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Trauma, Narrative and History: Representation of Traumatic Experience in the Works of Algirdas Landsbergis

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Abstract. The twentieth century witnessed an abundant number of traumatic events related to dark history. Trauma caused by war, occupation, exile, repression, gave rise to migration or mass murder. To rely upon Cathy Caruth (1996: 3), the concept of trauma is understood as a physical wound; however, subsequently in medicine and the literature of psychiatry, especially in Freud's works, the concept of trauma came to be understood as a psychological wound. In addition, trauma is not only a disturbing or stressful experience that affects an individual physically or psychologically, it may also be based on other factors created by society.

Over time the field of trauma in various contexts expanded so that today it is widely used in sociology when analysing historical and cultural events. Cultural traumatic memory is mirrored in trauma fiction that conveys the experience of loss and suffering, there is a space for memories, introspection, recollections, flashbacks and awful remembrances that are colored by pain. Apart from individual, event-based trauma, there is another category of trauma variously called cultural or historical trauma, which affects groups of people.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the latter topic, however, trauma and its expression in Lithuanian literature has not yet been sufficiently documented.

The aim of this study is to discuss the concepts of cultural and historical trauma and the way trauma is reflected in Algirdas Jeronimas Landsbergis' works. The authors of the study claim that Landsbergis – one of many Lithuanian writers-in-exile – wrote texts that fill a cultural vacuum and invite a re-discussion of what was most painful in the past.

Keywords: trauma; occupation; exile; identity; alienation; spiritual starvation

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Introduction

Trauma affects human values, identities and worldviews, as well as emotional and social ties. The twentieth century witnessed an abundant number of traumatic events related to dark history, due to which the perception of trauma, its consequences and effects on the individual increased.

The effects of exile and trauma on human beings is often overlooked in literature. They are linked to cultural identity and the person's sense of self. Wounding experienced by parents and grandparents is also felt by later generations, particularly when the trauma caused by war, occupation, exile, repression, etc., gives rise to migration or mass murder.

Over time the concept of trauma in various contexts has expanded to the point where it is widely used in sociology when analysing historical and cultural events.

Numerous studies show that life after a breaking point becomes different. One of the best examples of this manifest dissimilarity is observed in the case of German reunification because of how it confronted citizens of East and West Germany with many changes (Becker, Mergele, Woessmann 2020: 163). These changes were considered critical. Psychologists identified how in addition to opportunities and freedom, there was also a threatening uncertainty about the future (Butler, Panzer, Goldfrank 2003: 34–39). In the case of Lithuania, after the restoration of independence, "many people who had been in forced emigration, i.e. who themselves or whose parents or even grandparents had fled from Lithuania to escape the Soviet occupation, expecting to return shortly, came back from the West – primarily from the United States – determined to help create the independent state" (Gailienė 2015: 9). They all shared the same impression: the people they found in Lithuania were different to what they had expected. There was more distrust, intolerance, hypocrisy, reticence. People were more scared and their lives and personal stories were more complex, full of traumatic experiences that were the outcome of repression.

Trauma Theory and its Reflections in Literature

Speaking about the field of trauma theory, it "emerged in the 1990s out of the confluence of psychoanalysis, deconstruction and Holocaust studies" (Oziewicz 2016: 146). Sociologists and cultural scientists are particularly interested in the repression and trauma caused by the Nazis and the Soviets. Anne Whitehead explains that "the Holocaust has thus become a powerful lens through which we look at other instances of oppression and genocide" (2008:

150). Moreover, the remembrance of the Holocaust became a basis for analysing other collective traumas.

The concept of trauma, as Cathy Caruth observes in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996: 3), is understood as a physical wound. In the field of medicine and in the literature of psychiatry, especially in Freud's works, the concept of trauma is understood as a psychological wound. In addition, when discussing trauma Caruth identifies it as not only a disturbing or stressful experience that affects the individual physically or psychologically, but also as an experience influenced by factors created by society (Caruth 1996: 3–6).

Cultural traumatic memory has frequently been mirrored in trauma fiction, which conveys the experience of loss and suffering by creating a space for memory, introspection, recollection of atrocious events colored by pain. This is why it is important to observe how difficult it is to distinguish between history, individual, and collective memory. The French historian Pierre Nora in his *Realms of Memory* claims that,

> memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. (Nora 1989: 8)

Thus, if history is a representation of the past, memories enter the literary field in memoirs that are filled with traumatic reminiscences, transmitted from generation to generation.

Moreover, the concepts of cultural and historical trauma are not identical. To rely on Ron Eyerman, cultural trauma applies to any ethnic group or nation that suffered "a dramatic loss of identity or meaning" (Alexander and Eyerman et al. 2004: 60). Marek Oziewicz (2016: 147) insightfully adds that cultural trauma is a form of collective remembrance and a cultural process "mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory". Researchers who carried out studies on the concept of historical trauma and its evolution, claim that despite the multitude of terms, historical trauma can be understood as consisting of three primary elements: a) wounding; b) the trauma or wounding is shared by a group of people, rather than being limited to an individual; c) the

trauma spans multiple generations "such that contemporary members of the affected group may experience trauma-related symptoms without having been present for the past traumatizing event(s)" (Mohatt et al. 2014: 129).

As many trauma fiction scholars note, the trauma novel is usually based on memoirs and diaries. These memoirs formed by traumatic experiences are inconceivable and hardly identifiable (Whitehead 2004: 4). Recreating, as well as describing, experienced events and emotions is complicated. To convey experienced emotions and feelings in fiction Marinella Rodi-Risberg states that "writers employ fictional techniques such as figurative language to represent trauma and its concerns with dissociation, shattered identities, and fragmented memories, thus making traumatic experience more accessible and real to readers" (2010: 18). Such figurative language, with inserted fragments of memory, allows us to feel the reality of the fictional setting and identify with the character. Taking into consideration oppression and genocide in trauma fiction, E. Ann Kaplan declares that there is reflected "loss of identity" in which the state and consciousness of being human is traumatised (2005: 44). When a person is traumatised there is a certain loss of identity that can lead to a lack of humanity so that the person feels like an object with no rights.

The complex twists and turns in Lithuanian history has shaped the nation's culture, values, character and identity. Fifty years under occupying the totalitarian regimes have profoundly affected Lithuanian consciousness, self-awareness and relations resulting in explicitly expressed historical and cultural trauma in literature that has not been yet sufficiently documented. There are several studies on Ričardas Gavelis and Antanas Škėma's works that focus on the embodiment of trauma (Čičelis 2010); Mykolaitytė conducted a concise study of trauma in Romualdas Granauskas and Ramūnas Klimas' works (Mykolaitytė 2015, 2016, 2017); and Žindžiuvienė (2013) attempted to discuss trauma in Rūta Šepetys' bestselling novel *Between Shades of Gray* (2011).

Trauma in Lithuanian History: the Soviet and Nazi Occupations

Trauma in Lithuanian history is divided into three agonising events: the first Soviet occupation (1940–1941), the Nazi occupation (1941–1944) and the second Soviet occupation (1944–1990). The traumatisation of the "Lithuanian people continued for five decades (at least in Lithuania and the other Baltic countries)", as Gailienė (2015: 11) observes in her study on trauma and culture.

After a number of small European countries were occupied by Germany, it was hard to expect that Lithuania would remain untouched by the Nazi–Soviet conspiracy. The first two occupations resulted in a huge wave of refugees spreading around the world at the end of World War II. Having experienced

the occupation of communist Russia in 1941, the old and the young retreated to Germany and Austria, hoping that when the war was over, Lithuania would regain its independence and everyone would be able to return. It is estimated that there were about 60,000 such Lithuanians in exile (Gailienė 2008: 9–10). After four years spent in so called transition camps displaced persons were given the opportunity to emigrate to free countries. The majority of the exiles found themselves in the USA, others in Canada, Belgium, the UK, Austria, South America.

Moreover, immediately after the occupation and annexation of Lithuania in 1940, when some were looking for asylum, massive arrests and deportations of the Lithuanian population began. With the return of the Soviets in 1944 nearly 62,000 Lithuanians, including two-thirds of Lithuanian writers, went abroad. The USA became the most dynamic centre of Lithuanian writers in exile, with printing houses in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City; at this time the board of the Society of Lithuanian Writers relocated from Germany (Eidintas et al. 2015: 262–272).

Rimvydas Šilbajoris describes Lithuanian writers-in-exile in the following manner:

> [...] writers turned away from memories of the past toward the present, and for them the experience of exile acquired another quality – that of alienation. These were mostly younger people who were not bound, by the requirements of native literary tradition, because they had little experience at writing within the context of Lithuanian reality. They were open to all the sensory impressions of the new and alien lands, as well as to the most recent literary trends in the West. As it happened, the post-war reality in Western Europe was full of ruins, death and fear, while its literature began to reflect the cosmic hopelessness which always accompanies the collapse of a civilization. In such circumstances, these young writers were able to grasp another meaning of exile. It was for them not a meaningless, abnormal thing, but the natural state of man in the universe. Not they alone, but humanity as a whole became for them a homeless tribe, lost in an alien world (Šilbajoris 1972: 46–47).

Algirdas Landsbergis belongs in this category. Like many exiles he attempted to minimise the dizziness of alienation by developing a universe filled with disorder, a world that lacked ethical and moral principles.

Representation of Traumatic Experience in the Works of Algirdas Landsbergis

Algirdas Jeronimas Landsbergis (1924–2004) was one of the many Lithuanian writers-in-exile who repeated in his works events that were traumatic in his life.

In 1949 Landsbergis moved from Germany to the USA where he became famous as an essayist, literarary and theatre critic, playwright, and professor at Fairlegh Dickinson University in New York. Landsbergis wrote thirteen plays, a novel, and two collections of short stories. His writings have been translated into eight languages. "His plays were produced in Lithuania, United States, Canada, Europe, Africa and Australia. He has written scripts for the movies, TV and Radio" (Goštautas 2005). Writing was a way for him to tell the world about his native country, its language, traditions, and history. He was one of the few Lithuanian writers who could write equally well in both Lithuanian and English. He was "attracted to English because of its richness, multiple literary echoes, and the immense challenge to mastery it provides. As for his native tongue, Lithuanian gave body to the memory of childhood" (Daubenas 1974: 22). Landsbergis' literary and political activities were directed toward one goal: understanding the reasons behind historical upheavals so that he could find a way to alter the effects of these catastrophes (Vedrickaitė 2015: 93). His works reveal the drama of the Lithuanian nation, who by this time had been divided into two parts. The writer conveys in his works the trauma of the occupied people, as well as of the exiles, exploring their ways of surviving trauma and their adaptation to the new conditions.

In cooperation with the writer and translator Clark Mills, Landsbergis composed, translated, and published anthologies of Lithuanian poetry and folklore titled *The Green Oak* (1962) and *The Green Linden* (1964). His novel *Journey* (published in Lithuanian in 1954 as *Kelionė*) is written in the spirit of the Beat Generation and has resemblances to Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1950). It is set within a strange community of displaced persons (DPs) from all over the world – Armenians, Ukrainians, Roumanians, Italians, and of course, Lithuanians – who because of the war, find themselves together in the barracks of postwar Germany (see Goštautas 2005). Like Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, it defends the freedom to choose one's own life, to seek liberation from ideological traps.

Traumatic events are represented in a number of Landsbergis's short stories, eventually included in the collections *The Long Night* (*Ilgoji naktis*, Landsbergis 1956), *Music Entering the Unseen Cities* (*Muzika, įžengiant į neregėtus miestus*, Landsbergis 1979), and in the anthologies *Travel Music* (*Kelionės muzika*, Landsbergis 1992) and *Modern Lithuanian Exile Prose* (*Modernioji lietuvių*

egzilio proza, Kuizinienė 2006). His play *Five Pillars in the Market Square* (*Penki stulpai turgaus aikštėje*, Landsbergis 1966) appeared on stage both in Lithuanian and English. Other works include the play *Wind in the Willows* ("Vėjas gluosniuose", 1958), the comedy *School of Love* ("Meilės mokykla", 1965), the one-act farce *Beard* ("Barzda", 1966), *Children in the Amber Palace* (in Lithuanian and English, "Vaikai gintaro rūmuose" 1985, 1986), *The Last Picnic* (published in Lithuanian in 1978 under the title "Paskutinis piknikas"), and *Two Utopian Plays* (published in Lithuanian in 1994 under the title "Du utopiški vaidinimai").

Landsbergis worked as a Lithuanian Ambassador on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and in the International PEN Club, speaking to the world about the nations occupied by the Soviets. Thanks to his hard work, the Writers' Union of Lithuania was admitted to the International PEN Club in the spring of 1989. He was denied access to his homeland for a long time for his hostility to Soviet authorities. Only at the end of 1991 he reached Lithuania for the first time since his exile via Riga (Latvia). After retiring from active academic life, he founded a one-man "flying university" and gave lectures on various topics. He died in the spring of 2004 and was buried at Saint Charles Cemetery, Farmingdale, New York.

The characters of Landsbergis' works have experienced war, post-war realities, and exile. His texts fill a cultural vacuum, allowing for a new discussion of what was most painful in the past. His reminiscences chronicle the loss of identity and spiritual starvation:

> We were hungry; we were starved because during the War we were shut out from everything. The Soviet occupation, the Nazi occupation [...] and so many questions to ask. Everything that we believed in was put into questions; the meaningfulness of the world, Europe, our religion, patriotism – everything. The concentration camps were opened. Europe was a sort of lunar landscape at that time. One had to question everything. We had to reconstruct the world, in a sense, from nothingness (Landsbergis in Šilbajoris 1972: 16).

In his short story "The Greek Wind" ("Graikijos vėjas", Landsbergis 1956) Landsbergis conveys the reality of the DP camps: speculation, corruption, dullness, lordship of primitive instincts, a sense of exile. The story is linked to the myth of Theseus. The plot is constructed chronologically; the action is set in caserns surrounded by a high fence, but their location is not revealed, suggesting that the story could have happened anywhere. Whereas in the Greek myth the labyrinth is misleading, in Landsbergis' short story it helps to find answers to important questions as one of the characters distinguishes the recurring patterns. Theseus was sent to fulfil the will of the gods, but the Theseus of today

is weak and fearful. Landsbergis portrays a black-haired soldier who covers his weakness, cowardice, or inability to act with roughness and aggression: "Give me a Greek and I will squeeze his head between his ribs" (1956: 129–30). He is also prejudiced and makes his own experience into absolutes: "'I hate the Greeks', the black-haired intervened. 'They are scammers, abominations'" (129). He is a cold-hearted exploitative person. When he meets a girl at a military base, he takes advantage of her fascination with him, swindles the keys to the cellar from her, and steals food. He also tends to brag to others about his strength and power, but it transpires that these were lies. A victim of the trauma of war and exile is not sentimentalised.

Another character in the short story is a Lithuanian soldier student who struggles against the traumatic reality by creating a mental Hellenistic world. When he meets a woman at a military base, he compares her to a Greek heroine: "This is how Nausicaa must have looked while washing clothes by the seashore. Her eyes could not have been deeper, her nose classier, her lips discovered by a more prominent sculptor" (1956: 140). The young art fan tends to project literary experience onto reality. His lively imagination sometimes leads to confusion between the real world and the imaginary: "I could swear there was a sea behind those trees and a woman was following moon patterns in the waves" (141). The young soldier is sensitive and empathetic towards the environment around him. He tries to justify the actions of those who steal food by their "traumatic experience, sense of guilt" (147). His positive attitude becomes a means of survival: "How diverse and colorful life is" (14).

The characters are portrayed via their inner monologues as well as through authorial comment and reflection. Some stories are told by the same character twice, which indicates the acuteness of his feelings. Mythological elements and archetypes employed in the story become a balance to unfamiliar everyday reality.

In his short story "Gait" ("Eisena", Landsbergis 1956) Landsbergis portrays grim Soviet reality. Walking to deadly camps in Siberia, his character Linkus is staggering with others and thinking about a packet of grape sugar he is hiding from the others. The way of life in the camp is recreated in vivid detail. Driven by animalistic biological instincts people fight for survival. After avoiding death but failing to resist the pressures of the totalitarian system, the protagonist, a victim of fear, lies and denies his identity. He is afraid of the Soviet soldiers, he does not want to identify himself with the outcasts: "He feared that some broad-shouldered man would walk in and put them all in danger" (1956: 107). Linkus is selfish, ready to accept humiliation and adapt in order to gain the favour of an alien authority and become the clerk of the camp: "Would he kiss their hands?" (109). The traumatic experience of deportation and

imprisonment eliminates his power of empathy and his connection with the community: he seeks advantage only for himself. He flees from himself and his feelings but is distressed by his conscience and constantly wonders why he does not want to help others. He can give the grape sugar brought from Lithuania to a boy dying of hunger, but he does not, because he is saving it for himself. In this way he condemns the child to death, and this thought gnaws him: "he fears to see eye to eye with the child. Although, he does not know if I have sugar". Linkus cannot not get rid of his remorse, "his self-care suppressed everything" (117).

Thus, in the face of radical hardship, values are confused. All that previously seemed immoral, abnormal and unusual becomes part of everyday reality in Landsbergis' universe of physical and spiritual exile.

The short story "Long Night" ("Ilgoji naktis", Landsbergis 1956) depicts the protagonist's struggle to resist personal trauma, as well as the collective trauma of the occupation of his homeland. A politically active hero overcomes the trauma with the help of his own motivation. The traumas suffered during the war do not hurt but rather the contrary, they give access to his deepest human resources and empower him to grow and mature. He is a patriot, determined to resist Lithuania's invaders both actively and passively during the war and to defend his relatives. He smuggles books, joins a self-defence unit, fights the Germans, and is able to endure the hardships, the pain of the fighting and the loss of friends. He is emotionally and physically strong. Kęstutis takes responsibility for his actions, which endangered his beloved: "It is my fault that Rima was there" (60). With each experience he gains wisdom. He deliberately chooses the way of political struggle, and traumatic experience enhances the authenticity of his position.

A different distressing experience of a soldier abandoning humanistic values is portrayed in the short story via the characters who represent military occupation, Vasily and Fedia. Fedia is harsh, with a pronounced inclination to exploit and harm those who are weaker. He wants to rape a girl whom he imprisons in the basement, collaborating with Vasily to do so. However, at the end of the story it turns out that this is merely a disguise for their weakness. Vasily feels he is in chaos, unable to comprehend his feelings and understand how he should behave: "Two completely different voices spoke within him as if he had split in two" (1956: 68). One, the kind and compassionate self, urges him to release the girl, while the other alter ego surrenders to emptiness and futility. The occupant ponders all night that the prisoner is not a bad person, but he does not dare to act and thus condemns the girl to death and himself to moral distress. He finds an escape from his feelings, pretending he does not feel sorry for the prisoner, and treats her only as a class enemy whom he is ready to eliminate.

He is a representation of the 20th century literary heroes who are often helpless, disturbed, and mad because their identities are shattered by the traumas of war.

In the short story "The Birth of a Song" ("Dainos gimimas", Landsbergis 1992), the author depicts personal psychological drama and the way it effects a traitor who adapts to the conditions of occupation, tortures and deports Lithuanians. Landsbergis speaks about the times of the Soviet occupation and the union of the fifteen Soviet republics. Nobody was allowed to have doubts about the USSR and its legitimate government or betray this country. The chosen ones were allowed to travel to competition or concerts abroad. A KGB agent, who pretends to be a member of the Wales International Choir Competition, takes part in a song festival under the title "A Happy World". The agent, who is the protagonist, describes the course of events in letters to his beloved. His letters are exceptional in their structure, being arranged in sections that contain titles, "PSALM 23 (FRANZ SCHUBEBT), UKRAINIAN SHEVCHENKO CHOIR, ENGLAND", "MEN OF HARLECH (FOLK SONG), COR MEIBION, WALES", "AVE VERUM CORPUS (L.G. DA VIADANA), ŠAUKLYS CHOIR, VILNIUS, LITHUANIA, USSR". The letters are written in such a way that they resemble the structure of a concert program.

Landsbergis notes in his manuscripts that the situations and the characters described in the story are not fictitious: "I heard the main story of 'Birth of a Song' while visiting Lithuanians in London" (Landsbergis 2019).

The protagonist is an aggressive, degraded, violent personality: "I punched him in the embassy hallway for him to remember goodbye, and he whined like a dog" (Landsbergis 1992: 284). In an imaginary conversation with a lover, he demonstrates overconfidence, he has an illusion of being very powerful and intimidating: "I glare at everyone from left to right and I see their Adam's apples move, I smell fear!" (282). He is pleased with his task of supervising Lithuanian choristers in order to search for Soviet traitors among them. In this situation he attributes to himself the role of the shepherd: "it was my duty, I had to walk around, take care of my herd" (188). His desire for power and supremacy hides his true personality: his self-portrait as a strong man is an illusion to disguise his weaknesses. Indeed, the man is a rather timid individual who has to obey to the rules of the system. Having suffered many traumas during his childhood he attempts to compensate for them with actions that target those weaker than himself. The grammar of the conversation created in the character's mind – exclamation marks and negative epithets – signals that this painful experience makes itself felt at chaotic moments of his life. The psychological traumas of childhood and the schizophrenic, chameleonic nature of a developed character under occupation become the basis for traumatic memories. In the episode, as

the narrative approaches its climax and the KGB agent and other choristers rise to the stage, he can no longer control his emotions and feelings. The character's internal language becomes incoherent and he does not quite understand what he is thinking about. His thoughts move from the present to his childhood and back, his pace of speaking is fast, and the discourse is inconsistent. The flow of words in the protagonist's head overshadows everything. The character becomes paranoid, suspecting everyone to be his enemy. Finally, unable to hold the emotions back he starts singing a fragment of a Lithuanian folk song "Tasty Beer was Made!" in the middle of a Latin song, doing so at the top of his lungs (190).

In the short story "The Heavens Vanish, The Heavens Fill" ("Dangūs tuštėja, dangūs pildosi", 1979, Landsbergis 1992), Landsbergis describes a post-war Lithuanian family – Adelė, her husband and their daughter Danguolė – who live among Italians. Sturdy in her traditional views, Adelė feels safe, until that idyll is shattered by a young family and their son Petrukas who move to the neighbourhood and, unlike many of other families, do not attend church. Aiming to receive permission to go to a dance party, the virtuous Danguolė promises her mother that she wiil keep Petrukas from the neighbourhood safe and teach him religion. At first, she shows him a truly spiritualised, poetic heaven, although she later denies God's existence. The child's lively imagination fills heaven with his own mythological creatures. Thus, in such a manner Landsbergis conveys a crisis of traditional values that are distorted in the exile environment.

Moreover, in his three plays, "Five Posts in a Market Place", "The School for Love", and "The Last Picnic", Landsbergis posits the statement that "the playwright in exile carries within himself two irreconcilable realities: one being the native with an inherited culture and tradition, the other being the alien and the adopted" (Daubenas 1974: V). Nevertheless, Landsbergis' world is not entirely pessimistic. His characters seek to regain a sense of identity and belonging. There is a dramatic history behind the play "Five Posts in a Market Place", which is told in Guerilla Warfare on the Amber Coast, by K. V. Tauras. Landsbergis' play is written about the Lithuania's Freedom Army and freedom fighters and is a representation of grim reality. Posts in the market place were by the NKVD, who would bring corpses of Lithuania's Freedom Army fighters that were "sometimes horribly disfigured by grenade explosions". These corpses would be sewn back together and attached to the posts, sometimes desecrated with dung stuffed in their mouths and rosaries twisted around their necks. The townspeople would then have to identify the bodies. As Daubenas observed in his study, "It was a barbaric procedure, but it was also a symbol of the commitment of the Lithuanians to freedom" (1974: 120). When speaking

about Landsbergis as a playwright with a unique style of writing, one can rely upon American poet, playwright, teacher, novelist, and founder and editor of the *New York Quarterly*, William Packard's, statement that Landsbergis gave us Cold War psychology. The discussion in the play between the intellectual and the man of action may remind us of the demonic reasoning in Arthur Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*, or the existential reasoning in Andre Malraux' novel *Man's Fate*; or it may even take us back to the shattering discussion in the Grand Inquisitor scene in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karahazov* "because of the groping, tortuous attempt to provide some realm of personal value and meaning in a world that has turned its back on all meaning and all value" (Packard 1968: 63). The device of dramatic irony is employed by Landsbergis in all his plays. In "The Last Picnic" it is not so sharp, less bitter, and the tone is calmer. In one of his manuscripts, Landsbergis admitted that "The Last Picnic" is a play about music, among other things. His character Bartholomew lives in the past. He is the embodiment of the older generation of immigrants who spent the best part of their lives in the steel mills, factories, and slaughter houses of America. Bartholomew is determined to preserve at all cost the picnic tradition and the life it represents. Picnics offer him a sense of involvement and of belonging. They provide a coherent justification for his place in the universe. Landsbergis demonstrates that the picnics, which are a metaphor for an idyllic life, cannot survive unchanged in a world where change and practicality rule the day.

Conclusion

It is necessary to admit that trauma is important not only to those who have experienced traumatic events, but also to subsequent generations, and that it is possible to overcome trauma through reflection and discussion, acknowledging other people's pain and suffering.

Individual stories, which found reflection in the literature mirror, echoing painful history and disquieting traumatic events, have shaped the identities of specific communities.

Landsbergis' work testifies to the identity of the Lithuanian nation, depicting and illuminating the exile's search for a meaningful life through the psyche of a man of the second half of the 20th century, specifically an older Lithuanian expatriate, who was often heavily influenced by the consequences of occupation, war, deportation and exile. Therefore, the writer's work reflects the cultural trauma of an entire nation and reveals various personal psychological traumatic experiences of the older generation. The psychological traumas of

childhood and the schizophrenic, chameleonic nature of a developed character under occupation become the basis for traumatic memories.

There are elements in Landsbergis' creation that stem from his cultural heritage and native tradition, thus the writer's art of writing and worldview did not develop exceptionally in exile.

Landsbergis' work is rich in tension, changing forms and dynamism, which makes it extremely intriguing and engaging. There is little lyricism or tenderness in Landsbergis' work, rather he often employs elements of the grotesque, or demonstrates his vast imagination and complexity of sentence construction. Mythological elements and archetypes employed in his stories become a balance to unfamiliar everyday reality. In his plays Landsbergis, like Brecht, creates an atmosphere of alienation in order to prevent his audience from confusing the stage act with real life.

While Landsbergis' plays effectively illuminate the variance between the two cultures and the two traditions, they also demonstrate that attempts to resolve the conflict constitute the main source of his creativity.

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