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There Was a Little Girl: Coming of Age Amidst War, Statelessness, and the Heather Fields of Fishbacha

In October 1944, thirteen-year old Ruta and her parents fled a besieged Riga, and, in 1945, found refuge in a Bavarian DP camp, where they lived through 1949. Her flight and displacement coexisted, though, with a sense of place amongst fellow war refugees from the Baltics, who likewise carried with them not only their few, precious possessions, but a collective will to sustain one another in the wake of destruction, the terror of two brutal occupations, and intense personal upheaval. The displaced Latvians converted army barracks into a temporary community, with a school, kitchen, cultural center, and clinic—at once signifiers of their nationless, fragmented existence, and their intense efforts to rebuild lives from the rubble of war. It is in this context, in the vast expanse of post-war statelessness, in the confines of a refugee camp in post-war Germany's American sector, that the traumatized young girl was able to discover ways to shape herself into an astute, self-assured, and stunning young woman.

Central to the pastiche of Ruta's bildungsroman are photographs and stories. There existed not only the photographs from Latvia, but also those from Fishbacha. Through these images, a viewer is able to sense the scars of war, and the emergence of a person who clearly wants to be noticed. With the flourish of a smile, a hand on one hip, and a steady gaze that invites the viewer to meet her gaze, the refugee girl creates a persona that asserts, "I am." In this paper, I shall build on Roland Barthes' observation that "the photograph—attest[s] that what I see has indeed existed" and claim that at times it continues to exist. To understand the uniqueness of Ruta's coming-of-age story, is to better understand the significance of photographed moments and the construction of post-war identity.

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And Then I killed Him: Narratives of Violence among Red Army World War II Veterans

Soviet Jewish soldiers and officers engaged in violent military operations during World War II. When interviewed about their experiences, they discuss killing in combat, revenge killing of collaborators, and, of course, witnessing the aftermath of violence. Important for historians, these stories contain unique perspectives "from the ground", the ones that often do not end up in military reports or chronicles. In my paper, however, I am less concerned with the historical value of the testimonies. Instead, I analyze the message that they are trying to preserve. Based on over 220 interviews with the Russian-speaking Soviet war-veterans, recorded in Russia, Germany, United States and Canada, the paper studies how contemporary social, economic and, geographic conditions of the respondents affects their stories of the violence that took place 60 years prior to the interview. Specifically, respondents interviewed in the United States, emphasize Jewish solidarity among Soviet soldiers, the ones interviewed in Canada discuss their own heroism, the ones interviewed in Germany emphasize the equality of destruction for both German and the Soviet side. German-based veterans also prefer not to refer to World War II as the war against Germany, instead referring to it as an "anti-fascist war". Analyzed together, the differences in tales of violence suggest a number of ways to theorize about the use of testimonies as sources of the impact of violence on formation on one's ethnic and cultural identities.

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Becoming an Oral Historian: Collecting, Archiving, and Understanding US Veteran Oral Histories for the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Oral history can reveal intimate, obscure, and otherwise overlooked intricacies within historical narratives. This I learned interviewing US veterans and transcribing and archiving their histories for the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (SOHP). This project explored the multifaceted narrative of war through the lens of oral history.

The SOHP boasts a collection of over 5,000 oral histories. The program offers internship training to University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill students in the collecting, transcribing, and archiving of oral histories. For our project, two fellow undergraduates and I each interviewed two American veterans whose service ranged from the Vietnam War to active duty. The following paper will speak to my findings, placing them in historical context while highlighting challenges faced as a budding oral historian exploring the complex world of US military history. The paper will also discuss the methodology of the SOHP internship. Comprised of three corresponding parts – a research project, weekly seminars, and beat work – the program helps student researchers develop valuable technical and communicative skills. Our weekly seminars highlighted relevant research techniques as well as best practices in the field. Student researchers participated in exercises designed to strengthen interviewing skills by critiquing archived interviews and transcripts. For this project, seminars also included specialized "Green Zone" training to aid in the understanding of challenges and concerns faced by military affiliated community members. A specific focus was placed on expanding researchers' knowledge of military vocabulary, organization, and historical background. At the end of the four-month project, student researchers developed and delivered to a general public audience a coherent, multimedia presentation linking the six individual interviews.

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Experiences and narratives – the Civil War of young White women

This paper examines the experiences of girls and young women during the Finnish Civil War 1918. Being interested in the private lives of civilians during the war, our paper represents new military history, a very popular brand of military history in current research. The new military history focuses on social and individual problems arising out of armed conflicts in the past. Here the aim is to examine how the girls dealt with their experiences of the violent and brutal conflict and how they made the uncertain future bearable. Our research materials consist of school essays, letters and diaries written during and soon after the war.

For the girls, the Civil War was not a scattered life episode but connected with everything they had so far experienced and learned. The individual and the society are tightly connected, and every person is also a product of the community they live in and is influenced by the moral and cultural norms and ideals of that community. Young people are especially responsive, and it is presumable that the girls' experiences and reflections can be studied as a generational experience. We study the interaction between the individual and the community from a micro-historical perspective, and the generation is used as a methodological framework for explaining the experiences of the girls.

The aim of this study is also to observe the affective factors of the era. The fears and prejudices reflect the era and are bound to the norms and ideals formulated by the society. The way the girls wrote about the unknown Red people and the kinds of emotions they experienced illustrate what their society had taught them. Thus, through these cases we aim to examine the broader phenomena of the time.