Gintarė Malinauskaitė, *Mediated Memories: Narratives and Iconographies of the Holocaust in Lithuania*, Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2019. 300 p. ISBN 978-3-87969-433-4

The origins of this book in Gintarė Malinauskaitė's doctoral thesis (Humboldt University, 2017) are manifest in its scholastic structure. It begins with a review of the historiography of the Holocaust in Lithuania, describes the theoretical framework, lays out the historical context, and then proceeds with an analysis of narrative and visual representations. Through her analysis, the author addresses three research questions. How has the memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania been represented in different mediating arenas since 1990? What role has gender played in the development of the Holocaust memory? How have mediated representations of the memory of the Holocaust in Lithuania changed since 1990?

After surveying the state of the art (discussed below), the book reviews the history of the Holocaust in German-occupied Lithuania, and its memorialisation in Soviet Lithuania and in the Lithuanian émigré community during the Cold War. The author seems to apologise for the length of the analysis of what she calls the 'pre-history' of her main subject: how the representation of the Holocaust has evolved from independence in 1990 to the present. While she correctly describes this background as crucial to understanding post-Soviet developments, the characterisation of the Cold War period as a 'pre-history' to developments that 'start' in 1990 is out of step with the substance of her analysis.

Indeed, the direct continuity of Holocaust memory from the Soviet to the post-Soviet period is clearly disclosed by Malinauskaitė's insightful description of how the 'exilic' memory of the June 1941 Uprising against the Soviet regime, which coincided with the German invasion of the USSR, 'returned' from the émigré community in the USA to post-Soviet Lithuania. In Jewish memory, this fateful month marks the outbreak of communal violence by Lithuanians against their Jewish neighbours, and the beginning of the Holocaust. The 'collision' of diasporic Jewish memory and Lithuanian émigré memory in post-Soviet Lithuania is manifest in the controversies provoked by ongoing efforts to portray the uprising as a heroic event, and to glorify certain anti-Soviet partisans who also played a role in the Holocaust.

The characterisation of Holocaust memory in Lithuania continues with a survey of the politics of apology, particularly the act of contrition expressed by President Algirdas Brazauskas on behalf of Lithuania in 1995 to the Israeli parliament. The author contextualises this move against the background of other apologies made during this period by several European states. In a similar fashion, she characterises measures taken by Lithuania to recognise and atone for the Holocaust, such as the creation of the International Commission for the Evaluation of Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupations in 1998, as part of the politics of European integration. But rather than incorporating the Holocaust into national history, she argues, Lithuania has merely taken the European 'template' for Holocaust commemoration, and used it as a tool to demand recognition of Soviet crimes (p. 128).

The final and most substantive section of the book focuses on iconographies of the Holocaust in Lithuania in film and photography. It starts by analysing works that represent the postwar homecoming of Lithuanian Jews. It proceeds to a jarring juxtaposition and analysis of photographs taken by perpetrators and Jewish victims during the Holocaust in Lithuania: photographs of the Lietūkis garage massacre taken by German military personnel, and the photographs of 'everyday life' in the Kovno ghetto by George Kadish. The analysis then turns to the use and abuse of images of child victims of the Holocaust and Soviet press photographs of female Jewish partisans, and the representation of the female experience of the Holocaust in the 2006 film by the Lithuanian film director Audrius Juzėnas, entitled *Ghetto*.

The author consistently applies a transnational approach to the analysis of Holocaust memory, proceeding from the astute observation that representations of the Holocaust in Lithuania emerged in at least four distinct cultural contexts: Soviet Lithuania, the ethnic Lithuanian émigré community in North America, the postwar Jewish Lithuanian diaspora, and post-Soviet Lithuania. The strength of her book derives from the juxtaposition and combined analysis of discourses and works emerging from these distinct and sometimes antagonistic communities of memory. The very act of assembling such disparate material, including, for example, Soviet-era propaganda, disputes between liberal and conservative émigré groups during the Cold War, post-Soviet commemoration of the June 1941 Uprising, and George Kadish's photographs of the Kovno ghetto under the common heading of mediated memories of the Holocaust in Lithuania, represents an act of academic creativity and verve.

Indeed, the appearance of this book reinforces a positive trend in the development of a new generation of PhDs addressing the thorny question of conflicting memories of the Second World War in and around Lithuania, including Stanislovas Stasiulis on the historiography of the Holocaust in Lithuania, Justas Stončius on anti-Semitism in Soviet Lithuania from 1944 to 1990, Zigmas Vitkus on the Paneriai monument to the Holocaust, Akvilė Naudžiūnienė on the representation of minorities in school curricula, Gintarė Venzlauskaitė on the impact of displacement on the collective memory of Lithuanian émigrés during the Cold War, and Šarūnė Sederevičiūtė on the memory of the Second World War in photographs from Lithuania.¹

Returning to the state of the art, the author's assertion that she could find only 'a handful of publications related to the field of memory research', 'almost none' on the visual memory, and 'only one' on women partisans (p. 12) raises questions. It would take a separate review article to correct this assertion. Here, I refer only to some of the works published before 2019 that have informed my own writing on the Holocaust memory in Lithuania, including its visual aspect in art and film, and including women partisans: Ekaterina Makhotina, Eglė Rindzevičiūtė, Justas Stončius, Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, Linas Venclauskas, Dovile Budrytė, Milda Jakutytė-Vasil, Irena Šutinienė, Stanislovas Stasiulis, Christine Beresniova, Saulius Sužiedėlis and Šarūnas Liekis, Šarūnė Sederevičiūtė, Odeta Žukauskienė, Hannah Pollin-Galay, Anja Tippner, Juliette Denis, Irina Tcherneva and Vanessa Voisin.²

¹ S. Stasiulis, *The Historiography of the Holocaust in Lithuania: traditions and problems*, PhD dissertation (Vilnius University, 2018); J. Stončius, *Antisemitizmas Sovietinėje Lietuvoje 1944–1990 metais: Daktaro disertacijos santrauka* (Klaipėda University, 2018); G. Venzlauskaitė, *From Post-War West to Post-Soviet East: Manifestations of Displacement, Collective Memory, and Lithuanian Diasporic Experience Revisited*, PhD dissertation (University of Glasgow, 2019); Z. Vitkus, *Memorialas atminimo politikoje: Panerių atvejo tyrimas (1944–2016)*, PhD dissertation (Klaipėda University Press, 2019); A. Naudžiūnienė, *Tautinės mažumos Lietuvos istorijos mokykliniame naratyve 1918–2018 m.*, PhD dissertation (Vilnius University, 2019).

² C. Beresniova, *Holocaust Education in Lithuania: Community, Conflict, and the Making of Civil Society* (Lexington Books, 2017); D. Budrytė, 'From Partisan Warfare to Memory Battlefields: Two Women's Stories about the Second World War and its Aftermath in Lithuania', in: *Gender & History* 28, No 3 (2016), pp. 754–774; J. Denis, 'Violences en URSS: chantiers historiographiques et enjeux mémoriels', in: *Tracés. Revue de Sciences humaines* 19 (2010), pp. 141–153; M. Jakutytė-Vasil, 'Lietuvos Holokauto paminklų istorija ir jų įtaka istorinei atminčiai', in: *Kultūros paminklai* (2013), pp. 133–143; G. Jankevičiūtė, 'Dailė kaip propaganda 1939–1941 metais', in: *Darbai ir dienos* 52 (2009), pp. 121–139; E. Makhotina, *Erinnerungen an den Krieg-Krieg der*

The lack of reference to this literature may be the result of how the author theorises Lithuanian memory of the Holocaust as an absence. This approach is based on the premise that the post-Soviet space, including Lithuania, has been excluded from a key cultural development that has unified Western Europe and even Western civilisation, namely, the social construction of the Holocaust as a symbol of universal evil (p. 3). To compensate for this absence, to fill in the gaps, the author insists on expanding the empirical scope of the study, to include works produced outside Lithuania by the Jewish diaspora. But while manifestations of amnesia concerning the Holocaust in Lithuania are plain for all to see, and while the inclusion of works by Jewish authors can only be welcomed, the filling of gaps with missing content is not a methodology. Rather, it is an intellectual short-cut that de-historicises existing Lithuanian narratives of the period, as well as the construction of the Holocaust memory in the West.³

By defining the object of study as an absence, the book is blind not only to other analytical works, but also to empirical material that should properly fall within its scope. This structural fault is evident in the author's vain effort to explain the wide circulation of photographs of female Jewish partisan fighters alongside an alleged 'absence of a female

erinnerungen: litauen und der Zweite Weltkrieg (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018); H. Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing: Language, Place, and Holocaust Testimony* (Yale University Press, 2018); E. Rindzevičiūtė, 'The overflow of secrets: the disclosure of Soviet repression in museums as an excess', in: *Current Anthropology* 56, No 12 (2015), pp. 276–285; Š. Sederevičiūtė, 'Holokausto užmarštis kaip istorinis procesas: valbalkininkiečių atminties atvejis', in: *Lietuvos istorijos studijos* 37 (2016), pp. 177–194; S. Stasiulis, 'The Historiography of the Holocaust in Lithuania: traditions and problems', PhD dissertation (Vilnius University, 2018); J. Stončius, 'Sovietinės sistemos kinas kaip Holokausto atminties palimpsestas', in: *Istorija* 99, 3 (2015), pp. 68–92; I. Šutinienė, 'Trauma ir kolektyvinė atmintis: sociokultūrinis aspektas', in: *Filosofija. Sociologija* 1 (2002), pp. 57–62; S. Sužiedėlis, Š. Liekis, 'Conflicting Memories: The Reception of the Holocaust in Lithuania', in: *Bringing the dark past to light: the reception of the holocaust in postcommunist Europe*, eds. John-Paul Himka, Joanna Beata Michlic (Lincoln, NE, USA, 2013); I. Tcherneva, V. Voisin, 'La Shoah dans les documentaires soviétiques des années 1960: une reconnaissance ambiguë' (2016), pp. 115–122; I. Tcherneva, 'Establishing the historicity of Soviet visual documents of the Holocaust (Estonia, Lithuania, 1944–1948)', in: *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 3 (2018), pp. 59–78; A. Tippner, 'Conflicting Memories, Conflicting Stories: Masha Rol'nikaite's Novel and the Soviet Culture of Holocaust Remembrance', in: *East European Jewish Affairs* 48, No 3 (2018), pp. 372–390; O. Žukauskienė, 'Sugrįžusi žydų atmintis: vaizdinės reprezentacijos formos', in: *Tautinės mažumos Lietuvoje: virsmai ir atmintys* (2014), pp. 190–210.

³A. Jeffrey C. 'On the social construction of moral universals: the Holocaust from war crime to trauma drama', in: *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, No 1 (2002), pp. 5–85.

narrative of resistance in Soviet Lithuania' (p. 219). Asserting that the question 'defies an easy answer', the author simply ignores one of the key narratives in the Soviet Lithuanian memory of the war, described in countless newspaper articles, manifest in monuments in every town and village across the country, staged in an opera, screened in a feature film, portrayed on postage stamps, and performed through school and youth rituals: that of the Soviet Lithuanian female partisan Marytė Melnikaitė, based on the Soviet Russian war heroine Zoja Kosmodemjanskaja.⁴

Another theoretical issue concerns the way the author defines the Soviet period as the 'pre-history' of the evolution of the post-Soviet memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust. By asserting that 'after independence in 1990, Lithuania started its nation-state building process' like it did in the early 20th century (p. 103), the author uncritically adopts another premise, this time from an outdated version of post-Soviet historiography, that Lithuanian agency and the cultural process of identity formation was somehow suspended from the Soviet occupation in 1940 until the restoration of independence in 1991.

This approach reifies 'Western' and 'Soviet' memory, 'exilic Lithuanian' and 'Jewish' memory, and imposes a hard line of discontinuity in the evolution of Lithuanian memory before and after 1991. It amounts to an uncritical assumption that the rebirth of the national political subject meant the establishment of a blank slate for national memory and identity, and it defines as inauthentic all experience dating from the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviets in 1940, including the German occupation. Ultimately, it reinforces the historical amnesia of the Holocaust that the author seeks to correct, and is out of step with the contribution made by her book towards filling the gaps in Lithuanian memory and scholarship.

At its core, the problem lies in a failure to distinguish structure and agency. Studies of collective memory sometimes fall into the trap of attributing individual intentionality and agency to a collective 'remembering' subject, leading to misleading generalisations about what a society or nation or state supposedly remembers or thinks. Malinauskaitė attempts to sidestep the problem of agency by invoking the idea of 'mediation', analysing the 'mediation of memory and the representation of the Holocaust through various forms of media' (p. 23).

Side-stepping the question of Lithuanian agency is possible when limited to the historically contextualised interpretation of individual works

⁴ V. Davoliūtė, L. Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, 'Sovietization and the Cinema in the Western Borderlands: Insurgency, Narrative, and Identity in the Lithuanian Film *Marytė* (1947)', in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 64, No 3 (2016), pp. 39–56.

that represent *the Holocaust in Lithuania*, but the author also seeks to draw conclusions about *Holocaust memory in Lithuania*. The confusion of structure and agency is evident in the author's assertion that 'this study of Holocaust memory in Lithuania also asks how media—represented by a variety of memory actors, including journalists and historians, perpetrators and survivors—acted as an agent of memory that shaped and reshaped different narratives about the past' (p. 23). She writes of how 'Lithuanian political institutions', 'Lithuanian television' and 'Lithuanian newspapers' created narratives (p. 108), and ultimately how 'Lithuania has chosen' (p. 128), without developing an explicit theoretical approach to the definition or analysis of the Lithuanian subject or agency.

That said, the substance and practical unfolding of the author's analysis is not unduly impaired by this faulty theoretical framework. In practice, she provides an original synthesis of the evolution of Holocaust memory during the Cold War in a transnational perspective, and carries this analysis through the post-Soviet period. And while her treatment of the evolution of Lithuanian Holocaust memory is poorly informed by the innovative work of colleagues on the topic, and comes across as incomplete and rather dated, her juxtaposition and analysis of diverse narratives and images of the Holocaust in Lithuania constitute an original and significant contribution to the field.

It bears note that throughout the duration of the author's doctoral studies, and through the publication of this work in 2019 to the present day, the issue of Lithuanian memory of the Holocaust has become increasingly politicised. Scholars writing on the matter tread on a scholastic and political minefield, where one false step will invite a barrage of criticism. Against this background, efforts to push the envelope of disciplinary and scholastic boundaries should be welcomed.

As strategies for the interrogation of contested pasts shift from an outdated model of consensus and reconciliation to more realistic models of agonistic memory,⁵ *Mediated Memories* will be seen as a pioneering step in this direction. The monograph will be of interest and practical use to professional historians, students and general readers curious about the contested memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust in Lithuania.

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⁵ A. Cento Bull, H. Lauge Hansen, 'On agonistic memory', in: *Memory Studies* 9, No 4 (2016), pp. 390–404.