis as a child is tossed into the borderlands between cultures.

> My mother, however, found them vulgar, symbolic of all the things wrong with this new country: plastic flowers, Hostess cupcakes, Barbie dolls. What she found offensive about the Magikist sign was not only the deliberate and ugly bigness of the lips, but also the provocative misspelling of the word. "It should be *magic kissed*, shouldn't it?" she'd say every time we passed the sign. She disliked the loony orthography of American advertising, hated finding the *s* in *ease* arrogantly displaced by a *z*, as in the over-the-counter sleeping pill, Sleep Eaze. (In our native Lithuanian there's no mechanism for such an E-Z resettlement of morphemes.) (Markelis 2010, 1)

Markelis cannot reconcile her perception of the vulgar lips as beautiful with the cultural references her parents and her Lithuanian-American community instill in her. She experiences cognitive dissonance. She is asked to honor a country she has never seen, to uphold its cultural standards, and to literally not *see* the one that she was born into.

Critic James Morrison, in his review of Markelis' *White Field, Black Sheep*, calls this state of mind a "double-consciousness" arguing that her memoir is a narrative of displacement:

> This sort of double-consciousness is characteristic of the book as a whole, as it is of so many narratives of displacement. But Markelis' book is not a tale of immigration in the usual sense. Her own point of view is that the "native"-born daughter of immigrants to the United States—a perspective becoming increasingly common in multi-ethnic memoirs of recent years, following earlier waves of autobiographical and semi-autobiographical works recounting first-generation

> immigrant experience. This second-generation status complicates Markelis' consciousness of place, ethnicity, and national identity in ways quite distinct from her parents' experience of those categories. Markelis' book is a warm yet trenchant contribution to the growing body of literature that concerns such differences. (Morrison 2012, 337)

Morrison points out that there is always a double vision at work in the narrative of Markelis's memoir. The daughter's gaze, which is American and urban, has the DP mother's gaze superimposed onto it. The mother's gaze is one of a lyrical pastoral landscape from a lost country Markelis has never seen. While the Magikist lips are beautiful for the daughter, and part of her everyday landscape, they are vulgar and foreign to the mother. Such double vision appears consistently throughout the memoir, adding to the narrator's sense of cognitive dissonance and depression, which she self-medicates with alcohol.

Violeta Kelertas also notes this sense of double consciousness, when she observes in her review of the memoir, that while seeking to please her parents, the narrator navigates "an environment that the parents see as culturally deficient, one having totally different values than the European ones they brought with them to this country" (Kelertas 2016). The symbol of the larger-than-life sexualized woman's lips, which Markelis as a child finds "heartbreakingly beautiful," are understandably vulgar to her Lithuanian mother, who came to Chicago in the early fifties as a displaced person. The image that her small daughter associates with home to the mother symbolize gaudy, cheap, superficial American culture. Those lips grimace rather than smile, reminding Markelis's mother of everything that she has lost – first and foremost her culture. Borrowing from Sileika, the mother has lost the "serenity and dignity" of her perception of Lithuania.

While the constant reminder of those cheap gaudy lips hovering on the skyline over her home becomes a symbol of home to the daughter, but for the mother reminds her of the home she has lost, the gaudy American lips also challenge the mother to pass on to her daughter more refined cultural values than those of the Americans. To add insult to injury the misspelling of the word further confirms the mother's suspicion that most Americans are uneducated and barbaric, not even capable of spelling properly in the one and only language they do know, English. Markelis' mother, by contrast, is fluent in German, French, Lithuanian, has a reading knowledge of Russian, and a good command of English. She came from an upper class educated family in Lithuania, and as a young woman dreamed of becoming an architect. When

Markelis's grandmother told her that architecture was not a "proper profession for women" she went on to study German literature in Bonn. In the late 1930s the university asked her to leave because she was not a German:

> He was sorry, sincerely sorry, she was such a good student, and her German was so good she had everyone fooled, the provost told her, but someone had brought to his attention that Valaitis was not a German name." (Markelis 2010, 88-89)

In the United States Markelis's mother attended Northwestern for a year to study Interior Design. Her professors told her she had talent, but the tuition was too expensive for an immigrant woman and she soon she found out she was pregnant with her first daughter, Daiva. So, she dropped out of school, never to return. The daughter's success is meant to be an achievement built upon the disappointments of her mother. For Markelis, her mother's approval means more than just the warm embrace of maternal pride. However, her status as a woman, and an immigrant, robs her of her voice. Markelis's mother must rely on the diaspora community's society to instill, as a group, cultural memory in her daughters.

When speaking directly of the lineage of families of trauma survivors, Codde states that "the traumatized parents are incapable of providing their children with the reassurance and the sense of safety they are supposed to give them as parents" (Codde 2010, 5). In the Lithuanian diaspora communities of the United States and Canada, the second-generation's psychological stability from childhood onwards was influenced by cultural and familial trauma narratives in the home and in the diasporic community. Markelis describes the influence of cultural trauma on the family in her memoir.

At the same time, the second generation inherited the urgency to tell the first generation's unheard story. The children of trauma survivors are not only influenced by their parents' behavior, but also with their stories of trauma. However, while in some families the story of their trauma was narrated, in others the trauma was kept silent. Second generation Holocaust survivor, Melvin Bukiet, recalls: "Of course, some survivors spoke incessantly of the Holocaust while others never mentioned it" (Bukiet 2002, 13). These parents influenced their children through their behavior. Dominick LaCapra refers to the "intergenerational transmission of trauma" (LaCapra 2004, 108) because of the serious impact the stories and behaviors of the trauma survivors have on subsequent generations.

7.6. The Cultural Role of the Lithuanian-American Woman in the Diaspora

The role of women in the Lithuanian diaspora adhered to the edicts of the Christian doctrine and limited a woman's role to traditional family life. At the same time, the Lithuanian woman's responsibility and moral duty was to pass on the ancient Lithuanian language uncorrupted and instill Lithuanian cultural values in the next generation. This is a heavy legacy to place on a child. *The Lithuanian Woman* reminds the diaspora society group that the cultural role of the Lithuanian woman has deep ancestral roots, implying that maintaining the rules of cultural memory, culture, and society is not an individual choice, but a collective one:

> The political maturity of the woman runs like an unbroken thread throughout Lithuanian history. Women were among the devoted book smugglers who clandestinely brought into the country Lithuanian books and newspapers, printed in East Prussia and the United States and distributed them among the common folk hungry for the forbidden Lithuanian word. (Novickis 1968, 31)

Markelis was ten years old when these words were written. Sileika was fifteen. Applying the words from the Lithuanian Women's Club publication that served as a manual and carried significant cultural weight and significance in the Lithuanian diaspora in 1968 adds a historical voice to the narrative remembrances of the two memoirs from those years. This excerpt describes women book smugglers, but the significance is not on this particular moment in Lithuanian shared history, but in the assertion that "the political maturity of the woman runs like an unbroken thread throughout Lithuanian history." What happens when that thread is cut by immigration to another continent and culture?

The theme of being strong, of standing up for one's values and beliefs, for gliding above the American culture that surrounds them, usually in the economically depressed neighborhoods where immigrants live, runs through immigrant and minority group women's memoir. "'Don't have children,'" my mother told me more than once," Markelis recalls (Markelis 2010, 89).

Immigrant mothers, lacking the monetary and social support typical of the white middle-class, do not necessarily view marriage and children as the best option for a woman. Or they view marriage as an option once the daughter has completed her education and launched her career and has "something to

fall back on." Immigrant mothers are more likely to encourage their daughters to work hard and seek a better life than the one they've lived. Markelis proudly recounts: "I have spent some of my life traveling, and a considerable part of it reading good books. I have done this without having to resort to marriage to a doctor or wealthy Lithuanian. My mother is proud of me. She has seen my office at the university, has beamed at the name plate that hangs on the door" (Markelis 2010, 63). The author has internalized the story that her mother has told her about her own failed attempts at pursuing higher education.

In the seventies, when Markelis is a young adolescent, she overhears a conversation between her father and his co-workers.

> He (Markelis' father) had once opined to a group of fellow engineers that it seemed to him that young women in the United States had difficult life choices to make. "Between higher education and early marriage," he'd said solemnly. "Between Hamlet and Omelet." (Markelis 2010, 85)

This tacky joke reflects the feminist conversation of those times: should a woman choose "Occupation: Housewife" or should she pursue a career? It did not yet seem possible to balance both. The movement for men to take on a more active role at home had not yet blossomed in American culture. The joke reveals that Markelis's father associates cooking meals for the family with a woman's entrapment in the domestic patriarchal sphere. Markelis's mother actively resists him by not teaching her daughters how to cook, hoping that will keep them out of the proverbial kitchen. Markelis reflects that "although my mother was proficient in the kitchen, she often seemed a reluctant cook. I remember her sighing loudly as she peeled potatoes or stirred the soup" (Markelis 2010, 88). She describes the realm of the kitchen as one of woe:

> She was dismissive of women who obsessively clipped recipes from magazines, who asked for appliances for Christmas, large and clumsy *kugelis*-makers that grated seven potatoes at a time, who spent Saturdays baking elaborate frosted tortes for Sunday after-church gatherings. Her cookbook collection consisted of a nameless tome whose cover had faded to impressionistic depictions of roast chickens and baked apples, as if Monet had done the illustrations. (Markelis 2010, 87)

Markelis's mother's attitude towards cooking served to teach her daughters to seek higher pursuits and not end up trapped in the kitchen. Markelis never does learn to cook. She spends the rest of her life eating take-out or relying on others to cook. However, all these efforts to liberate her daughter from the drudgery of the kitchen do not free her from the expectations of society regarding women's roles. Markelis's first husband, a second generation Lithuanian-Canadian, remarked to her bitterly: "Your mother never taught you anything." What he means was anything useful from a domestic male perspective. Because she cannot cook, Markelis is useless as a wife. However, Markelis argues back that her mother did teach her many useful things:

> My mother taught me how to make birds, graceful cranes, from little pieces of paper. She taught me to recite from memory, with perfect Lithuanian precision, all twelve verses of the children's classic *Meškiukas Rudnosukas* when I was only three. She taught me how to avoid heavy, sweet-smelling cologne—"You don't want people fainting all around you"—and to stand up straight, because "Tall women have more fun." (Markelis 2010, 89)

Markelis's mother strives for her daughters to learn how to play the piano, recite poetry, read great works of literature, and make their own way in the world. The cultural memory ideal of the Lithuanian woman at that time, as reflected by *The Lithuanian Woman* and other diaspora publications, is a little different:

> Since time immemorial, Lithuanians have had their ideal of womanhood. Their symbolic and animistic mythology embodied the feminine ideal in a sylvan or water sprite, which they called *laumė*, a being that is akin to the god fairies of Western European folklore. This spirit-maid, surviving to this day in hundreds of folk tales, was a symbolic personification of the ideal Lithuanian woman: tall, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed, buxom maiden, with calm and melodious voice; a compassionate nurse and industrious maternal guardian of the aged and children. (Novickis 1968, 17-18)

Markelis's mother seems to be rebelling against this image and her rebellion started in the kitchen. Markelis reflects on the lesson she did learn in her mother's kitchen:

> It strikes me now that my mother associated meal preparation with a strict partition of gender roles; she had wanted to break out of this domestic penitentiary, but it was impossible, or nearly so, for an immigrant woman in her forties to leave behind that which was so firmly engrained in the collective female psyche. (Markelis 2010, 88)

At a moment in American culture, when female identity was influenced by consumer-oriented women's magazines, Markelis's immigrant mother draws on her Lithuanian culture to instill in her daughter the grit to rise above a life of domesticity and seek education and a career. Markelis's mother was suspicious of the American women's magazines her daughter read and would raid her bedroom to confiscate the magazines and anything associated with a sexualized representation of womanhood.

> "What is *this*?" she demanded, holding a tube labeled Neat in front of my face as if it were a stick of dynamite.
>
> "It's a depilatory cream."
>
> "A what?"
>
> "A cream to take hair off my legs."
>
> "What's wrong with the hair on your legs?" she asked.
>
> It was no use arguing with my mother. In our neighborhood, you could tell the women who had emigrated from Lithuania from those who'd been in the United States for a generation or two—the former never shaved their legs. (Markelis 2010, 109)

Markelis uses humor to deflect the significance of the culture clash in this scene: "the former never shaved their legs." That is beside the point. The mother is teaching the daughter to think for herself and not to blindly follow consumer culture. In her work as a feminist, Hirsch reflects:

> There can be no systematic and theoretical study of women in patriarchal culture, there can be no theory of women's oppression, that does not take into account woman's role as a mother of daughters and as a daughter of mothers, that does not study female identity in relation

> to previous and subsequent generations of women, and that does not study the relationship in the wider context in which it takes place: the emotional, political, economic, and symbolic structure of family and society. (Hirsch,1981, 202)

Hirsch emphasizes the importance of identity transmission from mother to daughter but recognizes that it takes place within "the emotional, political, economic, and symbolic structure of family and society." The battle over depilatory cream becomes a culture war. Through her mother-daughter dynamic Markelis learns what type of a woman she should not become – not a housewife who cooks and cleans all day, not a woman willing to spend on outward appearances, but an educated woman with a profession. Markelis speaks about the importance of her mother-daughter relationship in an interview with Ellen Cassedy:

> I was very close to my mother. We had many interesting conversations about a variety of topics – religion, politics, even sex. I think many Lithuanian-American daughters are close to their mothers – sometimes I think our mothers felt a bit lonely and misunderstood, and thus turned to their daughters for companionship. Of course, I thought my mother was special. She was a very outspoken, funny, and intelligent woman. (Cassedy 2012)

Due to her mother's influence, Markelis earns her master's degree and PhD and becomes a tenured Professor of Literature at Eastern Illinois University, thus fulfilling her mother's dreams.

In North America, along with the fight for women's rights in the sixties and seventies, came a heightened awareness of women's lives and experiences. This gave birth to the acceptance of women's voices in mainstream American literature. Multicultural American and Canadian literature in the seventies, eighties, and nineties, gave voice to Asian-American, Native American, Latina, and African-American women writers and set the groundwork for immigrant voices such as Markelis's to find a place within the landscape of American multicultural and immigrant literatures. Fundamental to the story of the hyphenated American woman's experience in the New World is her relationship with her mother, who is often, if not almost always, the force that seeks to instill in her daughter a deep-rooted love and cultural understanding of the home country and culture.

Sileika's *The Barefoot Bingo Caller* is organized less as a chronological narrative and more as a collection of seventeen essays, each illuminating an aspect of Sileika's life story, ranging from his induction into the Toronto Lithuanian folk dancing ensemble to meeting and marrying his wife, Snaigė, to his early years as an English Professor, to involvement in Lithuania's independence movement as a journalist, to his middle age, when he rediscovers Lithuania through his son's decision to raise a family in Vilnius. Unlike Markelis's chapters, which follow a chronological order, only Sileika's first few chapters describe his childhood and young adulthood while most of the later chapters describe adulthood. Like Markelis, Sileika relies on humor and an ironic tone in his writing. Whereas Markelis' remembrances are closely linked with her mother, Sileika writes more about his father and two elder brothers, as well as his mother. The narrative of Sileika's family's exodus out of Lithuania echoes in the background of the tenuous roots the family sets down in Canada, where the DP parents have a new worry – ensuring their children grow up never forgetting the homeland and retaining all aspects of Lithuanian culture. The memory and postmemory narratives that make up the memoir exist independent of each other, but also meld together into a cohesive life narrative. Sileika raises questions of identity, split identity, and cultural collusions.

7.7. Postmemory Narratives

In a talk titled "European Homelands of the Imagination," given at the 2019 Thomas Mann Literary Festival in Nida, Lithuania, Sileika describes ruminating more over memories from Lithuania that belonged to his parents than his own memories of his Canadian life:

> My mother learned to recognize the sound of airplane engines because the Soviet planes strafed the columns of refugees. If she did hear a Soviet plane, she ran for the ditch with her sister, and my father took the baby to join them. Their little horse was forever calm, and stood waiting on the road as the bullets flew all around. My mother and father remember that horse fondly. A kind German officer told them one night to hurry across a bridge before it was blown up to slow the advancing enemy, and the exhausted horse managed the job, bringing them eventually all the way to Oldenburg and safety. (Sileika 2019, 2-3)

Sileika describes the danger of crossing the bridge, the service of the loyal, but exhausted, horse as though he had lived through this dramatic scene himself. It is only at the end of the paragraph that he reveals that he never lived this experience at all: "There they hunkered for a few years in a DP camp, gave birth to my brother, and eventually came to Canada where I was born" (Sileika 2019, 2-3). He was born in the safety of Canada, thousands of kilometers distant from the warzone of Europe, and yet Sileika's family trauma narrative displaces his individual narrative:

> This homeland of my parents therefore existed for them, but it did not exist outside the walls of our house or the walls of our Lithuanian church, or the yard of our Saturday morning Lithuanian school. If my Commonwealth English homeland came to me through its authors, my parents' Lithuanian homeland came to me through the oral recounting of their childhoods. These stories were always tinged with sadness because they recounted a life in the equivalent of the city of Troy before it was destroyed, and their great migration was the Aeneid. Once Troy has been sacked, there is no going back. (Sileika 2019, 7)

"European Homelands of the Imagination" reveals how Sileika possesses a double consciousness, one Canadian, and the other a postmemory narrative of a Lithuania that "did not exist outside the walls of our house or the walls of our Lithuanian church, or the yard of our Saturday morning Lithuanian school." That confining memory space defines Lithuania for Sileika while contemporary Lithuania remains geographically unreachable because of the Iron Curtain. Sileika reflects on how in his older years "the complicated strands of history" become more tangled:

> Immigrants in the fifties were called "Displaced Persons," or DPs for short. I was undergoing some sort of reverse DP process, being pushed back in time and space.
>
> Somehow, my age, nearing retirement, should have had a clearer view of his place in the world, but the complicated strands of history were getting more tangled as I grew older. (Sileika 2017)

The postmemory construction of Lithuania is for Sileika a trauma memory of war and displacement. He is the inheritor of a trauma narrative from his parents.

Hoffman, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, describes the process by which she realized that the generation after cultural trauma bears a burden that marks them psychologically. Hoffman concludes that it is shared historical experience that shapes the postmemory generation as a group:

> If a "generation" is defined by shared historical experience and certain attitudes or beliefs that follow from it, then the "second generation" is surely a very tenuous instance of it. We have grown up, in the postwar Jewish dispersion, in different countries and cultures, under very different circumstances and within different political systems. There have been no great events or public milestones to mark our own histories. The defining event we have in common belongs not to our allotted time on this planet, but to our prehistory. (Hoffman 2004, 28)

Hoffman realizes that her identity, and those of the second generation of Holocaust survivors, have been formed by a "prehistory." Sileika recognizes his own "pre-history" although it is not a Holocaust inheritance. It is not surprising that the second generation would wish to reject their parents' attempts to instill in them memories and loyalty to the lost homeland they had not themselves experienced:

> So what about my parents' homeland? It could not be mine. Their homelands were both their childhood homes and family, and their youths as well, when they were young and easy and green and carefree. In my own cocky youth, I considered my parents nostalgic, and there was no more dismissive term in my adolescent vocabulary. Their memories were not my memories and I was casually cruel about their irrelevance. I would find a homeland, perhaps, but I would find it myself. (Sileika 2019, 7)

Markelis and Sileika use an ironic tone to describe the cultural push and pull between memory, culture, and society in cross-cultural situations that play out in a North American multicultural context, indicating that the intended audience of these memoirs is more likely North American rather than

Lithuanian. However, the reader is given to understand that although the scenes described play out in the Lithuanian language and not in English. In this manner, Sileika and Markelis act as cultural translators, balancing their cultural literacy of very different cultures: Canadian, American, and Lithuanian.

7.8. Humor, Irony, the Absurd

The narrators of both memoirs use an ironic voice and tone, as well as elements of the absurd, to reveal the incongruence experienced by narrators coming of age balancing a mainstream North American life with the dictates of a cultural memory imposed on them by the Lithuanian diaspora community. Typically, both memoirs use absurdist humor through the juxtaposition of Lithuanian traditional cultural memory moments with a contemporary North American mindset. The effect is creating absurdist scenes that display the complications of navigating the quixotic burden of balancing an identity between two disparate cultures. A criticism of the memoirs could be that these absurdist humor scenes read as a private joke that readers who grew up in the North American Lithuanian diaspora would immediately recognize and respond to, but which may be inscrutable, or not humorous, to readers outside of this cultural memory community.

7.9. Expressions of Memory, Society, Culture in the Memoirs

In the Lithuanian diaspora communities of Toronto, Montreal, New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, and elsewhere, Lithuanian second-and-third generation diasporic children shared similar experiences of the family stories of war and postwar displacement. The Lithuanian Saturday schools reinforce cultural memory by tirelessly working to instill Lithuanian history, language, and culture into the second and third generation children. However, despite these efforts to instill the diaspora's cultural memory into subsequent generations, there is a sense of being trapped between cultures, and not entirely belonging to one or the other.

Toronto has the most populous Lithuanian community in Canada. In 2021, this community, like Chicago's, is made up of members and

descendants of the three waves of Lithuanian immigration.[163] Both Chicago and Toronto possess Lithuanian Saturday schools, numerous clubs, theaters, newspapers, and even restaurants and bars where traditional Lithuanian food and drink is served. Although both Toronto and Chicago have specific neighborhoods, and even streets, that make up the heart of the Lithuanian community, a sprawling number of suburbs also make up the urban geography of these two Lithuanian communities. Markelis' memoir is marked by her life in the suburb of Cicero and Sileika's is marked by growing up in the Toronto suburb of Weston.

The North American specificity of Sileika and Markelis' memoirs place them within the context of American multicultural literature. At the same time, many of the cultural and societal cues in these memoirs are expressions of cultural memory unique to the North American Lithuanian diaspora. For example, only someone who has experienced the awkward sensation of venturing out into the public spaces of a Canadian or American city surrounded with a group dressed in the Lithuanian national costume, headed to a folk festival to perform Lithuanian traditional dances, may fully appreciate the humor in the scene in which Sileika describes taking a ferry ride with his Toronto émigré folk dance ensemble to perform at an ethnic festival for Dominion Day, a Canadian public holiday:

> Around us were Italian families with baskets and barely disguised bottles of homemade wine, a few Sikhs in their turbans and a couple of women in saris, Portuguese kids in baseball caps, and a whole contingent of older immigrants who had never assimilated very well—Hungarians, Poles with their chessboards, Ukrainians, half a dozen other nationalities whose countries couldn't be found on the map. All us immigrants still on the boat after all these years. Even the children of immigrants stayed immigrants. It was like we'd been inoculated against mainstream culture. (Sileika 2017, 33)

This scene is an expression of shared cultural memory. In this scene, the Lithuanian-Canadians blend into one larger mass of immigrants, or misfits, as Sileika's tone suggests, who chose not to be culturally absorbed into mainstream Canadian culture. Although born in Canada, Sileika imagines

[163] See Chapter Three: Three Waves of Lithuanian Migration.

himself as an immigrant on the boat to Ellis Island: "I wouldn't have been surprised if our ferry traveled down the St. Lawrence and out to the Atlantic and landed at Ellis Island" (Sileika 2017, 33). Notably, Dominion Day celebrates July 1, 1867, when Canada became a dominion of the United Kingdom. Canada's official policy is to embrace and celebrate immigrants from all races and ethnic groups in the spirit of building Canadian culture together and Dominion Day is typically a holiday that celebrates diversity. Therefore, the Lithuanian folk dancers are invited to celebrate together with the Hungarians, Poles, Portuguese, and other immigrant groups who have put down roots in Canada. Some of the immigrant groups come from cultures that have actual geographic homelands while "half a dozen other nationalities whose countries couldn't be found on the map." The experience of living cultural memory through a heritage that "couldn't be found on a map" haunts both Sileika's and Markelis's prose. In this scene on the boat, Sileika subtly points out that the Lithuanians are reliant on collective cultural memory to establish ethnic identity while the Portuguese, Italians, etc. are not.

Participation in the Lithuanian traditional folk-dance troupe instills in Sileika as a teenager a sense of cultural memory, shared culture, and group society, with an edge of celebratory intoxication:

> As for us, we were still on the boat. Even when we got off the boat, the island was filled with other people like us. Happy ethnics, celebrating their heritage while building a better future together. Other people went to Woodstock. Some had been to Monterey. I was on Centre Island. We had no psychedelic drugs or rock and roll. We didn't have to fear biker gangs. The only good part was the peasant-like unruliness. Whole families were already drinking wine on the grass, and there weren't enough cops to ticket them all, even if they had tried. For one day, we were allowed to drink in public. It was one of the only benefits. I wished I'd thought to sneak over a bottle of my own. (Sileika 2017, 34)

Sileika points out that he misses out on the counterculture of the sixties and seventies, which marks his generation in North America, but accepts the compensation of having some unruly fun with the other drinkers. He places the Lithuanian second generation diaspora youth comfortably among other immigrant groups. In his essay "European Homelands of the Imagination," Sileika describes the Toronto suburb of Weston where his DP parents found shelter after World War II as a place where "a scattering of working class and

middle-class families, all products of the war and then the postwar boom" lived (Sileika 2019, 1-2). Although Sileika remembers this time as one of "wealth and growth and slow enlightenment about civil rights" it also "had its horrors" (Sileika 2019, 1-2). He describes the friends he grew up with – all of them immigrants:

> My friend of Japanese heritage, Mike Adachi, had parents who were interned as aliens during the war, and lost all of their property. My friend Allen Jamieson's father had been a Canadian soldier who was in Hong Kong when it fell to the invading Japanese army, and he spend the war in a prisoner of war camp where he lost most of his sight due to malnutrition. (Sileika 2019, 1-2)

Sileika places Lithuanians among the other immigrant groups who experienced cultural and historical trauma, thus not granting them special status for suffering as was expected of the cultural memory narrative of the diaspora community:

> And then there was my family. Lithuanian immigrants who had fled the Red Army with their baby in 1944 and lived in a DP camp in Oldenburg where they had another baby, before emigrating to Canada in 1948 and eventually giving birth to me. (Sileika 2019, 1-2)

This perspective displays a break away from the perceptions of victimhood instilled by the first generation DPs and an embrace of the globality of human suffering. Writing from the point of view of a Canadian, where all immigrant cultures collectively make up Canadian culture, Sileika places the cultural trauma of his family (fleeing Soviet tyranny and occupation) within the context of other historical calamities that he experiences in his Canadian neighborhood, the World War II era internment of people of Japanese heritage or the trauma a son inherits from a father who was a prisoner of war. Sileika pushes against the cultural memory narrative of the diaspora by describing the Lithuanian-Canadian diaspora as one displaced group among many others, and hence, not exclusive. From the space of perspective, he evaluates his family's experience as equal to others within a Canadian cultural context. The narrative of Lithuanian cultural memory at the time was one of unique victimhood and the experience of displacement. Sileika, Markelis, Gabis, and Šukys all write about how this view of memory is taught to the second and third generations as they come of age.

7.10. Constructing Lithuanian Identity in the Diaspora and Cultural Memory

Marian J. Rubchak, in her paper "'God made me a Lithuanian': Nationalist Ideology and the Construction of a North American Diaspora,"[164] explains how the concept of the Lithuanian language and culture as sacred was formed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She draws from the work of Van Reenan to explain:

> ...in the nineteenth century, international research in comparative linguistics advanced the claim that Lithuanian was the closest living relative of proto-Indo-European, the ancestral tongue from which all later Indo-European languages evolved. This rise of philological and linguistic influence was accompanied first by a growing fascination with Lithuanian folk culture and then by greater academic interest in all things Lithuanian, in both Europe and imperial Russia. This scholarly concern, coupled with Lithuanian reaction to Russification and Polonization, prefigured the evolution of a modern Lithuanian identity. (Rubchak 1992, 118)

According to Rubchak, the concept of a Lithuanian identity is a rather recent invention. Early Twentieth-century Lithuanian nationalists, like Jonas Basanavičius, promoted the idea of a national Lithuanian identity that invoked a pagan past and the legacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Based on these ideals of a national identity, Lithuania declared independence from Tsarist Russia in 1918. Markelis's and Sileika's parents were a product of the twenty-two years that Lithuania thrived as an independent nation between the two world wars. After the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, the displaced persons formed a diaspora, absorbing the churches, schools, and infrastructure of the earlier generations of mainly economic immigrants from Lithuania to America and Canada.

The national systems of Lithuanian language Saturday Schools in Canada and the United States were an important institution that instilled the Lithuanian language, history, culture, and cultural memory into children and young adults while at the same time creating a group society.

---

[164] Rubchak, Marian, J. "'God made me a Lithuanian': Nationalist Ideology and the Constructions of a North American Diaspora," Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992, p. 118.

In a chapter titled "During the Reign of Vytautas the Great," Markelis recounts how her Lithuanian-American childhood played out within a postmemory landscape that instilled in the diaspora community's children the cultural memory of a Lithuania of the past:

> Every Saturday morning, for seven years of my life, while other children were watching cartoons, I studied Lithuanian history and geography, literature, and grammar, in the classrooms of St. Anthony's School. They seemed different on this day, these rooms, transformed from the orderly pristine spaces of the nuns, where during the week we sat, hands crossed, the girls in our prim green-and-white uniforms, the boys in navy pants and white shirts, to brighter, more chaotic, chambers where little learning appeared to be taking place. (Markelis 2010, 33-34)

Markelis describes being taught a historical narrative of medieval Lithuanian greatness that must not be forgotten. She is also taught to consider herself lucky and superior to American children.

> We were told, again and again, how lucky we were to attend a second school. We were "richer" than those poor *amerikonai* who only spoke one language, and mundane English at that. (Markelis 2010, 33-34)

Again, the inherent perceived superiority of the Lithuanian language over English is emphasized when English is described as "mundane." Although the children of the DPs grew up poor by the American standards of those years, they are taught within the framework of collective culture and memory to perceive themselves as culturally "richer." Part of those riches were the Lithuanian notebooks and primers that taught Lithuanian history.

> At the beginning of each semester of Lithuanian Saturday School, we received notebooks in bright orange and lime green and mustard yellow with portraits of Maironis, Father of Lithuanian Poetry, and Vincas Kudirka, Freedom Fighter, on each cover—one notebook per subject. We drew fancy mustaches on Maironis and otherwise defaced the notebooks. We made fun of the teachers, who had received their pedagogical training in Lithuania. We laughed at their fractured English, hurled

> spitballs at them, mangled their drawn-out Lithuanian names. (Markelis 2010, 33-34)

Not knowing how to properly assimilate the "luck" of possessing a dual culture, one American, familiar and real because it was experienced physically every day in the American societal environment, and the other a Lithuanian identity, constructed as a cultural memory yet intangible, as the children had never actually seen Lithuania, these second-generation children reacted by hurling spit-balls at their "foreign" teachers and defacing the sacred images of cultural memory on their precious notebooks. She captures the sense of an invisible culture that exists only in a cultural memory:

> At Lithuanian Saturday School I learned a geography imbued with longing—Lithuania was a country of lush pine forests and golden dunes, a paradise on earth, forever embedded in amber. More important, I learned about the arbitrariness of borders, that a country can exist for one person and not another—a lesson reinforced at home, where there were always maps, and a globe that my sister and I loved to twirl when my father wasn't around. (Markelis 2010, 35)

Markelis poignantly refers to "a geography imbued with longing" and the slippery nature of geographic borders as opposed to the firm, never-changing borders of the cultural memory. The borders that she is taught in Lithuanian school are firm in the diaspora's shared cultural memory; however, they reveal that the community is barely aware of the previous history of the region before a sense of Lithuanian nationalism was forged. It is also a legacy that Lithuanian-American children were taught to internalize:

> At Lithuanian Saturday School I learned that words can be borders, imposed artificially, that "the Baltic States" were not a complete, unbreakable little set of countries—Lithuanian, Latvia, Estonia—but a term conceived during the nineteenth century out of political expediency. Throughout the ages, Lithuania's history has been more firmly, closely linked with Catholic Poland's than with Lutheran Latvia's, although Lithuania's language, like Latvia's, is Baltic, not Slavic. (Markelis 2010, 15)

The preservation of the "endangered" Lithuanian language, the narrative of war, displacement, immigration is a constant presence in the cultural memory of the Lithuanian diaspora community. The 1969 book, *The Lithuanian Woman*, published by the Lithuanian Women's Club, opens with the epigraph: "Freedom for the oppressed!" The preface gives a short geographical and historical introduction to Lithuania and then delivers what Assmann refers to as the "memory of the contemporized past":

> After two years of the successful Wars of Independence, the Lithuanian people entered upon a prolonged period of rapid political consolidation and tremendous economic and cultural progress. This favorable development was interrupted by the aggressive acts of Soviet Russia, which, on June 15, 1940, forcibly incorporated her into the Soviet Union. Since that time the Lithuanians in their occupied homeland and those living abroad have continued to struggle uncompromisingly for the liberation of their homeland. (Novickis 1969, 8)

Markelis would have been a student in the Lithuanian Saturday school at the time these words were written. A chapter titled "The Lithuanian Woman Under Soviet Occupation" is dedicated to exploring this history:

> The Russian occupation in June 1940-1941 was distinguished for its brutalities—mass arrests, deportations to slave labor camps, murder, destruction of families, and economic deprivation. Yet the Lithuanian woman proudly withstood the spiritual and physical onslaught and resolutely joined in her nation's open and underground resistance. (Novickis 1969, 57)

However, it is noteworthy that the history jumps from 1941 to 1944, omitting the years of the Nazi occupation, 1941–1944. The annihilation of ninety-five percent of prewar Lithuania's Jewish citizens is omitted from the history in a single sentence. Those years are erased out of the cultural memory in the diaspora. The two suffering victim groups who remain intact in the narrative are the "tens of thousands of inhabitants [who] fled to the west to escape Russian terror" (Novickis 1969, 58) and "those who remained behind," who "faced a resumption of atrocities and complete loss of freedom" (Novickis 1969, 58). There is no mention of atrocities faced by Lithuanian Jewish women or men, nor are the Jewish survivors of Nazi atrocities

mentioned. There is a distinction between which group of people born and raised in Lithuania are included in the cultural memory group of the society and which are not. Jewish Lithuanians are not included. Assman's "inclusion and exclusion" are delineated in these texts, which represent the cultural collective memory built by the Lithuanian émigré community during the decades of the Cold War years.

7.11. The Role of Silence in Cold War era Lithuanian Diaspora Cultural Memory

Sileika and Markelis's memoirs are sensitive to the genocide of Lithuanian Jews during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania and openly address this historical trauma and invite discussion and reconciliation. Markelis writes about silence and omission in her memoir. Markelis's American cultural identity, like Sileika's Canadian identity, instills in citizens from an early age that North America is a land comprised of immigrants and descendants of immigrants who are all equal. This is colorfully described in Sileika's Dominion Day ferry ride. On a rite of return visit to independent Lithuania, Markelis visits the Jewish Museum in Vilnius, where she remarks that "Lithuanian Jews had been written out of the history books that I'd read in Lithuanian Saturday School" (Markelis 2010, 173). She realizes "they had never been mentioned in the seminars on Lithuanian culture that I attended." (Markelis 2010, 173). She considers that "the idea that our Nemunas was their river as well, that they had hated the Tsars just as we had, that they summered by the Baltic Sea and loved pickled herring and potato pancakes just as we did came as almost a biblical revelation" (Markelis 2010, 173). A visit to the Jewish Museum shocks Markelis.

> I … wandered from floor to floor, reflecting on the photographs and paintings and Hebrew manuscripts, on the life that unfolded before me like a finely woven prayer rug. (Markelis, 2010, 173)

The visit to the Jewish Museum is Markelis's first realization that the memory that held the community together relied on cultural omission. Upon her return to Chicago, she visits her elderly DP mother in the nursing home and confronts her with the cultural omission. Her mother tells her that her grandmother hid a Jewish mother and son during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania:

She remembers the boy, who begged to play outside, and the mother, who had been a dentist.

"Your grandmother gave her some mending to do, thinking, well, she must have good hands. But she turned out to be a poor mender. A really poor mender."

"That's the only time you, or *anybody*, ever talked about the Jews."

"*Not* the only time."

"Nobody ever discussed the Holocaust. It was always the Russians, the Russians, the Russians. They did this and this and this to us." (Markelis 2010, 174-175)

Markelis invokes the cultural trauma memory of the Soviet occupation; however, the four years that are omitted from the history, the Nazi occupation, are not part of that trauma narrative and therefore are not mentioned. In this context of erasure, saving Jews is also silenced out of the family narrative. This conversation upsets Markelis's mother who pleads with her, "Don't you have any happy memories of childhood?" (Markelis 2010, 175) Markelis's mother recognizes that her daughter's retention of the tragic stories of Lithuania's Nazi and Soviet occupations have marked her childhood. In this scene, Markelis's mother recognizes that she has passed on mostly tragic memories to her daughter, memories of genocide, war, exile. Those memories have become the postmemories of Markelis's narrative, and not the happy childhood memories of a pastoral Lithuania that her mother wished she could share with her daughter. The daughter tries to reassure her elderly mother, and receives no response, until she finally utters comforting words that appeal to the cultural memory of the Lithuanian diaspora:

"You made me speak Lithuanian."

She smiles and nods her head.

I try to tell her that the fact that I can navigate the world with two languages, two cultures, two voices, one to critique the other, is a constant good, but my Lithuanian fails me once again. (Markelis 2010, 174-175)

Recalling Hannah Arendt's words that "[l]osing one's language is not only to be denied a linguistic anchorage to nation and tradition, it also means losing the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings" (Arendt 2007, 264), the bittersweet irony of "but my Lithuanian fails me once again" reflects the perpetual linguistic disconnect

between the first and second generations as expressed by Markelis in this scene between mother and daughter. This linguistic disconnect leads to a pervasive sense of never quite measuring up to the standards of the first generation because those standards are rooted in postmemory of a Lithuania that no longer exists and in the impossibility of acquiring fluency in a complex language taught in a linguistic vacuum.

Cassedy notes this scene in her interview with Markelis in the popular Lithuanian online magazine, *15min.lt.* She asks Markelis a difficult question: "A particularly touching part of the book, for me, was the brief section called 'The Alphabet of Silence.' You describe how, near the end of your mother's life, she presented you with a set of silverware that had been given to her family for safekeeping by a Jewish doctor, who then perished in the Holocaust" (Cassedy, 2012). Markelis remarks in her response on the silence that shrouded stories around the Nazi occupation of Lithuania in the North American Diaspora communities:

> I wanted to write more about the many silences I experienced growing up in a Lithuanian household, but I wasn't sure how to go about this. I didn't want to alienate Lithuanian readers, many of whom are still reluctant to discuss what happened during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania. In retrospect I think I was being too subtle. (Cassedy, 2012)

The silence around Lithuanian participation in the Holocaust in Lithuania in the diaspora is a theme in Sileika's memoir as well. Sileika writes about how he keeps a letter written by three Jewish children who survived the Nazi occupation because the uncle he had been named after chose to save them. He regards the letter "as a kind of talisman, a good luck charm against the horrors of the past" (Sileika 2017, 215). Sileika recognizes that "the Holocaust was particularly brutal in Lithuania, where the vast majority of local and even fleeing Jews from elsewhere were killed by Nazis and local collaborators." (Sileika 2017, 215) Beyond carrying the letter as a "talisman" indicating that his family's forebearers were not perpetrators, but actually among those who saved Jews, little mention of the Holocaust in Lithuania is made in Sileika's memoir.

7.12. Cultural Politics

The Lithuanian politics of the diaspora community are challenged in the seventies when for the first time since World War II limited tourism to Lithuania is allowed by the Soviet Union. The clash of collective cultural memory and a contemporary (at the time) communist Lithuania confounds Markelis, whose father supports the decision of young people in the community to travel to Lithuania. After making a public statement to this effect, Lithuanian-American vandals spray paint a hammer and sickle onto the side of the family's garage. Markelis quips ironically:

> We stared at our garage, my mother shaking, my father frowning. I felt a surge of illicit excitement. My parents, who complained about taxes, who subscribed to Consumer Reports, who had voted Republican in the last local election, were Communists! (Markelis 2010, 38)

Markelis uses irony to describe the paradoxes of Lithuanian-American cultural memory. Her father has transgressed against the diaspora community's cultural memory of a prewar democratic independent Lithuania by suggesting young people travel to Soviet Lithuania to experience Lithuanian culture, thus breaking with a sacred agreed upon understanding of Lithuania based on cultural memory. This definition allows no room for a Soviet communist style of governance. The punishment for breaking with the cultural memory of the group is being labeled as a communist, even while voting Republican and upholding conservative values. The act of vandalism is a dangerous reminder that Markelis's father has violated the rules of the group, the society, and has challenged the tenets of the diaspora's cultural memory. Markelis clearly understands these nuances but chooses to hide behind irony: "My parents […] were Communists!" Yet, the act of vandalism represents an inappropriate reaction to a trauma wound that Markelis's father dared to open by suggesting that it would not a bad idea for Lithuanian diaspora youth to visit the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania so that they may actually see and experience the homeland rather than living with an imaginary version of it, a postmemory construct shaped through cultural memory.

Sileika, like Markelis, has absorbed the memory and narrative of his parents' trauma, which is interwoven with Lithuania's historical trauma:

> If I sat in the kitchen with my mother and father as they were drinking tea after dinner, and if they were not

> rushed, they might tell me the story of their last home in the Lithuanian city of Alytus, which they had fled in the summer of 1944. I possess one of the few family photos of that time, taken about a week before the arrival of the Red Army. My mother smiles innocently in the garden and holds the hand of my toddler brother, not quite a year old. On the other hand, my troubled father looks down, a briefcase in his hand, his mind clearly elsewhere. (Sileika 2019, 2)

The possession of the rare family photograph, taken before the calamity of occupation, and fleeing the country reveals Sileika's mother's prewar innocence, which would soon be lost.

> My naïve mother had said to the maid that they would need to clean the upstairs windows soon, but the maid replied the Soviets would be there within a week, so there was no point. When my mother asked my father about this, he explained he had a horse and wagon ready, a store of food, maps and currency and they would leave within a few days, as soon as they could hear the sound of the Soviet artillery. After all, his brother had spent a year in prison under the first Soviet occupation, and was lucky enough to escape alive, but lost all his teeth during beatings under interrogation by the communists. (Sileika 2019, 2)

The innocence of Sileika's mother is lost just after these last few peaceful days in the homeland. Through cultural memory narratives the diaspora community repeatedly seeks to recreate that lost innocence prior to the Soviet and Nazi occupations. Assman writes: "Cultural memory works by reconstructing, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation" (Assmann and Czaplicka, 1995, 132). This is evidenced in its folkdance ensemble motifs, choirs, schools and other activities. The vehicle of the Lithuanian folk dancing clubs both binds the younger generations to memory, instills culture, and creates a group experience. Therefore, the folk dancing groups are a vital aspect of every Lithuanian diaspora community in North America.

7.13. Cultural Memory and the Mother Tongue

Markelis's parents insist that the family speak only Lithuanian at home. This is the norm in Lithuanian-American and Lithuanian-Canadian households in the diaspora. However, the linguistic disconnect with English creates cognitive dissonance. Markelis describes her embarrassment over her father's heavily accented and faulty English:

> I mentioned an Ann Landers column about taking pride in speaking one's native language. My father, who read and admired Ann Landers, was nonetheless adamant: Vee cow-moon-ick-ate in English.
>
> The irony, of course, was that my father's vocal, overly enunciated English marked him as a foreigner in a way that a quiet, natural Lithuanian would not have. He plowed ahead, oblivious to articles, ignoring the dangers lurking in prepositional phrases. When my American friends would visit, my father would greet them with "How you do?" *How you do, Lisa? Tom, how you do?* After one too many *How you dos,* I couldn't take it anymore. I began to yell: "It's not *How you do?* It's *How do you do? How do you do? How do you do?"* (Markelis 2010, 44)

The narrator's frustration at her father's overconfidence in English speaks to the inability to reconcile the Lithuanian cultural memory, the diaspora community's group society based on that memory, and the function of Lithuanian culture with American culture. However, the mastery of both Lithuanian and English in the second and third generations proved useful during the movement for Lithuania's independence in the eighties and nineties. Some of the descendants of the DPs possessed cultural literacy in both Lithuanian and North American culture and participated in the independence movement.

In his memoir, Sileika describes how he becomes an impromptu journalist and public relations expert for the Lithuanian independence movement in the late eighties and early nineties. In the chapter, "The Church Basement Versus the Kremlin" Sileika describes how he preps the vice-president of the first democratically elected Lithuanian parliament for a meeting with the Canadian press. He begins by asking the parliamentarian how he will answer when asked why Lithuania wants to declare independence from Lithuania.

> He thought about the question for an agonizing four or five seconds and then started a history lesson that began in the fifteenth century and sounded like it would be delivered in real time.
>
> I had a vision of TV cameras turning off, of politicians turning away, of the Soviet Union hanging strong for another century.
>
> I stopped him and told him he would need to have a sound bite that ran no longer than twenty seconds. He protested that twenty seconds to explain the aspiration of millions of people were not enough.
>
> It was moronic to expect such brevity, he said. I welcomed him to the continent of morons. I told him that twenty seconds was all we had. (Sileika 2017, 188-189)

Sileika's cultural literacy in Lithuanian culture enables him to understand the vice-president's need to give a history lecture to the press, but his Canadian cultural literacy gives him the foreknowledge to know that the speech will need to be short. Sileika manages to negotiate both cultures and the press conference goes off smoothly. However, Lithuania's long history remains simmering under the surface.

7.14. Cultural Camouflage and Cultural Memory

Sileika describes a conversation with his mother when as an adolescent he was on the verge of falling in with what the older DPs would have considered a "bad crowd." This "bad crowd" consisted of hippies and hippy wanna-be's hanging out on Toronto's Yonge Street. Sileika comments, "Our parents, twenty-five years in-country but still immigrants at heart. To them, even sunglasses were seditious. Who knew what pupils were dilated behind the darkened glass?" (Sileika 2017, 28) His mother and father decide to remedy the situation by forcing him to join the Lithuanian folkdance ensemble. This strategy would keep the restless teenager busy with rehearsals and ensure that he spent his evenings and weekends with other Lithuanian youth who had also been inoculated against Canadian culture. As the mother and son talk evolves, Sileika notes his mother's appearance as opposed to his father's. One has learned to adapt to Canadian culture on the exterior, while the other has not adapted either on the exterior or interior.

> "I'm worried about you," my mother said. She was dressed in a green pant suit, pretty fancy for a Saturday

> with no company. To look at her, you'd almost think she was a real Canadian. (Unlike my father, who might as well have had the letter "I" for "Immigrant" stamped on his forehead.) She *looked* modern, she even listened to Herb Alpert, but she still *thought* like all the other immigrant mothers down at the parish hall. After twenty-five years in the country, she had learned about camouflage. (Sileika 2017, 25-26)

Later, as a performer in the dance troupe, Sileika observes his dance partner Irene dressing up in her Lithuanian national costume before a dance performance. He notes that she too is wearing cultural camouflage. Although he thinks Irene is pretty, he finds her national costume incongruent with her Canadian persona.

> … But who was I to make fun of her costume? I can't say that I was at the cutting edge of fashion with my baggy linen pants, Tom Jones shirt, and long sash. At least I didn't have to wear a headpiece.
>
> "I asked you how I looked," Irene said.
>
> "And I told you."
>
> "But you didn't even really look."
>
> "What's to see between the headpiece and weirdly patterned clothes all over your body? You look like a happy peasant."
>
> "That's just my costume."
>
> (Sileika 2017, 27-28)

The shaping of second-generation young adults to look like "happy peasants" can be interpreted as formative and normative according to Assmann:

> The binding character of the knowledge preserved in cultural memory has two aspects: the *formative* one in its educative, civilizing, and humanizing functions, and the *normative* one in its functions of providing rules of conduct. (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 131)

Sileika's mother seeks to "civilize" her son, who is wandering off to Yonge Street and hanging out with hippies in the sixties by reintegrating him into the Lithuanian diaspora's collective cultural narrative. According to the culture of the diaspora, the dance group is "educative" and "provides rules of

conduct." The "humanizing functions" are spending time in close contact with other young adults, like Irene, who belong to the same cultural memory group.

However, in these two scenes, at least on the surface, the generations appear to have switched places. The DP mother is "camouflaging" herself as a Canadian, so that she may work and be a part of her Canadian community while maintaining her immigrant mind. The DP daughter is "camouflaging" herself as a Lithuanian while taking a drag on a cigarette and retaining a Canadian mentality. Again, the exterior clothing denotes "Lithuanianess" while the interior mentality remains Canadian. This cultural collision comes to a head when Irene talks Sileika into joining a polka dance contest with her to win some tempting prizes. He ditches the contest just as they are about to win when he sees an attractive American girl, who he had been flirting with a few weeks back on Yonge Street. Before boarding the ferry back to Toronto, Irene hands Sileika his street clothing and tells him she would have "rewarded him" with sex for entering the dance contest with her, but that he had lost his chance. However, even with this temptation, the allure of the free hippy American girl from Yonge Street is simply too great. For the young Sileika, there is no contest between pure Canadian and fabricated Lithuanian. Assmann describes cultural memory as existing in two modes:

> Cultural memory exists in two modes: first in the mode of potentiality of the archive whose accumulated texts, images, and rules of conduct act as a total horizon, and second in the mode of actuality whereby each contemporary context puts the objectivized meaning into its own perspective, giving it its own relevance. (Assmann, Czaplicka 1995, 131)

By passing on their own wartime and postwar trauma, along with the secondary trauma of knowledge of their family members and countrymen and women being deported to Siberia and killed in the anti-Soviet armed resistance, The DPs, who formed the Lithuanian diaspora communities in North America, created a postmemory community within the ethnic Lithuanian diaspora. This community of cultural trauma existed alongside, but at the same time outside, everyday North American life.

Sileika's ironic observation that his DP mother had learned how to "camouflage" her immigrant thinking through dressing as a contemporary Canadian reflects lessons garnered about motherhood in the DP camps documented in *The Lithuanian Woman:*

> But even in the D.P. camps, as soon as the war ended, the Lithuanian women were found regrouping themselves into committees, reviving some of their old organizations and creating new ones. For five hard years (1945-1949), alongside her struggle for her very physical survival, the Lithuanian woman managed to devote some of her time and energy for cultural matters. She helped to found schools, organize educational courses, and work with the youth through scouts and otherwise. (Novickis 1969, 63)

Sileika's mother knows the solution for her Canadian-born son's restless wanderings: She forces him to join the Lithuanian dance ensemble. Sileika dutifully learns the steps and begins to enjoy the shared cultural memory experience and company of the group, or society. He admits another added benefit: "For a repressed teenager without a girlfriend, I got all the handholding and waist hugging I wanted" (Sileika 2017, 29). When his father sees him practicing the waltz step, he comments: "Look, Mother, … somebody finally taught the boy the meaning of fun" (Sileika 2017, 28). Sileika thinks to himself: "More likely the meaning of fear. The only person I feared more than my father was Mrs. Aldona" (Sileika 2017, 28). Sileika describes a pep talk given by his Lithuanian folk ensemble's director, Mrs. Aldona, meant to instill pride and a sense of dignity in the second-generation Canadian-born Lithuanian youth before an important Lithuanian folkdance performance:

> "Listen up," she said after she had formed us into a half circle. "We're going onstage after the Ukrainians." Mrs. Aldona paused after the word "Ukrainians" to let its meaning sink in. She paced a bit with her hands behind her back. "The Ukrainians are a tough act to follow. Maybe the toughest. With all that fancy boot slapping and Cossack foot kicking, the crowds love them and, on the surface, it's easy to see why. (Sileika 2017, 29)

This pep talk offers an opportunity for the first-generation Mrs. Aldona to instill the values of Lithuanian cultural memory into the Canadian-born second-generation teenagers. She continues her talk:

> But all they have is spectacle. You understand? The Ukrainians are not better than Las Vegas. Our dances are

> quiet, sure, but we have dignity and serenity. People sense that. They respect that. But you have to know how to *project* dignity. Irene, if I ever see you smoking in costume again, you'll get a one-month suspension and a call to your parents. Now go out there and project dignity and serenity or I'll have you practicing all summer long." (Sileika 2017, 29)

This dance performance pep talk about "projecting serenity and dignity" places a heavy burden on the second-generation Canadian-born teenage dancers. They are expected to carry the cultural trauma of the first generation without having themselves experienced the historical events that led to that trauma, and to pull it off with a sense of dignity in suffering, an aura of innocent victimhood, and to emulate it so well as to create a moving performance for a Canadian audience outside of the diaspora group's cultural memory.

Such a request may induce cognitive dissonance. In the Lithuanian diaspora community anxieties were soothed with addictions, like smoking and drinking. The interjection of the reprimand directed at Irene for smoking while donning the Lithuanian national costume reinforces yet one more layer of cultural expectations specifically intended for Lithuanian women. The lovely, modest, virginal Lithuanian woman in national costume did not engage in behavior as vulgar as smoking. The importance of veneer is stressed twice in one pep talk. Although Sileika's mother dresses in Canadian "camouflage," she retains her Lithuanian Old World values. Meanwhile, Irena is dressed in the "camouflage" of the Old World, but retains bad Canadian habits, like smoking.

7.15. Cultural Memory and History

In his essay, "European Homelands of the Imagination" Sileika describes how in his youth he seeks the Lithuanian history lesson that he was missing in Canada:

> My search for the homeland went into the university library where I spent many days and nights when I was a student and the place where I wandered the stacks of the European history section, searching at first for the word "Lithuania" in the indexes of European history books. Often I did not find the word and even when I did, the entries were always brief and sometimes dismissive,

> as in a leftist history which referred to interwar Lithuania as worthy of a "comic opera." Disturbed and wounded, I would return to a carrel where I was studying English literature and might be writing a paper on Ernest Hemingway or William Faulkner. (Sileika 2019, 7)

The sense of a lost history, of a history too unimportant against the backdrop of larger nations to have significance, is present in *White Field, Black Sheep* as well. The nagging sense of two realities is one that Markelis absorbs from her childhood as well and is expressed through maps:

> Depending on the politics of the mapmaker, Lithuania was either on the map, its borders penciled in with dashes, lines less certain that those that outlined France or Turkey, with the word *Lithuania* squeezed in (or sometimes, oh so wonderfully, *Lietuva*, the Lithuanian spelling), or it was missing, absent, obliterated by a large pink smear of color—the U.S.S.R. (Markelis 2010, 35)

Both memoirs continually raise the question: what is my homeland? In his essay, Sileika concludes that he belongs to two homelands:

> My one homeland of the imagination, the English one, was full of bravado and empire. My other one, my Lithuanian potential one, was full of melancholy. These homelands were like two angels on my shoulders, or to be Freudian, my English homeland was my childish superego, and my Lithuanian homeland was my id. (Sileika 2019, 5)

Both Sileika and Markelis are taught a version of a cultural postmemory of Lithuania by their DP parents and diaspora societies. These teachings are reinforced by diaspora organizations, such as the folkdance ensembles, Lithuanian choirs, Saturday schools, scouts, summer camps, etc., and also by Lithuanian publications, like *The Lithuanian Woman*, and others. However, both writers move beyond the imaginary constructed cultural memory, and postmemory, of the prewar independent Lithuania their parents experienced, and the Soviet occupation they fled, to construct their own mental concept of homeland. Sileika reconciles himself with his two homelands: one the superego, the other the id. Markelis's memoir concludes with her mother passing away. Markelis wonders where her mother's soul will travel after

death, but "the house in Marijampolė is no longer there, replaced by a concrete apartment complex built under the Soviets" (Markelis, 2010, 205). She then considers that her mother's soul might travel to the Baltic Sea, "but the water is polluted. *Russian industry*, claims my mother's soul" (Markelis, 2010, 205). The "Russian industry" and the Russian-built concrete apartment complex have usurped the memory of her mother's Lithuania just like the tacky lips on the Cicero skyline replaced the idealized image of a Lithuanian home that Markelis's mother tried to instill in her as a child. Finally, metaphorically, Markelis makes peace with the permanence of her family's migration to Chicago when she imagines that her mother's soul "flies back west to Charleston, Illinois, to the giant oak tree in the backyard of our house" (Markelis, 2010, 205). The oak tree is a Lithuanian symbol, but it grows in the ground of Charleston, Illinois. This conclusion shows how Lithuanian symbols absorb her mother's soul, her legacy, Markelis's heritage, but remain on American ground.

7.16. Searching for Home and Never Finding Home

White Field, Black Sheep and *The Barefoot Bingo Caller* reflect cultural memory constructed out of cultural trauma experienced by the first generation, the war refugees from prewar independent Lithuania, as experienced in the two most populous North American Lithuanian diasporas of Chicago and Toronto. The three main components of cultural memory – memory, culture, society – are used to instill societal cohesion in Lithuanian-émigré culture second and third generation descendants. Both writers describe in their memoirs similar cultural memory experiences – a romanticized nineteenth- and twentieth-century Lithuanian history, the omission of the German occupation (and the collaboration of Lithuanian perpetrators) from the historical narrative while placing emphasis on cultural trauma events, such as Soviet atrocities. They stress acculturation into the group, or society, through the cultural memory rituals of Lithuanian diaspora organizations, such as the folk-dance ensembles, Saturday School, scouts, etc. Both memoirists use humor, an ironic tone, and at times a voice ripe with sarcasm to highlight cognitive dissonance between collective Lithuanian cultural memory or postmemory and the culture of mainstream American or Canadian society. Both memoirists note how the culture of the Litvaks, their presence in Lithuanian history and culture, and the destruction of Jewish heritage and culture by the Holocaust in Lithuania, is omitted from the cultural memory of

the Lithuanian diaspora during the Cold War era and early years of the reinstatement of Lithuania's independence.

Ultimately, both memoirists negotiate a balance between their North American lives, professions, families and relationships and the cultural memory constructs of the Lithuanian émigré diaspora. Both writers make rite of return journeys to post-Soviet independent Lithuania. Both honor the memory of Lithuanian Jews, write frankly about the Holocaust in Lithuania, and mourn their loss.

These memoirs reveal that Lithuanian-American and Lithuanian-Canadian diaspora communities remained cohesive in the second half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, as a culture and society with a shared collective memory that was based on shared experiences of cultural trauma. However, the memoirs also show that shared cultural trauma and cultural memory lead to expressions of post-traumatic growth both for individuals within those communities and for the cultural memory community as a whole. The formative educative experience of Lithuanian dance festivals, Saturday Schools, clubs, scouts, etc., may be viewed as expressions of post-traumatic growth because they honored postmemory cultural trauma narratives and create a cohesive community. The retention of a cultural memory narrative of an independent Lithuania created hope for the future during the Cold War years.

Expressions of cultural memory in the diaspora community also enabled the educative formative experiences that produced a second and third generation culturally literate in both Lithuanian and North American culture. Members of the Lithuanian diaspora community, as Sileika records for posterity in his chapter "The Church Basement versus the Kremlin," were thus able to take an active positive role in the Lithuanian independence movement as cultural translators, serving as volunteer journalists, translators, public relations experts for *Sąjūdis*. The memoir also shows that in the decades since independence members of the Lithuanian diaspora have volunteered their educational and professional expertise, time and resources, to help rebuild Lithuania and to advocate for Lithuania in the West.

8. POSTMEMORY AS HISTORICAL RECKONING: COMPLICITY IN THE HOLOCAUST IN LITHUANIA: RITA GABIS: *A GUEST AT THE SHOOTERS' BANQUET* AND JULIJA ŠUKYS: *SIBERIAN EXILE: BLOOD, WAR, AND A GRANDDAUGHTER'S RECKONING*

8.1. Haunt Memory

The memoirs *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet: My Grandfather's SS Past* by Rita Gabis and *Siberian Exile: Blood, War, and a Granddaughter's Reckoning* by Julija Šukys transform informal family knowledge and haunt memory through archival research, interviews, and rite of return travel into postmemory narratives that seek to work through the inter-generational transfer of historical and cultural trauma. These memoirs may be regarded as a memory space for unhealed historical, cultural, familial, and individual trauma. No easy conclusions are drawn at the conclusion of either memoir.

Gabis and Šukys grew up in North America during the Cold War years at a time when the Iron Curtain prevented the exchange of information between the Eastern bloc and the West. In those years, family stories often took the place of an inaccessible history. These two North American writers initially encounter Lithuania's historical trauma through family narratives and cultural memory narratives in the Lithuanian diaspora community. For both writers the revelation of an unexpected family secret leads to seeking answers denied to them because of family silence. Both writers travel to newly independent Lithuania seeking answers about their family narratives.

Gabis and Šukys address sensitive emotionally difficult topics, family secrets, and reflect on moral accountability for the actions of their perpetrator grandfathers, who they learn had collaborated during the German occupation of Lithuania by serving in the Lithuanian police. Both write about the loss of their parents whose mothers were exiled to Siberia in 1941 during the first Stalin-era deportations in Lithuania.

Both writers narrate in their memoirs how the family secret that their grandfathers were perpetrators, and that their grandmothers were exiled to Siberia and served a hard labor sentence for their husbands' crimes, were shrouded in silence and half-truths. They write about how the silence around these family secrets adversely affected them in their formative years.

Over a period of five years, Gabis travels to Lithuania, Poland, and Israel to conduct research, visit memorial and murder sites, and to interview survivors and witnesses. Šukys travels to Lithuania and Siberia. Such work

takes a tremendous amount of courage and moral strength. Both writers construct a memorial space to the Jewish victims of their grandparents' war crimes and to their own family trauma through the act of writing and remembrance. In *Siberian Exile,* Šukys provides no easy justification for her grandfather's complicity as a member of the Lithuanian police, claiming his role as that of a perpetrator in the Holocaust in Lithuania. Gabis finds no easy justification for her grandfather's wartime role either.

Memory does not concern itself with memory for its own sake alone, but for the sake of the collective. Invoking Felman's work in *Testimony,* these two memoirs raise the questions: how is the invisible emotional and psychological shadow of a grandfather's complicity in war crimes passed on to his descendants? How is the haunt knowledge of an innocent grandmother's suffering as punishment intuitively experienced by a granddaughter? Šukys reflects on what it would be like to live free of the diaspora's past:

> Not everyone lives this way, so tethered to the past. What would a life untethered look like, I wonder, a life in which the only place I am from is the place I happen to be? Would it be a better way to live? Less painful? Is it even possible to make such a choice? (Šukys, 2017, 163)

When writing about Lithuanian historical events of the twentieth century, like the deportations to Siberia or the postwar armed resistance against the Soviet Union, Lithuanian-American and Lithuanian-Canadian writers are not writing from a place of lived experience, but from historical memory, affiliative postmemory and/or familial postmemory. However, the pain of those inherited memories is very real and is always present.

8.2. Truth and Recovery and Silence

Herman writes about Holocaust victims: "When the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery" (Herman, 1992, 1). In these memoirs, two third-generation postmemory writers, the granddaughters of perpetrators, apply Herman's concept of recognizing the truth to their own process of recovery. Šukys and Gabis heed Caruth's "voice that is not ours" that "cries out from our wounds." Both reflect on the perspective of their grandfather's victims. Šukys reflects:

> What justification exists for gunning down children in forests? For killing their mothers as the children watch? For stealing fathers, grandfathers and brothers and then taking them to their deaths? What credible defense can be offered for taking the life of an elderly doctor? Of an adolescent girl?
>
> The only possible answer is none. None at all.
>
> (Šukys, 2017, 60-61)

As the fact settle, Šukys conducts an examination of conscience: "Am I guilt too in some way, either genetically or by inheritance?" She asks herself. "I don't think so," she concludes. (Šukys, 2017, 60-61) Then she takes her internal monologue a step further:

> Do I have a responsibility to the dead: to Dr. Grossman, to Mira Rosenfeld, to my grandmother Ona?
>
> Yes, I believe so. (Šukys, 2017, 60-61)

The Holocaust in Lithuania, or even the knowledge that there had been a rich and vast Jewish community in prewar Lithuania that dated back to the sixteenth century, was never mentioned in diaspora Lithuanian schools or in the context of cultural memory. In her memoir of the Chicago Lithuanian diaspora, *Black Sheep, White Field*, in the chapter "An Alphabet of Silence" Markelis describes a visit to the Jewish Museum in Vilnius after the reinstatement of independence, where she is shocked to learn for the first time that Lithuania had a rich Jewish heritage before the Holocaust.

Markelis's discovery that an entire segment of Lithuania's population and an important aspect of Lithuanian culture had been erased from the Lithuanian cultural context in the diaspora is echoed in Šukys's memoir:

> For the Lithuanian history I learned in Saturday language school never mentioned these events, for perhaps obvious reasons. To talk about the mass killings of Jews, once must also address mass passivity and collaboration during the Nazi occupation. For a community that defines itself first and foremost as a victim of illegal and repressive Soviet occupation, this is, to say the least, uncomfortable. It's also not the kind of story that any community wants to tell its children about their grandparents' generation. (Šukys, 2017, 45)

Markelis and Šukys grew up separated by five hundred miles (835 kilometers). Markelis was born in the fifties and Šukys in the seventies. Despite the distance of age and kilometers, both experienced historical omission and silence in their respective Lithuanian diaspora communities. Through their writing they protest the diaspora's Cold War "culture of silence" surrounding Lithuania's Jews. They attempt a "future-oriented integration of the past" that opens the space for discussion among members of that community and its descendants.

Gabriele Schwab writes in the introduction to her collection of essays, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*[165] that "[w]riting about one's own involvement in and transferential relationship to a history of genocide—even if it is from the distance of a second generation—complicates the processes of mourning that accompany such writing" (Schwab, 2010, 11). Schwab, born in Germany just after World War II, argues that the "infamous silencing of the Holocaust in Postwar Germany" (Schwab, 2010, 11) was not a silence devoid of facts. German high school students were taught the facts about the Holocaust, and yet, Schwab writes, "I would later realize, the silence had not been broken. Silencing in Germany at that time was not a withholding of facts; it was caused by the absence of any kind of emotional engagement at both the personal and collective levels" (Schwab, 2010, 11). This engagement with the facts devoid of emotion fails to teach empathy; however, in the Lithuanian diaspora experience, the second and third generations were not even privy to the facts.

Schwab argues that "to break this kind of silence, Santner, LaCapra, and others insist, mourning is crucial to avoid both the distancing effects of a positivist historicism and the illusory psychic mastery gained by narrative fetishism" (Schwab, 2010, 11). The two memoirs by Gabis and Šukys are an attempt to break this silence and take moral responsibility for Lithuanian involvement in the Holocaust in Lithuania. According to Schwab, their writing constructs a memorial space of mourning:

> And while there seems to be something almost obscene in discourses that look at the effects of the war and the Holocaust on Germans in terms of trauma, ignoring that we are dealing with a defensive traumatic silence is itself a defensive posture. Remaining frozen in guilt not only sustains a culture of silence but also

[165] Schwab, Gabriele, 2010: *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, New York: Columbia University Press.

> induces defenses that prevent working through the past. Understood in this way, mourning is not a melancholic attachment to injury but, on the contrary, prepares the ground for a future-oriented integration of the past. (Schwab, 2010, 13)

Nouri Gama, in her essay "Trauma Ties: Chiasmus and Community in Lebanese Civil War Literature,"[166] raises the concept that in an epoch of mass murder and genocide, the written word serves the purpose of a memorial to all those who have been silenced through violence.

> Because of the increasing institutionalization of warfare and the decline of community wide mourning practices, the literary (indeed, the aesthetic writ large) has become the most hospitable public space where the performance of memory and mourning takes place. Not surprisingly, if depressingly ironic, entire literary traditions have been facilitated by violence and warfare. This has, obviously, been the case with a good number of modernist (Gama, 2014, 78)

Šukys and Gabis's memoirs become literary memorials to the deceased victims, Lithuania's Jews. The memoirs also bear witness to the traumatic wounding that takes place in the psyches of the descendants of those who were complicit.

In a presentation at the Westport Library filmed for CSpan, Gabis notes: "My parents' generation could be marked by the phrase: 'We didn't talk about it.'" Gabis notes many instances of silence in her family narrative in her memoir, and she sets out to break that silence. Šukys also describes the power of silence in her family:

> Silence organized our family. There was always, for example, a great hush surrounding the years between 1941, the year Ona was deported to Siberia, and 1944, when her husband, Anthony, and their three children fled

[166] Gama, Nori, 2014, "Trauma Ties: Chiasmus and Community in Lebanese Civil War Literature", *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism.* Eds. Bueler, Gert, Durrant, Sam, Eaglestone, Robert, London and New York: Routledge.

> westward. These years demarcate the Nazi occupation of Lithuania. Anyone telling us children the story of our family history inevitably jumped from Ona's arrest and deportation in 1941 straight to her children's dramatic departure from Lithuania with their father three years later, in 1944. I was almost an adult before I realized that the second event hadn't followed immediately on the heels of the first. Indeed, so total was the silence surrounding the German occupation, and not only in our family, that I was fifteen before I realized that the Holocaust had anything to do with Lithuania. (Šukys, 2012, 32)

Ultimately, through their research and writing, both memoirists break the silence around the secrets regarding their grandfathers' war crimes, the silence around the true nature of their martyred grandmothers' suffering, and the silence of their own conscience.

8.3. Expressions of Survivor's Guilt and Inherited Guilt

Herman writes in her introduction to *Trauma and Recovery*: "But far too often secrecy prevails, and the story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as a symptom" (Herman, 1992, 1). Gabriele Rosenthal writes in her article "Social transformation in the context of familial experience: biographical consequences of a denied past in the Soviet Union" about the inter-generational trauma caused by secrets within the bound family system. Her conclusions are based on oral histories recorded in Germany and in Russia, in which family members narrate their experiences of family secrets revealed after the reunification of the former DDR with West Germany and after the collapse of the Soviet Union:

> By studying the history of action in individual cases, contextualized in the histories of the family, the collective, and the society, we are able to reconstruct the individual's genesis and, furthermore, to distinguish manifest self-interpretations from latent structures of meaning. (Rosenthal, 2000, 115)

She postulates that atrocities committed by the National Socialists in Germany continue to "have considerable influence on descendants"

(Rosenthal, 2000, 119). Rosenthal's work interpreting oral histories of family systems affected by secrets leads her to draw the following conclusion:

> Our empirical analyses demonstrate the extent which the biographies of the descendants were affected by pasts which had been denied, and which may continue to be kept apart and not worked through. … More than fifty years after the war we might suppose that the long-term psychological effects of that era would slowly begin to disappear. The contrary is true: the impact of a burdening and threatening past makes itself increasingly felt, and grandchildren suffer even more overtly under their grandparents' past than their parents did. (Rosenthal, 2000, 119)

As Šukys and her cousin return on a flight from their rite of return journey to their grandmother's place of exile in Siberia, they reflect on "the sadness and misfortune that have visited us with a terrible frequency" (Šukys, 2017, 149). They conclude that there is a link between the suffering of their grandparents who were ensnared in Lithuania's twentieth century cultural and historical trauma with the early deaths of their parents: "Both my father and his mother, Ona's two younger children, died suddenly and unexpectedly—he of a heart attack when I was eighteen and she six years later of a cancer that killed her in a matter of weeks" (Šukys, 2017, 149). Could the early deaths of Šukys's father and aunt have been a symptom of the secrecy surrounding their parents' trauma narrative in Herman's terms? She writes: "The psychological distress symptoms of traumatized people simultaneously call attention to the existence of an unspeakable secret and deflect attention from it" (Herman, 1992, 1). Šukys reflects on how the family narrative and secrets she grew up with are similar to those of many Lithuanian families in the diaspora:

> Every family tells its children the story of who it is. Our story was of a proud people forced from their homeland when the soldiers came. They took my father's mother and shipped her east of the Ural Mountains, alone. They took her by mistake. It was all a mistake, or so the story went. Her husband, Anthony, had been the target. But he had escaped, to the safety of the West, by luck and through cunning with his children. (Šukys, 2017, 5)

However, for Šukys it was not enough to hear the family story. She had to memorize it and to pass it on.

> Our job, as kids, was to learn this story and remember it. To master our grandparents' language so that, one day, we might return home from exile. The first problem in taking on this latter task was that we had never seen this home to which we were to repatriate. The second was that the story we'd been told wasn't strictly true. Important pieces of it, the complicated bits that made it hard to narrate, had fallen away. (Šukys, 2017, 5)

Initially inspired by the tone of heroism and victimhood surrounding her grandparents' story, Šukys set out to write a memoir about her grandmother that would narrate her trauma story for the uninitiated reader. The hero of this postmemory narrative, Ona Šukienė, was separated from her husband and three children and spent 17 years alone in exile in Siberia (deportations in 1941). Šukys's grandfather, Anthony (Antanas in Lithuanian), flees Soviet-occupied Lithuania in 1944 and settles in Canada by way of Bradford, England and bravely raises their three children alone.

However, after beginning her research, Šukys admits: "I now see that I was naïve in embarking on a project that flirted dangerously with hagiography" (Šukys, 2017, 6). A friend suggests she request her family's KGB file from the Special Archives of Lithuania. While reading through the files, Šukys is shocked to learn that her grandfather collaborated with Nazi occupying forces during the 1941–1944 German occupation of Lithuania by serving as a security police officer in the Lithuanian-German border town of Naujamiestis (translated as "Newtown" in the memoir). This was the reason why her grandmother Ona could not return from exile in Siberia for seventeen years. It was also the reason why it took years to reunite her with her children in Canada once she was released to Lithuania.

Šukys admits: "I never dreamed how such a query would change not only the book I was writing but also the understanding of who my family was, who *I* was. I didn't know how fundamentally it would alter my relationship to the past" (Šukys, 2017, 13). Through the act of writing *Siberian Memoir* Šukys moves beyond the mythologized family narrative she inherited and gains a deeper understanding of her actual family narrative within the context of Lithuania's twentieth century historical and cultural trauma.

Rosenthal argues that "salient events in the family history which burden the family system and individual family members – even those which occurred before an individual's birth – can have a stronger impact on the current family

dynamics and the biographies of individual descendants than the fact of being socialized in different social systems"[167] (Rosenthall, 2000, 118). Šukys experiences a crisis of identity and her research only raises more questions than answers in the concluding chapter:

> For forty years, it seems, I have overvalued my origins. All my life, I have put so much stock in where I "came from" that when it turned out that the past looked different from what I'd imagined, a crisis of identity resulted. Who am I now that I've rewritten my family's history? (Šukys, 2017, 163)

Šukys works through these emotions, feeling burdened and confused by her family history. However, the process of writing *Siberian Memoir* and sharing her family secret with an audience of readers enables Šukys to move beyond the mythologized family narrative she inherited and gain a deeper understanding of her actual family narrative within the context of Lithuania's twentieth century historical and cultural trauma narrative.

Gabis was in her forties when she began raising questions about her family background; although she admits in her memoir that she always sensed the presence of secrets in the family. She recalls the moment when her initial curiosity about her family history began: "My conversation with my mother grew out of a desire to uncover—what, I didn't know. I couldn't name it yet or understand it, but I had begun the kind of amateur genealogical quests I'd always disdained, focused first on the Jewish side of my family, then quickly encompassing the Lithuanian side as well" (Gabis, 2015, 11). When she asks what her grandfather did during World War II, her mother answers, "he was a police chief" (Gabis, 2015, 15). When prompted, reluctantly Gabis's mother admits he was a police chief under the SS.

Her mother's admission leads to Gabis embarking on several rite of return journeys back to the Lithuanian homeland of her displaced person (DP) mother to research her grandfather's role as Chief of the Lithuanian Security Police during the German occupation in the Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian

[167] Rosenthal writes that "although we must restrict these findings to family histories that had traumatizing effects on the descendants, it seems safe to say that—in view of the course history has taken in our century—the same might be true of the majority of families both in Germany and in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, or in Europe in general." Rosenthal's research is based on oral histories collected in Germany and Russia; however, arguably the conclusions she draws from her research in those regions may be applied to Lithuania.

region of Švenčionys, a historically disputed area that all three nationalities laid claim to, but which was ceded back to Lithuania from Poland by the Soviets in 1940. Gabis discovers that her grandfather was responsible for ordering the murders of the Jewish people of the region. She also learns that in retaliation for a Red Partisan attack on a German officer that was blamed on the Polish resistance, Gabis's grandfather, Pranas Purlonis, ordered 500 innocent Poles arrested and executed.

Gabis's family maintains a careful polite distance between her Jewish father's and Lithuanian mother's families. Visits with her Lithuanian aunts, uncle, and the beloved *Senelis*, her grandfather, are infrequent. Because of their infrequency, these visits are dearly treasured in the author's memory. Gabis describes a visit to her DP grandfather and great aunt's humble house in Jamesburg, New Jersey. Her grandfather takes her to the local bakery, proudly introduces her as his granddaughter to the cashier, and directs her to pick out some pastries.

> I choose the flaky sweet pastry called "butterfly," but before the woman behind the counter can reach into the glass case and retrieve it, Senelis says, "More, choose more." I ask him how much more. He sweeps his arm across the small room. "Anyting," he says. (Gabis, 2015, 6-7)

Later that day, Gabis experiences guilt when she hears her grandfather and his sister arguing over the money spent at the bakery.

> But along with the certainty that my greed was at the root of the bickering I'd overheard, another thought came to me: my grandfather, who counted out the bills without any hesitation in the sugary air, was not rich, was not what he pretended to be. (Gabis, 2015, 6-7)

This scene reveals Gabis's childhood intuition that hidden behind the façade of her grandfather's magnanimity as a poor refugee pretending to be rich – essentially a victim narrative – lies a deeper secret. That secret is hidden behind the family narrative that had been passed down to her. The shift in the narrator's perception of her grandfather from victim to perpetrator is jarring as it unfolds slowly in the memoir.

Gabis's initial research to learn more about Pranas Purlonis' position as chief of police during the German occupation in Švenčionys leads to dead ends, and she is plagued with haunt memory, and her own postmemory

imaginings that serve to recreate scenes that would give her some answers. Not having concrete knowledge of her grandfather's war crimes until nearly the conclusion of the memoir, the poet narrator often lapses into sessions of imagining what her grandfather might have been thinking or doing during those years he was chief of police in Švenčionys:

> Was Senelis home the first night the bleeding woman spent in a barrack—his boots off, exhausted, asleep like a sack in his own room? Or was he in the outer glow of one of the bonfires? Was he at the Kasino—a late-night card game before the long duty ahead? Did he miss his wife? Did his mind wander from the thousands of prisoners a handful of kilometers up the road to a lover he'd taken, a promise he'd made, a grudge he was nursing? (Gabis, 2015, 183-184)

Hirsch and Miller comment on the inclination for the imagination to fill in the gaps of information that the first generation either chooses to withhold or is unable to divulge:

> While the idea of postmemory can account for the lure of second generation "return," it also underscores the radical distance that separates the past from the present and the risks of projection, appropriation, and over identification occasioned by second-and-third-generation desires and needs. (Hirsch, Miller, 2012,4-5)

Gabis is consumed with filling in gaps until ultimately enough research is uncovered to give a clearer understanding of her grandfather's choices.

> The appeals court that sentenced Jonas Maciulevičius to death based their sentence, to a large degree, on the application and interpretation of the new Nuremberg Laws concerning perpetrators of genocide. The court included my grandfather as one of these perpetrators, along with Maciulevičius, and also made a case against the Saugumas as a whole, for the substantive role its members played as deadly agents for the Reich's agenda. Wherever my grandfather went, it had to be somewhere out of reach of the Soviets, who were already looking for him in what was now a Lithuania under Soviet domination, handed over on a platter via the Yalta agreement. (Gabis, 2015, 382-383)

She hopes against hope that her research will prove her grandfather innocent and that the family lore that he had actually rescued Jews during the German occupation is true. Gabis is tormented with thoughts of what her grandfather did and did not do:

> The October of Poligon—my grandfather; he hadn't helped Mirele Rein, but according to my mother and her sister had let dozens of others out of the Švenčionys jail in 1943. Was it true? A lie? I had pieces, mentions, hints, and contradictions. At one point my mother called and said to me, "I don't care what the truth is; it all hurts." (Gabis, 2015, 199)

Eventually, however, she must face the truth. All of these phases of truth-seeking, denial, and imaging can be found in Rosenthal's research. She reports: "Children and grandchildren often unconsciously suffer from extremely detailed fantasies related to the undisclosed family history or family secrets" (Rosenthall, 2000, 120). She further points out that "subsequent generations suspect hidden parts of the past, and they act out the family past in their biographies" (Rosenthall, 2000, 120). Gabis's grandfather was an anti-Semite; however, his daughter married a Jewish man. His granddaughter embraced Judaism and identified with her Jewish family. The love-hate cycle between ethnic Lithuanians and Jews plays out in the family dynamic over the generations while the perpetrator grandfather's role in the incarceration and murder of innocent Lithuanian Jews remains a family secret.

8.4. Postmemory Memories of Lithuania

In her memoir, Gabis reflects on her perceptions about Lithuania:

> One truth about Lithuania is that, as a country, it is indistinguishable from the invaders, collaborators, ghosts, heroines, thieves, defenders, and healers it contains. It's the raped women and the father and the child. It's those who know nothing about what went on behind closed doors and those who stood by and watched, those who shrugged and walked away. Those who hid strangers, who carried messages, who didn't betray the hunted. It's the hunted themselves. (Gabis, 2015, 8)

Gabis's "one truth about Lithuania" involves several roles – that of the victim, the survivor, the perpetrator, the collaborator. However, this "truth about Lithuania" does not bear much resemblance to the Lithuania of the twenty-first century, a modern democratic country that is a member of the European Union and NATO. People living in today's Lithuania would rarely find themselves in any of the wartime roles that Gabis elaborates. This passage reflects the paradox of postmemory: a haunt memory of a historical trauma experience from eighty years ago takes precedence over the present in the writers' narrative journey. It is as though the writer, on her research trip to Lithuania, saw the postmemory Lithuania that her mother and grandparents had passed on to her through their stories.

> It's a prism. It belongs to anybody who wants it. It even belongs to people like me, who for many years hated to pronounce its name. Not because I had any special empirical knowledge of Lithuania. I had the lullabies my mother sang to me so I'd sleep and the stories she told me that kept me from sleep—the ones abut war, the ones about the potatoes that made her fat in the displaced persons camp.

She writes about memories associated with her mother that formed her perception of Lithuania:

> As a small child, I was well aware that my mother had lost her own mother to war. This deficit, this wound, was always present, even when it was not spoken about directly. "Vat do you vant from me?" she'd say. (I wanted her to talk like other mothers I knew). When she was angry, she became more explicit. "I had nu-ting!" she'd cry out. Meaning, of course, no mother, no grocery shelves stocked with twenty different kinds of cookies, no meat three times a week, no Disney, no childhood. I conflated my mother's anger and sadness, the disappearance of her own mother, the war itself with Lithuania. (Gabis, 2015, 8-9)

The cultural trauma narrative of war and displacement merges with Gabis's mother's experience of individual and familial trauma, most especially losing her mother, a loss that is described as a "wound." When Gabis's mother speaks out in her own voice she speaks in English with a terrible accent, "I had nu-ting!" The transliteration of the accent in this scene,

which rings comically to the native English speaker's ear, "Vat do you vant from me?" further distances the mother from the daughter, rendering her inaccessible, like Lithuania itself.

8.5. Rite of Return Narratives

Both memoirists relive and reimagine their family histories through rite of return journeys in which they seek to come reconstruct a past that had been shifted and altered in its retelling. Gabis's and Šukys's personal quest to uncover the truth about their family narratives and secrets leads them to research archives, interview relatives, and on journeys to Lithuania, Siberia, Israel, Poland. Both memoirists mourn their grandfathers' victims by visiting their burial sites. At the same time, they mourn their own loss of innocence. Through the ritual of writing, they both move towards a future-oriented integration of the past.

Šukys narrates her rite of return journey to Lithuania from the point of view of a member of the third postmemory generation. She returns to her grandparents' and parents' homeland to look for answers about her paternal grandfather's war crimes and the circumstances surrounding her grandmother's deportation. Ultimately, Šukys travels further East to Siberia, to visit her grandmother's site of exile to fully understand her grandmother's story.

This double rite of return project – to Lithuania and to Siberia – echoes Hirsch and Miller's words about how the desire to return is often spurred by an injustice:

> To some extent the desire to return always arises from a need to redress an injustice, one often inflicted upon an entire group of people caused by displacement or dispossession, the loss of home and of family autonomy, the conditions of expulsion, colonization, and migration. (Hirsch, Miller, 2012, 7)

Beyond learning about the injustices of exile but also how her grandmother adapted to life in Siberia, Šukys uncovers yet another familial betrayal. She is shocked to learn from a relative that Ona's arrest and deportation was not a "random stroke of bad luck" (Šukys, 2017, 24) as she had been told by her family, but the result of a miscalculation and poor decision on Anthony's part. The relative tells Šukys that her grandfather had "consciously gone into hiding. They had sent their children to the family farm not simply to get fresh air but for their safety, and Ona was home alone by

design" (Šukys, 2017, 24). The relative explains that "I think she was left behind to protect their belongings. She told me they'd never imagined they'd take a woman alone" (Šukys, 2017, 24). Šukys is shocked how this part of Ona's story had been left out of the family narrative. She weighs the repercussions on their descendants:

> Anthony and Ona, I saw for the first time, had made a colossal and tragic miscalculation. They had decided to put the mother of their children in the apartment and to bet on the humanity of the arresting soldiers. That gamble turned out to be a poor one, and the repercussions of their decisions have reverberated through three generations already. (Šukys, 2012, 24)

Šukys wonders: did Anthony leave Ona behind as a decoy? Or was he really that naïve? We never find out because the family story is glossed over by Ona's forgiveness of her husband's actions. When she is told that the family story does not matter because Ona has forgiven Anthony, Šukys recognizes the refrain from her family narrative that she'd heard her entire life: "When she returned from Siberia, Ona told us that she didn't blame Anthony for anything. He had raised their three children, and he'd protected them. For that she'd always be grateful" (Šukys, 2017, 24). In those places in the narrative where Šukys has no concrete history to work with, her narrative shifts from away from the concrete findings of her research to postmemory imaginings.

Šukys experiences pushback from the collective cultural memory community:

> *The times were complicated*, say my elders.
> *You are too young too understand.*
> *You weren't there. You don't know.*
> Perhaps. (Šukys, 2017, 60-61)

Ultimately, both memoirs seek to give voice to the voiceless.

These musings may be read as the third generation's emotional grappling with the incomprehensible. However, Hirsch and Miller write about how echoes that emanate from a lost history are a unifying component of rite of return memoirs:

> The doubleness of inherited trauma as it is expressed in the act of return haunts memoirs, as does, in fact, the double frame of return itself. For the generation of

> descendants for whom the world of the parents and grandparents is not a world they shared in the same fold of time, going back to the city of origin, however, is a way of coming to grips with the mythic dimensions of a place they would have to apprehend on new terms. The experience of return to an earlier generation's lived places is mediated by story, image, and history. (Hirsch, Miller, 2012, 12)

Šukys's claim that her need arose to write the family narrative for her son reflects Hirsch and Miller's conclusion that "in the literature of return, a painful past can sometimes be reframed through writing" (Hirsch, Miller, 2011, 7). Šukys's intention is to reframe a painful family past into a narrative of hope and resilience for the next generation:

> … A deep desire to tell Ona's story has inhabited me since childhood. Even back then, I had a sense that her tale of injustice and survival was fragile and vulnerable to oblivion. And even though I knew far less about her deportation and exile than I wanted to or perhaps than I should have, I sensed that one day I would sit down and write it. She would whisper her story to me somehow, I was sure of it. This desire to record her life grew to an urgency when I myself became a mother. I wanted to pass her story on to my son, so he too could know where he came from and who he was. So that he could take his place in the string of whispering ancestors. (Šukys, 2017, 5-6)

Although the impetus behind embarking on writing this family story was to pass on the family story to her son, the narrator realizes as she delves into her research that "before I could begin to tell him who he was, I had to rewrite the narrative my family had given me" (Šukys, 2017, 6). She reflects:

> But we know there are no actions without consequences, that no good intentions go unpunished. When I began reconstructing Ona's life, I imagined I was doing, for lack of a better term, a mitzvah for my family. From the wound that had shaped all of our lives so decisively—my grandmother's decades-long Siberian exile—I hoped to make something redemptive. … The universe decided to teach me a lesson by handing me a truth I neither expected nor desired. Perhaps the

> discovery I made about who my grandfather Anthony had really been and how my grandmother had unwittingly paid for his sins is my penance for taking a kind of pride in Ona's victimhood. Maybe it was a warning against claiming an ancestor's pain and survival as my own. (Šukys, 2017, 5-6)

Šukys was not prepared for the revelations researching Ona's story would bring. She learns that her grandfather signed off on the paperwork ordering the deaths of Jews: "Ultimately, the KGB files accuse Anthony not of executing mass killing but of oversight and coordination" (Šukys, 2017, 59). Bubnys claims that "[a]lthough the Final Solution was organized and initiated by the Nazis, it would not have been carried out so quickly and on such a scale without the active support of part of the Lithuanian administration and the local population" (Bubnys, 2008, 51). It is this level of collaboration that both Šukys and Gabis investigate in their memoirs. Their grandfathers were not shooters at the death pits, but rather the men who signed off on the killings.

8.6. Historical Restoration: Giving Voice to the Voiceless

Gabis and Šukys over half a century later give voices to the voiceless Jewish victims of their grandfathers' actions. Šukys investigates the life and circumstances of two Jews who survived the initial mass Newtown shootings, but who were later executed. There is an elderly doctor, Dr. Grossman, and an adolescent girl, Mira Rosenfeld, whom local Lithuanians saved and christened as a Catholic. Both only survived a few years longer than the remainder of the town's murdered Jews. Without concrete documents that would describe Dr. Grossman, Šukys brings him to life through her imagination:

> In my imagination, I hear Dr. Grossman address the citizens gathered before him. He speaks with a lilting Yiddish accent. With no side locks or yarmulke, he would have carried his Jewishness primarily on his tongue. I know he was unmarried; Romas told me so. I wondered as I studied his face if he kept kosher, if he went to synagogue, if he believed in God. (Šukys, 2017, 58)

With her imagined description, the writer restores a humanity to a single faceless victim. As Josef Stalin so cruelly said regarding the millions of Ukrainians who died of starvation in the Holodomor: "One death is a tragedy; a million deaths a statistic."

Gabis travels to Lithuania, to Israel, to the Bronx to interview the survivors of her grandfather's orders, to interview those who lost their parents, siblings, extended families. She dedicates chapters to several survivors: Chaya Palevsky, Illeana Irafeva, Anton Lavrinovich, Yitzak Arad, Lili Holzman, and others. She offers them compassion, empathy. Her American identity begins to slip away as she finds herself inside the story of Lithuania's historical trauma narrative:

> At one moment, in my interview with Lili Holzman, when she was talking about the Lithuanian guards and their hatred of the Jews, she said to me, not in apology but as a statement of fact, "At least half of you is that, part of that country." (Gabis, 2015, 217-218)

Šukys invokes ghosts as well: "I always wanted to believe that these histories connected me to the land of my ancestors. And I have always imagined that my rightful place lay at the end of a long chain of whispering ghosts and spirits" (Šukys, 2017, 5). Both writers make pilgrimages to the killing sites where the victims of their ancestors' violence lay. Šukys describes visiting the killing site in Newtown:

> A few hundred meters down the trail, I spotted a pyramid-shaped and moss-covered cairn. It marked a deep depression ringed by small boulders. Inside the stone perimeter grew ferns, grasses, and tiny evergreens.
>
> Beneath them lay the town's Jewish women and children.
>
> I walked slowly around the site, taking care to photograph it from all angles. I said a prayer. *I'm sorry,* I said. I said it again. And again. The phrase echoed inside me. My breath quickened. These were the killings that Anthony had overseen as police chief. (Šukys, 2017, 51-55)

Šukys conducts her own private ritual of mourning at the killing site. Together with Giedrė Genušienė, who has written about the tragedy of Lithuania's Jews, Gabis visits Poligon and mourns the people who died as an outcome of her grandfather's actions:

> Giedrė used to walk with Blumke Katz, long beautiful walks and walks of vigilance that were part of a territorial claim Katz kept over a place known as the Poligon or Poligony or Poligon or Polygon—a vigil that

> Giedrė keeps now. We agree that we will walk together, in a few days' time, the route Giedrė took with Blumke Katz to Poligon. (Gabis, 2012, 127)

Descriptions of these rituals of mourning serve as a memorial for those who have vanished. By breaking the silence of historical trauma through the process of writing, Gabis and Šukys open up the space for mourning.

8.7. Unanswered Questions

How is the invisible emotional and psychological shadow of a grandfather's complicity in war crimes passed on to his descendants? How is the haunt knowledge of an innocent grandmother's suffering as punishment intuitively experienced by a granddaughter? Both memoirists claim the narratives of their memoirs are inspired by the discovery of a hidden secret in the family. Both memoirs pose personal ethical questions. Both explore the emotional inheritance of a historical and family narrative that claims the role of victim but is later revealed as a perpetrator narrative. However, both writers express at the conclusion of their memoir they feel that their work is not yet complete. The memoirs conclude with unanswered questions and more soul searching. These writers are left, in essence, with the continual work of processing the "sins of the fathers." Both express the hope that their work will lead to a greater understanding that could prevent such crimes against humanity from being repeated. At the same time, moments of doubt arise. Šukys raises the question of whether the first generation's advice to leave the events of the past alone and to move forward is the right emotional path when after months of writing she asks herself "if certain facts are better left undiscovered."

> Would it have been preferable for me to live out my life ignorant of what Anthony is accused of having done in Newtown? (Šukys, 2017, 153-154)

Pranas Purlionis dies a peaceful death, never held accountable for his role in the murder of Lithuanian Jews and Poles in Švenčionys. But his granddaughter carries his guilt. Both writers express experiencing identity crisis. In her closing chapter, Šukys reflects:

> What sort of cruel joke is the universe playing when it turns you into an expert (via researching and writing one dissertation, a translation, and a book) on Lithuanian complicity in the Holocaust, only to reveal that you, yourself, are descended from one of the complicit? What

> is this journey if not a spiritual challenge or ethical quest? What does it mean that instead of bridging the gap to the past, I've now broken from it? Has the quest, I wonder, been a success or failure? (Šukys, 2017, 163)

By the end of the memoir, Gabis no longer searches for exoneration for her grandfather, but accepts that her beloved grandfather was a war criminal who was never brought to justice:

> Though he lied on his naturalization and immigration forms, the lies were not picked up by the U.S. Justice Department. He never had the opportunity to address questions about his wartime life and answer them in a court of law, even an immigration court. (Gabis, 2015, 383)

And yet, Gabis, having discovered answers to many (though not all) of her unanswered questions about her grandfather, still does not feel that her research is complete. When she receives a letter from the FOIA unit of Criminal Divisions of the Justice Department asking whether she was still interested in the materials she had requested on Vincas Valkavicas, a Poligon guard associated with her grandfather, she quickly responded: "Yes, I am interested, yes, I wish." (Gabis, 2015, 392). Gabis's memoir closes with the ambiguity of yet more unanswered questions that weigh on her and with an unfilled wish, one more attempt at closure, which at the same time, she recognizes may never come.

Trauma is not a static concept but is constantly revised. These memoirs metaphorically conduct an archeological dig into the past – both the familial past and the nation's historical trauma past. Both researchers, having dedicated years to their research and having traveled thousands of kilometers to visit the sites of the murders associated with their grandfathers, and then further still to speak with survivors, through the very nature of their rite of return journeys are telling the readers, "Yes, this is worth it." Gabis's memoir and her search to uncover the truth becomes a memorial space. Gabis dedicates her memoir to her Jewish father. The murdered Jews of Lithuania's Holocaust have no formal burial ground. Their remains lie in mass graves scattered throughout the forests of Lithuania. Through their intent to construct a memorial space through writing, these two works of literature become artefacts of remembrance for future generations.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the narratives of their five memoirs, these North American writers of Lithuanian descent explore both affiliative and familial postmemory, historical recovery, narrative reconstruction, family narratives, rite of return journeys, the resolution of split identity, individual, cultural, and historical trauma narratives, cultural memory, heritage memory, and haunt memory. A sense of shared collective cultural memory in this group of writers' literary works speaks to a shared cultural consciousness that influences their artistic choices to explore familial and individual trauma within the context of Lithuanian historical and cultural trauma narratives.

The second and third postmemory generation writers (Gabis, Markelis, Sileika, Šukys) describe and reflect upon their postmemory interpretations of the first generation's trauma narratives and family narratives. The first-generation writer represented in the dissertation (Bak) writes about trauma and catharsis from both first-hand witness and memory and the distance of secondary witness and postmemory by retelling his mother's, father's, and other ancestors' stories.

The emphasis on postmemory in these literary works is consistent with public statements made by the writers, expressing the personal importance they place on writing about Lithuania's cultural and historical trauma, such as the deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia during the first and second Soviet occupations, the postwar armed anti-Soviet resistance, the Holocaust in Lithuania, and silence regarding the Holocaust. Because of the emphasis on memory and postmemory in these memory narratives, these five memoirs are essentially postmemory writing. Almost all the writers, whether born before or after World War II, essentially draw similar conclusions regarding the thematic purpose of their literary work, their diaspora identity, the impact of Lithuania's cultural and historical trauma on their psyches, either through firsthand memory or postmemory remembrances of their parents' and grandparents' experiences.

Much of the writing in these memoirs is grounded in individual, historical, and cultural trauma. The memoirs reveal individual, historical, and cultural losses; however, narratives also describe how these experiences have been overcome and have led to personal catharsis and post-traumatic growth.

Because of the strong sense of community in the North American Lithuanian diaspora at the time when these writers were growing up and coming of age, and because they were shaped by a community that rendered less significant the outside influence of everyday American or Canadian culture, the Lithuanian-American and Lithuanian-Canadian writers studied in

this dissertation seem to feel a responsibility to write about Lithuanian cultural trauma in English for an intended audience of North American readers. In some ways, this audience of readers serves as witnesses to the historical and cultural trauma events reflected on in these memoirs. According to Laub, such an audience satisfies the need for the uninitiated listener to be initiated to the original trauma and to gain sympathy for the trauma community, or at the very least, to acknowledge the existence of the trauma community. Relief from inherited survivor's guilt, and the satisfaction of being heard, for the second-generation literary descendants comes from retelling the witness generation's trauma narratives, validating the first generation's experience of individual, cultural, and historical trauma.

Survival humor as a literary device is used in the memoirs studied in this dissertation. The writers employ survival humor as a tool of catharsis (in particular, Bak, Sileika, and Markelis). An ironic voice and tone, as well as humor, are used to craft scenes that reveal uncomfortable truths bordering on the absurd. In Bak's memoir, *Painted in Words*, Markelis' *White Field, Black Sheep* and Sileika's *The Barefoot Bingo Caller* humor serves to both distance the writer from painful memories, realities, and realizations, and convey the cognitive dissonance that arises from situations in which a clash of cultures occurs.

Gabis and Šukys mostly refrain from humor in the tone and voice of their narratives, and in their descriptions of cultural incongruency. Instead, they compose narratives that are at times confessional, often personal, and sometimes poetic. Gabis writes in a poetic prose style, drawing her craft as a poet into the language of the memoir. Other scenes reflect a philosophical meditative stance rather than concrete information. For example, a conversation with the director of a Lithuanian prison does not lead to any conclusive evidence but causes Gabis and her young translator to reflect on what humans are capable of doing to each other, again reflecting back contemplations of her grandfather's war crimes.

Trauma is not a static concept in these memoirs but is constantly revised. These memoirs metaphorically conduct an archeological dig into the past. For these writers it is both their family trauma narratives and Lithuania's cultural and historical trauma narratives that serve as signposts for future generations. The utterances made by these writers are attempts to re-construct a lost family and historical narrative, and as exiles to the North American continent, to make sense of their relocation and incorporate it into their understanding of their own transplanted ethnic identity.

Haunt memory, as it is experienced by the second and third generation writers in the manifestations of depression, disturbing dreams, and failed

relationships, is explored in these memoirs with frank honesty, as well as failed coping mechanisms, such as alcohol abuse. At the same time, these memoirists write about positive strategies, such as sessions with psychotherapists, rite of return journeys, which lead to catharsis and healing, and positive social projects that help to build a better future for Lithuania and offer individual post-traumatic growth. For example, Bak, having completed the draft of his Holocaust memoir, embarks on a rite of return journey to his native Vilnius for the first time since he fled in 1945. There he is warmly welcomed, experiences catharsis, post-traumatic growth, and a renewed creative energy that brings new themes to his work as a painter. He donates several hundred of his paintings to the Tolerance Center in Vilnius.

Šukys and Gabis take on the role of truth tellers, even when telling the truth is unbearably painful. Sileika makes many rite of return trips to Lithuania, but ultimately admits that his son has truly returned by embracing a life in today's Lithuania. Markelis delves back into the familial and cultural traumas of her family and diaspora community in Chicago, bravely faces her own alcohol addiction and copes with depression, reemerging eventually with a strengthened sense of self.

These rite of return postmemory narratives and memoirs create the intellectual space for members of the postmemory generation to reflect upon their family narratives and cultural and historical trauma inheritances. These works of literature serve as "artifacts" that allow readers to incorporate lessons learned and insights from reflections brought back through these writers' rite of return journeys to the homeland, and integrate them into their own healing experience.

There is a sense of belatedness of trauma in these narratives that takes place because of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, which rendered familial, cultural, and historical trauma narratives inaccessible for five decades, and which separated families, leaving some behind the Iron Curtain and others in the West. In narratives where family secrets and silence surrounded an ancestor's choices and actions, the resolution of those secrets by the second or third generation writer brings personal catharsis and post-traumatic growth.

Although the memoirs and works of literary nonfiction analyzed in this dissertation are postmemory works and concern themselves with rite of return narratives, revelations about historical and cultural trauma interrelated with their family narratives, the narrators represent themselves and their families not as victims, but as survivors. In greater or lesser degree, all five works of literary nonfiction progress from the initial space of familial, cultural, and historical trauma narratives into a realization of post-traumatic growth. This new growth brings with it an expanded and deeper understanding of family

narratives and Lithuania's cultural and historical trauma. Ultimately, through the process of researching and writing their memoirs, the writers report that they experience personal catharsis.

Also present in these works of literature is the ethical imperative that the histories revealed reframe the historical discussion for future generations. For example, Šukys dedicates her memoir to her son. In a public discussion of her book at the Lithuanian Franciscan Monastery in Kennebunkport, Maine, in August 2019, Šukys shared with the audience that it was important for her to do this research on her family story, to reflect on the significance of cultural trauma in the Lithuanian diaspora cultural memory community, and integrate it into her family narrative, so that "her son wouldn't have to."

The five works of literature studied in this dissertation bring about a sense of knowing, of becoming an expert, of acquiring an insider's view into personal and historical trauma. They examine how the family narrative fits within the cultural memory narrative, and how closure releases the narrator from the shackles of the past, offering emotional and/or psychological release. These memoirs are not only literary works, but through their narrative intent become artefacts for future healing in the diaspora community, offering the possibility of repair between second and third generation North American diaspora Lithuanians and their contemporaries in an independent democratic Lithuania.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, J. C., 2004: "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma", J. C. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. J. Smelser, P. Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, University of California Press, p. 1 – 30.

American Psychiatric Association, 2013: *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Third Edition, Washington, DC, London: American Psychiatric Publishing.

American Psychiatric Association, 1980: *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Third Edition, Washington, DC, London: American Psychiatric Publishing.

Anzaldua, Gloria, 2005: *The Gloria Anzaldua Reader*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Anušauskas, Arvydas, 1996: *Lietuvių tautos sovietinis naikinimas 1940-1958 metais*, (The Destruction of the Lithuanian Nation by the Soviets, 1940-195), Vilnius: Mintis.

Assman N, Aleida, 2006: *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Errerungskultur und Geschictspolitik*, Munich: Beck.

Assmann, Aleida, 2006: "Memory, Individual and Collective" in The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis. Eds. **Goodin,** Robert E., **Tilly,** Charles. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006, p. 210-224.

Assman, Jan, 2011: *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Assmann, Jan, 2008: "Communicative and Cultural Memory" in **Erill,** Astrid, **Nünning**, Ansgar, **Young,** Sara, Eds., 2008: Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook, Germany, De Gruyter, Inc.

Assmann, Jan and **Czaplicka**, John, 1995: "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", Spring - Summer, 1995, No. 65, *Cultural History/Cultural Studies* (Spring - Summer, 1995), Duke University Press, p. 125-133.

Bak, Samuel: 2001: *Painted in Words: A Memoir*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Baldick, Chris, 2001, 2004, 2008: Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, New York: Oxford University Press.

Balkelis, Tomas, 2010: "Opening Gates to the West: Lithuanian and Jewish Migrations from the Lithuanian Provinces, 1867-1914", Ethnicity Studies 2010/1-2, p. 41-66.

Berger, Alan, 2010: "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and Identity in Third Generation Writing about the Holocaust", *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies,* Vol. 28. No. 3. Spring, p. 149-158. Print.

Bloom, Sandra L., 1999: "Trauma Theory Abbreviated" From: The Final Action Plan: A Coordinated Community-Based Response to Family Violence, Attorney General of Pennsylvania's Family Violence Task Force, October, 1999. The Sanctuary Model. Web. April 27, 2013. Access online: http://www.sanctuaryweb.com/bloom.php.

Bradūnas, Kazimieras, 1992: *Lietuvių Literatūra Egzode* (Lithuanian Literature in Exile), Chicago: Lituanistikos Institutas.

Brandell, R. Jerrold and **Ringel,** S. Shoshana, 2012: *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice and Research,* California: Sage Publications, Inc..

Braždžionis, Bernardas, 1989: *Poezijos pilnatis*, (Complete Poems), Vilnius: Vaga.

Bubnys, Arūnas, 2017: *Lietuvių policijos batalionionai 1941-1945 m. (Lithuanian Police Battalions 1941-1945),* Vilnius: Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania.

Bubnys, Arūnas, 2011: *Holokaustas Lietuvoje 1941 – 1944 m.* (The Holocaust in Lithuania) Vilnius: Lietuvos Gyventojų Genocido ir Rezistencijos Tyrimo Centras.

Budrytė, Dovilė, 2018: "Memory, War and Mnemonical In/Security: A Comparison of Lithuania and Ukraine", *Crisis and Change in Post-Cold War Global Politics: Ukraine in a Comparative Perspective,* edited by Erica Resende, Dovilė Budrytė, Didem Buhari-Gulmez, Pelgrave Macmillan, p. 157-177.

Budrytė, Dovilė, 2016: "Points of memory in the narrative of a 'Mnemonic Warrior': gender, displacement, and the anti-Soviet war of resistance in Lithuania", *Journal of Baltic Studies,* Volume 47, No. 4, p. 473-496.

Budrytė, Dovilė, 2013: "Travelling Trauma: Lithuanian Transnational Memory after World War II", *Memory and Trauma in International Relations: Theories, Cases and Debates*, eds. Erica Resende and Dovile Budryte, Routledge, October, 2013.

Bukiet, Melvin J., 2002: *Nothing Makes You Free: Writings by Descendants of Jewish Holocaust Survivors*, New York: W. W. Norton.

Caruth, Cathy, 2013: *Literature in the Ashes of History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Caruth, Cathy, 2004: "Preface", "Trauma and Experience: Introduction", and "Recapturing the Past: Introduction." In Caruth, Cathy, ed. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Caruth, Cathy, 1996: *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.

Cassedy, Ellen, 2012: "Author Daiva Markelis explores ways of being Lithuanian and American in Diaspora Community," 15min.lt, July 13, 2012, accessed online at: www.15Min.Lt.en.

Chambers, Ross, 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004: *Untimely Interventions: AIDS Writing, Testimonial, and the Rhetoric of Haunting*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Codde, Philippe, 2011: "Keeping History at Bay: Absent Presences in Three Recent Jewish American Novels", *Modern Fiction Studies*. Vol. 57. No. 4. Winter 2011, p. 673-693. Print.

Codde, Philippe, 2010: "*Everything is Illuminated* (Jonathan Safran Foer)", *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Writers and Their Work,* Ed. Geoff Hamilton and Brian Jones, New York: Facts on File.

Codde, Philippe, 2010: "Postmemory, Afterimages, Transferred Loss: First and Third Generation Holocaust Trauma in American Literature and Film", *The Holocaust, Art, and Taboo: Transatlantic Exchanges on the Ethics and Aesthetics of Representation,* Ed. Sophia Komor and Susanne Rohr. Heidelberg: Winter, 2010. p. 61-72. Print.

Codde, Philippe, 2007: *The Jewish American Novel*, West Lafayette (Ind.): Purdue University Press.

Coe, Cynthia D. 2018: Levinas and the Trauma of Responsibility: The Ethical Significance of Time/Studies in Continental Thought, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Craps, Stef, 2014: "Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma theory in the global age", *The Future of Trauma Theory:Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, Eds. **Bueler,** Gert, **Durrant,** Sam, **Eaglestone,** Robert, London and New York: Routledge.

Crowe, David, 1988: Baltic Émigré publishing and scholarship in the Western World, Nationalities Papers, 16:2, p. 225-241.

Culler, Jonathan, 1997: *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Cutter, Martha J., 2005: *Lost and Found in Translation*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Caroline Press.

Danytė, Milda, 1999: "Ambivalence about Lithuania in Lithuanian Canadian Fiction Written in English", *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 45, No. 3, p. 33-47.

Davoliūtė, Violeta, 2018: "Between the Public and the Personal: A New Style of Holocaust Memory in Lithuania", Culture of History Forums: Horder Institut für historisches Ostmitteleuropaforschung Institut Der Leibnitz-Gemainschaft, 12 December, 2018.

Eidintas, Aldolfas, 2003: *Jews, Lithuanians, and the Holocaust*, Vilnius: Versus Aureus Publishers.

Erill, Astrid, **Nünning**, Ansgar, **Young,** Sara, Eds., 2008: Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook, Germany, De Gruyter, Inc.

Felman, Shoshana and Laub, Dori, 1992: *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Kindle version, New York: Routledge.

Freud, Sigmund, 1914: "Remembering, Repeating and Working-through", *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 12*, Ed. Strachey, James. London: Hogarth Press, p. 146-157.

Freud, Sigmund, 1955: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol II* (ed Strachey, J.), London: Hogarth Press.

Frieden, Betty, 1963, 2013: *The Feminine Mystique: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*, New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co.

Gabis, Rita, 2015: *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet: My Grandfather's SS Past, My Jewish Family, A Search for the Truth,* (Kindle Edition) New York, London, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury.

Gailienė, Danutė, Editor, 2015: *Lithuanian Faces After Transition: Psychological Consequences of Cultural Trauma*, Vilnius: Eugrimas.

Gailienė, Danutė, 2008: *Ką jie mums padarė: Lietuvos gyvenimas traumu psichologijos žvilgsniu* (What They Did To Us: The Trauma of Lithuanians from a Psychological Perspective), Vilnius: Tyto Alba.

Gailienė, Danutė, Editor, 2005: *The Psychology of Extreme Traumatisation: The Aftermath of Political Repression*. Vilnius: Akreta: The Genocide and Resistance Center of Lithuania.

Gailienė, Danutė, **Kazlauskas**, Evaldas, 2005: "Fifty Years on: The Long-Term Psychological Effects of Soviet Repression in Lithuania", Gailienė, Danutė, ed. *The Psychology of Extreme Traumatisation: The Aftermath of Political Repression*, Vilnius: Akreta: The Genocide and Resistance Center of Lithuania, p. 67.

Gama, Nori, 2014: "Trauma Ties: Chiasmus and Community in Lebanese Civil War Literature", *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism,* Eds. **Bueler,** Gert, **Durrant,** Sam, **Eaglestone,** Robert, London and New York: Routledge.

Głowacka-Grajper, Małgorzata, 2018: "Memory in Post-communist Europe: Controversies Over Identity, Conflicts, and Nostalgia", *East European Politics and Societies, and Cultures*, Volume 32, Number 4, November 2018, p. 924-935.

Green, Keith and **LeBihan**, Jill, 1996: *Critical Theory and Practice*, London: Routledge.

Greenspan, Henry, 1999: "Imagining Survivors: Testimony and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness", *The Americanization of the Holocaust.* ed. Hilene Flanzbaum, Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 45-67.

Habib, M.A.R., 2005, 2008: *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Halbwachs, Maurice, 1992: *On Collective Memory*, edited and translated by Lewis Coser, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Halbwachs, Maurice, 1985: *Das Gedächtnis und seine sozialen Bedingungen*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Halbwachs, Maurice, 1950: *La memoire collective,* ed. J. Alexandre, Paris: PU de France.

Herman, Judith, 1992: *Trauma and Recovery*, New York: Basic Books.

Hirsch, Marianne, 2012: *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Hirsch, Marianne and Miller, Nancy K., 2011: *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Hirsch, Marianne, 2008: "The Generation of Postmemory", *Poetics Today.* Vol. 29. No. 1. Spring 2008, p. 103-128. Print.

Hirsch, Marianne, 1997: *Family Frames: Photography Narrative and Postmemory.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hoffman, Eva, 2004: *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, New York: Public Affairs.m"Illuminations: The Art of Samuel Bak" at https://www.facinghistory.org/illuminations-art-samuel-bak. Accessed: February 8, 2021.

Hunt, Nigel C, 2010: Memory, War, and Trauma, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jung, C. G., **Adler**, Gerhard, **Fordham**, Michael, **Read**, Sir Herbert, 1970: The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Kaplan, Caren, 1996: *Questions of Travel*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Kardiner, A., 1941: *The Traumatic Neuroses of War.* New York: Hoeber.

Kasperevičiūtė, Vitalija., 2011.: Summary of Doctoral Dissertation Humanities, History. "The Emigration Politics of the Republic of Lithuania in 1918-1040", p. 10 – 12.

Kasparavičius, Algimantas, 2017: "Lietuvių politinės iliuzijos: Lietuvos laikinosios vyriausybės „Politika" ir Holokausto pradžia Lietuvoje 1941 metais" (Lithuanian Political Illusions: The Temporary Lithuanian Government, "Politics" and the beginning of the Holocaust in Lithuania in 1941." Lietuvos Žydų Litvakų Bendruomenė (Lithuanian Jewish Litvak Community). Online journal, 2017-1-15. Accessed: https://www.lzb.lt/2017/01/05/lietuviu-politines-iliuzijos-lietuvos-laikinosios-vyriausybes-politika-ir-holokausto-pradzia-lietuvoje-1941-metais/ Seen: April 7, 2021.

Kavolis, Vytautas, 1992: *Moterys ir Vyrai Lietuvių Kultūroje*, Vilnius: Apostrofa.

Kelertas, Violeta, 2016: "Deviant Sheep", *Vilnius Review*, August 2, 2016, accessed online at: www.vilniusreview.lt.

Kelertas, Violeta, 2006: *Baltic Postcolonialism*, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

Kelertas, Violeta, 1992: "*Come into My Time": Lithuania in Prose Fiction*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Kokot, Waltrand, **Giordano**, Christian**, Gandelsman-Trier,** Mijal, 2014: "Diaspora as a Resource of Homeland Nationalism Forged Overseas and Contested Back Home: The Case of Lithuanian-Americans", *Diaspora As a Resource: Comparative Studies in Strategies, Networks, and Urban Spaces*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, p.105.

Kolevinskienė, Žydronė, 2013: *Lietuviškumo ribos: tautinių vertybių kaita XX amžiaus pabaigos–XXI amžiaus pradžios lietuvių (e)migrantų autorių literatūroje (The Boundaries of Lithuanian Identity: Changing Ethnic Values at the End of the Twentieth Century and Beginning of the Twenty-First Century in the Literature of Lithuanian Émigré writers),* Vilnius: Edukologija.

Kolevinskienė, Žydronė, **Mačianskaitė,** Loreta, 2019: *Egzodika: Pasaulio lietuvių rašytojų antologiją (Exodus: An Anthology of International Lithuanian Writers*), Vilnius: The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore.

Krisciunas, Raymond G., 1983: "The Decision of Lithuanian Refugees to Emigrate, 1945-1950," *Lituanus* (Summer 1983), http://www.lituanus.org/1983_2/83_2_03.htm. Accessed March 16, 2021.

Kuizinienė, Dalia. 2014: "Lithuanian Émigré Literature and Press", History of Lithuanian Culture, Kaunas, Vytautas Magnus University, Versus Aureus, p. 213-238.

Kuodytė, Dalia, 2005: "Traumatising History", Gailienė, Danutė, ed. *The Psychology of Extreme Traumatisation: The Aftermath of Political Repression*, Vilnius: Akreta: The Genocide and Resistance Center of Lithuania, p. 13.

LaCapra, Dominick, 2014: "Fascism and the Sacred: Sites of inquiry after (or along with) trauma", *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, London and New York: Routledge.

LaCapra, Dominick, 2004: *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

LaCapra, Dominick, 1994: *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

LaCapra, Dominick, 2001: *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Laub, Dori, 1995: "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle", *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Ed. Cathy Caruth, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Laub, Dori, 1992: "An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival", *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History.* Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub. New York: Routledge.

Laub, Dori, 1992: "Bearing Witness of the Vicissitudes of Listening", *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, New York: Routledge.

Levinas, Emmanuel, Trans. Nidra Poller, *Humanism of the Other*, 2005: Chicago, University of Illinois Press.

Luckhurst, Roger, 2006: Patricia Waugh, ed, "Mixing memory and desire: psychoanalysis, psychology, and trauma theory", *Literary Theory and Criticism*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Margalit, Avishai, 2003: *The Ethics of Memory*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Markelis, Daiva, 2010: *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mesnard, Philippe and **Jurgenson**, Luba (Interviewer) & Marianne Hirsch (Interviewee), Portraits: Memories-Testimonies, 2015, Foundation Auschwitz. YouTube.

Metzler, Ken, 1977: *Creative Interviewing: The Writers' Guide to Gathering Information by Asking Questions*, Portland: University of Oregon Press.

Miller, Alice, 1997: *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self*, New York: Perennial: An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.

Mohatt, Nathaniel Vincent, **Thompson**, Azure B., **Thai**, Nghi D., **Tebes,** Jacob Kraemer, 2014: "Historical Trauma as a Public Narrative: A Conceptual Review of how History Impact Present-Day Health, Social Science & Medicine, Volume 106, April 2014, p. 128- 136.

Morrison, James, 2012: "Review: White Field, Black Sheep," Women's Studies: An Inter-disciplinary Journal, Vol. 41, 2012, Issue 3.

Novickis, Birutė, 1968: *The Lithuanian Woman*, Brooklyn, New York: The Federation of Lithuanian Women's Clubs, printed by Franciscan Press.

Paulauskienė, Aušra, 2007: *Lost and Found: The Discovery of Lithuania in American Fiction*, Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi.

Paulauskienė, Aušra, 2007: *Undiscovered Jewish-American Writers from Lithuania: Ezra Brudno and Goldie Stone*, Amsterdam-New York: Brill.

Primamore, Elizabeth, **DeLuise**, Dolores, 2011: *Literature and Gender*, Illinois: Pearson Education Inc..

Rosenthal, Gabriele, 2000: "Social transformation in the context of familial experience: biographical consequences of a denied past in the Soviet Union. In R. Breckner, D. Kalekin-Fishman, & I. Miethe (Eds.) *Biographies and the division of Europe: experience, action, and change on the "Eastern Side."* Opladen: Leske u. Budrich p. 115-137.

Rubchak, Marian J. 1992 "'God Made me a Lithuanian'": Nationalist Ideology and the Construction of a North American Diaspora, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Volume 2, Number 1, Spring 1992, p. 117 – 129.

Ruseckaitė, Aldona, (2018), *Padai pilni vinių* (Soles full of nails), Vilnius: Lietuvos Rašytojų Sąjungos Leidykla.

Ruthchild, Rochelle, 2013: "Writing and Remembering", Women's Review of Books, Vol. 30, No. 4, July/August 2013.

Schaefer, Richard T. 2008: *Encyclopedia of race, ethnicity, and society*. SAGE Publications. p. 854–857.

Schwab, Gabriele, 2010: "Writing against memory and forgetting", *Haunting legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma,* New York: Columbia University Press.

Schwab, Gabriele, 2010: "Haunting Legacies: Trauma in Children of Perpetrators", *Haunting legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Traumas,* New York: Columbia University Press.

Schwab, Gabriele, 2010: "Identity trouble: guilt, shame, and idealization", *Haunting legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma,* New York: Columbia University Press.

Shapiro, Philp S. 2020: "The Lithuanian Jewish Community of Telšiai, *Atminities Knyga: Miesto Žydų Gyvenimas / Memorial Book for the Jewish Community of Telšiai*, edited by Dr. Hektoras Vitkus, Telšiai: Žemaičių muziejus "Alka", The Samogitian Museum, "Alka", p. 101-136.

Sicher, Efraim, 1998: "Introduction", *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory after Auschwitz,* Urbana (III.): University of Illinois Press, p. 1-16.

Sileika, Antanas, 2019: *Provisionally Yours*, Toronto: Biblioasis.

Sileika, Antanas, 2019: "European Homelands of the Imagination: A Personal Account", Thomas Mann Literary Festival, Nida, Lithuania.

Sileika, Antanas, 2018: *Basakojis bingo pranešėjas,* Vilnius, Baltos Lankos.

Sileika, Antanas, 2017: *The Barefoot Bingo Caller*, Toronto: ECW Press.

Sileika, Antanas, 2011: *Underground*, Toronto: Thomas Allen.

Sileika, Antanas, 2004: *Woman in Bronze*, Toronto: Random House Canada.

Sileika, Antanas, 1997: *Buying on Time*, Toronto: Porcupine's Quill.

Sinclair, Upton, 1906, 2001: *The Jungle*, Unabridged, Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc.

Simutis, Anicetas, 1953: *Pasaulio lietuvių žinynas* (Lithuanian World Directory). New York.

Smith, Sidonie and **Watson,** Julia, 2001: Reading Autobiography: *A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Snyder, Timothy, 2015: *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, New York: Duggan Books. (Kindle Version)

Snyder, Timothy, 2012: *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York: Basic Books.

Socha, Kimberly, 2002: "Outside the Reign of Logic, Outside the Reach of God: Hester Panim in the Surreal Art of Paul Celan and Samuel Bak", *War, Literature, and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities.*

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Bak, Samuel (Interviewee), 27 December 2019.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Simutis, Aldona (Interviewee), 3 February 2018.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Landsbergis, Jon (Interviewee), 1 August 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Landsbergis, Paul (Interviewee), 2 August 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Bartkevičius, Jocelyn (Interviewee), 23 May 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Raulinaitis, Angelė (Interviewee), 21 May 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Šukys, Julija (Interviewee), 17 May 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Sepetys, Ruta (Interviewee), 9 March 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Brown, James Joseph (Interviewee), 1 November 2016.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Birutė Putrius (Interviewee), 5 November 2016.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Paronetto, Nijolė (Interviewee), 6 July 2016.

Sruoginis, Laima (Interviewer) & Sileika, Antanas (Interviewee), 30 December 2016.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) & Užgiris, Rimas (Interviewee), 17 October 2016.

Stasiulis, Stanislovas, September 16, 2019: "The Holocaust in Lithuania: The Key Characteristics of its History, and the Key Issues in Histiography and Cultural Memory," Sage Journals. See: sagejournals@sagepubcom, accessed March 15, 2021.

Sužiedėlis, Saulius, 2018: "The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania: successes, challenges, perspectives," Journal of Baltic Studies, 49: 1, p.103-106.

Sužiedėlis, Saulius, 2001: "The Burden of 1941," *Lituanus* (Winter 2001) http://www.lituanus.org/2001/01_4_04.htm, seen March 16, 2021.

Sztompka, Piotr., 2000: "Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change," *European Journal of Social Theory 3 (4):* p. 449-466.

Sztompka, Piotr., 2004: The Trauma of Social Change: A Case of Postcommunist Societies. In J. C. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. J. Smelser, & P. Sztompka (Eds.), *Cultural trauma and Collective Identity*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Šilbajoris, Rimvydas, 1970: *Perfection of Exile: Fourteen Contemporary Lithuanian Writers*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Šilbajoris, Rimvydas, 1958: "Geriau būt Dievo sutriuškintam", (It is better to be crushed by God), *Santarvė,* Number 3.

Šlapkauskaitė, Rūta, 2008: *Multikultūrizmo Problema Kanados Literatūroje: Egzodikos Diskurso Apraiškos*, Doctoral Dissertation, Vilnius: Vilnius University Press.

Šukys, Julija, 2017: *Siberian Exile: Blood, War, and a Granddaughter's Reckoning*, Omaha: University of Nebraska Press.

Šukys, Julija, 2016: *Epistolofilija: Užrašytas Onos Šimaitės gyvenimas.* (Lithuanian translation of *Epistolophilia: Writing the Life of Ona Šimaitė.*) Trans. Marius

Burokas. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla (The Lithuanian Writers' Union Press).

Šukys, Julija, 2012: *Epistolophilia: Writing the Life of Ona Šimaitė,* London and Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Švedas, Aurimas and Veisaitė, Irena, Transl. Karla Gruodis, 2020: *Life Should Be Transparent,* Budapest: Central European University Press.

Tyson, Lois, 1999: *Critical Theory Today—A User Friendly Guide:* New York and London: Garland Publishers.

Vanagaitė, Rūta, **Zuroff,** Efraim, 2016: Our People: Discovering Lithuania's Hidden Holocaust, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Van der Kolk, B. A., **Weisaeth,** L., and **van der Hart,** O., 1996: "History of Trauma in Psychiatry", *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on the Mind, Body and Society,* Ed. B. A. van der Kolk, A. McFarlane, and L. Weisaeth. New York: Guilford.

Van der Kolk, B. A., 1994: "The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Post Traumatic Stress", *Harvard Review of Psychiatry,* Vol. 1. No. 5. 1994. p. 253-265. Print.

Van der Kolk, B. A., 1989: "The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma: Reenactment, Revictimization, and Masochism", *Psychiatric Clinics of North America,* Vol. 12. Treatment of Victims of Sexual Abuse. 1989. p. 389-411. Print.

Van der Kolk, B. A. and **Ducey**, C. P., 1989: "The Psychological Processing of Traumatic Experience: Rorschach Patterns in PTSD." *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 2.* 1989, p. 259-274. Print.

Veisaitė, Irena, Švedas, Aurimas, 2016: *Gyvenimas turėtų būti skaidrus* (Irena Veisaitė: Life Should Be Transparent), Vilnius: Aukso žuvys.

Vince, Laima, 2019: "The Question of Identity: Lithuanian-American/Canadian Writers", *Lituanus, Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Volume 65, Number 4, p. 47-96.

Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, "Dealing with the Trauma of an Undigested Past," Vilnius Declaration on Dealing with the Consequences of Collective Trauma, March 5-6, 2002.

Wagoner, Vivian, 2018: "A Review of Julija Šukys's Siberian Exile: Blood, War, and a Granddaughter's Reckoning", *Brevity*, at www.brevity.wordpress.com. May 15, 2018.

Waugh, Patricia, 2006: *Literary Theory and Criticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Woolf, Virginia, 1929: *A Room of One's Own*, London: Harcourt.

Wyman, Mark, 1989, 1998: *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons*, *1945-1951*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Zabludoff, Olga, 2012: "Self-Induced Confusion", *Defending History*, access online at www.defendinghistory.com

Zundė, Pranas, 1964, "Demographic Changes and Structure in Lithuania," *Lituanus*, Fall and Winter 1964, http://www.lituanus.org/1964/64_34_01_Zunde.html. Accessed March 17, 2021.

APPENDIX

Selected Bibliography
Literary Works about Lithuania
by North American Writers of Lithuanian Descent

Memoir

Aras, Gint, 2019, *Relief by Execution: A Visit to Mauthausen,* Connecticut: Little Bound Books.

Bak, Samuel, 2001: *Painted in Words*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Cassedy, Ellen, 2013, *Mes esame čia* (Lithuanian edition of *We Are Here*) Vilnius: Media Incognito Press.

Cassedy, Ellen, 2012: *We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust,* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Foti, Silvia, 2021: *The Nazi's Granddaughter: How I Discovered My Grandfather was a War Criminal.* Washington: Regnery History.

Gabis, Rita, 2015: *A Guest at the Shooter's Banquet: My Grandfather's SS Past, My Jewish Family, A Search for the Truth*, (Kindle Edition) New York, London, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury.

Markelis, Daiva, 2010: *White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sileika, Antanas, 2017: *The Barefoot Bingo Caller*, Toronto: ECW Press.

Šukys, Julija, 2017: *Siberian Exile: Blood, War, and a Granddaughter's Reckoning*, London and Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Literary Nonfiction

Vince, Laima, 2019: *Mūsų nepalaužė: Partizanų, Ryšininkų, Tremtinių, Holokausto Aukų ir Jų Šeimų Likimai,* Vilnius: Alma Littera.

Vince, Laima, 2019: "Nutildyta mūza", *Matilda Olkinaitė Atrakintas dienoraštis*, Vilnius: Lietuvių Literatūros ir Tautosakos Institutas.

Šukys, Julija, 2012: *Epistolophilia: Writing the Life of Ona Šimaitė,* London and Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, University of Nebraska Press.

Vince, Laima, 2012: *The Snake in the Vodka Bottle: Life Stories from Post-Soviet Lithuania Twenty Years After the Collapse of Communism*, New York: Amazon Publishers.

Vince, Laima, 2012: *Journey into the Backwaters of the Heart: Stories of Women Who Survived Hitler and Stalin*, New York, Amazon Publishers.

Vince, Laima, 2009: *Lenin's Head on a Platter*, Vilnius: Lithuanian Writers Union Publishers.

Novels

Aras, Gint, 2016: *The Fugue*, Chicago: Tortoise Books.

Aras, Gint, 2009: *Finding the Moon in Sugar*, West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing.

Foti, Silvia, 2002: *Skullduggery*, Chicago: Creative Art Book Co.

Guilford, Irene, 2017: *Waiting for Stalin to Die*, Toronto-Buffalo-Lancaster (UK): Guernica Editions.

Guilford, Irene, 1999: *The Embrace*, Toronto: Guernica Editions.

Putrius, Birutė, 2018: *The Last Book Smuggler*, Los Angeles: Birchwood Press.

Putrius, Birutė, 2015: *Lost Birds*, Los Angeles: Birchwood Press.

Sepetys, Ruta, 2016: S*alt to the Sea*, New York: Philomel Books. An Imprint of Penguin Group.

Sepetys, Ruta, 2011: *Between Shades of Gray*, New York: Speak: An Imprint of Penguin Group.

Sileika, Antanas, 2019: *Provisionally Yours*, Toronto: Biblioasis.

Sileika, Antanas, 2011: *Underground*, Toronto: Thomas Allen.

Sileika, Antanas, 2004: *Woman in Bronze*, Toronto: Random House Canada.

Sileika, Antanas, 1997: *Buying on Time*, Toronto: Porcupine's Quill.

Vince, Laima, 2018: *This Is Not My Sky*, New York: Amazon Publishers.

Zilionytė, Lina, 2008: *Born for Freedom*, Bloomington: Author House.

Poetry

Vitkauskas, Lina Ramona, 2016: *White Stockings*, Chicago: White Hole Press.

Vitkauskas, Lina Ramona, 2014: *Spiny Retinas*, Chicago, Mutable Sound.

Vitkauskas, Lina Ramona, 2013: *Professional Poetry*, White Hole Press.

Vitkauskas, Lina Ramona, 2013: *A Neon Tryst*, Chicago: Shearsman Books.

Vitkauskas, Lina Ramona, 2012: *Honey is a She*, Chicago: Plastique Press.

Vitkauskas, Lina Ramona, 2010: *The Range of Your Amazing Nothing*, Chicago: Ravenna Press.

Vitkauskas, Lina Ramona, 2006: *Failed Stars Spawns Planet/Star*, Chicago: dancing girl press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2020: *Early Poems*, Brooklyn: Black Spruce Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2020: *The Angled Road: Collected Poems 1970-2020*, Beaumont Texas: Lamar University Literary Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2017: Three White Horses: Poems by Jonas Zdanys. Paintings by Sou Vai Keng, Beaumont, Texas: Lamar University Literary Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2017: *Two Voices/Du balsai*, Chicago: Purple Flag Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2017: *St. Brigid's Well*, Chicago: Purple Flag Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2017: *Preliudai po lietaus/Preludes After Rain:* Macau, China, and Markwell, Australia: Flying Island Books, ASM, and Cerberus Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2016*: Red Stones*: Beaumont, Texas: Lamar University Literary Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2013: *Cormorants*, Boston: Timberline Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2012: *The Kingfisher's Reign*, Chicago: Virtual Artists Collective.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2009: *The Thin Light of Winter: New and Selected Poems*, Chicago: Virtual Artists Collective.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2007: *Salt*, Chicago: Virtual Artists Collective.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2005: *The Woman on the Bridge*, Chicago: Virtual Artists Collective.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2004: *The White City*, New Haven: The White Birch Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 2004: *White*, New Haven: The White Birch Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 1999: *Lithuania Crossing*, New Haven: The White Birch Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 1997: *Water Light*, Vilnius: Vaga.

Zdanys, Jonas, 1994: *The White Bend of the River*. Drawings by Mykolas Malkovas, New Haven: Patrick Schrieber.

Zdanys, Jonas, 1994: *The Metaphysics of Wolves*. Drawings by Mykolas Malkovas, New Haven: The White Birch Press.

Zdanys, Jonas, 1990: *Maine Aubade*, Newington, Connecticut: Appletree Chapbooks.

Zdanys, Jonas, 1982: *Voice on an Anthill*, New York: Manyland Books.

Drama

Landsbergis, Algirdas, 1959: *Five Posts in A Market Place*, New York: Manyland Books, Inc..

Nakas, Kęstutis, 2017: *When Lithuania Ruled the World a four-part play cycle*, Vilnius: Aukso Žuvys.

Vince, Laima, 2017: *A Hike at the Seashore*, New York: Amazon Publishers.

Vince, Laima, 2012, *The Interpreter*, New York: Amazon Publishers.

Anthologies

Kelertas, Violeta, 2006: *Baltic Postcolonialism*, Amsterdam and New York:Rodopi.

Kelertas, Violeta, 1992: "*Come into My Time": Lithuania in Prose Fiction*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince, 2002*: Raw Amber: An Anthology of Contemporary Lithuanian Poetry*, Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince, 2002: *The Earth Remains,* Landsbergis, Algirdas, "Adventures in Storyland" New York: Columbia University Press.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince, 1997: *Lithuania In Her Own Words: An Anthology of Contemporary Lithuanian Writing*, Vilnius: Tyto Alba.

Šilbajoris, Rimvydas, 1970: *Perfection of Exile: Fourteen Contemporary Lithuanian Writers*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Essays

Avizienis, Rasa, "Book Review: Between Shades of Gray: Philomel, 2011", *Lituanus*, Vol. 57. No 3, Fall, 2011. Accessed April 3, 2021: https://www.lituanus.org/2011/11_3_11BR5_Sepetys.html

Bartkevicius, Jocelyn, Summer 2016: "Mother Tongue," *Crab Orchard Review* (winner of the 2016 John Guyon Prize in Literary Nonfiction). *Crab Orchard Review* 20.1 (Summer 2016). p. 75-90.

Bartkevicius, Jocelyn, June 2016: "How to Survive in Lithuania," *Bridges*: *Lithuanian-American News Journal* 40.5 (June 2016). p. 11-15.

Bartkevicius, Jocelyn, (Spring 1998): "Out of the Garden," *Missouri Review* 21:1 (Spring 1998): 116-132. Winner of The Missouri Review Editors' Prize in the Essay. Rpt. *Fourth Genre: Contemporary Writers of/on Creative Nonfiction*. Eds. Robert L. Root, Jr. and Michael Steinberg. NY: Pearson Longman, 2004. p. 18-31.

Brown, James Joseph, 2016: "Stebuklas", *Bridges,* p. 14 – 18.

De Voe, M. M., 2016: "J.F. will never read this," Bridges: Lithuanian-American News Journal, October 2016.

Foti, Silvia, 2021: *The Nazi's Granddaughter: How I Discovered My Grandfather was a War Criminal,* Washington: Regnery History.

Foti, Silvia, 2018: "My grandfather wasn't a Nazi-fighting war hero—he was a brutal collaborator," Salon, www.Salon.com, July, 14, 2018.

Foti, Silvia, 1998: "Džoja Barysaitė Documents Lithuania's New President Valdas Adamkus," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Vol. 44, No. 4.

Foti, Silvia, 1997: "The Dove and The Webbed Witch of the Wind," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Vol. 43, No. 4.

Foti, Silvia, 1996: "It's a Birthday Party! Viktoras Petravičius would have been 90," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Vol. 42, No. 3.

Foti, Silvia, 1988: "Nijolė Sadūnaitė. A Radiance in the Gulag," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Vol. 34, No. 2.

Foti, Silvia, 1984: "OSI Collaborates with KGB," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Vol. 30, No. 1.

Foti, Silvia, 1981: "Elnar Sanden, KGB Calling Eve," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Vol. 27, No. 4.

Goštautas, Stasys, 2005: "In Memorium Algirdas Landsbergis", *Lituanus, Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences,* Volume 51, Number. 1.

Kelertas, Violeta, 2020: Rimas Uzgiris, "North of Paradise: Dancing Poetry," *Lituanus,* Winter 2020.

Kubilius, Kerry, 2018: "The Unquiet Family History of Siberian Exile", *Vilnius Review: The Online Magazine for Lithuanian Literature*, December 6, 2018.

Landsbergis, Algirdas, 2002: "Adventures in Storyland" Ed. Vince, Laima. *The Earth Remains.* Columbia University Press. New York.

Landsbergis, Algirdas, 1991: "The Baltic Case – A Personal Perspective", New York, 1991, Posted by Jon Landsbergis on Facebook August 26, 2018.

Landsbergis, Algirdas, 1973: "Vita Longa Breviter," Manuscript.

Landsbergis, Algirdas, 1962: "Words, Beautiful Words," *Lithuanian Quartet.* New York: Manyland Books.

Nakas, Kęstutis, 2007: "The Lions of Lithuanian Theatre," May/June issue of American Theatre Magazine.

Nakas, Kęstutis, 2003: "One Lithuanian Guy," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 48, No. 3.

Shapiro, Philp S. 2020: "The Lithuanian Jewish Community of Telšiai, *Atminities Knyga: Miesto Žydų Gyvenimas / Memorial Book for the Jewish Community of Telšiai*, edited by Dr. Hektoras Vitkus, Telšiai: Žemaičių muziejus "Alka", The Samogitian Museum, "Alka", p. 101-136.

Sileika, Antanas, 2019: "European Homelands of the Imagination: A Personal Account," Thomas Mann Literary Festival, Nida, Lithuania.

Šukys, Julija, 2017: "My Mother's Legs: On Degeneration, Stoicism, and Pure Life," *The Tusculum Review* 13, p. 75-79.

Šukys, Julija, 2012: "Trans-Siberia: Like Birds Returning Home," Invited submission for *Maps of Memory: Trauma, Identity and Exile in Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States*. Eds Tomas Balkelis and Violeta Davoliūtė. Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore: Vilnius, Lithuania, p. 218-39.

Šukys, Julija, 2010: "Pregnant Pause: On Šimaitė, Archives, Life writing and Motherhood," *Feminist Formations* 22 (2), p. 1-17.

Šukys, Julija,"My link to the past is gone," *The Globe and Mail*. July 2, 2010, http://www.theglobeandmail.com. (1,000 words)

Šukys, Julija, "Lietuvių kilmės rašytojos J. Šukys namuose Monrealyje skamba trijų kalbų mišinys" Translation of "Alphabet fusion." *Lietuvos rytas* (Lithuanian morning). May 4, 2010. (1,000 words)

Šukys, Julija, "Alphabet fusion," *The Globe and Mail,* April 21, 2010. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/facts-and-arguments/alphabet-fusion/article1541049/

Šukys, Julija, 2008: "Brovka: Reconstructing a Life in Tatters (My Grandmother's Journey)," *Lituanus* 54 (4), p. 27-44.

Šukys, Julija, 2008: "Ona Šimaitė and the Vilnius Ghetto: An Unwritten Memoir," *Lituanus* 54 (2), p. 5-25.

Šukys, Julija, 2003: “Lost and Found in Vilna: Letters From a Librarian,” *PMLA* 118 (2), p. 302-17.

Šukys, Julija, 2002: Introduction. Dalia Grinkevičiūtė. “Memories: On the Laptev Sea,” Trans. Irena Blekys. *Alphabet City 8: Lost in the Archives*. Ed. Rebecca Comay. Toronto: Alphabet City, p. 651-52.

Vince, Laima, 2019: “The Question of Identity: Lithuanian-American/Canadian Writers,” *Lituanus, Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, Volume 65, No. 4, p. 47-96.

Yuknavitch, Lidia, 2015: “Woven,” Guernica, www.guernicamag.com/woven, August 3, 2015, accessed May 24, 2020.

Interviews

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Foti, Silvia (Interviewee), 24 July 2021.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Žukauskas, Gintaras (Interviewee), 23 July 2021.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Nakas, Kęstutis (Interviewee), 23 July 2021.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Budrys, Audrė (Interviewee), 23 July 2021.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Markelis, Daiva (Interviewee), 22 July 2021.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Bak, Samuel (Interviewee), 9 July 2021.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Gabis, Rita (Interviewee), 3 July 2021.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Bak, Samuel (Interviewee), 27 December 2020.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Simutis, Aldona (Interviewee), 3 February, 2018.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer) Bartkevičius, Jocelyn (Interviewee), 23 May 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Brown, James Joseph (Interviewee), 1 November 2016.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Birutė Putrius (Interviewee), 5 November 2016.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Landsbergis, Jon (Interviewee), 1 August 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Landsbergis, Paul (Interviewee), 2 August 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Paronetto, Nijolė (Interviewee), 6 July 2016.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Raulinaitis, Angelė (Interviewee), 21 May 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Sepetys, Ruta (Interviewee), 9 March 2017.

Sruoginis, Laima (Interviewer), Sileika, Antanas (Interviewee), 30 December 2016.

Sruoginis, Laima Vince (Interviewer), Užgiris, Rimas (Interviewee), 17 October 2016.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The road to completing and defending this dissertation was a long journey, wrought with discovery, moments of epiphany, but also many pitfalls along the way. I'd like to acknowledge my dissertation supervisor, Professor dr. Regina Rudaitytė, who helped me navigate the early stages of my research by suggesting a few books and articles. However, Professor Rudaitytė retired before I completed my dissertation, and I was left without an advisor to guide me through the final stages. Others stepped in and donated their time to help me through the process of researching, reflecting, thinking through, writing, and revising (many times) this dissertation. I'd like to thank all these researchers and professors, who offered me invaluable advice and feedback, read drafts of my dissertation, and helped me edit, shape, and reflect on the interdisciplinary approach I chose for this work. I'd like to say a few words about each one, as I am deeply grateful to these generous academics for their insights and editorial comments.

I'd especially like to thank Dr. Saulė Matulevičienė from the Vilnius University Lithuanian Literature Department. She guided me through several rewrites and revisions of this dissertation and its summary, while offering ceaseless support. I am grateful to Professor Dr. Violeta Kelertas, the former Lithuanian World Community (Pasaulio Lietuvių Bendruomenė), Endowed Chair of Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and currently Affiliated Professor at University of Washington, Seattle, for her guidance and insights on North American Lithuanian diaspora literature and for writing a letter of support. Dr. Kelertas helped me edit an early draft of my dissertation, asked tough questions, and would settle for nothing less than a well-thought-out response.

I would like to thank historian and Holocaust scholar, Dr. Saulius Sužiedelis, Professor Emeritus of History at Millersville University of Pennsylvania, and Chairman of the Nazi Crimes Sub-Commission of the Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania. Dr. Sužiedelis guided me through writing about the Holocaust in Lithuania with accuracy and sensitivity. He read drafts of my disseration and oversaw my research and writing on this tragic chapter in Lithuania's history. I thank him for his generous letter of support.

I could not have found the structure, terminology, or thematic direction of this dissertation in its earliest drafts without the guidance of Dr. Julija Šukys, Professor of Creative Nonfiction at the University of Missouri. I'd also like to thank Professor of American Studies, Dr. Timo Müller, from the University of Konstanz, for reading a draft of several early chapters and

offering feedback, as well as the opportunity to present my dissertation thesis in his doctoral seminar and participate in his doctoral research discussion group.

Dr. Danutė Gailienė, professor, psychologist, and clinical traumatology psychotherapist, was indispensable for her comments on historical and cultural trauma in Lithuania and for guiding my reading in the field of trauma theory. I'm grateful to Dr. Gailienė for commenting on my dissertation from the perspective of a clinical traumatology psychotherapist.

I am grateful to Phillip Shapiro, President of Remembering Litvaks, for reading my dissertation and commenting on its historical accuracy as it pertains to Litvak culture, history, and literature, and for suggesting relevant reading about Litvak emigration from prewar Lithuania to North America.

I'd like to remember the late Dr. Irena Veisaitė, Holocaust survivor and Professor of Literature, and thank her for her friendship and support. Conversations with Irena Veisaitė on the Holocaust, and Jewish culture in Lithuania, helped me shape my thinking as I worked on this dissertation.

I especially thank Samuel Bak for his friendship, support, and for generously and sensitively sharing his insights on surviving the Holocaust in Lithuania. Sam helped me understand the nature of historical trauma experienced by Holocaust survivors. He also taught me about the power of post-traumatic growth through storytelling, writing, and art.

I would like to thank Dr. Mariana Pereira from the Cambridge Heritage Research Centre at Cambridge University for her insights and advice on how to gather and analyze heritage data through interviews with writers. I'm particularly grateful for Dr. Pereira's detailed explanations on how heritage and self-expression through literature are linked through new and exciting interdisciplinary methods that are being developed at the Cambridge Heritage Research Centre.

I am grateful to the following writers for taking the time to participate in interviews that enabled me to establish an understanding of the experiences, backgrounds, and worldviews of North American writers of Lithuanian heritage: Birutė Putrius, Samuel Bak, Kęstutis Nakas, Jon Landsbergis, Paul Landsbergis, Daiva Markelis, Rita Gabis, Silvia Foti, Audre Budrys, Ruta Sepetys, Milda DeVoe, Rimas Užgiris, Karolis Gintaras Žukauskas, Lina Ramona Vitkauskas, Irene Guilford, Antanas Sileika, Julija Šukys, Medeinė Liuda Tribinevičius, Jocelyn Bartkevičius, James Joseph Brown, Ellen Cassedy.

I'd like to thank the three reviewers who diligently wrote critical reports on this dissertation for the Vilnius University Doctoral Committee: Dr. Žydronė Kolevinskienė, Dr. Ingrida Ragaišienė, and Dr. Jadvyga Krūminienė.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Birutė Gudelienė for helping me navigate through every stage of paperwork preparation while working towards my dissertation defense.

Finally, I would like to thank the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies for the dissertation grant that enabled me to continue my research, travel to conduct interviews with North American writers of Lithuanian descent, and for the support I needed to work through the final stages of this dissertation. I'd also like to thank AABS for the travel grant that enabled me to present a chapter from this dissertation at the 2021 Baltic Studies Conference in Uppsala, Sweden.

PUBLICATIONS

Peer Reviewed Scholarly Publications by Laima Vincė Sruoginis

"Postmemory as historical reckoning: Coming to terms with a grandparent's complicity in the Holocaust: Rita Gabis, *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet* and Julija Šukys, *Siberian Exile*." *Journal of Baltic Studies,* Issue 2, Vol. 53 (2022)

"Two Interpretations—Two Continents: A Reading of Algirdas Landsbergis's Play, Five Posts in a Market Place." *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Issue 1, Vol. 53 (2022) DOI10.1080/01629778.2021.1989471

"A Question of Identity: Lithuanian American/Canadian Writers," *Lituanus*, Vol. 64 (2019)

"Catharsis Through Memory—Samuel Bak's *Painted in Words—A Memoir,"* Boston: Pucker Gallery, 2021.

Conferences

September 16 – 17, 2021
"Memory, Trauma and Recovery" International Interdisciplinary Conference (online).
University of Gdansk, Poland. Paper: "Catharsis and Memory in Samuel Bak's memoir, *Painted in Words.*"

September 1 – 4, 2021
Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies Conference, Uppsala, Sweden. Paper: "Postmemory, Historical Trauma, and Cultural Trauma in Literature by North American Writers of Lithuanian Heritage."

February 24 – 25, 2021
Second Postmemory and Contemporary World International Interdisciplinary Conference (online), University of Gdansk, Poland. Paper: "Writing by North American Writers of Lithuanian Descent as a Collective Body of Work."

September 16 – 18, 2019
Narratives of Forced Migration, University of Stirling, Scotland. Paper: "The Question of Identity: How Lithuanian American and Canadian Writers Self Identify."

March 30 – April 1, 2018
The Asian Conference on Arts and Humanities, IAFOR, Kobe, Japan. Paper: "The Microcosm Within the Macrocosm: How the Literature of a Small Country Fits Within a Global Context."

May 26 – 29, 2016
Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, University of Pennsylvania. Paper: "Researching and Writing the Lithuanian Experience."

Dissertation Grants and Awards

Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies Dissertation Grant, 2021: $3,500
Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies Doctoral Student Travel Grant, 2021: $1,000
University of Southern Maine, Professional Development Grant for Dissertation: $500
Vilnius University Doctoral Student Stipend, 2016 – 2020

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laima Vincė Sruoginis earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from Rutgers University in 1990 and a Master of Fine Arts in Writing from Columbia University in 1994. In 2013 she was awarded a Master of Fine Arts in Nonfiction from the University of New Hampshire. Laima Vincė Sruoginis was awarded a Fulbright grant in Writing in 1995 – 1997 and 2007 – 2011.

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

Vilniaus universiteto leidykla
Saulėtekio al. 9, III rūmai, LT-10222 Vilnius
El. p. info@leidykla.vu.lt, www.leidykla.vu.lt
Tiražas 15 egz.