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OCCUPIED IDENTITIES: NATIONAL NARRATIVES IN BALTIC MUSEUMS OF OCCUPATIONS

Aro Velmet

This paper analyzes representations of national identity in three museums dedicated to commemorating twentieth-century occupations in the Baltic States. Narratives presented in those museums can reproduce dominant forms of nationalism (the Estonian case), provide alternative models of discourse while paying respect to established identities (the Latvian case) or deconstruct the victim/oppressor binary altogether while contributing to other aspects of nationalist discourse at the same time (the Lithuanian case).

Keywords: sites of memory; museum studies; deconstruction; national identity; USSR

Introduction

The recent history of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania has been largely shaped by a half century of Soviet rule, a period that officials of the neighboring Russian Federation staunchly refuse to call ‘occupation’ (*The Times* 2005). Within the Baltic States too, the term ‘occupation’ is fraught with controversy. For some, it may conjure images of mass deportations, repressions and censorship, for others, mass industrialization, military might and victory in the twentieth century’s largest war. Though these memories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they are often divided along ethnic lines. Both Latvia and Estonia (Lithuania to a lesser degree) are home to large populations of ethnic minorities, mostly immigrants from other parts of the former Soviet Union. In addition to inhabiting a separate linguistic and social space, these immigrant communities also differ from the locals in their views on recent history.

It is reasonable to assume that nascent states would try to mend these cleavages in historical memory. After all, it is from ‘elements of myth, memory, symbol and tradition that modern national identities are reconstructed’ (Smith 1999, p. 9). States’

attempts at formulating inclusive narratives of recent history, however, have hardly been successful. This was demonstrated as recently as 2007, when the decision of the Estonian government to relocate a Soviet-era memorial to the victory in World War II was met with widespread rioting by a largely Russian-speaking population who considered the act sacrilegious. The monument, which stood as a symbol of oppression for many ethnic Estonians, was a patriotic expression of liberation and victory for the protestors.¹ Evidently, post-Soviet Baltic identity narratives lack a commonly accepted chapter on contemporary history.

The Baltic museums of occupations provide three attempts at writing that final chapter for the national narrative of their respective countries. Though purportedly academic institutions of critical inquiry, museums are also discursive establishments, conduits of power transmitting and shaping narratives of national identity through their scholarly and political authority. Museum exhibitions, particularly those dedicated to such a high-profile and politically charged issue as occupation, form a part of the ‘imagined community’ of a nation-state (Anderson 1991, pp. 4–6). There, history is collected, systematized and transformed into a narrative that can animate a nation and mould the shape of civil society.

This essay analyzes the representations and practices at the Baltic Museums of Occupation in order to delineate how a relatively similar past can be interpreted in radically different ways. Moreover, this paper will investigate how ideas of ethnic identity and national unity represented at the museums reflect on ideals of civil society and multicultural development. To that end, the case studies below have been chosen to exemplify a diversity of narratives, and a diversity of methods, while still remaining comparable as ‘museums of occupations’. The Estonian Museum of Occupations showcases a more academic and conservative approach, the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia represents a modern, visually and structurally dynamic approach, and Grutas Park in Lithuania provides an example of a commercial museum. As this paper will show, these museums, regardless of their style, often present their narratives in terms of Manichean oppositions of ‘good’ natives and ‘bad’ colonizers, ‘victims’ and ‘oppressors’. As a result, deeper complexities of a given occupation period, such as the role of native collaborators in perpetuating the Soviet regime or the impact of the Holocaust on pre-war minorities in the Baltics, are left unexplored. Though the narratives presented at the museums often reproduce exclusive notions of ethnicity and nationalism, other examples, found mostly in Latvian and Lithuanian museums, highlight these controversies – in radically different ways – thus contributing to a rethinking of dominant narratives of ethnonationalism and the development of a cohesive civic identity.

The Museums: Estonia

Next to a majestic neogothic cathedral and the remains of a 700-year-old town wall, with the numerous towers of Tallinn’s Old City looming in the background, the Estonian Museum of Occupations looks almost tiny. It is one of two buildings in Estonia constructed explicitly as museums – the other being the multi-million

dollar Estonian National Art Museum, a giant limestone-and-steel complex constructed amidst intense public debate next to the Presidential palace and the historic Catherine's Valley Park. The Museum of Occupations has more modest origins. It was established in 1998 by Olga Kistler, an Estonian expatriate who migrated to the United States during the Second World War. In collaboration with Tunne Kelam, then Vice-Speaker of the Parliament and Heiki Ahonen, a former political prisoner and historian, she decided to start a foundation for establishing a 'museum of contemporary history' with a focus on recent occupations.²

The goal of the museum is to 'document the catastrophes and cataclysms, which took place during the last fifty years and to find detailed proof about the past based on facts and analysis. [...] [It is] interested in the life of Estonians, and also of Russians, Germans, Jews, Swedes and other minorities under the totalitarian regime of the second half of the XX century. [...] [It] must prevent the dreadful offences from being forgotten'.³ The museum's day-to-day activities are run by Heiki Ahonen, its executive director since the very beginning, while the Kistler-Ritso Foundation keeps an eye on the museum's long-term objectives.⁴

Of the three museums of occupations, the Estonian institution is by far the smallest. It welcomes around 25,000 visitors yearly, a fourth of the number at the Latvian museum and a seventh of the number at Grutas Park. Yet Estonia welcomes almost twice as many tourists per year as either of the other Baltic States.⁵ The museum employs seven people, four of them full-time. Though the museum operates as a private non-profit, about two-thirds of its operating budget is financed by grants from the Ministry of Culture, with the rest coming from ticket sales.⁶ The size of the government grant was about \$250,000 in the fiscal year of 2009, making it the smallest enterprise in terms of funding as well.⁷ Consequently, the museum has smaller ambitions than its counterparts. There is no big outreach program, no elaborate educational activities, and no an army of trained tour guides. Instead, the museum focuses on expanding its complex exhibition consisting of audiovisual materials and physical artifacts, continuing a research program on the history of the Estonian Communist Party (ECP) and publishing general overviews of Estonian history for foreign visitors.

The ground floor houses the main exhibition of the museum, with an afterthought-like supplement of Soviet era sculptures and posters in the basement. Exhibition space consists of a single giant room that can also function as a lecture hall and a cafeteria, with exhibition cases serving as the only lines of demarcation. The physical centerpiece of the museum is a massive mockup of two trains forming a gateway into the back half of the museum, one bearing the Nazi swastika, the other the Soviet red star. The intellectual centerpiece, though less grandiose visually, is equally epic in scope: projected onto the back wall, seven documentary films with a total length of four hours narrate the past 70 years of Estonian history. Period artifacts, carefully chosen to symbolize the mentalities, everyday practices and overall atmosphere of various stages of the Nazi and Soviet occupations, surround the video screens, adding a tangible component to the exhibition.

The other major objective of the museum is research. Their work on the history of the ECP has resulted in the three major monographs, as well as a number of academic articles, conference presentations and other publications. However, the only

major work that has been translated into English and Russian is a 2004 collection of articles on the history of Estonian occupations.⁸ Thus, most publications are inaccessible to visitors not fluent in Estonian, who make up half of the museum's audience.⁹ The analysis presented here will focus on the large selection of English- and Russian-language booklets and introductory texts available at the museum store, including the collection of articles on the Soviet occupation, a government publication called *The White Book* (2005) on 'losses inflicted on the Estonian nation by occupation regimes', and a number of colorful introductions to Estonian history by historian and former prime minister Mart Laar.¹⁰

Latvia

Four hundred kilometers southward, the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia offers a mirror-image of the small, transparent and dynamic Estonian museum. The two institutions are similar in origin and in their funding scheme: the Latvian museum was founded by an expatriate, Pauls Lazda, and one quarter of its budget comes from government grants. In other aspects the Latvian museum stands in striking contrast to its Estonian counterpart. It is located in a dark, reinforced concrete edifice, originally built as the Latvian Red Riflemen museum in 1970.¹¹ Employing 42 people, half of them full time, the museum serves over 100,000 visitors per year.¹² About two-thirds of the visitors are tourists or non-resident Latvians, followed by schoolchildren and students as well as 'eyewitnesses' who come for the nostalgia.¹³ The goal of the museum is summed up in three words: 'Show, Remind and Remember'.¹⁴ Though not formally defined, the political goal of the museum is at least equally important. The museum, according to its chief administrators, tries to subvert deliberate or accidental misinformation that dominates nationalist Russian discourses about the Latvian occupations.¹⁵

These objectives are realized in the main exhibition hall located on the windowless upper floor, where tall red pillars divide the exhibition area into sections detailing various aspects of the occupations. The exhibition presents two narratives, color-coded and spatially separate: the main narrative recounts the political, social and cultural aspects of twentieth-century occupations in chronological sections. The sections, however, are broken up by the secondary narrative, focusing on Latvian experiences in Soviet GULAGs. Since the museum was built piece-meal, earlier sections of the exhibiton are more comprehensive and larger in size, creating an unintentional focus on earlier periods of occupation and deportation.

The Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 frames the primary narrative of the exhibition. The tour starts with an illustrated history of its signing and ends with the Soviet Union's admitting to the secret protocols that allowed for the occupation of the Baltics in 1989, with the story of restoring Latvia's independence serving as a coda in a separate room of the museum. However, although the on-going economic crisis has made predictions rather unreliable, the museum is still planning the construction of a new wing, which would allow the curators to accommodate a larger, better-planned exhibition. The new exhibition is designed to be multifocal, more thematic, and more involved in the socio-cultural aspects of the occupation, while the curators themselves

admit the present is 'too political'.¹⁶ The extensive collection of artifacts, accumulated over the years, provides the curators with greater liberty. As a result, the new exhibition will be more attentive to issues of balance and composition, while the current exhibition was often constructed with expediency and availability of space in mind.¹⁷

The outreach and education program deserves extended discussion. Program coordinators not only educate visitors and train employees of the museum, but they also work with teachers in public schools and produce educational materials for distribution outside of the museum premises. Activities conducted inside the museum include creative exercises for grade school students, such as role-plays and scavenger hunts.¹⁸ Many of these activities engage the students in learning about a variety of interpretations and views of the occupation, and challenge them in taking on unusual roles and adopting a number of different perspectives.

Finally, the museum features an extensive set of publications in Latvian, English, Russian, French, and even Estonian and Lithuanian. The selection includes a large and colorful guide to the museum and translations of major research publications.¹⁹ Next to thick overviews of the entire occupation period and collections of academic articles, one can easily find translations of novels by former dissidents or case studies of, for example, the Nazi and Soviet disinformation campaigns portraying the Holocaust in Eastern Europe as a spontaneous upsurge of anti-Semitism (Ezergailis 2005). Like Estonian publications at the Estonian museum, Latvian texts dominate the bookstore, though a larger variety of publications and languages creates an impression of a greater focus on outreach.

Lithuania

Two bus-rides and a number of small country roads away, next to Druskininkai, Lithuania, lies a giant estate, surrounded by a rustic village, a golf course, a resort and, most importantly to us, Grutas Park. The institution, owned by mushroom tycoon Viliumas Malinauskas, is centered on ninety Soviet-era sculptures, ranging from typical examples of Marx, Lenin and Stalin to heroes of Socialist Lithuania and obscure leaders of the Communist Party in Lithuanian villages. The statues make up the bulk of the outdoor exhibition (along with a reconstruction of a GULAG camp tower, a few pieces of artillery and a petting zoo), but equally important are the indoor exhibitions, located in two reconstructed examples of Soviet architecture. A 'typical' 1960s-style cultural house gives an overview of Soviet social life, and a 'typical' Soviet art museum explains the intricacies of Soviet ideological propaganda through an exhibition of popular paintings in the socialist realist style. Inextricable from the exhibition are the 'attractions' that amplify the sense of nostalgia and 'authenticity' (or perhaps a very consciously ironic pseudo-authenticity). A kvass²⁰ machine with a distinctly 1970s look, a restaurant offering 'themed food' such as smoked herring with boiled potatoes, and a souvenir shop prominently dominate the intersection of the three 'main streets' of the park. Visitors are welcome to purchase vodka with red stripes printed at 50, 100 and 200 gram marks along with toasts to Stalin, the Homeland and Communism. The children's playground and the petting zoo

serve no other purpose than to provide entertainment for the kids while the parents visit the exhibition.²¹

At Grutas Park, the focus is on simulated reality, entertainment and leisure. Characteristic of this approach is a complete lack of written material (the museum shop does not have a single book, not even an introductory overview of the park) and a non-existent educational program. Were it not for the serious and analytical exhibitions in the cultural house and the art museum, we could easily call the establishment a 'theme park' and not a 'museum' (Walsh 1992, pp. 97–104). Grutas Park is fully privately run. The only connection to the Lithuanian state is the statues, which the founders won at a public competition. Finally, in contrast to amicable state–museum relationships in Estonia and Latvia, Grutas Park has come under harsh criticism by the government, Lithuanian intellectuals, and the writing public for ostensibly mocking the grim realities and tragic history of the Lithuanian people.

Of course, those interested in a more serious, academic presentation of recent Lithuanian history can visit the Museum of Genocide Victims in Vilnius. That museum, housed in the former headquarters of the KGB, provides a highly visceral experience with reconstructions of interrogation chambers and execution rooms next to an academic presentation of the Soviet occupation. However, since the style and content of the exposition closely mirrors that of its Latvian counterpart, this paper will focus on Grutas Park, in the hope that a contrasting perspective will add to the analytic force of the argument.

The Museums in Context: National Identity and the Conflict of Memory

On its own, the statement 'Baltic Museums of Occupation construct national identity' is almost not worthy of discussion. After all, having accepted that museums are discursive institutions, what else could they be constructing? The curators admit this themselves: the director of the Museum of Latvian Occupations names a key goal of the museum as '[showing that] as a people, a nation, Latvians survived and now continue to rebuild and prosper in spite of many difficulties'.²² The real question then is 'What sort of national identity do the museums construct?' Though the assumption that the very existence of the modern society is contingent on the existence of the nation-state is perhaps a bit too radical,²³ it is certainly evident that politics of identity have a bearing on the political stability of a community. John Rex (1995, pp. 243–46) notes that the problem of multiculturalism can only be adequately solved with recourse to a 'civic culture', an overarching identity that mediates civic interaction between cultural groups, without presupposing their dilution. In analyzing the narratives of nationalism in the occupation museums, we must then note whether the story they are creating is supportive of overlapping identities, accepting of different cultural norms and values, or exclusive, polarizing or even hostile towards the 'out-group'.

The museums do not exist in a vacuum, and they are not the sole creators of national identity. As Michel Foucault (1980, p. 215) has observed, power does not flow as a concentrated current, as orthodox Marxists would have us believe.

The institutions under examination here are only strands in a system of interconnected technologies, all contextualized in time and space. In the Baltic context, national identity is shaped, among other elements, by a history of ethnic conflict, the legacy of Soviet repopulation policies, the looming presence of a powerful and authoritarian neighbor, and a long-standing fear of cultural and political marginalization. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, all three Baltic States have made some progress toward constructing a civic identity that supports and integrates all of the ethnic groups inhabiting their respective countries. However, the division of memory created by 50 years of Soviet occupation is far from depoliticized (Budryte 2005, pp. 34–35). In fact, a tenuous relationship between the Baltic countries and Russia, along with radically different perspectives on history, democracy and world politics, has kept issues of history and memory constantly topical (Ehin & Berg 2009, pp. 1–15). In such an explosive environment, ‘truth creating’ institutions, such as museums, must pay particularly strong attention to avoiding an unnecessary exacerbation of conflict.

Two approaches will be employed in analyzing identity creation at the museums: a focus on representation and a focus on practice. By analyzing how museums represent the past, exhibitions may be read as texts, with a focus on locating and describing the structures of power built into the display of artifacts and the composition of interpretive texts, publications and pamphlets. By analyzing museum practices, museums are seen as active creators of discourse, reproducing identity and power relations through their everyday activities, administrative hierarchies, political engagements, live interpretations, applications of educational policies, and so forth.

One must also take note of the inevitable limitations posed by a finite number of material resources that have forced museums to choose certain modes of exhibition over others. In brief, it is very hard to represent minority cultures at the same level as majority cultures, since material objects relating to the dominant culture are almost always easier to obtain. Similarly, funding restrictions create concrete limits on what a museum can do, forcing curators to prioritize certain objectives (such as collecting artifacts) over others (such as educational outreach). Still, choices matter, and as the following analysis will show, even within these important constraints, museums can still pursue radically different goals, indicative of their implicit policies on cultural inclusion and the creation of multicultural national identities.

In the following analysis, the key focus will be on questions of similarity and difference, of sameness and otherness. Stuart Hall has argued that a classically exclusive model of identity creation is based on the exclusion of the Other. In other words, a present, affirmative identity is only conceivable with recourse to an absent, negative identity. In this Manichean model, the oppressor and the oppressed, the friend and the enemy are discreetly defined and constantly opposed, with no possibility of reconciliation (Hall 1989, pp. 16–17). Yet Hall also proposes another method of identity construction, one based on acknowledging and embracing the cultural contingency and ambiguity of identity creation. This ‘new’ model would take into account the problems inherent in the construction of fixed binaries, such as the affirmative identity always being secretly reliant on the identity it publicly denies, and always containing traces of attributes it purports to oppose. Drawing on Jacques Derrida’s ideas of *différance*, Hall (1989, p. 17) proposes that a liberating form of identity ought to be mindful of its own instability, its reliance on the presence of the

Other, and accept the inevitability of always resisting sharp divisions, clear and uncontested definitions, and constancy of any sort. The purpose of the following analysis is to determine, when the narratives presented in the museums conform to the first model and when they embrace the second.

The following analysis focuses on two models of representing difference: exclusion and subordination. Through exclusion, only subjects, events and practices that conform to the identity under construction are allowed a place in the narrative. This practice clearly delineates who has the *right* to claim an identity and the grounds on which these claims can be made (Woodward 1997, p. 26). In the Baltic context, exclusionary practices are often used to create an impression of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity on the one hand, and to delineate a victim-oppressor binary, with the local ethnic in the victim role and the Soviet Union (and sometimes simply Russia) in the oppressor role. Subordination involves submitting intercultural relations to a power structure, where one party is portrayed as uniquely superior, positive, acceptable, and the other as inferior, negative, deviant.²⁴ The following analysis must then involve a careful reading of the exhibitions and museum practices to see where such hierarchies are imposed and where they are subverted.

Inclusion and Exclusion: ‘All These Weird Subjects ...’

Two types of exclusion are at play in the Museums of Occupation, to varying degrees. First, exhibitions can exclude, downplay and ignore specific events or communities in order to homogenize the national narrative. Second, in selecting their thematic focus, museums inevitably privilege certain issues over others, marginalizing or completely excluding some social groups and historical events. A comparison of the three museums will allow us to discover and examine some of the differences in their choices of focus and their depictions of specific events.

Depictions of the Holocaust in the Estonian and Latvian museums provide a clear illustration of the first type of exclusion. It is an undisputed fact that Nazi Germany engaged in the mass extermination of Jews, Roma and other ‘inferior’ groups in the Baltics. Similarly, scholars agree that most of actual extermination was conducted by locals. The death toll reached 200,000 in Lithuania, 60,000 in Latvia and around 10,000 in Estonia. These numbers included virtually all of the local Jewish population, plus significant numbers of Roma and Soviet POWs. Often, once local extermination had been completed, additional Jewish and Roma prisoners were brought in to Baltic concentration camps from other Nazi occupied territories as well as from Germany itself.²⁵

The Latvian museum treats the tragic event with due attention. It occupies a central place in the part of the exposition dedicated to the German occupation. Visitors can find data on the actual killings, look at examples of anti-Jewish propaganda, observe a discussion on later Soviet attempts to portray the Latvians as Nazi sympathizers, and finally read a summary of Latvian collaborators and the few Jewish survivors. The exhibition also discusses historiographical controversies, specifically related to Holocaust research during the Soviet period, during which ‘victims of the Holocaust were conflated with “peaceful Soviet citizens”’.²⁶ In addition

to the physical exposition, the Holocaust is covered in a bare-bones 40-minute version of the audioguide and the bookstore, which offers an entire volume on the history of Latvian Jews (Gordon, 2001).

One could expect a similar treatment of the Holocaust in the Estonian Museum of Occupation. Although the Jewish population of Estonia was smaller, the thoroughness of the Nazi genocide was all the more apparent, as not a single Estonian Jew who was in the country in 1940 survived the German occupation (Hiio 2004, pp. xviii–xix). In reality, the Holocaust is almost completely absent in the physical exposition and entirely marginal to the documentary focusing on the Nazi occupation. While the segment does include an eyewitness account describing the atrocities of concentration camps, it is preceded by a lengthy meditation on the use of the term ‘extermination camp’ at Klooga. ‘It has often been written that these were so-called “extermination camps”, I would rather call them “labor camps” – when the work day ended, then people were allowed to visit the local villages’, narrates an a local farmer.²⁷ Compared to this discussion, which sounds suspiciously like justification, the actual events of the Holocaust are skimmed at best.

Museum publications ignore the event as well: with the exception of the International Commission Report, introductory texts neglect the Holocaust completely (Ahonen 2004). Former prime minister Mart Laar’s 70-page overview of ‘Estonia in World War II’ covers the Holocaust literally in one paragraph on pages 23 and 25. Laar emphasizes ‘several cases of sheltering and rescuing Jewish-origin citizens of Estonia from the Nazis’, noting only a few lines later, in a staggering feat of self-contradiction, that Jewish and Roma populations of Estonia were ‘entirely exterminated’ (Laar 2005, pp. 23–25).

Though the Estonian museum claims to strive for the ‘objective portrayal of history’, the treatment of these two issues shows how well the narrative presented in the museum follows what Anthony D. Smith (1984, pp. 105–07) calls the ‘myth of descent’, specifically, the creation of ‘special dignity’. By establishing the Estonian nation as the ‘victims’ of World War II, the myth endows the Estonian nation with a sense of entitlement, as well as a special uniqueness. The ‘victim-status’, of course, excludes the possible presence of other victims, or worse yet, the possibility of seeing Estonians as perpetrators of oppression. Acknowledging the effects of the Holocaust in Estonia would put the Estonians on the same level with various (in fact, most) other European communities who also collaborated in the Holocaust and would invalidate the claim to ‘special dignity’.

A more systematic method of exclusion is enacted by privileging certain themes in the exhibition over others. Given its finite space and resources, every museum has to make decisions on which narratives should be emphasized and which must be excluded. The Estonian museum claims to focus on the ‘perspective of the average Estonian’.²⁸ The Latvian exhibition concentrates on the implications of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, thus privileging political history.²⁹ Grutas Park purports to convey ‘a sense of how life was during the Soviet times’.³⁰ However, a look at the actual exhibitions, publications and guided tours reveals a very different impression: the Estonian museum deals overwhelmingly with political history, the Latvian mixes social and political aspects, and only the Lithuanian stays true to its stated focus on social and cultural history.

The Estonian museum is by far the most political of the three. Out of seven documentaries, three focus on the years of the Second World War and the last one deals with the independence movement, leaving three films with the daunting task of covering the 40 years in between. Even there, a substantial amount of screen time is given to political actors: Estonian partisans, dissidents, and deportees. The structure of the films usually has the narrator lay out an interpretation of political events, followed by a brief, emotional commentary by an 'eye-witness', leaving little room for different assessments. The eye-witnesses are rarely truly 'everymen', they are rather, in the words of the curator, 'better than average'.³¹ With a few exceptions, this means Estonian elites: the first movie interviews a government official, an Estonian student, and a banker recounting their experiences in 1940. One interviewee, to be fair, was a Russian-Estonian student in 1940, yet her commentary was still specific to the perspective of the national majority. Were she replaced by a generic Estonian student, the text would not necessarily have changed. In the last movie, the interviewees are almost uniquely leaders of various popular movements, in some cases even the current President of Estonia and the commander-in-chief of the Estonian Army.

One might argue, correctly, that these are entirely logical choices in discussions of political history. However, this is precisely the crux of my critique: by *choosing* to focus on the political history of the occupation, the museum is implicitly disenfranchising population sectors who were not involved in running the country or not directly victims of Soviet repressions.

This is even more evident in the publications, which almost exclusively deal with the political and military aspects of the occupations. As representatives of ethnic minorities, lower social classes, those living outside the center of government or the war zone are excluded from the 'everyman perspective', the term 'everyman' ultimately means nothing more than 'middle-class ethnic Estonian'.

The Latvian museum focuses on the experiences of individuals, without presenting them as metonyms for a particular social class or community. This is evident in the museum's treatment of mass deportation, which is illustrated by a number of 'life stories', complemented by personal documents and photographs. Focusing on the personal instead of the political helps to universalize the suffering of the deportees beyond the confines of ethnicity and social class. The individualized GULAG experience is also clearly separated from the political narrative, both spatially and thematically. This distinction helps to establish a border between the necessarily subjective political interpretation of the occupation and the depiction of individual, universally tragic human suffering.

The Latvian museum also includes a wider variety of perspectives on the occupation. Panels on political history are complemented by panels dedicated to cultural and social history, such as the history of the Latvian church, newspapers, propaganda culture and so on. The history of Nazi occupation covers aspects from book-burning to the Holocaust. The post-war section contains extensive information on 'culture', 'propaganda' and 'everyday life'. The bookstore sells a series titled 'Art.Myth.Document', covering Soviet propaganda and art. By focusing on social changes affecting large groups of people regardless of ethnicity and emphasizing the repressive nature of the Soviet culture, the museum does not excessively privilege

the majority identity. At the same time, the museum remains true to its mission of celebrating Latvian culture, but depictions of sweeping social changes, individual experiences and a focus on the repressors as well as the repressed provide points of commonality that transcend exclusive ethnic identities.

Grutas Park takes a similar approach. Its focus on the ‘lifestyle’ of the Soviet Union makes it difficult to find points of identification with particular national identities – the material culture, customs and propaganda were experienced by everyone in Soviet Lithuania, regardless of ethnicity. Moreover, the tone of the exhibition is decidedly ambiguous, conveying both ridicule and nostalgia at the same time. This makes binary opposition difficult to establish. On the one hand, visitors laugh at the ridiculousness of the pompous statues of Marxist leaders, but then step aside to buy a glass of kvass from the run-down Soviet restaurant, and perhaps drink a cup of vodka to the Party’s health. The elaborate re-creations of Soviet culture can function as points of identification for *anyone* who has some familiarity with life in Soviet Lithuania.

Questions of inclusion and exclusion apply to practices as well as representation. Here too, the Latvian and Estonian museums show two contrasting approaches. The Latvian museum has made significant efforts to include communities outside of Riga, through their traveling exhibition, through teachers’ education programs and through an educational outreach policy that encourages schools to plan field trips to the museum. These activities help include a wider range of socioeconomic groups and ethnic minorities who tend to be less mobile and less centrally located. The Estonian museum, on the other hand, has no such programs, a fact explained by its significantly smaller scale and thinner wallet. Nevertheless, given the museum’s location in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods of center city, its visitors will be almost uniquely tourists, the upper-middle class and schoolchildren from nearby neighborhoods. Conversely, ethnic minorities, almost half of whom live in eastern Estonia, with less access to modern technologies and easy transportation, are inevitably less able to participate in the museum’s activities.

The websites of the two museums offer a reverse example of this exclusionary practice. The Estonian museum has translated all of its films, some major exhibition items and founding documents into both English *and* Russian. Furthermore, the web page includes targeted content, custom-designed *specifically* for audiences speaking English or Russian. The English website offers links to general overviews of Estonian and Baltic history, whereas the Russian website offers detailed content on historical topics that have proven controversial in recent political debates concerning the legacy of World War II in the Russian Federation. At the opposite end, the website of the Latvian museum, in a surprising reversal of their educational outreach policy, does not even have a Russian version. That said, physical outreach is likely to have both a wider and deeper impact than a web site that is hardly advertised anywhere and whose layout seems to be from the 1990s, but given the budgetary constraints, it can at least be considered a genuine effort.

In addition to selection bias, where events not supporting the national narrative are excluded from the exhibition, the museums’ overarching research priorities implicitly privilege certain forms of history over others. Political and military history are both structured around the concept of the nation-state, leaving little room for

individual stories and experiences located on the margins of society. Museums dealing with the commemoration of atrocities face an intriguing conundrum, as crimes against humanity have both individual and national dimensions. The Estonian museum has opted to emphasize the national dimension, describing the Soviet occupation in terms of suppressing a polity. Though the individual experiences of singular human beings occupy a central role in the exhibition, they are discussed in the framework of political decisions and stand as representatives of a nation. On the other hand, the Latvian museum distinguishes between the individual and the nation, avoiding their conflation in the form of exclusive identity politics. At the same time, it remains a space where Latvian culture is celebrated, in the form of national poetry accompanying the GULAG exhibition.

Coloring the tragedies of the Soviet occupation with a specifically nationalist hue as the Estonian and, to a lesser extent, the Latvian museum have done, politicizes the exposition spaces and restricts the scope of the narratives that make it to public display to a rather narrow selection of political and elite histories. Enn Tarvel, the author of the Estonian documentaries, has once, perhaps ironically, said: 'There are also all sorts of weird topics [in history], women's history and the history of sports. Many fly high on feminist topics and gender history. I wish there were more old-fashioned historians. . .' (quoted in Bärenklau, *Postimees* 30 July 2007). Perhaps these weird topics would make for a worthy addition to the museums' expositions.

Hierarchies of Power: Privileging and Contesting National Narratives

Having looked at what is left unsaid in the museums, this essay will now examine what is, in fact, said. This part of the paper is concerned with how the museums of occupations portray relationships between communities defined as belonging to the discourse of nationalism and communities defined as belonging 'outside' it (Foucault 2007, pp. 76–77). In other words, we will be looking at hierarchies of difference.

In the case of identity formation, and elsewhere, the binaries of differentiation are not simply opposed; they are in a relationship of subordination. The concept of the 'self' is formed in relation to the concept of the 'other', and the self is inevitably placed in a position of privilege. 'We' are pure, uncorrupted and valid, while 'they' are impure, corrupt and invalid (Woodward 1997, p. 36).

How are these oppositions built up in the exhibitions, tours and publications of the museums of occupations? Do they perpetuate the power relationships of a nationalist discourse of history or do they attempt to undermine and subvert the traditional roles of power? What are the linguistic, rhetorical and narrative tools used to establish these relationships? Are these techniques observable in the practices of the museum, the spatial relationships of the exhibition or in other, less obvious forms? Finally, whatever relationships and oppositions one might discover in the museums of occupations, they must always be situated in the context of broader social discourse on nationalism, the crisis of memory, and other historical controversies in the Baltics.

Sometimes the hierarchies of privilege and subordination are quite obvious. The Estonian museum, with its focus on documentary films, is fairly devoid of

interpretive texts. Those that do exist, however, focus solely on the perspective of the ethnic majority. A large prominent glass plaque at the very entrance of the museum introduces the objectives of the museum as follows: ‘Estonia is the only home Estonians have. We want to learn what has taken place in this country and tell others about it. [...] While the suffering of Estonian victims was certainly a motivating factor in the [struggle for independence], we are where we are now thanks to the yearning for the freedom of the people and because the people never lost hope’. Never mind that the occupations also affected the numerous (though, indeed, much smaller) populations of Baltic Germans, Russians, Jews, Armenians and Finns living in Estonia, or that some Estonians worked in collaboration with the occupying forces (both the Communists and the Nazis). The text establishes the perspective of the entire museum as one of ethnic Estonians (who, unlike *others*, have been living on their lands since time immemorial), who have suffered (whereas *others* presumably did not), and collectively won back their freedom (implying that *others* had a less significant role in this effort).

In other cases, museum narratives can undermine the implied ‘otherness’ of ethnic minorities, ideological opponents and anti-nationalists by recognizing the existence of these hierarchies and actively discussing and complicating these structures. The Latvian museum has established a number of educational exercises for schoolchildren forcing them to step outside their established identity and step into the shoes of various actors during various points in the occupation. For instance, the museum organizes role-plays, where participants assume the roles of various people during the 1941 mass deportations – the deportees, the Soviet soldiers, the collaborators, the refugees – and collectively discuss possible motivations that might have compelled these people to act in the ways they did.³² This exercise attempts to subvert the victim/oppressor dichotomy by creating a situation in which the schoolchildren are guided to understand that the dynamics of mass deportations cannot be boiled down to a simple Manichean opposition. This approach, though not immune to criticism, is certainly a step away from the ethnocentrism of the Estonian museum, where complexities of the historical reality are reduced to a tale of the suffering majority.

The Estonian museum provides another example of exclusion through selective attention. Estonian soldiers are endowed with complex psychological profiles, their acts of violence are analyzed and situated in historical context. Such attention is rarely awarded to those combatants who committed violence against Estonians. On the contrary, their acts are left largely unexamined and summarily condemned. The documentary on German occupation provides a lucid example of this process. First, the narrator explains at length why Estonians were likely to join the German or Soviet armies. ‘Of course you wanted to enlist, you would’ve been dead if you had continued living in the conditions they had us in’, states an eye-witness. According to the documentary, Estonian sympathies towards the Germans were caused by the relative mildness of the German occupation compared to the Soviet ‘Year of Terror’. For instance, the documentary explains, Germans recognized Estonian national symbolics and traditions at least *pro forma*. These are all important considerations and potent historical arguments, but they become vehicles of justification, when compared to uniquely pejorative language and lack of sophisticated argumentation in descriptions

of ‘the bad guys’, the Soviets. They are ‘vandals’, ‘Bolshevist murderers’ and ‘torturers’. The narrative is almost black-and-white – the Soviets were brutal murderers, who left the country burning everything in their way, tortured and killed their prisoners and finally returned with a vengeance. The Estonians, on the other hand, joined the German military because they did not have any choice. Of course, more complicated narratives exist, ones that take into account the role of volunteer Estonians in overseeing concentration camps (Maripuu 2001, pp. 135–47). Yet at the museum exposition, the *self* is defined as the positive and the neutral, whereas the *other* is ‘defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity’ (Beauvoir 1994, p. 206). While certainly comforting to Estonians who suffered through World War II and the occupation, this approach is unlikely to please individuals who identify with communities who may have suffered in the hands of say, Estonian police officers, or conversely, whose ancestors are described as inherently evil murderers, a term unfitting for both the Red Army and the Wehrmacht as a whole, and overly simplistic and antagonizing in any academic context.

One way of avoiding the reproduction of privilege and power relations in museum narratives is by explicitly acknowledging their existence in the society-at-large. The final chapter of the Latvian museum’s official publication candidly discusses both the ongoing integration debate and the conflict of memory surrounding interpretations of nationality and occupation. Instead of adopting the prevailing oppositions of the debate, such as ‘nationals’ versus ‘foreigners’ or ‘citizens’ versus ‘non-citizens’, the publication frames the debate in terms of ‘radicals’ and ‘moderates’, a distinction that crosses identity boundaries and directly undermines the ethno-nationalist paradigm. ‘It does not help that small but vociferous radical groups on both sides oftentimes set the tone in public debates’ (Nollendorfs 2008, p. 211). With this simple short sentence, the museum distances itself from the dominant discourse of nationalism, and diffuses suspicions of complicity with the ethnic majority. Where the Estonian exhibition adopts the categories of difference and subordination ascribed by the nationalist discourse, the Latvian exhibition complicates these oppositions and provides alternative terms of discourse.

Grutas Park treads a somewhat schizophrenic path, sometimes falling straight into the trap of reproducing prevalent ethnic oppositions, but in other cases problematizing and subverting these relationships in a variety of ways. Unfortunately, examples of the former far outweigh examples of the latter in both quantity and degree. By repeatedly conflating the terms ‘Soviet’ and ‘Russian’, the audio presentation constantly replicates a staple opposition.³³ The audio tour regularly describes the Other in broad generalizations, calling the Soviet repressive authorities ‘genocidal’ and ‘criminal’, often with no additional commentary. Meanwhile, ample explanation is provided for the complicity of ordinary Lithuanians in the Soviet regime: ‘It was not worth it to oppose the Soviet regime – you would either suffer the same fate [as dissidents who were killed by the KGB] or be exiled to Siberia’.³⁴

Yet, ironically, the park also contests the traditional categories of the Self and the Other in a variety of ways. A section of the exhibition dedicated to the genesis of the park itself provides a lucid illustration. The entire section seems motivated more by self-indulgence than self-reflection – most of the discussion consists of establishing Grutas Park as the ‘first’, ‘biggest’, ‘most expensive’ and ‘most popular’ of

commemorative museums in Eastern Europe.³⁵ However, one anecdote relayed in the process serves as a potent reminder of the ambiguity of the oppressor/victim paradigm. When the museum was opened as a private, commercial institution, it fell under substantial criticism in the Lithuanian media for ridiculing what many Lithuanians considered a delicate and almost sacred topic – the occupation. Indeed, Viliumas Malinauskas, the mushroom millionaire turned museum manager, considered ‘[helping people] stop fearing the times, and tell the story as it is – a story with some humor’ as one of the primary goals of the exhibition.³⁶ His response to public criticism certainly had a sense of humor – he had statues made of some of the most vociferous critics and put them next to Soviet statues making up the bulk of the exhibition. The irony was twofold – many of the critics, now prominent statesmen of the Lithuanian republic, were former members of the Communist Party.³⁷

Whatever Malinauskas’s intentions were in creating this little addition to the exhibition, the result was a persuasive complication of the traditional national narrative. First, it decouples the victim/oppressor dichotomy from the local/foreign opposition by pointing out that many who are now waving the flag of Lithuanian nationalism had stood behind the Red Flag with equal fervor only a few decades earlier. Second, contesting the authority of the nation-state, the museum subverts another key aspect of ethnonational discourse, according to which subscribing to a Lithuanian identity must entail subscribing to the institutions of the Lithuanian nation-state.

Still, one has to admit that calling Grutas Park ‘irreverent’ in its treatment of the Soviet occupations is, in fact, a very precise characterization. After all, the park has put a petting zoo next to replicas of Soviet artillery, plays Lithuanian Communist Party members for laughs, serves kvass out of nostalgic food-trucks, complete with unhygienic reusable glasses, and sells vodka mugs with toasts to one of the twentieth century’s greatest dictators. The critics of the museums see this as a major problem, to the extent that the museum has acquired a reputation for being a ‘Disneyfied representation of the occupation, StalinWorld, so to speak’.³⁸ From the perspective of identity creation, however, this ‘irreverent’ presentation can be seen as a form of subversion, particularly in contrast with the sacralizing of occupation narratives in Latvian and Estonian museums.

At first, the purpose of marking one identity as ‘sacred’ and another as ‘ridiculing’ or ‘profane’ seems obvious. We mark ourselves as ‘sacred’, the other as ‘profane’, and thus a power relationship is established. Yet, in the case of Grutas Park, one finds oneself facing the question: whose identity exactly is being marked? Critics seem to believe that the park undermines Lithuanian identity; it profanes what is meant to be sacred and corrupts what is meant to be pure. The memory of the Soviet occupation has become a sacred part of Lithuanian identity, the horrors of mass deportations, the repression of free speech and loss of independence its key components. Depiction of these events in jest leaves a mark on the memory as a whole. However, another reading of the park, provided by its director, suggests that what is being ridiculed is the Soviet occupation, in all of its absurdity and irrationality, as a counterpoint to the sacred and respected Lithuanian nationalism. In this interpretation, the ‘profane’ is still the Other, the Soviet antagonists. In Malinauskas’s view, the park strengthens the national narrative, instead of undermining it.

Perhaps the very existence of this confusion hints at the possibility of Derridean reading of the park, in which the sacred/profane dichotomy is altogether deconstructed. If one is to believe Derrida, then the sacred/profane binary cannot be sustained, due to *its very nature as a static binary*. The problematization of that binary in the space of the park is just a manifestation of a fundamental contradiction. Instead of simply reproducing ethnonational oppositions, or substituting them with new, equally divisive oppositions (although both happen on numerous specific instances within the exposition), as a whole the park questions the very notion of identity as a discreetly defined binary of similarity and difference. The fundamental ambiguity of 'sacredness' and 'profanity' is revealed by providing a space in which the 'sacred' is shown as containing elements of the profane, even though we believe them to be absent (or, to follow Derrida more closely, precisely *because we believe them to be absent*).³⁹

The Latvian and Estonian museums show little of that ambiguity, instead they appear tied to the mythology of the nation-state both physically and ideologically. Physically, in the sense that they are both located next to important institutions of state power: the parliament, town hall, and other important national landmarks are only a stone's throw away. Of course, state institutions are always centers of tourism, and any museum aspiring for any sort of popular recognition would want to place themselves in the center of attention. From a purely commercial perspective, the Latvian and Estonian museums have made excellent choices (though certainly not the only possible ones, given that Grutas Park, by far the most popular of the three, is located in the middle of a forest, a two-hour drive from Vilnius).

Yet the connection with the institutions of the nation-state goes deeper than just locations and funding schemes. The two museums seem to function as seemingly independent legitimizers of state authority and state ideology. Both museums display at their entrance photographs of and gifts from various heads of state who have passed through the premises on official visits and other ceremonial occasions. The Museums of Occupation are requisite stops for any cortege of foreign statesmen visiting the Baltics, alongside Houses of Parliaments, national churches, famous battlegrounds and other symbols of national identity. The museums' content thus becomes marked as sacred, stamped with a big red mark saying 'contestation not permitted', and those disagreeing with the message of the exhibition (and as we have noted, there are many who would) are forced to reject not simply a subjective interpretation of a historical period, but an important national symbol with connections to state authority, civic identity and presumably democracy and liberty as well.

The Estonian museum, which purports to present an 'objective, and visually transparent recounting of history',⁴⁰ and a narrative well in accordance with the tropes of Estonian nationalism, is more unambiguously an extension of state power than its Latvian counterpart. The latter is housed in the building originally constructed as the museum of Latvian Red Riflemen, Latvian soldiers with Communist allegiances who took part in attempt to establish a Latvian Socialist Republic in 1918. It is quite ironic that the building originally designed to commemorate the 'fight against bourgeois nationalism' would now function to celebrate Latvian culture and remind of the atrocities committed by those who sought to destroy it. The museum stands as a reminder that through the opposition to Soviet occupation, Latvian identity has

become fused with the Soviet one, providing traces of a deconstructive attitude similar to the one we saw in Grutas Park.

In both practices and representations, as we have seen, the Latvian museum is far less accepting of the Baltic nationalist dogma than its Estonian cousin. However, its friendly relationship with state institutions is far harder to deny. Herein lies the insidiousness of legitimizing power through a seemingly independent institution: by leaving the impression that the state has no official relation to the museum, the politicians are left with an opportunity to be 'seen to be paying respect, while leaving any controversies or mistakes with the institution' (Williams 2007, 107).

Conclusions, Complications and Consequences

The very different relationships the three museums of occupations have to power and national narrative seem to be closely tied to presuppositions about the nature of history that underlie their exhibitions and practices. Museums that provide more complex accounts of recent history seem to recognize their role as discursive institutions, or at least admit to a subjectivity in their narratives. On the other hand, claims to 'objectivity' and 'telling things as they happened' go alongside reproductions of dominant national narratives. The fundamental premise of the Estonian museum is to 'let the objects speak for themselves', to avoid over-dramatization, and to stay close to a 'dispassionate, close-to-objective' representation of history. According to the museum's director, 'contemporary history is a topic that needs to be dealt with objectively if possible, so to speak, and with visual transparency as well'.⁴¹ Of course, this premise turns out to be the museum's undoing: neither artifacts nor history can be portrayed 'as-is'. Pretending otherwise leads to implicit acceptance of existing discourses, a dearth of critical thinking, and a tendency to privilege a research of 'facts' over an analysis of interpretation. It is worth quoting Spencer Crew and James Sims (1991, p.159) on the possibility of 'transparent and objective' museology: 'The problem with things is that they are dumb. They are not eloquent, as some thinkers in art museums claim. They are dumb. And if by some ventriloquism they seem to speak, they lie'.

The Latvian example shows that a more productive approach to interrogating issues of power and avoiding the perpetuation of existing imbalances can be achieved by openly recognizing the issues framing the dissemination of identity in the museums. Acknowledging the subjectivity of the national narrative and the crisis of memory that pervades Latvian society allows the Latvian museum to fulfill its task of commemorating and celebrating Latvian culture and remembering the tragedies of the past, without allowing these stories to become contributors to the discourses of power and domination.

Grutas Park, like an inexperienced puppy dog, provides the scholar, often unintentionally, with moments of intense satisfaction amidst a sea of mishaps and bad decisions. Where it discredits the rigid binary oppositions of national mythology, it does so largely by accident, although with tremendous enthusiasm. And as much as you would like to congratulate it for the successful deconstruction of Lithuanian/ Communist oppositions and the desacralization of national identity, you cannot but stare in dismay at the puddle of ethnocentric narratives it has produced with the same

eager spontaneity. The scholarly value of the project is difficult to evaluate, largely because it is not intended to be a scholarly project, but rather a capitalist enterprise, with all the associated problems: it commodifies tragedy, simplifies complex events and reproduces convenient mythologies of communist absurdities instead of encouraging a critical perspective. It is quite unclear whether Grutas Park functions primarily as a clever play on the received notions of identity and memory, or simply as a Disneyfication of tragedy leaving everyone with a feeling of emptiness and a strange allergy towards capitalism. Finally, of course, both could be true, and perhaps the intent, in this case, is not as important as the outcome, which is both provocative and complicated, challenging the very foundations of common understandings of nationalism.

Our evaluations of the museums are inevitably complicated by the fact that the material reality, established museum practices, the social context, and the short history of pluralist and multicultural education in the Baltics color museum practices in the Museums of Occupations as well as elsewhere. As much as the curators of the memorial museums might like to break boundaries and deconstruct dominant narratives, they are faced with a number of challenges that steer them towards an ethnonationalist interpretation of occupations. Patrons who donate artifacts to the museums are more likely to be valiant nationalists; symbols of national heritage are more likely to have survived in private collections than everyday items that can be used to illustrate the stories of individuals and marginalized groups. The pressures of a market economy force museums to purchase guest exhibitions and emphasize narratives that invite wealthy and privileged audiences, with fat wallets and conservative nationalist mindsets. The lack of qualified specialists makes it difficult for museums to design exhibitions that transcend traditional museum practices. Fifty years of Soviet rule have created a situation where few Baltic historians have intimate knowledge of postwar developments in historical theory and social history, not to mention gender history or subaltern history, which have yet to become popular fields of research. The Latvian museum is currently hard at work on compiling a new, improved exhibition that pays more attention to the equal treatment of varied topics, prioritizes individual experience over broad generalizations, and embraces multiple perspectives and a plurality of voices, thanks to a young and progressive curator at its helm. Grutas Park faces its own share of problems due its location in the middle of the Lithuanian countryside, almost unreachable without a car. We might be offended – or amused – by the petting zoo next to busts of Stalin, but would we solve the problem of catering to a large number of visiting families any differently?⁴² Clearly, very different approaches are possible within the same constraints, yet given the aforementioned problems, changes in museum practices have been, and will continue to be, slow and painful. Nevertheless, ideally museums should work towards becoming institutions of liberation, not of colonization. Or, as Foucault (1984, pp. 32–50) would put it, museums should embody a ‘critical limit-attitude’, the positive aspect of the Enlightenment, and not the universalizing, homogenizing streak that all too often means subjugation under the guise of Truth and Freedom.

Finally, this evaluation must consider the two important pivots that form the foundation of our value system: responsible museum practice on the micro level and the possible impact of the exhibitions on social cohesion, social justice and identity

formation on the macro level. Upon closer inspection, of course, it turns out that the two are, in fact, much the same, as both presuppose (correctly) an understanding of museums as discursive, fundamentally political institutions, thus imbuing them with the same responsibilities that we would expect in any political body, be it the government, the school system or the academia.

In order to understand what is really at stake, here is a brief summary of the consequences associated with reproducing ethnocentrist narratives of national identity. As Jeffrey Olick has noted, any official representation of memory contains a desire for 'normalization' of the past. The image of the past that forms the backbone of national narratives is an idealized past, a past as we would like to see it and thus also containing instructions for a future as we would like to construct it (Olick 2003, p. 17). Thus the ethnonationalist mythology prescribes a society that is culturally and linguistically homogenous, shares ideals of unity and uniqueness, and the membership of which is based on birth, rather than choice (Smith 2001, pp. 39–41). This ideal is becoming more and more problematic with every passing day, as the plurality of values, identities, and beliefs that individuals hold continues to multiply, fertilizing the ground for conflict. Research has shown that while the socio-economic differences between majority and minority groups in the Baltics continue to shrink, conflicts of memory and identity are increasingly likely to occur and tolerance towards 'out-groups' has decreased in recent years in both Estonia and Latvia (Lithuania remains an exception) (Pettai 2006, pp. 124–36). The classical Eastern European model of the nation-state, based on the domination of an ethnic elite, is quite simply not sustainable in a multiethnic, highly globalized environment, yet it is quite hard to see how the status quo could change without a profound change in the underlying discourse that establishes modes of 'permitted' thought, as Foucault has shown. The role of discursive institutions, such as museums, is therefore critical in helping to bring about these changes. The 'liberation' of the museums from the trappings of dominant ideologies without destroying the heritage contained within is an important challenge that the museums of occupation inevitably have to confront.

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Notes

- 1 The complicated history of identity conflicts in light of recent events has just recently been explored in a special issue of *The Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39, 4, 2008.
- 2 Heiki Ahonen (director of the Estonian Museum of Occupation), interview with the author, July 2009, Estonian Museum of Occupation.
- 3 The Kistler-Ritso Estonian Foundation. *Goals and Objectives*, Tallinn, <http://www.okupatsioon.ee/english/index.html>, last accessed 15 November 2009.
- 4 Ahonen, interview with the author.
- 5 Iveta Druva Druvaskalne and Agita Slara, 'Tourism Challenges in the Baltic States Since EU Enlargement,' European Regional Science Association Conference Paper,

- 2006, <http://ideas.repec.org/p/wiw/wiwr/sa/ersa06p121.html>, last accessed 15 November 2009.
- 6 Ahonen, interview with the author.
- 7 Eesti Vabariigi Kultuuriministeerium, *Kultuuriministeeriumi valitsemisala Eelarve 2009*, 8 March 2009, http://www.kul.ee/webeditor/files/erle/KUM_2009_eelarve_seis_03_08_2009.xls, last accessed 15 November 2009.
- 8 The Kistler-Ritso Estonian Foundation. *Teadustegevuse Põhisuunad ja Prioriteetid*. <http://www.okupatsioon.ee/tegevus/tegevus.html>, last accessed 1 December 2009.
- 9 Ahonen, interview with the author.
- 10 The publications include titles like *The Forgotten War: Armed Resistance Movement in Estonia 1944-1956* and *Birds-Eye View of Estonian History*, all Grenader: Tallinn, 2005.
- 11 Gundega Michel (director of the Museum of the Occupations of Latvia), interview with the author, August 2009, Museum of the Occupations of Latvia.
- 12 Museum of the Occupations of Latvia, *Visitors*, http://www.omf.lv/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=142, last accessed 1 December 2009.
- 13 Michel, interview with the author.
- 14 Museum of the Occupations of Latvia, *Museum Brochure; English*.
- 15 Michel, interview with the author and Valters Nollendorfs (director of external relations of the Museum of the Occupations of Latvia), interview with the author, August 2009, Museum of the Occupations of Latvia.
- 16 Ieva Gundare (curator), interview with the author, August 2009, Museum of the Occupations of Latvia.
- 17 Valters Nollendorfs, interview with the author.
- 18 Nollendorfs, interview with the author.
- 19 Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, *Publications*, http://www.omf.lv/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=32&Itemid=28, last accessed 1 December 2009.
- 20 A popular drink in Russian and Eastern Europe, similar to root beer.
- 21 Viliūmas Malinauskas (director of Grutas Park), interview with the author, August 2009, Grutas Park.
- 22 Gundega Michel, interview to Martin Evans, 9 April 2006.
- 23 Indeed, though this idea has many proponents among the early theorists of nationalism, and unsurprisingly among many contemporary Marxists, such as Eric Hobsbawm, there are equally potent counterarguments, advanced by the likes of Anthony D. Smith (in the field of Political Science) or the likes of Michel Foucault (and his followers in critical theory and cultural studies), which posit that although identity is something widely co-opted by the state for its own ends, it is not necessarily tied to it in some intrinsic way, and that such a proposition would be a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy. An example of such an argument can be found in Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001, 76–78.
- 24 This concept is fundamentally central to Michel Foucault's analysis of power and representation, which has been adopted and elaborated by many scholars of cultural studies. A good starting point for a deeper discussion of representational politics can be found in Michel Foucault (1980) 'Truth and Power'

- in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, New York, Pantheon, pp. 109–132.
- 25 Cf. Michael MacQueen, ‘The Context of Mass Destruction: Agents and Prerequisites of the Holocaust in Lithuania’ in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 12,1, pp. 27–48 for an overview of the Holocaust in Lithuania; Valters Nollendorfs and Uldis Neiburgs (2006), *The Holocaust in German-Occupied Latvia*, Museum of Latvian Occupations, Riga, for the same in Latvia and Estonian International Commission for Investigating Crimes Against Humanity, *Conclusions: 1941-1944*, http://www.historycommission.ee/temp/pdf/conclusion-s_en_1941-1944.pdf, last accessed 12 March 2009 for the same in Estonia; Anton Weiss-Wendt, ‘Why the Holocaust Does Not Matter to Estonians,’ in *The Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39, 4, p. 476 for additional geographical data.
- 26 Gundega Michel, interview with Martin Evans, 9 April 2006.
- 27 Museum of Occupations, ‘Sõda ja Saksa Aeg, 1941–1944’ in *Eesti Lähiajaloo Okupatsioonid, 1940-1991*, Tallinn, <http://www.okupatsioon.ee/english/index.html>, last accessed 17 November 2009.
- 28 Heiki Ahonen, interview with the author.
- 29 Gundega Michel, interview with the author.
- 30 Viliūmas Malinauskas, interview with the author.
- 31 Heiki Ahonen, interview with the author.
- 32 Ieva Gundare, interview with the author.
- 33 Grutas Park audioguide, item 55, 57 are just two examples.
- 34 Grutas Park audioguide, item 50.
- 35 Grutas Park audioguide, items 1–18.
- 36 Malinauskas, interview with the author.
- 37 Grutas Park audioguide, item 11.
- 38 Malinauskas, interview with the author.
- 39 Grutas Park as a deconstruction of Lithuanian identity is of course a topic well deserving of its own essay, and the analysis provide above is only a very crude outline of Derrida’s method. For a better understanding of this complication of what appear to be rigid binary opposition, Derrida’s (1991, pp. 114–42) essay on ‘Plato’s Pharmarcy’ provides a good introduction.
- 40 Ahonen, interview with the author.
- 41 Ahonen, interview with the author.
- 42 Ahonen, interview with the author, on the difficulties of acquiring artifacts and compiling the exhibition. Nollendorfs, interview with the author, on attracting specific audiences, and the new exhibition. Malinauskas, interview with the author, on the problem of family visits.

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