

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

REFUGEE JOURNEY OF ESTONIAN WOMEN
IN K. LINDA KIVI'S *IF HOME IS A PLACE*
AND CRISSA CONSTANTINE'S
BANISHED FROM THE HOMELAND

MA thesis

LIIS ROSENTHAL

SUPERVISOR: *Asst. Lect.* EVA REIN

TARTU

2018

ABSTRACT

The thesis explores the representation of the refugee journey of the Estonian women in Crissa Constantine's *Banished from the Homeland* and K. Linda Kivi's *If Home Is a Place*. The purpose of the analysis is to study how the trauma of losing home appears in their later lives in Canada. The paper also determines the key aspects of the journey that affect the self-perception and cultural identity of the refugees in the two primary sources.

The first chapter of the thesis provides theoretical approaches for the analysis of the refugee journey experience, discussing the characteristics of the wayfarers, the effects and meaning of the journey, focusing on the trauma of the refugee journey and its appearance in the two stories. Thereupon it discusses the temporal characteristics, the start and end of the journey, formation of cultural identity and self-perception, sense of belonging, as well as the importance of the revisit of homeland in the process of self-definition.

The second chapter concentrates on the refugee journey experience of the women in the primary sources. The analysis includes the factors influencing the journey and the key aspects of the journey. The refugee journey is seen as a continuum that begins before the physical departure and whose ending differs from person to person. The final subchapter discusses the identity dynamics concerning the self-perception and cultural identity of the women.

The conclusion summarises the main findings of the thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

The year 1944 with its development of the military events is the saddest one in the recent history of Estonia. These events led to the Great Escape, caused by the withdrawal of the German army from Estonia and the forthcoming second Soviet occupation. An hour had arrived in September 1944 when tens of thousands of Estonians felt that their time in their homeland was over and it was inevitable to begin the uncertain refugee journey. The people had fallen into a silent desperation and helplessness and many incomprehensible events took place in those days.

This is how Joel Haukka (2014) summarises the causes of the Great Escape. He emphasises that we must understand that the main reasons for leaving were fear of the future and worry about safety. The experience of the first year of the dreadful Soviet occupation was still vividly remembered and thus many Estonians left their homeland in autumn 1944, mostly heading to Germany or Sweden.

The issue of the Estonian and the Baltic refugees and the displaced persons (DPs) during the Second World War has been previously researched rather thoroughly, especially from the historical perspective (Tõnismäe 2015, Kumer-Haukanõmm 2005). It is difficult to estimate the number of the refugees who left the country. One of the latest studies on the topic has been conducted by Kristi Anniste, Kaja Kumer-Haukanõmm, and Tiit Tammaru (2010). According to them, approximately 70 000-80 000 Estonians left, of whom 6-9% lost their lives during the journey, and some returned. Most of the refugees went to Germany and about 11 000 Estonians moved on to Canada from there (Anniste et al 2010).

When it comes to the literary representations of the refugee experience, there is an extensive scholarship on Estonian life-stories, which offers critical perspectives on refugee life-stories written in the Estonian language and published since 1940s (Kirss 2006a, Kirss 2006b). Estonian literature in Canada written in Estonian has been the main focus of interest as part of Estonian diaspora literature (Kronberg 2006, Kruuspere 2008), however, Estonian-Canadian literature, especially life-writing by Estonians in the English language, has not received as much critical attention. Mari Peepre (1999) has analysed K. Linda

Kivi's *If Home Is a Place* in the framework of Canadian immigrant literature and Tiina Kirss (2006a) has discussed Estonian-Canadian writing with a focus on Kivi's novel in the context of the genealogies of exile in contemporary Canadian prose. Crissa Constantine's *Banished from the Homeland* has been reviewed by Doris Kareva (2001) in Estonia and Tõnu Naelapea (2001) in Canada. Estonian refugee experience with regard to trauma and testimony has been explored on the example of the poetry of Arved Viirlaid in the English translation published in Canada (Tamm 2013). There is a recent study on the overall topic of Estonian literary life in Toronto from the 1950s to the present (Karus 2014) that addresses the preservation of Estonian cultural identity in exile.

Estonian-Canadian literature about the refugee experience is an important yet under-researched source concerning Estonian history and culture. Therefore, the topic of refugee life-writing by Estonian-Canadians in the English language has been chosen for a closer analysis. The thesis focuses on the narratives of refugee experience of the Estonian women, who escaped Estonia during the Second World War, then stayed in Germany and later immigrated to Canada in the end of 1940s. The primary sources for the thesis are Crissa Constantine's *Banished from the Homeland* and K. Linda Kivi's *If Home Is a Place*. The authors of both books are second-generation immigrants to Canada. According to Kirss (2002: 1872), the novels that were published during the first decade of exile focused mostly on the dramatic nature of the boat trip and the thin line between life and death. The works by Kivi and Constantine originate from the period when the exile had formally ended with the restoration of independence in Estonia in 1991. The present thesis highlights the refugee journey in the primary sources.

Banished from the Homeland is an account of the life of Sonya. The book begins with the story of her childhood, family, teenage years, and the first marriage – the events of

which have been described in a beautiful and sincere manner through several chapters. Nonetheless, the reader can sense the coming of a dramatic change during the Second World War. Sonya is forced to flee Estonia alone and she manages to escape to Germany, from where she immigrates to Canada. In Canada she begins a new life, remarries and has a daughter. The book describes her journey, life and emotional difficulties that followed leaving behind her family and homeland. Finally, in 1991 she can revisit her homeland again and find her inner peace. This book is a fictionalised biography based on a true story of the author's Estonian mother.

If Home Is a Place is a story of three generations of women, two of which are refugees: Esther, a Canadian-born daughter of an Estonian family that escaped Estonia during the Second World War and later immigrated to Canada, her mother Sofi and maternal aunt Helgi, and maternal grandmother Maria. The story is narrated from the three different perspectives of Maria, Sofi and Helgi until their arrival in Canada, while the later events are told from the perspective of Esther. The novel deals with the relationships between different generations, the mother-daughter relationship, and the discovering of one's heritage as a refugee. Furthermore, the novel asks, what constitutes home and whether it is a place, people we live with, something inside ourselves, or the family history. The novel is based on the stories told by the parents of Linda Kivi.

Both works describe the problems of being a refugee. While Constantine's and Kivi's books cover the same time span from the early 1940s to the early 1990s, their narrative strategies differ. The former is a linear narrative and everything is told in a chronological order, the latter, on the other hand, is fragmentary, whereas the chapters about the past and the narrative present alternate throughout the novel. It can be explained by the following: the protagonist of Constantine's book is her mother Sonya, a self-conscious individual

telling her life-story. However, Kivi's protagonist Esther knows only some parts of her family history and is in search of her identity. This thesis focuses on the refugee journey in both works. The juxtaposition of these journeys and their renderings help us to better understand the diverse experiences of Estonian refugees. Moreover, each different story adds to the bigger tale.

To provide a theoretical backing for an analysis of the refugee experience in Constantine's and Kivi's works, the conceptual framework for the study of the refugee journey as developed by Gadi Benezer and Roger Zetter (2014) has been chosen. Their model embraces the refugee journey in its multiple manifestations and it is possible to combine with it the related concepts and approaches developed by other scholars. In their discussion of the scholarship on the refugee journey, Benezer and Zetter (2014: 297-298) suggest that such a significant topic merits more attention in refugee studies. They identify the conceptual challenges in researching the refugee journey, and refer to the kinetic model of Kunz (1973, 1981) which is "an early attempt to develop a conceptual framework of different modes, typologies, and timing of refugee movement that has a bearing on the exilic journey." However, it was never developed and therefore the meaning of the refugee journey has not received much attention from researchers (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 304-305).

Benezer and Zetter (2014: 299) argue with a reference to BenEzer that the experience of the refugee journey is not just a "transitory stage," but a significant period in a person's life that has an impact on the rest of the refugee's life. Refugee studies have focused rather on the reasons and consequences of fleeing homeland. Benezer and Zetter (2014: 299) claim that the importance of the journey itself has been overlooked by researchers, because they have not duly examined "what happens in between – the actual exilic process, the

medium that connects the two ends.” The beginning of the refugee journey already changes the identity of a person. It is the process of “‘becoming’ and ‘being’ a refugee” (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 299). Dam and Eyles (2012) have aptly described the nature of being a refugee. The person is like in an in-between state in the sense that one is no longer who he used to be and not yet who he will become. The exilic process shapes the future person, whereas the person himself has little or no control over the course of events.

According to Benezer and Zetter (2014: 302-303, emphasis original), it is an important research topic because “the journey is a *profoundly formative and transformative experience*” and the studies “*give voice* to the refugee/forced migrant /.../ which can challenge the competing voices that come from more socially powerful exogenous agents which may often discount or minimize the refugee experience.” Moreover, they suggest that in addition to biographical interviews, researches should consider “written accounts and autobiographies /.../ and even literary pieces based on actual journeys, representations in film/cinema, poetry and popular songs, plays, prose, paintings” (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 312). They find that all the genres reflecting on the refugee experience are significant and contribute to a better understanding of the refugee experience (Benezer and Zetter (2014: 312). Thus, the analysis of the refugee journey in the works of Constantine and Kivi draws on and contributes also to refugee studies in addition to literary studies.

Alongside with fundamentally changing a person’s sense of self, being a refugee may be a traumatic experience, as noted by Benezer and Zetter (2014: 301). This is exactly the case of the women in Constantine’s and Kivi’s works. Therefore, the thesis will also consider trauma in life-stories and analyse trauma in both works. To enable a further and context-specific analysis of the trauma in the primary sources of the thesis, the two articles by Kirss (2006b) in which she develops an approach to the Estonian refugee stories have

been chosen as another main source for the theoretical framework of the thesis. According to Kirss, the refugee story is closely related to cognition and the perception of identity, both individual and collective. Identity is based on the ties of relationships and values, and it keeps changing, shifting and developing in time throughout an individual's life. Thus, Kirss holds a similar view with Benezer and Zetter that although refugee journeys vary in their degree of difficulty, they still challenge the perception of one's identity. The discussion of refugee trauma and its impact on an individual and across generations also benefits from the work of Miriam George and Esther Rashkin respectively.

In order to analyse the process of cultural transition of the refugees as outlined by Benezer and Zetter (2014: 306) in greater detail, the theorising of Kirss, which includes also the issue of returning to Estonia (2006b), is combined with the studies by Vanessa Burholt (2016) and Nan M. Sussman (2000). Similarly, Sussman's and especially Alfred Hornung's research on East European refugees who immigrated to Canada serves as a basis for theorising the significance of the revisit as well as for an analysis of the event in Constantine's and Kivi's works.

The thesis aims to find answers to the following questions: Does the trauma of losing home affect the later lives of the women and how does it appear? Does the refugee journey influence their self-perception and how? What happens to their cultural identity: a) does it change or remain the same; b) do they assimilate or is it important for them to preserve it; c) how does their cultural transition appear?

The first chapter will provide the definitions and explanations for the central terms of the thesis. It will provide the theoretical framework for the analysis of the two primary sources. The second chapter discusses the refugee journey in the experience of the Estonian-Canadian women in K.Linda Kivi's *If Home Is A Place* and Crissa Constantine's

Banished from the Homeland. The opening sub-chapters discuss the main factors influencing the journey.

Leaving home, the loss of home in Estonia and the consequential trauma are regarded as the key aspects in the beginning of the refugee journey. Thereupon the thesis looks shortly at the routes of the refugee journeys. The following sub-chapters describe and analyse two more key aspects of the refugee journey, which include the death of the parents and the revisit of Estonia. The revisit is another important aspect of the refugee journey in ordering the self-narrative and the perception of the past. The author is looking at the aspects of the journey to detect the events that influence the formation of self-perception and cultural identity of the Estonian women and their descendants in Canada, and how the trauma of the refugee journey may appear years later or even be transmitted to a child born in the new country. The final sub-chapter discusses the cultural identity dynamics of the refugees of the two primary sources.

1 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF REFUGEE JOURNEY

The following subchapters will provide a conceptual framework for the current thesis. The concepts and approaches discussed in the chapter will provide a basis for the analysis of the two primary sources that share many similarities, but which are also very different in terms of the genre, structure of the works as well as specific aspects of refugee experience and accommodation to Canada. Yet it is exactly these differences that contribute to a better understanding of the experience and identity issues of Estonian refugees.

1.1 Refugee

Miriam George (2010: 379) concludes from the UNHCR (2006) documents that “refugees are persons who are forced to flee their home countries to escape serious human rights abuses and other causes of prolonged physical and emotional distress.” George (2010: 379) also refers to the Refugee determination system of the Canadian Council for Refugees and explains that “refugees are exposed to disasters, incidents of extreme trauma and ongoing physical, sexual and psychological oppressions.” These definitions provide a clear understanding that refugees do not leave their home countries voluntarily, but they escape. It is not possible for them to return safely and they remain in exile.

1.2 Exile and Home

In the context of the current thesis it is important to define the concepts of exile and home. According to Edward Said (2000: 181), exile means being “prevented from returning home.” Mayer (2015: 100) explains that “the word ‘exile’ is traditionally

associated with forced migration, displacement and estrangement. It refers to an involuntary geographical separation from one's home or homeland for economic or political reasons or a combination of both." Said (2000) has captured the essence of exile and explains the emotional dynamics that appear in literature about exile experience:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that its literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (Said 2000: 173-174)

In the context of the thesis we could consider "home" as the opposite of exile. The titles of the two primary sources also include the words "home" and "homeland." Many refugees probably contemplate the nature and location of home. This is also the case in *If Home Is A Place*, where already the title is posing the relevant question. It is interesting to note that the representative of the second generation in the story has the most difficulty with the concept of home and considering a place of her own. The issue and the reasons behind the identity problem of Esther will be addressed further in the thesis. It is very difficult to answer the question of what home is for a refugee. It seems that home, but also cultural identity is multifaceted and challenging concepts for refugees.

Chingyen Yang Mayer (2015: 94) talks about the "nostalgic yearning for her homeland, and the loneliness of an exile, but also celebrates the dynamic multiplicity of transnational identities and homelands." This occurs also in *Banished from the Homeland*. Sonya says several times that she is lonely. But she also seems to adapt to the lifestyle with George that includes some travelling and even moving, although inside Canada. In *If Home Is A Place* the topic of loneliness of an exile is not particularly addressed and this could be due to the fact that the family left Estonia together. Despite the problems they had, there was still the emotional support of a family member being close.

1.3 The Refugee Journey

The approach for researching refugee journey in the present thesis is based on the conceptual framework by Benezer and Zetter (2014). They distinguish seven levels of the refugee journey into exile. The journey may be viewed as “a conceptual construct; as a physical process; as a historical event; as a symbolic episode; as a metaphorical and material expression and representation of the exilic process; as the distinctive indicator of refugeehood; as a transformative experience involving immense personal and social upheaval.” (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 305) The thesis concentrates on the last dimension and looks at how the refugee experience influences the self-perception and cultural transition.

In their discussion of what needs to be studied to understand the experience of the refugee journey, Benezer and Zetter (2014: 305-312) formulate four areas of interest: 1) temporal characteristics; 2) drivers and destinations; 3) the process/content of the journey; 4) the characteristics of the wayfarers. For the purposes of providing the theoretical underpinnings for the present thesis and structuring the theoretical chapter, the first and the fourth domain have been chosen. In the following, the domains of temporal characteristics and the characteristics of the wayfarers are explicated. In the discussion of each domain, the key questions as pointed out by Benezer and Zetter (2014) are addressed. This is followed by an exploration of the aspects of the domain that are relevant for an analysis of the refugee experience in the works of Crissa Constantine and K. Linda Kivi. As for the domain of the temporal characteristics, these aspects include the start and the end of the journey. In the case of the wayfarers’ characteristics, the following aspects are considered:

gender, age, journey with and without close relatives or friends, individual and group journey, as well as the effect and meaning of the journey.

1.3.1 Wayfarers' Characteristics

In the discussion of the wayfarers' characteristics, the present thesis considers the following factors proposed by Benezer and Zetter (2014: 310 - 312): gender, age, journey with and without close relatives or friends, individual and group journey, as well as the effect and meaning of the journey. It appears from the literary works that the principal factors influencing the journey are gender and age, as well as whether refugees travel alone or with others. In the study of group journeys it is important to look at how people communicate with each other during the journey, how they perceive the events and the kind of meanings they assign to them (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 310).

It is necessary to consider the factors because depending on these different characteristics of the refugees, the corresponding experience of the refugee journey also varies. The purpose of the subchapters is to illustrate how these characteristics may influence the refugee journey experience. As a result of the discussion, we will have a better understanding of how different the perspectives on the refugee journey may be, especially among a family, which in the present thesis is relevant for the analysis of *If Home Is A Place*.

1.3.1.1 Gender

Every refugee journey and refugee experience is different and one possibility to analyse the topic is to distinguish two perspectives, female and male. In the current thesis it

is important to consider the gendered experience in addition to the individual experiences because we concentrate on the experience of women. Among other factors, e.g., geographical position, access to information and transportation, health and age, gender influences refugee journey to a great extent. When discussing the female perspective, Benezer and Zetter (2014: 310) highlight that the conditions of the refugee journey disturb the “social norms and roles” which causes the vulnerability of women.

Umut Erel (2016) discusses the European refugee crisis from the perspective of gendering the refugee experiences. Still, the main ideas may be considered in the analysis of the Second World War refugee experience as well. Erel (2016: para.7) distinguishes difference in the length of the distance that men and women tend to travel during the refugee journey, saying that the latter take up shorter routes than fellow male refugees. There may be three reasons for this. First, women who are mothers move together with their children and it makes their journey even more difficult as they are responsible not only for their own lives. Moreover, the younger the children, the harder it is to manage during the journey. Secondly, men have physical advantages of overcoming the difficulties or accidents that occur during the refugee journey (Erel 2016: para. 11). This in turn, leads us to the third reason that women are often more vulnerable, not only in the sense of physical strength, but they are threatened by “gender-based violence” (Erel 2016: para. 5). Simone de Beauvoir (1949: 28) claims that women have always been subordinate to men. Sexual desire as a biological need has not liberated women socially. On the contrary, men are superior in this relationship. It comes especially evident in the war-time situation. However, it is important to differentiate wartime sexual violence and sexuality in general (Nikolic-Ristanovic 1994). The soldiers are superior and it is sensed from their behaviour of how they often treated women with disrespect and used physical violence. Women

become the objects in the course of wounding the counterpart. Due to that negative power women became more vulnerable, both physically and emotionally and were forced to live in constant fear.

Vulnerability of women and sexual violence are serious topics when discussing the female refugee experience. These problems not only influence the refugee journey, but also the physical and mental health. It is also important to notice that the threat is present not only during the physical journey itself or in the presence of foreign soldiers, but the problems have occurred with military police and different refugee officers, i.e., any male feeling superior to a woman (Erel 2016: para. 15-16). The topic of wartime sexual violence against women has been researched more thoroughly by a number of authors (e.g., Kurvet-Käosaar 2003; Gerard and Pickering 2014) but the current thesis will not be looking more into it because the problem is not discussed in detail in the two primary sources.

1.3.1.2 Age

Another factor that influences the refugee journey and the refugee experience is age. King, Welch and Owens (2010) studied the refugee journey of Serbian refugees to Australia during the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s and they concluded that age influenced not only the refugee journey, but also the process of cultural transition. An interesting difference in viewpoints that became evident from their research showed that younger people concentrated rather on the new opportunities that would open up for them upon relocation, e.g., “prospect of beginning a new life and taking up new education and employment opportunities” (King, Welch and Owens 2010: 67), whereas the older people were more concerned about what they had to leave behind. The authors explain the difference by “more established financial, material, educational and employment assets”

the latter held (King, Welch and Owens 2010: 67). However, the young did report continuous grief of losing their homeland (King, Welch and Owens 2010: 67).

It has been a challenge for researchers to understand how children perceive the refugee experience. Dam and Eyles (2012) conducted a study about the Vietnamese refugees and their journey to Canada. Their conclusion from the interviews confirmed also that the refugee experience depends on the age of a person. The study revealed that the children and younger refugees appeared less worried about the life in refugee camps because when recalling their experience they “expressed a sense of adventure; a feeling that may not have been shared by others in the same situation.” (Dam and Eyles (2012: 14). And indeed, their thoughts are in contrast with the memories of the older people who rather sensed a feeling of imprisonment while living in the DP camps, which eventually had an influence both on their mental health and perception of their self/identity (Dam and Eyles (2012: 14-15).

Venken and Röger (2015) have explored the topic of the Second World War and childhood. Their article points out that “not all of these children had developed capacities to understand the experiences they faced” (Venken and Röger 2015: 203). They describe the perspective of children as follows:

Children not only experience situations differently than adults, they often also face other horizons of experience. Young children are less politically informed and, as a result, do not understand or share the enemy category of adults. They also tend to treat separation from their parents more seriously than adults, and the importance of strong emotions such as fear and mourning is often only comprehensible to them through their interpretation of the way adults articulate similar feelings. (Venken and Röger 2015: 204)

Their explanation supports the idea by Dam and Eyles (2012) that children perceive the war-time events differently than adults. This, in turn, allows us to assume that refugee experience at times might not be as difficult for children only because they do not comprehend all the seriousness of the situation. However, the assumption becomes

questionable when considering Wylegala (2015: 298), who claims that although the situation was difficult for adults as well, they at least “were able to rationalise and justify it,” the categories in which children are not capable of thinking.

In her research Wylegala (2015) concentrated on the differences between the memories of children and adults about their refugee experience from Poland and Ukraine. The study concludes that children did not completely comprehend the political situation and reality. At times it probably created confusion for them (Wylegala 2015: 296). However, unlike the other mentioned authors, Wylegala (2015: 296-297) claims that children perceive “the resettlement process itself as something much more oppressive than how their parents perceived it. They remember long journeys, often in the middle of winter, difficult conditions on the train, and the brutality of Polish soldiers.” The same may be noticed in *If Home Is A Place* in the chapters narrated by Helgi. Her perspective of the events offers a rather detailed description about the train-ride to Berlin (Kivi 1995: 109-116), as well as the soldiers of the Red Army and the German soldiers, and how they behaved in her presence in comparison to her elder sister Sofi (Kivi 1995: 77). On the other hand, Wylegala (2015: 299) says that adaption in the new environment is easier for children as they tend to experience rather nostalgia than painful grief of losing home and homeland compared to adults.

As it was briefly mentioned earlier, King, Welch and Owens (2010: 67-68) studied the lives of the refugees in the host country as well and concluded that age also determines how refugees adapt to a new society. The first factor influencing the success of adaption is proficiency in the new language. The study about the Serbian refugees revealed that acquiring a new language was more challenging for older people and they tended to learn only basic skills while learning and becoming fluent in a foreign language required less

effort from younger people. However, knowledge of the local language determines future opportunities for refugees in education and labour market. (King, Welch and Owens 2010: 67-68). These findings suggest that age not only influences the refugee journey but also the cultural transition process. Moreover, based on the previous findings we may conclude that the same factors that influence the refugee journey experience have an impact on the cultural transition process as well.

1.3.1.3 Journey with and without Close Relatives or Friends

Benezer and Zetter (2014: 311) suggest that scholars compare the refugee experiences that are “undertaken with or without close relatives.” It is also relevant in the current thesis because *Banished from the Homeland* describes the journey of a young woman mostly travelling alone and *If Home Is A Place* looks at the refugee experience of the family. According to Benezer and Zetter (2014: 311) these journeys “may differ significantly in the levels of social support for the individual, resources for management of various situations, including life threatening ones, the ethical dilemmas and harsh decisions to be taken.” At times it might be easier to manage and travel alone, yet in other situations the presence or support of another person would be helpful.

Serious health problems that occur during the journey may lead to difficult decisions when travelling with friends or family. It might happen that somebody has to be left behind or even buried in the foreign ground. Furthermore, these experiences may have a rather strong influence on the future family dynamics.

1.3.1.4 Individual and Group Journey

Another possible perspective for analysing the refugee journey experience is to look at “how the experience of the individual becomes part of a group experience.” (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 311). This way the journey experience remains partly individual and partly shared with the group. It would be interesting to analyse how the individual and group experience influence the perception of self and each other, the group as a whole and also the meaning of events. Furthermore, Benezer and Zetter (2014: 311) refer to Benezer (2002, 180-194, 2007) and extend the possible research area to exploring “what kinds of stories and explanations emerge in such instances./.../When do stories of the journey become a group myth? What are the processes involved in the creation of such myths? What happens to the “silenced voices” and the alternative stories within such group myths?”

1.3.1.4.1 Stories and Silences

When we analyse the content of the refugee life-writing we should bear in mind that telling one’s story is also connected to creating an identity. In other words, by writing down one’s story we influence how others will perceive us. It is also an act of arranging the memories. While it depends on the experience, one can choose whether to tell it as a personal success story and imply that despite all the hardships and difficult conditions the person made it through the difficult times, survived and started over quite successfully. Or there is the option of documenting the events and focusing more on the tragic. In the success stories there is the possibility that something could be omitted from the narrative. There can be three reasons for that. Firstly, people do not want to include certain details that are too personal, delicate, or connected to privacy of someone else. Secondly, it could

be too hurtful or even shameful to memorise the details for the story. This is, for example, connected with the war-time violence against women. Finally, there were also the topics that the Estonian community did not approve to be published in the memoirs of Estonian-Canadians. These included problems with alcohol, family issues, violence, psychological problems, and depression. However, there is the possibility that the author was lucky enough not to witness the worst horrors of the refugee journey.

When we look at the two main sources of the thesis, *Banished from the Homeland* could be categorised as a success story. At times we may sense the sub-text that despite all that had happened, a single young woman who was alone most of the time during her journey, overcame courageously all the problems. It is important to emphasise that by this comment the author of the thesis is not trying to cast doubt on the truthfulness of the story by any means. But as Kirss (2006b: 638) argues, by memorising and retelling, which continuously arranges and finds meaning in the experience, the feelings of the time and subsequent perception of the situation are inevitably blending. The passing of time and filter of writing also influences the assessment of one's actions and behaviour. On the other hand, in this context it is also important to mention that the success story was not only the preferable form of the local Estonian community. It was also a demand of the Canadian general public. The local press presented the new immigrants as productive and hard-working citizens who adjust smoothly. (Kirss 2006b: 642) However, Kirss (2006b: 642) concludes that both the success stories and the opposite experiences are important. The former are supportive on the individual and community level while the latter help us to understand the experience more thoroughly.

If Home Is A Place is a story with a different prevailing mood. There is somewhat more human tragedy as the chapters about the refugee journey describe the poor and

hopeless conditions of the refugee camps, the hunger and the despair. We also see the eventual falling apart of the family in Germany despite all their efforts during the war-time.

In both of the stories there are some situations that are not discussed at all or mentioned only very briefly. Certainly, all authors choose the material for their work and leave something out. The missing material could be conditionally referred to as silences in the frames of the current thesis. In life-writing, sometimes silences or gaps in a text may speak more than it first seems or what the text says. Mostly there is a reason why something is not addressed or discussed, as was mentioned above. The two primary sources are based on the memories of the people and we may only assume why some parts of their experience have been excluded or they do not receive much attention in the texts. What concerns writing about traumatic events, then Tiina Kirss has commented on it as “a delicate balance between remembering and the need of forgetting” (Kirss 2002: 1874). However, as Tamm (2013: 20) claims, to implicitly consider everything that has not been addressed in a text as unpleasant to remember would be arbitrary. Such a presumption might inadvertently tilt the interpretation of the narrative. Therefore, when analysing written stories about refugee experiences, one should not over interpret the text and rather focus on the material that is presented.

1.3.1.5 Effect and Meaning of Journey

Another area for research that Benezer and Zetter (2014: 311) propose is the effect and meaning of the refugee journey for an individual. In the context of the present thesis, “the pain of separation and the disintegration of families, and the sense of mourning and loss” (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 312) are important to consider. The refugee journeys are

often traumatic experiences and causing psychological traumas for people. These traumas influence the further lives as well as shape the identity (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 312).

The retrospective construction of the refugee experience carry the tone of suffering, loss and trauma. But the stories may also entail the sense of achievement, overcoming the challenges, and bravery, referring that the escape required their “active rather than passive stance and the resourcefulness, motivation and commitment”. The latter are characteristics of a success story. (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 304; 312). Therefore, the tone or voice of the story also depends on the approach that the storyteller chooses.

Among the effects and meaning of the refugee journey the thesis discusses the influence of the experience on the formation of self-concept and cultural identity dynamics of the characters in the two primary sources. The key aspects that influence the journey also have an impact on the later lives of the women.

1.3.1.5.1 Trauma of Refugee Journey and Its Appearance in the Text

Trauma theory seems to be the most productive approach to further analyse the impact of the refugee journey appearing later in life. As the thesis discusses the experience of the Estonian refugees, the approach of Tiina Kirss will be considered first. She has studied the life-stories of Estonian refugees and has developed a theory that can be applied to the current thesis. Her theory is relevant for the analysis of the primary sources because it has been developed from the analysis of the similar stories.

Kirss (2006b: 616) states that because of traumatic events, the refugee journey and being a refugee was quite shocking for many people. It might seem that arriving in a new country should lessen the stress to a great extent because first, people are safe, there is no more escaping or threat. Secondly, they are to expect some kind of stability in their lives

again, especially what concerns food and shelter. However, this might not be the case. Psychologically, depending on their refugee journey, they might need to deal with the consequences of the events that took place during their journey. As Kirss (2006b: 616) suggests, people would have needed time and peace to overcome the shock and manage psychologically, but it was not possible during the journey. There was no time for it because they had to focus on survival. Therefore, some of the consequences of trauma may appear later in life. Moreover, “the farther consequences of trauma began to appear when being without homeland was acknowledged as an irreversible situation” (Kirss 2002: 1872). This is also happening in *If Home Is A Place* and *Banished from the Homeland*. These issues vary definitely by person, but the one trauma all refugees are forced to face is the loss of home. Home is usually the basis for the sense of security.

George (2010: 379) defines refugee trauma “as a consequence of multiple historical, social and political constraints which are embedded in the personal experiences of the refugees.” In addition, she states that “the effects of trauma on refugees are long-lasting, both physically and mentally” (George 2010: 379). According to the definition, we can infer that the refugee journey of the Estonians during the Second World War is a traumatic experience. One of the aims of the thesis is to find out whether and to what extent the trauma affected their later lives and identity formation in Canada. In order to do so the refugee journey will be thoroughly explored in the empirical chapter of the thesis.

Kirss (2002: 1871) also points out in her article that “the events which took place in September 1944, how Estonians fled their home country and the consequences on both individual and collective level could be conditionally connected with the definition of trauma.” It is a psychologically difficult experience and the consequences of which do not disappear but sometimes emerge somewhat mysteriously and even unexpectedly. She finds

that “such a framework helps to explain the logic of remembering and recalling the traumatic events”. (Kirss 2002: 1871) The refugee journey was a dreadful experience for many of those who fled, although the reasons for this may vary in different stories. Kirss (2002: 1872) brings out that the “central image or figure of refugee stories is the image of a boat on a stormy sea”. And it makes sense because first, due to the geographical position of Estonia it was the fastest way to leave. Secondly, it was the way by which most of the people fled. Thirdly, it was one of the few moments during the refugee journey when people could think about the events, being between two countries and maybe sensing more deeply the experience of escaping. The importance of the image may be also seen in the two primary sources of the thesis. In both books the boat trips from Europe to Canada are described in the length of a full chapter. When an event receives more narrative time in a text, it is a sign that the moment is important for the character. Therefore the episodes of the boat trips in the two primary sources are discussed and their importance is analysed in a separate subchapter. Whether it was the boat from Estonia to Latvia or Poland, or from Germany to Canada, the time spent on a boat could be described as an in-between moment, in the sense that the people were between their past and future, between the old and the new.

Kirss (2002: 1872) also briefly considers the titles of the refugee novels and says that these interpret the fleeing as a tragic loss resulting from injustice, as a double trauma, which consists of the hardships of the refugee journey and the loss of homeland in general. Interestingly, this may also be noted for the titles of the primary sources - *Banished from the Homeland* and *If Home Is A Place*. What is common about them, as was brought out above, is that they both include the word *home*, but also in a sense of not having it. The

former gives a strong notion about being forced to leave one's home and the latter speaks about searching for something to call home. They both refer to the trauma of losing home.

A very important idea that Kirss (2002: 1874) emphasises about trauma is that the sign of it is not only carried by the writer, reader and the relationship between them, but also the text itself. She claims that besides the specific content and going into exile, trauma theory allows us to address the deeper structure of the texts and the hidden symbols (for example, leaving, boat at a stormy sea). This is evident in the primary sources of the thesis as well. The closer analysis of the refugee journey and its key aspects to reveal several personal traumas or traumatic events, as well as how the influence of these events may appear later in life will be analysed in the second chapter of the thesis. Additionally, we see how the traumas influence the formation of the self-perception and cultural identities of the women in Kivi's and Constantine's works.

In both of the books some of the episodes that describe being at home are simple descriptions of the atmosphere and still life. It is interesting to notice the details and specifics there, for example, of the colour of a blanket or an arm-chair, the way the sun rays fall on the floor from the window, which sound the wooden floor makes when a certain family member moves around the house, how the plum and apple trees form monster-like shadows in the garden, and of course, several descriptions of the breathtaking nature and the smell of blooming lilacs. What makes these extracts especially remarkable is that we know that these are late childhood memories of the people who told their memories half a century later for publishing the stories and still they are described in such vivid detail and so realistically as if one was describing the surroundings in the present moment. Yet the detailed descriptions indicate that these moments were very important for the characters and the moments became more valuable when they realised that they would

not be able to return to these places. Among the aspects of trauma Kirss (2002: 1874) brings out the nostalgic representation of homeland, descriptions of which are often sentimental and attempting to capture realistic accuracy. She also notes that the fairness of the homeland image is inversely related to the time one has been away from one's country. The episodes in the books speak about the feeling of safety and home. Looking back at these moments probably intensifies the pain and sorrow of the loss, and creates the exact nostalgia Kirss (2002: 1874) refers to. It is difficult to miss something one has never had or imagined, but it is possible to mourn the loss of something very dear for decades.

1.3.1.5.1.1 Transmission of Trauma

There have been conducted several studies about the possibilities of transmitting trauma from a parent to a child. Esther Rashkin (1999: 434) has discussed the topic and calls the phenomenon “the theory of phantom – a psychic constellation that can be produced in response to specific private, intra-familial traumas, but can also manifest itself in response to forms of public trauma associated with societal or group persecution.” It means that a parent who has experienced something overwhelming, disturbing or shocking and conceals it, may transmit the emotional consequence of the experience into to subconsciousness of his or her child. According to Rashkin (1999: 435), it usually happens “through a cryptic language and behaviour.” It may also form an invisible connection between the parent and the child, and hinder the otherwise normal independence of the descendant. A transmitted trauma usually reveals itself in the behaviour of the child. However, the child is not aware of the phantom, as long as the parent keeps the secret. (Rashkin 1999: 437). The topic is relevant for the thesis because we may see the traces of it in *If Home Is A Place* in the mother-daughter relationship between Sofi and Esther.

1.3.2 Temporal Characteristics

In the discussion about the temporal characteristics of the refugee journey Benezer and Zetter (2014: 305) present a very important question: “Is the journey a time-limited and finite event?” Furthermore, do the journey in time and the journey in mind take place concurrently? They claim that “how researchers, and refugees construct and understand these components and what they include, will reveal potentially significant insights into the physical, symbolic and mental representation of the journey.” Benezer and Zetter (2014: 305). Their thought proposes that the refugee journey in the mind of a refugee begins earlier than the actual physical departure takes place. Therefore, the first important task in researching the refugee journey is to define the beginning of it. The second key aspect is defining the end of the refugee journey and how refugees see it themselves.

1.3.2.1 Start of Journey

In the discussion about the beginning of the journey it is also important to define the reasons for departure as it influences the way the person perceives the journey and it also influences the self-perception. For example, when forced to flee homeland, it means to be uprooted, torn away from your roots and it is caused by foreign, most often violent invasion. Everything that has been is changed completely in a short period of time. It has a strong influence on the self-perception that might reveal itself later when it is realised that it will be impossible to return in the near future. The empirical part will discuss the respective reasons in the two primary sources.

The present thesis takes the position, that when looking at the construction, i.e. the retrospective telling of the refugee story, we see that the refugee journey does not begin

with boarding the ship but with preparing for the departure. According to Benezer and Zetter (2014: 305), the “anticipation of events” as well as “making actual preparations” already mark the beginning of the journey. This may include packing of the suitcase and choosing the relevant items (books, family photos, winter coats, etc), the consideration of possible hiding places of valuables that could be used as currency during the journey, taking suggestions from family members about surviving techniques in difficult situations. It also includes the preparations that are carried out thinking in advance about returning, for example hiding the household items that are left behind. Both of the examples are found in the primary sources of the thesis and will be discussed in the corresponding subchapters.

1.3.2.2. End of Journey

According to the approach of Kirss (2006b: 616) we could consider the refugee journey as a route that begins with leaving Estonia and ends with reaching Sweden or the refugee camp in Germany. However, she also introduces the concept of “*järelpõgenemine*” [after-escape], which could be a part of the refugee journey. In the context of the current thesis, the refugee journey will be considered as a longer continuum that does not end with “*järelpõgenemine*.” The tentative claim that it lasts until the restoration of Estonia’s independence, when the exile technically ended, as mentioned above, will be revised in the light of Benezer’s and Zetter’s reasoning, as it is a more suitable approach to consider the complexity of temporal aspect of the individual journeys in the experience of the refugee women in Kivi’s and Constantine’s works.

Benezer and Zetter (2014: 306) extend the notion of length of the refugee journey even further. They admit that although “the journey may end as a physical event at the

moment of arrival at the refugee camp or reception centre,” it is not always possible to identify the fixed end-point. The first location of arrival in the host country or refugee camp might turn into a temporary intermediate stop along the journey (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 306). They suggest that besides the “physical end, it is perhaps even more important to investigate how, and indeed when, the wayfarers construct the ending of the journey in their minds.” (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 306). There are several possibilities of how the completion of the journey could be seen. Besides personal matters, it depends on the external factors such as initial reception and process of integration. It may be the sense of regaining security, resettling in the host country, sensing a certain level of integration or belonging to the new society, new identity formation, or financial independence (Benezer and Zetter 2014: 306).

The abovementioned factors indicate two important things. Firstly, that the journey of the mind often lasts longer than the physical journey itself. Secondly, therefore, the length of the refugee journey is different for every individual because the completion of the journey is based on different factors. According to Benezer and Zetter (2014: 305) “all these experiences stretch the journey in time, beyond its spatial temporal dimension.” Furthermore, for some refugees there might be borders or transitional phases that exist only in their minds and do not coincide with the physical space of journey. Benzer and Zetter (2014: 306) explain the situation as follows: “In the ‘imagination of the minds,’ there is less a point of arrival, but rather, a process of being ‘on the way to a destination.’” However, sometimes it might occur that despite the physical arrival, there is no ending of the mental process of the refugee journey.

1.3.2.2.1 Process of Integration: Cultural Identity and Cultural Transition

To further explicate the process of integration, the concepts of cultural identity and cultural transition will be incorporated into the discussion. Vanessa Burholt et al (2016) conducted a study about the integration of older migrants in the United Kingdom. They took “a social identity approach” to look at the connections “between cultural heritage, social class, social support network types, transnational family relationships and “cultural identity”” (Burholt et al 2016: 57). In their research they used the following definitions: “Cultural identity is an umbrella term for three identity measures: a migrant’s sense of belonging to (1) an ethnic group, (2) the family’s country of origin and (3) the country of residence, in this case the UK” (Burholt et al 2016: 57). In their study they refer to them respectively as “ethnic identity, cultural identity with the family’s country of origin, and British identity.” They used the term “cultural identity” in general discussion about identity. The current thesis adopts the classification of terms and their definitions when analysing the identity issues of the Estonian refugees of the two primary sources. When we talk about ethnic identity, it refers their sense of belonging to the ethnic group of Estonians. Cultural identity stands for the homeland Estonia, the cultural heritage and traditions, and their country of residence is Canada.

Sussman (2000: 358) has also discussed the matter and claims that “cultural identity, often conceptualised as coterminus with national identity (i.e., thinking of oneself as American or Japanese or Italian), more accurately can be considered the psychological counterpoint to national identity - the identity that describes the cultural self in content, evaluation, and structure.” He indicates the following in his discussion about the influence of a new culture on the native or home culture of refugees:

Cultural transitions for the traditional immigrant, who has a few or infrequent contacts with country of origin, transform one cultural identity (e.g., Irish) into a new one (e.g., Canadian or Irish Canadian).

Alternatively, sustained contact with the new culture may result in strengthening home (or native) culture identity, resulting in a separated or marginal identity relative to the dominant culture. In turn, each of these psychological responses is linked to attitudinal and behavioural changes. (Sussman (2000: 359))

In the light of the above theory, the current thesis will analyse the characters of the primary sources and tries to identify whether and how their home/native culture identity is affected.

1.3.2.2.2 Sense of Belonging: Self-Perception and Membership in Estonian

Community

One part of identity in general is self-perception. In his article Sussman (2000: 357-358) refers that “people hold multiple beliefs about themselves – that is, many self-schemas. Those self-schemas include personal attributes about the self (e.g., traits, characteristics, dispositions) and thoughts about membership in social groups such as those formed around gender, ethnicity, social class, religion, and culture.” According to Henri Tajfel (1981: 255) “the social or collective self is an aspect of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.” It means that the self-perception of a person shows to which social or cultural group he or she belongs.

When discussing the membership in social groups, then we can talk about a strong Estonian community in Canada. It seems that the basis of the community feeling was the idea of free Estonia and standing for it even though the people were far away from their homes. Some of them could not return for almost half a century but it did not mean that they would have turned their backs to their country of origin. On the contrary, they stood for their country and organised gatherings and protest so that the world would not forget

that there is a small country under the unjust occupation of the Soviet Union. It was very important for most of them to keep alive the language, customs and traditions in exile, as well as to give education to children in their mother tongue. Some of them believed that the only way to preserve language and culture was in exile; in a community consisting of fellow compatriots. In doing so they did not lose the hope of Estonia regaining independence decade after decade. Moreover, it is important not to underestimate their effort. Certainly, all the people who fled to Canada did not belong among the activists, and naturally, some were more enthusiastic than the others to take part in the organised events. In the same way, keeping one's cultural identity is more important for some people than the others. (Kirss 2016: 263)

When analysing the interviews that were conducted with the Estonian-Canadians and looking at whether they consider themselves Estonian, Kirss (2006b: 667) concludes that it would have been even strange to ask the question from the representatives of the older generation, e.g., people born before 1922. For them the answer was self-evident. In the primary sources we have three women representing the same category by age: Sonya, Maria and Sofi. For the people who were born before the fleeing and during the refugee journey were children or in their teens, it was already slightly more complicated to choose and maintain the Estonian identity. It often included a personal internal search, as well as an intentional revisit to Estonia to seek for the roots and the vaguely remembered past. (Kirss 2006b: 667) Helgi in *If Home Is A Place* belongs to this group from the primary sources of the thesis. The third group consists of the people who were born in Canada. For them the choice of (foreign)Estonian identity was more of a process that required years of contemplation, internal monologues and journeys to Estonia. The restoration of independence in Estonia was identified as an event that played quite an extensive role in

the process. (Kirss 2006b: 668) In *If Home Is A Place* we see Esther going through the same experience when determining her identity. In *Banished from the Homeland* the identity question of Karin is not addressed. She meets her relatives both from Greece and Estonia, and speaks fondly especially of the latter, but we do not know how she perceives herself.

An interesting comment that Kirss (2006b: 669) brings out from an interviews, states that the prevailing attitude of the Estonian community in Canada was that Estonians are Europeans, a nation of culture, but the North-Americans, including the Canadians, are not. We may sense national pride and even irreverence in the described attitude, but the very same belief could have been the basis for maintaining the strong Estonian identity in the community for decades and instill confidence. We may look at the Estonian community as a small society and it was important that all the members would manage in the new country.

1.3.2.2.3 Revisit

As the thesis explores the refugee journey and considers the restoration of independence as an important part of the refugee journey experience, it also analyses the revisit of Estonia and the possible influence it has on the self-perception of the women. In her discussion of the issue of returning to Estonia in the life-stories of Estonian refugees, Kirss (2006b) concludes that the impact of the visit may vary rather widely. Firstly, because it was an emotionally intense experience for quite many people as the Estonia in their imagination and memories was quite different from the reality that they met in the 1990s. Secondly, the re-visit might have torn apart some old emotional wounds and personal issues that the individual had made peace with. Thirdly, and partly in connection

to the two previous points, the re-visit forced the individual to re-consider and re-evaluate the events of the past on several occasions. All of the mentioned aspects and their examples may be also found in both of the primary sources of the thesis.

Sussman (2000: 365) claims that the change in cultural identity becomes evident mostly during repatriation. Although the characters of the primary sources do not repatriate, but only revisit Estonia, the thesis may still consider the theory. The revisit is also a longer direct contact with the homeland and home Estonians. His claim supports the relevance of the research question raised by the author of the thesis, that the revisit to Estonia might have affected the self-perception and cultural identity (re)formation of the characters. The corresponding sub-chapter also analyses how and why the revisits provoked the rethinking of past, the self, and perception of the past events.

Among other scholars, Alfred Hornung (2013) has also studied biographies of East European refugees who immigrated to Canada. The emphasis of the study was on returning to homeland after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Hornung (2013: 2) claims that “cultural negotiation of a self between a country of familial origin and a country of residence contributes to the formation of a transcultural self and prefigures a transnational affiliation.” According to him, the revisit has an essential role in the self-perception of a refugee who has been in exile in Canada almost for fifty years: “The final stage to complete the picture for the self-narrative is a return trip to the place of origin in Eastern Europe, undertaken in the 1990s”. Moreover, one of the stories he has chosen discusses the identity question of the refugee children as well. They are born in Canada but resulting from their parents’ tales also sense their connection to another land.

Visiting Estonia at the period was a rather questionable act for several reasons. First, there was the fear of the Soviet horrors. Estonians had fled from the repressions. People

had witnessed the deportations and executions of innocent people. These experiences were deeply traumatic and they did not want to return to the sites. People were also afraid of the spies and what might happen to them or their relatives living in Estonia.

Secondly, Estonians in Canada were sceptic about the changes in the political situation. Thirdly, when it became possible to travel to Estonia, the people who went there were sometimes associated with Communists by the fellow Estonians in Canada. And finally, the reason could have been simply emotional or even a sense of guilt in some cases. When considering the perspective of the home-Estonians, we can see how the situation might have created some misunderstanding about why the Estonians who fled did not want to return or hesitated before coming. For home-Estonians it could have seemed that being in exile was a less difficult experience to bear.

2 REFUGEE JOURNEY EXPERIENCE OF THE ESTONIAN WOMEN: K.LINDA KIVI'S *IF HOME IS A PLACE* AND CRISSA CONSTANTINE'S *BANISHED FROM THE HOMELAND*

By the second half of 1944 the situation in Estonia had become rather tense – the German troops were retreating and the Soviet troops were invading again. Shifting national borders and a difficult geopolitical situation began to have an impact on the peaceful everyday life. During the Second World War, many Estonians fled their homeland and later on a significant number of them immigrated to Canada. Further knowledge of the refugee journey of Estonians is important in order to understand their adaptation, development of their identity and destiny in Canada, because they are influenced by the experiences of the journey. Kirss (2006b) who has researched the experience of the refugees emphasises that identity is not a product but an outcome of an ongoing process. The journey of a refugee has an important place in Estonian-Canadian literature and therefore it requires a closer examination.

The chapter outlines three main factors that influenced the refugee journey: gender, age, and family relationships. However, in the situation of uncertainty, there was more left to chance than ever. This includes circumstances beyond the control of the individual as well as coincidences, such as e.g., being the last to cross a bridge before it was blown up. These might have both positive and negative results. In the primary sources we see that the women sometimes associate some events or their “lucky escapes” with fate.

The chapter compares and analyses two refugee journeys as possible routes. These journeys have been chosen from two different books – K. Linda Kivi's novel *If Home Is a Place* and Crissa Constantine's fictionalized biography of her mother *Banished from the Homeland*. In order to analyse the refugee journeys of the Estonian women in both works,

it is necessary to understand their reasons for departure and look at the factors that influenced their decision to leave.

The chapter looks at how the routes, as well as the key aspects and the problems that emerged are depicted. Additionally, it will deal with the aspects that affect the choices of the refugees and the direction of their movement – whether and how many options they had. For the women chosen for a closer analysis, the refugee journey began already when they realised that they had to escape, long before they stood for the last time at their doorstep, not only with leaving Estonia. Building a new life and identity is in one way or another, directly or indirectly influenced by their experience of the refugee journey. Refugee journey is difficult for everybody, but there may be some aspects that besides human actions influence the experience.

2.1 Journey: Key Influencing Factors

2.1.1 Gender

Refugee journey is difficult for everybody, irrespective of the gender of a person. However, in the light of the two primary sources of the thesis we can discuss how gender influenced the journey of refugees.

First, as was mentioned earlier, the situation for women, especially young women, was unsafe. Besides the war there was the threat of Russian soldiers abusing women sexually. Secondly, the women who were mothers had to protect and take care of their children, which in a war situation is not easy. Pregnant women were trying to keep their unborn babies in those circumstances. In this sense women are both emotionally and physically more vulnerable in a war situation. Two of the women, Sonya in Constantine's biography and Maria in Kivi's novel, were both married and therefore a question may arise

why they had to manage and escape alone. Adam, the husband of Sonya, had left the country alone in secret after deserting the German army. By doing so he was hoping to be united with his wife in the future. For Sonya, it was a factor to leave the country, as her husband was no longer there to protect her and it left her devastated. The uncertainty and insecure situation were both strongly influencing her decision. Furthermore, leaving Estonia was suggested, not to say ordered by her parents.

The husband of Maria, drafted into the German army, had to choose at one point between escaping Estonia or going hiding to the woods and continuing to fight from there. As we learn from his letter to the family he chose to flee on a boat to Danzig in order to find a new home for his family. It was more secure for Maria and her children to stay with the hospital than to be on their own in the chaos of the war, all the more so as they were parted from their husband and father. From their family story it may be concluded that he as a man had two options to choose from: to fight for his home country as long as possible or to try protect and take care of his family. As the latter was no longer possible in Estonia, he tried to direct and manage their journey as much as possible and keep contact with them via post from Germany, hoping that he is regarded too old to be forced to continue to serve in the German army. Therefore, the reason why the women were left alone was not that the men had escaped or did not fulfill their responsibility of protecting their families, but instead they were doing the best that they could in the given circumstances. Often it meant forced parting from the family and as a result, women eventually found themselves alone in the turmoil of the war.

As it has been already pointed out, the main reason for women to leave was the matter of safety. Also, in a war situation women are always more vulnerable than men. The vulnerability is not only connected to the horrors of war, but there is another issue that has

remained rather a taboo topic - war-related sexual violence against women (Kurvet-Käosaar 2003: 313). Kirss (1999) has noted how male and female experience of war differs in “the sexual vulnerability of women, the fears attached to this and the resulting manipulation of women by those in power.” Historically, this kind of cruelty has been a part of warfare, means of humiliating and weakening the morality of the other side. The issue is touched upon in both of the primary sources of the thesis.

In *Banished from the Homeland* Sonya is sent away from Estonia by her parents because of the reports about the soldiers mistreating women sexually (Constantine 2000: 87). We may conclude that when the parents reached a decision that extreme, there must have been more than a few reports on the issue of violence, more than a few cases that were being talked about in the society, and therefore the threat was a serious matter. Another episode where the topic arises is when Sonya meets her friend Hilde in Germany. They exchange their experiences about escaping and Sonya describes a part of their dialogue as following: “She eventually told me that she fled Estonia in order to avoid being used as a sex slave by the Soviet soldiers. She also knew that many of our high school friends did the same thing, but she had no idea where they were now.” (Constantine 2000: 108) The information that Hilde shares with Sonya supports the fact that the threat of soldiers abusing women must have been widely spread or known in the society at the time. These are, however, the only two episodes where sexual violence against women is discussed in the book. In the article where Kirss (2006b) analyses the fleeing from Estonia in 1944 and the reasons behind it, the topic of fear of sexual violence against women is not mentioned. However, it could be one of the topics that people did not wish to address during the interviews and rather want to forget. It may also be that they had not come across the issue in their experience. The matter is not discussed in the further chapters in

Banished from the Homeland, nor addressed later in the book when Sonya looks back at her leaving.

In *If Home Is A Place* the topic arises in three episodes. First, in Ingolstadt, Germany when Maria and a Lithuanian woman have a conversation and the latter tells Maria that she is “lucky to have daughters” (Kivi 1995: 146). Maria answers as following: “Jah,.../ but what of the soldiers? So many bad things have happened to our girls here.” (Kivi 1995: 146) Her answer refers that women in the displaced persons (DP) camps in Germany were also not safe. Secondly, the issue appears again in Ingolstadt, when Sofi attends a Polish dance party and stays there after the curfew. All the girls from the hospital and everyone from the hospital where her mother Maria works, are gone and she is left alone wondering how she will get to the other side of the town without the military police (MP) catching her and putting her in a cell for the night. His dance partner offers to walk with her, but she refuses referring to the fact that if the MP sees a man with her they might shoot. However, she is unable to finish her next sentence about what they might do to her and she thinks to herself: “I can’t say what they’ll do to me. He’ll think I’m cheap” (Kivi 1995: 168). The last sentence is a proof that she was aware of something more horrible that might happen to her besides ending up in the cell. On her way she is caught by the MP on the street and she is ordered to step into the car. To her luck, one of the men is from Finland and after a short discussion they take her to the hospital safely. When she waves at the car, the guard of her hospital gets “an ugly gleam in his eyes as if he understands something that isn’t there to understand” (Kivi 1995: 171). We see Sofi looking back at the episode on her way to Canada during the boat trip. She is thinking about how things were left with her family and wonders about the life in the New World. Here the reader also learns about another “close call” she has not told her parents about. She describes the episode as follows:

The soldier had already ripped my dress /.../ Kadri saved me that time, hit him on the head with the bloody sheet she was carrying, yelled at him in German until he let me go. I never went into the basement of the hospital in Tallinn again. Kept my eye on those soldiers. Some of them were so sweet, so nice. I told her right there and then, after I stopped crying, that if I ever have a daughter I'd name her after her. Yes, that's what I'll do. (Kivi 1995: 250-251).

Although Sofi managed to escape the situation with the help of her sister and the act itself remained an attempt, it is still a case of attack and violence directed against women. Her deep fear and relief at the same time are shown in her gratitude. One thing that is important to point out from this episode, is that it happened in Estonia. Therefore we could connect it with the reports that were discussed in *Banished from the Homeland*. Another important fact is that, contrary to the common belief that the Soviet soldiers were using sexual violence against women, this was a German soldier. Thirdly, as the incident took place in the hospital, it is rather evident that no place was safe for women in that matter.

Both of the women, Sofi even more closely, were threatened by the war-time physical violence targeted at women. The situation forced women into being inferior to men.

2.1.2 Age

We may argue that the refugee journey could be somewhat easier for young unmarried people and also for children at some points. During the journey children lose an important part of their childhood and the feeling of security, but depending on their age they might not experience, understand or later remember all the horrors of the war, and consequently, their personality and identity might be less affected by the events of the war. The loss of home could be a category that children, unlike adults, are not able to consider yet at the beginning of the refugee journey. Kirss (2006: 614) claims that those who left in their childhood or in early teens together with their parents could perceive several parts of

the refugee journey as full of discoveries or even as an adventure despite all the difficulties and poverty. Generally, the refugee journey is probably the hardest for the elderly. They have more to leave behind and it is more difficult for them to adjust in new situations. In the primary sources the women's ages differ, ranging from early teens, to early forties.

In *Banished from the Homeland*, Sonya is 23 years old when leaving Estonia. As it became impossible to return, she moved further on from Poland to Germany, and enrolled in two universities in order to secure her permit to stay in Munich as a refugee. Later it was possible for Sonya to apply to immigrate to Canada and she was offered a job as a nurse trainee at a Quebec City hospital on a condition to work for at least one year to pay back her travel costs to the government. (Constantine 2012: 116-126) Therefore, we may conclude that because of her age, she was able to enroll to universities and establish herself not only as a refugee but also as a student. Firstly, it gave her an opportunity to avoid the DP camps, which was her purpose throughout the journey. Secondly, due to her education she was offered a job in addition to the permit to immigrate to Canada. This way she was re-gaining at least some control of her life and refugee journey.

In *If Home Is a Place*, Maria is in her early forties when she leaves her family home after having buried some of their belongings in the garden, but unlike Sonya, she is a mother of three daughters and has to take care of two younger children – Sofi and Helgi, aged 16 and 13 respectively, during the journey. As Sonya left a few months earlier and saw it as a rather short journey at the time, Maria and her children left already in rather different circumstances. Before they escaped Estonia, they took refuge for a year in the house of Maria's mother-in-law in Rakvere and later stayed for a short time in the apartment of the eldest daughter Kadri in Tallinn. We may assume that because Maria is older than Sonya and has a family of her own, she is thinking more about the loss of home,

being reunited with her husband and returning than having a new beginning. Besides taking care of herself, she had to find food and clothes for her children, and keep them safe.

During the refugee journey in Germany Sofi comes of age and wishes to start making decisions about her own life. She is personally frustrated because of her youth passing by in depressing refugee camps and not being able to enjoy things appropriate to her age, like courtship, socialising, dance parties, etc. She is often dreaming about marriage and the kind of a man she would like to marry and start a family with, but is trapped by her current situation and facing the fact that in these circumstances those dreams might not be fulfilled and simply slip away with time.

Helgi is the youngest daughter in the family and we see her suffering from the loss of the sense of safety because of the war. Although she might not comprehend the situation completely at times, and some things are kept from her, the overall refugee experience still has an impact on her future identity. She is often sickly during the journey as a result of an earlier suffering from tuberculosis.

The attitudes of Sofi and Helgi differ greatly when it comes to their perception of the refugee journey. This becomes especially evident when we compare two episodes. While Helgi desperately wants to return home and she even wants to jump off the train together with her suitcase on their way to Berlin, Sofi sees the fulfillment of her dream upon arrival in Berlin, even if the war-torn city has lost some of its grandeur, partly real, partly imagined. Furthermore, we can see some misunderstanding between the sisters, especially on the part of Sofi, as she is reluctant to take care of Helgi when her mother and father ask her to help them. Sofi also thinks that Maria keeps treating Helgi too much as a child whereas she has to act more as an adult.

Therefore, relying on the previous discussion, we may say that there are no two identical refugee journeys. When we look at how the refugee journey influences the later lives of the refugees, we see that the same factors that influence the refugee journey experiences have an impact in turn on the shaping of the self-perception and cultural identity.

2.1.3 Family Relationships

When we look at the family relationships of Sonya, we see that she is very close with her parents and her brother and sister. When she leaves Estonia they part with deep sadness. It is the decision of her parents but everybody is of the opinion that it is the best solution. On her last morning in the family estate her brother gives her his words of wisdom to follow:

Listen to classical music when you feel that there is no more hope. It will give you strength and courage even when no one else is around to help you. I will write to you and Erna, and we will all meet here in the garden soon. We will dance and sing the day you both return. (Constantine 2000: 88)

Already the words of Albert gave Sonya some reassurance. After giving Sonya the six silver spoons which she could sell in case of serious need, her mother says:

“There is something else I want to give you.” She took me by the shoulders and looked straight into my eyes. “I will give you some of my psychic power. We will be connected through it, and I will sometimes appear in your dreams to warn you of danger. You will also have sudden premonitions that will help you make the right decisions in times of crisis.” I would feel waves of a special energy inundating my body. “Also, you will have the power to curse those who are cruel to you and you will have revenge against them.” (Constantine 2000: 89)

The existence of psychic power is not the topic of the thesis and therefore will not be analysed further. It also cannot be proven whether in case of their existence passing them on to another person is possible. Nonetheless, we see later in the story that believing in the words of her mother gave Sonya the courage and confidence she needed. Moreover, it may be concluded from her experience that she indeed felt a connection with the spirit of her mother and it helped her on several occasions. It is narrated that her mother appears in her

dreams when Sonya is in a difficult situation or before an important event or incident in her life. At other times we see her receiving advice from her mother in dreams to keep on fighting. A poignant example of a situation that describes Sonya feeling the presence of the spirit of her mother is when the problems with Elektra, her mother-in-law, reach a critical point and she has a dream about her mother handing over the shotgun of her father and urges her to fight for herself (Constantine 2000: 159). At that moment Sonya is rather weak physically and emotionally but her dream seems to give her the necessary strength and determination. Another wisdom that Sonya learned in youth from her mother and also uses later in life is the following suggestion: “When you think your soul is going to break into millions of pieces, start doing heavy manual labor and keep working until your whole body aches. Eventually, your despair will ease.” (Constantine 2000: 85-86). She practices the advice to a great extent when her future seems unstable in Canada. She spends most of her days doing gardening work around the house and it helps her through the hectic time (Constantine 2000: 192).

After leaving Estonia, Sonya is alone most of the time. She does not have any family members physically close and cannot communicate with them for years but she still feels their sympathy and closeness in heart. She has their advice and support that are emotionally valuable to her in difficult situations and it helps her through the hardships on her journey. Especially the character of her mother, their relationship and connection is emphasised several times as something that gives Sonya the courage and strength. She also listens to classical music whenever possible, especially before going to Canada. Her loneliness is relieved after creating a family of her own with George and giving birth to their daughter Karin. However, new and rather difficult problems arise from the relationship with her manipulating mother-in-law and these complicated family

relationships influence the lives of Sonya, George and Karin for several years. In dealing with these problems she again finds courage from thinking about her mother.

The family relationships of Sofi are also very close and unlike Sonya, Sofi leaves Estonia together with her family. The first differences between sisters occur already in the early stages of their refugee journey when Sofi starts showing signs of tiredness from constantly being asked to help taking care of Helgi, her younger sister. She feels that by doing this she is restricted from things more interesting at her age. It seems to her that everybody is pampering Helgi more than necessary. It upsets her at times and as a result, makes her act not very kindly towards her. Helgi, on the other hand, looks up to her older sister but also feels that “Sofi is so mean to me sometimes” (Kivi 1995: 109). Their father Juhan always stresses the importance of family in his letters and that they have to take care of each other. He also cautions Sofi every time to listen to their mother and obey the rules. Sofi is not careless about her family but she is more eager to make her own decisions.

The most serious fallout between the sisters is probably the episode when Helgi is ill and coughing again and therefore cannot go to work. Sofi asks her to look after the things she got from the American soldiers. When Sofi returns she discovers that Helgi has drunk the wine she wanted to share with her Polish boyfriend. She is very upset with Helgi and talks to her in a rather rude manner. When Helgi continues pretending to sleep, she shakes her vigorously and says: “You’re just a lazy, stupid, pampered baby. Why don’t you grow up and quit pretending? Why? Mamma isn’t here to rescue you, what are you going to do now? /.../ I hate you”(Kivi 1995: 190). The disappointment of Sofi is understandable but such harsh words and behaviour towards her little sister are rather hurtful.

While their stay in Germany, their mother Maria discusses the topic of Sofi. She is working in a sewing class and explains that she was late in the morning because Sofi and

her father were having another argument again. She describes the matter as follows: “The girl wants to go to Munich to a nursing school. Always wanting to go somewhere, wanting something that she can’t have” (Kivi 1995: 217). When we analyse the situation from the point of view of Juhan and Maria, we see that their claims about Sofi being selfish are rather well-reasoned. In May 1945 Juhan said that they have survived the war but they are not yet safe and therefore have to be careful (Kivi 1995: 172). He meant with this that they should obey the rules, follow the curfew and not draw any unnecessary attention with their actions or behaviour. The parents had done everything possible to keep the family together during their refugee journey, their father looking for a place where they could live and their mother worrying about the health of Helgi. At one point they need to move to another town as Helgi needs to be taken to a hospital because of her lungs. Otherwise they will not be able to immigrate further from Germany (Kivi 1995: 220). Maria is worried about the moving because Sofi has different plans for herself – she wants to marry her Polish boyfriend Peter. Her worry is understandable for the reader as well, because when Sofi discusses the topic of Helgi we never see her being worried about the health of her little sister, she rather sees it only as an obstacle in her life.

Sofi’s case is an example of a situation when the personal interests of an individual do not coincide with the ones of the family. The priorities for Sofi are her youth and personal life. And eventually, we see her choosing to continue the refugee journey alone because she thinks that with waiting for the rest of the family she would be wasting her life even longer. Her decision leads to such a serious quarrel with her parents that on the day of departure there is nothing left to be said at the harbour. Her leaving is difficult for the parents for two reasons. Firstly, the family will no longer be together. Secondly, they are worried how Sofi will manage alone as she is only eighteen years old. Soon after her

leaving their father dies and Maria is left alone in Germany with her youngest daughter Helgi. Later in the story we see that these events caused a great amount of guilt for Sofi which is the reason why she takes changes in her own family life rather seriously and they become problems for her. It is important to notice here that we never learn about the thoughts of Maria concerning these events. When she has become a grandmother, she shares her memories with her granddaughter Esther but these are only stories from her own childhood, her brother and their family. When Esther is wondering about her family history she mentions that they never talked about her grandfather Juhan or how he died (Kivi 1995: 225). We can assume that the loss was so tragic, even traumatic for Maria and therefore it was not discussed.

When we compare the relationship between siblings, we see that Sonya is very sad to part from her family and is worrying about her brother and sister, their whereabouts and safety during all the years they have no contact. At the same time Sofi is together with her family but seems to take her younger sister more as a burden on the refugee journey. Despite her attitude Helgi feels differently about Sofi. When she writes the letter to Sofi telling about the death of their father she adds to the end: "I wish you were here. You always know what to do better than I do" (Kivi 1995: 265). When looking at the Canadian years, we learn that Maria and Helgi are living together since their arrival and Sofi has a family and two daughters. However, Esther sometimes mentions that Sofi likes to be in control of all the family members. In comparison of the characters of Helgi and Sofi, the former is more modest and humble by her nature.

When analysing the text and her behaviour, it seems like Sofi did not appreciate the fact that their family was together and decided to move further alone. But Sonya who was alone most of the time thought often that if only she could discuss something with a family

member or someone would simply be there for her to support her. During one of those thoughts she says: “I couldn’t trust anyone else” (Constantine 2000: 177). The importance of family is something that Sofi also learns later in life after leaving and emphasises it to Esther when she is about to leave home. However, the lesson is not easy for Sofi.

In the analysis of K.Linda Kivi’s *If Home Is a Place* and Crissa Constantine’s *Banished from the Homeland* three factors were identified to influence the experience of refugee journey of the Estonian-Canadian women. From the analysis we saw that depending on their gender and age the women found themselves in a different situation, facing different issues, as well as different opportunities or choices to make. Each experience is individual, but every individual experience helps us to understand the refugee journey and its impact on identity on a broader scale.

2.2 Journey: Key Aspects

2.2.1 Start: Journey of Mind

In order to analyse the refugee journeys of the Estonian women in both works we should also understand their reasons for departure and look at the factors that influenced their decision to leave. The main reason for people to leave their home country was the outbreak of the Second World War and the invasion of the Soviet troops. In sub-chapter 2.2.2 we will look more closely at the departure of Sonya in *Banished from the Homeland* and Maria, Sofi and Helgi in *If Home Is a Place*.

By the late summer of 1944 Sonya had been recently married to a man named Adam, who already a month later unexpectedly deserted from the German army and fled to Finland to join the Finnish military. They had previously discussed the possibility of

another Soviet invasion and Adam assured to have plans for them to flee to Sweden. Therefore Sonya suddenly found herself in a rather difficult situation – she was left by her husband before the outbreak of the war. It is the turning point in her story. She felt betrayed, confused, and uncertain about her future. When the German troops were retreating and the Soviet ones rushed in, the situation in Estonia worsened. There were reports about Soviet soldiers sending young women to Siberia and elsewhere to work as sex slaves (Constantine 2000: 87). In order to keep her daughter safe, the mother of Sonya decides that it would be best for her daughter and daughter-in-law to leave the country for as long as the war is over. Furthermore, in the light of the events in her personal life, Sonya is described to see it as an opportunity to leave for a while and begin a new life upon their return. It may be concluded from *Banished from the Homeland* that they did not consider the worst to happen, as Sonya saw her leaving as “an adventure in a new environment” (Constantine 2000: 87). Therefore, in general, we can say that the primary reason for Sonya to leave was the matter of safety.

By the fall of 1944 Maria, Sofi, Helgi and their father have lived already a year together with their grandmother in Rakvere, which is further away from the Russian border than their own home. From there they leave for Tallinn to stay with the eldest sister Kadri who works at the hospital. During the bombing in October the apartment of Kadri is left in ruins together with many other buildings in Tallinn. Since the war has started, the only possibility for them to move further on is to evacuate together with the hospital. It may be concluded from the story that their father Juhan escaped with the Germans after fighting in Saaremaa in the hope of finding a new home for their family. When we read the descriptions of the situation on the streets of Tallinn and how Sofi and Helgi are looking for some drinking water after a day without food and water, we perceive the chaos they

are in and see that people are in shock. As the apartment of Kadri was their last option for shelter, they now have nowhere to live. They have lost their home. Therefore, we may say that the female characters of *If Home Is a Place* did not really have any other choice but to leave their home country because figuratively speaking, the ground under their feet was burning. Firstly, it was impossible for them to stay in Estonia as they had no place left anymore. And secondly, the situation was not safe to move around the country or return to their previous locations.

Therefore, in conclusion, we may say that despite some differences in their circumstances, the primary reason for all the four women to leave their home country in 1944 was the highly unsafe situation.

2.2.2 Start: Physical Journey

2.2.2.1 Sonya

Sonya begins her physical journey in the end of August in 1944 together with her sister-in-law Erna. They spend a night in Tallinn to be close to the harbour. The next day they leave Estonia on a German supply ship that occasionally transported some civilians from Tallinn to German-occupied Danzig in Poland. From there they took the train to Breslau to stay with the relatives of Erna. As the situation in Estonia worsened and the Soviets took complete control of the country, it was impossible to return in near future. Both women started working to keep their right to stay in Breslau. In the beginning of 1945 the Soviets were approaching Breslau and the residents were commanded to evacuate. A policeman who was the last to leave the town offered Sonya to take her with him and his wife. When they arrived at the Oder River, it seemed like Sonya was the last civilian to cross it as the bridge was blown up in order to avoid the Russian army from

advancing further. The policeman took her to the Görlitz train station from where she continued her journey to Chemnitz via Dresden with the help of Red Cross. In February the Allies started bombing Dresden and as Chemnitz was rather close the citizens spent “every evening from six to midnight in dark, deep hillside mine-shafts...”(Constantine 2000: 99). Sonya decides that she will try to get to Boden See and meet the friend of her sister Lara. A few weeks later she manages to leave for Ulm by a military train where the helpful officers dress her into a military coat and hat to disguise her as one of the staff. In Ulm she meets by chance a group of Armenian students who take her to another train station and she goes to Friedrichshafen. Sonya finds a job at a pharmacy in nearby town Weingarten and stays there for a while. In June 1946 she moves to Munich and enrolls in the Engineering School and the UNRRA University. In the university she meets several other Estonian refugees. In December they make a car trip to an Augsburg DP camp to see whether they could meet someone they know. Sonya is lucky to find her godmother and her sister. They exchange contacts and stay in touch also years later when the two women move to New York. In August 1948 Sonya decides to apply for a permit to immigrate to Canada.

2.2.2.2 Maria, Sofi and Helgi

For Maria, Sofi and Helgi, the refugee journey begins slightly earlier, as they flee their home in the fall of 1943. They lived closer to the Russian border and therefore had to move away from there. At night they bury the kitchenware in the garden to prevent it from being stolen and pack the necessary items and leave. For a year the family lives together with their grandmother in Rakvere and by October 1944 they have moved further on to Tallinn where the older sister Kadri works at the hospital. They survive the bombing of

Tallinn and evacuate to Leibau, in Latvia, together with the hospital by train. At the same time their father Juhan has arrived in Danzig, Germany and is at the SS transit camp. In November 1944 they leave for Germany by a boat at night and escape the attack of the Russian base on shore. In Danzig Kadri, the eldest daughter of Maria is taken to a hospital because she is pregnant but in pain, and the family continues the journey without her. In December Maria, Sofi and Helgi take the train from Danzig to Berlin. By March 1945 they have moved to an Ingolstadt hospital that used to be a school before and the women continue to work for the hospital. In July they relocate to Munich. By May 1946 they are living in a DP camp in Desching and they are reunited with their husband and father Juhan. Maria is attending the camp sewing school, Sofi works in the camp creche and Helgi is learning to keep the books in the office because of her poor health. In August 1947 the family has moved to the Estonian camp in Oldenburg and Helgi stays at a sanatorium because of her lungs. And in September Sofi decides to part from the family and immigrates further on to Canada alone. This is also the last episode in the book that documents the route of their refugee journey through the eyes of the family members. The very last chapter is the letter from Helgi to Sofi, sent in January 1948 from Oldenburg to Winnipeg. Helgi writes to let her sister know that their father has died. They have managed to reconnect with their sister Kadri, who lives and works in England, although in poor conditions. We also learn from the letter that Helgi and Maria are going to have their immigration interviews soon and if they pass they are going to Canada in spring. (Kivi 1995: 263-265) Their arrival is not discussed in the book, but from the chapters narrated by Esther we know that the mother and her two daughters were reunited in Canada and continued living in Winnipeg together.

2.2.3 Leaving Europe

By August 1948 the situation in Germany had changed for refugees and it was no longer possible to stay there. When we analyse the circumstances in which Sonya and Sofi left Europe there is a similarity in their situation. Together with their official permits to immigrate to Canada they both also received job offers. Sonya was assigned to work as a nurse trainee at a Quebec City hospital (Constantine 2000: 126) and Sofi at a hospital at Winnipeg (Kivi 1995: 249). Therefore their refugee journeys continue with already somewhat lesser uncertainty about their future. However, both of them had hesitations about accepting the offers but they decided to take them in hope for stability and better future perspectives.

But we can bring out an important differences in their positions as well. The decision to leave Germany was easier for Sonya than for Sofi. By September 1948 Sonya has been alone for quite some time and does not have to take anybody into account in her decisions and so nobody could consider her as selfish in her actions. She has the approval of her parents to leave from the very beginning of her journey. Sofi, on the other hand, becomes more restless while the family stays in Germany and her constant wish for independence culminates in September 1947. She decides to separate from her family for rather selfish reasons and leaves for Canada alone despite their pleas to wait for them as well. Therefore, one substantial difference in their departures for Canada lies in their relationship with their families. Psychologically, it puts Sonya in a better position as she knows her parents support her in making the necessary decisions, whereas Sofi leaves the family against their firm will and gets into conflict with her parents. It is only on board of the ship that she realises the ugliness of her words but it is the last time she sees her father. A rather strong influence of this episode is revealed in her life in Canada years later. For example, when

her grown-up daughter Esther wishes to move away from the family, Sofi strongly disapproves of it by reasoning: “When I was young, I wanted to have my own life too, I didn’t think of my family” (Kivi 1995: 158). And in addition to admitting her mistake, she makes a reference to her father by saying “People die when you go away, you know. We might not be here when you come back” (Kivi 1995: 159).

2.2.4 Boat Trip to Canada

It can be argued that after leaving Europe the refugee journey ends and there is no more escaping, and we could talk about re-settlement. But as leaving Europe was related to the continuing unstable political situation and fear, we can consider it part of the refugee journey (Kirss 2006b: 638-640). Kirss (2006b: 638-640) explains that fleeing from the war in 1944 was not finding an asylum; it was rather the beginning of a journey, the further course of which was mostly designated by acts of war. After having waited for the ending of war and hoping for the best solution for Estonia, many refugees decided to flee further to the West so that they would not get into the hands of the Soviet troops. As there was the fear that the political situation in Europe was still rather unstable, then their journey from Europe to Canada may be considered as part of the refugee journey in political and humane sense. Like Kirss (2006b: 640) refers, the fear itself and the basis for it, however, would need a further separate analysis.

Sonya and Sofi both travel to Canada by boat from Germany. In both of the stories the importance of the episode is connected to the narrative time that has been given to it because the experience is mediated quite in detail. The episode is important because the reader gets an insight into the thoughts of the characters, how they reason their choices, how they reflect on the situation, what kind of images, memories and thoughts arise. The

analysis of the figurative language allows us to see which images of memory are becoming more important. The trip could be described as an in-between moment; being between the presence of the two – the old and the new. We may say that the situation of being in a boat on the sea between the two continents gave the characters an opportunity to look back at their lives and refugee paths, and have a moment to think more thoroughly about the events from a short distance.

When Sonya is leaving the harbour of Bremerhaven and looks outside of her cabin window she remembers the “receding fairy skyline of Tallinn” (Constantine 2000: 127) and her eyes moisten. She feels optimistic about starting a new life in Canada but on the other hand leaving Germany brings also back her memories of leaving Estonia and her family years ago. Skyline of Tallinn seems to be one of memories of Estonia that has become important for Sonya during her refugee years. From the description of her first evening on the ocean liner we learn that she “dined on gourmet food while hearing a lot of French conversations around me and noticed an impeccably dressed middle-aged gentleman at a neighbouring table who turned his head in my direction frequently” (Constantine 2000: 127). The man joins with Sonya and introduces himself as Monsier Deneuve. He is a French lawyer and an economist who lives in Montreal. They have a conversation in German and when Sonya tells him she is from Estonia, he understands her situation as a refugee immediately. He occasionally provides news reports and commentaries about the postwar lives on the radio and has an interest in refugees. After hearing that Sonya is going to Quebec City he gives his address and assures that Sonya can contact him at any time and he will help her to move to Montreal, which is not as small and provincial as Quebec City. He asks Sonya to promise she will contact him once more before their parting from the ship. (Constantine 2000: 128-129)

Becoming acquainted with Monsier Deneuve is one of the important episodes of the boat trip and as well as the refugee journey of Sonya, because after her obligatory year in Quebec City she contacts the man, he helps her to move to Montreal and a chain of positive events follows from it.

Sofi leaves from Cuxhaven to Canada a year earlier than Sonya, in September in 1947 among the first people who immigrated to Canada at the period. They travel on a troop ship that had survived the war (Kivi 1995: 253). In the chapter where Sofi is describing her trip she talks about the situation on the boat, fantasises about her future life in Canada and what she will do there. In addition to that, she also looks back and reflects her thoughts about the last meeting with her parents and their quarrel. It seems like she is analysing the course of events, their conversations and trying to find some kind of justification to her behaviour in order to suppress her guilt. Besides her own life she thinks about the whereabouts and future of her sister Kadri and her friends, whether they also go to Canada or will they ever meet again. (Kivi 1995: 248-256)

Sofi works in the ship dispensary during the boat trip. There are over a thousand of passengers on the ship and many of them are sea sick. She describes that the people who are at good health are spending their time by playing cards and as result the dining room floor is full of cards. Sofi herself is also not sick but prefers to spend her time at the dispensary and dream about her future life in Canada. She is looking forward to working in “a real hospital, with real patients instead of just soldiers and people who haven’t got enough to eat” (Kivi 1995: 249). Sofi also decides what she will do with her first salary: “I’m going to buy a whole pork roast, a vat of sauerkraut, a crate of white bread, a basket of potatoes, a bag of oranges, and eat it all myself” (Kivi 1995: 249). These thoughts show that the two things she is most tired of are hunger and being surrounded by wounded

soldiers and other refugees. It means that she is tired of the war and the situation it has forced her into. Her dreams are very simple, she only wishes to have a job and enough to eat in the new land. However, the thought of spending money on a bigger amount of food and eating it by herself reveals the trauma of constant hunger and even starvation in the DP camps. We may see it also later in the descriptions of their life in Canada.

When analysing the thoughts and expectations of Sofi, her rather selfish behaviour becomes more understandable. The descriptions of the boat trip travel conditions and her dreams are interfered by her thoughts about her parents, especially about the dissenting opinion of her leaving alone. Whether she describes the situation on the boat or has a conversation with a fellow passenger, her thoughts still seem to connect or move to parents eventually, no matter the topic. As they had a serious quarrel over the matter and her parents accused her of being selfish and not having any feelings, she is analysing the situation in her thoughts and justifying her actions by stating that “enough of my life has been wasted. Enough” (Kivi 1995: 249).

The chapter also reveals the reason why Sofi was not willing to wait to leave Germany together with the other family members. We learn from her reflections that everybody wanted to leave Germany because of the consequences of the war, even some of the citizens besides the refugees, and they were going wherever it was possible to go to. America favoured families, whereas Canada and Australia preferred single people. However, young, healthy and not so well educated people were in privileged position in general because they would contribute in terms of labour. Many refugees even lied during the interviews in order to secure their position of being chosen. Therefore Sofi was of the opinion that applying for the immigration permit to leave together with the family would not turn out to be successful and it would lessen her chances of leaving Germany. During

the boat trip she seems to be reassuring herself that she has made the right decision by saying: “I couldn’t wait for them. I just couldn’t” (Kivi 1995: 254). Her decision is based on three reasons. First, it is unclear how long she would have to wait and the uncertainty had become unbearable because she was afraid of her life passing by. Secondly, people were asked to read a newspaper at the interview, but her mother Maria had not learned to read the Roman alphabet and asking for a Russian paper was not possible. Sofi was worried about what would happen if she could not pretend to know how to read and the family would fail the tests. Thirdly, she was afraid that the poor health of her sister Helgi would become an obstacle that lessens their chances of passing the interview and immigrating to Canada. (Kivi 1995: 254) These aspects led to the ugly quarrel she had with her parents before leaving:

Mamma turned her back on me when I said that. I was only telling the truth. But they didn’t want to hear it. They didn’t want to hear anything. I stop in my tracks. I said, “Helgi is going to die. Just like those boys from the Belgian mine.” I shouldn’t have said that. I was so mad. It was too late. Isa even raised his arm. He’s never hit me before. Never. (Kivi: 1995: 254)

Sofi understands that she crossed the line with the tactlessness of her words and hurt her mother and father. She seems to regret her comment about her sister and knows she should not have said that. However, she maintains her perspective on the situation. At the same time she is also upset that her parents could not understand her choice. When analysing their quarrel, Sofi defends her decision strongly by stating: “And I am going where I need to go too. Do you hear me, Isa!? I am going where I need to go!” (Kivi 1995: 254). Behind the anger and improper statements is the simple fear of being stuck and not being able to start a life of her own. However, it does not justify the rude behaviour to her parents. At the end of the chapter she summaries her thoughts about the matter as following: “I’m sorry, Isa. I am. But I had to go. The New World is waiting.” (Kivi 1995:

256). We may conclude from it that at the moment the priority for Sofi was to move on and concentrate on her own life, not to stay together with her family.

When we compare the conditions in which Sonya and Sofi travelled we see quite a difference. Sofi left among the first group of people immigrating to Canada and they were sent on a troop ship. It can be concluded from her story that refugees were the only passengers on board. Sonya left for Canada a year later and her description of the boat trip indicates that it was a regular journey for passengers with tickets, among whom were also some refugees like herself.

Therefore, the overall atmosphere and conditions of her boat trip are different – she mentions that she has her own cabin with a window and for example, some of her fellow passengers are French returning from France. She describes the surroundings as following: “That evening I dined on gourmet food while hearing a lot of French conversations around me” (Constantine 2000: 127). Indeed, a similarity that they both, Sonya and Sofi, mention about the trip is that it was possible to eat as much as one could. In their circumstances the importance of the fact and mentioning it is however more than understandable. This was the reason what caused the sickness of many fellow passengers of Sofi because their body was not used to the quantity and richness of the food served.

When comparing the episodes of the boat trip in the two stories, the great difference between the characters of Sonya and Sofi becomes obvious. The analysis of the language Sofi uses in the quotations that were brought out in this chapter reveals that she is indeed selfish in her actions and not very considerate of her family, because in her thoughts that seem to justify her behaviour she concentrates strongly on herself and emphasises merely her personal needs and wishes. Her communication with her parents and straightforward statements are rather impolite and tactless. It is only later in her life that she completely

understands the importance of family. The significance of her choice to leave alone and the resulting guilt become more serious because it is the last time she sees her father alive. Consequently, the selfishness of her decision and the guilt will haunt her for the rest of her life, appearing on several occasions when changes are taking place in her own family-life in Canada. Sonya, on the other hand, seems to be more obedient to her parents and treats them with more respect. During the refugee journey she has to stand up for herself several times as well, but otherwise she is a little more refined and delicate. It could be said that they are even quite the opposites in their mindset and behaviour. Their goals that they mention are rather different as well. Sofi is looking forward to finding a husband in Canada, whereas Sonya is more concentrated on advancing in her work-life.

The boat trip from Germany to Canada was a longer moment for Sofi and Sonya to reflect on the events that had taken place since leaving Estonia and how they had reached this point in their lives. One period of their refugee journey was ending and the following one about to begin. Another similarity in their thoughts is that they were both also wondering about their lives in The New World. However, besides the past and the future, the prevailing thoughts of the two women are different during the boat trip. One of them, Sofi, had previously quarrelled with her parents and is looking back at the situation and dealing with the emotional consequences of her decision. Sonya is thinking wistfully about her parents and recalls the memories about leaving Estonia. In a conclusion, we may say that the trip is an important episode/aspect in both of their lives. For Sonya, it was because she became acquainted with Monsier Deneuve whose help was of great importance during her first year in Canada, for Sofi, because her decision to leave alone caused the quarrel which was a hard lesson to learn and the consequences haunted her for the rest of her life and affected her family-life as well.

2.2.5 Death of Parents

In October 1957 Sonya receives a letter from Estonia via Sweden, which has a black cross on the corner of the envelope. It was a sign that the letter contains sad news about a relative or a close one having passed away. Sonya is nervous and afraid to open the letter. When she finally does it, she talks to her daughter and describes her feelings as following: “My father died. He fell to the floor after having a heart attack.” I gulped and the lump in my throat was very painful and almost choking me. “The last thing he said was “Sonya!”” I whimpered like a wounded animal now” (Constantine 2000: 180). Her choice of words and especially the comparison with the sound of an animal that has been hurt describe the enormous pain and sadness the news caused. This was not only because of the loss of her father. She had hoped that one day it would be possible for them to meet again but now that hope was gone as well. They had not seen each other for 13 years and with this letter Sonya realises she will never see him again. The fact that her name was the last word her father said shows that he missed his daughter very much, was worried about her and had waited for them to meet. The envelope contains some photos from the funeral and these bring the only good news for Sonya. After years of not knowing anything about the whereabouts of her brother Albert, she now sees that he is alive and together with the family.

In July 1976 Sonya receives another letter from Estonia with a black cross on it. This time the letter brings sad news about her mother who passed away at the age of 88 because of heart failure. The reaction of Sonya is the same as when she learned about the death of her father and it is described with similar language and the sounds expressing extreme pain. She explains the situation to her daughter Karin as following: “What makes it even

worse is that Mother desperately wanted to go to Helsinki in June to meet me there. The bloody Soviets again denied her the visa, using the ‘security risk’ excuse again” (Constantine 2000: 200). For several years they had attempted to organise a meeting on a safe and neutral ground. Firstly, already in 1964 Sonya had tried to arrange a meeting with her then 76 years old mother in Helsinki as travelling to the Soviet Union was still not safe. They could communicate the meeting between them via post through Sweden. They both wanted to meet each other very much but the authorities refused to grant the visa request to her mother with the excuse of her being “a security risk” (Constantine 2000: 186). Sonya was very worried about her mother because first, their country estate – the family home, had collapsed. Since any of the family members could not afford rebuilding it, her mother had to move away from there near to Tallinn where Albert and his family lived. (Constantine 2000: 185-186). The accident was emotionally difficult both for Sonya and her mother because it meant that they had lost their home. Secondly, Sonya knew that her mother was getting older and needed more support. It was all more difficult for her to bear because she was far away and there was nothing she could do to help. And then, after several failed attempts the hope of seeing her mother one day was also gone. She had already lost her father, their family home and now also her mother. The loss of her parents was also a loss for her daughter Karin as she could never meet her maternal grandparents. Additionally, the death of her mother intensifies the wish to return to Estonia, as she whispers while looking at the photos of the funeral: “I want to go home” (Constantine 2000: 200). It signifies that even after years of living in Canada and creating a family of her own, Sonya still considers Estonia as her real home.

We may conclude from her story that family was very important to Sonya and therefore their loss was very painful for her. She respected her mother and father very

much and had a close relationship with them since early childhood. Even though they had not met in many years because of the political situation, they always knew they had each other and Sonya held strongly the hope of being able to return to Estonia one day and being reunited with her family again. The death of her parents also changed the past perspective for Sonya. Now it meant that when they said their goodbyes in 1944, thinking the parting would not last long, they actually had said good-bye forever.

In the context of *Banished from the Homeland* and analysing the key aspects for Sonya, we should also consider the deaths of the parents of George, the husband of Sonya. The reason for this is that Evangelos and Elektra, especially the latter interfered and influenced the family-life and the relationship between Sonya and George to quite an extent and definitely not in a positive way, despite the fact that they lived in Athens. Sonya even names her “a personal enemy who was determined to destroy me” (Constantine 2000: 159) after Elektra tries to declare her officially “mentally not competent enough to bring up your own child” (Constantine 2000: 159) and have Sonya placed in a mental institution. Contrary to Elektra, Evangelos welcomed Sonya to their family during their first meeting, gave his blessing to their marriage and had a warm and positive attitude towards Sonya. His presence neutralised some of the critical situations rather often. Therefore, after his passing away in 1964 the situation became even more difficult for Sonya because Elektra was being openly rather hostile towards her daughter-in-law, influenced George and also manipulated with her grand-daughter Karin. Although the negative influence of Elektra was decreasing as she got older and weaker, it is only after her death in 1978 that Sonya remarks: “As soon as his mother died, George became more affectionate toward me.” (Constantine 2000: 204). When she is thinking about the memories and their first years of marriage, she even wonders: “How much better it would have been all these years

without Elektra's poisonous influence" (Constantine 2000: 205). These thoughts prove that Elektra influenced their relationship and caused many problems that were unnecessary. They also indicate that the relationship between Sonya and George became stronger and better, and she had less worries in her life. Therefore it may be concluded that the death of Evangelos is a key aspect because thereupon life became harder for Sonya. The death of Elektra is an important landmark because the married life improved for Sonya since then.

In January 1948, just three months after leaving Europe, Sofi receives a letter from her sister Helgi and mother Maria which informs her about the death of their father:

KALLIS SOFI,

Mamma and I have some bad news. Isa is dead. It came upon us so suddenly that we haven't known what to do with ourselves. The funeral was three days ago. People from the Oldenburg camp organised it. You know who better than we do.

It was terrible, Sofi. He had been drinking with his friends, you know the concoctions they make and the things they put in it. They brought him to the barracks unconscious. You've seen for yourself how he has come home that way. Mamma put him to bed. His skin was yellow and when I touched his forehead, it was cold. He murmured in his sleep. The next morning he began to cry out and moan. Mamma sent me to get the doctor.

He took Isa to the clinic right away. Mamma stayed with him for three days but wouldn't let me see him. And now he's dead.

Isa's friend, the one who plays the violin, sold Isa's wedding band and had a coffin made. It was just a plain wooden box and there wasn't enough money to buy a stone for the head. The man who carves from the next barrack made a wooden cross but it's plain, Isa's name isn't even on it. Mamma wants to know if you can send money to buy Isa a stone? Our interview with the immigration people is in two weeks. If they let us go, we should come in the spring. Can you send the money before that? (Kivi 1995: 263-264)

The letter conveys the immediate and sincere reaction of Helgi to the sudden death of her father. It is the last chapter of Sofi and also the last chapter that documents the escape of the family through the eyes of Maria, Sofi and Helgi in the book. We do not know how Sofi reacted at the time and the details of how the family came together again. However, the importance of the episode and the consequences of the trauma are revealed years later several times in the chapters that have been written from the perspective of Esther, who is the grown-up daughter of Sofi. We see that it caused a great sense of guilt for Sofi. She develops a connection in her mind between her leaving and the death of her father, one

causing the other, in the sense that she perceives the situation so that her father died because she left. This vision starts affecting how she sees the events and changes later in her own family-life.

The letter describes in detail the funerals and the poor conditions in which her father was buried. As Sofi had left and Helgi was too young, Maria was left alone to manage the organisation of the funerals. Reading and thinking about the situation the family was in is emotionally difficult. They did not have any money and the only possibility to afford the most modest coffin was to sell his wedding ring, which we may imagine was not an easy decision for his wife. Their only hope is that Sofi could send some money for the stone before they leave so that the grave would not remain anonymous. The situation was also painful for Sofi because she was far away, her mother would have needed her help and support, and his father was buried in the foreign ground. The details of his death, her own heartache and emotional pain probably increased her guilt. It makes the matters worse that the cause of his death was something that could have been easily avoided. Therefore it adds more tragedy to the loss. Through the incident he suffered and also his wife and children suffered, and were eventually left alone. Sadly, the episode reveals the problems with alcohol and the tragedies it caused for families in conditions that were already difficult to bear.

The situation that first seems to begin the triggering of the guilt and suppressed emotions of Sofi is the breaking of the marriage of her daughter Kadri and her husband Bob. When Sofi learns that Kadri does not have an intention to reconcile with her husband, she takes the matter very seriously. Sofi tries to convince her daughter that “families are meant to be together” (Kivi 1995: 119) and asks the other family members to do the same. When her daughter Esther does not understand her, Sofi reasons her statement as follows:

“Because something bad will happen if they don’t. /.../ Children need their fathers. You don’t know anything about these things. Wait till you have kids of your own” (Kivi 1995: 119). This reasoning is very clearly connected with her own life-experience. Before leaving Europe, she had seen her father more as someone constantly restricting her and holding her back from starting her own life. The death of her father had seemingly changed the perspective on life and family for Sofi. She had left Europe against the will of her father, left the family, and months later lost her father. This is the episode that also reveals that Sofi feels guilty of his death. Without realising that the two situations are different and the current circumstances are not the same as in the past, she wishes her daughter to avoid the mistake that she made.

The further changes in their family life remind Sofi of her past decision and the death of her father again. The irrational connection of consequences it has for her, appears again. In the late spring 1990 her daughter Esther is moving from Winnipeg to British Columbia and Sofi does not approve. She tells Esther that when she was young she also thought that focusing on one’s own life is more important than family. When trying to change the mind of her daughter, she seems to rely on her own experience by concluding her talk with the statement: “You won’t find what you’re looking for” (Kivi 1995: 159). This episode shows her regret about her selfish decision of leaving. We may assume that she has understood that her father was not restricting her, but protecting her and thinking about the family, as it was all that they had – each other. During the arguments with both of her daughters, they try to make Sofi see that the circumstances are different than in the past, but Sofi does not consider it. In the end, she reasons her opposition by saying “People die when you go away, you know. We might not be here when you come back” (Kivi 1995: 159). It is another clear reference to the war-time events and indicates again that Sofi has a strong

connection between a leaving family member and death. She seems to believe families not only have to feel the closeness but must stay physically together.

The third situation in which we see Sofi dealing with the guilt from the past is the death of her mother. In summer 1991 Maria, mother of Sofi dies of old age. Soon after the funeral Sofi calls Esther, crying hysterically and repeating: "See. It's true. People die when you go away" (Kivi 1995: 270). When Esther is confused whom her mother talks about and adds that their grandmother was old, Sofi continues:

But Isa wasn't. /.../ He was only forty-six. Only forty-six. If I hadn't left, he'd still be alive."/.../
Kes Mamma? "Who, Mother?" Esther had asked. "Elmar's not dead. Is he?"

"Not Elmar. My father. Juhan. Isa." And with this she began to weep again, squeezing out forty years of sorrow. And guilt? Why was his father's death her fault? How did he die then?

"What happened? Tell me."

"We fought. He didn't want me to come to Canada without the rest of the family. I wanted to have my life. I was so tired of the war. I was young, I didn't know better."

"But how did he die?"

"I shouted at him when he forbade me to go. I shouted at my own father, my protector, my dear father."

"Mom. Shouting at someone doesn't kill them. How did he die?"

Esther held the phone away from her ear as Sofi wept with renewed fervour. Esther was stunned. She had never heard Sofi fall apart like this. Like a baby, with abandon. Had she been holding this in all these years. Guilt. (Kivi 1995: 271)

When we analyse the phone call between the mother and daughter, it is first important to notice that the conversation does not take place at the funeral or days later when Esther is still at home. But Sofi calls Esther in British Columbia quite some time after the funeral. From this it may be concluded that the call was a culmination of the thoughts and emotions she had had after the funeral. The death of her mother was the major event that brought out all her feelings, guilt and the consequences of trauma from her past. Therefore the call may be regarded as a breaking point for Sofi.

At first it seems as if Sofi is accusing Esther and her leaving for the death of her mother. But when she abruptly changes the topic and begins to talk about her father it becomes evident that her call is a burst-out of her emotions. She feels guilty for having a fight and acting against the will of her father. From her words it can be concluded that she

has understood why her father forbade her to leave alone – it was not to restrict her but to protect her and to keep the family together. She feels bad for her selfish behaviour and admits it. What increased and intensified her heartache and guilt about the matter over the years is that it was the last time when she saw his father; they had parted with a quarrel. It is only forty-three years later, in connection with her mother's death that Sofi manages to release the suppressed guilt and emotions about the fight with her father.

The episode also explains why Sofi reacted the way she did when her own daughters were making decisions in their lives that involved parting from the family. She was feeling responsible for the death of her father as she says during the call. Although her father died because of drinking, Sofi thinks that if she had stayed together with the family he would have not died. Therefore, she desperately tries to keep her own family physically together. From these episodes and her reactions we may conclude that the past had created such a misconception for her and shaped a part of her personality.

When analysing the death of the parents in both works we see that besides emotional distress and pain, it also leads to the shift in perspective on other things in life. Furthermore, how the issue may arise years later several times in connection with the problems and changes in the present. When comparing the episodes it is important to notice the difference in how the matter is reflected. In *Banished from the Homeland* the informing about the death is given in the text as a short notice, and the sorrow and painful reactions of Sonya are described in a slightly greater length. In *If Home Is a Place* the letter reporting the death forms a separate chapter in the full length of it and it adds weight to the matter. Although the letter describes the feelings of Helgi and Maria, we do not learn anything about the instant reaction of Sofi. However, we see how the influence of the death of his father appears years later in several episodes. We also see how Sofi is trying to

manage with the guilt she has been holding inside her for decades. The meaningfulness of the death for Sofi lies in the fact that the letter has been printed in full length. The gloomy details of the tragedy also explain the roots of her guilt. Therefore, we could say that in a way the death of the parents has also a different meaning and influence for Sonya and Sofi. The difference is caused by the fact that Sofi feels guilt besides sadness and the grief of loss.

2.2.6 Revisit

In fall 1990 Sonya hears from her husband that the political situation is changing in Estonia. George shows her a few newspaper articles written by people who have visited the country and encourages also Sonya to travel to her homeland. After some hesitation and consulting her friends about the safety of the trip, she decides to visit Estonia in June 1991 together with her daughter Karin, as George could not join them. Sonya is looking forward to the trip and comments it as following: “If I would have arrived there safely it would have been after an absence of 47 years, that’s longer than some human lifetimes” (Constantine 2000: 213). The comment and the comparison with human lifetime emphasises the lengthiness of the time she has been forced to stay away from her homeland.

Sonya and Karin first fly to Helsinki and rest there for a couple of days before crossing the Gulf of Finland to Tallinn. When they arrive in Tallinn, Sonya first wishes to prepare herself in hotel before meeting some of the relatives. (Constantine 2000: 215-217) It is worth noticing that Sonya has some hesitations first about crossing the Gulf of Finland and secondly about meeting her relatives when they are approaching Estonia. Certainly, a factor to consider here is her age, because such a long journey can be rather tiring at the

age of 69. There is nothing negative behind her thoughts, it seems that she just needs some time for herself before meeting her homeland and relatives after almost half a century. Her thoughts witness the emotional weight and significance of the step. On the same day Albert invites them for supper to his house and it is evident from the dinner scene that the situation was meaningful for everybody because Sonya describes it as following: “All the relatives stared at me and smiled and no one said a word for at least one minute, emotions were too deep for words right now” (Constantine 2000: 219). Albert takes his harmonica before they start to eat and plays some folk music. They dance and sing on the occasion just as they had promised each other on the day Sonya left.

During the revisit Albert and his sons take Sonya and Karin sightseeing in the old town of Tallinn, where Sonya shows the places she passed during the night of bombing on March 9 in 1944. They also take part in the midsummer celebration where Sonya is glad to witness that “our ancient customs were still alive and our spirit still lived” (Constantine 2000: 242). The most emotional moment of the revisit is when they drive to the country estate, their childhood home. On their way Sonya asks her brother about the situation of the estate and hears that many of the trees have been cut down and that “there are no traces of our house to be found” (Constantine 2000: 237) except the outdoor cellar. Hearing this information has a strong emotional effect on Sonya and causes a shock. Her emotions are described as following:

But I couldn't speak. I just stared at the warm, rusty brown earth and the dark evergreens and bright green birches and felt the sun's warmth through the thin clouds. The road leading down the gentle slope to the estate seemed to reach out to me, it was whispering, “Come home, Sonya. You belong here.”

Suddenly I felt the onset of a panic attack and I opened the door right beside me and breathed deeply, I could not go further. That estate was me, that was where my soul lived. It always had. If I would have gone there now and tried to face the destruction of the house and thinned out forest I knew I would have had a heart attack and died on the spot.

When I recovered a little from the panic attack, I told my brother, “I cannot see the estate.” I felt nauseated.

Albert told his son, “Let's drive down to the estate now. We can see the graves on the way back.” He sounded insistent.

“No! I want to remember everything the way it was when I was young. I refuse to go there.” I was just as insistent as he was.” (Constantine 2000: 237)

The above instance shows how Sonya identifies herself through the estate. As it has been the foundation of her identity, the loss of it is traumatic for her. Going to the estate was very important to her as she says earlier in the text that without seeing it she would not really feel that she is at home (Constantine 2000: 223). But she realises that the estate she loves so much and where she wished to return to for decades, lives now only in her memories. The extent of pain it causes her is evident from the fact that she claims that going further and witnessing the bare ground would result in having a heart attack and therefore she suddenly strongly opposes to seeing it.

Despite the fact that the estate was gone and it was emotionally impossible for her to visit the site, Sonya finds her peace at the family cemetery by the grave of her mother. She says to her brother: “I’m home. I’m finally home” (Constantine 2000: 238). The episode shows that although Sonya has lived abroad for 47 years and she has only come to visit Estonia, she still considers Estonia and more specifically the family estate grounds her true home. Moreover, she, like her brother, wishes to be buried next to their parents after death. We see in Sonya what Mayer (2015: 96) described about how place is relevant in relation to the perception of home.

The revisit is important for Sonya also because besides being reunited with the family, they could talk about everything and fill in the gaps concerning whereabouts and happenings in their lives during the past 47 years. After being worried about her brother for years Sonya finally learns what happened to Albert and how he survived. During her stay she also learns about the fate of the people that were close to her. In addition to that she hears the details about how her mother had passed away. As Kirss (2006b) has argued, besides the emotional aspect, the revisit changed perception of past for people. We may say

that it considered both, those who fled to Canada as well as the others who stayed in Estonia. The narratives people had composed for themselves were now altered or completed because of the new or missing information about the relatives and their course of life. Additionally, several unresolved questions received the necessary answers.

Throughout the revisit it may be strongly felt that Sonya is very proud of the sons of his brother Albert because of how intelligent they are, their accomplishments in career and that they speak foreign languages – English and Russian, despite the hardships of living in the Soviet Union. When listening to the stories about the mysteries of the Soviet life, Sonya comes to the following conclusion: “How they survived the oppressive conditions of life here – they had strong family loyalty, humour, and indomitable spirits. I was so happy for them, I had to be my own source of strength for decades” (Constantine 2000: 236).

It may be said that some questions she had not thought about before came to her mind during the revisit. For example, at one point Sonya starts to wonder “if life was harder for the ones who fled or for the ones who stayed behind. In any case, it was tragically difficult to be Estonian” (Constantine 2000: 226). It shows that when people had earlier been worried about the well-being of their families and relatives, then now after being reunited it was possible for them to look at the situation from another perspective. Sonya is experiencing the similar change that both Sussman (2000: 365) and Hornung (2013:2) discuss about a refugee returning to homeland after being in exile. She seems to acknowledge the matters of her identity and apprehend the basis of home more deeply. Consequently, her self-perception and narrative are reformed and completed during the revisit.

Before leaving, she summarises her feelings about the revisit as follows: “I came home and was elated in one sense, but also very disappointed because my country was still occupied. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to return to a free Estonia? Was that too much to ask before my death?” (Constantine 2000: 240) In 1994 Sonya manages to visit her homeland again and this time she can celebrate the independence of Estonia with her brother and the other relatives. She reflects on her visit as following: “God, or fate, or The Creator, if you really are there and if you can hear me, thank you for letting me come home once more, I prayed. I was finally back in Free Estonia and that meant that there was still hope for humanity.” (Constantine 2000: 244).

Esther and Helgi in *If Home Is A Place* visit Estonia two years earlier than Sonya and Karin. They arrive in summer 1989 and visit the relatives of Elmar. The chapter that discusses their visit is narrated by Esther. It reflects her thoughts during the car ride to the childhood home of Helgi and then about visiting the place. Therefore we may say that it was probably the most important and emotional part of their visit.

When Esther compares the difference in attitudes towards fellow Estonians in Canada and in Estonia, she notes that “in Canada, every Estonian was practically family. Here, Esther and Helgi were novelties, guests, even among Elmar’s relatives. They were relegated to the dark living room when the others went to peel potatoes or milk the cows” (Kivi 1995: 100-101). It is not that they were unwelcome, but they indeed were strangers before the visit. The difference might also come from the fact that although they were connected to each other, they were not relatives in blood but in-laws.

The experience of the revisit is described rather differently in the two books. For example, it seems that when Sonya and Karin mostly heard stories about how people had

managed to overcome difficult situation more or less successfully then Esther describes the visit rather gloomily:

There was no end to the stories of Soviet injustices, about men rounded up for the Chernobyl cleanup who were now perishing from cancer, of women arrested for hemming neighbours' dresses, of the disappeared. Even her cousins' laughter was acrid. /.../ Each one of her many relatives had a story to tell, a joke about the inefficiencies and stupidities of the Soviet system, and a barrage of questions about The West. It wasn't that she didn't want to hear and answer. No. It was just that there was too much, a red river of venom that seemed to have no end. (Kivi 1995: 96-97)

In the text she brings out the difference in visions she and Helgi had about the trip compared to their relatives. Besides hearing about the experiences and hardships the home-Estonians want to share, Helgi and Esther wish to see "places that once were home" (Kivi 1995: 97). There were two reasons why their relatives did not want to visit the place. First, they all confirmed that "There's nothing there" (Kivi 1995: 99). Secondly, the land belonged officially to Russia now and they did not want to go there. However, a relative does find a man willing to drive them for money.

When they arrive at the site Esther sees that the moment is emotionally very difficult for Helgi although she does not speak for quite some time. After they walk hand in hand in silence for a while and arrive on a field of potatoes, Helgi stops and finally says:

"The house isn't here anymore. I'm sure this is the spot. I recognise the trees," she said. Helgi looked like a forlorn scarecrow, battered thin by the wind. She stood unmoving, only her eyes alive, as if they were seeing what was no longer there: the mirror trimmed with oak leaves, the sideboard, the long cookstove that was built into the corner of the kitchen. /.../ Helgi sighed deeply, wrapped her thin arms around herself and began to sway, softly, from side to side. Esther stepped closer, half expecting to see tears on Helgi's cheeks, but instead, there was a wistful smile, almost elfin in its sweetness. (Kivi 1995: 103-104).

We see that Helgi recovers rather quickly from finding out that the house is really gone. Or perhaps it speaks of the fact that she has started to consider Canada more as her home because when she left Estonia she was quite young and still a child. It seems that she fixes the fact that her childhood home is gone but understands how important the place was for her mother. Therefore she concentrates on finding the ladle they buried among other kitchenware on the night before leaving their home almost fifty years ago in order to take it

to Maria. They leave for Tallinn shortly after they manage to get the ladle. Esther describes it and then concludes: “This was all that was left” (Kivi 1995: 107). Although she herself had never seen the place, she understands how difficult it might be for Helgi to see that there are no traces of her childhood home left. One possible explanation to the disappearance of the house may be considered from an episode in the first chapter of the book, narrated by Maria. She thinks about the conversation with a German officer who informed her that their family has to leave: “I told him what they must do with our house when we are gone. “Burn it. Don’t leave it for the Bolsheviks.” My begonias will freeze anyway. And they won’t like the house without us” (Kivi 1995: 15). Her comment slightly suggests that she had considered the worst might probably happen and they would not be able to return. Or it was less hurtful solution for her than the possibility of Soviet soldiers vandalising their home.

A similarity about the revisits for Sonya and Helgi is that their childhood homes are gone. A difference between the two stories that unravels from the revisits is how the women talk about their Estonian homes. Sonya still calls the family estate her home, although the house is vanished. In *If Home is A Place*, the places are referred to as homes which existed in the past. The difference probably comes from the fact that in first case, Sonya left alone and her family continued living in the estate, but in *If Home is A Place*, the whole family left together. However, we do not get the perspective of Sofi and Maria on the topic of home and its location. The lack of their perspective on the issue leads us to another important observation. It is not mentioned what Maria, Sofi and Elmar thought about Helgi and Esther visiting Estonia, whether they considered joining them or not, and what they discussed upon their return. We can only assume that Maria was too old to travel and Sofi and Elmar had their own reasons not to go.

The revisits in both books indicate that the women held a strong belief that they would come back to their homes sooner. They did not imagine returning only to visit. When comparing the revisits we may say that it was more emotional for Sonya because she was reunited with her brother and met his family, who were her relatives in blood. However, in both of the books we see that the perspective of the women about their past and self-identification changes. Some gaps in knowledge are filled and it leads to rethinking the events and to a change in self-perception. To what extent and how it influenced their identities will be discussed in the following subchapter.

The analysis of the key aspects raises also a question why both of the stories are narrated exactly the way they are? We may be first left with the impression that the journey was not as difficult and complex for Sonya. But is it true or is it what the narration seeks to render and represent? The author of the thesis assumes that this could be also part of conscious identity creation. Secondly, it could be connected with choosing a focus for telling one's story. In other words, it might be an example of the success story Kirss (2006b: 642) also talks about.

2.2.7 Dynamics of Cultural Identity

We may say that in order to analyse the identity dynamics of refugees, it is first important to understand the background influencing the formation of their identities in new home countries. The key aspects of the refugee experience influence the further lives of the women in Canada because these events were life-changing and required re-ordering of the self-perception. Therefore, the thesis first looked at the refugee journey more closely and identified the aspects influencing it, as well as the reasons behind the choices or situations the women found themselves in. Additionally, some of the key aspects were discussed.

The following part will examine the cultural identity and self-perception of the main characters in *Banished from the Homeland* and *If Home Is a Place*. I will discuss their cultural transition and how their cultural identity is expressed in Canada. Key episodes will be included as examples in order to illustrate and support the analysis.

When we look at Sonya in *Banished from the Homeland*, we should first notice that already during her refugee journey she has become accustomed to communicating in a foreign language. When she studied at the two universities in Munich, the teaching was carried out in German and the circle of students she communicated with was international. She seems to have no fear of the other, something that is foreign or strange. A good example of this is also the episode during the boat trip when she meets with Monsier Deneuve. They have a quite long conversation and continue to keep in contact in Canada as well. Sonya comes under the impact of Greek culture after marrying George and in a way it also influences her course of life. However, during the refugee journey she has also several contacts with other Estonians and in Canada she has both Estonian friends as well as close acquaintances from other nationalities. For example, when she has to send her daughter Karin to Greece for a period, she mentions visiting a good Spanish friend with whom she has a “mutually satisfying and strong bond” (Constantine 2000: 181). According to the thoughts of Hornung (2013: 2), we may see in Sonya the step-by-step “formation of a transcultural self” during her refugee journey. Her rather constant contacts with different nationalities create a precondition for “transnational affiliation” (Hornung 2013: 2). But as Sussman (2000: 357-358) stated about people having several self-perceptions, her transcultural self did not threaten the perception of being Estonian. Her Estonian cultural identity was maintained through following the customs and the suggestions given by her family to overcome the difficult times. It may be said that she adjusted in the international

surroundings and different companies, as well as behaved accordingly, but in her heart she kept thinking about Estonia, her family and maintained a deep connection with them. According to the cultural transition theory by Sussman (2000: 359), we may say that during the journey Sonya developed “a separated identity relative to the dominant culture” and also maintained her Estonian cultural identity.

When we look at the women in *If Home Is A Place*, we see that every generation adapted differently in Canada. We may say that age as a factor did not only influence the refugee journey of the women but also the adaption and their cultural transition in Canada. Thus their cultural identities and self-perceptions differ as well. The thesis stated in sub-chapter 2.1.2 that the refugee journey was more difficult for the elderly as adjustment in new situations is more challenging for them. It seems to the author that Maria never quite adapted. We do not know any details about her life course in Canada, but it is said that she learnt only a very few words of English. In the years that are discussed in the book, we see her slipping away into her own world as she becomes older. The cases of Sofi and Kadri, both also representatives of the first generation refugees of the family, differ slightly as well. Kadri is married to a Canadian and upon their breakup Esther mentions that it is only then that during the family dinners on Sunday they “had reverted to speaking in Estonian. Even the boys had picked up a few words” (Kivi 1995: 141). It refers to the retention of heritage language. Sofi seems to be more inwardly facing when it comes to nationalism, especially in comparison with Sonya. Her husband is Estonian and she prefers to communicate with fellow representatives of her motherland. An illustrative example is revealed when Esther recalls the summer camps in Toronto, the friends she made there and how she “kept in touch with a few: wild Maret, who never quite measured up in Sofi’s eyes because her father wasn’t Estonian” (Kivi 1995: 48). The episode indicates that Sofi

preferred her children to communicate rather with Estonians as well. This is also a good example of the second and third category relationships and challenges of identity described by Kirss (2006b: 669-675). We see that Sofi wants her children to keep and strengthen their Estonian cultural identity. According to the cultural transition theory by Sussman (2000: 359), Sofi represents the type of a refugee whose native cultural identity strengthens in exile. However, when we consider the aspect of age once more, we see that all the younger women adapted rather well in Canada, each in their own way. Sonya and Sofi created new families of their own and there is no evidence that Helgi had difficulties in Canada.

Esther is described looking for her identity and searching for her own place throughout the chapters narrated by her. The heart of her problem seems to be not knowing enough about her family history and their roots, and therefore, she has difficulties with finding her own place. We do not know what is left unsaid and it causes confusion for Esther. First important landmark in her quest is the visit to Estonia, during which she becomes certain that Estonia is not her home:

The thought caught in her throat with such clarity that Esther could not hold back her tears. Their years of exile were irreparable. The feeling had been growing every day and though Esther tried to push it away, it welled up in her as certain as thirst: Estonia wasn't Esther's home. And it would never be. Though her mother tongue filled some of the gaps, like a spring that finds crevices between rock, she did not belong to this place. Or not all of her, or even much. Not enough to erase the fifty years that her family had rooted in another place. (Kivi 1995: 105)

She concludes her trip by stating that contrary to her expectations the visit did not answer her questions; vice versa, it had created new issues she could not solve (Kivi 1995: 118). The second landmark for Esther is the death of her grandmother. At the funeral she is thinking the following thoughts: "They say that you don't belong to a place until one of yours is in the ground. It made sense /.../ She felt as though a piece of her own self had been buried. Was this what it would take?" (Kivi 1995: 229) Esther also thinks about the

other Estonians she grew up with and wonders among other culture specific things like the language and the “roll of rrr’s on their tongues” whether they also “dream that they were being pursued, by men in caps, by bears, like she did?” (Kivi 1995: 230) Her dreams about being chased may refer to the fears of her family that have been projected on her. It may be considered as such because she develops the question during pondering about the other Estonian children and what culture specific traits they might have in common. The author does not consider it as a transmitted trauma discussed by Rashkin (1999: 434), but it could be regarded as a fear transmitted from a parent to a child.

The third important landmark in her life is the announcement of Estonian independence. It seems that until then she felt the obligation to stand for the freedom of Estonia and it held her back and discouraged making decisions about her own life. Interestingly, for her the clarity about her identity arrives with this event: “Great. Wonderful. She was Canadian. Yes. Finally, she had been freed from her duty to uphold the banner of the free Estonian. Her term had expired. The people in the old country could do it themselves now” (Kivi 1995: 261). It is important to notice that these last thoughts are narrated extremely concisely, especially in comparison with her previous thoughts where she ponders about the concepts of identity and home at greater length. There is no analysis or hesitation in her mind now. She seems to have a very clear idea of who she is. It may be supposed that she perceives Estonians as a small defenceless nation and now disclaims her belonging among them. We may say that there is nothing positive for her about Estonianness.

From the analysis we see that her self-perception, ethnic and cultural identity is connected to the sense of place. Although she is born in Canada, she senses some connection to Estonia through the tales she has heard from her family. As Mayer (2015:

96) emphasizes, the importance of place in self-definition, and Sussman as well as Hornung (2013: 2) bring out the relevance of revisit, Esther wishes to visit the country of the roots of her family. Although it does not answer her questions, it brings her closer to finding the answers. However, her experience is somewhat opposite to what (Kirss 2006b: 667) describes about the second generation, visiting Estonia and confirmation of the Estonian identity. The trip shows her that Estonia is not her home. But as Kirss (2006b: 668) also stated, restoration of independence in Estonia indeed had a significant role in her self-perception. But unlike the people who participated in the interviews Kirss (2006b) analysed, Esther found that she was Canadian with a strong influence of Estonian cultural identity through the stories and items in her home. Therefore, after analysing the three episodes we could say that the foundation of ethnic and cultural identity for Esther is the location of home, although she continues to embrace the Estonian roots of her family as well.

An illustrative episode that shows how the fears and more specifically the trauma of losing home have been carried on to the next generation is when Esther is wondering what to do with the coin her grandmother gave her:

Make home? Hah! What a farce. Just to have someone take it away? If you have to start over and over again, what was the point in starting at all? She knew she was overreacting, but she couldn't seem to stop herself. Why was she so eager to see every possibility of home extinguished. What was she so afraid of? (Kivi 1995: 228)

The passage indicates that Esther was so afraid of losing something she created herself or something that belonged to her, because it was the model she had learned from the past of her parents and grandparents. First, Maria had to leave her Russian home at the age of 17. Later, when she had family and children of her own, they all, Maria, Juhan, Kadri, Sofi, Helgi also had to leave behind their Estonian home.

When Esther tells her family about her plans of moving to British Columbia, it comes as a shock to Sofi. She automatically regards herself as the main reason for Esther to move and assumes she is considered a bad mother because her daughter wants to move that far away from her. No other reasons come to her mind. Behind it is of course her own personal trauma about the disintegration of her family and it appears again. She does not seem to be able to think rationally about the situation, but her mind instantly returns to the connection that if a family member leaves someone dies.

A very important aspect to mention about the family of Sofi is the fact that they were an Estonian-Russian mixed family. The topic is very briefly mentioned at the beginning of the book when Maria is hiding her kitchenware in the garden ground and recalls the memories about how the Russian soldiers came after her brother Leoni and that her father took her to Estonia thereafter. The issue arises again when they are already in Germany and Sofi is thinking about going to Canada alone. By the time they have agreed to call their mother Mari and have organised her a fake passport that recognises her Estonian origin for the security reasons. (Kivi 1995: 88; 145) As it was mentioned in the subchapter about the boat trip to Canada, Maria could only read the Cyrillic alphabet. Therefore, the worry of Sofi becomes more understandable, because one of the reasons behind the strong fear of not being able to start her own life was the national identity of her mother.

The origin of Maria is also kept as a secret from Esther and the revelation of it causes her quite a shock. She feels confused and upset that her family has lied to her. When she turns to Helgi, the latter explains the reasons why Maria and Juhan made such a decision years ago. When Helgi refers to the difficult relationship between Estonians and Russians, Esther understands:

Russians were scum to Estonians, even among her generation of kids who had never suffered at the hands of the Soviets themselves. How would her Toronto friends have looked upon her if they knew

she was part Russian? The lurch of her stomach startled her. This hatred was bred into them, sucked in with their mother's milk and every mouthful since. And suddenly, to find that the so-called enemy's blood coursed in her own veins. She didn't know what to think. (Kivi 1995: 86-87)

It is important to shortly explain the background of the hatred Esther thinks about.

The difficult relationship is a result of the Soviet occupation. Estonians saw it as a serious threat to their language and culture.

Esther then asks Maria about her brother and she tells her now the whole story. Enough years had passed for Maria to talk openly about her past and origin. The conversation makes Esther also wonder about why Helgi had remained single. She asks herself: "What did the people who stayed behind do with their lives? Who would she, Esther, be if things had gone differently. What did women her age dream about in Estonia?" (Kivi 1995: 90) Her thoughts show that even though she was not a refugee and was born in Canada, the experience of her mother, grandmother and aunt still affects her life and self-perception as well. The episode gives her the final impulse to visit Estonia. She is also very surprised when her aunt wishes to join her :

What? /.../ Was she serious? Helgi, who would never speak about the homeland. Helgi, who never argued with Sofi and Elmar when they criticised their friends who had chosen to visit Estonia in the past few years: "They're just supporting the Soviets; we won't go until Estonia is completely free." Helgi, who hadn't travelled any further than Lake Winnipeg in forty years. (Kivi 1995: 90)

But it seems that Helgi is not that afraid and has indeed made up her mind about visiting Estonia. When Esther asks about her grandmother, Helgi says that she will not join them. Their conversation also reveals why Sofi and Elmar did not consider visiting Estonia. However, the episode reveals another interesting issue to mention. When we look at the different viewpoints about visiting Estonia, we notice that the national gap in the Estonian diaspora resulting from the opposing opinions about visiting Estonia and communicating with home-Estonians exists also in the family, and especially between the sisters, Sofi and Helgi.

There is no evidence in the text about Helgi and her self-perception. We can only assume that like the rest of her family, she retained her Estonian cultural identity. When she revisited Estonia she saw that there was nothing there except the relatives of Elmar as her own family was in Canada.

One of the instances narrated by Esther shows rather well the foundation of identity of Sofi and Elmar. After Estonia had regained its independence, she describes the situation among the Estonian community as follows: “What now? Who were Estonians if they weren’t opposed to the Soviets? What had she ever been taught about living for something instead of against it? What exactly was she for?” (Kivi 1995: 245) In another chapter she continues to describe the confusion that took over and how the announcement of independence influenced the Estonians who were in exile:

Why were they all at a loss now that Estonia had thrown off the shackle?

The Estonian community had become a dazed contingent of somnambulists, particularly those of Sofi and Elmar’s generation, going through the motions of their daily lives.

The reality of Estonian independence had shocked them all. But why? Shouldn’t they rejoice? So let Estonia be free. (Kivi 1995: 261)

The answer is rather simple. Standing for Free Estonia, going to the protests, and keeping the cultural heritage and language alive in exile was perceived as their task before their homeland. The generation of Sofi and Elmar identified themselves through it. And now the part was gone and it was like their homeland did not need their efforts anymore. There was no longer a need to be against someone. They were still Estonians but they were forced to reconsider their self-perception. In a sense it could be said that they were no longer refugees because in general it was possible to return to their homeland.

When we look at the names of the women in the two primary sources, we may say that a name is an important part of identity and could also be taken as a reflection of it. The name of a child also carries information about the parents of the offspring. It shows not so

much about the self-perception and cultural heritage of the parents, but more how they wish their child will be regarded in the future or if and with which cultural tradition he or she will be associated with. It is important to notice that both Sonya and Sofi chose Estonian names for their daughters who were born in Canada: Karin and Kadri, although, Esther is an international name. This is especially interesting in the case of Sonya, whose husband was Greek. It means that the mothers wanted to pass on the Estonian origin and at least some cultural heritage to their children. In this sense a part of Maria's identity was taken from her during the refugee journey, when the final A was removed from her name:

I don't even have my own name anymore. We dropped the "a" from Maria when we bought my Estonian papers, so now I am Mari, an Estonian woman. In every way. It's better like this. The stories we've heard from the Russian camps are enough to make "a"s fall out of the sky. The Russians are not allowed to work, like we do, in hospitals. And their camps are said to be places much worse than this. Hard to imagine. (Kivi 1995: 145)

Maria originally comes from the Russian culture, but we could say that she began to perceive herself altogether as Estonian by changing her name for safety reasons. Although she still says the name is not hers, she understands why the change is necessary. In Canada she seems to retain her cultural identity. It is only before her death that she starts talking about her true past and identity. Therefore we could say that her ethnic identity was based on her first name. She got the "a" and her original identity back only after her death on the grave stone. Her cultural identity, however, could be a mix of Estonian and Russian because at times she sings Russian lullabies to her children.

When analysing the women characters it seems that the first generation of refugees did not have obvious problems with their self-perception, cultural identity or confusion about the concept or location of home. It is interesting to notice that the problems occur most for Esther. She, who was not a refugee, but she had inherited the fears and trauma of being a refugee. It seems that the cultural identity of the women who fled to Canada was

strengthened in the course of refugee experience and it was important for them to preserve it. We see it in Sonya, when she revisits free Estonia. We see it in Maria, as she never quite adapted in Canada. And we see how Sofi became a true nationalist and patriot in Canada. A common foundation of their cultural identity was the Estonian language.

We can see several examples of Estonian cultural heritage in both of the books as well. Despite living abroad for several decades, the women still followed the customs, preferred typical Estonian meals, continued knitting wool socks and passed the traditions on to their children. One of the most prominent practices in the texts was the habit of making vegetable gardens and flowerbeds, and raising flowers like irises and daisies in Canada. The tradition is carried on by Esther as the final words of the novel imply:

She would plant irises to remember Vanaema by.
A patch daisies for Elmar.
And some bachelor's buttons – the Estonian national flower – for home. (Kivi: 1995: 273)

CONCLUSION

As we read Crissa Constantine's *Banished from the Homeland* and K. Linda Kivi's *If Home Is a Place*, the two works of life-writing about the Estonian refugee women, we may sense the loss, desperation, uncertainty and pain, both physical and emotional that the experience caused. The difference between the stories does not only lie in the variation of the routes, but they also offer two different perspectives on the refugee journey experience. They show us how the same event is not only experienced differently but it has also different consequences. The stories reveal what it meant to leave Estonia alone and compare it to the experience of leaving together with the family. Additionally, we are offered four different perspectives of the refugee journey according to the age of the women. Each has their own losses and problems, but also relevant decisions to make during the journey. However, we cannot say that the experience was easier for some women than the others. The tragedy simply cannot be measured.

The purpose of thesis is to explore how the trauma of losing home appears later in the lives of the women. The author also defines the key aspects of the refugee journey that in one way or another influence their self-perception and cultural identity.

The first chapter of the thesis discusses the theoretical framework of refugee journey and consists of three sub- chapters which discuss the main terms in the context of the current thesis. The first defines the term refugee. The second defines the meaning of exile and home. The third discusses the refugee journey. In the following, it talks about the characteristics of the refugees and analyses how gender, age, and travelling alone or with close relatives may influence the journey experience. It also addresses the differences between individual and group journeys.

Further on, the sub-chapter discusses the effects and meaning of the journey. The first topic is trauma of the refugee journey and its appearance in the stories. The trauma that all the women experienced was the loss of home. A similarity in the books is that the trauma of losing home may be first traced in the tender and detailed descriptions of the childhood homes by Sonya and Helgi. Kirss (2002: 1874) has indicated the nostalgic and sentimental representation of homeland as an aspect of trauma and says that the fairness of the homeland image is inversely related to the time one has been away from his country. This observation explains the vividness of the childhood memories written down almost half a century later and reveals the pain of loss and yearning. The concept of home in Canada does not seem problematic for Sonya, as she moves together with her husband rather often. It seems that in her heart, Estonia and the family estate remain her home, and wherever they move, she adapts. Her daughter seems to be her consolation and she does garden work or finds other things to do or learn when Karin is away from her in order to avoid pondering on the topic of home. In *If Home Is A Place* we see that there is a difference between Sofi and the other women. Sofi does not address the loss of home in detail. It seems that she rather wished to go to Germany and Canada, being excited and looking forward to the possibilities the cities there might offer, as well as meeting a suitable husband candidate. She had her own reasons at the time and these are discussed in depth in the corresponding sub-chapter about age and key aspects. Maria, Helgi and Sonya, on the other hand, clearly wanted to return to home.

The most severe trauma of the refugee journey for Sofi is the loss of her father, after they had parted in Germany with a serious quarrel. She develops an irrational causal connection between a leaving family member and someone's death, which starts appearing concurrently with changes in her family life. In the case of Sofi, we see, indeed, what Kirss

(2002: 1871) and George (2010: 397) both claim about the consequences of the trauma appearing later in life and that it may be aroused by an unexpected matter. The significant episode that triggers the final opening of her personal trauma and guilt about her father's death is when her daughter Esther moves farther away from home. Sofi perceives it as her fault and failure as a mother.

Another trauma that stands out in *If Home Is a Place* is related to food. The descriptions of the refugee journey concerning the period in DP camps show that the family had to manage in very poor conditions, having little or nothing to eat. On her way to Canada, Sofi dreams about spending her first salary on food and then eating it all by herself. As a result, we also see how food is treated in Canada, nothing is thrown away and a remarkable supply of food is kept at the homes of Maria, Helgi and Sofi.

The subchapter about the temporal characteristics discusses the beginning and end of the refugee journey. Kirss (2006b: 616) considers leaving Estonia as the beginning and reaching Sweden or Germany as the end of it. However, she is of the opinion that leaving Europe could be regarded as a part of the refugee journey as well. I will expand the concept of the refugee journey in terms of length even further in the context of the current thesis. The discussion is based on the concept of Benezer and Zetter (2014) who claim that the journey in time and the journey of the mind do not occur in parallel. The beginning of the journey is marked by planning and preparing for the departure. However, it is more difficult to determine the fixed end-point of the journey. It depends on how refugees see it themselves. People perceive the experience rather differently and therefore, the length of the journey also varies for every individual. In other words, refugee journey does not only imply physical movement between geographical locations.

The second topic introduces theories explaining self-perception and formation of cultural identity. Self-perception and cultural identity are reformed during the refugee journey and besides the influence of different events we must consider the membership in social groups. In this sense, the Estonian community in Canada strongly favoured following the traditions and keeping alive the language and cultural heritage, e.g., retaining the cultural identity in exile. The sub-chapter also outlines the theoretical sources emphasising the importance of revisit and place in self-narration. The sub-chapter also explains that the main reason why the refugees in Canada were afraid of visiting Estonia at the time was the fear of Soviet authorities and scepticism about the changes in political situation.

The second chapter discusses the refugee journey in the experience of the Estonian-Canadian women in the two primary sources. The sub-chapters analyse how gender, age, and family relationships influenced the refugee journey respectively. Thereupon, the key aspects of the refugee journey are detected and examined more closely. Firstly, the start of the journey of the mind, secondly, the start of the physical journey, and thirdly, leaving Europe. Reaching Canada brings more stability to the life of Sonya. The aspect is important in *If Home Is A Place* because it marks the decision of Sofi to part from her family and she leaves alone. Fourthly, the boat trip to Canada is the time for both Sonya and Sofi to look back and reflect on their journey so far. It also describes the fight between Sofi and her father. Fifthly, there is the death of the parents. The aspect is tragic for Sonya because she realises that the parting in Estonia was the final goodbye. In the episodes we see her growing heart-ache and desire to go to Estonia. The death of her in-laws also influences her life. We do not know about the instant reaction of Sofi concerning the death of her father, but when her mother dies, the trauma and guilt that has been hidden inside of

her for years finally unfolds. The sixth key aspect is the revisit, because in both of the books it establishes clarity in the questions regarding the location of home and self-perception. In 1991 Sonya travels to Estonia with her daughter and is reunited with her brother. The most emotional moment is the visit to their country estate grounds. When Sonya hears that the house is vanished she suddenly refuses to witness the bare ground. The estate has been something she identifies herself with and the loss is traumatic. She finds her peace by visiting the grave of her mother and states that she is finally at home (Constantine 2000: 238). The revisit is also important because she hears about her relatives and the past events that complete her perspective on herself as well as the past. In 1994 she visits Estonia again. The revisits are emotional but they bring inner peace for Sonya.

In *If Home Is A Place* only Helgi and Esther travel to Estonia in 1989 to visit the relatives of Elmar, Esther's father. Esther is born in Canada and is a descendant of a refugee, but we see the struggle with her identity and the transmitted fears and traumas projected on her resulting from the experience of her family. When we compare Sonya and Helgi, then they both experienced the loss of their childhood homes, but they react differently. We may assume that it is due to the fact that Sonya left alone, but Helgi was together with her family and this could have created a stronger feeling of home in Canada. The final sub-chapter discusses the identity dynamics. In the case of Sonya, there are no traces in the text about difficulties in self-identification, problems of relating herself to the surrounding world, or clashes of different cultures, which might be expected. It may be said that she develops a transcultural identity that does not interfere her self-perception of being Estonian and her Estonian cultural identity. Regarding the women in *If Home Is A Place*, we may conclude that Maria did not quite adapt in Canada. Before her death her mind turns to the childhood memories and she talks openly about her Russian origin which

she had to hide for decades and her name was changed into Mari in the false passport. This is related to the notion of name being a part of identity. In this sense a part of her identity was removed and it was returned only after her death. In terms of cultural identity, we may say that her background entails both - Estonian and Russian cultural influence.

The Estonian cultural identity of Sofi strengthens in exile. The foundation of her identity was standing for the Free Estonia, keeping alive the language and cultural heritage. When it was announced that Estonia's independence had been restored, it was like a part of her identity was lost. It probably forced her to reconsider her self-perception regarding the matter. There is no evidence in the text about Helgi and her self-perception. We may therefore assume that as she stayed in close contact with her family and lived together with Maria, she maintained her Estonian cultural identity.

The visit to Estonia is the first step for Esther in her self-definition and she realises that it is not her home. The second step is the death of her grandmother Maria that leads Esther to the thought that "you don't belong to a place until one of yours is in the ground" (Kivi 1995: 229). The last and decisive event in her search is the restoration of independence in Estonia. She feels that she is no longer obliged to stand for the Free Estonia and against the Soviets. She perceives herself as Canadian with a strong influence of Estonian culture. The foundations of her identity are place and location of home. In Esther we see also the transmitted fear and trauma of losing home and it could be one of the reasons why she finds it difficult to create something for herself.

The author of the thesis has explored the refugee journey of the women in the works of Kivi and Constantine with the purpose of contributing to the understanding of how and to what extent refugee experience affects the self-perception and cultural identity of an individual. It may be concluded from the analysis of the key aspects that the first

generation did not have significant problems with self-perception, cultural identity or locating home. On the contrary, their Estonian cultural identity became stronger and it seems that they wanted to preserve it. The described problems occur for the second generation, for the descendant of a refugee, Esther.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Liis Rosenthal

Refugee Journey of Estonian Women in K. Linda Kivi's *If Home Is a Place* and Crissa Constantine's *Banished from the Homeland*. Eesti naiste põgenikuteekond: K.Linda Kivi "If Home Is A Place" ja Crissa Constantine'i "Banished from the Homeland."

(magistritöö)

2018

Lehekülgede arv: 103

Täpsem teadmine eestlaste põgenikuteekonnast on oluline, et mõista nende kohanemist, identiteedi kujunemist ja saatust Kanadas, sest neid mõjutavad muuhulgas ka teekonnal läbielatud kogemused. Antud magistritöö käsitleb võrdlevalt kahe teose – K.Linda Kivi "If Home Is A Place" ja Crissa Constantine'i "Banished from the Homeland" naistegelaste põgenemisteedi. Töö eesmärk on uurida, kuidas põgenikuteekonna ja kodukaotuse trauma avaldub naiste hilisematel eluetappidel Kanadas.

Enesemääratlus ja kultuuriline identiteet on ühel või teisel viisil, otseselt või kaudselt mõjutatud põgenemisteedi läbielamist. Seepärast määratletakse ning analüüsitakse töös vastavaid võtmeaspekte. Analüüsitava teose tegelaste jaoks algas põgenemisteedi juba lahkumisvajaduse tekkega ning jätkus seejärel kodulävelt, mitte alles Eestist lahkumisega. Antud magistritöö arutleb ka põgenemisteedi lõpu määratlemise võimalikkuse üle ja arutleb, kas teekonna füüsiline pikkus ajas on võrdne vaimse teekonna kestvusega.

Töö esimene peatükk defineerib kesksed mõisted ning käsitleb põgenikuteekonna traumaatilist ja selle avaldumist põgenikulugudes. Gadi Benezeri ja Roger Zetteri käsitus põgenikuteekonnast on töö teoreetilise raamistiku lähtekohaks ning põgenemislugude, trauma ja identiteedi seoste peamiseks aluseks on Tiina Kirsi uurimused. Teises peatükis tuuakse välja peamised tegurid, mis mõjutavad tegelaste põgenemisteedi kogemust: inimese sugu, vanus ja perekondlikud suhted. Samuti vaadeldakse naistegelaste lahkumise põhjuseid ning otsust mõjutavaid tegureid. Lisaks käsitletakse liikumise suunda – kas ja kui palju on valikuvõimalusi ning kui palju jääb saatuse hooleks. Töö aluseks olevate kirjandusteoste analüüsi keskmes on teekonna võtmeaspektid, esilekerkivad probleemid ja teekonna kujutamine. Teoreetilises osas väljatoodud Eesti taaskülastuse oluline roll põgenike enesemääratluses ilmneb ka töö põhiallikest. Vastav peatükk analüüsib taaskülastust mõlemas teoses ning toob välja, kuidas see mõjutas ka kodu kui koha tunnetamist. Viimane alapeatükk käsitleb naistegelaste enesemääratlust ja kultuurilise identiteedi kujunemist ning analüüsib kuivõrd avaldub seejuures põgenikuteekonna trauma. Samuti tuuakse välja nende identiteetide aluste erinevused, st mille kaudu iga tegelane isedust määratleb.

Analüüsi tulemusena võib öelda, et esimese põlvkonna põgenikel ei esinenud küsitavusi enesemääratlusega. Nende kodumaa kultuuriline identiteet pigem tugevdus ja neile on oluline selle säilitamine. Iseduse määratlemise raskused ning kodu kontseptsiooni küsimused avalduvad aga teise põlvkonna esindajal Estheril, kuid tema jaoks saavad

määravateks episoodideks Eesti külastamine, vanaema surm Kanadas ja Eesti taasiseseisvumine.

Märksõnad: Crissa Constantine, Linda K. Kivi, Canadian-Estonian literature, refugee journey experience, trauma of refugee journey, refugee life-story, cultural transition, cultural identity, revisit to homeland.

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

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Refugee Journey and Cultural Transition of Estonian Women in K. Linda Kivi's *If Home Is a Place* and Crissa Constantine's *Banished from the Homeland*,

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