

2012

Leaving the House of Memory: Post-Soviet Traces of Deportation Memory

Rebecca Gould, *University of Iowa*

Vol. 41 No. 2 June 2012

Mosaic

A journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature

2



Drawing on Pierre Nora's contribution to memory studies, this essay examines the mediation of history by deportation memory. Literary texts and ethnography are used to illuminate the historical experience of two Muslim peoples of the Caucasus: the Chechens, deported to Central Asia in 1944, and the Hunzib, who remained behind.

Leaving the House of Memory: Post-Soviet Traces of Deportation Memory

REBECCA GOULD

If the initial decades of the twentieth century witnessed a turn to individualized memory, by the twentieth century's end, archives are saturated memory's collectivization. In the words of Pierre Nora, who regards the modern transformation in memory as a testimony to the replacement of *milieux de mémoire* by memorial *lieux*, memory's "new vocation is to record; delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering, it sheds its signs upon depositing them there, as a snake sheds its skin" (7). The normative account of modern memory, proposed by both Nora (15) and Paul Connerton (*How To* 26), argues that memory was psychologized and thus individualized by Bergson, Freud, and Proust at the beginning of the twentieth century. A century of memory studies scholarship teaches us that, in modernity, memory ensures survival, whereas forgetting can imply a compromise with atrocity, or, more frequently, acquiescence in defeat (see Connerton, "Seven").

Whereas early-twentieth-century memory was a privilege for Europe's literati, mid-twentieth-century memory enabled resistance to a diversity of state coercions.

The early twentieth century's quest for reconstructing the shards of past selves into coherent entities became a late-twentieth-century quest to make meaning from catastrophe (see Nichanian, *Entre* and *Historiographic*). The middle of this century witnessed a series of deportations and genocides—including the Holocaust, the Nakba, the partitioning of South Asia, and the lesser-known deportations of the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus to Central Asia—that challenged early-twentieth-century memory's individualizing orientation. But even the Nakba was not the Nakba until the 1990s; prior to that date, the Palestinian catastrophe was regarded by Palestinians themselves as anything but final (Allen 253). Just as the Palestinian tragedy was finally assigned a name only in the 1990s, so too does the deportation of the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus to Central Asia still await its taxonomy. In the post-Soviet Union, particularly among Muslim peoples, the process of extracting memory from history has only just begun.

Within the framework of the late twentieth century, as memory became the primary medium of collective identity, it was absorbed into history to the extent of constituting history's subject. The historicization of memory, or, conversely, the memorialization of history did not by any means result in an isomorphism between these two categories. To invoke Nora again, describing memory's relation to history at the tail-end of the twentieth century: "Memory [remains] 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" (8).

Nora goes on to argue that whereas memory is a "perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present," history represents the past (8). In spite of the apparently intimate association between memory and history in modernity, divergences between the two narrative structures are as salient as the grounds for their convergence. "Memory," in Nora's account, "attaches itself to sites," to *lieux de mémoire*, whereas "history attaches itself to events" (22). In Connerton, whose work is heavily informed by Nora, the history-memory dialectic, also called "place memory" (*How* 7), oscillates between the "memorial" and the "locus" (10). In representing the past, history alone cannot speak meaningfully in the present; it requires the artifice of memory to take root in social realities. As one studies the histories of the peoples wiped from the map of humanity during the year 1944, particularly the Chechens and Ingush, Nora's analysis stands out for its lucidity.

The eventuality of history contrasted with the spatiality of memory is borne out by the examples given in this essay, concerned as they are with intersections between *Geschichte*, the past as experienced, and *Histoire*, the past as understood in the lives

and textual cultures of the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus. These intersections between past and present, history and its representation, are referred to here as “deportation memory.” Deportation memory partakes of an *Histoire* mediated by memory. Broadly speaking, deportation memory has characterized the historical experience of the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus for the past half-century, although it has received only sporadic analysis by political scientists and historians and has been largely ignored by scholars of literary culture.¹

The function of deportation memory may be usefully contrasted with the function of memory in antiquity. Whereas memory in the ancient world aimed to assign things to their places, deportation memory is confronted with the impossibility of finding appropriate places for the chaos induced by time. Cicero insisted that those desiring to train the faculty of memory “must select places and form mental images of the things they wish to remember and store those images in the places” (qtd. in Yates 2). Augustine compared memory to the chambers of a house and spoke of “memory’s huge cavern, with its mysterious, secret, and indescribable nooks and crannies” (186). He conceived of memory as a mental faculty always at the disposal of the reflective mind. The manipulation of language alone could make this faculty yield its treasures: “When I am in this storehouse, I ask that it produce what I want to recall, and immediately certain things come out” (185-86). Even assuming a degree of indeterminacy—Augustine noted that “some things require a longer search, and have to be drawn out as it were from more recondite receptacles” (185)—his implication that memory is at the disposal of the will, and, more crucially, that it is subject to order and regulation, is clear. From the vantage point of deportation memory, the Ciceronian desire to deploy memory to induce order and the Augustinian injunction to put things in their place appear impossible to implement.

By contrast, deportation memory is more accustomed to homelessness than to the continuity of steady, inhabited spaces. Deportation memory derives its fragmented meaning (or lack thereof) from rupture. In modernity, so say theorists who regard the modern moment as already past, memory could only frame identity defensively. Paths for such analytically grasping discontinuities have been paved decades earlier by the psychic excavations of, among others, Bergson, Freud, and Proust. But no theorist during the early period of modern memory’s genesis fully grasped the implications of deportation memory, of displacements for collectivities, of losses exceeding the individual. By generating new traumas and new forms of forgetting and by collectivizing suffering, the Soviet experiment brought deportation memory to a new stage in its history. By contrast, in societies such as post-war France that experienced World War II-related trauma with dramatically different results, collective

memory is less foundational to public representations of war. In modern French museums commemorating the war, one finds testimonies to individual courage in place of monuments to collective trauma (Walsh 436, 445). Here, the production of memory as heroic resistance was motivated by a need to efface what Henri Rousso calls France's "Vichy Syndrome." In deportation memory, under the conditions of Soviet rule, one finds either collective representations or nothing at all.

In the much-discussed thesis of Ernst Renan, forgetting (*l'oubli*) and even historical error (*l'erreur historique*) condition and enable national consciousness (7).² What Renan derives from French and German history applies in part to the collective consciousness of the minority peoples of the Caucasus, as mediated by deportation memory: even as the state enforces certain kinds of memories, communal solidarity flourishes most in contexts of enforced forgetting. When deportation memory is denied, it becomes necessary to make sure it gets written. Those who follow Renan provisionally accept that modernity's forgetfulness is sutured together by a collaboration between the commodity form and the nation-state (see Connerton, *How* 40-98, especially 48). The deportees discussed here inflect this formulation with a third factor, which neither Connerton, to whom the commodity-plus-nation formulation is due, nor Renan, on whom he bases his deduction, were able to factor into their diagnoses of modern memory. This third factor derives from a peculiarity of Soviet rule, which formalized into inflexible law customs that prior to this regime had been negotiable. Deportation memory moved the Balkars, Chechens, Dagestanis, and Georgians to build museums and to craft other forms of testimony. It moved them to rewrite their pasts, presents, and futures. Deportation memory determined not only what they were as peoples, but what they, as peoples, could become. It made local sense of global displacements.

With the end of the Soviet regime, suddenly what was forbidden became permissible. New modes of remembering became visible. Soviet and post-Soviet memories were of recent and unprocessed pasts, not of ancient things. Almost invariably, state-sponsored sanctions on remembering are accompanied by statist imperatives to forget. Local histories just as invariably creatively respond to these imperatives. This essay considers the local displacements that entered the Soviet world in the midst of and after Communism's demise. It examines how local actors—poets, novelists, and everyday citizens—transformed global trauma into instruments of solidarity.

There were seven deported peoples in all: the Turkic Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, Balkars, Karachays and Meskhetian Turks, and the Vainakh Chechens and Ingush. The Chechens and Ingush were the first among the deported peoples to build a

deportation memorial after the fall of the Soviet Union. They were also the first to witness their memorial be strategically destroyed by Russian soldiers during the first Chechen war. Emblazoned across the base of the Chechen deportation monument in Grozny are the words of Jawhar Dudaev, independent Chechnya's first President: *Dölkur dac! Duxur dac! Dic a olur dac!* (We will not cry! We will not be broken! We will never forget!). These words were commonly recited in the days leading up to the war. The rebuilt memorial, now located in the centre of downtown Grozny, relies on the symbolism of vengeful memory, and the dream that victory goes to the one who remembers last. A male's clenched fist thrusts a sword high into the air. The fist breaks through earth and mixes with the rubble of decomposed graves. In front of the grave mound stand rows of headstones, references to those who perished during the deportation or to cemeteries destroyed during that event.³

The Chechens who created this monument (and the different demographic who write books about the deportation and who strive to engrave the experience on their children's consciousness) draw on the resources of deportation memory. They do not ask permission from the state to remember the deportation. Perhaps for this reason, unlike the neighbouring Balkars, the Chechens have no deportation museum. This may explain why this memory is transmuted into aggression, in the absence of an official outlet for collective grief.

Which is better: the post-Soviet permission to remember combined with an injunction to forget, or a Soviet injunction against memory as such? Is it better to be denied access to history or to memory? The person who has much memory but no history may at least be distracted by memory's narration; the historicized person with no memory inhabits a mental prison cell. The contemporary theorist Andreas Huyssen also tried to grapple with the claims of memory in post-Holocaust Germany. "Memory," he wrote, "can be no substitute for justice, and justice itself will inevitably be entangled in the unreliability of memory" (28). The difference between justice and memory parallels the difference between *Geschichte* and *Histoire*. What does deportation memory seek to remember? Every memory entails forgetting, every recollection requires repression. Remembering one detail entails forgetting another.

In place of memories authored by Chechens of their own deportation, we possess imaginary reconstructions of sympathetic Russians and Georgians not present as witnesses but nonetheless connected to this tragedy. The most revealing and detailed account of this (imagined) event is the remarkable Russian-language novel *Dekada*, by the Russian-Jewish poet and translator Semen Lipkin, published in 1983 in New York, and still untranslated and unstudied, even in Russian.⁴ It is not difficult to determine why this text was published abroad for the first time as a stand-alone volume,

although it had earlier been serialized in the leftist Soviet publication *Druzhba Narodov*. *Dekada* is the first account of the Chechen deportation to appear in Russian. The Chechens were officially “pardoned” by Krushchev and allowed to return home in 1957, but, even after 1957, it was not possible to allude to the deportation without risking a repeat of the same events. *Dekada* narrates an event that, at the time of its writing, had been officially forgotten. Perhaps this is why it had to be written and publicized as fiction. Even in 1989, it was not possible to suggest that the erasure of entire peoples had ever occurred in the Soviet Union.

The names of the ethnic groups were changed in this non-fictional novel. Balkars became Tavlars⁵ and Karachays became Ghulars, but, in every other detail, *Dekada*’s plot parallels the 1944 event that wiped Kabardino-Balkaria and Checheno-Ingushetia off the world map. (Not only were toponyms changed, but even the encyclopaedia entry for “Chechen” and “Ingush” was removed from *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*.) Piled into cattle cars against their will and transported to they knew not where, tens—perhaps hundreds—of thousands died from starvation and disease along the way. Lipkin describes the guilt of his protagonist, Stanislav Yurevich Bodorsky, a Russian officer shocked by the crimes he is instructed to commit against an innocent people. The Russian officer obeys his orders; he becomes an accomplice to the deportation. When he arrives in Kyrgyzstan (in actuality, the majority of Chechens and Ingush were deported to Kazakhstan, not Kyrgyzstan), Bodorsky befriends a young Tavlar named Mansur (a Balkar in Lipkin’s linguistic camouflage). Mansur, as it turns out, is an aspiring artist. Full of dreams, he may be a stand-in for the author himself.

Bodorsky and Mansur start a voluminous correspondence: letters follow about art, life, and especially about the Tavlar’s dream of studying art in the Moscow Academy. Mansur gleans from Bodorsky’s critical realism that he will never live the life he yearns for. He will never become an artist because he is Tavlar (in other words, Balkar) and therefore a member of a repressed nationality. For that reason alone, Mansur will never be admitted to an institution of higher learning in Moscow. Their correspondence is destined not to last—for what, in the end, can a Russian officer say to a Tavlar whose family he deported to the other end of the world?—but the boy’s vanquished dreams remain in the officer’s memory as a reproach, testimony to the many miracles that might have been possible had the Soviet state not been so eminently capable of crushing individual dreams.

Georgians who, unlike the deported peoples invoked here, identify with a largely Eastern Orthodox Christian cultural heritage were not repressed as severely as were their Muslim neighbours to the north. Most Georgians do not remember what their neighbours suffered, but some have built their entire literary legacy on insisting on

the need to remember. The Georgian poet Gabriel Jabushanuri continued the tradition inaugurated by novelist Alexander Qazbegi and poet Titsian Tabidze of documenting Georgia's complicity in the colonial oppression of the Chechens, Ingush, and Daghestanis and of explicitly thematizing the "Muslim" dimension of mountaineer Georgian culture in their literary endeavours. In the poem cycle *Alas, Cloudy Sky of Ghilgho* (*Hoi, ghilgos daghrubluri tsao*), published posthumously in 1991, Jabushanuri mobilized deportation memory for the sake of political as well as literary engagement with the Ingush. One of the few extant portraits of Jabushanuri depicts the Georgian poet in Ingush dress, or, read otherwise, in the dress that mountaineer Georgians and Ingush shared in common.

Jabushanuri's is the only Georgian account of a contemporary observer to the Chechen-Ingush deportation. Jabushanuri composed these poems in the 1950s in the mountainous Ingush village of Ghilgho, on the border between Georgia and Ingushetia, where he was forcibly relocated after the deportation. In his new home in exile, Jabushanuri kept a notebook in which he jotted down extracts from reconstructed conversations of Ingush life before the deportation. Objects served as his primary data: stones, jewellery, wood-carvings, engravings, etchings, and other keepsakes and possessions the Ingush had not been allowed to carry with them when they were crowded into the chattel cars that transported them to Central Asia. Jabushanuri knew there was no point in trying to publish the poems during the heyday of Soviet censorship. So the texts languished, unread and unheard, deepening the silence and the impossibility of knowing what had transpired in the south-easternmost periphery of the Soviet Empire as Stalin took advantage of wartime chaos to perform acts impermissible in the clearer light of peace.

Voices speak to the poet in Jabushanuri's poems, like ghosts in Ghilgho, the abandoned Ingush village. The poems read like fragments, memories construed from skeletons. Their titles signal loneliness and loss for the poet and his subjects: "Ballad of the Stone Man," "Lonely Village," "The Vanquished Village," and "Twilight in an Abandoned Village." Jabushanuri's language pours memories into Ingush bones. Nearly every poem in his collection eulogizes emptiness. Nearly every poem signals the poet's attempt to fill with his imagination a land that has literally been rid of its human element. By at once evoking memory and displacing it, nearly every poem supports Connerton's contention that modernity is the age of forced forgetting, the age when we cannot afford to remember anything for too long.

Alas, Cloudy Sky of Ghilgho includes a cycle of love songs to an imagined Ingush woman named Hadishat. Little can be said of Hadishat aside from the kinship her name shares with the name for Prophet Muhammad's eldest and wisest wife, Khadija.

Hadishat is the Ingush version of this common Muslim name. More than any of his other marriages, Muhammad's marriage to Khadija helped him pursue his mission: his wife provided him with the moral and financial support necessary to overcome his fears of failure.⁶ Likewise, in Jabushanuri's poem cycle, Hadishat provides the poet with the moral resources necessary to complete his poems and to imagine into being a post-deportation world through the evocation and, ultimately, the exorcism of deportation memory.

Though his poems remember skeletons, the poet's phrases and snippets of dialogue give life. Jabushanuri's skeletons are metaphors for a deportation memory that projects order onto chaos to make sense of the unsayable. Whereas ancient, pre-deportation memory docilely obeys the speaker's will, modern post-deportation memory defends the rememberer against a world that language cannot canvass. The world outside the house of memory in post-World War II modernity is equivalent to hell. Hence the poet's decision to privilege imagination's structure over state-sanctioned chaos, to select the yield of an ahistorical fantasy over Soviet realism.

In "Evening in an Abandoned Village" Jabushanuri writes: "წონწხნი იხსნიან უზრაობის დღისეულ ნიღაბს, / აქლდამეზიდან გამოდიან ბაასით ჩქარა [Skeletons call to their masked faces, / and the bones fall from the cliffs, singing]" (29).⁷ According to Jabushanuri, it is the poet's job—it is the job of everyone who has the courage to face deportation memory—to bring the dead to life: "გაცოცხლებულა ღიღღოს მთა-ბარი / და მისცემია ამო ოცნებას [Ghilgho's mountains and plains are made to live, / and I give myself over to vain dreams]" (18). The use of the causative verb in the above sentence suggests what would otherwise be unapparent in translation: an agent brings life to Ghilgho's mountains and plains (*mta-bari*). They do not return to life by themselves. This agent is poetry, and poetry's handmaiden, memory. In Jabushanuri's poems, memory resurrects the imagination. Memory creates life from death. Memory commemorates—more dramatically, it *redeems*—suffering. Ultimately, deportation memory subverts the reality of the event it was intended to evoke. This is why history is event-based, whereas memory is necessarily attached to place. To rewrite the history of an event, one must attach oneself to the material world that outlived history's progress.

The life that Jabushanuri's poem cycle resurrects no longer exists in the present. As he surveys the panorama of Assa Valley from which nearly all the Ingush villages and their stone towers (*bashxo*) can be seen, the poet writes only indirectly of his present. Do we find in Jabushanuri's poems "a more organic form of memory, one that recognised the crucial contingency of past processes on present places" (Walsh 437), as Walsh does when contrasting pre-industrial, pre-museum memory with the collective

memory of post-World War II modernity?⁸ If the second premise is true, it does not follow that the first is accurate. The memory of the modern poet who sings the deprecation is not more “organic”; like modernity itself, his texts are structured by rupture.

In keeping with his vocation as a poet of historically-induced rupture, Jabushanuri transform ruins into palimpsests. His alchemy endows fragments that would otherwise be lost in the flow of time with solidity and permanence. The poet memorializes the past, without turning it into a museum, without freezing suffering into the temporality of statist narrative:

მე აქ ვიფოვე შენი სურათი
 იქნებ ეს ჩერი შენაც გეხურა
 როცა მთირალი სთოვებდი ღილღოს
 ალბათ გდიოდა ცრემლის ცხრა მილი,
 მე ის მდულარე დღეს დაცვებს მიღბობს
 და შენს მაგიერ ვაგრზებლებ თირილს. (26)

[I found your picture here.

Maybe, like a long lost home, it will keep you warm.

When you left the village crying,

your tears travelled for miles.

They melt me, instead of you, now far away,

and I am the one who sings your sad songs.]

Unlike the reproducible images pasted on the walls of many museum basements, the poet’s images of Hadishat—here Jabushanuri uses the Arabic-derived word *surati* (form, image) to render his image of his beloved—are singular and unrepeatable. With the help of Hadishat’s *surati* (used here in the sense of image), Jabushanuri’s poems transform absence into the beginning of grief. His poems help the reader mourn without requiring, or indeed expecting, that grief be dispelled.

Though encapsulated in poetry, the memories Jabushanuri evokes are not locked in time. In this respect, they contrast starkly with historical memory. In a museum, one may stare at images for hours without being conscious of any sentiment other than external coercion: the condition of being expected to experience a certain emotion at a certain time. Jabushanuri’s images, in contrast, plot no preordained path for the reader. We do not know how we are supposed to react; there are no stage directions telling us how to feel. Reading Jabushanuri, we absorb his words without knowing where they will take us, without possessing a museum’s clear itinerary.

In addition to their purely aesthetic qualities, Jabushanuri’s poems viscerally evoke, revoke, and revise the premises of history. Temporal depth separates Jabushanuri’s poems from museum imagery. The objects in Jabushanuri’s elegies

function as time-marks, to borrow Walsh's phrase (437), structurally analogous to the ethnographic paraphernalia one finds in museums, but with the crucial difference that these Georgian poems leave open the holes of memory and allow the reader to experience the pain of deportation in its fullness, as though this pain were one's own.

Elsewhere in mountainous Georgia, closer to Daghestan, there lives a man who has composed the first poems ever in the Hunzib language. One of the hundreds of languages belonging to the Northeast Ibero-Caucasian language family and classed within the Avar-Andic-Tsezic language group within this family, Hunzib is a minority within a minority. According to one scholar's estimation, it is spoken at present by the two thousand Sunni Muslims residing in south-western Daghestan and north-western Georgia (van den Berg 8). Hunzib is denominated East Tsezic. Its most closely related language is Bezhta, a language with seven thousand speakers. As with nearly all languages indigenous to the Caucasus, Hunzib and Bezhta are named after the village in Daghestan from which they are believed to have originated. Hunzib takes its name from Gunzib, a village in contemporary south-western Daghestan, just across the Georgian-Daghestan border. Magomed Rasulovi, the former director of the local school for the village of Saruso and the first Hunzib in living memory to commit his poetry to writing, regards himself as one of the last defenders of his native language.

Saruso, the Daghestani village that houses the school Magomed directed, is located in the Qvareli region of Georgia, close to the Georgian town of Akhalsopeli (New Town). Four villages in the Qvareli region have at some point in their history been home to Daghestani communities: Tivi, Saruso, Tkhili Tsqaro (Hot Springs), and Chantlis Qure (Pig's Ear). All the names are Georgian in origin. Tivi is the oldest village that still has a Daghestani settlement. Tkhili Tsqaro is equally old, but it is no longer settled by Daghestanis. According to Magomed, both villages were settled by Daghestanis when General Ermolov, famous for his cruelty to the natives, was the Tsar's Proconsul to the Caucasus.⁹ The Daghestanis chose Tivi and Tkhili Tsqaro strategically to block entry into Georgia along both roads that led south from Daghestan.¹⁰

Tkhili Tsqaro today stands empty, populated by only a few lone Georgians. According to Magomed, during the so-called *areuloba* (shake-up), also known as the Georgian Civil War (1990-91), all Daghestani residents of Tkhili Tsqaro were ordered to return to Daghestan. Magomed explained these events to me in Georgian in terms of the famous Caucasian hospitality morality. "In the Caucasus," he explained, "you're a guest for three days. After that, you're no longer a guest and you have the right to call the place where you are staying your home. But those Georgians, Gamsakhurdia's men, they told us that we were *guests* on Georgian territory. They told us to go back

home, that we were no longer wanted here. So the Daghestanis left, and now Tkhili Tsqaro is empty.”¹¹ In the villages that border Georgia and the Muslim Caucasus, deportations are a fact of yearly—if not daily—life. They occurred on an epic scale a half-century ago and continue to transpire in smaller increments into the present.

When I asked Magomed why he started writing in his native language when he could have composed a perfectly decent poem in the three languages he knew with equal fluency—Georgian, Russian, and Avar—and thereby would have communicated with a much larger audience than the two thousand people in the world who understand Hunzib, Magomed responded: “I used to write in Avar, because we Hunzibs have no written language. Then in 2001, this dictionary was published.”¹² Magomed went into another room and returned with a thick volume handsomely bound in red leather with Russian script. “It is the first Hunzib dictionary ever published. I started reading it, and then I asked myself why I was writing in Avar. Now that a dictionary existed in my own native language, I realized that I could write poems in that language, too.”¹³

After this discovery, Magomed wrote and wrote, until he became known throughout all of Saruso as the first, the only, and quite possibly the last Hunzib poet. Magomed’s poems cover a wide range of subjects. He did not share all his poems with me; some, he said, were too sensitive for my eyes. Magomed preserved all his poems in a brown notebook even thicker than the hefty Hunzib dictionary. He told me that he hoped to publish them someday, but there was no money for that now, especially as the language in which they were written was comprehensible to so few.

Magomed read to me humorous poems about his mother-in-law and epic poems about war. The poems he read dealt mostly with the recent wave of scholarship on his native language. There was a poem in honour of the Hunzib dictionary and also a poem dedicated to a Dutch scholar, Helma van den Berg, who died in 2003 due to a tragic accident in the mountains of Daghestan. Van den Berg singlehandedly transformed Hunzib scholarship and helped to bring the dictionary to completion. As the greatest, and, in many respects, the first linguist of international stature to have devoted herself to the study of Hunzib, her death was mourned by Magomed as though van den Berg had been his mother. Hunzib was his mother tongue, after all, he explained to me, so it was only fitting to mourn the death of the woman who had made it possible for him to write in this native tongue. Magomed was proud that the dictionary was completed with the participation of scholars from all around the world, including America, although I was unable to discover while flipping through the pages of the dictionary the names of any American scholars.

I was only able to ask the questions that had motivated my trip to the Daghestani villages of Qvareli toward the end of my visit to Saruso, after Magomed had read through his

poems. I wanted to know how the Daghestanis reacted when they heard of the Chechen, Ingush, Balkar, and Karachay deportations. Did they wonder if they were next in line to be deported? Did they believe the accusation that the deported people had either collaborated or intended to collaborate with the Nazis? Did they feel guilt, remorse, or were they happy to see the Caucasus depopulated and to come into possession of the homes and goods of the deported? With the exception of the brief overview of Hunzib history offered by van den Berg (10-11), these questions have not been raised in the scholarly literature, nor have they been posed by journalists, due to a perhaps excessive focus on present traumas at the expense of the distant and recent pasts that bear on current conflicts. As many Chechens have over the past decade found shelter in Daghestan following multiple Russian bomb attacks, there is a palpable fear that asking such questions risks increasing tensions between Daghestanis and Chechens at a time when conflict looms.

Qvareli was far from the scene of any imminent conflict, yet it nonetheless seemed inappropriate to raise questions about guilt and revenge until the requisite three days had passed and I was no longer a guest, but was well on my way to becoming a native. I waited so that Magomed could speak to me not as to an outsider, but rather to someone who could understand him and his people as a fellow Muslim Caucasian. I started with questions that seemed easy to respond to, such as “Did everyone know they were being deported to Chechnya?” and “Did they talk about it publicly?” and “How did the parents explain what was happening to their children?” Magomed did not answer directly. He had been born a few months after the deportation and his memory of the years he spent in Chechnya was dim at best, he explained. I asked if anyone in the village of Saruso would remember those years better than he did. He told me that even if the elder villagers remembered, they would not have been able to articulate their memories to me because no one in that village except him had finished primary school. They were not educated and could not express themselves in Georgian or Russian.

When the other Avars left for Daghestan after they had been ordered to do so by the Georgian government, Magomed stayed behind. He had earned a position of respect in the community as the director of the Saruso school and he regarded Qvareli as his home. Magomed also had the distinction of being the only Daghestani not fired from his job during the *areuloba*. As Magomed put it, “I don’t want enmity with the Georgians. They are an educated, civilized, dignified people. If I wanted enmity with the Georgians I wouldn’t have stayed behind when half of my family returned to Daghestan. But they are guilty of hypocrisy. They complain about the Russian mistreatment of ethnic minorities, but look how they mistreat their own minorities.”

Magomed was born in Chechnya, in the Nozhai-Yurt region. He was six years old when he left. He told me that he did not remember well what it was like to live there,

but what he did remember, and what he recalled of what his ancestors imparted to him, compensated for its fragmentariness. “They deported us all in one night, in August 1944,” he recalled. The deportation of the Ingush and Chechens had taken place half a year earlier, on 23 February 1944: “They told us that the Georgians didn’t need us anymore. Russian officers packed us into cars and drove us into the mountains. They said we could pick whatever house we wanted to settle in. The houses were all empty. Some Chechens had left pictures behind, stuffed in boxes. Others had left all their Russian books. And guns, lots of guns, strewn everywhere on the floor and some tacked to the walls. Some families had skis staked to the wall, for walking through the mountains during winter.”

Magomed spent five years of his childhood in one of the many homes that the deported Chechens had left behind. It was situated in mountainous Nozhai-Yurt, known for breeding leaders of the Chechen resistance, including Shamil Basaev, and, a century prior to him, the *abrek* (outlaw) Zelimkhan of Karachoi.¹⁴ When the Chechens returned from exile in 1957, they expected to return to their old homes. Where the Daghestanis had taken up residence, they were largely able to start their lives over again in their old homes because the Daghestanis, unlike the Ossetians, recognized the justice and necessity of relinquishing the homes they inhabited to their deported owners. For the Daghestanis who were preparing to abandon their temporary homes, this meant that they had no place to go. Most Chechens extended their hospitality to these Daghestanis and allowed them to live in their homes, even when this made for considerable discomfort for both host and guest. I asked Magomed if many conflicts arose from these cramped living conditions. “What do you expect when you have two masters of one house?” he said. “Of course people got angry with each other and sometimes fought. But there was no serious conflict, no murder or anything like that.” Magomed’s account is confirmed by archival sources. Soon after the forced resettlement, the Hunzib “started returning to their villages in Daghestan as well as in Georgia. A report from early 1946 lists 1,600 people [. . .] who had tried to return to Georgia and had been sent back to Chechnia. They were described as people ‘not having a permanent residence, working as hired labourers or thieving’” (van den Berg 11n10).¹⁵ Thus the Soviet state controlled the movements of its unpliant population by resorting to the rhetoric of criminality. History was separated from memory, and memory severed from history.

Magomed then proceeded to count from one to ten in Chechen—*tskhi*, *shi*, *kkho*—to demonstrate what he had learned during the year he lived with the Chechens. Then he suggested, with knowledge of Ibero-Caucasian linguistics possessed by only a few people in the world, that the Chechen language was related to

Hunzib. “Probably my ancestors who lived in the Chechen border regions but did not share a common Daghestani language such as Avar spoke to each other in Chechen,” he speculated. It was a minor observation, of the kind made several times a day, and will incite feelings of astonishment in few readers, but for those familiar with the normative structures of Soviet ideology and with its insistence on severing memory from history, Magomed’s recognition of his kinship with his neighbours bears traces of the miraculous. Magomed’s statement contradicted the basic tenets of Soviet linguistics and historiography, as viewed from Moscow and St. Petersburg. Russian scholars, and non-Russian scholars willing to ratify Soviet clichés, were more interested in demonstrating the intrinsic irreconcilability of the Islamic peoples of the Caucasus—their unabating propensity for violence, their bloodshed and war, their incorrigible tendency toward rebellion—than in investigating the social relations that predated colonial rule. By invoking his ancestors, Magomed did not grow nostalgic for a proto-Hunzib state, as his more thoroughly Sovietized and nationalized counterparts might have done. He did not partake of the nationalist disease promoted by nineteenth-century historiography.

Before we parted, Magomed added that one reason he stayed in Georgia while other Daghestanis were returning to Daghestan was that a Kist friend had asked him not to leave. Kists, it should be known, are Chechens and Ingush who arrived in Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge a century prior and became so assimilated to Georgian culture, without losing their old language, identity, or religion, that they acquired an ethonym more fitting to their new Georgian milieu (Gould 131). This man, the director of Akhalsopeli’s School Number One, had pleaded to his Hunzib friend: “Magomed, we are the only non-Georgians in this region. We fit in well here. We have made it, but the Kists need you if they are to stay strong. Please don’t go anywhere. Stay here with me.” Partly because of this man’s request, but partly also because, I suspect, his acquired Georgian roots had penetrated as deep as his Daghestani origins, Magomed remained behind in Saruso to fight for his language, to write perhaps the last poems that will ever be written in Hunzib, and to remember, in a world fast losing the capacity to care, how the 1944 deportations changed his neighbours’ lives forever. Pierre Nora is interested in using memory to rewrite the project of *Histoire*. “Reflecting on *lieux de mémoire*,” he writes, “transforms historical criticism into critical history [...] it allows history [...] a kind of reawakening” (24). According to this reading, Magomed, like Lipkin and Jabushanuri, is a master in the arts of memory: he revises the scripts bequeathed to him by his Soviet education—he revises history by drawing on the resources of memory—and forges from deportation memory a post-Soviet and postcolonial solidarity.

NOTES

- 1/ For historical studies of the Central Asian deportations, see Walter Comins-Richmond's "The Deportation of the Karachays" (*Journal of Genocide Research* 4.3 [2002]: 431-39. Print) and "The Karachay Struggle after the Deportation" (*Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22.1 [2002]: 63-79. Print), both of which focus on the Karachays; Alf Grannesa's "The Soviet Deportation in 1943 of the Karachays: A Turkic Muslim People of North" (*Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 12.1 [1991]: 55-68. Print); and, above all, Michaela Pohl's "It cannot be that our graves will be here': The Survival of Chechen and Ingush Deportees in Kazakhstan, 1944-1957" (*Journal of Genocide Research* 4.3 [2002]: 401-30. Print). For an insightful application of Nora's *lieux de mémoire* project to anti-Soviet rebellion, see Bruce Grant's "An Average Azeri Village (1930)" (*Slavic Review* 63.4 [2003]: 705-31. Print).
- 2/ "L'oubli, et je dirai même l'erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la formation d'une nation" (Renan 7).
- 3/ For an excellent analysis of this memorial that slightly differs from my reading, see Brian Glyn Williams's "Commemorating 'The Deportation' in Post-Soviet Chechnya: The Role of Memorialization and Collective Memory in the 1994-1996 and 1999-2000 Russo-Chechen Wars" (*History & Memory* 12.1 [2000]: 122. Print).
- 4/ Only two English-language notices of *Dekada* were published at the time of the book's release and nothing on *Dekada* has been published since. These two notices are book reviews by Natasha Kolchevska (*Slavic Review* 44.3 [1985]: 589. Print) and Yuri Vidov Karageorge (*World Literature Today* 59.1 [1985]: 117. Print). By contrast, *Dekada* has fared better in Europe: a German translation was published in 1984 and a French translation in 2008. For another account of the Chechen deportation in Russian literature, see Anatolii Ignat'evich Pristavkin's *Nochevala Tuchka Zolotaia* [*The Gold Cloud Laid Down to Sleep*] (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1988. Print) and its French translation, *Un nuage d'or sur le Caucase* (Trans. Antoinette Roubichou-Stretz. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1989. Print).
- 5/ It is unfortunate that only one commentator on *Dekada* in English has managed to accurately represent the people with whom the Tavlar are associated. Karageorge located the Tavlars in "their native Azerbaijan" (117), while Margaret Ziolkowski conflates the Balkars with the Bashkirs (*Alien Visions: The Chechens and the Navajos in Russian and American Literature*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2005. 100. Print). Only Kolchevska correctly identifies the Tavlars with the Balkars.
- 6/ Montgomery Watt maintains that the Qur'ānic verse 43:8 ("Did he not find you needy and enrich you?") refers to Muhammad's marriage to Khadija ("Khadija." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Ed. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, and G. Lecomte. 2nd ed. Vol. 4. Leiden, NL: Brill, 1995. Print).
- 7/ All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.
- 8/ For the argument that modernity is structured especially—though not exclusively—in colonial contexts by rupture, see the work of Sudipta Kaviraj, particularly "The Sudden Death of Sanskrit Knowledge" (*Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33.1 [2005]: 119-42. Print).
- 9/ Magomed's association of the founding of Tivi and Tkhili Tsqaro with Ermolov's rule would locate their dates between 1816 and 1827. However, he later provided the date of 1852 as the year of Tkhili Tsqaro's founding, which makes the former information uncertain.
- 10/ "Nikolai's road," named after the Russian Tsar (r.1825-55), runs through present-day Saruso and is in remarkably good condition. The second road is called the Qvareli-Russian road.
- 11/ Interview conducted in Saruso, Georgia, in 2006.
- 12/ Magomed is referring to I.A. Isakov and M.S. Khalilov's *Gunzibsko-russkii slovar* (*Hunzib-Russian Dictionary*), which is referenced in van den Berg (15). According to van den Berg, Isakov began work on this dictionary in 1976. For an earlier source on the Hunzib language (limited unfortunately to phonetics), see Magomed-Rasul Elovic Gamzatov's *Fonetika gunzibskogo jazyka* [*Phonetics of the Hunzib Language*] (Moscow: Inst. Iazykoznaniiia, 1975. Print).
- 13/ Aside from Akhmed Ibragimovich Osmanov's *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia v Dagestane I pereselenie gortsev na ravninu (20-70-e gody XX v)* [*The Agricultural Transformation of Dagestan and the Resettlement of*

Mountaineers to the Plains, 1920-1970] (Makhachkala, RU: RAN, 2000. Print), I am unaware of any sustained scholarly discussion of the resettlement of the Daghestani peoples on Chechen territory following the 1944 deportation in any of the relevant languages. A useful list of Soviet archival references corresponding to the events Magomed describes may be found in van den Berg (10-12n7-15).

14/ On Zelimkhan and the *abrek* tradition, see Rebecca Gould, "Transgressive Sanctity: The Abrek in Chechen Culture" (*Kritika* 8.2 [2007]: 271-306. Print).

15/ Here van den Berg relies on a government report (*dokladnaja zapiska*) dated 14 January 1946. It is located in the Central Government Archive (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv), collection (*fond*) 411, document inventory (*opis'*) 3, (*delo*) 21.

WORKS CITED

- Allen, Diana. "The Politics of Witness: Remembering and Forgetting 1948 in Shatila Camp." *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. Ed. Ahmad H. Sa'adi and Lila Abu-Lughod. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. 253-84. Print.
- Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. New York: Oxford Classics, 1991. Print.
- Connerton, Paul. *How Modernity Forgets*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.
- _____. "Seven Types of Forgetting." *Memory Studies* 1.1 (2008): 59-71. Print.
- Gould, Rebecca. "Becoming a Georgian Woman." *Frontiers* 31.2 (2010): 127-44. Print.
- Huysen, Andreas. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2003. Print.
- Jabushanuri, Gabriel. ჰაი, დიღღის დაღრუბლებული ცაო [*Alas, Cloudy Sky of Ghilgho*]. Tbilisi: Gulani, 1991. Print.
- Lipkin, Semen. *Dekada*. New York: Chalidze, 1983. Print.
- Nichanian, Marc. *Entre l'art et le témoignage: Littératures arméniennes au XXe siècle*. Geneva: MêtisPresses, 2007. Print.
- _____. *The Historiographic Perversion*. Trans. Gil Anidjar. New York: Columbia UP, 2009. Print.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*." *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24. Print.
- Renan, Ernst. *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* Paris: Ancienne Maison Michel Lévy Frères, 1882. Print.
- Rouso, Henri. *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994. Print.
- van den Berg, Helma. *A Grammar of Hunzib*. Munich, DE: Lincom Europa, 1995. Print.
- Walsh, Kevin. "Collective Amnesia and the Mediation of Painful Pasts: The Representation of France in the Second World War." *Museums and their Communities*. Ed. Sheila Watson. New York: Routledge, 2007. 435-47. Print.
- Yates, F.A. *The Art of Memory*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1966. Print.

REBECCA GOULD is Assistant Professor at Yale-NUS, a new liberal arts college created by Yale University and the National University of Singapore. Her work has recently appeared in *The Journal of Islamic Studies*, *The Journal of Literary Theory, Culture, Theory & Critique*, *Contemporary Islam*, *Early Modern Women*, and *symplokē*. She is completing a book manuscript entitled *Transgressive Sanctity: Islam and Anti-colonial Resistance in the Caucasus, 1859-2001*.