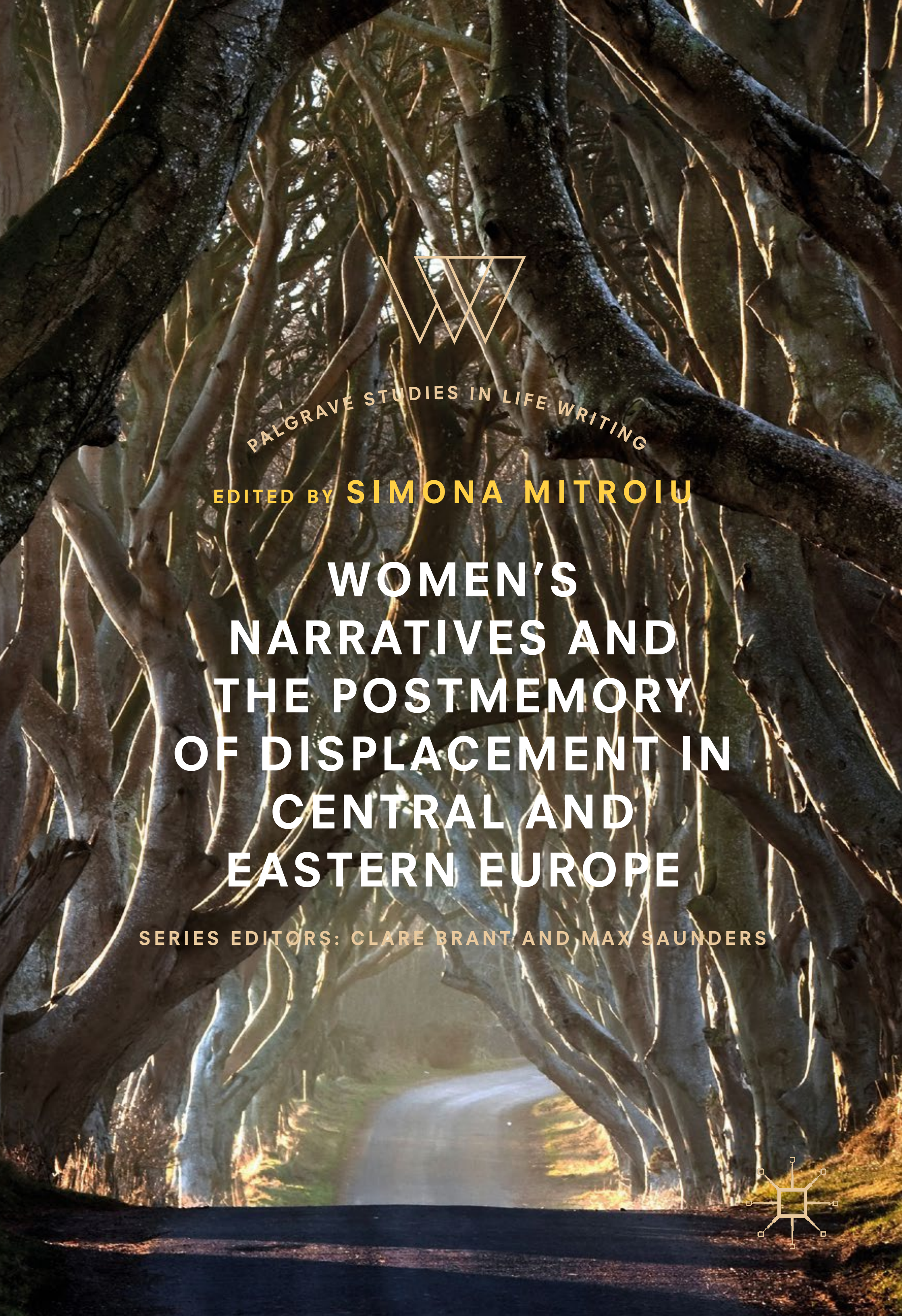

PALGRAVE STUDIES IN LIFE WRITING

EDITED BY **SIMONA MITROIU**

WOMEN'S NARRATIVES AND THE POSTMEMORY OF DISPLACEMENT IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

SERIES EDITORS: CLARE BRANT AND MAX SAUNDERS

Palgrave Studies in Life Writing

Series Editors
Clare Brant
Department of English
King's College London
London, UK

Max Saunders
Department of English
King's College London
London, UK

This series features books that address key concepts and subjects, with an emphasis on new and emergent approaches. It offers specialist but accessible studies of contemporary and historical topics, with a focus on connecting life writing to themes with cross-disciplinary appeal. The series aims to be the place to go to for current and fresh research for scholars and students looking for clear and original discussion of specific subjects and forms; it is also a home for experimental approaches that take creative risks with potent materials.

The term ‘Life Writing’ is taken broadly so as to reflect the academic, public and global reach of life writing, and to continue its democratic tradition. The series seeks contributions that address contexts beyond traditional territories – for instance, in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. It also aims to publish volumes addressing topics of general interest (such as food, drink, sport, gardening) with which life writing scholarship can engage in lively and original ways, as well as to further the political engagement of life writing especially in relation to human rights, migration, trauma and repression, sadly also persistently topical themes. The series looks for work that challenges and extends how life writing is understood and practised, especially in a world of rapidly changing digital media; that deepens and diversifies knowledge and perspectives on the subject, and which contributes to the intellectual excitement and the world relevance of life writing.

More information about this series at
http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/15200

Simona Mitroiu
Editor

Women's Narratives and the Postmemory of Displacement in Central and Eastern Europe

palgrave
macmillan

Editor
Simona Mitroiu
Department of Interdisciplinary Research
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University
Iasi, Romania

Palgrave Studies in Life Writing
ISBN 978-3-319-96832-2 ISBN 978-3-319-96833-9 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96833-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018951599

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2018
This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.
The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.
The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: Stephen Emerson / Alamy Stock Photo

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

PREFACE

The idea of this book developed while gathering material for my last editorial project *Life Writing and Politics of Memory in Eastern Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Working together with some wonderful and very talented researchers on the topics of life narratives, I was struck by the scarcity of the women's narratives associated with the recent past memory studies in Central and Eastern Europe. I was left wondering about the role of women's narratives and their place in the context of public memory discourse. The second personal trigger was the latest public discussions related to migration and refugee status and some Eastern European countries' reluctance in assisting the refugees. Some questions began to arouse, related to displacement, coming to terms with the recent past, postmemory and alternative narratives of the past. What is the background of the life narratives of displacement and migration in Central and Eastern European countries? And how was the process of dealing with the recent past of the Second World War and its aftermath processed at the individual level? These questions triggered more others evolving around the connection between displacement, empathy and alternative narratives. Besides, the concept of active and engaged listener of the past narratives began to shape my research aim. Is the fact that women's stories of displacement occupy such a small place in the collective memory discourse affecting the current situation in Central and Eastern Europe? And how can we move forward and explore this area where memory and postmemory connection become embedded in personal life narratives? Furthermore, what forms of expression were chosen in dealing with the past displacement? Having in mind the topic of women's narratives and after preliminary discussion with some of my previous collaborators (Hannah Kliger, Katarzyna Kwapisz Williams and Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper—who continually offered me their encouragement and support), I started to distribute a call for chapters in 2016 and to collect the scientific community feedback. The idea of this collaborative editorial project triggered various appreciations and many researchers announced their interest and support; some of them fully involved themselves in writing chapters and sustaining this common project (Sasha Colby, Alina Sufaru). Unfortunately, many of those involved from the beginning in this common project or shortly during its many stages were not able to continue working with us for various reasons. Nevertheless, we learned tremendously from our scientific encounters and I personally was able to continue this project with the grace of their continuous support. In 2016, I participated at the IABA Conference, organized in Cyprus by the International Auto Biography Organization, and as result of then intense discussions and open presentation of my interest, Linda Warley and Eva C. Karpinski decided to join us. I also had the opportunity to spend six months at the Center for Ideas and Society, University of Riverside California, USA, and Georgia Warnke offered me her full support for disseminating my research interests. Our discussions and her invaluable suggestions helped me establishing connecting lines and shaping the structure of this volume. A third and fourth wave of researchers join us at the end of 2016—Vikki Turbine and Shannon Woodcock, and their dedication and research endeavours continue to amaze me—and in 2017 respectively, with the participation of Mihaela Ursa and Vanja Polić. Each chapter enlarges the survey of women's memory and postmemory of displacement and helps deepening the analysis of the connections between life narratives, intergenerational transmission of memory and resilience and various mechanisms of coping with the past. The volume truly corresponds to the main attribute of memory, narrative and remembrance that lately fascinated me with its complexity and implications—the multi-layered character. The volume revolves around its centre topic—women's narratives—and offers space to different narratives and forms of expression to fully articulate themselves.

Besides its numerous advocates' support and my editorial efforts, this volume was made possible especially through its contributors' dedicated involvement; their chapters offer significant insights in the field of women's narratives and postmemory of displacement in Central and Eastern Europe. I want to express my gratitude for all their commitment. I am deeply moved by their research pathos and sustained efforts in following through our initial ideas. Some of the contributors wrote about their family and their own struggles, gently and openly presenting us their thoughts, hopes and dreams. I am grateful for their generosity and honoured by their trust and willingness to make us witnesses to their personal quests. Others, based on the affiliative postmemory and their personal research endeavours, enlarged and further deepened the frame of women's narratives and postmemory expressions in Central and Eastern Europe. I fully engaged myself into our editorial project and I am thankful for each of our virtual encounters. I wrote my introductory chapter while working on the project *Recuperative Memory in the Post-Communist Society* and I had financial support from this research grant (PNII-RU-TE-2014-4-0010). I also had the material support of my institution. Marianne Hirsch, Maria Todorova, Lilia Topouzova, Krassimira Daskalova, Ene Kõressar, Leena Kurvet-Käosaar, Andrea Pető and many other excellent researchers responded to my quests and sustained me with various information. I am very grateful for all their help. As usual, my family offered me an extremely creative and supporting emotional environment; our creative and passionate discussions cleared my mind, offering glimpses of my creative best self. Just like his father, my four-year-old son continues to amaze me as he begins to be an extraordinary inquisitive and communicative partner; I am eager to see where our future discussions will lead us. This volume is dedicated to the postmemory continuous and multi-layered work.

Iasi, Romania Simona Mitroiu

Contents

1 Women's Narratives and the Postmemory of Displacement in Central and Eastern Europe: Introduction 1
Simona Mitroiu

Part I Generations and Narratives of (Post)Memory 37

2 The Transmutative Turn: Legacies of Loss and Love at the Source 39
Hannah Kliger

3 'Narrative Achieves an Amplitude': Research-Creation, Postmemory, and the Aesthetics of Transmission 65
Sasha Colby

4 Entangled Memories of Expulsion and Resettlement in Post-1945 Germany and Poland: Dialogue in Two Voices 87
Linda Warley and Eva C. Karpinski

Part II Sites of (Post)Memory 107

5 Eva Hoffman's *Exit into History*: Shifting Subject Positions 109
Alina Sufaru

6 Inherited Displacement and Relational Remembering in *Once My Mother* by Sophia Turkiewicz 127
Katarzyna Kwapisz Williams

7 Non-human Displacements: Narrative Remediations of Autobiography and Postmemory in Herta Müller's Writing 153
Mihaela Ursa

8 Dubravka Ugrešić: Boundaries of (Post)Memory, Self, and Nation 173
Vanja Polić

Part III History and (Post)Memory 197

9 Gender-Structured Transmission of Post-displacement Memory in Contemporary Poland 199
Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper

10 Postmemory and Women's Displacement in Socialist Albania: Historical Methodologies as Response 221
Davjola Ndoja and Shannon Woodcock

11 Inheriting and Re-imagining Rights: Assessing References to a Soviet Past amongst Young Women in Neoliberal and Neoconservative Russia 245
Vikki Turbine

Index 269

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Eriada Çela has acquired her Master's Degree in Gender Studies at Central European University in Hungary and a Ph.D. in Pedagogy from Tirana University in Albania. Since 2006, she has been a lecturer in the Faculty of Human Sciences at Aleksandër Xhuvani University, Elbasan, Albania. Her main interest is in education, critical and feminist pedagogy, gender issues, active citizenship and recently history with a gender perspective. Her interest in the history of communism in Albania led her to participate in the workshop "Free and Equal—Equal and Free? Communism and Human Rights in the 20th Century", organized by Humboldt University, Berlin, with new research titled "The Right to Education Propaganda in Communist Albania: the War of Classes versus Women's Emancipation".

Sasha Colby Ph.D. is Director of Graduate Liberal Studies and Associate Professor of English at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. Her past work includes a critical book on dramatizing literary research that also contains three original plays: *Staging Modernist Lives: H.D., Mina Loy, Nancy Cunard, Three Plays and Criticism* (2017), a book on the impact of archaeology on the historical and literary imagination, *Stratified Modernism: The Poetics of Excavation from Gautier to Olson* (2009) and *Voicing the Mosaic* (2007), a community-based performance and multi-media installation project on language, immigration and refugee experiences in Surrey, Canada.

Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper Ph.D. works as an assistant professor in the Institute of Sociology at the University of Warsaw. Her main interests are ethnic minority groups and theirs activities focused on cultural surviving, contemporary developments in ethnic and national identity and problems of social memory and tradition. She conducted her fieldwork in Poland, Lithuania and Slovakia and in the Siberian part of Russia. She has authored several articles and books on ethnic minorities in Poland, ethnic identity and social memory in post-soviet countries and on the memory of resettlements which have been published widely. She works on the relationship between memory and religion in Poland and on the social memory of lost territories shaped in the different socio-cultural environments.

Eva C. Karpinski Ph.D. is an associate professor at the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at York University in Toronto. She teaches feminist theory and methodology, autobiography studies and translation studies. Her articles have appeared in *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, *European Journal of Life Writing*, *Open Letter*, *ATLANTIS, Literature Compass*, *Men and Masculinities*, *Studies in Canadian Literature*, *Canadian Woman Studies* and *Resources for Feminist Research*, among others. She is editor of the volume *Pens of Many Colours: A Canadian Reader*, and co-editor of the volume *Trans/Acting Culture, Writing, and Memory: Essays in Honour of Barbara Godard*. She is the author of a monograph on Canadian and American immigrant women's narratives, called *Borrowed Tongues: Life Writing, Migration, and Translation* (2012). She recently co-edited a special issue of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* on "Broken Dialogues".

Frieda Lorberbaum Kliger is a Polish-born Holocaust survivor, living in Holon, Israel.

Hannah Kliger is Professor of Communication and Jewish Studies at The Pennsylvania State University, The Abington College. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Pennsylvania and completed her B.A. in Sociology at Barnard College, Columbia University. In addition, Kliger holds a Master's Degree in Clinical Social Work from the Bryn Mawr School of Social Work and Social Research. She is licensed as a clinical social worker, a marriage and family therapist, and is an AASECT—certified sex therapist. Kliger maintains a private practice in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, and is a clinical candidate at the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia. Her publications focus on communication and culture in immigrant groups, and her current research explores legacies of love and loss in the aftermath of trauma and tragedy. Bina Peltz graduated from Princeton University and is studying law at Yale University. Frieda Kliger resides near Tel Aviv, and she is a much sought-after speaker about her life in Poland, the United States and Israel.

Katarzyna Kwapisz Williams Ph.D. is Research Fellow in Literature and Cultural Studies at the Centre for European Studies, the Australian National University. Her research focuses on global literatures in English, life narratives, the issues of migration, memory and displacement. She is the author of a number of articles and book chapters on transcultural and migration experience, and a book on changes in literary production and reception (*Deforming Shakespeare: Investigations in Textuality and Digital Media*, 2009). In 2014, she edited a special issue of *Life Writing* "Displaced Women: Eastern European Post-War Narratives in Australia". In 2016, she convened an interdisciplinary research workshop, "Women of Diaspora: Roles and Self-representations", and co-convened the fourth meeting of the Australian Memory Research Network, "Between Europe and Australia: Memory, Museum and Heritage".

Edlira Majko is a programme specialist for the Open Society Roma Initiatives Office where she focuses in strengthening leadership in the Roma movement in Europe. She holds an M.A. in International Relations and European Studies from Central European University and a degree in German Language Translation from the University of Tirana. She has worked as a researcher for the European Roma Rights Center on housing standards for Roma communities in Albania and the Albanian Institute for International Studies focusing on the European perspective for Albania. Edlira's interests are Roma rights, EU enlargement, contemporary history and translation of literary work.

Simona Mitroiu Ph.D. is a senior researcher at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania. She is the editor of the volume *Life Writing and Politics of Memory in Eastern Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Her research focuses on European culture, identity narrative, memory and life writing. She is the author of two books and several papers in international journals, such as *The European Legacy: Towards New Paradigms*, *Nationalities Papers. The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, *Cogent.*

Art & Humanities. She is also working on a project concerning the recuperative memory and its forms in the Romanian postcommunist society, with implication at the level of the memory spaces offered to the women's stories of the past.

Davjola Ndoja M.A. was born and lives in Tirana, Albania. She has worked as a researcher for the Institute for the Studies of Communist Crimes and Consequences, and her monograph titled *The Food Rationing System in Albania 1946–1957* (ISKPK, 2012) has been published. She earned a double degree from University of Bologna and Sarajevo in Democracy and Human Rights and wrote her M.A. thesis on "Rights and Treatment of Former Political Prisoners in Albania and Romania" (2016) focusing on transitional justice mechanisms and the politics of memory in both countries. Ndoja has written several articles on politics of memory in Albania and is interested in memory studies.

Bina Miriam Kliger Peltz is a graduate of Princeton University and is a law student at Yale Law School.

Vanja Polić Ph.D. is an assistant professor at the Department of English at the University of Zagreb, Croatia, where she teaches literary theory, contemporary Canadian literature and film, and the eighteenth-century British novel. Her articles on Canadian literature and culture have been widely published, and she is the author of a monograph on the rhetorical practices of self-legitimation in the prefatory materials of the early eighteenth-century British novel (2012). Her research interests include postcolonial literature and postmodernism. Her current project concerns contemporary western Canadian literature, with special emphasis on the revisions of the myth of the West. She is the president of the Croatian-Canadian Academic Society and a member of the editorial board of *Canadian Literature*.

Alina Sufaru is a Ph.D. candidate in American cultural studies at the University of Paris-Saclay, France, and a Teaching and Research Fellow at the University of Cergy-Pontoise, France, where she teaches courses on contemporary American society and the history of American democracy to undergraduate students. Her main areas of interest include the history of ethnic minorities in the United States, the construction of memory, identity and imaginary/imagined homelands in the autobiographical writings of exile, the tensions between displacement and belonging and exilic performativity. More specifically, her work focuses on the intersection of memory, space, identity and performativity in the autobiographical texts by translingual writers of Eastern European descent in the USA during the Cold War and post-Cold War period.

Vikki Turbine Ph.D. is Lecturer in Politics in the School of Social and Political Sciences and a board member of the Centre for Gender History at the University of Glasgow. She researches women's rights and political dis/engagements in neoliberal times with a focus on everyday contexts in contemporary Russia and the UK. She has a long-standing interest in the continued saliences and resonances of the Soviet for women of all ages in Russia and beyond. Her work has been published in various journals, including *Europe-Asia Studies*, *East European Politics*, *New Eastern Europe* and *e-International Relations*. She tweets @VikTurbine.

Mihaela Ursa Ph.D. is an associate professor at the Faculty of Letters in Cluj, Babeş-Bolyai University. She is Chair of the Department of Comparative Studies and Theory, editor-in-chief of *Metacritic. Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*. She is member of the executive committee of the European Society of Comparative Literature. She has authored books, articles, studies and chapters on comparative literature, cultural studies, intermediality, gender studies and critical theory. In 2017, she authored "Made in Translation: A National Poetics for the Transnational World", in *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, edited by Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru and Andrei Terian with Bloomsbury Press.

Linda Warley Ph.D. is an associate professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Waterloo, Canada. Her research focuses on Life Writing in Canada, including by Indigenous authors. Her work appears in journals such as *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies, Life Writing, Essays on Canadian Literature, Studies in American Indian Literature* and *Canadian Literature*. She is co-editor of and contributor to three volumes: *Tracing the Autobiographical* with Marlene Kadar, Jeanne Perreault and Susanna Egan (WLUP 2005); *Photographs, Histories and Meanings* with Marlene Kadar and Jeanne Perreault (Palgrave Macmillan 2009); and *Canadian Graphic: Picturing Life Narratives* with Candida Rifkind (WLUP 2016).

Shannon Woodcock Ph.D. is a historian specializing in histories and experiences of violence, primarily in Romania and Albania. She is the author of the book *Life is War: Surviving Dictatorship in Communist Albania* (HammerOn Press, 2016), which traces everyday life through testimony. Shannon lives in Brabawooloong country in Australia and researches capitalist colonialism as a continuing violence. Her recent article “Biting the hand that feeds: Australian cuisine and Aboriginal sovereignty in the Great Sandy Strait” was published in *Feminist Review* (114, 2016).

CHAPTER 1

Women's Narratives and the Postmemory of Displacement in Central and Eastern Europe: Introduction

Simona Mitroiu

> 'Will I ever be old enough to know?' (Hannah Kliger, present volume, p. 63)
>
> 'I am, indeed, made of the histories and languages of others.' (Eva Karpinski, present volume, p. 104).

To be forced to leave one's community, family, and country as a result of an armed conflict or natural disaster has been described as an expulsion from the social order (Nail 2015, p. 1). This kind of forced migration can lead to feelings of displacement and the loss of community and affects all aspects of individual and family life, including the lives of members of the next generation: 'Children of refugees inherit their parents' knowledge of the fragility of place, their suspicion of the notion of home.' (Hirsch and Spitzer 2003, p. 93). Forced displacement is not a new phenomenon, nor is it a temporary one. The accelerated political and economic transformations

---

S. Mitroiu (✉)
Department of Interdisciplinary Research, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi, Romania
e-mail: simona.mitroiu@uaic.ro

© The Author(s) 2018

S. Mitroiu (ed.), *Women's Narratives and the Postmemory of Displacement in Central and Eastern Europe*, Palgrave Studies in Life Writing, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96833-9_1

that result from shifting socio-ethnic patterns are likely to remain a constant in the human experience. 'The twenty-first century will be the century of the migrant. At the turn of the century, there were more regional and international migrants than ever before in recorded history' (Nail 2015, p. 1). However, how do we respond to memories of forced displacement? Are these memories of the past, when shared and integrated at the discourse memory level, of any help in dealing with current forced migrations of populations? What exactly represents forced displacement, and how are we affected by it? In addition, how do women cope with displacement and the loss of their homes? This last topic was chosen in relation to the totalitarian regimes that dominated Central and Eastern Europe until recently and, more specifically, with the process of coming to terms with the past as it has developed in some of the countries in this part of Europe. This volume seeks to explore the different mechanisms and *millieux* used by women to come to terms with the past, and the research has been constructed around the variety and complexity of their stories within the context of Central and Eastern Europe. The lines that both unite and separate the volume chapters are not geographically determined, even though some references to specific places in Central and Eastern Europe are provided; rather, they are determined by the women's narratives of the past and the ways in which the creative process is used for appropriating it. The main question of this volume focuses on the willingness of European society to recuperate the stories of the past from the perspective of women and on the memory spaces created for alternative narratives. This is the question of the 'addressable other' without whom such stories cannot be told: 'The absence of an empathic listener, or more radically, the absence of *an addressable other*, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story.' (Laub 1992, p. 67).

In countries previously dominated by totalitarian regimes, where the trust and social bonds between people were largely destroyed, the process of coming to terms with the past involves confronting the collective trauma, personal histories, and individual traumas, as well as listening to and accepting the stories and accounts of others. Referring to the communist past of Eastern Europe, Tony Judt described exactly this penetration of totalitarian regimes into people's lives: 'It is not for any real and imagined crimes that people feel a sort of shame at having lived in and under communism, it is for their daily lies and infinite tiny compromises.' (2005, p. 102). Why is this process of coming to terms with the past so important? Moreover, why must we make room for women's narratives of the past? It is the credo of this volume that '[a]s long as the telling of stories of trauma continues to meet with resistance and denial, the psychic effects of the past remain to poison the present' (Leydesdorff et al. 1999, p. 17). Are women's narratives of the past a form of counter-narrative? The alternative stories of the past are exceptionally important and need to be integrated at the level of collective memory discourses, but are these stories counter-narratives to institutional history and memory discourse? In addition, what does it mean to contest the past? This volume seeks to further explore the meaning offered by Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone,[1] for whom to contest the past does not mean to present a conflicting account of it, but rather to address the 'question of who or what is entitled to speak for the past in the present.' (2003, p. 1). This volume is an edited work structured to give a coherent and comprehensive view of women's narratives, life writings, and the postmemory of displacement in Central and Eastern Europe, including a balanced amount of theoretical approaches and empirical, in-depth analyses in each chapter. The women's narratives from Central and Eastern Europe are approached from a multidisciplinary point of view, addressing social, cultural, and ethnic aspects. The three sections of the volume—'Generations and narratives of (post) memory', 'Sites of (post)memory', and 'History and (post)memory'—address the topic of women's narratives and representations of the past in relation to the mediums used and the mechanisms of transmitting and coping with the past. The connections between chapters allow for non-sequential reading, as many theoretical topics and questions cross and unite the three parts of the volume. The first part addresses the quest for personal (post)memory from the perspective of the second- and third-generations. The touching collaboration established in reconstructing individual and family (post)memories offers invaluable insights into the effects of displacement, coping mechanisms, and resilience. The chapters here also offer emotional glimpses of the women's capacity to explore and reconstruct their narrative identities using their mothers' and grandmothers' memories of the past, and how they cope with their own (post)memory of displacement. Adopting Alina Sufaru's observation that the text itself becomes, in Eva Hoffman's case, a site of (post)memory, the second part of the volume brings into discussion different sites and develops further this topic in relation to the creative process—Dubravka Ugrešić case—and visual text in the case of Sophia Turkiewicz. Targeting the multiple forms of displacement in Herta Müller's prose, Mihaela Ursa focuses her chapter on the writer capacity to use the identity displacement to mediate and remediate different places of memory. The last part questions the past in relation to the process of coming to terms with it in the countries where the trauma of abusive regimes destroyed social bonds and had a lasting impact on the lives of the people. Is the past knowledge a key for the present politics of memory? Are women's voices being heard and appreciated? Finally, are these societies prepared to accept and integrate women's narratives of the past into the public memory discourse?

Memory and the Remembrance of the Past

'The past is a foreign country', stated David Lowenthal, so we need to approach it carefully, with wonder and openness. At the same time, this 'foreign country' of the recent past is constructed based on the memory and experiences of our parents and grandparents. Thus, it is never completely estranged, as the links that connect one generation and another never cease to exist, even if they can be disrupted by major historical and social events. 'We can remember only thanks to the fact that somebody has remembered before us' commented Luisa Passerini. Thus, '[r]emembering has to be conceived as a highly inter-subjective relationship' (2009, p. 2). Remembering the past is not an isolated, individual process, as it includes postmemory (Hirsch 1997), which is formed during and based on interactions with others, and the process of listening and becoming witnesses to their narratives. But how is the past intergenerational memory transmitted and what mechanisms are activated during its transmission? How can one truly separate personal memories from institutional forms, and personal experiences from political or ideological representations that often surround the collective remembrance? Della Pollock pointed out that every story and individual narrative is more than personal, as it is not possible to 'own' history at the personal level: 'Any one story is embedded in layers of remembering and storying. Remembering is necessarily a public act whose politics are bound up with the refusal to be isolated, insulated, inoculated against both complicity with and contested over claims of ownership.' (2005, p. 5). To remember the past, especially referring to events that include major social and political changes, means to negotiate between different layers of the personal, political, and public memory. The lines that both unite and separate these strata of memory offer valuable clues about how one remembers the past. No narrative of the past is 'written' in isolation, not the personal, public, nor the gender-determined narratives; all are interrelated and influenced by past and present historical frames. The remembering process is influenced by the memories of our family and society, the political and cultural contexts, our present needs, and images projected from the present into the historical past. These images are determined by our personal aspirations and dreams, as well as by the public agenda. The past and its remembrance are summoned to respond to our present questions: What did we choose to remember from the past in order to make the present more accessible for us? How can we interpret past wrongs so that our personal and collective lives become more valuable? Critics of memory studies, whether they focus on personal memory or the institutionalization of memory at the level of national archives,[2] have pointed out the fluid nature of remembrance, as well as the suspicion of past political or social manipulation in order to adequately respond to present needs. Vieda Skultans resumes this situation:

> Whatever the rights and wrongs of such accusations, we know that personal memory is fluid and easily influenced, collective memory is a reification, personal identity is but a comforting illusion of permanence, or a culture-bound category conveying a false sense of agency to Western humankind and national identity is an unjustified extension of individual identity. (2014, p. 12)

What other solutions do we have for dealing with past traumas and events? Is it not this mix of personal and collective memories with the influence of institutional forms of memory that is the main way of accessing the past? Those who feel strong about the history-memory opposition relation will continue to protect their view of history as result of intangible scientific data and will reject the reliability of the memory as being subjective, personal, and changeable. They are right: memory is all of these things and more; no past moment remains the same if we compare two different memories of it. The past is permanently reconstructed in narratives: 'always representation, always construction' (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, p. 2). Furthermore, the remembrance itself adds its own influence, adding different layers to past events: '[m]emories return to past experience but add their traces to the initial stories' (Winter 2010, p. 11). However, are we the same? Are we identical to ourselves in the two different moments of time when we remembered or listened to the same story? There are so many influences and repetitive constructions of the past during the process of remembering. Some of them are consequences of individual traits, others are socially and historically determined, and others are related to the narrative process and its effects. Thus, the focus of this volume is on the concept of multi-layered memory and narratives of the past.[3] Narratives of the past are the result of the extremely elaborated process in which memories are correlated and permanently negotiated between the agents of memory. On the other hand, the dualistic approach of history and memory of the past emphasizes an excessively unilateral perspective without considering the multi-layered nature of remembrance and the interplay between historical perspective and memory register.[4] As Aleida Assmann observed, the current memory boom 'reflects a general desire to reclaim the past' and to individually position ourselves 'in a wider historical perspective' (2008, p. 54). The distinction made by Assmann between the three stages of the relation of history and memory—identity, opposition, and interaction—proves to be useful in understanding the polarity between memory and history, public and private memory discourse, and so on. This seems to be sensed in the societies that were in the past dominated by totalitarian regimes and inherently in the studies resulting from the analyses of the process of coming to terms with the past. After many years of history being used to serve the needs of totalitarian regimes, the next step is the creation of multiple versions of the past: of offering space to alternative and counter-narratives of the past.[5] Only in this context can history and memory co-create new meanings and interact in a constructive manner to complete one another.

For those who have experienced past traumatic events, the task of sharing memories can follow them throughout their entire lives, sometimes without finding the proper means of expression:

> Witnessing is a general condition of agency, and in certain cases it is as much as one can expect of someone who has been through a limit-experience. (…) But just as history should not be conflated with testimony, so agency should not be conflated with, or limited to, witnessing. In order to change a state of affairs in a desirable manner, effective agency may have to go beyond witnessing to take up more comprehensive modes of political and social practice. (LaCapra 1998, p. 12)

In speaking about the personal past, one becomes a witness to past events, as personal memories and experiences are brought into the public arena. This act is no easy task, and the process of witnessing and testifying (and the relationship between direct witnesses and indirect ones, and the connection of memory and postmemory) is one of the most complex and multi-layered relations that can be analysed in the realm of memory studies. The performative nature of remembrance is, as Jay Winter pointed out, defined by the act of 'attending to the voices of victims and survivors' (2010, p. 20). One of the most intriguing and touching expressions of this complex act of remembrance that involves witnessing and attending to the voices of survivors was offered by the writer Herta Müller when she explained her relationship with Oskar Pastior. He shared with her his memories of life in a Soviet camp and based on his memories, Müller wrote her book *Atemschaukel* (2009; *The Hunger Angel*, 2012). Müller (2011) confessed that the further she progressed in her writing about Pastior's experiences in a concentration camp, the more she, herself, entered the concentration camp. After Pastior's death, left only with her text, she understood that this was the only possible way. All along, Pastior needed to leave the camp, and she needed to enter it. Retelling a trauma, even in a fictionalized form, can become an instrument of liberation, especially for the second- or third-generation or for the agents of affiliative postmemory.

The quest that impels this volume is based on this complex and fascinating relationship between the testimony of the past and the act of listening to past narratives. It is not only the question of societies' willingness to integrate women's narratives into the collective remembrance of the past that needs to be further explored; this volume seeks to show the essential character of the active listener, as this fragile and complex relationship sustains the act of witnessing the past and determines its remembrance. Thus, it is the aim of this volume to highlight all the actors involved in the process of remembering the past: both those who remember and those for whom the past is recalled. This leaves room for analyses of the cultural and social influences that continually shape our view of the past. The narratives of the past do not speak only about survivors and their traumas, but also about those for whom these testimonials are made. Speaking about the testimonial chain, Dori Laub resumed this relation between the witness and the listener:

> because trauma returns in disjointed fragments in the memory of the survivors, the listener has to let these trauma fragments make their impact both on him and on the witness. (…) As one comes to know the survivor, one really comes to know oneself; and that is not a simple task (…) (1992, p. 71)

Remembering and life story writing, explained James V. Wertsch (2002), are mediated through textual resources in the cultural space: school books, political discourses, different public media, and so on. Remembering is a continual process that pervades and mixes the layers of individual lives and the collective space of the public arena. Many victims of the totalitarian regimes that left their mark on major parts of Central and Eastern Europe never had the option of writing their memoirs. In some cases, their life stories were orally transmitted, but only to the members of their own families. It can be hard for second- or third-generation family members to relate to the experiences of their parents or grandparents when their memories of the past are missing or one-sided. Furthermore, as years pass and the register of collective memory is influenced by political actors, the task becomes not only to fight the silence but also to rectify the distortion of past events (Passerini 2009). The question of this volume is related to the place occupied by the narratives of the past situated within the larger frame of the politics of memory in Central and Eastern Europe. Focusing on women's narratives of the past, the volume shows different mechanisms used to relate to traumatic past events, not only by those who experienced them but also by those who became, through family or affiliative connections (Hirsch 2012), active listeners in the process of witnessing and giving testimony of the past.

Displacement in Central and Eastern Europe

Many historians and researchers have remarked on the difficulties and great challenges of the last century, a period when power politics negatively impacted a large proportion of the global population through political persecution, ethnic cleansing, displacement, and so on. The trauma that accompanied the ethnic conflicts and genocides of the twentieth century deeply affected its history.[6] Central and Eastern Europe is a geographical and political area where ethnic cleansing[7] was implemented before, during, and after the Second World War. Some of the countries designated as being part of Eastern Europe[8] during the Cold War were in fact located in Central Europe; thus, the concept used here, Central and Eastern Europe, is a political one, more than a geographical designation, and defines the space of Europe that fell under the rule of communist regimes after the Second World War.[9] This is a geographical space where the differences between countries, ethnicities, and so on are as significant as the common elements, including their shared experience with totalitarian regimes, but a space that is 'broadly characterized as postsocialist, postcatastrophic, and (…) postcolonial.' (Blacker and Etkind 2013, p. 2). The communist regimes that shaped the history of so many European countries are the main factor in the determination of this political designation. During and after the Second World War, Central and Eastern Europeans experienced one of history's largest displacements of people: Millions of people fled their countries or escaped death only by leaving their former lives behind, and many others, for various reasons, lost forever their precious belongings and the support of their communities.[10] However, as Tony Judt observed, 'the scale of material destruction pales in comparison with the human losses, in Central and Eastern Europe in particular' (1992, p. 84). Eastern Europe was also the place where 'the Nazis had most vigorously pursued the Holocaust, where they set up the majority of ghettoes, concentration camps, and killing fields' and where 'Nazism and Soviet communism clashed' (Applebaum 2012, p. 8) with disastrous results for the population.[11] The physical and economic destruction in Eastern Europe was doubled by massive changes in 'population distribution, and ethnic composition' (Applebaum 2012, p. 10). The postwar period was also characterized by a massive displacement of the population. Anne Applebaum described this situation very well in her book *The Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944–1956*, describing these years as the 'years of refugees':

> (…) Germans moved west, Poles and Czechs returned east from forced labour and concentration camps in Germany, deportees came back from the Soviet Union (…). Some of these refugees returned home but, upon discovering that home was no longer what it had been, struck out for new territories. (2012, p. 10)

Many of these forced displacements that shaped the Central and Eastern Europe demographic composition were based on ethnic cleansing. The UN Commission of Experts defined ethnic cleansing as 'rendering an area ethnically homogenous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons of another ethnic or religious group'. Robert M. Hayden (1996) underlined the fact that ethnic cleansing and genocide are intertwined and asserted that the separation of the two concepts is merely based on moral decisions. Norman M. Naimark (2001) described ethnic cleansing as a modern concept that differs from ethnic and religious persecution in that its definition involves two essential concepts for the modern nation-state: the state and nationalism (p. 8). Consistent with Hayden, Naimark asserted that ethnic cleansing can precede genocide and can easily become it, as the Jews and the Armenian tragedies demonstrated. Defining ethnic cleansing, Naimark highlighted its main characteristics: It always involves violence, it occurs during a war or its aftermath, it is absolute, it not only implies physically removing the group from the territory but also involves deleting all traces of their existence (e.g. changing street names and destroying landmarks, all with the desire of forgetting that the ethnic group was ever there and removing any possibility that they might return), and their properties are handed to other members of the community (p. 193). Another principal characteristic of ethnic cleansing is its being 'inherently misogynistic' (p. 195), with women being the main target. This is not only because they represent the main group due to the men being at war, but also because, in Naimark's view, women represent the 'biological core of nationality' (p. 195).

After the First World War, the desire to form states that were ethnically homogeneous started to spread throughout the continent.[12] The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 sought to resolve the issue of displaced populations due to the war or new state borders. Furthermore, the Treaty of Versailles contained special clauses for the cultural and economic protection of minorities (Ahonen et al. 2008, p. 5). The Treaty of Lausanne was the first international act that enforced a transfer of population between two nations—Turkey and Greece—that ended with the Ankara Convention seven years later. Greece also participated in a voluntary population exchange with Bulgaria; however, only 20,000 people returned to Greece. Regarding 'the nationality problem in continental Europe' Judt remarked that there were still some 25 million persons living in 'someone else's state': 'The Nazi occupation had gone some way to resolving this perennial European problem by killing most of the Jews and some of the smaller stateless groups. After the war, the liberated states took the occasion to further this process by removing the Germans themselves.' (1992, p. 88).

Adolf Hitler imposed the German policy of ethnic cleansing on the Jews in Europe, even if this was not the first time that Jews were seen as an unwelcome ethnic group (Fleming 1994; Frankel 1997; Marrus 1987; Pulzer 1988). Throughout European history, Jews have been subject to numerous mass expulsions from almost every country on the continent (Gilbert 2014; Hilberg 1985). After the First World War, with a new global structure in place, the largest community of Jews—approximately 3 million—was living in Poland, all of whom were born in the old, great empires: Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany. In Hungary, there were almost half a million Jews, followed by Romania with a similar number. In Germany, there were around 490,000, in Czechoslovakia 350,000, and in France 250,000 (Gilbert 2014, p. 14). Arieh Tartakower and Kurt Grossman, reviewing the 1933–1934 social and political contexts, pointed out that 'the refugee movement had a rather tentative character. To many it seemed that the anti-Jewish excesses would pass, to be followed by a new Jewish policy, embodying moderate restrictions and disabilities. It was hoped that there would be only a limited exodus, and that the bulk of the Jewish population would remain in Germany.' (1944, p. 29). In the following years, the Jewish migration began to affect Europe, as anti-Jewish movements started to take place in Romania, Lithuania, and Bessarabia. Some migrated to Palestine (but a small number, due to restrictions imposed by the British Mandate authorities), while the rest went to the USA, Britain, South Africa, Canada, France, Holland, Belgium, Brazil, Bolivia, and the European Nordic States (Bauman 2000, pp. 58–59; Kosmala and Verbeek 2011; Dawidowicz 1986). The non-aggression pact between Germany and Russia signed in August 1939 sounded the alarm for all Polish Jews, and in the first months of the German occupation, more than 5000 Polish Jews were killed. Starting in October 1939, all Jews living in the borderland of the General Government were officially made liable for two years forced labour with possible extension. By July 1940, there were more than 30 labour camps (Gilbert 2014, p. 92). In the Lodz ghetto, there were more than 180,000 Jews, while the Warsaw ghetto contained almost half a million. In the summer of 1941, the first forced deportations and mass executions of Jews took place in Romania and Bessarabia. The end of 1941 culminated in the implementation of the 'final solution', and Buchenwald and Chelmno became places of terror and death. By the end of 1942, the Germans needed to establish the infrastructure needed for mass executions. More death camps were thus prepared: Belzek, Treblinka, Sobibor, Birkenau (Piper 1998; Marrus 1997; Le Chěne 1971; Hilberg 1985; Bauman 1997; Dobroszycki 1984). In the spring of 1942, deportations from all around Europe continued and in March of that year, the first trains arrived from France. The first deportations from Holland and Belgium took place in the summer of 1942, followed by the deportation of Jews from Italy (Gilbert 2014, p. 315). In the last eight months of the existence of the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex, more Jews were brought. With the arrival of the Red Army in Polish territory, Germans started the cleansings both in the camps and in the ghettos. More than 3000 of the 110,000 survivors at Mauthausen and its sub-camps died after they were freed. It is estimated that 6 million Jews died during the war, and only 200,000 survived the ghettos, camps, and death marches (Gilbert 2014, p. 673; Shepard 2011). In the next month, the ones who were in better physical condition left the camps to return to Eastern Europe in search of their families; it is believed that 70,000 left for Hungary and Romania, and several thousand to Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Baltic states (Konigseden and Wetzel 2001, pp. 15–21; Browning 2003).

Hitler also practiced what Bell-Fialkoff called a reversed cleansing when the ethnic Germans, the Volksdeutsche, were resettled from Eastern Europe to the conquered territories, especially the western part of Poland (1993, p. 114). By doing this, Hitler started the ‘unmixing’ (Glassheim 2000, p. 465) of nations in Eastern and Central Europe, an action that was continued by the other states during and in the aftermath of the Second World War. According to Corni, ‘The transfer policy planned and carried out by the Third Reich was by far, the most extensive and best organised of all transfers of populations’ (2008, p. 18). For instance, in September 1940, the Reich signed an agreement with Moscow through which the German population from Bukovina and Bessarabia, almost 150,000 people, the majority of them peasants, were transferred. In October 1940, another agreement between Germany and the Romanian government had as its purpose the repatriation of Germans from the south of Bukovina and Dobroudja; more than 215,000 people were transferred within weeks. In total, half a million Germans were repatriated from Volhynia, Gallicia, Bukovina, Bessarabia, Romania, the Baltic States, and South Tyrol, as well as approximately 270,000 from the USSR and Yugoslavia (Corni 2008, p. 19). In 1942, the RKFDV experts (Reichskommissariat für die Festigung des deutschen Volkstums) created the General Plan of Settlement that engulfed Luxembourg, Alsace, Lorraine, Bohemia, Moravia, the Baltic region, and territories of Poland that were occupied in 1939. The plan involved relocating more than 12 million settlers over a period of 20 years. Furthermore, any people considered to be unsuitable were to be expelled from the territory.

The advance of the Red Army was another factor that caused massive population movements in Central and Eastern Europe. For instance, the Romanians who moved to Bessarabia and the north of Bukovina in 1941 left the regions when the Russian army was approaching the borders.