

Jehanne Gheith, Duke University

Abstract

This paper traces the different trajectories of three “daughters of the Gulag,” (daughters of so-called enemies of the people): Mariia Budkevich, Nina Kolkunova, and Elga Torchinskaia. I analyze their narratives in relation to Marianne Hirsch’s concept of post-memory from her book, *Family Frames*.

Budkevich was the daughter of a Polish Communist, Kolkunova of a Czech Communist, and Torchinskaia the daughter of an NKVD officer. Each had different ways of remembering and incorporating the memories into their lives: roughly, Budkevich developed a form of personal memory or quest, Kolkunova of activism and through active remembering of her mother, and Torchinskaia through her work as an ethnographer.

Hirsch developed the idea of “postmemory” in relation to children of Holocaust survivors. Because remembering often had to be indirect for survivors of the Gulag due to both the particular internal and external pressures of the cultural context of the Soviet Union, some of Hirsch’s concepts work for children of the Gulag and others do not: while, both groups could remember in a way that the survivors themselves could not, the particularities of this were very different for the children of the Gulag who were often living in the long silence about the Gulag that was part of the Soviet experience until the late 1980s.

Throughout, I give long quotations from the interviews, putting them into context, in order to show the workings of personal memory over time—a kind of in-depth recovery that is important because of the mass dehumanization of the Gulag.