

Part of the problem is the common assumption among many trans-national theorists of migration as a purely value free exercise. If it matters little whether migrants live here or there, then nationalist concerns over migration indeed appear irrational. Yet, for smaller and not-very-rich countries with stagnant or declining birthrates like Poland (or even more so for far more impoverished countries in Africa), the loss of large numbers of young, educated, productive citizens cannot be viewed with equanimity. Whatever one's feeling toward the politics of Jaroslaw Kaczyński or Donald Tusk, whose statements the author uses to illustrate "hegemonic" responses to migration (pp. 58–62), their expressions of concern over the scale and nature of migration from Poland reflect real not theoretical problems.

Although the author is certainly no historian, at times his discussion of the past seems captive to PRL-era historiography. This is notable in his view of the Polish gentry (p. 79) and more seriously for this study, in his dismissive approach to the Polish community in Britain created by World War II era Polish veterans and refugees (p. 89). The horrors and tragedies suffered by veterans, refugees, and their families at the hands of the Nazis and Soviets, and the poor treatment many experienced in post-war Britain, including the exclusion of Poles from post-war victory celebrations, is for Garapich, just another set of myths to be deconstructed (see, for example, p. 259 n 315).

Large parts of the book are written in the jargon heavy post-modern prose that is now standard in much of the humanities and social sciences, which often serves to make the quotidian seem profound while signaling one's erudition to one's peers. Readers patient enough to wade through this and past the wince-inducing ideology and the occasional historical ignorance (as well as the lack of an index) will find much to admire. *London's Polish Borders* can be read with profit by students and scholars of Polish migration past and present.

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Donna Solecka Urbikas, *My Sister's Mother: A Memoir of War, Exile, and Stalin's Siberia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 312 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. ISBN 978-0-299-30850-6.

Years ago, while interviewing a veteran of the Polish Second Corps and a survivor of Stalin's labor camps, the reviewer duly recorded the details of his family's arrest, deportation to north Russia, escape from the Soviet Union, and his service in battles from Monte Cassino to Ancona to Bologna. In the last part of the interview, when asked about his life after the war, he gave a brief summary of coming to America, earning a college degree, and a summary of his children and grandchildren. Follow up questions on this aspect of his life were met with bemusement. It had just not occurred to him that compared to the dramatic events of his youth that his life in America would be of the least historical interest. In this, he was not

alone. Memoirs and oral interviews of war veterans, of Holocaust survivors, and of victims of communist repression and genocide have understandably tended to focus on the most intense and traumatic aspects of their lives. Compared to surviving Auschwitz or going over the top in the final assault on Cassino, how could life in post-war suburban America seem anything other than a pale shadow?

Yet the postwar adjustment of these survivors was often anything but smooth. The usual problems of adjusting to a new language and culture, or finding work were often compounded by the memory of personal traumas, including the loss of family, combat, torture, abuse, and starvation. Such experiences are grouped under the rubric of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), but remain imperfectly understood despite significant study and advances in understanding and treatment since the 1970s. Today there are therapies available for PTSD which provide some help for survivors, but in the years following the war, no such thing existed. Documentation and better understanding of the impact of the war and Holocaust on survivors and their families has emerged gradually, with accounts of Jewish victims of Nazism being the best known. The post-war experience of Polish survivors has been less prominent, but is also becoming better known. The poetry of John Guzlowski (*Echoes of Tattered Tongues* and *The Language of Mules*), is but one example of how the children of survivors have been able to lay bare not only their parents' trauma but the wider impact of that trauma which often took a heavy toll on the survivors as well as on their children.

Donna Solecka Urbikas' memoir of her mother and sister's survival in the Soviet gulags and their post-war experiences is one of the finest memoirs of this genre for its portrait of the long-term impact of the horror of Stalinist repression on post-war Polish émigrés. Whereas most memoirs relegate their post-war experiences to the background or a final chapter at the end, *My Sister's Mother* foregrounds the post-war impact of the war and the gulags. This is done by interspersing a chapter on her mother and sisters' experiences during the war with a chapter on the family's post-war life in Chicago and Wisconsin. Thus, part of the book is based on extensive interviews with her mother (as well as with her sister and father) as well as her own experiences living with her mother and sister who can never fully escape the horrific events they endured as young women.

This effective approach allows the reader to see more clearly the long-term trauma caused by her mother's wartime experiences and difficulty of adjusting to life after the war in America. Her mother's encounter with a group of American friends brings home the profound sense that nothing her mother experienced could be clearly understood by those who had not gone through a similar trauma:

One time, my parents invited several new American friends to our Wisconsin farm during one of our several vacations there, and as usual the conversation turned to the War.

“Why couldn't you just fight them or refuse to go,” asked one guest naively.

“Wasn't Poland a free country then?” asked another.

My mother grew very grave, narrowing her arched full eyebrows and wrinkling her forehead, making herself look old and anguished. I sat still, bracing myself for an outburst and anticipating the embarrassment I expected to feel in front of our new guests.

“Free? Do you think *you* know what freedom is?” she asked, her voice rising. “I know what freedom really is, because I know what it is not!”

We all stopped and stared at her . . .

My mother laughed, an exaggerated howl, repeating their questions as if in mockery. My father, sister and I sat quietly. I looked at our awestruck guests as they stared at my mother.

“Why I didn’t resist arrest?” she asked. Without waiting for the guests to speak, she followed with more questions, spewing words in rapid fire. “Why was it so difficult for me, while somehow others survived better? Why can’t I forget?” (pp. 11–12)

*My Sister’s Mother* also shows that post-war experiences were never uniform. Different experiences during the war, individual personality, gender, and the support networks of family and friends before, during, and after the war made a difference in how any particular individual processed his or her memories after the war. Urbikas’ father, Wawrzyniec Solecki, had also been deported to Siberia. A veteran of the September Campaign as well as the Polish Second Corps campaigns in Italy, he nonetheless provided an anchor of stability for the family. Urbikas’ older half-sister, Mira, who experienced the horrors of deportation and imprisonment along with her mother, never completely escapes her wartime experiences, eventually developing a serious mental illness to which her past trauma doubtless contributed.

The author herself experiences the dislocation of living in two seemingly different worlds inhabited by her sister and parents and her peers, respectively. While initially embarrassed by her mother’s demeanor, she eventually comes to identify more closely with her, especially as she becomes a mother herself and undergoes treatment for breast cancer. Interviewing her mother and recording the family’s traumatic past becomes a way for the author to reconcile the disparate parts of her childhood and to better understand her mother’s history and personality. *My Sister’s Mother* is both a historical chronicle of a Polish family’s wartime experiences as well as a moving story of the true personal costs of Poland’s twentieth century history, long borne in silence by so many refugee families.

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Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 228 pp., notes, index. ISBN 978-0-226-29403-2.

Rarely do I pick up a book of literary criticism and fall under its thrall, but Rita Felski’s *The Limits of Critique* made me want to become her acolyte, or at least her disciple. I can imagine a groundswell, a movement, a school, a new New-Ism. Or