



Deportation and the Self in Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's Memoirs *A Stolen Youth, A Stolen Homeland* and *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea*

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ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH

The article addresses the issue of deportation and the self in the two versions of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs: *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros: Atsiminimai, miniatiūros, laiškai*, written in 1949–50, in 2002 translated as *A Stolen Youth, a Stolen Homeland* and *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros*, written in 1974, in 1990 translated as *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea*. At the age of fourteen, Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (1927–1987) was deported from Lithuania to Siberia during the mass deportations of 1941 and spent almost 10 years in Yakut Republic. Taking as a point of departure Lacan's statement that relating self to the others may bring a healing effect, it seems relevant to look at Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs from the perspective of the narrative therapy. Drawing on White's and Payne's ideas that this type of therapy helps a person to regain the sense of identity and that the re-storying of one's identity re-casts the person's memory systems into more helpful forms, writing the two versions memoirs may be interpreted as a therapeutic process and as a means of composing and/or re-creating the self.

Keywords: deportation, trauma, the self, writing, creative process, narrative therapy

ABSTRACT IN LITHUANIAN

Straipsnyje aptariamos deportacijos, atminties bei savasties temos Dalios Grinkevičiūtės atsiminimuose, parašytuose 1949–50 m. bei pirmą kartą publikuotuose 1997 m. knygoje *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros: Atsiminimai, miniatiūros, laiškai*, o 2002 m. išversuose į anglų kalbą kaip *A Stolen Youth, a Stolen Homeland*

bei 1974 m. parašytame antrajame atsiminimų variante *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros*, 1990 m. išverstame į anglų kalbą kaip *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea*. 1941 m. birželio 14 d. kartu su motina ir broliu keturiolikametė Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (1927–1987) dešimčiai metų deportuojama į Jakutiją. Skaudžios patirties kontekste, atsiminimų rašymą galima interpretuoti kaip savasties sukūrimą iš naujo. Savasties kūrimas bet atkūrimas naratyvo pagalba daro gydomąjį poveikį asmenybei, patyrusiai sukrečiančius išgyvenimus bei sunkias psichologines traumas (Lacan 1975). Daugelis mokslininkų teigia, jog savasties suvokimas priklauso nuo to, kokiame santykiyje ji yra su "kitu" ir pabrėžia, kad kūrybinė veikla, ypač rašymas, atlieka savasties atkūrimo bei atstatymo funkciją bei atkuria savasties-objekto santykį. Autobiografinis rašymas savasties, savojo "aš" atkūrimo procese vaidina svarbų vaidmenį. Remiantis teiginiu, kad papasakojimas apie save gali turėti gydomąjį poveikį, Grinkevičiūtės atsiminimus bei jų rašymą galima analizuoti iš naratyvinės terapijos perspektyvos. Galime kalbėti apie tris gydančius naratyvo lygmenis Grinkevičiūtės atsiminimuose. Pirmųjų 1949/1950 m. atsiminimų tekstuose Grinkevičiūtė aprašo kaip mergaitės, gyvendamos Trofimoske, viena kitai pasakoja apie Lietuvoje valgytą maistą bei dalinasi patiekalų receptais taip išreiškdamas Tėvynės ilgesį. Kitas naratyvo lygmuo – tai formos suteikimas psichologinei traumai, kurią sukėlė deportacija ir tremtis, t.y. pirmasis atsiminimų variantas, parašytas iš labai jauno žmogaus perspektyvos. Trečiasis naratyvo lygmuo – tai 1974 m. atsiminimai, antrasis bandymas prabilti apie traumą. Grinkevičiūtė jaučia vidinį poreikį apie tremtį kalbėti garsiai, nes, remiantis, "apie gyvenimą pasakojama ji gyvenant ir gyvenama apie jį pasakojant (Carr 1986, p. 61).

Raktiniai žodžiai: deportacija, tremtis, kūrybinis procesas, autobiografinis rašymas, naratyvinė terapija

INTRODUCTION

The article addresses the issue of deportation and writing as the means of re-creating one's self after traumatic experiences of deportation in Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros: Atsiminimai, miniatiūros, laiškai*, written in 1949–50, first published in 1997, in 2002 translated as *A Stolen Youth, a Stolen Homeland* and in the second version of the memoirs, *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros*, written in 1974, in 1990 translated as *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea: The Siberian Memoirs of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė*. At the age of fourteen, Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (1927–1987) was deported from Lithuania to Siberia during the mass deportations of 1941 and spent almost 10 years in Yakut Republic.

Research in psychology suggests that "writing or talking about negative events (or storying them) is related to increased well-being" (McLean et al. 2007, p. 267). It is possible to talk about three levels of healing

narrative in Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs. In the first version of the memoirs *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros: Atsiminimai, miniatiūros, laiškai*, Grinkevičiūtė writes how while in a labour camp in Siberia the deportees remember nice moments from their lives before deportation and tell each other stories thus helping each other to endure the harsh reality of the displacement and deportation. Another level of narrative is writing the first version of the memoirs in 1949–50, and the third level is the memoir of 1974, *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea*, a second attempt to externalize the trauma.

After her arrest in 1941 at the age of fourteen, Dalia Grinkevičiūtė was deported to a forced labour camp in eastern Siberia. In 1949, she managed to escape to Lithuania and for two years lived there illegally with her mother. During this period, she wrote the memoirs of her displacement. Feeling a constant threat of a possibility to be arrested by KGB, Grinkevičiūtė packed her untitled memoirs *Atsiminimai* written on small sheets of paper into a glass jar and buried the manuscript in the garden. In 1951 Grinkevičiūtė was arrested and sent back to Siberia again.

The memoirs *Atsiminimai* were thought lost until their discovery in 1991, three years after her death and published in 1997 in *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros: Atsiminimai, miniatiūros, laiškai*. In 2002 *Atsiminimai* were translated into English by Izolda Geniušienė as *A Stolen Youth, A Stolen Homeland*.

In 1956 Dalia Grinkevičiūtė was rehabilitated and allowed to return to Lithuania. Here in 1960 she completed her medical studies which she had started in 1954 in Omsk, Siberia, and worked as a General Practitioner and a radiologist in a hospital of a small provincial town in Lithuania, Linkuva. Being under a constant surveillance of KGB and not able to comply to the Soviet propaganda, in 1974 Grinkevičiūtė was fired from her job as the Head of Linkuva Hospital and deprived of Medical Doctor's licence. Considering her memoirs she had written in 1949–50 and buried in the garden of her parents' house lost, after the loss of her job in 1974, Grinkevičiūtė started writing the second version of the memoirs which was published under the title *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros (Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea)*. Thus, the second version of the memoirs was written after 1974 and first published in 1979 in a Russian dissident magazine *Pamiatj* (Memory). In 1981 an excerpt was published and in 1988 the whole text of the memoirs was published in Lithuanian. The English translation of the second version of the memoirs, *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea*, translated by Laima Sruoginytė, appeared in *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences* in 1990.

GRINKEVIČIŪTĖ: COMPOSING SELF THROUGH NARRATIVE

According to Philippe Lejeune, autobiographical writing implies an “autobiographical pact” according to which the author of an autobiography

declares that he is the person he says he is and that the narrator, protagonist and author are one and the same (Lejeune 1982, p. 202). Considering the etymology of the word and as its everyday usage suggests, “autobiography” can be “defined as a life of the self who is writing” (Graham et al 1989, p. 15). As per Natalie Sutherland, autobiography is “a historical form, since it specifically attempts to recount the story of a self via its *history*” (Sutherland).

Considering Grinkevičiūtė’s life experience, writing memoirs may be understood as a means of composing or re-creating the self. At the same time, this re-creating of the self through narrative becomes a healing process to that wounded by the tragic experiences of deportation and exile. If we refer to Lacan, being understood by someone or relating self to the others brings a healing effect: “The subject begins the analysis by talking about himself without talking to you, or by talking to you without talking about himself. When he can talk to you about himself, the analysis will be over” (Lacan 1966, p. 373; trans. Wilden 1975, p. 21). According to such scholars as Kohut, Hartmann, Modell, and Kernberg, a sense of self depends on the negotiations of self defined against and in relation to others, where the “other” takes the form of an object of various emotions. For many of these scholars, creativity, especially writing, performs the function of restoring or re-creating a sense of self and re-negotiating self-object relations. The idea of writing as re-creation of the self, can be related to autobiographical writing where this is quite explicit.

As it has already been mentioned, there are two versions of the memoirs. *Atsiminimai (A Stolen Youth, a Stolen Homeland)* is written by a twenty-three-year-old and relate experiences from life in Siberia and the understanding of the 1941 Baltic deportations through the eyes of a 15-year-old girl. *Atsiminimai* is written using the first-person perspective, present tense predominates the narrative. The translated text, *A Stolen Youth, a Stolen Homeland*, employs, however, the past tense and this way loses the intimacy produced by the original. The relatively close temporal proximity to the events narrated makes the narrative more detailed and more personal than the second version, *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros (Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea)*, the point of view of which is mixed – it varies from the third-person perspective to the first and then to the second, the use of past tense predominates with the shift to the present tense at moments the author wants to emphasize.

A Stolen Youth, a Stolen Homeland focuses on the harsh winter of 1942–1943; *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea* consists of four parts: the first part narrates the period from the arrest in 1941 to the summer of 1943; the second part tells about the period from the summer of 1943 to the year

of 1951, her second arrest; the third part describes the time in prison (gulag) and the deportation until 1954 when she was allowed to study medicine in Omsk. The fourth part deals with the period of 1954–1974. Let us consider the opening paragraphs of the first and the second versions of the memoirs. *A Stolen Youth, a Stolen Homeland* starts with the following words:

What was that? My hand touched a piece of cold metal. The sun was shining... Then a shadow fell. I felt one period of my life was over. That was the end of it. A new life, uncertain and frightening, was about to start. Twenty-four people were lying close to me. Were they asleep? Who could know? Each of them was engrossed in his own thoughts, each of them had left behind a part of his life, which had ended only the day before. Each of them had a family, relatives, and very close friends. In their thoughts they were taking leave of all those they loved (Grinkevičiūtė 2002, p. 13).

Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea, written by a 47-year-old mature woman who uses a more detached perspective, focuses more on facts than on her response to them and feelings:

On June 14, 1941 at three o'clock in the morning mass arrests and deportations began simultaneously in all of the Baltic states—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Following Moscow's orders, chekists from Byelorussia, Smolensk, Pskov, and other places were mobilized to execute this task.

One after another overfilled convoys moved eastward transporting great masses of people, the major part of whom were fated never to return. They deported grade school and high school teachers, university lecturers, lawyers, journalists, the families of Lithuanian military officers, diplomats, various office workers, farmers, agronomists, doctors, business men and so on (Grinkevičiūtė 1990).

Most theories of life writing distinguish between the narrator at the moment of writing and reflecting upon his or her life (“the writing I”) and the protagonist, the narrator in his or her younger days (“the written I”) (Avižienis 2006, p. 199). In Grinkevičiūtė's case, we have several levels of “I” – the “I” of the 14–15-year-old protagonist, the “writing I” of a twenty-year old – young adult, and the “written I” looked upon by the writing “I” of a mature woman after eighteen years have passed from the experience narrated. Discussing the different levels of “I” in Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs, Jūra Avižienis notes that “in addition to flashback, the texts can be seen as employing several cinematographic techniques; including a kind of

voice-over for the opening deportation scene, and a keen sense of visuality throughout” (Avižienis 2006, p. 200). As it has already been mentioned, in an autobiographical piece of writing, the narrator, the main character, and the author/writer all claim to be the same individual, and yet are distanced from one another as they exist in different moments of time. In Grinkevičiūtės memoirs, the present of the narrator is continuously defined by the experiences of the past:

Golgotha! It was the Golgotha of the spring of my life. With short breaks, I became convinced I would have to carry its cross throughout all my life. That Calvary formed my character. It gave birth to my persistence. I learned to suffer quietly, and step by step and painfully to approach the top. After reaching it, I learned to feel joy and to trust in my strength. That Calvary was the first teacher in my life. It was a very cruel and merciless teacher. It taught me to fight and survive (Grinkevičiūtė 2002, p. 120).

Moreover, as Jerilyn Sambrooke notes in this connection, “by moving throughout the text between the “I” who is the autobiographical writer and the “I” who is the young exiled girl of fourteen, Grinkevičiūtė creates a gap. [...] these moments invite the reader – who now occupies this present space with the narrator – to see how the past defines the reader’s own identity in the present” (Sambrooke 2008). Discussing the later version of the memoir Lithuanian critic Viktorija Daujotytė notes that the self of the 1974 version of the memoir is more mature, the “I” of the protagonist is viewed as one of many, as being among others, the pain of personal experiences has lost its acuteness as years pass by, the main focus of the first part the memoir is the life and fate of the co-prisoners, other deportees (Daujotytė 1997, p. 31):

I remember those who died in Trofimovsk: The teacher Staniškis from Kaunas, the teacher Gediminas Balčys from Daugiai, Asmontienė, Lukoševičienė, from Šiauliai, Raibikienė from Kalvarija, Balazarienė from Kėdainiai, the twenty-five – year old giant Zabuka, dead from starvation, the twelve year old Jonukas Giedrikis from Marijampolė, Barniškienė, Mikoliūnienė, young Baltokas, the Volungevičius, Geleris, Klingmanienė, Krikštanas from Kaunas. [...] All of these and many others, Lithuanians and Finns whose names I don’t remember, or never even knew, lay down in one common grave on which one real live flower was never placed and next to which mournful music never played (Grinkevičiūtė 1990).

Thus, Grinkevičiūtės calling the past – the experiences of deportation – into the present, provide insight for the reader on how these experiences have shaped her as a personality and a narrator.

NARRATIVE AS HEALING ONE'S SELF

In *Narrative*, Paul Copley proposes that narrative is the mental structuring process through which we define our existential relationship to the environment around us, to “our linear perspective of time, to events in the objective and subjective worlds; and to our sense of moving from past to future, through retrospection and anticipation, with the present as a continuing interaction point with both” (Copley 2001, p. 16–17).

As it has been already mentioned, re-creating of the self through narrative becomes a healing process. Taking as a point of departure Lacan's statement that relating self to the others may bring a healing effect, it is possible to discuss Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs from the perspective of narrative therapy. Narrative therapy is a form of psychotherapy using narrative, initially developed during the 1970s and 1980s, largely by Australian Michael White and his friend and colleague, David Epston, of New Zealand.

Narrative therapists claim that this type of therapy works well with people who have experienced violence and abuse and state that this therapy helps a person to regain the sense of identity, of “who I am in order to the abuser's attempts to rob her/his identity”, that re-storying of identity re-casts the person's memory systems into more helpful forms (Payne 2006, p. 181, 183). In *Selected Papers* Michael White states that “if you are crying on the inside and not outside at the same time, you will drown your strength” (White, 1989: 5). He further writes:

Externalizing is an approach to therapy that encourages persons to objectify, and at times to personify, the problems that they experience as oppressive. In this process, the problem becomes a separate entity and thus external to the person who was, or the relationship that was, ascribed the problem. These problems that are considered to be inherent, and those relatively fixed qualities that are attributed to persons and relationships, are rendered less fixed and less restricting (White 1989, p. 97).

Discussing Grinkevičiūtė's writing of the memoirs, it is possible to say that there are three levels of healing narrative. In *A Stolen Youth, a Stolen Homeland*, she writes that in Trofimorsk, to console each other children at school would tell each other stories about their lives they used to lead while at home, “girls entertained each other by retelling – for the hundredth time – recipes of the meals that they used to have back in Lithuania” (Balkelis 2005). Two thirty-year-old women telling each other stories from their lives back in Lithuania could serve as another example of a healing narrative helping to endure the horrors of the gulag:

They recalled their lives in Lithuania, their student days, their balls, their first love letters and trips abroad. [...] Miliūtė's eye shone in the dark, and I heard the two whispering secrets to each other. They would tell each other everything, including the most intimate things. They talked as if they were mesmerized, they looked into the darkness without seeing the hut, and without taking part in all the nightmare around them (Grinkevičiūtė 2002, p. 94–95).

Although, from the exile's perspective, as Tomas Balkelis notes, “these stories represented a time of wasteful abundance and abnormality, they also served as a collective framework through which their feelings of belonging and nostalgia could be expressed” (Balkelis 2005).

Another level of narrative is the externalizing of the psychological trauma of displacement in the first version of memoir from the perspective of “a displaced teenager with a strong individual voice, a child whose childhood had been stolen and destroyed” (Balkelis 2005). On the one hand, the story expresses the identity of the narrator, on the other it shapes and influences the transformations of that identity. This is because it is through their stories that individuals come to know themselves or to reveal themselves to others.

The third level is the memoir of 1974, a second attempt to externalize the trauma. Grinkevičiūtė has the inner urge to speak out loud as, to use Carr's terms, “lives are told in being lived and lived in being told” (Carr 1986, p. 61):

The dead still live in my heart. Many years have passed, but I still see them, condemned and feeble, young and old, children and young people. Their deaths were so hard; they longed so much one day to be able to return to Lithuania . . . It is my duty to tell about them (Grinkevičiūtė 1990).

In “Minčių, pokalbių išlikę fragmentai”, short excerpts of conversations with Grinkevičiūtė and her thoughts published as a supplement to *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros: Atsiminimai, miniatiūros, laiškai*, Grinkevičiūtė writes: “I had no peace all that time. The dead were asking me to tell about their sufferings and meaningless deaths... Now, as I have written about that, now as people read, feel sympathy and feel for the dead, I have become free, calm and even happy” (Grinkevičiūtė 1997, p. 270; translation by the author of the article).

CONCLUSION

During the period 1941–1953 approximately 132,000 Lithuanians were deported to remote areas of the USSR in Siberia, the Arctic Circle areas,

and Central Asia (Kuodytė and Tracevskis 2005, p. 5). Grinkevičiūtės memoirs can be considered as the voice of hundreds of thousands of Lithuanian deportees who suffered the trauma of displacement and exile during the years of 1941–1953. Discussing *A Stolen Youth, a Stolen Homeland* and *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea: The Siberian Memoirs of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė* from the perspective of the narrative therapy, it seems relevant to view the creative process of relating the traumatic experience of deportation and exile through writing as a means of healing and re-creating of the self.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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