IV Displacement and Integration

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"Memory of Migration – Migration of Memory": Essays of the Last Soviet Generation of Women Abroad

1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the essays that were published by the journal *LiteraruS* in Finland in 2017. *LiteraruS* is a literary magazine established in 2003 that publishes in Russian and Finnish. It has been supported financially by the Finnish Ministry of Education and intermittently by grants, also from Russia.[1] The editor in chief is Ljudmila Kol, herself an author with a Soviet Russian background having moved to Finland, and the editorial board consists of Finnish-Russian academics and literary persons. In 2016 the magazine organised an essay competition "Pamiat' migratsii – Migratsiia pamiati / Memory of Migration – Migration of Memory."[2] All 29 essays (including two as poems) were submitted from Finland, Sweden, Germany, France, Israel, USA, Denmark, Australia and Russia; 11 were written by men and 18 by women; the majority, 16 essays, came from Finland, of which 11 were written by women.

In this chapter, employing concepts of cultural and memory studies, we focus on the essays authored by women living mainly in Finland. They look back on their migrant experiences, those interpretations of events that the writing revives as personally important and worthy to be shared with others. The texts are analysed as discursively constructed, paying special attention to the interacting and changing processes of knowledge and memory, affects, values and expectations devoted especially to gender and to national formation and stereotypes.

In the chapter, we ask what is remembered in a moment when the past is explicitly invited back into the present day, and what personal and collective experiences are re-lived by different modes of memory work. We do this through close reading analysis of the transcultural map of memories and their shifting, un/certain and gendered nature (Neubauer and Geyer-Ryan 2000). We also highlight the material provided by "ordinary average people" ("obychnye srednestatisticheskie liudi", IM, 1), here by ex-Soviet women who have often been the object

1 The journal has not been published during 2024. The last volume is from December 2023.

2 Konkurs esse "Migratsiia pamiati – pamiat' migratsii". *LiteraruS – Literaturnoe slovo* 51, no. 2 (2016).

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of stereotyped tropes (Sarsenov 2008) and whose voices are often bypassed to focus on the migrant narratives adopted by literary professionals and public persons. Although taking part in a literary competition, the essayists provide privately motivated descriptions of subject histories that exceed any specific aesthetic programmes, simultaneously contributing to knowledge "from below" (Thompson 1978) of how perestroika came to affect the decision to emigrate. We are also interested in whether the "last Soviet generation" of women abroad think back on those Soviet efforts in terms of gender politics and multinational issues.

The essay competition was introduced and motivated by the organisers' questions:

- What was the most important for you in your past life when you got into a new environment and started "a new" life?
- What would you like to keep forever in your memory?
- Did your memories of the country you left and of your life there change over time?
- What do you like to remember about your former life?
- What would you like to forget?
- Did the memories of the past help or hinder you in living and adaptation in a new country and in a new culture?[3]

These questions are implicitly present and become part of how and what memories are reconstructed. Similarly to in oral history interviews, the writer recreates her memories in an intersubjective process that is entwined in a conversation between the individual with her "emotional baggage", i.e. her sense of self and the "interviewer" represented here by the guiding questions, drawing upon discursive formulations or recognisable public identities available to her from cultural resources (Abrams 2010, 54–55; Savolainen and Taavetti 2022, 18–19). Both the

3 The translations are our own if not otherwise stated.

- Что для Вас было самым важным из прошлой жизни, когда Вы попали в другие условия и начали другую жизнь?
- Что Вы хотели бы навсегда сохранить в памяти?
- Изменились ли со временем Ваши воспоминания о покинутой стране и о своем прошлом, прожитом в ней?
- Что Вы сейчас вспоминаете о своей прежней жизни?
- Что Вы предпочли бы забыть?
- Помогла или мешала Вам память о прошлом жить в новой стране, в новой культуре?

questions and the invitation in Russian to participate in the essay competition have an impact on writer and reader positions. It appears that the reader in this dialogue is expected to be familiar with the Soviet environment and to feel for the hardships caused by emigration from the USSR; without the essay writer giving much detailed clarification of culturally fixed terms, the reader is assumed to know Soviet performances and rituals of both high and popular culture, what is meant by the "Soviet way of life" ("sovetskii obraz zhizni"), to be a "Soviet person" ("sovetskii chelovek") or "Rodina". This shared projected reader position might also be a reason why most of the essayists do not go any deeper into the Soviet circumstances.

The competition made it possible for the writers to tell a story that they felt was worth telling. While looking back on their memories, the women ask how they became what they are now in the new country of residence. They reflect on their past to affirm their obviously difficult, even agonising decision to leave their native environment with its social networks. The memoirs consist of various time layers and narrative conventions that together bring about a "diachronic identity" as "a synthesis of time and identity [. . .] effectuated by memory" (Assmann 2008, 109). This means that

> memory is the past made present. The notion of a 'making present' has two important corollaries: first, that memory is a contemporary phenomenon, something that, while concerned with the past, happens in the present; and second, that memory is a form of work, working through, labor or action. (Rothberg 2009, 3–4)

The writers themselves acknowledge the palimpsest and confusing nature of memory which is seen as "a special structure that is not subjected to a human will" (RK, 4). Memory acts in its own and unpredictable way, like an "elf" ("Feia") moving "episodes of our past life" like pieces in a kaleidoscope (RK, 4);[4] it resembles a "puzzle" or a "library of our life" (IM, 1).[5] These writers point to the logic of memory that operates as a blend of conscious recalling and associative recognition (see Kihlstrom and Barnhardt 1993, 88–125). While participation in the contest requires the writers to become conscious of past events, so that they can be described to someone else, simultaneously, any associatively or conceptually related events and expressions of memory in the writing may not refer to factual episodes in the subject's life. It is thus not in our interest to ask whether the recollections are true or not, or if the events really happened, but to focus on memoirs

4 "[. . .] обособленная структура, которая не подвластна человеку. Может быть, ею управляет высшая субстанция? Фея . . . Фея Памяти? Иногда, [. . .] Фея может показать – как в калейдоскопе – эпизоды из прежней жизни."

5 "Память – это библиотека нашей жизни."

as present literary interpretations of the past migration modified by transcultural and gendered memories.

The invitation to recall the history of one's migration makes the writers participate in a group memory. Most of the writers were aged about 50 at the time of writing, so they represent, as Yurchak (2006, 31) terms it, "the last Soviet generation" who were born, grew up and were formed in the USSR just before the beginning of its collapse. They share a common "cultural life script" (Bernsten and Rubin 2004; Janssen and Haque 2015, 30; Vehkalahti and Jouhki 2022, 383–384) that consists of culturally shared knowledge about important events in the life course, anticipates what events and memories are favoured and expected to recall in early adulthood, and shapes how the events should be narrated and which narrative voices form the social and historical dialogue the writers take part in.

Despite the variety of present residence, the writers' common spatial past is in the Soviet Union, often Leningrad or Saint Petersburg and Moscow, as well as in the childhood landscape of the Soviet countryside. The most significant and the common linkage point for many of this generation is perestroika as an experience that is vital and not to be bypassed, marking the end of childhood and family communities:

> My good life was destroyed by perestroika. The 1990s. . . Much has already been forgotten, erased from memory. A time of general confusion, misunderstanding, survival. . . I remember my clear thought when I was travelling on the subway and saw women were standing in the underpass selling newspapers: "This is my future" [. . .] The future seemed hopelessly scarce and not very encouraging. (MS, 19)[6]

The writers share in collective images and narratives as "ordinary average people" (IM, 1; BE, 5) of the Soviet past and feel that they were part of something shared, which they coin "our country" ("nasha strana"). Perestroika as the dividing line becomes evident in the change in pronoun use from "we" ("my") to "I" ("ia"). When one is no longer a member of the familiar Soviet community, the break, as one recalls, causes the self-positioning as a single "I" separate from the state: "I had to decide what to do. No, not with the country, it's not my place to think about it. I need to decide what to do with myself" (RT, 23).[7]

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6 "Мою хорошую жизнь разрушила перестройка. 1990-е годы. . . Многое уже забылось, стерлось из памяти. Время всеобщей растерянности, непонимания, выживания. . . Я помню свою четкую мысль, когда ехала в метро и видела женщин в переходе, продающих газеты: 'Вот это мое будущее' [. . .] Будущее виделось беспросветно дефицитным и мало радующим."

7 "Надо было решать 'что делать?' Нет, не со страной, куда мне об этом думать. Надо решать, что делать мне с собой."

The essays practice common rhetorical rituals, display an inherited habitus and draw on repertoires of explicit and implicit knowledge apparent in the cultural memory of late socialism (Erll 2011; Assmann 1992; 2008; Yurchak 2006, 31). However different the experiences may be, the features recurring in the memoirs generate a common life script that includes nostalgic retrospections of childhood and of family community, memories of war, lack of mobility in the Soviet past, gaps in knowledge of both Soviet and Western societies and oblivion to historical events both in private and collective memory. The thematical contexts to be reconstructed in the common life script can be framed as following: reaching the decision to move; locating in-between time and space and recollecting in the maternal lineage.

2 Dead-end and Adaptation via Childhood Memories

The atmosphere of the memories shared in the essays is affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the following displacement. The essays confirm what several scholars have already stated: that it is the loss of the Motherland and the sense of displacement which characterise the collective post-Soviet identity (Sorvari 2022, 4–5; Oushakine 2009). The memories convey the perception of a dead-end and an experience of estrangement affected by migration and impacting the present identities. In most of the essays, emigration is economically motivated going back to the perestroika years, which are commonly seen as “chaos and collapse of the familiar world” (IM, 1; also PT, 3). Other reasons given for migration, typical for women, include marriage, especially in Finland where “Russian-Finnish marriages are relatively common” (Pöllänen and Davydova-Minguet 2017, 207). Besides that, four of 11 essays were written by Ingrian Finns. From 1991 until 2016 the Law of Return enabled 35,000 Ingrian Finns to move from Russia and Estonia to Finland, where they were eligible for automatic residence permits (Savolainen 2022, 191; Rinta-Tassi 2016). Nearly all essays mention the perestroika years as causing a profound existential change in quotidian life: lost jobs and salaries, breaks in professional careers, shortage of food, queuing to organise everyday issues, selling various things on diffuse marketplaces to overcome the collapsed infrastructure. Even so, no matter how hard it was economically, the decision to move abroad required an individual to overcome both psycho-social barriers and ideological prejudices associated with what Yurchak (2006, 158–161)

calls the "imaginary West": "I bought a cheap tour to Helsinki, at least to see how people live there, in the 'Wild West'" (IM, 1).[8]

Among the Ingrian Finns, migration to Finland is perceived as "coming home" and reconnecting to one's historical and family "roots": "in my declining years I turned to my Ingrian roots – in religion, by adopting the Lutheran religion, and later I changed my place of residence – I moved from St Petersburg to Finland where they have an understanding for the related people" (OL, 13).[9]

What is in common to nearly all these writers – irrespective of ethnic background – is the impression that they were taken by surprise and were unprepared to confront migration, not least how little they knew about "the Wild West" ("dikii zapad") which was, as Yurchak pointed out, an "imaginary" one:

> We don't know what awaits us in foreign countries. We don't know yet. . . we still don't know. . . "overseas" countries attract us with their unknown, incomprehensibility and almost unreality. They seem sweet, like forbidden fruit. . . There, oranges fall from the sky, the paths are covered with rose petals, and dollars grow on the trees. [. . .] We hope that there. . . behind the border fence the grass is greener and the strawberries sweeter. (RT, 23)[10]

One writer confesses that she "was not ready for the realities of a new life in a new country" and recalls being "surprised while understanding that everything is arranged differently here" in Finland (BE, 5).[11] Another writes: "we were going, as in that fairy tale, 'there, I don't know where'" (KM, 6).[12] The idea behind the decision to move is rather like "an indefinite vague elusive dream of a wonderful evening in a wonderful place" (OL, 13).[13]

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8 "[Я] купила дешевую путевку в Хельсинки, хоть посмотреть как там на 'Диком западе' люди живут."

9 "я все-таки обратилась на склоне лет к своим ингерманландским корням – в религии, приняв лютеранскую веру, ну а затем поменяла все-таки и место своего пребывания – переехала из Питера в Финляндию, где к родственному народу относятся со всем пониманием."

10 "Мы не знаем, что ждет нас в чужих странах. Пока не знаем. . . все еще не знаем. . . 'заморские' страны манят неизвестностью, непостижимостью и почти нереальностью. Кажутся сладкими, как запретный плод. . . Там с неба падают апельсины, дорожки устланы лепестками роз, а доллары растут на деревьях. [. . .] Мы надеемся, что там. . . за пограничным забором трава зеленее и клубника слаще."

11 "[Я] оказалась не готова к реалиям новой жизни в новой стране. [. . .] удивленное понимание, что здесь все устроено по-другому."

12 "мы ехали, как в той сказке, 'туда, не знаю, куда'."

13 "[Свершилась] моя неопределенная зыбкая мечта о чудесном вечере в чудесном месте."

The memoirists do not go deeper into explanations for being unprepared. The reasons behind the confusion are rather laconically commented on: "We got tired. Tired of the changes in the country, of stupidity, uselessness, futility of life" (RT, 23).[14] Although almost all writers mention perestroika and the coup attempt in August 1991, political agency is assigned only to the "leader", i.e. the president and the political elite that "artificially created perestroika" and fundamentally transformed citizens' lives (IM, 1). The "average" Soviet citizen is provided with no political agency: "You were not supposed to be interested. Can't be discussed. What for? Sit more quietly, live more calmly. And keep your head down. Be a moth" (RT, 23).[15]

Cautious hints of criticism are not addressed to political leaders, but to the myth-loaded Russian national character:

> Russian people are amazing, because they are always waiting for a miracle, but no one warned them that Europe no longer needs miracles. In general, nobody warns them about anything: neither about the differences in legislation, nor about the complexity of the language, nor about the difficulties of integrating into everyday life. (PT, 3)[16]

The individual decision-making is delegated to higher forces, even such as the famous Russian "Fate" ("sud'ba"): "Thanks to Fate which gave us various lessons of life and thanks to the Superior Forces that helped to survive and to gain life experience" (TS, 2).[17]

The Soviet past is provided only with a brief overview and covered mostly by silence, even on the memories of ethnic repression. A writer with an Ingrian background comments on her own attitude:

> if they even told me how the former owners returned to their old country houses, or if I learned from my grandmother or aunt that before the war my Finnish grandfather disappeared to "nowhere," I took it for granted, like everything weird in our life that cannot be explained. [. . .] Nobody explained to me, for example, where the inhabitants of the empty fields of the former peasant estates had gone, why there was no one to repair the once

14 "Мы устали. Устали от перемен в стране, от бестолковости, бесполезности, бесперспективности жизни."

15 "Было не положено интересоваться. Нельзя обсуждать. А зачем? Тише сиди, спокойней живи. И не высовывайся. Будь мотыльком."

16 "Русские люди прекрасны, потому что всегда ждут чуда, но их никто не предупредил, что Европе давно уже не нужны чудеса. Их вообще никто ни о чём не предупреждает: ни об отличиях в законодательстве, ни о сложности языка, ни о трудностях устройства в повседневную жизнь."

17 "Спасибо Судьбе, преподнёсшей различные уроки жизни и спасибо Высшим Силам, которые помогли справиться и приобрести жизненный опыт."

> paved road through the swamp and many other issues in our life that it was preferable not to talk about at that time. (OL, 13)[18]

The absent – repressed – past is transmitted into the present in images of disappearance and emptiness, and history likens a blank page left beyond explanation that makes that life seem "weird", as the writer recalls the past. Traumatic events of the earlier generation – disappearance of family members and a national, here Ingrian Finnish, minority – are remembered or, rather as Hirsch puts it, traumatic history is mediated not by recall but engulfed in silence, and thus passed on only fragmentarily by the "imaginative investment, projection and creation" of postmemory (Hirsch 2012, 5). The imaginative "weirdness" is a reconstruction shaped in the process that Hirsch calls postmemory of the generation that has grown up with overwhelming inherited memories of what preceded their birth: here, the collective repression of the historical events and suffering caused by Russification and ethnic purges during Soviet history is transformed into what exceeds comprehension and becomes "weird in our life that cannot be explained".

While migration destabilises identity, it can also be a motor of renewal. Loss of the familiar community in a strange environment may make one's adult life feel fragile: "Being a lady of an elegant age, I kind of felt myself a child. I was depressed and even thought about getting away from all the difficulties by cutting all the knots in one fell swoop" (IAL, 16).[19]

Disappointment and disillusion alternate with the need to cope with the new situation after migration. Despite the challenges, migration is seen as a promise of hope, "a dream" of a better future, both materially and spiritually, of a "liberation", "freedom", and "limitless possibilities" (RK, 4). As one writer formulates it: "Nowadays I allow myself a lot of what I didn't do in my earlier life" (IAL, 16).[20]

While change can be liberating, the cultural life script also holds fast to the past and revives Soviet ideals, such as making a virtue of hardships as essential

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18 "если мне и говорили о возвращении в старые деревенские дома бывших их владельцев или я узнавала от бабушки или тети об исчезновении перед войной в 'никуда' моего финского дедушки, я воспринимала это как должное, как все непонятное в жизни, которое нельзя объяснить. [. . .] никто и не растолковывал, например, куда делись жители пустующих участков бывших крестьянских поместий, почему больше некому починить выложенную когда-то дорогу через болото и многие другие недосказанности нашей тогдашней жизни."

19 "Будучи дамой весьма элегантного возраста, я как бы возвратилась в детство. Я была в депрессии и даже подумывала об уходе от всех трудностей, разрубив сразу, одним махом, все узлы."

20 "Теперь я многое могу себе позволить, из того, чего никогда не делала в прежней жизни."

to constant self-development into an "all-round personality" (Kelly et al. 1998, 9). Life becomes a never-ending process of self-education in which learning to live with the migration is only one phase: "I continue my learning of life, my lesson in the new country, in the new culture. By getting to know something new and unusual, I become a more multifaceted, highly developed Personality" (TS, 2).[21]

The nostalgic mode affects the language, and strongly emotional style of writing, influenced by an ambiguous state of mind:

> I sometimes feel very sad because of being a migrant. For what reason? I do not know. Maybe because of a lack of stability in a state of being "in transition," maybe because of some kind of constant lack of the *peace of mind*. There is no answer to this question. I'm feeling sorry for something that no longer exists, or maybe never existed. (RK, 4)[22]

In the meantime, hardships, moments of loneliness and despair, are compensated for by positive childhood memories within a shared cultural life script, applied to make sense of one's history. The chronology of the migration story is often disrupted by the accent on childhood and youth. Childhood memories not only regenerate the atmosphere of emotionally important situations from a distant past but also include rather detailed and vivid images typical of "flashbulb memories" in autobiographical memory (Vehkalahti and Jouhki 2022, 379; Conway 1995; Brown and Kulik 1977). By highlighting their childhood experiences the memoirists draw a clear distinction from the public memory and emphasise the private essence of their memories. The particularly bright and tangible memories are associated with bodily experiences and the five senses: childhood with the "sounds of crickets", "the noise of a car, tractor, neighing of a horse, mooing, crowing, cackling" in the background (OL, 13), "the smell of baking, the smell of a pie that grandma is about to take out of the oven" (RT, 23),[23] the sweet taste of candy like "Korovka" and "Rakovye sheiki" (RK, 4), and touch, like "the rough and warm hand of my grandmother, straightening a strand of my hair that had fallen out from under the winter hat she knitted. And a mended woollen scarf, the warmth

21 "Я продолжаю проходить своё обучение жизни, свой урок в новой стране, в новой культуре. Я становлюсь более разносторонней, развитой Личностью, знакомясь с новым и необычным."

22 "Мне как мигранту иногда бывает очень грустно. Отчего? Сама не знаю. Может от нехватки стабильности в состоянии 'in transition', может от какого-то постоянного отсутствия покоя. На этот вопрос нет ответа. Я грущу по чему-то, чего уже нет, а может никогда и не было."

23 "запах сдобы, запах пирога, который вот-вот достанет бабушки из духовки . . ."

of which I have felt all my life" (RT, 23).[24] Even the whole native country has its own smell: "My homeland is a pie. The pie that grandma baked. I will never confuse the smell of her pies baking with any other. And *vareniki* with cherries, and red juice of cherries flows down your hands, when you are just taking a bite . . ." (RT, 23).[25]

Memories are designed in bodily motifs whereby the body becomes a discursive figure located in a gendered environment. The site of childhood memories is the family home with mothers and grandmothers as the main providers, which indicates their central role in the past, still present in the moment of recollection. The historical present tense, as it is applied in the essays, creates an illusion of the past merging with the present, and relocates the memoirists in the past world of childhood harmony.

3 In-between Time and Space

Displacement transforms the memoirists' relationship to Soviet discourses but the memoirs also show that the national cultural script resists forgetting. Speaker positions and the language are affected by two narrative discourses – the literary emigrant narrative and the re-adoption of the authoritative Soviet discourse. Reference to Russian literary emigrant-authorities, particularly Tsvetaeva, regenerates a well-known dialogue about cultural identity belongings. Although they are privately motivated descriptions of subject histories, the memoirs are entries in a literary competition. The context has an impact on the topics and "literary" language and style in which the emigrant's life story is expected to be told. Images are more ideal than real and follow the Tsvetaevan tradition of writing on "homesickness" (toska po rodine). One memoirist describes her experiences of "loneliness in a crowd" referring to Tsvetaeva:

> After writing these lines, I read in Marina Tsvetaeva's letters about her life in emigrant Berlin in 1922: "It's possible to live without people at all. A little like in the next world." I don't want to compare the intensity and fury of Marina Ivanovna's passions with my own, but,

24 "шершавая ладонь бабушки, поправляющей мне прядь волос, выбившуюся из-под вязанной ею же зимней шапочки. И заштопанный шерстяной платок, тепло которого я ощущаю всю жизнь."

25 "Еще моя Родина это пирог. Пирог, который пекла бабушка. Запах сдобы ее пирогов никогда не спутаю ни с каким другим. И вареники с вишней, из которых течет красный сок по рукам, стоит только чуть откусить . . ."

> probably, emigration has something in common for everyone – uselessness, isolation, restlessness, and loneliness in the crowd. (IAL, 16)[26]

In general, the language of the essays is the language of the last Soviet generation and the authoritative discourse of the late Soviet period with a performative shift of irony, when "it is not what is said that matters, but how it is said" (Yurchak 2006, 128–131). Standard formulae are widely adapted to illustrate the harmony of the past life. Several authors describe their life before migration as that of a "self-made person"[27] with an emphasis on those very ideals of the "Soviet way of life" (sovetskii obraz zhizni) provided with a superior way of "culturedness" (kul'turnost') as "a semiofficial order [. . .] that referred to the realm of everyday practice" (Kelly et al. 1998, 8–9). A memoirist recalls:

> I graduated from the institute, worked as an engineer, constantly engaged in self-improvement: I took courses in astrology, cutting and sewing, and psychology. I enjoyed aerobics and swimming. I loved my mother very much. I lived in harmony with my husband, made plans for the future with him. (IM, 1)[28]

"Self-education" and "self-improvement" including work, sports, family, and faith in a bright future were the normative criteria that made an ideal Soviet life and made it easier for one to "become a more versatile, developed Personality" (TS, 2).[29] Migrant women in their present environments often have difficulties finding work that corresponds to their earlier academic education and professional careers; they recall the life before perestroika in a positive way and highlight education and career combined with family.[30] The nostalgic emphasis may indicate

26 "Уже после написания этих строчек в письмах Марины Цветаевой прочла следующее о ее жизни в эмигрантском Берлине в 1922 году: 'Можно совсем без людей. Немножко как на том свете'. Не берусь сравнивать накал и яростность страстей Марины Ивановны со своими, но, вероятно, в эмиграции для всех есть что-то общее – это ненужность, оторванность, неприкаянность и одиночество в толпе."

27 cf. educated (obrazovannyi), well-bred (vospitannyi), cultured (kul'turnyi). Kelly et al. 1998, 7.

28 "Закончила институт, работала на предприятии инженером, постоянно занималась самосовершенствованием: окончила курсы астрологии, кройки и шитья, психологии. С удовольствием занималась аэробикой и плаваньем. Очень любила свою маму. Жила в ладу с мужем, строили с ним планы на будущее."

29 "[Я] становлюсь более разносторонней, развитой Личностью."

30 Pöllänen and Davydova-Minguet (2017) point out that in their migration research: "The data has clearly proved that the labour market position of Russian immigrant women is precarious, and this has an ambivalent influence on their everyday lives [. . .] the women were unhappy with their situation as being excluded or being on the margins of the labour market. Many women explained that participation in the labour market would mean an increase in self-confidence and more active social networks."

that their situation has changed for the worse but also that the ideals of "self-improvement" are resistant and long-lasting.

The language continues the late Soviet of the 1970s and early 1980s discourse that, according to Yurchak (2006, 128, 131–133), contributed to the internal deterritorialisation of the authoritarian discourse and the emergence of the widespread principle of living "in-between" (*vnenakhodimost'*) as a mode of life. It is easy to distinguish expressions and clichés that adopt the ironic shift so typical for the Soviet discourse: beyond the "iron curtain" the West is both "wild" and "decaying" (PT, 3), one travels to a country of "reindeer and northern lights" (IM, 1), moves "from a country of collapsed socialism to 'capitalism with a human face'" (MS, 19), "developed socialism" transforms into "underdeveloped capitalism" (RT, 23) and the president replaces the "party as our helmsman" (IM, 1), while one's "principles and convictions [. . .] did not coincide with the 'general line' of the Swedish authorities" (MS, 19).

What is clearly expressed in several memoirs is the revival in migration of the cultural life script of living "in-between" that is experienced as living "between two worlds, where the one is not yet mine, and the other – not any more mine" (BE,5).[31] Whether we read this as affected by Soviet legacy or not,[32] the memoirists clearly position themselves between past and present, here and there, inside and outside the present society. This habitus of an observer recalls the Tsvetaevan idea of "loneliness in a crowd" (odinochestvo v tolpe) reformulated in an essay as follows: "memory with all its appearance makes me understand that reality is not where my body now exists. Reality is where my soul resides – in memories. In them my true life pulsates with every vein, every blood" (GN, 25).[33]

4 Merging of Memories Along the Maternal Lineage

The concept of *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 1989) as a space and place framed as a container of memory has been criticised for actively constructing national memory within the nation-state as a social framework of remembrance (Erll 2011, 7). The

31 "в положении человека 'между двух миров', где один мир уже не мой, а второй – еще не мой?"

32 In the sense of being "vne" according to Yurchak (2006, 130–131).

33 "[. . .] память всем своим видом даёт мне понять, что реальность не там, где сейчас существует моё тело. Она там, где пребывает моя душа – в воспоминаниях. В них моя истинная жизнь пульсирует каждой жилкой своей, каждой кровинкой."

essays confirm the idea posited by Erll (2011, 11) that: "Memories do not hold still – on the contrary, they seem to be constituted first of all through movement." While acknowledging that national self-images may change, we recognise that the personal memories in these essays bear witness to what Benedict Anderson has coined "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) – conceived by the memoirists as representations of a Russian mentality.

In this context, the imagined community is the (Soviet) Russian Motherland (Rodina, Rossija). A strong emphasis on the Russian language, Russian/Soviet customs, traditions and cultural legacy together creates the socially constructed community of imaginary Russianness, allowing people to perceive themselves as members of a nationally coherent community. This imaginary rests on the fixed past that is preserved and reembodied in the sequence of generations by what Assmann calls "cultural memory", continually illuminating the changing present (Assmann 1988, 11, and 2008, 110–112; also, Welzer 2008, 14). Memoirs as texts of and contributors to the cultural memory that is strongly organised and ceremonial not only keep the past alive but consolidate the image of itself that the collective society wishes to pass on. The significant "fixed points" in the history that society narrates (Assmann 1988) tell us not only about the last (Soviet) generation but also about the controlled cultural memory of (Soviet) Russian history that has been cherished and cultivated by a rigid canon of texts, rituals and memorials. Well-known rituals and symbols of both high and popular culture stand for important and shared events: for instance, Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* was played on Soviet television on the day of the August coup in 1991 and thus became an omen of governmental instability. Other works in the canon of shared cultural memory include Soviet films such as *Letjat zhuravli* and *Buratino* (LIu, 20), the nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary classics (Pushkin, Esenin) and the legacy of Russian literary migrants (Tsvetaeva, Nabokov). Popular culture including Soviet wartime songs and anniversaries such as Victory Day and Lenin's birthday (LIu, 20), celebrated by the pioneers, contribute to the common memory. Also, the pre-revolutionary architecture of St Petersburg is admired, and oral myths are passed on about both the Second World War and everyday life, such as the idealised "helping hand" among Soviet neighbours. At the break between subject positions (from "We" to "I"), some parts of Soviet cultural memory that remained intact for decades lost their truth value: the "Soviet Motherland" that was conceived of as lasting forever loses its mythical nature of "multinational equality" and becomes confusing:

> In the past, "we" had the "Soviet Motherland": I grew up in the USSR – a country with an Iron Curtain [. . .] In the old days I couldn't even imagine that Belarus and Ukraine, Latvia and Estonia are independent states. (IM, 1)[34]

Despite national self-reflection, the idea of a single and unique Russian culture becomes internalised in national mentality and memory. It favours "social homogenization" (Welsch 1999, 194) which does not consider the inner complexity of cultural formations, generates "ethnic consolidation" implemented as a supremacy of Russianness and Russian cultural legacy within the multiethnic Soviet state, and is characterised by "intercultural delimitation" which means that culture is seen as separatory, generating binaries such as Russia versus the West. The internalisation of ethnic uniqueness may be felt so essential that it becomes existential, and one may feel its loss as "betrayal" or even virtual "death", seen with a mother who emigrated from the USSR and mourns her daughter's assumed rootless cosmopolitism:

> [she] will no longer be able to think as a Russian, that is, with *Russian thoughts*. [. . .] And this is death. Not only mine, but also of all those who gave birth to me. My parents – father and mother. And all, all, all those who came before them. Grandfathers and great-grandfathers. A long list of Russian people whose code has broken. Because I became an immigrant. Although this is not my fault, but my misfortune. I left but didn't leave. From moving the body in space, my subconscious has not changed. But my daughter. . . [she] understands Hegel, but not Babel. (RT, 23)[35]

The concept of culture is constructed upon the assumption of an isomorphy between territory, social formation, mentality and memories. A conflict arises when the carriers of memories move across borders. While adjusting to a new environment, the mind begins attempting to unify its memory culture. It seems that when both migrants and memories travel, the narrative of a nationally unified memory tends to grow stronger and becomes a means of compensating for the loss and felt estrangement of being an "outsider" in the new country: "In my memory of St Petersburg, I will always keep the good education I received there,

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34 "Раньше у нас у всех была 'Советская Родина'. Я росла в СССР – стране с 'железным занавесом'. [. . .] В прежние времена даже придумать не могла бы что Белоруссия и Украина, Латвия и Эстония самостоятельные государства."

35 "думать по-русски, то есть *русскими мыслями*, она уже не сумеет. [. . .] И в этом смерть. Не только моя, но и всех тех, кто меня родил. Моих родителей – отца и матери. И всех, всех, всех тех, кто были до них. Дедов и прадедов. Длинного списка русских людей, код которых прервался. Потому что я стала эмигранткой. Хотя в этом не вина, а беда моя. Я уехала, но не оторвалась. От перемещения тела в пространстве мое подсознание не изменилось. А вот дочь. . . [она] понимает Гегеля, но не понимает Бабеля."

the beauty and grandeur of the architecture of its buildings, cultural heritage, strength, and power of the Russian nation" (TS, 2).[36]

The essays not only confirm the memories shared by the cohort of late Soviet women abroad but also show that "the discourse about the importance of the generational experience is widespread and powerful", especially when we deal with Russian culture, according to Yurchak (2006, 31). In all these memoirs, the lineage of memory is formed down the female line – from grandmother to mother, aunt and daughter. This phenomenon confirms the centrality and double meaning of Russian motherhood as the symbolic Motherland, referring to the nation as a metaphorical family, on the one hand, and the mother as "the binding force" (Hellberg-Hirn 1998, 112, 116) within the Russian family, on the other. The lineage of mothers and grandmothers is where communicative memory is passed on and activated by the daughters recalling their past everyday life. This memory is non-institutional in character and located in an interactive praxis of everyday communication. Unlike institutional, cultural memory, communicative memory does not know any "fixed points" but its time horizon changes within communication that is close to everyday life (Assmann 1988, 10, 11, 13; Welzer 2008, 13–14) where the mother is the very "focus of reverence and affection", as Billington (1970, 19–20) defines the Russian family hierarchy. She is the embodiment in the discourse about the Motherland that the daughters have left behind: "So where does the Motherland begin? Everyone has one's own answer to this question. Me too [. . .] My motherland is my mother" (RT, 23).[37]

When the writers recall the past, their nostalgia concerns primarily their mothers and grandmothers: "[I have] an incredibly strong thirst to return there to meet with my relatives. Not even my younger self, but especially, with my mother and grandmother" (RT, 23).[38] Mother means childhood memories of the "maternal warm palm" (GN, 25), familiarity and a safe place at home with the mother cooking and doing dishes (MS, 19). She is the bright symbol of the past: "if I could really go back to the past, to that past. . . no, of course not, I do not want that life [. . .] But my mother and grandmother. . . how I want to go to them!!!" (RT, 23)[39]

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36 "В памяти о Петербурге останется навсегда полученное хорошее образование, красота и величие архитектурных построек, культурное наследие, сила и мощь русской нации."

37 "Так с чего начинается Родина? У каждого свой ответ на этот вопрос. У меня тоже. . . [. . .] Моя Родина, это моя мама."

38 "яростная жажда туда вернуться из-за встречи с родными. Даже не с собой молодой. А именно с мамой и бабушкой."

39 "[. . .] если бы я действительно могла вернуться в прошлое, в то прошлое. . . нет, конечно, я не хочу той жизни [. . .] Но мама и бабушка. . . как же хочется к ним!!!"

The affective quotations indicate the emotional hardships caused by emigration and the break away, not only from the mother but the extended Russian family, often including siblings and grandparents (Pöllänen and Davydova-Minguet 2017, 206): "I didn't yet quite understand that I was leaving there, in my homeland, the main treasure – my mother, sister, and her children" (KM, 6).[40]

In several essays, emigration abroad is formulated in relation to a break away from one's mother. Simultaneously, the mother is also the authority who sends the daughter abroad to look for a better life: "my mother says to me: "Maybe you should try to go to Finland, get a job" [. . .] I conscientiously told my husband and mother all the information received from the teacher [. . .] Fate itself dictated through the mouth of my mother what I should do" (IM, 1).[41]

Due to the intense relationship between mothers and daughters, the "torment of separation" from the mother is almost the only situation which "eats away" the heart of the daughter (GN, 25). Separation from the mother is filled not only with sorrow but also the daughter's bitterness and guilt at paying too high a price for a better life abroad. Mothers' experiences and life stories have an impact on daughters who feel unable to compensate for society's "injustice" ("nespravedlivost'") faced by their mothers, for instance if they were not provided with an apartment promised by the state (IM, 1).

From their mothers, the daughters hear their family history that can hardly be imagined without mentioning the Second World War and the Siege of Leningrad (BE, 5). Mothers' stories and recollections as part of the communicative memory fill the gaps in silenced histories, especially about the ethnic terror and deportations of Ingrian Finnish families. Women – grandmothers, mothers and aunts – act as mediators, conserving and passing on the knowledge and memory of the ethnic family history, cultural tradition and religion that all helped the daughters to assimilate in Finland. A memoirist refers to the dominant role of Russian and the disappearance of minority languages:

> My aunt explained to me that the picture tells us about the celebration of Christmas among Finns (but they took me to the Russian church, and it looks different). My aunt sometimes sang not in Russian and said that these were the prayers of her people – the local Finns, but she did not teach me her language, only a few phrases. And my mother sang along with her

40 "Я еще не понимала, что оставляю на родине главное сокровище: маму, сестру, ее детей."

41 "моя мамочка мне говорит: «Может, тебе попробовать поехать в Финляндию, устроиться на работу. [. . .] Сама судьба продиктовала устами моей мамы, что я должна сделать."

> when she came to the village. She told me that I was Russian through my father, and so far, one language was enough for me. (OL, 13)[42]

The daughters, the present migrants, grew up with inherited memories and narratives. Their own life stories risk being displaced by those of their ancestors, as Hirsch (2012, 5) warns us, but as these essays also show, postmemory has productive potential to extend beyond transgenerational family history and to work through collective national traumas. Through the communicative memory mediated by their grandmothers and mothers, the daughters as writers of these essays reconstruct the gaps in remembered collective and cultural memory.

5 Conclusions

The memoirs are affected by loss and unanticipated events that make the migrants ill-prepared to adjust to their new context of living. Learned suspicion about the “Wild West” corresponds with the political circumstances in Soviet society that cut off its citizens behind the Iron Curtain. Respectively, the memoirists do not reflect on the economic and political collapse of the USSR. Decision-making, including the decision to leave, is delegated outside one’s own agency, be it to the political elite, some supernatural agency of Fate or even one’s mother. Emigration from the Motherland is equated with spiritual abandonment, even with virtual death, and a sense of nostalgia, guilt and bitterness. The break from the Motherland is far from easy. The bond to the past is less politically than mentally motivated, which becomes obvious in how the values and practices of the Soviet set of “kul’turnost’” (Kelly and Volkov 1998) or cultural values that were integrated into everyday life as basic knowledge of individual identity still affect life abroad – more than three decades after the end of the Soviet Union.

The memoirs contribute to a socially constructed and imagined community of emigrants that perceives itself as part of a group, the last Soviet generation (Anderson 1991, 6–7). The memoirs share largely what is perceived as “average” in the “Soviet way of life” yet evoke what was split off and repressed in the country’s history, here especially the ethnic repressions that were hushed up but later became public knowledge. As other memory scholars have pointed out when in-

42 “Тетя мне объяснила, что картинка рассказывает про встречу Рождества у финнов, а меня водили в русскую церковь, и она выглядит иначе. Тетя пела иногда не по-русски и говорила, что это молитвы ее народа – местных финнов, но меня своему языку не учила, только несколько фраз. И мама подпевала ей, когда приезжала в деревню. Она мне сказала, что я русская по отцу и пока мне хватит одного языка.”

terviewing Soviet generations on their history, "[p]eople's silence gave an illusory unity to collective memory: Everyone's experience was made to seem the same" (Alpern-Engel and Posadskaya-Vanderbeck 1998, 2). While this illusion of the Soviet commonality slowly vanishes, in the new country a new conflict emerges between the travelling memory and the boost to one's Russian identity in migration. Adherence to the Soviet past may provide compensatory power, especially in moments of estrangement, but the compensatory idea of a separate Russian culture with overwhelming potential is implicated in idealised memories. The backward focus corresponds with the rhetoric of standing in-between times and spaces, indicating an ambiguous place in one's present life.

Memories of childhood further compensate for the losses of emigration by anchoring the identity and life story, having a therapeutic effect in a moment of uncertainty. The political space of the Soviet past is replaced by the social space of childhood, indicating safety and refuge. The illusions change places; the earlier imaginary West is now replaced by the imaginary Soviet childhood. Childhood memories come up in several memoirs: do displacement and multidirectional memory activate the memoirists to return to the family history and its silenced stories? Memories of family histories bring daughters, mothers, and grandmothers onto the stage of collective history and make visible a distinct remembrance community of women. Yet, the maternal figures who play an important role as symbols of stability of the past are absent since they are left behind – a loss that engenders deep sorrow in the recalling mind of the adult daughters in migration.

This gendered coded remembering in the female lineage of recalling carries on interactive communicative memory and challenges ceremonial cultural memory. Transgenerational family memory fills in the gaps, including what is unpleasant to recall – injustice, ethnic deportations and losses, especially among the Ingrian Finns. Merging and partly competing memories give rise to confusion, both confirming and destabilising what was considered trustworthy in the past. Since the daughters' viewpoint is mainly on childhood and youth, they lack the time and space to recall their lives as adult women. The retrospective focus on childhood years may partly explain why the essays shy away from women's issues and the gender-biased Soviet policy which affected the everyday lives of the daughters, their mothers and their grandmothers.

Family memory awakens alongside cultural memory when private memoirs become part of multilayered temporalities. However fragile personal memories are in the face of the "frozen" (Yurchak 2006, 266) authoritative memory and the long history of silence, they can fill in the gaps and reconnect the temporal discontinuity created by oblivion and silence. When the material basis of the collective identity based on the past (Soviet) "We" is vanishing, the personal essays on

migration formulate new knowledge of the shared past that has become a contested object of memory work. Thereby these women's individual essays contribute to and reshape collective memory of the Soviet past.

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