How to tell historical stories of the lived experience of totalitarianism in Soviet Latvia ‘Then’ from a 21st Century ‘Now’ standpoint? This critical analysis of the researcher’s published monograph *The KGB and Latvia* proposes a new theoretical framework for writing about the past - Historical Discovery Journalism - based on a dynamic hybrid storytelling model built around first person accounts of Stalinist repression in Latvia 1940–49.

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Abstract

This thesis makes a substantial intervention to the field of documentary journalism by proposing a new theoretical framework for writing about the past as well as new empirical thinking about approaches to historical journalism.

In a critical analysis of the researcher's published monograph *Up Against the Wall – the KGB and Latvia* (Helion, 2019), the thesis reflects on the researcher's many years of professional practice in documentary journalism fieldwork and combines this instinctive discovery-driven approach with theoretical analysis from multiple academic disciplines, such as oral history, memory studies, lived experience, history and subjectivity, as well as theory relating to narrative, photography and translation.

The main theoretical contribution to knowledge is a proposed method of writing about the past from a 'Now' perspective using eyewitness testimony which is termed Historical Discovery Journalism. This thesis identifies how, based on the proximity of primary sources to the actual events, and contextualised using reliable and verified published secondary sources, Historical Discovery Journalism can assemble multi-layered and detail-rich perspectives on 'what happened in the past'.

New empirical thinking drawn from the methodology of this model is a second contribution to knowledge, identifying two discovery techniques which have been employed in this method. One involves a pro-active approach to data gathering and the second a change in the positionality of the narrator to become actively involved in the telling of 'life-stories' rather than a dispassionate observer.

Theoretical constructions such as David Manning White's 1950 gatekeeping filter have been adapted for Soviet Latvia 1940-49, resulting in a further contribution of a period-specific Latvian Gatekeeping Filter for evaluating the political, social and geographic breadth of the datapool used in the narrative. The thesis argues that this technique of re-visiting the past and its adaptions in research and storytelling methods has the potential to challenge existing assumptions about the past and through a dynamic process of 'new discovery' cause history to be re-considered. This has the potential to be applied to future studies of periods of political upheaval and totalitarianism.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The researcher's published monograph *Up Against the Wall – the KGB and Latvia* (Helion, 2019), considers the entire period of Latvia's 20th Century relationship with the Soviet secret police (the NKVD, later KGB but commonly known to Latvians throughout as 'the Cheka') between 1905 and 2019. These dates span the first attempted anti-Tsarist revolution in Russia and Latvia through to the opening of the secret 'Cheka Bags' in Riga 114 years later. These bags were several sackfuls of records thought to be of KGB agents which were seized when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

However, for the purposes of this thesis, reference will be made only to the period of Soviet control between 1940-49. The rationale for limiting the critical analysis is that this was a decade of almost continuous and extreme political terror and repression, widespread guerilla war and the imposition – twice – of an alien ideology implemented forcefully by the Cheka. The ten-year period is Latvia's most historically significant era of political terror in its transition from an independent country to an occupied, subjugated state. What happened during this time impacted every family in the country for many years to come (Kibilds, 2018; Plakans, 2007; Dreifelds, 1996; Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993 et al).

The period encompasses the first Soviet occupation of 1940-41, known to this day by Latvians as 'the Year of Terror' and the Soviet re-occupation from 1944 onwards. During this period policies of post-war pacification were introduced, filtering and deporting former combatants, assessing the population for security risks and dealing with the threat from widespread partisan resistance before the imposition of unpopular ideological measures such as the 1949 collectivisation of agriculture. Latvian historians Pabriks and Purs (2013) searched NKVD and KGB files for crimes categorized under the Soviet Constitution as 'political' – in 1945 alone, there were 14,702 'political' arrests.

Political arrests in Latvia by year
1944 – 3,708
1945 – 14,702
1946 – 3,967

1947 – 2,424
1948 – 3,131
1949 – 3,542 (Pabriks and Purs, 2013 in Hunt, 2019: 121)

Official records show that between 1944 and 1956, 44,000 men were recruited into the *istrebiteli*, local militia groups commanded by Cheka officers tasked with going into the forests hunting partisans – whom they may well have lived alongside (Plakans, 2007: 203 in Hunt, 2019: 112). Cheka records show 12, 250 partisans fighting them, with five artillery guns, 738 machine guns and 11,863 rifles. They killed 111 Cheka officers and 259 soldiers, as well as 735 *istrebiteli*. The Cheka killed 2,407 partisans and arrested 5,489, of whom 498 were executed and most deported in 1949 (Hunt, 2019: 114-115).

Two mass deportations of opponents of the Soviet regime book-end this study; of 15,000 people in 1940-41 and a further 43,000 people in 1949. Plakans (2007) notes that this period "changed the life of Latvia and affected not only the whole of the state and society, but all persons individually" (2007: xi). The Nazi occupation of 1941-44 is not part of this focus of this thesis, as the published monograph was an exploration of the relationship between 'Soviet power' and the Latvian population. This thesis considers how the foundational data for this monograph was gathered by a non-Latvian speaking researcher, the methods used in translation, evaluation and stratification and the narrative adjustments required to tell a highly complex story full of graphic violence, torture and murder well for an audience in English. Among the problems encountered were missing archives, a reliance on 'one side of the story' - as Cheka officers do not give interviews or write books - issues of balance, bias, reliability and verification and 'memory wars' lasting to the present day. The narrative shift in positionality considered in Chapter 3.5 and the proposed technique of pro-active discovery (Chapter 3.4) are contributions to knowledge based on the critical analysis of professional practice informed by the literature relating to qualitative research methods. The elements involved in the theoretical technique of Historical Discovery Journalism proposed in this thesis are:

1. A synthesis of methods of professional journalism practice evaluating the value of sources in relation to their proximity to events;

2. The representation of a breadth of political positions in a conflicted and contested datafield and;
3. The contributions from new sources identified by data mining on location through a network of gatekeepers (see Chapter 4).

Up Against the Wall – the KGB and Latvia was translated into Latvian in the same year as the English edition was published, and has sold out two print runs there. An English paperback edition was published in 2021. The monograph was listed among the books of the year in the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies' book prize in 2020, and awarded an Honorary Mention. It is the researcher's third application of this technique of framing eyewitness accounts in documentary-travelogue examinations of long-forgotten chapters of history, the first two being about the scorched earth destruction of Finnmark in the far north of Norway (*Fire and Ice – the Nazi scorched earth destruction of Norway* The History Press, 2014) and the six battles of the Courland Pocket in western Latvia, both in 1944-45 (*Blood in the Forest – the end of the Second World War in the Courland Pocket* Helion, 2017).

1.1. The submission of the monograph and use of excerpts

The monograph will be submitted in its entire published form, and this thesis will refer to examples and relevant excerpts from the period 1940-49, indicated by page referencing. These excerpts will be inset in the thesis text for clarity to illustrate the main contribution to knowledge of this thesis, which is a proposed theoretical journalistic method of writing about history which combines discovery techniques from professional documentary practice and storytelling devices from broadcast production to showcase personal or 'lived' experience through text and pictures. It draws from a wide pool of primary and secondary sources and data to develop a hybrid method of narrative eyewitness storytelling about the past, which the researcher proposes as Historical Discovery Journalism. As this thesis will argue, this proposed new theoretical method is underscored by academic rigour relating to appropriate lenses of critical analysis, such as memory studies, oral history, history, translation and photography theory (see Chapter 4.5 onwards).

1.2. The objectives of this thesis

This thesis sets out its objectives as to:

1. Identify the component elements of Historical Discovery Journalism as a hybrid multi-layered, multi-source method of meaning-making from the contributions of people who were there, contextualised by secondary sources. Figure 6 (see p.67) identifies these constituent elements for the purposes of this thesis. Seven lenses of academic critical analysis are used, plus theory from journalism and documentary journalism, to underscore and affirm the researcher's technique in relation to qualitative research methods and journalism practice. As a result this thesis positions the published monograph at the intersections of journalism and oral history, history, memory studies, subjectivity and lived experience and argues that what it presents are stories about individual people in the past: what academics such as Ellis and Flaherty (1992) consider 'lived experience' (see section 5.6). Photographs and images offer snapshots in time, while accurate and nuanced translation is crucial to telling those stories accurately (see sections 5.8 and 5.9). The technique of Historical Discovery Journalism combining these elements is the main contribution to knowledge from this thesis.
2. Evaluate two new methods of empirical thinking about writing the past from a 'Now' perspective which were identified from the critical analysis in this thesis; namely that of a discovery technique titled here as Pro-Actively Seeking Access (see section 3.5) and a shift in narrative positionality titled here as Active Included Narrator (see section 3.6).
   This is an adaption rather than the abandonment of the long-standing tradition in journalism that the narrator assumes a position of dispassionate and disinterested observers. As Dvorkin (2006) states: "In short, they must not project themselves on the events they cover". However, this shift in positionality is informed by the turn towards narrative in the social sciences as a 'sense-making practice' as stated by political terrorism theorists Graef, da Silva and Lemay-Herbert (2020): "Narratives are tools to understand, negotiate and make sense of situations we encounter." In letting elderly

contributors speak at length in face-to-face encounters describing both their 'living situation' as well as their 'lived experience', the narrator is 'being true to their story' and adhering to journalistic ethics of representation, while also 're-centring' the narrative around them: in effect, as psychologist Robert M. Gordon (1995) describes it, empathetically 'putting himself in their place'. In embedding learning from the disciplines of political terror, psychology, subjectivity, autoethnography and lived experience into journalism, the two methods proposed are a further contribution to techniques employed in writing about events in the past.

3. Propose a method of evaluating and ranking data from specific contested and conflicted periods in the past based on the researcher's experience writing about Soviet Latvia, which is titled the Latvian Gatekeeping Filter (see Figures 4, 5, 6; Table 1).

   This filter has been developed from the datafield encountered by an English-speaking researcher working in Latvia's post-totalitarian society through a network of Latvian gatekeepers. It has been adapted from David Manning White's original 1950 news Gatekeeping Filter and constructed as part of the critical analysis for this thesis. It can be used to assess and evaluate the political positionality, possible bias and potential contribution to the over-arching narrative of source material to aid in the production of a panoramic perspective from a 'Now' standpoint on 'what happened in the past'. An analysis of gatekeeping has been an important process in the disassembly of the published monograph and the deconstruction of Historical Discovery Journalism and is discussed in Chapter 4 (see page 55). The Latvian Gatekeeping Filter has the potential to be adapted and applied by other researchers writing about societies in other times which have been affected by political upheaval, totalitarianism or periods where memories are contested and conflicted.

1.3. Identification of a gap in the knowledge

The published monograph was – and remains - the first to be published in English dealing specifically with the role and methods of the Soviet secret police, or Cheka, in Latvia. This gap in the knowledge and the literature in English was identified

before the process of writing began. Using existing written sources as a knowledge base (Nollendorfs and Oberlander, 2005; Plakans, 2007; Dreifelds, 1993; Swain 2003, 2004 et al), the researcher relied upon instinctive journalistic practice during some phases of the data collection period, building a network of contacts across Latvia and constantly revising the direction of the book depending on which data could be found, while also looking for ways to represent the view and position of the Soviet power structure two decades after the USSR collapsed.

While the researcher accepted this situation as part of the landscape in which he was working, and his attempts to solve the problems it raised as part of 'the journey' of writing this manuscript, this process has highlighted a gap in the knowledge that this thesis attempts to address: there is no manual to explain how to represent one side of a power relationship when it is missing. This critical analysis identifies the methods used to overcome these problems with relation to the literature from multiple disciplines of qualitative research and social science methods. One solution lay in the process common in documentary journalism and theorised here for the purposes of this critical analysis: laying out and grouping the datapools and testimony – the 'raw materials' of history as Marwick (2010) would say - that the published monograph was drawn from. This helped structure chronology and aid in the identification of themes emerging from the 'commonality' in eyewitness accounts: a technique drawn from the researcher's period working as an interviewer and producer in news and current affairs for a decade (1990-1999), then as a documentary maker (1999-2014), culminating in a series of narratorless *Radio Ballads* for BBC Radio 2, where the narrative was driven by the interviews, which in turn inspired new songs.

The selection and sequencing of this data into a narrative structure was conducted despite certain limits (such as the relative lack of Soviet sources) but by that stage a sense of *realpolitik* had descended on the narrative process, in that the book could be written mainly from an ethnic Latvian perspective of contact with the Soviet security police and the resulting experience: that of 'the people this was done to'. Copyright-free photographs, poems and extracts from rare UNESCO-protected letters written on the bark of trees and posted from Siberia enhance this personal perspective, combined with eyewitness testimony drawn from letters, trials, sociological studies, folklore and publications from the Latvian diaspora. Although there are many autobiographies and personal profiles of significant political figures in

the Latvian literature, this personal perspective is under-represented in the literature in English, so the monograph filled a gap in the existing knowledge relating to a Latvian perspective on gulag studies (drawing on Celmina, 1985; Kalniete 1989; Knagis 1999; the poems of Knuts Skujenieks, the films of Dzintra Gekas); the partisan war 1944-53 (Swain, 2009, 2010; Turcinskis 2011, Skultans 1998, interview with Zihmanis et al) and especially in relation to Cheka methods (interviews with Dreimane, Krilovs, Bruvers, Lesinka, Mucins et al in Hunt, 2019). In many cases the content discovered or generated through the researcher's pro-active approach had not been published before in either Latvian or English, prompting the monograph's speedy translation into Latvian.

While the published monograph identified a gap in the knowledge and filled it, this critical analysis identifies the techniques used to generate new data and compile a panoramic datapool drawing from Latvian, English and where possible Soviet sources.

It identifies how Historical Discovery Journalism can make a safeguarded and academically reliable contribution to studies of a Soviet totalitarian past in Latvia 1940–49 which, as Section 5 considers, is a period where memory in academic discourse is still contested between Latvian and Russian historians. This thesis not only tests the data and testimony in the published monograph for its value in both a storytelling and academic sense, but offers this researcher's pathway through the fragmented datafield of Soviet-occupied Latvia 1940-49 as a possible template for future students wishing to write about similarly complex political power situations in other periods and other societies.

1.4. The structure of the thesis

The thesis begins by establishing its focus in the 1940-49 period of Soviet repression in Latvia. Chapter 1 identifies a gap in the knowledge that this thesis seeks to satisfy (p.11) and outlines the development of the researcher's hybrid technique of journalism (p.11, 12) from his professional practice as a broadcast documentary maker and previous monographs as an author prior to entering academia.

Chapter 2 (pp.16-28) reviews the literature relating to the landscape of political terror and personal trauma in Soviet Latvia in the 1940s, which is the context and backdrop against which the lived experience gathered by the researcher plays out and informs.

This includes an overview of the resistance to the Soviet regime within Latvia and the apparatus through which totalitarian control was enforced.
Chapter 3 (pp.29-56) critically analyses the methodological elements of the researcher's technique of Historical Discovery Journalism, from the core component of the eyewitness interview, its ethical representation and how it can be used in the storytelling frameworks being employed. These include the technique of Freytag's Pyramid, a version of the Beginning, Middle, End structure that has been employed in storytelling for centuries. This chapter also assesses the contribution of journalistic methods developed from the researcher's professional practice that have been identified through the critical analysis for this thesis: that of 'Pro-Actively Seeking Access' (p.44-49) – seeking out sources of information – and 'Active Included Narrator' (p.50) - where the narrator becomes an actor in the narrative in order to explain and add human relatability.
Significant processes of gatekeeping in this journalistic method have been identified through this critical analysis, which are considered in Chapter 4 (pp.55-69). These processes relate to the data-gathering for the monograph itself and the stratification and separation of the raw data gathered on location. The critical analysis has led to the development in this thesis of a Latvian-specific gatekeeping filter (pp.63-69) which identifies a range of perspectives and contributions used in the narrative structure to represent the viewpoints in the lived experience in Soviet Latvia.
Section 4.5 onwards of Chapter 4 (69-95) examines the lenses of critical analysis considered for their evaluation of the positive and negative aspects of eyewitness testimony and narrative assembly. The theoretical literature on Journalism and documentary indicates that although the professional practice may be considered 'instinctive' it is actually embedded through years of professional experience, training, compliance with editorial guidelines, programme research and production and best practice. Oral history as a prime source has a relationship to 'history' while the reliability or otherwise of memory is an important factor in accounts of lived experience, subjective eyewitness testimony and also in the construction of narrative – such as where the story begins and ends. Two additional lenses with an important bearing on the construction of the published monograph are considered: that of the role of translation in the process of 'meaning-making' in the narrative, and the value of photographs as pictorial evidence of the conditions of the 'lived experience' and as a record of the reality of totalitarianism.

Chapter 5 (pp.96-108) forms the discussion element of the thesis and includes a comparative analysis of other works revisiting periods of totalitarian dictatorship in Argentina, fascist Italy and Nazi-occupied France, finding similarities in narrative technique and observational aspects deployed by the researchers. There is consideration of the shortcomings of the Historical Discovery Journalism technique – namely, that the data relies on the fractured and fragmented nature of the archives in a society splintered by decades of a 'winner takes all' totalitarian approach. This has resulted in gaps in the knowledge.

The thesis deconstructs passages from the published monograph to analyse how this technique seeks to acknowledge these gaps in the knowledge and the data and also to apply accounts of eyewitness 'lived experience' to help address this shortage of documentary evidence from human perspectives when writing about 'Then' from 'Now'. The discussion also considers the application of this Historical Discovery Journalism technique to a subsequent monograph, written alongside this thesis, which has applied and refined the learning from the critical analysis. Publication of this monograph in October 2023 has prompted the descendants of Latvian Legionnaires living in the UK to come forward with important new information about aspects of this experience, which has added fresh and significant detail to episodes of war from 80 years ago. This is evidence that the Historical Discovery Journalism method has the capability to be a dynamic, interactive and responsive process that can generate new material – in this case 'what my father told me' - and so update 'what is known about the past'.

In the next section this thesis will consider the literature on the period of political terror and lived experience between 1940-1949 in Soviet Latvia and identify the contribution made by the secondary literature to the contextualisation and framing of the first person testimony.

Chapter 2. The literature on ‘lived experience’ in Soviet Latvia 1940–49 and the writing of this monograph

Because of the profound impact of this turbulent decade on Latvia as a nation, it has been an area of intense study by historians such as Nollendorfs and Oberlander (eds, 2005); Ozola and Jansons (2011); Dreifelds (1996), Misiunas and Taagepera (1993) and many more. Dreifelds notes that Latvia was ‘an unwilling member’ of the USSR for almost half a century, during which time Latvian society was ‘profoundly affected and moulded by the Soviet system’, losing control over personal freedoms, the ability to socialise and communicate with each other freely and even to whistle Latvian folk songs in public. Dreifelds writes that: “Only at the individual level, within families and small groups of friends and also through surreptitious and symbolic communications were Latvian values preserved” (1996: 10). For this reason, the researcher identified personal memories, stories and methods of individual memory-making – such as photographs – as important sources in reconstructing an alternative, private version of reality in those times: a grassroots, human history of totalitarianism, told by the sectors of society that were on the receiving end of this ideological battle.

Strods (2012) argues that the consolidation of Soviet rule in the Baltic state from 1944 onwards consisted of four stages: occupation, annexation, integration and colonisation. “All these phases of Sovietisation were aimed at the political, economic and spiritual subjugation of Latvia to the totalitarian dictatorship of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union” (2012: 212).

The aim of the published monograph was to tell this story through verified personal examples to demonstrate in the words of people who were there what that political, economic and spiritual subjugation meant to individual Latvians. The various clauses of the repressive Soviet statute Article 58 define in legal terms what was considered ‘anti-Soviet activity’ by the Latvian SSR regime: the oral history accounts and memories gathered by the researcher on location and from the literature illustrate what this means at a personal level.

Hazans (2019) notes that the Soviet regime’s deportations of 14-15 June 1941 sent 15,424 Latvians as ‘class enemies’ to camps in northern parts of Russia, around 40

per cent of whom died. When Germany invaded two weeks later, another 53,000 people fled to the USSR. Between 1942-45, an estimated 242,000 people – or 13.4 percent of the population - were lost due to forced migration. These people were either mobilised into the Nazi army or Red Army, sent to Germany to work in labour programmes, or left Latvia for Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden to avoid life under the Soviet regime. Hazans writes:

> This was the starting point of the post-war wave of the Latvian diaspora. About 45,000 went to the US; Australia and Canada received about 20,000 each; 17,000 ended up in the UK; 15,000 settled in Germany, 4,000 in Sweden, 5,000 in South America and 5,000 elsewhere (Hazans, 2019: 40).

There was also an influx of people into Latvia from the Soviet Union. At the end of the war, approximately 15,000 people returned to Latvia from the USSR. Between 1946-1948 the return of refugees and military personnel, the centrally-managed personnel and the centrally-managed influx of foreign workers from various regions of the USSR brought 323,000 people into Latvia in just three years. After the death of Stalin in 1953 and the denunciation of his years of repression at the 20th Communist Party Congress three years later, around 80 percent of those exiled in 1949 returned to Latvia (Hazans, 2019: 41).

These figures offer a glimpse into the disruption to Latvian society during these years and the loss of significant population elements, including the murder of 70,000 Latvian Jews in the Holocaust of 1941 living in the main cities of Riga, Daugavpils, Ventspils, Liepāja, Rezekne and many other towns and villages (Yad Vashem, online). The hastily-organised resettling of 50,000 Baltic Germans to Germany in 1939 and a further 11,000 in 1941 as part of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop pact removed an economically and politically dominant class from Latvian society. As Kibilds (2018) notes:

> About 50,000 people had left Latvia in a matter of weeks. They were mostly the elites. It sparked an economic crisis. Demand decreased rapidly as the greater spenders had left. Real estate prices plunged as thousands of apartments had been left; some Rīga streets were abandoned entirely. The GDP was driven down by the closure of hundreds of companies. There was a labor shortage as well. A gaping hole had been torn in the Latvian nation (Kibilds, 2018).

2.1. Resistance to Soviet control and the Partisan War 1944–53

Armed attacks against the Soviet occupiers, local Party officials and their structures of oppression such as Cheka headquarters were common, and there are many examples in Latvian literature. Accounts were organised by the researcher both chronologically and geographically to construct a national timeline of resistance to Stalinist power (see Chapter 8 of the published monograph, p.106-120). This technique built a picture not only of the scale and nature of armed resistance across Latvia but also of individual human experience – the fate of the Annas partisans in Courland being one example (See Chapter 9 *The Whispering Society* pp.124–125) while also highlighting the cruel treatment of fighters like Eduards Auze (p.125) who were captured alive by Soviet security forces. However, the security forces and political structures contained many Latvians and there was concern for their fellow countrymen, even as partisans or 'bandits'. "They are our Latvians too," said Central Committee Third Secretary J. Jurgens, later sacked (p.119).

Accounts of resistance were drawn from the translation of Communist Party records by Plakans (2007), publications by Skultans (1998), Swain (2009), Statiev (2010), Turcinskis (2011) Rotbaha (2015) et al, and from interviews by the author with surviving partisans (Modris Zihmanis, p.143-144). The critical analysis has identified the organisation of these accounts of resistance to aid 'meaning-making' as an important element in constructing a tapestry of the lived experience of the time. This stage in the collection, organisation and evaluation of data makes a significant contribution to an ongoing and pro-active journalistic process of historical discovery. By seeing where the existing data is concentrated in the literature, it is possible for the purposes of the intended publication to see where more information about 'Soviet times' is needed. In this way, blind spots in Latvian history or social memory that the researcher intends to include in his narrative may be identified and addressed through pro-active research. Thus, efforts to identify sources of more information can be focused through regional gatekeepers, museums or historians and 'holes' in the narrative can be joined up using storytelling devices on location which inject information from the secondary sources.

The process of critical analysis confirmed the value of the decision made during the research phase to consciously seek out in the literature examples of resistance to

Soviet power across the wider population, not just partisans. Folklorist Rotbaha (2015) particularly captured the experiences of schoolchildren who collected weapons for the partisans from the forests and daubed anti-Soviet slogans on the walls of their town. This ended with several of them dying in the gulag, particularly 16 year-old Dzintra Purvina (pp.122-123).

These secondary sources from the literature detailed the realities of partisan life and identified a panorama of resistance to Soviet rule across ethnic Latvian society. Interviews with former partisans collected by Latvian academics such as Skultans (1998) and Reinsone (2015) contribute vivid personal descriptions of the terror felt when these individuals were being hunted by Soviet security forces, and of the death and trauma experienced around them. These are individual human stories, and stories of small resistance groups in the forest, while historians such as Nollendorfs and Oberlander (2005), Swain (2009, 2010) and Plakans (2007) contribute a wider picture of lived experience in Latvia during the imposition and enforcement of Soviet control. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.1. The apparatus of totalitarian control

Through the translation of Soviet-era documents from the Latvian National Archives, the publication of the findings of the KGB Commission led by Jarinovska (2016); regional Communist Party records by Jansons and Zalite (2018), Plakans (2007), Swain (2009, 2010) and the contextualisation of Nollendorfs and Oberlander (2005), a picture emerges of the apparatus of repression imposed across Latvia by the Soviet regime from 1940 onwards.

Soviet control was maintained by use of Article 58 of the Russian SFSR [Soviet Federated Socialist Republic] criminal code, which listed counter-revolutionary crimes. Charges included ‘struggle against the revolutionary movement’ or membership of an organisation that was referred to as ‘fascist’ or ‘counter-revolutionary’ which gave ‘almost total unrestricted rights’ to punish activities the authorities considered anti-state, such as expressing views contrary to official policy. Among the various clauses of Articles 58 were:

58–4: assisting the international bourgeoisie;

58–6: spying;

58–10: anti-Soviet propaganda;

58–11: membership in a counter-revolutionary organisation;

58–13: active work or active struggle against the working class and revolutionary movement performed while being in a responsible or undercover position under Tsarist rule or under counter-revolutionary governments during the civil war (Viksne, in Nollendorfs and Oberlander 2005: 60–61).

Those found guilty of breaching the various sub-clauses of Article 58 were convicted and exiled for years in Siberian gulags and resettlement areas. These measures led to a response from resistance groups. The authorities reported 1,562 Soviet personnel killed and 560 wounded over the entire period of partisan activity (Plakans, 1995: 155). Local militias known as Destroyer battalions [*istrebiteli*] were organised to hunt down the partisans. The bodies of men and women killed in these security operations were dumped in the centre of country towns like Kuldiga as a warning to others. Those who mourned them were identified as sympathisers or relatives and earmarked for deportation (Liulevicius, 2015). Dreifelds (1996) notes that, according to Communist Party First Secretary Kalnberzins, in the period 1945–1953, 26,500 were arrested by state security organs, 2,321 were killed as bandits, 43,702 were deported as ‘kulaks’ and ‘supporters of bandits’ and another 46,350 were arrested by organs of the militia and procuracy.

These statistics may have been intended originally to show how effective the Soviet clampdown on resistance was ‘then’, but from a ‘Now’ perspective they indicate how widespread that resistance was and how general – and sometimes how petty – the categorisations of resistance were. By way of comparison, Dreifelds notes, if equivalent proportions were applied to the United States, more than 20 million people would have been involved (1996: 45). Other tactics of deterrence included Soviet double agents infiltrating guerrilla groups to identify them and their support network, and fake guerrillas perpetrating atrocities against local communities to discredit the partisans. Among notable examples in the published monograph is infiltrator-assassin Janis Klimkans, who began as a double agent in Daugavpils infiltrating partisan groups in the east, then assassinating leaders such as Peteris Supe (Turcinskis, in Hunt, 2019: 113). Secret agents recruited by MI6 and the CIA

from former Latvian Legionnaires and refugees in the west were sent back to establish links with the resistance but, due to the KGB's penetration of British intelligence, most were captured or killed very quickly (Bower, 1993; Dorril, 2000; Kasekamp, 2018: 129). The research for the published monograph connected the KGB activities of Klimkans in the east with his later infiltration operations in the western region of Courland, posing as a partisan to thwart efforts by MI6 and the CIA to insert agents. His success brought him to the attention of MI6 in London and he was extracted to the UK to advise on operations in Latvia, an achievement that displays the true complexity of the counter-intelligence operation run by KGB chief Major Janis Lukasevics outlined in Bower (1993: 207–245) and Dorril (2000: 515–516).

By 1947 the Soviet power base was strong enough for more sweeping Communist measures, such as the abolition of private property and the collectivisation of agriculture. The first collective farms – the kolkhoz – were introduced in 1947 and steep taxes levied on those who resisted joining. Glimpses of the reaction of the local population to anti-partisan operations and the planned collectivisation of agriculture can be seen in the reports to senior Communist Party officials (Plakans, 2007). Vast numbers of troops were diverted into Latvia from Russia and Poland and sent against partisan units (Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993). Partisans were offered amnesties to become 'legal' but were often immediately deported after giving themselves up. Eventually mass deportation was used to cut the partisan support base among the ethnic Latvian farmers in the countryside and end resistance to the collectivisation of agriculture. In March 1949, 43,000 Latvians were rounded up and sent to forced labour camps in Siberia, including partisans, partisan supporters and their families (Senn, in Nollendorfs and Oberlander, 2005: 31).

The 1949 deportations are an appropriate endpoint for this thesis as they dealt a body blow to the guerrilla movement, depriving partisans of food supplies and scaring off potential recruits. Misiunas and Taagepera write that as the reality of a long-term Soviet regime set in, Latvian society began to accept that "stable jobs and careers were better assured by collaboration". They write:

> As more people collaborated, more became targets of guerrilla counter-terror, with the results that victims' families became more pro-Soviet. More people joined the Komsomol and the Soviet militia. As victory for the guerrillas (with Western help) became ever more unlikely, their national-liberation aura was increasingly transformed into an image of rebels who hit and ran, leaving the civilian population to face the wrath of those in power. People were tired of living between two terrorisms (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993: 92–93).

Thus it can be seen that there is a wide range of secondary source literature in English by both Latvian and Western academics which explains the social upheaval and context of Soviet Latvia 1940-49. This literature helps locate the specific circumstances and goals of those resisting the Soviet regime, and explains why partisans took up arms. The response of the Soviet authorities to resistance is also detailed in these accounts, and strong indications of the nature of the lived experience of the partisans and their supporters can be gleaned from them. The betrayal and ambush of a partisan group in Varkava on the morning of Sunday 16 September 1945 makes for particularly bleak reading (see Hunt, 2019: 112).
In the next section this critical analysis will consider the reasons informing the decision to write this published monograph, and the background to the narrative style employed.

2.2. Finding a narrative style that brings these sources together

The published monograph was the third by the researcher, all written in the form of a journalistic travelogue exploring a chapter of history through eyewitness accounts. Therefore it made sense to continue applying this narrative style, adjusting it to take account of the data and the developments along the path of writing it. The first monograph was a journey across the far north of Norway exploring the scorched earth destruction of Finnmark by the Nazis in 1944: the second took readers across Courland in western Latvia hearing stories from survivors about the six epic battles of the Courland Pocket 1944-45.
The researcher identified the KGB as a possible idea for a further monograph after interviewing a former soldier in Courland turned partisan, who explained his motivation was to stop the return of the Soviet system. He had been sentenced to death for throwing a hand grenade at the Interior Minister's car but that was commuted to nine years' hard labour. This moment generated curiosity as to whether

anyone ‘would talk’ about their experiences of contact with the Cheka. The researcher’s professional practice making documentaries led to the decision to seek out contributors to interview and to write the story as a long-form narrative in the style of a broadcast documentary script and from the perspective of ‘the people this was done to’ – the ethnic Latvian population. Where new interviews could not be carried out, testimony was drawn from unedited archive interviews, from clips for Riga’s City of Culture exhibitions in 2014 and drawn from published literature, both academic and autobiographical. What would distinguish this narrative account was the perspective of the researcher as ‘an outsider’ looking from a ‘Now’ perspective at what happened to those arrested, interrogated and then punished by the Cheka for their resistance to the regime. This would be aimed at an audience in English, through an English publisher, so the narrator would explain and situate these stories accordingly.

Plakans (2007) was a key text in explaining the structure of the apparatus of power around which eyewitness accounts, whether as fresh interviews or from the archives, could be grouped. The process was one of finding personal accounts, assigning them to a category then arranging them along a chronological timeline and seeing how the story flowed. This highlighted several stages of repression as the Soviet regime consolidated its group on Latvia, and these were used to bookmark chapters. While the monograph did not set out to be an academic study, the critical analysis for this thesis has demonstrated there is considerable overlap with the methods of qualitative researchers and that this proposed method draws from multiple academic disciplines in terms of approach. Among these disciplines are those of oral history, narrative ethnography, memory studies, subjectivity and lived experience (see Chapter 4.5 onwards). The discovery aspect of finding ‘new voices’ – in academic terms, ‘prime sources’ - raises the possibility of new data resulting which may challenge accepted views of history, which Marwick (2010) considers as “the past as we know it from the work of historians”. With new voices identified by the researcher’s pro-active discovery technique in the field and the monograph presenting them through the narrator’s active and included presence as a character in the story ‘framing’ the voice of eyewitnesses, the learning from this critical analysis has identified that this monograph offers an audience ‘the past as we know it from people who were there and whose voices have not yet been heard’. This data gathering process, identified by the critical analysis for this thesis, has led to the

construction of content and ranking evaluation systems (Figures 4, 5, 6; Table 1) that have the potential to be applied to other studies of political conflict and terror.

In terms of how the writer approaches this subject matter it is an 'augmented narrative' – in that the researcher takes time to listen and talk to his contributors, bring together the facts of their lives and amplify what happened to them when they were suddenly plunged into political violence. To emphasise the telling of these stories about 'then' from a modern 'Now' perspective, the narrator augments the eyewitness testimony with descriptions of his journey to meet the contributor, summaries of the geopolitical changes that led to these turbulent times and even the time of year and weather – as Latvian life revolves around several significant cultural events, such as 'Jani' or Midsummer, and the extremes of the Latvian winter are often a factor in the stories. This technique of augmenting the story with detail drawn from anecdotes, poems, observation, autobiographies and 'events on the road' is intended to create a much more immersive story for the reader and enhance their engagement so those unfamiliar with the subject matter absorb the facts and the geography as the narrator moves across the landscape, relating shifts between sequences in a pithy yet conversational style familiar to radio listeners.

However, the terms 'augmented narrative' and 'immersive storytelling' are not suitable to describe this long-form prose technique, as they are more commonly associated in 21st Century journalism with 'augmented reality' and multi-sensory environments created by technology, headsets and even scents (Arrow, 2016). Instead, the definition of 'documentary' by Sheila Curran Bernard (2011) summarises what *Up Against the Wall* attempts to do. Bernard, an Emmy award-winning media maker, writes:

> Documentaries bring viewers into new worlds and experiences through the presentation of factual information about real people, places and events, generally – but not always – portrayed through the use of actual images and artifacts […]
>
> But factuality alone does not define documentary films; it's what the filmmaker does with those factual elements, weaving them into an overall narrative that strives to be as compelling as it is truthful (2011: 1-2)

Bernard says the values of the documentarist are transferable from the discipline of 'creative non-fiction' broadcasting to counterparts working – like the researcher –

with long-form narrative, where, Bernard says, “authors use the tools of the novelist and dramatist to present factual, journalistic content” (2011:3). Because of the choices the writer makes in what to present, the medium is ‘unavoidably subjective, no matter how balanced or neutral the presentation seeks to be’ (2011: 5).

Gerard (1996) compiles five characteristics that make non-fiction writing creative. First, it has “an apparent subject and a deeper subject”; secondly, it is “released from the usual journalistic requirement of timeliness”. Thirdly, it “always tells a good story”; fourth: there is a sense of reflection by the author – it is a “finished thought”. Finally, it “shows serious attention to the craft of writing” and the story will feel “seamless and inevitable, fully and actively engaging the viewer” (Gerard, in Bernard, 2011: 2-3). The researcher would argue that the published monograph meets at least four of these five criteria.

The process of critical analysis for this thesis has identified a number of discovery and narrative processes common in journalism that had a significant impact on both the data gathering approach – pro-actively looking for ‘new voices’ – and adaptions to the storytelling style to make the narrator a character in the telling of the ‘lived history’ of a section of a past society that had yet to tell its story for an audience in English. The inclusion of the narrator in the story began as a device to provide continuity and to explain ‘jumps’ in the story from Latvian experiences in the Russian Civil War, to Stalin’s Purges and then the 1940-41 and 1944-1991 Soviet occupations. However, as this critical analysis focuses on the decade 1940-49, the narrator presents ‘lived’ stories of partisan resistance, deportation and the rupture of families which affected the vast majority of households in Latvia at that time. Six eyewitnesses were identified who had different stories to tell about their relationship with the Cheka, so this became the spine that the over-arching consideration of the methods of the Cheka across Latvia was built around. Where new interviews could not be carried out, testimony was used from unedited archives, then from clips for Riga’s City of Culture exhibitions in 2014 and then drawn from published literature, both academic and autobiographical. The constant ‘single voice’ narrative bonded disparate voices describing their experiences of repression across several generations through a diverse range of expressive platforms, from TV documentaries to poetry collections, autobiographies to DVDs to films online. From this critical analysis the researcher has theorised the techniques used in the writing of the monograph, which have relevance and potential for future researchers examining

societies under past totalitarian control or experiencing repression or political upheaval. Some of these techniques can be found in other published works, notably Farmer (2000) and Gordon (1997) which are considered in the following section.

2.4 Resonance with other studies of totalitarian terror

Journalists do not have a set methodology for gathering content for their work in the same way as historians or social scientists do. Rather, as Sanders (2003) says, they have a 'commitment to the story' (2003: 45). They adapt to circumstances and develop solutions to particular challenges in the storytelling; they find a way to tell the story as it presents itself. This commitment led to the researcher travelling to Latvia many times during the writing of the published monograph to conduct self-funded field work to gather content, interview contributors, talk to people and see the locations where 'history' had taken place – what Pierre Nora (2002) calls '*lieux de memoire*' (*the places of memory*).

One example with particular relevance for the researcher's method of 'going back to a site of history', is that of Sarah Farmer (2000) who investigated the commemoration of 642 French men, women and children massacred by the Nazis in the village of Oradour-sur-Glane in June 1944. In it, she uses to great effect many similar techniques to the researcher's published monograph – seeing for herself, asking questions, double-checking details. The ruins of the shattered village were preserved in 1946 as a monument to French suffering under the German occupation and are now a tourist site. To examine how the memory of 'the martyred village' sits in French consciousness and remembrance, Farmer conducted extensive archival research and went to the location to interview survivors and local officials. The site was originally intended as a site of pilgrimage with the careful preservation of personal items of those killed but long-serving town mayor Robert Lapuelle told Farmer, as thirty years had passed, the visitors were now more like tourists (Farmer, 2000: 113).

Although preserved exactly as the village would have been at the time of the massacre, Farmer discovered that not everything is right, such as 'the car of Dr Desorteau' – the town doctor who was stopped by German guards as he returned to

the village, and then shot with other townspeople. Restoration experts were trying to preserve this car, which had been left exposed to the elements for 50 years, but Farmer discovered that 'the locals' knew the car had actually belonged instead to the wine merchant, not the doctor. The doctor's real car – evidenced by a photograph - – was parked by a wall in his former garden (Fig. 23, 2000: 203). This is a discovery generated by what journalists would call 'legwork' and is an excellent example of why location visits can be productive.

Another text with useful parallels to the published monograph in terms of subject matter is *Ghostly Matters* by Avery Gordon (1997), which explores the stories of 'the Disappeared' in Argentina's Dirty War between 1976 and 1983. Gordon's work on the response of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo to loved ones being 'disappeared' during the military dictatorship – some drugged and thrown into the sea from aircraft – bears close relation thematically to the position of Latvians between 1940–49. Gordon describes a society "haunted by terrible deeds … when people you know or love are there one minute and gone the next … when an ordinary building you pass every day harbours the façade separating the scream of its terroristic activities from the hushed talk of fearful conversations" (Gordon 2008: 64). There are parallels with Latvian mothers crossing the road with their children rather than take them past the front door of the dreaded KGB headquarters in Riga. Gordon breaks down the experiences of 'the Disappeared' of Argentina into stages which mirror the experiences of Latvians in the Stūra Māja: activity before arrest, experiences during interrogation, punishment. There are phases of illegal abduction, being held in detention centres with specific routines for prisoners, the 'normalisation of excess' of being turned into a number and of being isolated, sometimes blindfolded or hooded – the 'method' of totalitarian control. Gordon develops ideas of 'ghosts' and 'haunting' as she examines the experiences of relatives of the thirty thousand Argentines who 'disappeared' during the years of military dictatorship (Gordon, 2008: 72). The ghost, she argues, "is primarily a symptom of what is missing. It gives notice not only to itself, but also what it represents" (Gordon 2008: 63). This loss is usually of a life, or sometimes of a path not taken, and, she says, "we must offer it a hospitable memory *out of a concern for justice*" (writer's itals, 2008: 64). The justice here, in the researcher's view and in the realisation of Latvian KGB researcher Inese Dreimane (in Hunt, 2019), is in restoring those victims of totalitarian violence to named

individuals whose lives were cut short: of 'putting a face' – often quite literally – to a name.

There is an important parallel also between Gordon's themes of ghostly presences in Argentina and the work of Inese Dreimane at the KGB headquarters in Riga. She took on the task of identifying 99 people shot by the NKVD at Riga's Central Prison as the Soviets withdrew in 1941. Dreimane began to dream about the 99 people as she attempted to put names and faces to them so they could be remembered – a work of memorialisation. In Chapter 4 of the published monograph (*Say our names – murder at the Central Prison*, Hunt, 2019: 58) she described how grey shadows began appearing in her dreams, asking her to name them. It took her two and a half years to complete the research, during which time she managed to name and find photographs of 56 of those who were killed. This episode is telling because it shows the impact and toll such work has on those who are trying to find out 'what happened' in such situations, and the responsibility they feel to complete it. In addition, Dreimane's experience bears out Gordon's awareness of ghostly presence at such sites. She said:

> I got to the moment when I had collected 20 photographs. I looked at the pictures and I thought: "Oh my God. That's who you are. That's who you really are. And someone put a bullet between those eyes." (Dreimane, in Hunt 2019: 58–59).

This comparative analysis with other published works exploring the impact of totalitarianism on individual lives – namely, cutting them short – has shown there is similarity in the modus operandi of repressive regimes. How they deal with their opponents, the stages of their arrest, interrogation and eventual disposal has commonality from Argentina through the Nazis to the Soviet-occupied Baltics.

In the next section, this thesis will explore the methodology employed in this critical analysis, and consider similarities between journalistic techniques used in the data-gathering for the monograph and qualitative research methods in the social sciences.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

From the researcher's experience, documentary journalism requires a level of engagement with the study topic, the data and the people involved far in excess of the regular news cycle, as well as a solutions-focused approach to creating narrative from raw data. Schon (1983) argues that 'reflective journalism' is a more appropriate term for this approach rather than the traditional views of journalists as keepers of an 'expert body of knowledge'. Sheridan Burns and Matthews (2018) say journalists are 'constantly evaluating information in terms of their own experience, perceptions about accuracy, the perceived audience and its interests…' (2018: 36). As documentary journalism such as the published monograph involves understanding, editing and structuring the experiences of many people in the past, and the study of people is a social rather than a natural science, this critical analysis identified an interpretivist epistemology as being most appropriate for this thesis. It considers 'the subjective meaning of social action': in other words, is attempting to make sense of the world by seeing it through the eyes of the people being researched (Bryman 2016: 692).

In the study of a totalitarian society comprising of 'oppressors' and 'the oppressed', seen from the perspective of post-totalitarianism by an outsider seeking to create a grassroots human history of events in Soviet Latvia, the researcher is attempting to understand how the individuals involved made sense of the world around them: what Schutz (1962) calls 'the reality of their daily lives' (1962: 59, in Bryman, 2016: 27). In sociological terms, this is a phenomenological approach influenced by the work of Max Weber and his concept of *Verstehen* or 'understanding'. The aim is to explain links between cause and effect, and that humans act on the meaning they make from what happens either to them or around them.

The journalist-researcher set out to gather 'lived experience' through interviews with 'people who were there', such as eyewitnesses, participants and observers. This intent mirrors academic practice in qualitative research and has echoes in the literature. The interview is a key data-gathering tool of journalism, and an opportunity

to take control of the process of inquiry and direct it. As Lee-Potter (2017) notes: “It is still the principal way in which reporters and feature writers gather their material”. There are strong similarities between this view and qualitative research methods theory. Gorman and Clayton (2005) consider the advantages of the interview as being “immediacy, mutual exploration, investigation of causation, personal contact and speed” (2005: 125). The interview gives a friendlier and more personal emphasis to the data collection process, and open-ended questions may lead to unexpected insights. Interview encounters not only generate eyewitness testimony but can also be described, contextualised and used to emphasise how this particular story fits into the over-arching narrative, and why it matters. This process of description is also used to introduce transparency of method into the narrative relating to each ‘case study’ interview – where contributors tell their story, detailing their lived experience at a certain period in the past. “Interviews facilitate the collection of a large quantity of rich data in a relatively short space of time,” write social scientists Gorman and Clayton (2005: 126). Lee-Potter (2017) argues from the standpoint of journalism: “A case study […] will reinforce the effect that this is having on individuals and will bring the subject to life” (2017: 28)

The researcher-as-journalist values this ‘rich data’ for its vivid personal testimony, colour and atmosphere, human scale relatability and explanation of motives, reactions and personal circumstances. The process of recording the interview preserves the source material exactly as it happened, allowing for later transcription and repeated analysis away from and after the actual meeting. Heritage (1984) notes that the process helps “correct the natural limitations of our memories and of the intuitive glosses that we might place on what people say in interviews” (in Bryman 2016: 479). This is more than just ‘getting quotes right’: although a time-consuming process, the transcript has to be 100 percent accurate.

Seidman (2006) says the objective of qualitative interviewing is “in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (2006: 9). Phenomenologists Tarozzi and Mortari (2009) and Bogdan and Taylor (1975) agree that the interview process is a way of understanding how people interpret the world. Bogdan and Taylor write: “In order to grasp the meaning of a person’s behaviour, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person’s point of view” (1975: 13–14, in Bryman, 2016: 26).

One important aspect of the data gathering for the published monograph was fieldwork on location in Latvia over a period of several years. By going to the region the researcher was able to speak face-to-face to people who were either ‘there’ or were receptacles or ‘gatekeepers’ of local knowledge. Stories could be told in full in a relaxed manner in the interviewee’s own home and interviews could cover a broad range of topics and reflections due to their semi-structured nature. Accuracy of meaning could be checked with both translators and contributors at the time of the interview and, in certain cases, later. As this thesis shows, these safeguards validate and verify recollections in line with the practice of qualitative researchers.

In the presentation of those ‘interview-encounters’ in the published monograph, the narrative style aimed to illustrate the process of meaning-making during the interviews through ‘transparency of method’; that is, running transcripts showing how a journalist ‘follows the conversation’ - which also includes the pauses, hesitations and clarifications in line with oral history best practice. This process of transparency helps challenge notions of bias, argue Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) and is particularly important for clarifying ‘the position’ of an interviewee when presenting stories from a mostly ethnic Latvian position about a contested period of ideological occupation. The researcher-journalist used semi-structured questioning as the basis for starting interviews with contributors, but what was more valuable was ‘the conversation’ - when the contributor talked unprompted about their personal experience of an event.

However, the researcher is aware that accounts of lived experience are entirely subjective, reliant on memory and recall and may be considered biased, partial and unreliable. Gorman and Clayton (2005) argue that interviews can be costly, uncritical, too personal and open to bias, while the interview process may be “emotionally draining” for both interviewer and contributor. They recommend the technique of triangulation as one of the best ways of addressing weakness in a single research method and instruct the qualitative research interviewer, in advice that is often given to journalists: “Your job is to listen and learn; not to praise, preach and condemn” (2005: 131). They recommend a process of ‘reflective listening’ to check understanding of what is said, clarify ambiguities and agree meaning” (2005: 131). They suggest archiving the interview recording with a transcript to keep the original sources, while working off copies. These are safeguards which add to ‘Yin’s chain of evidence’ (see Figure 1 below) and strengthen the credibility of a

researcher's approach, methods, technique and results. As the reputation of the entire monograph depends on the quality, accuracy and reliability of every detail of the data gathered, vigilance is required to verify each contribution, ensure its veracity and apply processes of safeguarding as to its accuracy.

The critical analysis for this thesis has identified that these elements are embedded almost instinctively in the researcher-journalist's professional practice of confirming facts, verifying information, reflecting on the data and solving problems. Sheridan Burns (2018) says journalists often find it difficult to describe their thinking processes, and often act in a way many would describe – and is described here – as 'instinctively'. "This is because their thinking processes, once internalised, are used almost without conscious thought" (2018: 42). Thus it can be seen that this critical analysis demonstrates that these instinctive journalistic actions and decisions correlate to - and so are safeguarded by - many of the best practices of qualitative research. However, journalism theorists such as Mencher (1991) and Sheridan Burns and Matthews (2018) argue that the interview is effectively a process of trusting that the contributor is telling the truth. Mencher (1991) says:

> The reporter must keep in mind that he or she is relying on someone else, and that fact alone makes the story vulnerable. No reporter can ever feel certain that another person's observations are as accurate as his own or that the person lacks bias or self-interest (1991: 285).

Burns and Matthews (2018) point out, with emphasis: "A journalist never knows what the interviewee *thinks*, only what the interviewee *says*" (2018: 121).

The next section of this thesis will consider the researcher-journalist's approach to the contested and fragmentary datafield encountered in Latvia and the ways in which problems of missing archives and representation were overcome or acknowledged.

3.2. Journalistic processes of stratification and separation of content

The lack of the perspective of the Cheka was acknowledged in the interest of transparency (Kovach and Rosentiel, 2014) on the first page of the monograph, and the ambition of the monograph was explicitly stated: 'This is a glimpse of the misery inflicted inside the walls of the Stura Maja [KGB headquarters in Riga]. It tells the stories of the people who were imprisoned or tortured there, or who passed through

its doors to face execution or exile […] It's an incomplete picture as those who served the KGB do not give interviews' (Hunt 2019, Preface, vii).

Although this was a step taken 'instinctively' (see previous section) it was designed as a pre-emptive acknowledgement that the monograph was not a balanced account. As a non-Russian speaker, and because of lack of access to Soviet archives, removed from Latvia when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the researcher made the decision to acknowledge this and to work with the data that could be found: namely, the existing literature (see Chapter 2) and new voices that could be generated through a pro-active documentary approach to discovery in the field. An important step in this process – which is analysed retrospectively for this thesis with reference to the literature from multiple academic disciplines – was to assess and evaluate the existing data, group it thematically and place it within a chronological narrative structure.

The process of 'grouping', drawn from professional documentary practice, highlights 'commonality of experience' and was learned during the researcher's work on the BBC Radio 2 *Radio Ballads* (2006, 2012), which explored through interviews the personal experiences that became universal in communities in the UK, such as shipbuilding. In Latvia this technique was applied to reflect perspectives across a spectrum of themes based on political positioning, attitude to the Soviet regime, geographical location, education – for example, the activism and experiences of schoolchildren - and common experience, for example in gulags. This 'instinctive' but very carefully considered process of thematic grouping, refined and embedded through years of professional broadcast production and representation of positions, enabled the researcher to select from across a spectrum of possible data, whether that be political, thematic or geographical, and to actively and dynamically adjust the content-gathering research process to address areas of shortcoming and ensure representation of viewpoints, sometimes possibly conflicting. This selection process formed the basis of the sequencing in each chapter and in the overarching 26-chapter master narrative.

Critical analysis of this process for this thesis has brought valuable insight into the narrative structuring stage, as it has identified where content has been selected from various 'pots' as elements in the overall sequence. During the process material was added to ensure representation of perspectives. Sometimes it signposted shortcomings in the databank, such as where 'more may be needed' or where

balance needed to be addressed. This led to two developments in empirical thinking about writing about the past, which are rooted in documentary discovery processes and narrative approaches. ‘Pro-active action’ was taken to generate new data, including searching for ‘fresh voices’ to adjust these sequences to the satisfaction of the author (as outlined in section 3.4). A shift in the positionality of the narrator was introduced to make it ‘active’ and drive the over-arching narrative from 1905 to 2018. Because the narrator was an ‘outsider’ and the audience in English likely to be unaware of much of the detail, this editorial adjustment helped contextualise the personal testimonies at the core of the narrative and to link sequences as the narrator moved across the landscape and met new contributors (see section 3.5). Both these positions will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter (pp.46-56).

The next section will consider the value of field research on location to the generation of new data for the published monograph, which injects dynamism into the research process and may unlock, through contact with gatekeepers, new archives, images and content to enhance and amplify the telling of stories about ‘what happened in the past’.

3.3. A comparative analysis of the researcher’s professional practice with qualitative research methods

This section will evaluate aspects of the researcher-journalist’s professional practice with relation to academic theory, noting the strong correlation between documentary journalism practice and qualitative research methods and best practice (Shep, 2005; Bryman, 2016; Yin, 2011). As a result, the researcher-journalist concludes that his professional journalism practice is a blend of methods common in social sciences research with regard to the verification, validation and efficacy of data, the identification of types of data that can contribute towards narrative accounts about ‘the past’ and also the importance of storing this data correctly as a ‘chain of evidence’ (see Yin, 2011 later in this section). This conclusion underscores and affirms the reliability of the researcher’s data gathering in the field and adds to the

academic validation of the Historical Discovery Journalism technique as a way of writing about events in the past from a 'Now' standpoint.
The researcher worked for many years making BBC programmes involving research on location and data gathering in the field, so applied his professional practice techniques to the data gathering and narrative process for the published monograph, which followed certain stages, namely:

a: gathering and evaluation of content from the existing datafield;
b: the identification of potential new contributors and contact with them prior to a field trip;
c: data gathering on location and evaluation and assessment of the results;
d: stratification and structuring of the enlarged datapool, and;
e: assembling this into a narrative.

Location visits to conduct interviews were an essential element in the data-gathering process for the published monograph. In the researcher-journalist's professional practice they generated encounters with potential contributors who could be asked on the spot if they would be interviewed - and they often agreed. This dynamic process of discovering additional contributors with unpublished data and stories is where some divergence appears between the research producer and the qualitative researcher. Processes of ethical clearance in advance common in social research methods are too slow for a location producer needing to seize an unexpected opportunity. In this respect, the researcher disagrees with Shep (2005) that researchers should accept the limitations of their datapool, pinpointing the goals of social research methods as 'to identify sources, assess their value and nature, interpret evidence and communicate that evidence in written form' (2005: 163-164). In the application of the journalistic discovery method theorised here later in this chapter as Pro-Actively Seeking Access, more data can often be generated by 'digging' – that is, a process of inquiry through the existing literature and gatekeepers such as, in the example of the published monograph, museum curators, researchers, fellow authors, journalists and academics. Word of mouth is one of the researcher's preferred methods of finding people with stories. The researcher would however agree with Shep in his recommendation for the use of as many sources as possible. "History has often been characterised as a huge jigsaw puzzle – without all the

pieces," he writes. "The more sources used, the fewer gaps to be filled. The greater the variety of sources, the more the historian will be able to give due weight to competing viewpoints or multiple perspectives and develop a more finely textured understanding of the complexity of the past" (2005: 168). Shep values oral history as a 'corrective' to elitist traditional history, quoting Thompson (1979) that it provides "a more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past, a challenge to the established account … [and] radical implications for the social message of history as a whole" (2005: 171).

Shep's approach to validation, verification and reliability, which includes good record-keeping, correlates strongly with professional journalistic ethics, such as verification and attribution of information, use of original sources, identification of sources and the utmost importance of accuracy (Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, 2014).

The ethics of the representation of interviews and images are an important consideration in all areas of journalism, but the researcher's view is that this is particularly so in subject fields where the journalist is not a native, such as in Soviet Latvia. The power that the narrator has to frame and select the viewpoints presented in their accounts of historical times is significant and – as seen by studies of Soviet-period publications by, among others, Ferro (1984) – is open to manipulation and ideological distortion. As discussed earlier in this thesis (see p.12), the researcher's background is as a BBC-trained reporter and producer. The BBC editorial guidelines on striving for accuracy, weighing and balancing opinions and checking claims and statistics thoroughly have remained as valuable benchmarks during his post-BBC professional practice.

> Accuracy is not simply a matter of getting facts right. Relevant opinions as well as facts may need to be considered. When necessary, all the relevant facts and information should be weighed to get at the truth (BBC editorial guidelines, 2023: 3.3.1)

Among the important guidance the BBC gives its staff is that journalists should 'gather material using first-hand sources' and 'validate the authenticity of documentary evidence and digital material' (Ibid). The pace of day-to-day news and current affairs is so fast that 'member-checking' or ensuring approval in advance from contributors is not possible, but for more considered or in-depth journalism such

as investigative documentaries, this further confirmatory step would be necessary – particularly if the material was contentious. Because the researcher's priority was accuracy rather than meeting deadlines, member-checking was carried out without prior knowledge of this process as a safeguard in qualitative research.

As Bryman (2016) writes "the goal is to seek confirmation that the researcher's findings and impressions are congruent with the views of those on whom the research was conducted, and to seek out areas in which there is a lack of correspondence and the reasons for it" (2016: 385).

In all but one case relating to the published monograph, the member-checked transcripts were returned with little or no amendment. The one transcript that was amended was completely re-written, despite the original account being a verbatim transcription. As a rule, journalists do not like to agree to 'copy approval' – that is, allowing the contributor to have the final say over what is or isn't included (Harcup, 2022: 145) – but in this case, the contributor was a lawyer and a significant and senior figure in Latvia's investigation into the KGB landscape. It is the researcher's position that if a journalist submits to the member-checking process, they have to accept its outcome: hence, the amended version was used.

Images played an important part in the storytelling, and here too, the journalism industry advises that these must be used ethically and responsibly. The world's largest professional organisation for digital and broadcast journalism, the US-based Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA), outlines this in its code of conduct:

> Photojournalists and editors should exercise the same level of ethical professionalism and accuracy in editing sounds and images as reporters and producers are expected to exercise in their choice of words, soundbites and facts (RTDNA, 2023).

Journalists working in visual media are advised to "think about their responsibility to edit stories in a way that results in stories that are accurate and truthful".

> Often the public remembers the visual images in a television story long after they forget the story's narrative. That is testament to the underlying power of "the visual" (ibid).

The National Press Photographers' Association, another American-based professional body, stresses that visual journalists operate as "trustees of the public".

> Our primary goal is the faithful and comprehensive depiction of the subject at hand. As visual journalists we have the responsibility to document society and to preserve its history through images (NPPA, 2023).

Thus it can be seen that journalistic codes of practice shape ethical behaviour and representational fairness in the industry and become embedded in practice. In complying with them, journalists fulfil their duty to tell stories accurately and to reproduce quotes and images faithfully, without misleading an audience or distorting the meaning. Such ethical issues as confirmability, reliability and verification are critical to an outsider's telling of stories from Latvia's Soviet past from a 'Now' perspective, and practical considerations such as the storage of data as a 'chain of evidence' (Yin, 2011) underscore and underpin the validity and value of this journalistic method. In the researcher's data gathering on location for the published monograph everything was recorded on a smart phone and digital recorder: interviews, photographs of contributors and locations, descriptive links about moments and places during the trip; passages from documents and books, maps and information boards and so on. This data was immediately archived along with notes, comments and contact details and safely stored in several locations.

Yin (2011) says interviewers should be 'non-directive' as they allow contributors to "describe the world as they perceive it" (2011: 136). Documents such as personal letters, artefacts, mementoes and archival records collected in the field represent another form of primary evidence that can be 'highly revealing' (2011: 148).

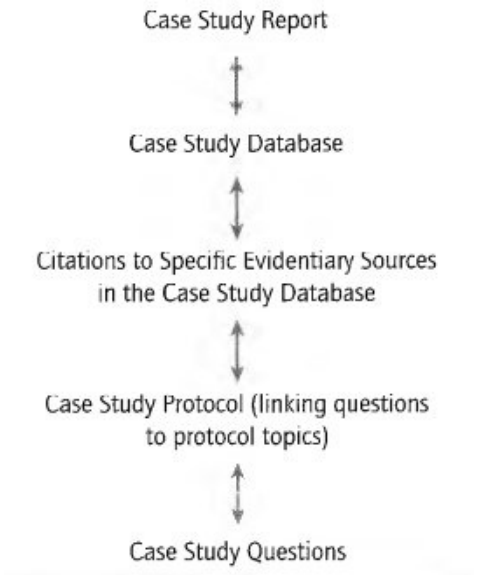
Yin writes that archival data such as population statistics, newspaper articles and municipal records – in the case of Latvia, of Communist Party records and statistics as in Plakans (2007), Dreifelds (1993) and Swain (2004) - can provide important contextual information to complement fieldwork (2011: 148). He does however urge caution as to the reason for the creation or motive of these records "and thus [their] potential slant" (2011: 150). Among his recommendations are a 'chain of evidence' and the use of multiple sources to help confirmation through triangulation.

Yin says qualitative research should be 'based on an explicit set of evidence' (2011: 20). This evidence will, he says, "consist of participants' actual language as well as the context in which the language is expressed". He argues that in these situations

"the language is valued as the representation of reality" (2011: 20). The journalist-researcher's view is that in the cross-referencing and triangulation of stories and the cataloguing and archiving of the original interview files, Yin's chain of evidence mirrors the processes and journalistic methods in the gathering of data for the published monograph, therefore adding further validation and reliability to the proposed method of Historical Discovery Journalism.

Thus it can be seen that the critical analysis conducted retrospectively for this thesis has identified further correlation of journalistic practice with social sciences' best practice in validating, verifying and ensuring the reliability and retrieval of data, which moves this method from 'instinctive practice' to a safeguarded and academically rigorous technique for revisiting or re-examining 'what happened in the past'. Yin's Chain of Evidence is illustrated (below) in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Yin's Chain of Evidence



From: Yin, Robert K. (2014, p.128). *Case study research: design and methods*. Fifth edition. California, London: SAGE

Further underscoring of the researcher's journalistic practice in Latvia comes from social research processes as outlined by Cresswell (2007), Lincoln and Guba (1985)

and Guba and Lincoln (1994), namely of credibility, dependability and ‘transferability’ - what Geertz (1973) calls ‘thick description’; a rich account of the details of a culture adding context and insight into the political and social temperature of the time (in Bryman 2016: 384). ‘Confirmability’ is another important consideration. Bryman (2016) says researchers should acknowledge shortcomings – such as the relative lack of Soviet sources in the published monograph - and maintain as objective an editorial position as possible. Academics recognise that complete objectivity is not possible and stress that, as with journalists, those doing the research can be shown to be ‘acting in good faith’: that they have not allowed their personal values to sway the research or its findings (Bryman, 2016: 386).

In applying these tests, the researcher argues that the eyewitness accounts in the published monograph present ‘a specific version’ of social reality, in line with the ontological approach of constructionism defined by Bryman (2016: 33). As discussed earlier, further safeguarding by the ‘member-checking’ of the accuracy of final transcriptions of interviews was built into the process, an element of qualitative research proposed in Guba (1981: 75–91) and Gorman and Clayton (2005). They describe it as “the single most important action inquirers can take, as it goes to the heart of the credibility criterion. This can help ensure that the interpretation which has been built upon it is indeed valid” (2005: 60).

Thus it can be seen from this retrospective critical analysis that the datagathering, verification and validation processes used in the published monograph are underscored from the literature on qualitative research methods and journalism theory. In the next section, consideration will be given to narrative techniques employed in the assembly of the published monograph, particularly when that process is adjusting dynamically to the gathering of new data and information that may require a change in the narrative direction. This process of organic absorption of new data into a developing storyline is a product of ‘reflective practice’, which Sheridan Burns (2018) defines as ‘the capacity to identify, sort and prioritise contextual elements surrounding practice’ (2018: 36). In the researcher’s professional practice, categorisation of themes and episodes in the narrative are decided both in advance of the search for potential contributors as well as during it, as the datafield is mined and new information comes to hand. The research on location had to be combined with the requirements of work, which meant the narrative structure was worked out over a number of years and draft manuscripts

written in sections and sequences. To maintain control over this developing draft, and to add new data as it was gathered to the overarching story, the journalistic technique of Freytag's Pyramid – essentially 'Beginning, Middle, End', or 'Three-Act Dramatic Structure' as Bernard (2011) describes it (2011: 58) - was adapted and made more flexible. In this adaptation, 'Middle' sections were extended thematically to absorb new material as it was discovered, with travelogue 'set-up' sections or 'bridges' written onsite or later to help develop an editorial flow and a 'sequentiality of narrative' similar to that in a broadcast documentary. The adaption and use of Freytag's Pyramid as a narrative control device will be explored in more depth in the following section.

3.4. Freytag's Pyramid: an adaptable journalistic storytelling framework that allows new data to direct the narrative

The following section considers adaptions and innovations to the 'classic' journalistic storytelling approach of Freytag's Pyramid which were employed during the writing of the published monograph. The 'beginning, middle, end' framework of Freytag's Pyramid is widely used in journalism and is derived from analysis of storytelling dating back to Greek and Roman narratives (McCombs in Kolbre: 2012). The Pyramid is a theoretical A, B and C section model of journalistic storytelling devised by Gustav Freytag in 1900. Section A is the beginning where the story is set out and introduced, B is the middle section where the story is told and developed and C is the end, or resolution. The C section is particularly flexible because of the various ways that stories can be resolved: through crescendo, climax, triumph, disaster and many other ways of heightening the jeopardy or tension and ending the stories being told (McCombs in Kolbre: 2012: 7). Freytag's Pyramid conceptualises five stages of storytelling within this structure – exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement – and as McCoombs (2012) notes, this method can also be applied to documentary and journalistic storytelling.

> You need to set up your story – characters, issue, location – in a way that allows events to unfold so that viewers learn more and more about the topic, the ways your characters are affected by it, how they develop a solution (or not) and finally, where they go from there (2012: 6).

This description of the way documentary makers go about their art mirrors almost exactly the instinctive mental processes the researcher considered in attempting to make sense of complex political and social times in Soviet Latvia as well as a data gathering and writing period that extended over several years. McCoombs' theoretical description of the Freytag's Pyramid technique in action focuses firmly on the human experience, which is universal.

1. Meet the character who will be affected
2. Learn about the conflict and how it affects them
3. Details about debate resolution
4. Reaction to the resolution from the character
5. Where do they go from here?

She writes: "The narrative approach allows the audience to relate to the conflict before getting to the resolution … an emotional incentive to stick around for the entire story" (2012: 6). While the adaption of Freytag's Pyramid happened during the data gathering and process of reflection about how this story could be told, this critical analysis has identified two factors relevant to a change in narrative positionality. Firstly, to provide a constant, trusted narrative voice through a 26-chapter monograph covering 1905-2018, with a considerable number of changes in location and meetings with contributors. Inserting this narrative voice to set up beginning and end sequences and link passages promotes the smooth 'sequentiality of narrative' and reduces the prospects of 'clunky' shifts between scenes. Secondly, the critical analysis for this thesis has identified this narrative adjustment as a device that actively enters the narrative and is engaged in its development. However, this adaption does not necessarily mean that the monograph becomes entirely subjective and sympathetic to one side only, with journalistic principles of dispassionate observation abandoned, but rather that the storyteller works in a style known as an 'authored narrative'. This is a narrative form that has been used widely in the BBC and enables the telling of 'big' subjects (Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation*, 1969; David Attenborough, *Life on Earth*, 1979; *The Living Planet*, 1984; Robert Winston, *The Human Body*, 1998; Simon Schama, *A History of Britain*, 2000-02). While Clark (BFI, n.d) defines authored narrative as a genre "that at its core attempts to turn serious scholastic debate into informative entertainment by the power of the

presenter's personality and on-screen presence" it can, as in the published monograph - written by transferring broadcast storytelling devices such as 'links' and 'inserts' into continuous prose - convert a series of episodes of graphic violence and suffering into a coherent story, or 'journey', which is hung around the narrative spine of the contributor interviews, becoming what Bernard (2011) calls 'the train' – "the single thread, the plot" that drives the narrative onwards (2011: 48). The critical analysis for this thesis has identified that Freytag's Pyramid allows the insertion into this structure of a narrator who remains a constant voice but also drives or guides the narrative into crescendo or climax through his additional role as a literary device as a witness in his own right, in telling the story 'Now from Then'. Among the functions of this Active Included Narrator are opening or closing scenes on location, moving to a new set of experiences somewhere different or expressing a personal reaction to a story of horror. This is something an 'authored narrative' can do, but would not be considered if writing from the perspective of a news journalist, where the emphasis is on the disengaged observer (see further discussion in section 3.6: Active Included Narrator).

Many complementary storytelling techniques derived from professional broadcasting practice were used throughout the monograph – such as opening a story with 'a taste' of the voices to come (see 'On Soviet times', p.xii) and starting with 'the moment' and telling the story back from there (see Chapter 3 of the monograph: Riga's heart of darkness). However, Freytag's Pyramid was selected as the main narrative chassis as it is a versatile and easily understandable process for a reader to follow. It sets a storytelling arc both across the master narrative and also individual chapters, sequences and episodes. Each chapter opens and closes (A and C) reaching a resolution or climax of some kind, while the storytelling develops in the B section. Events, interviews, developments and realisations can be inserted into B-sections and sequences that can be linked, switched or expanded at various stages in the narrative process, for example, if a compelling story emerges at a later stage, such as the story of Eduards Pleps (p.126). Consequently, the 12 chapters relating to the period 1940–49 in the 26-chapter published monograph are built using this journalistic structure. Because the technique is about opening or closing a window on a dramatic moment, the use of Freytag's Pyramid in the published monograph is driven by the narrator's desire to amplify the lived experience and particularly the drama and so engage, and sometimes horrify, the reader. Thus, in seeking to

achieve these goals, the question of “when do these windows of lived experience open and close?” are answered automatically: “at the most dramatic moment”. Given the scale and intensity of the repression, torture and hardship, there were difficult moments after such sequences of emotion and suffering in answering the question “What comes next?”. At these points the device of the Active Included Narrator developed functionality to ‘move the narrative on’ and to allow the reader to process and digest the content to that point. Freytag’s Pyramid provides the structure and sequencing necessary to introduce periods of rest and reflection, particularly in such a litany of misery.

In this section, the thesis has considered classic journalistic and filmic storytelling devices that are used to structure the narrative and highlight key moments. There are examples in the monograph of soundbites, pithy quotes, dramatic vignettes, cliffhangers and transitions from climactic ‘how do you follow that?’ moments. The content from Soviet Latvia is, in the researcher’s view, quite intense and emotionally exhausting to read, and that also became a factor in where the writer stopped each chapter. The next sections of this thesis will consider two examples of empirical thinking theorised as a result of this critical analysis which have been employed in the data gathering and storytelling processes in the published monograph. These are:

- the journalistic ‘digging’ technique of Pro-Actively Seeking Access in search of relevant data and,
- an Active Included Narrator moving around the landscape meeting contributors; describing his surroundings, explaining complex moments and ‘helping the story flow’:

3.5. Pro-Actively Seeking Access – an active approach to data gathering about the past based on journalistic ‘digging’ method

The following sections (3.5 and 3.6) will discuss two key innovative elements in the journalism used in this proposed model of historical discovery writing, formulated as a result of this critical analysis. One significant driver of new data-generation in this

technique is the pro-active approach to content-gathering: used by the researcher in his professional career and applied to the writing of this monograph. This involved getting ‘as close to the story as possible’ by making contact with eyewitnesses to - or survivors of – key moments of KGB contact. Museum curators were gatekeepers to primary sources and often valuable contributors in themselves, as custodians of knowledge. Academics and authors who had written about a certain topic had value as ‘talking heads’ – a device drawn from journalism where an expert voice can ‘plug a gap’ in the story or explain its significance in a way that someone who was there may not be able to, due to them being so close to the event being analysed.

The goal of the Pro-Actively Seeking Access technique is to use the time on location to get as much material as possible while doors are opening and goodwill is being extended. Being on location enables access to potential contributors and the researcher knows from many years of experience that the primary source generates by far the most compelling content. This is underscored academically in this thesis with reference to the literature on oral history, history, memory studies, lived experience, narrative theory and so on (see Chapter 4.5 onwards). Data-gathering in the field can be exhausting, and it is vital to work pro-actively on location to maximise yield.

Pro-Actively Seeking Access as a technique is, in the researcher’s view, an important contribution to the knowledge, as it leverages ‘what is known about the past’ and can generate content that may challenge the ‘accepted version of events’ – simply through a process of revisiting ‘the past’ with fresh eyes: and perhaps, in the case of the researcher, a past that is seen with an outsider’s eyes.

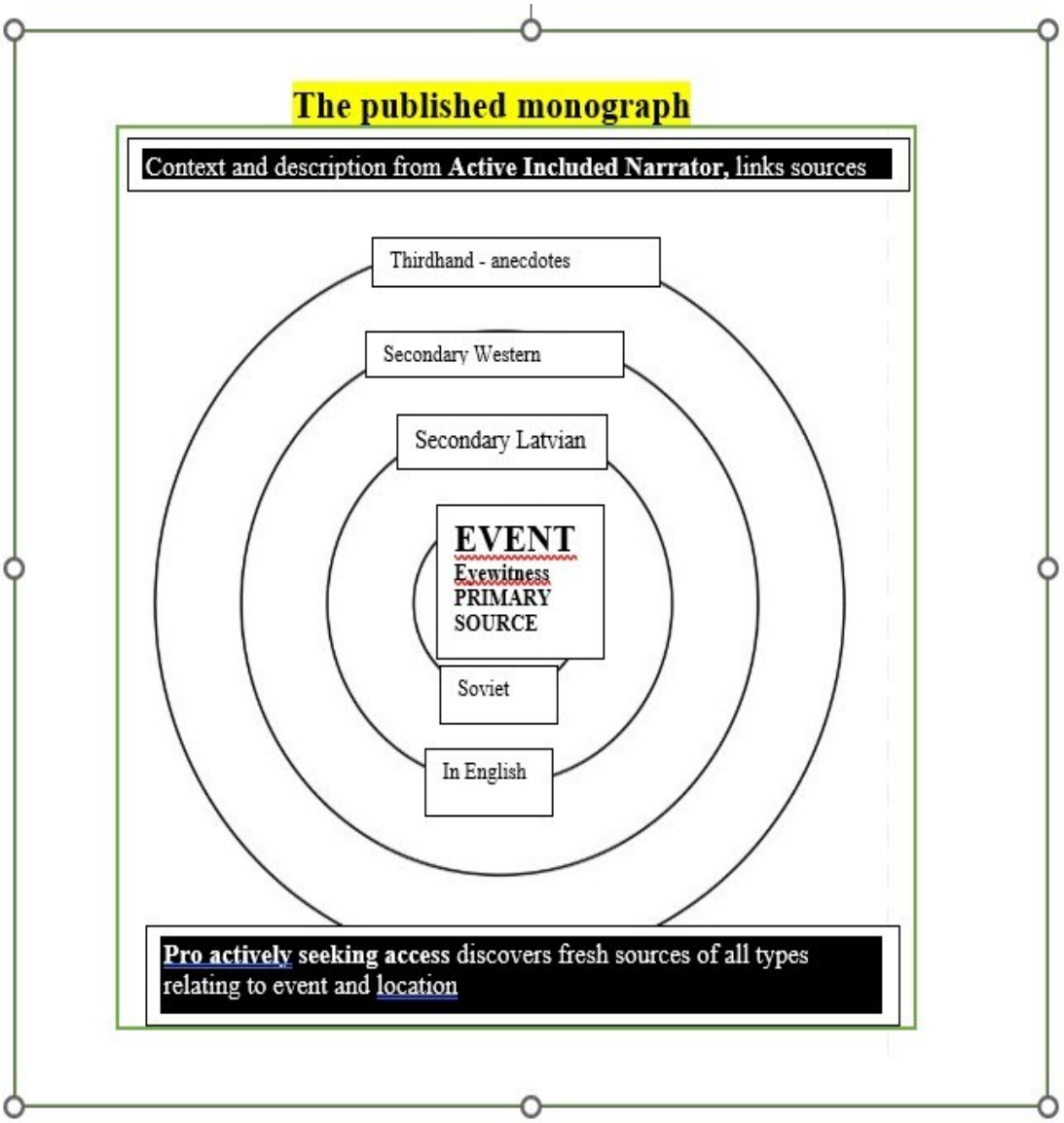
The researcher’s success in finding ‘new voices’ for the monograph led to reflection about this process for this critical analysis, and the formulation of these two positions of empirical thinking. In turn, this formulation of a pro-active discovery technique which generates new data led to the theoretical evaluation of sources based on their proximity to events and the consequent strength of their contribution. In the researcher’s view, the closer contributors were to the event, the more valuable the account. A figure representing this theoretically (see Figure 6) has been included for the purposes of this critical analysis.

In this configuration, primary sources such as eyewitnesses are closest to ‘the event’. The event is the nucleus around which everything else is wrapped, like the layers of an onion. These are the raw, vivid, first-person accounts of what happened

– a battle with security forces, a person being interrogated or tortured and so on. They are at the centre of the experience, and while their human story may have a narrow focus and not reflect the bigger picture, it is a personal account of a human experience articulated in dramatic, relatable, human terms. It is framed in the published monograph as what a journalist would call a ‘case study’ – a narrative telling the story of a fellow human in a personal situation that opens up and illustrates a profound life experience (Lee Potter, 2017: 28).

Moving out in concentric circles in terms of distance from the event are the ‘bigger picture’ accounts of historians and authors, who may consider more than one report of the time and contextualise it in their own voices in terms of ‘the struggle’, the geo-politics or as part of a collective national experience (for example, Nollendorfs and Oberlander, 2005; Ozola and Jansons, 2005; Skultans, 2002; Rotbaha 2015 et al) which, when used in the published monograph’s over-arching narrative, help locate and explain ‘the Soviet times’ from a national, post-independence perspective.

Figure 2: Sources by proximity to events in Soviet Latvia 1940-49 in the published monograph. Different degrees of proximity and also different degrees of authority.



As a further element of the critical analysis for this thesis, Table 1 (below) deconstructs the published monograph into categories of contributor or source based on their proximity to events.

Table 1. Deconstruction of the published monograph by contributor/source proximity to events

INNER RING, NUCLEUS	
Primary source	Eyewitness interview (someone who was there).
Contemporary account	Written about the event later (eg the autobiographical description of the ambush of the Annas partisans in Hunt, 2019: 125).
Journalistic account from later which adds detail	e.g. newspaper article about the re-burial of the partisans (in Hunt, 2019: 125).
INNER RING/SEGMENTED	**THEN**
Secondary source (Latvian)	Written by someone inside the country with a detailed knowledge of the event and what led to it. This might be: academic work with useful insight into the Soviet society of the time such as Dreifelds (1996; economics) Nollendorfs (2012; historical/political) or Kangeris, Neiburgs and Vīksne (2016; historical reassessment) OR: Expert researchers with family connections to partisans (such as Turcinskis (2011) or with considerable experience in their specialist area (e.g. Rotbaha (2015: folklore).
Secondary source (Latvian, using extracts from interviews)	Written by a researcher, folklorist, social anthropologist who has conducted their own interviews – these eyewitness accounts can be used in script, eg Rotbaha (2015), Skultans (1998), Reinsone (2015).
Secondary sources from Soviet publications, translated or in English	Political publications by senior Communist officials such as Latvian party chairman Janis Kalnberzins (1951) and First Minister Vilis Lacis (1959). However, these are limited, fragmented and not representative.

Secondary source (Western, in English)	Published historical work by Conquest (1978), Bower (1993), Dorril (2000) et al.
OUTER RING/SEGMENTED:	**NOW**
Active Included Narrator/Pro Actively Seeking Access technique	On location research, description, discovery of new findings and artefacts relating to that time.
Modern 'Voices of expertise'	Museum curators, holders of private collections.
Data banks	Personal photographs, memoirs from the diaspora adding new information to the knowledge.
Films, documentaries and anniversary/retrospective features from within the country	For example, news items on English language website lsm.lv which might shed new light on aspects or details of the event.
Family stories, anecdotes	Anecdotal stories told to researcher on location.

To summarise, the contribution to knowledge here is the production of a series of figures and tables ranking the nature and value of sources in relation to their proximity to an event. This has been created from the critical analysis of data gathering techniques for this thesis. These templates have the potential to be used by researchers studying other periods of totalitarian rule or time of conflict to draw a panoramic and telescopic multi-perspective view of 'what happened in the past'. If fresh eyewitness data can be gathered, this can be added to the 'mix'. Figure 2 shows the 'ripples in the pond' in relation to the event being analysed.
The second innovation in empirical thinking identified from this critical analysis of professional practice is that of the Active Included Narrator, which will be analysed in more detail in the next section.

3.6. Active Included Narrator: a contextualising narrative development to explain a conflicted and contested past

The researcher considered for a long time how best to 'tell the story' in the published monograph for a Western audience. Most Western visitors do not leave the capital Riga, while the Soviet occupation affected the entire country for half a century. The port of Liepāja in western Latvia was a closed city for 50 years, while regional towns

such as Tukums, Kuldiga and Daugavpils were controlled from regional NKVD headquarters and thus had their own history of contact with the security forces in the period 1940–49. Soviet anti-partisan measures in Kuldiga in 1945 for example included 200 NKVD men supported by a tank storming a partisan bunker held by 30 fighters. Even outnumbered to such an extent, 20 partisans managed to escape from the Annas bunker (Hunt 2019: 124-125). The researcher discovered this story by coming across the graves of the partisans while taking a shortcut through a graveyard one evening.

The researcher believed that describing these locations would bring stories from beyond the boundaries of the capital into the narrative and add further descriptive elements to the 'big picture', especially as Cheka repression in eastern villages like Balvi featured prominently in the work of researchers such as Inese Dreimane (see the story of Mednis in Hunt, 2019: 109). The visits to interview locations and places of memory – *'lieux de memoire'* in the terminology of the French historian Pierre Nora (1989) – such as the *Zilais brīnums* police headquarters massacre site in Liepāja (Hunt, 2019: 28–39) and the Stūra Māja KGB headquarters in Riga (ibid: 39–54) served a double purpose in the narrative. Doing so placed the narrator firmly in the 'Now' perspective and created a 'journey' for the reader to follow and identify with, rather than the monograph be a continuous collection of gruesome stories. The shift in positionality enabled the researcher to create word pictures about the physical location where the action was taking place 'now' as well as explaining what happened there 'then'. This created a transitional sequential 'bed' allowing secondary source material from the existing literature to be injected into the 'set-up' ahead of meeting the next contributor. In certain respects, the geography of the story is an important factor: Latvia's forests were the bases for the partisans and a place of refuge for those fleeing either the war or the Cheka, and the researcher-journalist wanted to juxtapose the beauty and stillness of the countryside 'now' with such violent acts seven decades earlier.

The aim of synthesising the 'back story' into the narrative through the shift to an Active Included Narrator was to make the content 'more productive' by telling the story of what happened at a certain place 'Then' from the position of 'Now' before hearing from someone who was actually there – thus amplifying why their story mattered. At the end of that sequence, there was an opportunity for the listener-narrator to reflect on what he had just heard, and look for how that moment is

remembered ‘now’ as he walks around or leaves the location. The benefits to the narrative flow were quickly apparent and enabled smoother transitions between sometimes awkward junctions. Critical analysis from the literature on journalism, auto-ethnography and political terror adds academic theoretical insight as to the value of this change in positionality to the themes below:

1. Descriptive and emotional flexibility. The monograph was intended as a narrative journey rather than an academic gathering of eyewitness testimony. The aim was to fuse real life testimony about actual events in the past into a readable story that, for example, an English visitor to Riga might buy in the Occupation Museum bookshop. Entering the story as a narrator allowed the description of contributors, the geography now, the situation at the time – the ‘exposition’ that Bernard (2011) says “gives audience members what they need to follow the story that’s unfolding and more importantly allows them [to get] inside the story” (2011: 16). The Active Included Narrator developed as a flexible and versatile narrative device to allow these transitions and to insert periods of rest for the reader to process the information, take a break from an unremittingly intense collection of experiences and also for the narrator to insert ‘health warnings’ alerting readers of grim content to come.
2. Transparency. The aim of the narrative style was to take the reader ‘on a journey’ where ‘the process’ would be on display. Transparency is valued by journalists as a defence against accusations of bias (Craig, 2006; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014; White, 2016). The reader can be more closely engaged with the interview process through ‘colour’ descriptions creating word pictures for them, which also helps personalise and locate the interviewee in their social and geographical environment. Visits to locations also enable the telling of ‘the story’ of these places and how and where they sit in the overall ‘story’ of the Cheka in Latvia and in the experiences of the Cheka by Latvians (Bernard, 2011: 42).
3. Faithful reproduction of the encounter. The interview transcript in the monograph is reproduced as ‘passages of conversation’ with ‘questions left in’ so the narrator is present too. Oral historians Thompson (1979), Shep (2005) and Saleniece (2016), and social scientists such as Gorman and Clayton (2005) and Geertz (1973) value this content for the rich and vivid descriptions

it provides. Documentary theorists Howard and Mabley (1993) identify the elements of ‘a good story well told’ as being about someone ‘with whom we have empathy’; the story is told for ‘maximum emotional impact and audience participation in the proceedings’ and the story must come to a satisfactory, and not necessarily happy, ending – what the researcher refers to as ‘resolution’ (in Bernard, 2011: 23 – see also point 4 below).

4. Personalising the pain. Having the narrator as part of the story is a way of forefronting the lived experience in an encounter with someone who has experienced pain. Describing and transcribing this meeting, with the narrator’s reactions and questions included, helps articulate and personalise the pain and aids in the exploration of events way beyond the lived experience of the narrator-interviewer in a process of reflective journalism that in word pictures captures a moment or a situation. This approach equates to some degree with that of narrative ethnography, where, as Ellis and Bochner (2016) say: ‘the emphasis is on the ethnographic dialogue or encounter” between the narrator and members of the group being studied (2016: 741).
5. An Active Included Narrator places the whole narrative process into the story and puts the narrator on the same level as his interviewees, rather than this being a hands-off dissemination of facts and anecdotes. Tedlock (1991) explains this shift from participant observation - where researchers attempt to be both ‘emotionally engaged participants’ and ‘coolly dispassionate observers’ of the lives of others - to narrative ethnography, which involves writing both as the Self and Other simultaneously, ‘focused on the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue’ (1991: 78) Although the monograph did not set out to be a memoir of academic fieldwork but a journalistic framework of episodes of complex power relationships seen through the perspective of eyewitnesses in which an Active Narrator could act as a guide – what journalists describe as a ‘trusted voice’ - Tedlock (1991) identifies the ‘self-conscious shift’ in positionality in which the author ‘purposely becomes a secondary character’ to alleviate the problem of ‘foregrounding and backgrounding’ the characters (1991: 81). Presenting the memories this way sharpens the perception of this being an encounter, and the monograph reproduces what was said by a person about what happened to them, then. These are stories about the past, and they are presented as

such: the researcher has taken an opportunity to talk to an eyewitness, and all he knows about them is what they tell him. “Narrative truth seeks to keep the past alive in the present”, argues Bochner (2000). Life and narrative are inextricably linked, although narrative is always “a story about the past and not the past itself” (2000: 756). Denzin (2014) discusses the concept of ‘epiphanies’ which he describes as ‘interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives’. They are often moments of crisis, and alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life, he argues, but the personal nature of the story may make it open to criticism: “A story is always an interpretive account, but, of course, all interpretations are biased”.

6. Theorists on political terror such as Graef, da Silva and Lemay-Hebert (2020) recognise the value of the interview as a narrative tool in a ‘storied reality’. They consider narratives as “tools to understand, negotiate and make sense of situations we encounter”. In shifting positionality, the Active Included Narrator is able to convey a much more personal picture of the contributor and explore their feelings about political violence experienced many decades before in much more depth, which adds a greater level of understanding to those events. As the interview is already a form of narrative (Hinchman and Hinchman 2001, Bruner 1985 et al) the researcher-author reproduces a transcript of the encounter, edited only for dramatic effect as to where that narrative begins and ends, guided by the Active Included Narrator. Polkinghorne (1995) describes this as ‘narrative cognition’ - “a series of anecdotal descriptions of particular incidents” (1995: 11) which help readers understand human actions from situations well beyond their normal experience. This, in the researcher’s view, is particularly valuable in a study of a time where accounts of ‘the past’ are contested, fragmented, politically charged and where certain ‘voices’ are missing. Using this technique of a narrator included in the story, there is no doubt about the circumstances under which the ‘encounter’ took place, the conversational excerpts are reproduced intact – in a sense, this technique has transcended documentary journalism and is intersecting with narrative ethnography, and the ‘voice of the loser’ (Saleniece, 2016) can be represented at length, ‘re-centring’ the narrative around them: in effect, as psychologist Robert M. Gordon (1995) describes it, empathetically ‘putting himself in their place’. In embedding

> learning from the disciplines of political terror, psychology, subjectivity, autoethnography, narrative ethnography and lived experience into journalism, the two methods proposed are a further contribution to techniques employed in writing about events in the past.

The critical analysis which follows will consider the role and importance of gatekeeping to the theoretical development of this hybrid form of documentary journalism about ‘the past’. In analysing the published monograph for this thesis, reference has been made to the academic literature relating to journalism, documentary journalism, oral history, history, memory studies, narrative theory, lived experience and the theory of translation and photography. Each will be considered in its own sub-section.

Chapter 4. Critical analysis

4.1. Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the published monograph draws from many different types of sources and combines a number of disciplines in creating its hybrid documentary form. In de-constructing this form for this thesis, the critical analysis has identified a breadth of academic disciplines that have resonance with this technique, so that it might be termed 'multi-disciplinary'. Weaving new eyewitness testimony into an illustrated historiographical landscape of 'what is known about the past' mixes the disciplines of oral history, history and qualitative research methods with documentary journalism, photography, subjectivity, the reliability or otherwise of memory, with issues of bias, representation and standpoint, as well as considering the reliance of the 'meaning-making' on the accuracy of translation.

To ensure as comprehensive an assessment as possible of this hybrid narrative technique, this thesis considers a multitude of lenses of critical analysis, drawing on the academic literature to evaluate the effectiveness of the published monograph in portraying lived experience in Soviet Latvia 1940–49. It takes into account the previously-stated shortcomings of the content-gathering with respect to a) the researcher's reliance on translation and b) the relative shortage of input from Soviet sources and the reliability of those Soviet sources that do exist in English. However, there is a range of work on the Soviet power structure (Jarinovska 2015; Swain, 2003, 2004; Nollendorfs and Oberlander, 2005; Kasekamp, 2018 et al) for the apparatus of oppression to be a central feature of this monograph.

This assessment of the critical tools in this chapter begins by considering the role and function of the concept of gatekeeping. This is a critical lens that has been invaluable in this retrospective analysis of the published monograph, which was written using 'instinctive' or 'embedded' journalistic practice. However, for the purposes of this thesis, it has rationalised this journalistic practice and enabled processes of evaluation and stratification of raw data that were consciously applied during the writing of the monograph but not theorised. This analysis of gatekeeping processes has led to the formulation of several theoretical concepts, including the period-specific Latvian Gatekeeping Filter (Figure 5). This filter – enabling

management and assignment of raw data into a foundational datapool - is one of the main contributions to knowledge of this thesis.

4.2. The significance of gatekeepers and gatekeeping in establishing first person perspectives on 'Then' from 'Now'

This section will consider the importance of 'gatekeepers' and 'gatekeeping' to the data gathering processes involved in writing the published monograph. Gatekeeping has developed increasing importance as a concept during the critical analysis for this thesis as the professional practice of the researcher-journalist in securing prime source interviews was evaluated against the approach of social science researchers. Prior to this critical analysis, the researcher did not think about 'gatekeepers'– only about people or contacts who could 'open up' a story and provide access to 'people who were there'. This is another area of unconscious overlap between the 'instinctive' journalism practitioner and the social sciences researcher: both are looking for access to a community and to the data which binds and informs that community but they go about it and think about it in different ways. The social sciences researcher has a framework to adhere to; the researcher-as-journalist does it 'instinctively' – or as a result of so many years of professional practice that it has become embedded subconsciously.

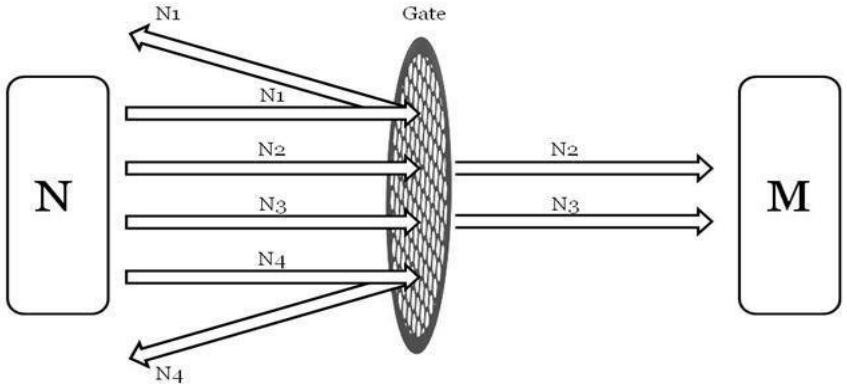
Applied to journalism, Gatekeeping Theory is an adaption of a selection process from the catering and food industries put forward by Lewin (1947) and developed in 1950 by David Manning White, a journalism professor at Boston University. In journalistic gatekeeping, information that gets through the mediated filter of news selection generally becomes social reality – in other words, is broadcast to an audience. Information that does not is 'dropped'. In this definition by theorists Shoemaker and Vos (2009) journalists are the gatekeeper to news:

> Gatekeeping is the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people every day … People rely on mediators to transform information about billions of events into a manageable subset of media messages (2009: 1).

The gatekeeping and selection process is illustrated in Figure 3 (below), which was a starting point for the development of a period-specific filter for information relating to

Soviet Latvia (see Figure 5, pp.64-66). Data in various forms and levels (N1, N2 etc) is assessed and evaluated at the gate by the researcher. Here grading and assignment takes place into themes, positions, episodes in time, category (e.g., in the Latvian case, of 'partisan', 'deportee' or 'dissident'). In the diagram, 'M' corresponds with the researcher's datapool which became the foundation of the verified lived experience the monograph is based on.

Figure 3. David Manning White's original gatekeeping filter



Key: N = news sources, M = audience. N1–4 are stories being considered by the filtering editor for inclusion in the output. N1 and 4 are discarded as not 'being right' for the audience – for example, 'out of the area' or the 'wrong type' of story, whereas N2 and N3 meet the audience criteria; for example, they are 'KGB stories from Soviet Latvia', whereas N1 might be a sport story and N4 might be about an incident in Belarus. Visualisation of David Manning White's gatekeeper model by Stacks and Salwen from Yin and Ponnan (2019).

The Manning White visualisation of Gatekeeper Theory in Figure 3 adapted well for the Soviet Latvian data situation. Sources were laid out along a chronological narrative line to create a data pool, then issues of 'representation of viewpoint' could be considered to create a textured diversity of perspective. This offered a variety of contrasting or supporting narratives which were assembled using a variety of narrative techniques. For example, see Chapter 9: The Whispering Society which describes the period of occupation post-1944 as the Soviet authorities tried to extinguish a widespread partisan war. Accounts from partisans (Rotbaha 2015, Jarinovska, 2015) are placed alongside translated official records (Plakans, 2007), statistics about the society from academic research (Pabriks and Purs, 2013) and

stories gathered in the field (for example the Annas partisans, p.124; Eduard Pleps, p.126).

Gatekeeping processes helped address one of the issues facing the researcher at the outset of this monograph: how to find reliable sources in Latvia when he was not Latvian, did not speak either Latvian or Russian and did not live in Latvia. The answer, which evolved over several years of self-funded research field trips and evaluation of data, was to rely on reputable publications both in Western and Latvian literature, English-speaking museum officials and archivists and Latvian friends as gatekeepers into the data field. In that way, despite the language limitations, the researcher would know the source of data and could judge it from that position of 'partiality' – i.e., as an ethnic Latvian or Soviet source. Using that method of transparency, Soviet-era historiography could also be fitted into that framework, thus offering a spectrum of perspectives on the past (for example, the obvious delineation of partisans as 'bandits' to the Soviets and 'freedom fighters' to the Latvians). The language limitation would be countered by having everything translated by a skilled Latvian-to-English translator so the researcher could work in his native language. With safeguards in place, the process of shaping the narrative began.

The literature on gatekeeping consulted for this critical analysis echoed the researcher's editorial judgement when it came to the selection of 'the type' of material that passed through the gate for the published monograph. Nisbett and Ross (1980) emphasise the importance of anecdotes and case histories as being more attractive to readers than data summaries. They place dramatic value on the 'witness statement', writing: "Vivid information grabs hold of the imagination and is exciting, whereas pallid information is dry and unappealing". People are more likely "to store and remember vivid rather than pallid information", they write (in Shoemaker and Vos, 2009: 26). Hewes and Graham (1989) note that issues of repetition and representation mean that once one type of story has passed through the gate, others that are similar are less likely to – or, as the researcher did with the published monograph, they may be shortened and 'grouped' into a sequence or summary to amplify the commonality of that experience. Items of 'doubtful truthfulness' are less likely to pass through the gate because they cannot be adequately verified and are likely to find themselves on a shortlist for rejection (in Shoemaker and Vos, 2009: 27).

All these processes identified in the literature resonate with the practice of identifying and assembling the data in the published monograph. The researcher was looking for stories that met a certain stylistic parameter or 'house style', namely, an oral history first person interview; an eyewitness who can say: "That's what happened to me". Shoemaker and Vos (2009) agree that 'people-stories' make more impact when told by the person involved, and that images are a strong element in storytelling.

> Concrete details about individual people, their actions and their situations make the information more 'imaginable', thus prompting the production of cognitive images … Pictures, which are concrete and both supply and elicit images from memory ... are remembered better than verbalisations (2009: 26–27).

4.3. Navigating a series of gates: using gatekeepers to find prime sources

The process of critical analysis for this thesis has also identified how a pro-active approach to research coupled with location visits to conduct interviews with prime sources in person can trigger an opening of 'gates to the past' – simply by being there. In this process of re-examining the past, the journalist-as-researcher becomes more than a professional with "a ringside seat to history", as the BBC war reporter Martin Bell (2000) described journalism, but an active digger into the layers of the past and accepted knowledge that constitutes 'history'. Concepts of what history 'is' and 'can be' will be discussed in the section considering academic lenses of critical analysis (section 5.4).

The researcher's efforts to find 'people who were there' in Soviet Latvia times while based in the UK and lacking Latvian language skills involved identifying institutions or individuals who might have contacts with – for example – people who were deported to Siberia, who fought as partisans or whose family had been affected by these times. The researcher went back to some of his sources for his first monograph about the Second World War and asked if they knew anyone who had contact with the NKVD/KGB. In some cases this produced results, particularly in the archives of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, which had literally thousands of interviews. An issue here was filtering these results to select which particular episode of personal suffering to highlight.

Having used initial gatekeepers to identify potential prime sources, the emphasis shifted to making contact with them and planning a research trip. These research trips could be extremely productive in unexpected ways, as the prime source would suddenly become a gatekeeper to a private and personal archive. Sometimes during an interview a contributor would refer to photographs of family moments, particularly of their parents, and then, when prompted, would produce them – often from a shoebox in a cupboard. In some cases, historically significant images of moments of drama were gathered, such as former Member of Parliament Linards Mucins giving permission for photographs to be used that were taken when the 'Cheka Bags' were seized in 1991 (see plates p.XXX). These bags, full of card index records found when the KGB headquarters was stormed, were at the centre of speculation for 25 years afterwards over who was and wasn't a Cheka agent in Latvia. There were no pictures of these bags in the English literature until publication of the researcher's monograph.

Thus it can be seen that, from this critical analysis, gatekeeping theory applied to the researcher's experiences on location has identified how interviewees can become gatekeepers in their own right, helping the researcher dig into a deeper level of memories, images and artefacts well beyond the reach of desk-based colleagues. There are two issues here that are of relevance to this process of discovery, however. One is the ease of duplication of photographs, maps, letters, useful books through digital cameras and smart phones and the rapid transfer of material by email and to hard drive for safe storage. The second is that of trust; whether the contributor trusts the researcher-journalist with these precious memories. The first issue has a bearing on the second, as this material can now be photographed immediately without the need to take it away. Increasing the data yield from a visit to a prime source key informant in this way also spread the narrative load across new images, new anecdotes, long-lost pamphlets, medals, keepsakes and potential new sources of information, which adds valuable raw material to the foundational datapool while also widening and personalising it.

In this way, identified by this critical analysis, the contribution of 'gatekeepers' is fundamental to the search for prime sources as well as to generating fresh data to shape the monograph itself.

This realisation from the critical analysis has led to the development of a template of possible gatekeepers allowing access to a story about the past (Figure 4) and a

specific filter relating to content-gathering in Soviet Latvia (Figure 5). Figure 4 (below) sets out a framework of gatekeepers offering possible routes to access the past – journalistic 'ways into the story' – thus constructing an editorial access window into Soviet Latvia 'Then' from 'Now'.

Figure 4. Template of possible gatekeepers to access 'then' from 'now' in Soviet Latvia

Accessing 'then' from 'Now'	Contributor
Experts and eyewitnesses	Latvians who were 'there'
Anglo-Latvians	Important sources of knowledge and interpreters of nuance. Gatekeepers to 'the literature'
Translators	Possessing the ability to craft passages of written or oral testimony to ensure accurate 'meaning-making' in the published edition.
Photograph and image curators	Experts in the evidence of what 'then' was like, with the knowledge of where and when these photographs were taken, where they came from and how they ended up in their collection. The 'story of the image' is also compelling.
Literature	How poets, novelists and writers responded descriptively and emotionally to certain times, events and circumstances.
Librarians and local historians	Curators of local knowledge, managers and custodians of information about the past such as newspaper archives, local biographies and histories.

A priority ranking was developed around these sources, with preference given to in-person interviews conducted and recorded by the researcher on location. The reason for this was because variables in the content-gathering process can be controlled much better in that situation and body language can be observed. The content is raw and unedited by third parties and so the narrator can honestly say it

has not been tampered with or altered. The priority ranking for preferred sources in Historical Discovery Journalism data-gathering on Soviet totalitarianism 'Then' from 'Now' follows this order:

i. The in-person interview, conducted on location by the researcher so all aspects of the process are known;
ii. Filmed testimony by reputable documentary makers, e.g., The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia;
iii. Online clips of first-person testimony, recorded by reputable sources, as in the case of the City of Culture clips posted by the Occupation Museum;
iv. Autobiographical accounts (either in English or translated);
v. Translated memories, diaries, newspaper cuttings and regional research into the period, from whatever medium (such as online, locally published books, regional newspapers or history projects);
vi. Local stories, either told in conversation with the researcher or relayed as reported speech by the researcher.

4.4. The development of a Latvian Gatekeeping Filter

From this framework of access to 'the past', a Latvian-specific Gatekeeping Filter began to emerge in response to the grading and evaluation of source material prior to and during the data-gathering field trips contributing to the published monograph. It is based directly on the template devised by David Manning White in 1950 and takes account of the type and flow of digital information to the researcher. The elements in the filter (see Figure 5, pp.64-66) help the researcher decide whether the data makes a relevant contribution to the narrative (in journalese, evaluating "what it adds to the story") and evaluate its positionality and 'strength' if it passes through the initial examination. An important element in the data-gathering for the published monograph was the collection of information about specific personal artefacts, photographs and mementoes, which add considerably to the personalisation and relatability of a story; in other words, *why* these artefacts and images are so significant to the keeper. Period examples of this might be a watch, a pen or a letter from the KGB cover office in London inviting the recipient to return to Latvia.

The fact that these mementoes have been kept until the ‘end of life’ period indicates how significant they have been. This personalisation, perhaps beyond any other type of source, is what distinguishes the monograph as a work of historical documentary journalism about people, rather than it being a work of ‘history’ about a period in time. Oral history, memory studies, lived experience, autobiography, biography and so on are all important elements to be considered in the overall picture but the important element is the ‘people stories’. Historical Discovery Journalism draws from all these disciplines and is an amalgam of them – it is intended to be a multi-layered contextualised landscape with people at the core of it and as the main focus: their narrative drives the main narrative in a series of sequenced encounters across the country. This analysis of the monograph’s construction led to the conclusion that this method might be transferable to other societies.

The shift in positionality in the published monograph from ‘dispassionate objective narrator’ to an Active Included Narrator discussed in the previous chapter makes this reliance on the gatekeeper even more acute. The Active Included Narrator is no longer an impartial, disengaged journalist but an active character whose actions are also driving the story and who sifts and ‘positions’ the content, reacting to the people encountered during this journey. Interactions with gatekeepers become part of the process of discovery and thus the narrative: the narrator becomes a gatekeeper too. The storytellers are characters living in their own homes rather than coming to a broadcast studio; the Active Included Narrator is seeking them out, telling the reader about the journey along the way then describing the emotional impact the stories are having on him. The narrator has become part of the story and can no longer claim to be entirely ‘disengaged’ – the journey has become the destination. Through the narrator the reader meets the contributors; the narrator decides where the window onto the story opens, how it develops, climaxes and closes and then the narrator delivers the ‘closing thought’. This is a process of gatekeeping too: the narrator is the gatekeeper to the content as well as its ‘shaper’.

From this shift the theoretical construction of Historical Discovery Journalism emerges, with the Latvian Gatekeeping Filter (Figure 5) as its central data-sifting component. This filter helps identify, evaluate and position the incoming data to create a raw datapool from which narrative elements are drawn and structured.

Figure 5. The Latvian Gatekeeping Filter developed for Soviet Latvia 1940–49

Type of data	Data evaluation	Filter analysis	Decision
1.	**Information falls outside the parameters of the narrative to be told. Wrong time period, wrong region.**	Story is rejected as off-track	No. Assigned to bin.
2.	**Material from Soviet-period publishing from within Latvia, sent out to West. Clearly ideological propaganda, driving false narratives.**	If this material can be verified, contextualised and labelled properly, this can be useful. Authentic Soviet propaganda.	Yes, with safeguarding and positionality declared. Category: 'Authentic Soviet propaganda'.
3.	**Latvian newspaper article that covers old ground but contains certain new elements, such as quotes, photographs or additional examples.**	Take the new detail and add to other accounts to triangulate and build a fuller account. Acknowledge source so pre-publication readers can see where it comes from. Photographs and police reports are particularly useful.	Partial acceptance. Strip out the new material; 'frame, don't claim'. **Assigned as '**Part of 'the record'. Can attribute and use photographs, excerpts from official documents. Useful for 'parts'.
4.	**Western published source, respected historian e.g., Lumans, Buttar, Ezergailis.**	Into final draft as a way of setting agreed historical boundaries and contextualising.	Yes, definitely. Work into the narrative, attribute. **Assigned to**: Contextualising material, authoritative secondary source of 'events in the past'.
5.	**Original interview, conducted by author.**	This is a self-generated new face-to-face interview which is driven by the author and covers topics decided in advance and planned into the narrative structure.	Definitely yes. Translate, transcribe and work **i**nto book final draft as 'new material, personal memories'. Edit into sections for duration reasons as 'witness to re-visit later'.
6.	**Person with similar story, willing to talk.**	Interview anyway, but ask as well about a whole series of other issues, feelings and experiences. May generate unexpected dividends, and certain to add to overall story about 'events in the past'	Conditionally accept, but may reject aspects due to duplication. Find a way to generate new material or additional angles on certain situations. Useful for possible verification and confirmation reasons, plus may add new detail for triangulation or other examples elsewhere. Can be

			useful for thematised sequencing.
7.	**New information, e.g., transcript in English of genocide trial of KGB boss Alfons Noviks.**	Primary source, admissible evidence. In English, a court transcript, focused and detailed, in the right style.	Yes. Definitely. Excerpt from the official record of post-Soviet justice with witness testimony. **Asssigned to:** Into final draft as evidence of KGB methods. Run without editing in the same way as evidence from the Nuremberg trials might be used.
8.	**Source suggests material that needs translating but might be of use.**	Accept. Err on the side of caution and check it out. Ask trusted translator (e.g., Daina Vitola) to read and assess, rather than translate word for word.	Yes. Evaluation of entire translated text to ensure knowledge of context and nuance. Full or partial translation takes place. **Assigned to**: Into final draft, but may be edited, split across topics or chapters. Use to maximum effect.
9.	**Long, detailed interview in English with key informant on aspects of Soviet Latvia.** On transcription does not stand up in print as well as it did in the telling. Other sources suggest this person is making themselves out as more important and influential than they are. On member-checking, they correct the transcript from its original rendering and emphasise different points.	They are a significant official research figure in this story, but their methods are unethical. It is important to include their contribution because of who they are, but they have rejected the original transcript, which was faithful to what was said.	Proceed, but with caution. Accept their revisions. Edit down their contribution but reduce the scale of their involvement to a minimum. There is something 'not right' about this. The author doesn't want to unwittingly become a publicity outlet for them. **Assigned to:** Partial use, simply out of recognition of the value of the office. Pursue other options to sideline this source, if this is their method. Not the right way of behaving.
10.	**Informant tells great stories during a casual meeting at the railway station which illustrate examples of partisans double-crossing the Cheka.**	Pursue, get a useable version together, and include. Get as much as is possible. Push for more.	Yes, definitely. Personal stories, particularly ones with a twist, are definitely 'on the money'. **Assigned to:** Add to partisan stories and develop.
11.	**Discovery through desk research of publications by Latvian Communist leaders, such as Janis Kalnberzins and Vilis Lacis.**	Read, evaluate and include. Obviously partial propaganda perspective but valuable for putting	Yes, definitely. Example of Latvian Communist perspectives on achievements.

		'the other side of the story'.Published in the West, so significant contemporary artefact.	**Assigned to**: Use as contrast to ethnic Latvian stories, Juxtapose with examples of Latvians on the receiving end of these policies.
12	**Photographs from regional and national archives, personal collections**	A 'snapshot in time' – evidence of 'what had been' (see Barthes, chapter 4.5.8).	Yes, definitely. Shows people in their context, 'story is in their eyes' and so on. Kuldiga history teacher Herbert Knets said of Soviet records: 'The information may lie but the photographs don't'.

The theoretical technique of Historical Discovery Journalism proposed as a result of the critical analysis for this thesis draws from all these sources and combines them into a single authored narrative in the form of 'a story about Then from Now', blending content from a series of disciplines, perspectives and drivers, as described below in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Constituent elements of the proposed historical discovery journalism method of writing about 'then' from 'now'.

Journalism: An examination of 'history as it stands' based on 'what is known about the past' (in this case in English or translated into English).
Discovery: Gathering of new content. Revisiting '*lieux de memoire*' and available content from a 'Now' perspective. For example, de-classified CIA files from 2005 relating to intelligence about Latvia in the 1940s and 1950s add new knowledge about the past. New material comes from the diaspora with the emergence and publication of 'Grandad's diaries'.
Documentary: Location interviews generate fresh eyewitness accounts and vivid personal detail from 'people who were there' describing 'what happened in the past'.
Lived experience: as a discipline, evidence of 'what happened to this person in the past' even if their account is told in isolation. Autobiographies and personal stories help build up and add detail to factual accounts.
Oral history: as a qualitative method of content-gathering, eyewitness accounts can bring historical episodes to life. When told to expert researchers and translated verbatim, they can offer raw and personalised testimony using methods that are academically valid.
Archive photographs: Images as evidence of 'then' which stand as evidence of the human condition (e.g., lived experience in Siberia considered from a 'Now' standpoint).
Researcher's own location photographs: images as evidence of historical sites of memory 'Now' – what is remembered about 'then', 'Now'.
Memory studies: personal accounts of 'then' from 'now' in published or private letters, diaries and so on.
Emotional expression: through poems, literature written about 'then' during the experience as a record of, or emotional response to, the experience or event.

Thus, it can be seen that critical considerations of gatekeeping concepts for this thesis have helped articulate the unconscious journalistic process of stratification and separation of content into definite areas of positionality and perspective to form a foundational datapool. This instinctive process, refined through years of professional production, enables the researcher to select from across a spectrum of possible data, whether that be political, thematic or geographical.
The selection process forms the basis of the sequencing in each chapter and in the overarching master narrative. This process brings valuable insight into the narrative structuring stage, as content can be drawn from various 'pots' to ensure representation of perspectives and signpost where 'more may be needed' or where balance may need to be addressed. The content-gathering research process can thus be adjusted as material is harvested, and pro-actively directed to address areas

of shortcoming. Stylistic narrative junctions into and out of this material can be generated through the character of the Active Included Narrator either on location or later in the scripting process.
The next section of this thesis will analyse this developing method – which has evolved into the theoretical model of Historical Discovery Journalism - using nine academic lenses of critical analysis.

4.5. Lenses of critical lenses applied

As the published monograph was an application of the researcher's professional practice over many years, working in both broadcast and print media and in news and documentary programming, this analysis of critical lenses will begin with journalism, considering its function and the safeguards that need to be applied to ensure that published accounts are accurate, honest and fair. In the case of the published monograph, there were considerations related to the partiality of contributors and the ideological slant of literature from Soviet times.
This analysis considers the advice the journalism industry offers regarding the methods that should be applied to verify content, reduce bias, highlight partiality and consider all data to reach the best-informed conclusion possible about a situation.
The chapter goes on to consider theoretical perspectives on the purpose and function of documentary journalism, before analysing elements of the monograph through the critical lenses of oral history, history, memory studies, lived experience, narrative theory, translation and the value of photographs to 'writing about events in the past'. In particular this critical analysis identifies the value of eyewitness testimony in the academic disciplines of oral history, history, memory studies and lived experience, and its contribution to the creation of a detail-rich and vivid human account of past times of political terror. In seeking out new eyewitness accounts and combining elements that can drive narrative in a multi-disciplinary, multi-media way, reference to the literature from those disciplines leads this critical analysis to conclude that this form of documentary journalism creates a highly personalised detail-rich subjective landscape of the past written from a 'Now' perspective.
Because of the transferability of this theoretical method between periods of time and

different languages, it has the potential to contribute to new ways of thinking about ways to revisit and write about 'events in the past'.

4.5.1 Journalism

Journalists have long argued that they aim to be impartial and objective, although they decide who to interview, they assemble the voices and facts in a story and they choose what evidence to include. The researcher evaluated the content for the published monograph in the same way. This section will consider arguments about whether journalists can, or need to be, impartial when approaching a subject. The answer, in the researcher's experience, is that impartiality depends on what you are writing about and how much material you have to work with. As has been previously stated, the datafield relating to Soviet Latvia is fragmented and incomplete, and while impartiality is an ideal to strive for, there is not a second side of the story to balance as the Soviet Union has collapsed.

The definition of impartiality according to McQuail (2000) is "balance in the choice and use of sources, so as to reflect different points of view, and also neutrality in the presentation of news – separating facts from opinion, avoiding value judgements or emotive language or pictures" (2000: 321). Frost (2000) considers that impartial reporting means the journalist is 'aiming' at the truth, whereas true impartiality would require giving the whole picture (2000: 38, in Harcup 2022: 90) With regard to impartiality, achieving balance and reducing bias, BBC guidelines state that:

> It requires us to be fair and open-minded when examining the evidence and weighing all the material facts, as well as being objective and even-handed in our approach to a subject (BBC editorial guidelines, 2005: 27).

Journalism theorist Harcup (2022) writes: "It could be argued that journalism unencumbered by neutrality might actually be *more* objective because the audience knows where the journalist is coming from" (2022: 89). This is a very useful standpoint in relation to the published monograph, because aspirations of impartiality have not been abandoned, but it was not possible to gather enough data relating to Soviet positions to balance content from an ethnic Latvian position. There was also a question for the published monograph of whether it was necessary to achieve a

mathematically-correct data balance or to focus on one side in detail because that content was there, and to concentrate on the 'Soviet power' – about which there was much more data. Another strategy for journalists is to include conflicting sources illustrating a number of positions, or what Harcup describes as 'truth claims' (2022: 93). This was another technique employed by including extracts from books published in English by Communist Party boss Kalnberzins and Interior Minister Lacis, which were clearly produced for propaganda purposes but had value in representing their perspective.

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) say journalism's first obligation is to the truth and its essence is 'a discipline of verification', but they do not include stipulations of 'fairness' or 'balance' as they deem these concepts 'too vague' to be essential principles. Fairness was too 'subjective' to offer any guidance on how to operate, while balance was "an operational method that was so limited it often distorted the truth" (2014: 9–10). Objectivity should relate to journalistic method rather than the individual, they argue, as the individual will never be fully without a subjective dimension. As a lens of retrospective critical analysis, these principles have great resonance with the researcher's method of collecting and evaluating data, and indeed many are the same, including:

- Do not add and do not deceive – journalists navigate the lines between fact and fiction;
- If journalists are seekers after truth, they must be honest about what they present to their audiences: they should be 'truth-presenters';
- Journalists should be as transparent as possible about sources and methods "so audiences can make their own assessment of the information". The method is objective, not the journalist, and 'getting it right' is the foundation upon which everything else is built – context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate (*The Elements of Journalism*, API online article).

Where information comes from, what bias it may contain, how meaning may be lost in translation and the classic journalistic flipping question "What *don't* we know?" lead Kovach and Rosenstiel to consider this level of self-disclosure and evaluation as "the most important single element in creating a better discipline of verification".

> Most of the limitations journalists face in trying to move from accuracy to truth are addressed, if not overcome, by being honest about the nature of their

> knowledge, why they trust it, and what efforts they make to learn more (2014: 114).

Thus, transparency of method and the mechanics of the data gathering process are an important element in the published monograph, realised in narrative passages describing, for example, the researcher's journey to a contributor's house, ahead of a verbatim transcript of the interview. It "allows the audience to judge the validity of the information, the process by which it was secured and the motives and biases of the persons providing it" (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014). The willingness to be transparent is at the heart of establishing that the reporter is concerned with truth. The lie, or the mistake, they write, is "in pretending omniscience, or claiming greater knowledge than one has" (2014: 114–115).

In the published monograph, the narrator travels across Latvia to meet contributors in a journey of discovery. By the end – Section C, or the 'resolution' of Freytag's Pyramid' – he knows more than when he started, having been told many stories about how people's lives changed as a result of contact with the Cheka. To achieve this travelogue form, and to introduce the idea of the journalist transparently 'bearing witness' to these stories, a shift in narrative positionality was introduced (see Active Included Narrator, section 3.6). In terms of editorial guidelines, this equates to a position the BBC describes as an 'authored narrative' – a move from the traditional journalistic position of impartial, detached observer to that of an involved, personal perspective. With regard to 'authored narratives', BBC guidelines state:

> Content reflecting personal views, or authored by an individual, group or organisation … particularly when dealing with controversial subjects, should be clearly signposted to audiences in advance (BBC, 2005: 30).

This does not mean, however, the abandonment of impartiality, fairness, transparency and other journalistic principles: it is a narrative device which tells the story from that perspective.

At later stages of editorial consideration, Kovach and Rosenstiel argue for a technique of 'sceptical editing' – questioning how we know this, who said it, and how it is substantiated (2014: 128). It is here that documentary principles become an important lens of critical analysis, and these will be considered in the following section.

4.5.2. Documentary journalism

During the Bolshevik Revolution early documentary makers such as the Soviet director Dziga Vertov pioneered the use of film: he considered his camera lens as 'a second eye' and the documentary as a way of presenting 'life as it is' and 'life caught unawares'. Nearly a century later Bernard (2011) defined documentaries as a way of bringing their audience "into new worlds and experiences through the presentation of factual information about real people, places and events, generally – but not always – portrayed through the use of actual images and artefacts."

> Documentary is an art form, a conduit of expression, weaving factual elements into an overall narrative that strives to be as compelling as it is truthful and is often greater than the sum of its parts (2011:1).

As a practitioner, and without realising this resonance with the literature on documentary journalism literature, the researcher instinctively applied these storytelling methods in the construction of the narrative arc, searching out images of Siberian funerals and partisan groups cheerfully brandishing their weapons in the forest. Barnouw (1974) writes: "The documentarist has a passion for what he finds in images and sounds – which always seem to him more meaningful than anything he can invent. Unlike the fiction artist, he is dedicated to NOT inventing. It is in selecting and arranging his findings that he expresses himself" (in Bernard, 2011:2).
Frisch (1990) argues that working on documentaries requires making the audience a more explicit dimension of consideration than in scholarly writing. Preparing material for documentary use involves considerable attention to how the material will actually 'work' and how editorial choices will bear on its effectiveness in advancing the purposes at hand (1990: 83). Documents come 'from' the past, he says – film clips, letters or reports – while interviews are documents 'about' the past. They are more than reminiscences in this sense, as they bring a meaning and subjectivity to the sequence of narrative into which they may be inserted: there is a process that needs to be undertaken to showcase oral history effectively.

> To use oral history in documentary in most cases involves an act of translation as well as selection and presentational shaping (1990: 84–85).

The editing of any form of testimony requires an ethical commitment to retaining the sense of the original contribution (see Chantler and Stewart, 2003: 35), and the editor - in this case the researcher - makes the decision on where to open and close this window onto the 'event in the past'. Thus, by doing so, the researcher controls the selection process and by extension the intended meaning-making in a chapter or sequence. This is a position of power, and journalists, writers and broadcasters must respect that privilege and adhere to the professional codes that have been shaped over the course of relating accounts of the past), such as the Society of Professional Journalists in the United States (2014) which states: "Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility" (SPJ Code of Ethics, 2014, (see p.37). This code was adopted in 1926 as a set of principles to encourage journalists to take responsibility for the information they provide.

This lens of critical analysis is especially important for this thesis as it can be seen that the approach of a documentary journalism practitioner is to present honest, accurate, reliable and verified accounts of events in as transparent a manner as possible in an effort to reduce accusations of bias and a lack of impartiality. In the view of the researcher making this shift in documentary journalism positionality to tell a series of intense and emotional stories involving rupture and loss from the position of an Active Included Narrator increases reader engagement, amplifies the emotional content due to relatability being increased as characters are described more fully and offers a more 'immersive' view in an exploration of events in the past. However, while the traditional journalistic standpoint of 'dispassionate, disengaged observer' (Dworkin, 2006) may have been augmented with this more empathetic approach- the ethnic Latvians are, after all, the 'victims' of repression – this editorial shift in personal documentary storytelling does not mean the abandonment of integrity, fairness and rigour, just a more person-centred approach to the task.

In the view of the researcher, accounts which do not attempt to portray their material honestly or reach certain standards of objectivity fail to achieve their objective of offering accurate and reliable accounts of events. Where that material comes from, and the views of academics as to its strengths and weaknesses, will be discussed in the following sections (4.5.3 to 4.5.9).

4.5.3 Oral history

The core of the published monograph was the six new oral history interviews with contributors, recorded onsite, transcribed verbatim and member-checked before publication. Journalists have long embraced the personal account and oral history theoreticians value the authenticity, vividness and immediacy of what it adds to historical accounts. Eyewitness quotes bring to life in human form accounts of 'what happened' and have been central to the researcher's professional practice. This section will consider the strengths and weaknesses of oral history and its contribution to storytelling about 'the past'.

The French historian Jules Michelet in 1846 considered the memories of the 'common people' as 'living documents' (in Thompson, 1979: 40). In his 1979 text *The Voice of the Past*, Thompson wrote that oral history practitioners were "shifting the focus and opening new areas of inquiry by challenging some of the assumptions and accepted judgements of historians, by bringing recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored" (1979: 79). However, critics of oral history say memories can be 'unreliable', particularly with old age and lapses into nostalgia. O'Farrell (1979) condemned oral history for leading "not into history, but into myth" through its interest in "the world of image, selective memory, later overlays and utter subjectivity" (in Ritchie, 2011: 79). Subjectivity, however, is exactly the element needed to engage and immerse a reader in an extreme personal experience.

The Latvian oral historian Irina Saleniece (2016) argues that personal testimony reveals a human perspective on events, individual experience and essential values that are "almost impossible to find in archival documents" (2016: 109).

> Only the people themselves know what they felt and thought at the moment of detention, deportation and the years of special settlement. Only they can recall how they learned to adjust in the unfamiliar natural and human environment of Siberia and how they managed to adapt to new living conditions (2016: 102).

Saleniece's statement is important for this critical analysis in terms of emphasising the immersive side of this documentary narrative style. It has clear retrospective resonance for the researcher as the conditions the Latvians survived in Siberia were well beyond his own lived experience. How could these stories of incredible suffering and hardship be told for an audience new to this period? The answer was to be true to the experience of the storyteller, and let them tell the story in their own words.

Sherbakova (1998) notes that the oral transmission of family stories was especially relevant in Soviet times. Writing was dangerous as it might be discovered and considered 'anti-Soviet', punishable with long spells in labour camps in Siberia. In Soviet times, she writes, historical truth lived on only through 'underground memory', long before Western broadcasts could be heard and manuscripts secretly circulated in *samizdat* form:

> Before that there was only silence, or at the most, rare whispers between intimates, because to tell anyone about the prisons and concentration camps was deadly dangerous (Sherbakova, in Perks and Thompson, eds. 1998: 235).

Sherbakova interviewed Latvians in the gulags alongside Russians, Jews, Poles, Germans, Armenians and many others, and argues that it is the detail in people's memories of periods like this that is significant – a conclusion borne out in the many interviews with Latvians from the digitised archive of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia which were copied and translated by the researcher:

> As a rule it is the first arrest or the first cell which is remembered best of all, probably because it came as such a powerful shock to one who, up to that very moment, had been an innocent person. Often they still hold the whole view of what they saw in their parting glance as they were marched off, their last look at their old life … each spare little shred of clothing, the stockings given to someone, the mittens stolen from you, they all remained fixed in the memory for decades (1998: 235).

Thompson (2000), Perks and Thomson (1998) and Sherbakova (1998) say oral history humanises the experience of people who were there, adding powerful and dramatic emotional insight to episodes of great trauma and stress. Social anthropologist Skultans (1998) conducted research in the immediate aftermath of Latvia's independence from the Soviet Union, and noted:

> Narrative accounts focus on a past which could not be talked about under Soviet rule. Informants were keen to set the record straight and to challenge the versions of history in Soviet textbooks (1998, foreword).

The learning from these practitioners through this critical analysis is particularly important in understanding how lived experience was passed down in Soviet times

through the oral account. Experiences of military conflict and combat were common in the period of partisan war from 1944 onwards, so this critical analysis consulted academic literature relating to oral history and war. A study of New Zealand war veterans by Hutchings (2011) revealed that sometimes anecdotes about war were extremely detailed, as though the teller was reliving the experience. At other times, memories were very vague. In trying to understand why this might be, Hutching considered that the strength of emotion experienced at the time of the event left vivid memories, and noted: “It is often times of extreme personal danger or despair that are remembered in such a way” (2011:240). Some war stories told by her veterans were “often perfect anecdotes with a beginning, a middle and an end,” she wrote. “These are the types of stories told at unit reunions, servicemen’s clubs or to family members. Some stories are never told, perhaps because no-one had ever asked, or because the events are too traumatic […] Sometimes narrators will remember nothing other than an event occurred: sometimes it is as if they are actually reliving the experience” (2011: 240). This is certainly true in the experience of the researcher, who in research for his previous and subsequent monographs *Blood in the Forest* and *The Road of Slaughter (*Helion, 2019 and 2023) found veterans in their 90s still too traumatised to talk. However, others of the same age had crystal sharp memories and were willing to reflect on the effect war had on their psyche. Testimonies of personal experiences of totalitarianism were drawn from autobiographies in the literature (Kalniete, 2009; Celmina, 1986; Knagis, 2009); factual accounts of personal experience (Nollendorfs and Oberlander, 2005; Ozola and Jansons, 2011; Skultans 1998; Rotbaha, 2016 and more); excerpts from video interviews recorded for the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia documentary team; witness statements in the trial for genocide of KGB chief Alfons Noviks (taken from transcripts found in Pettai, 2015) and newspaper articles, diaries and so on – wherever quotes could be found. Trial transcripts have a basis in law as ‘reliable testimony’ and produced shocking imagery, such as the Alfons Noviks ‘count the slaps’ extract from inside the KGB cells (see Hunt, 2019: 45).

4.5.4. History

For the reasons stated above by Sherbakova (1998) and Skultans (1998) Soviet history was not considered a reliable guide to ‘events in the past’ experienced at a

personal or community level. As Ferro (1984) explores in some detail, the relationship between the past and Soviet history and historiography "was transformed and distorted according to the twists and turns of the political 'line', which always had to be explained by the necessities of history-in-the-making" (1984: 167). History became the servant of Marxism and the Communist Party leadership, helping build Socialism and loyalty to the regime from an early age. Ferro quotes a 1934 Communist Party instruction:

> A good historical education should convince people that capitalism must go bankrupt… and that everywhere, in science, agriculture, industry, peace and war the Soviet people leads all others, its achievements being unequalled in history (1984: 175).

Social anthropologist Skultans (1989) argues that ethnic Latvians would not accept the 'official' Soviet history introduced into an occupied society by an alien ideology.

> The spoken not the written word was the bearer of the truth. The textual paradigm did not have undisputed dominance and the printed word was mistrusted and sometimes seen as deliberately misleading. If history books lie, memory acquires a central importance for the perseveration of authenticity and truth, as well as a peculiar poignancy (1998: 28).

Official Soviet accounts often reflected ideological or propagandistic goals, argue Khubova, Ivankiev and Sharova (2011). Oral history testimony from Soviet times can be a more reliable source than written accounts, they say, because official history "was consistently distorted in the Soviet period for ideological and propaganda purposes (2011: 8). They write:

> It is sometimes said, and it is almost true, that for us [Russians] the documents are subjective and the only thing that might be objective are the memories (in Gheith and Jolluck, 2011: 8).

Reflecting on this academic analysis emphasises the central role that oral history and memory play in the effectiveness of the published monograph in bringing to life the personal experiences of 'Soviet times'. The literature relating to history also

offers great insight into how this discipline can contextualise individual accounts from certain periods in the past.

History, Elton (1987) writes, “amounts to a search for the truth” but history cannot be ‘truth’ as it is the subjective opinion and interpretation of the historian (1987: 70–71). History happened, he argues, and although “exactly what happened, or when and how and why, cannot now be known … this does not alter the fact that it is knowledge of a reality, of what did occur.” He goes on to say:

> History will rarely be able to say: ‘This is the truth and no other answer is possible’ [but] it will always be able to say: ‘This once existed or took place, and there is therefore a truth to be discovered if only we can find it’ (1987: 73–74).

Winter (in Olick et al, 2011) argues in questioning the nature, genesis and purpose of history: “Whose history, written for whose benefit, and on which records?’ (2011: 426). Considering these fundamental caveats in the critical analysis for this thesis identified the unconscious reliance on ‘the personal story’ as a way of making meaning about events in the past in the published monograph. That Soviet ‘history’ was politically influenced, subject to change and statistically unreliable was proven by one example in Soviet-era Latvian history relating to conflicting accounts of the activities and death toll at a WWII concentration camp at Salaspils, east of Riga. The Soviet claim was that 100,000 prisoners were killed at this ‘death’ camp, many of whom were Jews, and that medical experiments were conducted on children, whose blood was drained off for transfusions for German soldiers. Research by Latvian historians post-independence argues this figure was vastly inflated by propaganda. Kangeris, Neiburgs and Vīksne (2016) believe that a more accurate figure was a maximum of 2,000 dead among 21,000 prisoners there between May 1942 and September 1944, 1,000 of whom were Jewish. Between 250–650 children died from malnutrition or illness and were not subject to medical experiments, as detailed in the original Soviet account. As many as 4,000 inmates were transferred to camps in Poland and Germany, where many would have died.

A comparison of sources used in the published monograph with Marwick’s *Taxonomy of Primary Sources* (2010) lists almost every source type used instinctively by the researcher in his data gathering. This suggests, for the purposes of this critical analysis, that as the published monograph is using the same type of

sources, then the finished text is ‘a version of events about the past’ – a ‘storied form of knowledge’ as Munslow (2007) puts it - using prime sources. The list includes documents of record, surveys and reports, chronicles and histories, family and personal sources, pamphlets, political manifestos, guides, handbooks, other works of reference and so on (Marwick, 2010: 166–172). Marwick argues that only memories, relics and traces – whether these are written, printed or archaeological - offer glimpses of ‘the human past’. These are more accurate and precise than ‘history’, he says.

> Primary sources form the very basic ‘raw material’ of history; they are sources which came into existence within the period being investigated. The articles and books written up later by historians, drawing upon these primary sources, converting the raw material into history, are secondary sources … Primary sources are indispensable for research and the production of historical knowledge (Marwick, 2010: 26).

Fellow historian Munslow (2007) argues that ‘the past’ and ‘history’ are separate entities. “The past is what once was, is no more and has gone for good,” he writes. “History on the other hand is a corpus of narrative discourses about the once-reality of the past, produced and fashioned by historians”. There are three important implications, he says:

i. The past is a category of content (real events)
ii. The significance of how it is told is crucial (the issue of discourse or narration of a story)
iii. History is a category of expression (varieties of narrative representation) (2007: 25).

Munslow’s view of history as “a storied form of knowledge” containing “statements of justified belief based on sources and evidence” is particularly interesting for a non-Latvian speaking journalist analysing what is known about the past in Soviet Latvia. Munslow says history usually becomes textual and “a reference to events with the explanations or meaning of historians.” By viewing history as a narrative representation of the past, Munslow defines history as “the story space existing between” past events, the author/historian’s ‘narration’, and the past as a ‘history narrative’, perhaps as a text, film, performance or comic strip (2007: 25). The

narrative “is the organising principle for the aesthetic turning of the past into what it patently is: the past-as-history” (2007: 28).

Crucially for the purposes of this critical analysis, Marwick argues that the word ‘history’ in reality means “the past as we know it from the work of historians” (2010: 29), and in words that could apply equally to journalists as historians, continues:

> If you are planning to make an original contribution to historical knowledge, you are unlikely to make much of a stir if you stick strictly to other people’s work; that is, the secondary sources … It is through the secondary sources that one becomes aware of the gaps in knowledge, problems unsolved, suspect explanations. It is with the aid of these secondary sources, and all the other resources of the profession, that one begins to identify the archives in which one will commence one’s researches (2010: 29).

Therefore, the lens of history is crucial in this critical analysis for establishing ‘what history is’ and ‘what can be history’. While oral history and memory studies have weaknesses due to age and partiality, history is, as Napoleon Bonaparte said: “a set of lies that people have agreed on” (Various, 2021). Marwick’s comments have great significance for the researcher, who drew from ‘history’ for verified accounts of ‘the past’ in the published monograph, but sought out primary sources in the form of eyewitnesses recounting their memories as the elements to advance the story. But are memories valuable reflections on past events or accounts tainted and adjusted by the passing of time?

In the following section the academic discipline of Memory Studies will be considered for its evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of human stories.

4.5.5. Memory studies

One of the cornerstones of the published monograph is memory. The reliability of stories about the past is critical to its credibility. Therefore it was essential for the literature on memory to be consulted for this critical analysis. Suzanne Langer (1953) describes memory as ‘the great organiser of consciousness’ but identifies weaknesses therein.

> Actual experience is a welter of sights, sounds, feelings, physical strains, expectations, perceptions that memory simplifies and composes. Above all,

> memory transforms the experienced past into what we later think it should have been, eliminating undesired scenes and making favoured ones suitable (in Lowenthal, 1985: 206).

Sherfy (2006) argues that modern perspectives mean, by definition, that observers will never fully understand experiences in the past.

> Even having steeped ourselves in the literature of the period, worn its clothes and slept on its beds, we never shed [today's] perspectives and values … We cannot arrive at a full understanding of the past because the past is something outside our experience, something that is 'other' (Sherfy, in Vansina, 2006: 185–6).

The French sociologist Halbwachs (1877-1945) held that memory, both individual and collective, was a more important factor in individual lives than history. History was 'a dead memory' which had lost its 'organic, experiential relation' to people's lives, whereas memory was more meaningful. Halbwachs broke memory down into several categories:

- autobiographical memory, experienced and remembered by an individual;
- historical memory, drawn from historical records and texts;
- history – what happened in the 'past';
- collective memory – the 'active past' that helps form and shape human identity (in Olick and Robbins, 2008: 110).

Tosh (2015) argues that memories can become modified through 'subsequent experience' and contamination by the recollections of other people. While their stories are often recounted "with vividness of detail and an emotional power" he warns that the memories of elderly informants are "modified by the impact of subsequent experience and the recollections of other people" (2015: 263). However precise and vivid the memories, they are filtered through subsequent experiences.

> They may be contaminated by what has been absorbed by the informant through other sources [notably the media]; they may be overlaid with nostalgia or distorted by a sense of grievance … The notion of a direct encounter with the past is an illusion, but perhaps nowhere more than in the case of testimony from hindsight. 'The Voice of the Past' is inescapably the voice of the present too (2015: 270).

However, Edkins (2003) argues that the process of bearing witness or giving testimony may cause it to lose its original impact.

> In order to tell the story it has to be translated into narrative form. This loses the immediacy of the traumatic recall, but more importantly it loses '*the force of its affront to understanding'* (2003: 41, quoting Caruth, C. *Trauma*).

The question of subsequent contamination raised by this critical analysis is one that has to be considered, given that the memories told to the researcher for the published monograph stretched back over seventy years. They may have become tailored in their telling, or skewed by television reporting. However, as Hutchings (2011) noted earlier, the intensity of the experience may be imprinted on the storyteller's cognitive processes. The French historian Pierre Nora (1989) wrote that when totalitarian regimes collapse societies are suddenly able to, or have no choice but to, reconnect with their past heritage, traditions and memories. This rehabilitation of their past, Nora argues, is "part and parcel of reaffirming their identity"– a process he calls the 'decolonisation' of memory which has:

> … helped reunite these liberated peoples with traditional, long-term memories confiscated, destroyed or manipulated by those regimes: this is the case with Russia and many countries in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Latin America and Africa (in Olick et al, 2011: 440).

This section of this thesis would not be complete without the inclusion of reflections from several examples of memory work with veterans for the researcher's subsequent monographs. These examples relate to issues of the 'fragility of memory' or – in one case – the ability of memory to correct 'the record'. The overarching question is whether stories of survivors are factually correct, a version of what happened to them and what they saw, or a rough approximation of what they think the interviewer wants to hear? Are these memories subsequently edited as survivors make sense of their experience; are they edited to leave out bits they would rather forget, like running away under fire? Have memories changed over time? The strength of the accounts of survivors – some of whom have been determined to survive just to be able to tell those stories on behalf of those who did not, like in the gulags (Celmina, 1985) – is that they add a layer of reflection to the raw accounts of

what happened. The ‘subsequent knowledge’ helps to make sense of what was happening beyond the fifty yards to the left or right of them, as memory workers say about soldiers. In the researcher’s opinion, these stories are worth hearing. The use of ‘prompts’ as advocated by oral historians such as Thompson (1999) can stimulate the sharing of long-forgotten memories during an interview session.

Mortar battalion section leader Uldis Dukurs was interviewed many years after the Battle of Berlin in 1945 for a book of memoirs by Aivars Petersons. He had had 50 years to reflect on those experiences, to read the accounts of other men whom he may or may not have served alongside, had read many books about that time, seen the news and documentaries and films about wartime experiences he was part of, and so his accounts may have been tempered by that. But equally, by living so long and by having digested all this material, he was able to add his memories to what was already known - and to correct the account as it stands on the record. In a separate and subsequent video interview for the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, he adds detail to stories of Latvians being executed by gendarmes in Berlin for looting wine stores. He turned a corner to find a group of gendarmes lined up against a wall with Latvians about to machine gun them in revenge for executing their comrades. He talked them out of it, but this story – told many years after the event - adds a layer of detail and complexity about the relations between Latvians and Germans during WWII.

Another veteran, Janis Cevers, was a machine gunner on the Eastern Front for several years. During a lengthy interview with the researcher, he admitted that war had stripped him of any human emotions. Although he was a machine gunner using an MG-42 or Bonesaw, known for its fearsome firepower, he could not bring himself to admit he had actually killed anyone. “Maybe one for definite,” he said. “I saw him fall, but perhaps he was only wounded.” Those guns fired 800 rounds a minute, and the bodies of Red Army soldiers often stacked up several deep in front of Latvian positions. Maybe this is an example of the human memory retreating into denial for self-protection? Mr Cevers also admitted to having nightsweats for twenty years after the war so badly he had to change the bedsheets every morning.

A 94 year old veteran, Henry Vitols, was expecting to be asked how many men he had killed. As his memory was failing due to dementia, he couldn’t remember, and so wasn’t pressed. At his stage in life, and with his faculties in decline, is it worth pressing him any further? Does it matter any more how many men he killed?

The linear, textual narrative is not the only form of 'remembering' used in the published monograph, however. The capacity of photographs as a method of 'record' does not decline over the years: they are a snapshot of a moment in time. Photographs were an additional and important storytelling device during the process of content-gathering used as 'images of what once was' in the narrative, as well as for prompts during interviews with elderly contributors. As Thompson (2011) notes: "Oral historians and reminiscence workers know that sensory triggers, such as interviewing in situ or the use of photos, can often enable rich and even unexpected remembering" (2011: 83). Sutton (1992) says photographs have three functions – as illustration, data (part of the field notes) and as 'prompts' to stimulate memories during the data-gathering process. Harper (2002:13) says photographs can stimulate specific thoughts from an interviewee as 'photo-elicitation', with images unlocking memories from a different part of the brain.

This critical analysis has identified the problematic nature of Soviet history, and the tradition in former Soviet states of relying on oral transmission of information to avoid placing oneself or one's family in danger. The researcher's concentration on the personal history, and the use of personal photographs to illustrate that, locates the narrative in 'the personal' rather than as a 'history'. Ferro (1984) writes:

> ... the historians of this country were indeed the last to tell the truth about its immediate or recent past … it was the writers or the cinema directors who analysed the lived experience of past or present history, whether of the Second World War (Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood*, 1962) or of the climate of tyranny that reigned during the Stalin period (*Repentance*, by Abouladze, 1984) (1984: 202).

Ferro then writes about the 'authenticity' of these memories, based in witness testimony.

> The authenticity of these works lies in the way they gave the Russians back their past, a past that had been confiscated and manipulated in preceding periods, when certain events had been consigned to oblivion. By virtue of this, in history, witness took over from analysis and became an experience of the truth; the memory of the citizens was appealed to, so as to reconstitute a censored history, and also prevent the dramas that the past had experienced (ibid).

Modern Russian and Latvian perspectives on their shared history differ greatly and have led to what the Latvian-American political scientist Nils Muiznieks (2011) describes as ‘memory wars’, with insults traded by both sides. Latvian officials have accused Russia of trying to “whitewash” the past, particularly the Stalinist repressions and the forcible annexation of Latvia, he writes. For their part, Russian officials have regularly accused their Latvian counterparts of “revising” history, even of “glorifying” or “rehabilitating” Nazism (Muiznieks, 2011: 7).

Zelče (in Muiznieks, 2011) compiled an array of academic opinion about Bolshevik history. Glovinsk’ii (1996) says it represents ‘the triumph of right over wrong in all realms of life’ – in effect ‘a weapon of tyrannical power’ which excluded the possibility of any other version of history existing. Uvarov (in Kobrin, 2007) argues that historians were complicit in the Soviet-era lies, maintaining a master-narrative of Soviet ‘rightness’. Zelče (2011) describes them as “members of the guild of those keeping the secrets of Soviet power”. Heller and Nekrich (1986) write that “Soviet history, as cooked to taste by Stalin, took the form of a monstrous mixture of nationalism and Marxism” which was applied to film, literature, history and education, reinforced by propaganda and with censorship editing out any conflicting opinions. Zake (2013) notes that attempts in 2012 to create a joint Latvian-Russian historical commission failed as Latvian historians demanded that their Russian colleagues accept occupation as a historical fact: the Russian historians would not (2013: 22). Although written before the opening in 2018 of the incomplete list of KGB agents contained in the ‘Cheka Bags’ seized when the Soviet Union collapsed, Zake argues that concepts of ‘denial’ and ‘responsibility’ need to be considered so post-totalitarian, divided societies such as Latvia can come to terms with the past.

> A society that refuses to engage with the past and displayed unwillingness to admit its members’ complicity in an oppressive regime can lead to distorted views about historical realities. It can breed a notion that things that happened under the previous regime were always somebody else’s fault. If the past remains unacknowledged and collaboration not discussed, it can produce deep-seated distrust among individuals and toward the new authorities … (Zake, 2013: 31–32).

The unreliability of the ‘history’ of Soviet Latvia and disagreements over how the past is remembered contributes to the fragmented and contested context in which contributors’ stories must be placed. This lens is particularly important for the critical

analysis for this thesis as it demonstrates the differences of opinion among academics as to how reliable memory is, and at the same time, how politically unpalatable certain memories can be. The next section considers the value of the academic approach of lived experience in evaluating eyewitness testimony.

4.5.6. Lived experience and subjectivity

Lived experience was another significant lens of critical analysis for this thesis because of the extreme and unpredictable nature of life in Soviet Latvia in the decade 1940–49. Entire sections of Latvia's population were expelled or massacred in this period – the Baltic Germans in 1939, the Jews in 1941 – while the uncertainty of this political upheaval, the suddenness of change and the intensity of experience were prevalent at many levels of Latvian society, from farmers to government workers. Memories of resistance to and contact with Soviet security forces are characterised by their vividness and detail and are almost filmic in their descriptions of 'time standing still' as terror, trauma and personal suffering unfold around the storytellers. This critical analysis of lived experience theory has underscored and supported the content-gathering methods of the researcher in the published monograph, particularly relating to the use of personal testimony, contemporary accounts and literature as sources.

Sociologists Ellis and Flaherty (1992) define subjectivity as "human lived experience and the physical, political and historical context of that experience". They argue that "emotional processes are crucial components of social experience" and propose interviews, participant observation, systematic introspection, performance, the analysis of archival records and documents from mass media such as films, newspaper accounts, autobiographies and novels as ways of studying this. Representations of lived experience can be found in films, diaries, biographies, letters, calendars and children's fiction, Ellis and Flaherty write, describing them as "cultural artefacts as documents of human subjectivity".

In new and unusual circumstances Ellis and Flaherty write that the mind focuses, alert to the possible risk to self. Concentration on the establishment of meaning is "deep only when there is sudden trouble to avoid". Rapidly changing and extreme circumstances lead to "a great increase in one's cognitive engrossment with self and

environment" (1992: 146). The increase in stimulus activity fills "normally perceived" units of time with a more intense density of experience, increasing the sense of protracted duration, making time feel like it is 'standing still'. The 'dynamic interplay of self and situation conditions the individual's perception of the passage of time,' they argue (1992: 147, 153). Baddeley (1999), considering the impact of violence on memory, writes:

> Fear may put a crucial feature of a situation into sharp focus, but may reduce the reliability of the witness's account of peripheral features (1999: 181).

Thus the literature on lived experience offers insight into the mental processes and perceptions of human beings under great stress (see examples above). Denzin (1989), Ellis and Flaherty (1992) and Baddeley (1999) explain why these contributions are so dramatic: because they are not about normal life at all, but about extreme, life-threatening circumstances of rupture, dislocation and isolation. Thus, reference to the literature on lived experience adds important new value to the contribution of eyewitness accounts in times of personal jeopardy, and may reveal the influence and significance of trauma on what is remembered by the storyteller and why. How eyewitnesses tell those stories and how they shape the sequencing and 'meaning-making' of such extreme events is the subject of analysis through the lens of narrative theory. The following section will focus on how eyewitnesses make sense of what happened to them.

4.5.6. Narrative Theory

Narrative, say theorists Hinchman and Hinchman (2001), is "forms of discourse that place events in a sequential order, with a clear beginning, middle and end" (2001: xv). This view correlates with the structure of the journalistic feature and the storytelling technique of Freytag's Pyramid outlined earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 3.4) of A, B and C sections, where stories are introduced, developed and then resolve, climax or end in catastrophe. Psychologist Jerome Bruner (in Ritchie, 2011) says that stories are 'pivotal' to human subjectivity, and that "Narrative is the way we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings" (2011: 89).

Hinchman and Hinchman support this view. Narrative "does not falsify or distort that which is recollected," they write. "It merely casts it into the story pattern that its inherent structure warrants" (2001: xx). In the researcher's view, narrative theory embraces the story for itself and celebrates the personal account. The stories that people tell come from who they are and who they consider themselves to be – their identity, journey of development and memory of how they came to be that person. This view has resonance in the literature with MacIntyre (1981) who says that a human being is not a 'citizen of Nowhere'. The story of an individual life depends on the larger stories of the community to which that person belongs.

> Narrative history of a certain kind turns out to be the basic and essential genre for the characterisation of human actions (in Hinchman and Hinchman, 2001: xxiv)

Narrative theorists say 'the story' is at the heart of the process of 'meaning-making', which gives that view extra relevance in terms of the contributors to the published monograph. The interviewees are describing – to an 'outsider' - the hardships and suffering they experienced under Soviet totalitarianism and the fate of their friends and classmates. Narrative theory gives credit to the value of the life-story rather than questioning it and validates it as an experience in its own right, thus in turn validating the person telling it. Even though life may have been cruel and harsh, meaning can be made from it. Therefore, it can be seen that the literature on narrative theory supports the researcher's decision to focus on personal stories organised automatically into a structure that meaning can be made from and which in turn help validate the experience of the eyewitness.

The critical lenses considered for this thesis so far have concentrated on analysing the content-gathering and selection processes in the published monograph. They have identified the value of eyewitness testimony and memories in amplifying the highly personal insight that 'people who were there' bring to a retrospective study, albeit with possible weaknesses due to inaccuracies in the telling or subsequent 'editing' of accounts to gloss over inconvenient details. However, they establish a 'version of events' which may be considered 'history' but can certainly be categorised as 'lived experience'. These conclusions are important to this study as the critical analysis demonstrates that showcasing new testimony and contextualising it with 'agreed' history enhances our understanding of what

happened in the past, and underscores the researcher's efforts to do that from a 'Now' perspective.

However, there are more factors that need to be considered with regards to the methods used in the published monograph. Translation was a hugely important factor in ensuring the accurate reporting of eyewitness accounts when working with raw material in a foreign language. Another factor in the gathering of content for the monograph was the value of photographs in illustrating and amplifying the lived experience and making it 'personal'. The next section will consider perspectives from translation theory and the crucial role that translation plays in 'meaning-making' from the data gathered. After that this thesis will consider literature relating to the significance of photographs and their value in establishing one of the goals of the published monograph and a key aim in this critical analysis - a greater understanding of 'Then' from 'Now'.

4.5.7. Translation

With the exact meaning of language crucial to the accuracy and credibility of the published monograph as a work of journalism in English, it was essential to have translations that matched the sense and relayed the nuance of the original contributions in Latvian. Therefore this thesis analyses some of the decisions and processes that related to translation from Latvian into English and the safeguarding of the meaning in the original.

Translator Daina Vitola – a family friend - was chosen as she considered herself 100 percent fluent in Latvian and English, both spoken and written. She is the daughter of a Latvian Legionnaire who surrendered in Germany in 1945 and came to the UK as a voluntary worker in the Westward Ho! scheme, along with 15,000 other expatriate Latvians. She was born in Britain but grew up speaking Latvian in a Latvian family home and did not learn English until she went to school. She spent her life working as a multi-lingual language teacher at the Latvian school in exile in Munster, Germany, speaking Swedish, German, Latvian and English. As this was often the first port of call for Latvians fleeing to the West, she also knew many of the significant figures in the Latvian community.

The journalist-researcher valued not only her language skills in both the original language and English, but her intent to translate ‘the meaning’ rather than the words themselves:

> Translation is not verbatim, but ‘meaning-making’. I try to see inside the words. And not just the words but the sense, especially the detail and the cultural nuance. I see my ‘skill’ as knowing what it means in Latvian and knowing how to make that ‘make sense’ in English – it helps the author gain a sense and comprehension of the material that they would never know if they just translated ‘the words’.
>
> There’s more to translation than just the words. There’s meaning rooted in the sense and the nuance of the Latvian language of the period, the experience of this community and how that needs to be articulated for an audience in the 21st Century. Translations should be natural, not stilted, and should ‘retain the Latvian-ness’ in English translation (Vitola, 2023).

Daina Vitola’s comments align closely with translation theory, and in particular the work of Herta Muller (2012), who says translation is more than a process of replacement, and is instead that of ‘matching’.

> The art of translation is looking at words in order [to see] how those words see the world … Each sentence is a way of looking at things, crafted by its speakers in a very particular way. Each language sees the world differently, inventing its entire vocabulary from its own perspective and weaving it into the web of its grammar in its own way. Each language has different eyes sitting inside its words (in Williamson, 2012: 102–103).

Venuti (1995) argues that the more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator becomes. A final text should reflect the translated writer’s “personality, intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text – in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the ‘original’” (Venuti, 1995: 32). Spivak (1993) says translators are like theatre directors or actors interpreting a script: therefore, she argues, “texts must be made to speak English”.

> We must attempt to enter or direct that staging, as one directs a play, as an actor interprets a script. That takes a different kind of effort from taking translation to be a matter of synonym, syntax and local colour (Spivak, in Williamson, 1993:28).

The literature on translation recognises the significant and central role of translators as interpreters of intended meaning, and, if immersed in the culture and history of the society being explored, they can also become cultural and contextual guides and thus offer valuable insights into the issues and events being explored in the narrative. This finding in the critical analysis is highly important, because it shows the researcher has applied safeguards of reliability and accuracy in selecting a native Latvian speaker as the conduit for the passage of 'meaning making' from one language to another. Additionally – in what is perhaps a more important role than that of simply 'translation' – the translator has become a cultural gatekeeper, aware of folk norms, customs and nuance that might pass other researchers by.

4.5.8. Photographs as a record of totalitarianism

This final section of critical analysis explores the value of photographs as a narrative device, considering their role in the published monograph in underscoring and amplifying human experience and telling stories in a reader's mind that words cannot convey. Academics in the field of photography have long valued the personal insight into the past that archive photographs offer. The Museum of Modern Art (2023) notes that photographs can be "powerful tools for telling stories and chronicling events. Their context and presentation can greatly influence the way we understand everything from historical narratives to current cultural issues and situations".

> Photographs can provide glimpses into lives past, long-ago events, and forgotten places. They can help shape our understanding of culture, history, and the identity of the people who appear in them (MoMA website, 2023).

Because the photographer has made choices about what they will show, photographs have a human hand determining what is presented in the image. The photographs selected for the published monograph feature a subject or subjects set in a particular theme, such as 'partisan' or 'Siberia'. The photographs include much rich detail that can be elaborated on in the narrative, such as clothing or weapons, facial expressions, living conditions and more. The photographs are an integral part of the story, and operate on several levels: as historical documents, as evidence of

individual and collective stories in history, and as amplifiers of the human experience being described in the text. The researcher believes they can offer both subjective and objective glimpses into the past, as MoMA recognises below. But in the modern era of misinformation and the importance of verification of images, there are always issues of trustworthiness.

> Photographs can bear witness to history … foster sympathy and raise awareness or, alternatively, offer critical commentary on historical people, places and events. Throughout the history of the medium, photographers have aimed to capture the essence of events they witnessed—though the question of the trustworthiness of their images is always up for debate (MoMA website, 2023).

Gordon (2008: 77–78) considers how photographs personalise the experiences of relatives of 'the Disappeared' in Argentina, citing the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo holding pictures of their lost children. These photographs add to the body of evidence that repressive societies use the same techniques to control society – by eliminating their opponents - and that these techniques generate anguish and pain the world over. Gordon references the seminal work *Camera Lucida* by the French philosopher and literary theorist Roland Barthes.

> Barthes grasps that the photograph's capacity to make meaning meaningful, to convey the existence of something profoundly or vividly or eloquently so that it matters to the viewer, is bound in its power to attract, 'to animate me', to draw me in, sometimes besides myself (Gordon 2008: 106).

Barthes (2000) explores themes of absence and presence in his theoretical philosophical writing; themes which occur and recur in the experiences of 'the disappeared' in Argentina, 'the repressed' in KGB-controlled Latvia and 'the murdered' in Nazi-occupied France. He talks of the 'evidential power' of the photograph and of the certitude of the image, but perhaps more importantly for this thesis and for the researcher's work, he argues that photography 'authenticates the existence of a certain being (2000: 107) and 'what has been' (2000: 115).
In writing about 'then' from 'now' photographs are an important window onto 'then' and the people who lived 'then'. Photography is always a representation of 'something', he argues, "which immediately yields up those "details" which constitute the very raw material of ethnological knowledge" (2000: 28). There is a parallel

between the images of Latvians in exile in Siberia in the clothes they have gathered to survive the harsh conditions and Barthes' impressions of Russians photographed in Moscow on May Day 1959 by William Klein. He writes:

> The photographer teaches me how the Russians dress. I note a boy's big cloth cap, another's necktie, an old woman's scarf around her head, a youth's haircut (2000: 29).

In the researcher's opinion, this demonstrates the power of the photograph to inform, to report; to show 'how it was then' – and to impart valuable information about the circumstances of the lives of the people existing at this moment 'then'. This becomes an important tool in evoking a sense of what 'then' was like – how people dressed, the vehicles they used, the buildings they lived in, the street scenes – helping to assemble a picture of the past for readers 'now'. Putting a face to the name makes the fate of the characters in the story all the more poignant. As journalists say, and as the American filmmaker Ken Burns eloquently demonstrated, "the story is in the eyes".

In his critically-acclaimed television series *The Civil War* (1990) Ken Burns presented eleven hours of film, mostly built around 3,000 still images of the American Civil War drawn from a five-year search of archives which yielded 16,000 photographs. These were brought to life by spoken testimony drawn from diaries, letters, speeches, news reports, epitaphs, memoirs – many "rich in simple eloquence" (Barnouw, 1974: 328). Burns' unrelenting zoom into the expressions on the faces of the people in these images – particularly focusing on the eyes – has become so much of a staple in the documentary genre that it is known among film-makers and camera manufacturers as the 'Ken Burns technique'. Burns' painstaking attention to the detail of his subjects' lives enabled him to create what Barnouw describes as "an almost unbearable reality" (Barnouw, 1974: 328).

This lens of critical analysis is vitally important in understanding the spectrum of data that was used to create the published monograph. The stories are told in words but amplified and affirmed using images. As Latvian historian Herbert Knets told the researcher during one interview about records of events from Soviet times: "The words may lie, but the pictures do not" (Knets, in Hunt, 2017). Therefore it can be seen that the literature relating to images has opened up new channels of communication with readers, engaging different parts of their brain, evoking different

types of emotional response, and possibly staying longer in their memory than the words themselves.

4.5.9. Summary

The published monograph was intended as a multi-sensory exploration of human experience in a period of repressive Communist rule, the actual memory of which was still within first person lifespans – in journalistic terms, there were ‘people who could talk’. In gathering those accounts, the researcher found images of the harshness of life in Siberia which added new dimensions of detail, human expression and depth to the textual accounts of lived experience at that time. Images became poignant elements in the narrative, evidence of the lived experience and an integral part of the attempt to understand in human terms ‘Now’ what happened ‘then’.
The multiple lenses of critical analysis considered in this chapter have offered a panorama of views on the techniques employed in the data gathering and structuring of the published monograph. These lenses apply to written as well as visual accounts; to the translation of original testimony and to the processes of safeguarding meaning and verifying accuracy in a work of ground-breaking historical journalism. As the critical analysis for this thesis has confirmed, the journalist-researcher has employed techniques consistent with the editorial principles of the BBC and other broadcasting organisations and the ethical codes of professional journalists such as the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) and the National Press Photographers Association (NPA) regarding the commitment to accuracy and impartiality not just of the words used in the published monograph but also the images. The researcher has used data gathering methods common both to the documentary maker and the qualitative researcher to confirm and ensure the transparency, reliability and validation of information gathered, and where possible, gather several accounts from the same time period or incident to allow triangulation to assist in that process. As Craig (2006) notes, professional ‘truth’ involves “accuracy, honesty, lack of distortion or misrepresentation, and fairness”. By adhering to these codes and guidelines, the journalist-researcher is seeking to make it clear where the data is coming from, who is saying it, what their positionality relative to the story is and also the circumstances under which this material has been collected. As the US National Archives and

Records Administration notes: “The use of primary sources exposes students to important historical concepts. First, students become aware that all written history reflects an author's interpretation of past events. Therefore, as students read a historical account, they can recognise its subjective nature […] Primary sources force students to realise that any account of an event, no matter how impartially presented it appears to be, is essentially subjective” (USNARA, online, 2023).
In the Discussion which follows, the researcher will consider the application of the learning from this thesis. In academic terms this entails a greater understanding of social sciences methods in relation to verifying ‘events in the past’ and a deeper knowledge of the period and region due to the extensive reading conducted. This learning – and validation of the proposed technique through academic rigour – has been applied to a subsequent monograph, written concurrently with this thesis. There is consideration too of how the publication of monographs such as this can stimulate the descendants of other people involved at the time to come forward with family stories and photographs, making Historical Discovery Journalism a dynamic and interactive process of writing about the past.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This thesis set out to critically analyse ways in which the researcher told historical stories of the lived experience of totalitarianism in Soviet Latvia **'**Then' from a 21st Century 'Now' standpoint in the published monograph *Up Against the Wall - The KGB and Latvia (Helion, 2019)*. The result of this critical analysis proposes a new theoretical framework for writing about the past - Historical Discovery Journalism – which is based on a dynamic hybrid storytelling model built around first person accounts of Stalinist repression in Latvia 1940–49.
The objectives of this thesis were to:

1. Identify the component elements of Historical Discovery Journalism as a hybrid multi-layered, multi-source method of meaning-making from the contributions of people who were there, contextualised by secondary sources.
2. Evaluate two new methods of empirical thinking about writing the past from a 'Now' perspective which were identified from the critical analysis in this thesis; namely that of a discovery technique titled here as Pro-Actively Seeking Access (see section 3.5) and a shift in narrative positionality titled here as Active Included Narrator (see section 3.6).
3. Propose a method of evaluating and ranking data from contested and conflicted periods in the past based on the researcher's experience writing about Soviet Latvia, which is titled the Latvian Gatekeeping Filter (see Figures 4, 5, 6; Table 1).

This critical analysis identified an interpretivist epistemology to consider what Bryman (2016) calls 'the subjective meaning of social action'; in other words, making sense of the world by seeing it through the eyes of the people being researched. The widespread use of personal testimony in the published monograph led to the adoption in the critical analysis of an ontological approach of constructionism (Bryman, 2016: 33), as the eyewitness accounts present 'a specific version' of social reality.

This chapter examines the close correlation between ‘instinctive’ or ‘embedded’ journalistic practice as theorised by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014); Harcup, (2022); Lee-Potter, (2017) et al and the data gathering, verification and validation methods used by qualitative researchers such as Bryman, (2016); Gorman and Clayton, (2005), Lincoln and Guba, (1985), Yin (2011), et al. Among the points for discussion will be the many areas where journalism and social sciences research methods overlap, using the same techniques to confirm the reliability of the data on which they base their work. From this critical analysis, a technique drawn from journalism of pro-active discovery in a subject field has been identified, and this will be evaluated for its potential contribution to writing stories about ‘events in the past’. To achieve the aim of the original monograph of writing a ‘grassroots’ collection of stories of lived experience in Soviet Latvia, the narrator’s position shifted to become more engaged and included to help forefront the subjectivity of oral history accounts and ‘personalise the pain’, without abandoning traditional journalistic principles of impartiality. This chapter begins by defining the theoretical approach of Historical Discovery Journalism formulated as a result of this critical analysis and proposed as its main contribution to knowledge. Issues relating to the two methods of new empirical thinking identified from the thesis, the discovery technique of Pro-Actively Seeking Access and the narrative shift of Active Included Narrator, will be discussed later in the chapter.

5.2. Key findings

The published monograph critically analysed for this thesis applied data gathering and narrative techniques drawn from the researcher’s professional practice as a documentary journalist for the BBC and used in the published monograph. This practice was considered ‘instinctive’ but among the key findings of this analysis is that the methods of qualitative researchers mirror closely those of journalists in seeking to confirm, verify and validate data. In some cases, for example, ‘member-checking’ the process was exactly the same, with the same goal – confirming that data was reliable. As the researcher was telling stories using images from the time and accounts from the period that were in Latvian, issues relating to the use of photographs and translation were considered with relation to the literature of both disciplines. One key finding was the value of images to writing about the past: as a

prompt for storytellers, as a window on the past, and as data that can be pro-actively discovered through in-person research on location. As the next chapter will discuss, these techniques have amplified and deepened the researcher's ability to dig into 'events in the past' and tell highly personalised stories.

5.3. Interpretation of Findings

The critical analysis for this thesis limited itself to a ten-year period in the relationship between Latvia and the Soviet secret police which encompassed three consecutive occupations between 1940-49 (Soviet-Nazi-Soviet) bookended by two mass deportations to Siberia as a Communist ideology was imposed (1941, 1949). This period was chosen for critical analysis as it was a time of intense political unrest and a widespread guerilla war during which every family in Latvia was affected (Plakans, 2007; Liulevicius, 2015). While there were many publications, exhibitions and several films relating to personal stories of the deportations (Geisler, 2009; Kalniete, 2009; Celmina, 1986; Knagis, 2009); coverage of the guerilla war during this time was fragmented, with Bower (1993) and Dorril (2000) concentrating on events in the west of the country while Turcinskis (2011) and Swain (2003, 2004) examined events in the east. Plakans (2007) translated documents relating to the apparatus and exercise of Soviet power, which involved regional Latvian commanders and local militia as active elements in the fight against their fellow Latvians as partisans. The monograph drew from commanders' operational reports to Communist Party meetings (Plakans, 2007) official statistics (Pabriks and Purs, 2013; Dreifelds, 1993; Statiev, 2010) accounts from partisans (Rotbaha 2015, Jarinovska, 2015) placed alongside stories gathered through pro-active journalism in the field (the Annas partisans, p.124; Eduard Pleps, p.126). Thus the published monograph drew from secondary sources to locate eyewitness stories within the geopolitical and historiographical framework which would personalise and bring to life those events. Lenses of critical analysis were used to assess the contribution these accounts made to a monograph which identified new sources and new data to add to the knowledge about this time (see Chapter 4.5 onwards). These lenses have helped identify the elements and content that contributes to the researcher's multi-media, multi-disciplinary approach to data gathering, which has been theorised here as Historical Discovery Journalism. This has also led to the creation of several tables

and figures (Figures 4, 5, 6) deconstructing these sources and evaluating them in terms of their value to the narrative.

Testimonies of personal experiences of totalitarianism were drawn from autobiographies in the literature (Kalniete, 2009; Celmina, 1986; Knagis, 2009); factual accounts of personal experience (Nollendorfs and Oberlander, 2005; Ozola and Jansons, 2011; Skultans 1998; Rotbaha, 2016 and more); excerpts from video interviews recorded for the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia documentary team; witness statements in the trial for genocide of KGB chief Alfons Noviks (taken from transcripts found in Pettai and Pettai, 2015) and newspaper articles, diaries and so on – wherever quotes and examples could be found. While this literature is common in Latvia, the monograph was intended for an audience in English, so political contextualisation was introduced through Western and Latvian texts in English (Conquest, 1978; Nollendorfs and Oberlander, 2005; Jarinovska 2014 et al).

As a result of drawing from multi-disciplinary sources this thesis positions the published monograph at the intersections of journalism and oral history, history, memory studies, subjectivity, narrative ethnography, literature and lived experience and argues that what it presents are stories that academics such as Ellis and Flaherty (1992) consider 'lived experience' (see section 5.6). Photographs and images offer snapshots in time, while accurate and nuanced translation is crucial to telling those stories accurately (see sections 5.8 and 5.9).

5.4. How these findings relate to previous studies

The published monograph draws eyewitness testimony and imagery from previous studies, mostly on sale only in Latvia and often in Latvian, and re-purposes them as part of a larger over-arching narrative in English about Latvia's relationship with the secret police or Cheka, which has not been done before in either English or Latvian. The published monograph was translated into Latvian in the same year it was published in English, and has sold out of two print runs, much more than the usual volume for a 'history' book in Latvia. Although limited to the time frame of 1940-49 the critical analysis for this thesis has identified the differences this monograph brings to its audience – the showcasing of personal stories, the movement across the Latvian landscape, the contextualisation from Latvian and Western secondary sources, often publications from the Latvian diaspora, which shows the researcher's

immersion in the topic and familiarity with the country. To emphasise the narrative standpoint of an 'outsider' the monograph is written as an extended documentary script, as broadcast techniques do not assume knowledge, they signpost and set-up sequences for the greatest understanding – and this is a natural style to be used given the researcher's professional practice in this field.

5.5. What these findings contribute to this field of research

While the published monograph draws from many forms of academic and published work, what sets it apart from other studies of totalitarianism is the shift in positionality of the narrator, who conducts interviews with contributors on location, expresses empathy and introduces information, pauses and rests into sequences, guiding and signposting the reader through the over-arching narrative. This critical analysis has identified the value of narrative as a way of understanding political conflict such as in Soviet Latvia 1940-49. Political terrorism theorists Graef, da Silva and Lemay-Herbert (2020) argue that "Narratives are tools to understand, negotiate and make sense of situations we encounter." In letting elderly contributors speak at length in face-to-face encounters describing both their 'living situation' as well as their 'lived experience', the narrator is 'being true to their story' and adhering to journalistic ethics of representation, while also 're-centring' the narrative around them: empathetically 'putting himself in their place' as psychologists like Gordon (1995) might say. This critical analysis demonstrates that documentary journalism can synthesise learning from the disciplines of political terror, psychology, subjectivity, autoethnography and lived experience into a single story, although adjustments may be needed to the narrative presentation. This could be considered as an 'augmented narrative' – a device to draw on a wide range of sources through the character of the included narrator, while an active participant in the unfolding of the story.
As the researcher was not a Latvian and did not speak Latvian, he was reliant on Latvians to translate as well as contribute their accounts, so felt that it would be more appropriate to 'frame, not claim' and to be transparent about his journey exploring 'Soviet times' in Latvia. Contributors were asked to recount their lived experiences of events in the past which the literature relating to the disciplines of oral history, lived experience, memory studies, narrative theory and history recognised as adding value to 'what is known about the past'.

The monograph's focus on oral history ensures that personal experience is at its core, and so this critical analysis considered the literature on oral history for its possible contribution to storytelling. Thompson (1979) argues personal testimony opens new areas of inquiry 'by challenging some of the assumptions and accepted judgements of historians' allowing voices that have previously been ignored to be heard. Saleniece (2016) says the human perspective that personal testimony brings to events and experiences are "almost impossible to find in archival documents" while Perks and Thomson (1998) and Sherbakova (1998) agree that oral history humanises the experience of people who were there. The work of Hutchings (2011) on oral history and war mirrors the experience of the researcher in the field conducting interviews, as she writes: "Sometimes it is as if they are actually reliving the experience" (2011: 240).

Lee-Potter (2017) argues from the standpoint of journalism: "A case study […] will reinforce the effect that this is having on individuals and will bring the subject to life". For the published monograph data gathering process, the interview was an opportunity to let contributors have their say about 'Soviet times' from the safety of post-independence Latvia – a considerably different time from the events they were describing. Social anthropologist Skultans (1998) conducted research in the immediate aftermath of Latvia's independence from the Soviet Union, and noted that the past 'could not be talked about under Soviet rule'. In her experience, as in the researcher's, 'informants were keen to set the record straight and to challenge the versions of history in Soviet textbooks'. The technique of conducting fresh interviews with people who were there is valued by social scientists Gorman and Clayton (2005) who say this method means a large quantity of 'rich data' can be gathered quickly. However, a reliance on interviews comes with risk. Journalism theorist Mencher (1991) argues this reliance has the potential to make the story 'vulnerable', while Sheridan Burns and Matthews (2018) warn that: "A journalist never knows what the interviewee *thinks*, only what the interviewee *says*" (2018: 121). Critics of oral history say memories can be 'unreliable', with O'Farrell (1979) arguing that the method leads "not into history, but into myth."

The confirmability and accuracy of data was a key issue considered by this critical analysis. Data gathered from interviews on location was cross-checked through triangulation with accounts in the literature. Gorman and Clayton (2005) say triangulation 'helps validate the reliability and accuracy of data'. Processes of

‘respondent validation’ and ‘member-checking’ used in social sciences research (Bryman, 2016; Guba, 1981; Gorman and Clayton, 2005) were used ‘instinctively’ by the researcher to check the accuracy of transcripts from contributor interviews. Gorman and Clayton (2005) describe member-checking as “the single most important action inquirers can take, as it goes to the heart of the credibility criterion. This can help ensure that the interpretation which has been built upon it is indeed valid” (2005: 60). Among the important guidance the BBC gives its staff is that journalists should ‘gather material using first-hand sources’ and ‘validate the authenticity of documentary evidence and digital material’ (BBC, 2005).

The analysis of qualitative research literature for this thesis (Shep, 2005; Bryman, 2016; Yin, 2011 et al) has identified many ways that documentary journalism practice strongly correlates with best practice in qualitative research methods. Shep’s approach to validation, verification and reliability, which includes good record-keeping, correlates strongly with professional journalistic ethics, such as verification and attribution of information, use of original sources, identification of sources and the utmost importance of accuracy (Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics, 2014). Yin (2011) says data such as population statistics, newspaper articles and municipal records can provide important insights into society to complement fieldwork. In the published monograph these were drawn from Communist Party records and statistics in Plakans (2007), Dreifelds (1993) and Swain (2003, 2004).

Thus it can be seen that there is extensive literature detailing the areas of practice in which documentary journalism practice overlaps with qualitative research, and this critical analysis has led to the theorisation of the multi-media, multi-disciplinary technique proposed here as Historical Discovery Journalism. It does not claim to be ‘history’, because the narrator is a journalist who aims to amplify personal experiences rather than showcase archival findings. It is however, ‘a version of events in the past’ recounted verbally, which in the opinion of oral historians (Saleniece, 2016; Thompson, 1979) celebrates the ‘voices of the ‘loser’ rather than the voices of authority - which tend to be preserved through documents. Winter (2011) questions the fundamental nature and purpose of history: “Whose history, written for whose benefit, and on which records?”. In the case of the official Communist Party records translated by Plakans (2007) the audience was apparatchiks in Riga and ultimately Moscow.

Elton (1987) argues that history cannot be ‘truth’ as it is the subjective opinion and interpretation of the historian, while Marwick (2010) prefers ‘memories, relics and traces’ as they offer glimpses of ‘the human past’ and are more accurate and precise than ‘history’.

> Primary sources form the very basic ‘raw material’ of history; they are sources which came into existence within the period being investigated […] indispensable for research and the production of historical knowledge.

While Tosh (2015) celebrates memories for their “vividness of detail and an emotional power”, he warns they can become modified through ‘subsequent experience’ and contamination by the recollections of other people. Edkins (2003) says the process of converting the process of ‘bearing witness’ into narrative may cause it to lose its original impact. However Bruner (2011) says that stories are ‘pivotal’ to human subjectivity, and that “Narrative is the way we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings”.

Translating these narratives into the researcher’s native language was an area that needs special safeguards so meaning was not lost or modified in translation. To achieve accuracy both of language and meaning, a translator was used who was 100 percent fluent in both written and spoken Latvian and English, and whose father had been in the Latvian Legion before coming to England in 1947. Thus the translator, Daina Vitola, had a perfect understanding of the nuance and meaning of language that could be slightly dated. She became a cultural guide and social interpreter as well as translator through her concern for the accuracy of the text:

> There’s more to translation than just the words. There’s meaning rooted in the sense and the nuance of the Latvian language of the period, the experience of this community and how that needs to be articulated for an audience in the 21st Century. Translations should be natural, not stilted, and should ‘retain the Latvian-ness’ in English translation (Vitola, 2023).

Thus it can be seen that basing the published monograph in oral history and memory stories roots it in personal experience, which is often intense, painful and in need of contextualising. This was achieved using reputable sources from the published literature in both Latvia and the West. Using a translator for whom Latvian is a mother tongue brought great value in recognising nuances that might pass another

researcher by. Adopting a process of discovery from journalism generated new ‘prime sources’ which should be of value to historians, oral historians, students of memory, lived experience and subjectivity as well as those with an interest in the field of totalitarianism and political violence. As a result of this critical analysis, the nature of contributions in the foundational datapool could be stratified into three separate categories:

i. **Human history** – eyewitness accounts, from a cross-section of survivors, using accounts written at various periods after the event, with interviews conducted personally by the researcher being the ‘most preferred’ option;
ii. **Geographical history** – what happened where, when, and what is that place like ‘now’? This emphasised the need, as theorised in this thesis, for the narrator to become ‘active and included’ to describe these locations for Western readers and to highlight nuances in the story. Visiting the locations aids the understanding for the writer, and enables accurate, honest and more descriptive writing.
iii. **Photographic history** – showing ‘then’, now, and showing ‘them’ – the families living in shacks in Siberia – ‘then’. Photographs were used to break down the journey into sections so it could be illustrated with pictures of the locations ‘then’ as well as ‘now’. Photographs of people reinforce the rule of documentary journalism that ‘the story is in the eyes’ and that pictures add enormously to the story. As Barnouw (1993) relates, the American Civil War filmmaker Ken Burns – a significant influence on this researcher - was pleased there was no film footage when he made his television series: “The still photos seemed more haunting. They offered time to look at the faces” (1993: 328). Burns’ unrelenting zoom into the eyes has become a staple of this way of historical storytelling, and the researcher attempted to transfer this focus to his narrative when writing about individual and collective experience by focusing on the people in the pictures.

The framing of these stories by the ‘outsider-narrator’ will be discussed next, as this involves a shift in positionality from the usual ‘impartial and dispassionate’ journalistic voice to one of a narrator that is part of the story.

5.6. The shift in positionality to active included narrator

The decision for the narrator to become a character in the story was not one taken lightly, as it moves away from the traditional journalistic position of 'dispassionate observer' (Dworkin, 2006). As a literary device it was an effective way of joining 26 chapters of varying degrees of political turbulence into one over-arching narrative. The shift in the positionality of the narrator to become active and included in the story helped introduce complex episodes of political turbulence and terror through a single voice across a period dating from 1905 to 2018.

The researcher felt becoming part of the story added a greater narrative yield. Many readers in English would not have visited the locations outside Riga, and it was a natural and transparent move to describe and introduce contributors before their interview appeared in a conversational transcribed form – as though the reader was there.

Transparency is a key concept in journalism theory (Craig, 2006; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014; White, 2016). The move to an active included narrator helped emphasise the process of how the narrative developed: in plain sight. In the researcher's view, this is 'technique on the outside' and a narrative adaption rather than the abandonment of the long-standing tradition in journalism of 'dispassionate and disinterested observers'. As Dvorkin (2006) states: "In short, they must not project themselves on the events they cover". However, in the researcher's view, an authored narrative can tell stories that the traditional 'straight' approach would struggle to deliver well. The critical analysis has identified parallels in the social sciences of narrative being considered as a 'sense-making practice' as stated by political terrorism theorists Graef, da Silva and Lemay-Herbert (2020): "Narratives are tools to understand, negotiate and make sense of situations we encounter." By entering the story, meeting elderly contributors and letting them speak, the narrator is 're-centring' the narrative around them: in effect, as Gordon (1995) says, empathetically 'putting himself in their place'. The added relatability this approach of 'described encounter' brings also increases the engagement of the reader, and enhances the vividness of the picture that can be painted. The researcher is able to

become a different kind of writer, not just a reporter, and to think about sequence junctions; where and how to pause the story so readers can process information, where to start and how to finish the storytelling. This technique of allowing 'process time' is common in radio storytelling. The Active Included Narrator style is, in the researcher's view, a lot more involved in terms of the casting of the story, but is also a more sophisticated way of presenting lived experience that is by some measure beyond the researcher's own. Having the narrator as part of the story, describing and transcribing this encounter, with the narrator's reactions and questions noted helps personalise the pain by transcribing the conversation as it unfolds, and aids in the exploration of events in a way similar to narrative ethnography, where Ellis and Bochner (2016) say: 'The emphasis is on the ethnographic dialogue or encounter". Tedlock (1991) says it is possible for researchers to be both 'emotionally engaged participants' and 'coolly dispassionate observers' at the same time, although this involves writing both as the Self and Other simultaneously. Shifting to an Active Included Narrator gives the researcher greater flexibility to negotiate editorial junctions and introduce characters, mull over moments of realisation while at massacre sites, wince as the last moments of the film *Katyn* demonstrate how Latvians were killed by the NKVD with a shot in the back of the head (p.321) – these are human reactions to the nature of death and demise during this time, and the researcher's reaction 'now' was part of the delivery of this method – to steer readers through a collection of eyewitness accounts and episodes of complex power relationships at a personal level and explain why they mattered. In the journalistic technique of 'trusted voice' narration it is not the researcher's intention to abandon editorial principles and write entirely sympathetically and subjectively, merely to write more empathetically and to show a little compassion for the many victims of Soviet political terror in this time.

However, the shift in positionality to a more included narrator does involve a closer relationship with graphic accounts and images of violence that can leave scarring on the researcher. Figure 6 (see p.67) identifies the constituent elements of the proposed method of Historical Discovery Journalism, while Table 1 (see pp.48-50) ranks these sources in value terms related to their proximity to events – for example, the closer to the event, the stronger the account in terms of personal experience, but this may lack objectivity.

Thus it can be seen that this critical analysis has achieved its aim of identifying

the component elements of Historical Discovery Journalism as a hybrid multi-layered, multi-source method of meaning-making from the contributions of people who were there, contextualised by secondary sources. In sections 3.5 and 3.6 the researcher theorises the two new methods of empirical thinking about writing the past from a 'Now' perspective identified from this critical analysis - Pro-Actively Seeking Access and Active Included Narrator – with reference to the benefits of this technique from the literature from a wide range of academic disciplines.

Objective 3 has been met through the production of tables, figures and templates demonstrating the conclusions of the researcher as to the value of source material of different types when researching a contested and conflicted period in the past based on his experience writing about Soviet Latvia. These tables include a period-specific Latvian Gatekeeping Filter (Section 4.1, Figure 5); identification of the elements of the proposed method of Historical Discovery Journalism (Figure 6); and a deconstruction of the value of the sources in relation to their proximity to 'events in the past' (Table 1). These theoretical tables have the potential to be applied thematically to other periods of contested history and other societies experiencing political terror, totalitarianism or other forms of repression.

In the final and concluding section of this critical analysis, the researcher will set out his contribution to knowledge from this thesis.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Recap of objectives

This thesis had three objectives:

a. to identify the component elements of the multi-disciplinary narrative method used in the writing of the researcher's published monograph *Up Against the Wall* in order to theorise it as 'Historical Discovery Journalism' (see Figure 6).
b. to theorise two developments in empirical thinking about discovery and narrative processes as a potential contribution to future writing about the past – the discovery technique of 'Pro-Actively Seeking Access' and the change in narrative positionality through the application of the technique of 'Active Included Narrator' (see Sections 3.5 and 3.6)
c. To theorise the process used to analyse, identify and stratify the information in the conflicted and fragmented datafield of Soviet Latvia for the purposes of creating a known and politically-attuned datapool so that positions across the political spectrum can be represented. This process has been theorised as the Latvian Gatekeeping Filter (see Figure 5).

What differentiates the technique of Historical Discovery Journalism from how journalism 'usually' approaches such stories is the combination of sources and the flow of information. Because data is drawn from diaries, letters, interviews, conversations, anecdotes, posters and 'kept artefacts' as well as the usual official and published sources for such writing, there is a vastly increased personal level to this perspective, and so the construction of 'the past' is much more immersive. The construction process can be considered as akin to the creation of a mosaic, made up of lots of different parts drawn from memories, accounts of what happened, artefacts and photographs that remain, maps that tell a story in themselves and an 'outsider-narrator' immersed in this storytelling visiting the location digging for more information but also aware of the need for this information to be reliable. The very gathering of this multi-faceted data, in a mode of constant iterative triangulation, reflection and response, adds to its credibility and reliability.
The data-gathering takes place over an extended period, so the process of considering what the data is revealing and the meaning that can be made from that

means the discovery process can be adjusted to focus on areas that are not sufficiently represented in the final datapool.

The data-gathering process, the pro-active stages of new discovery and the injection of an Active Included Narrator to link passages of testimony into the draft and subsequent versions of the final manuscript can be expressed in the form of a flow chart (Figure 7).

This flow cycle should be considered flexible rather than rigid, as where these elements sit in the flow of information will adjust according to the stages of data-gathering. For instance, the initial stage might be of gathering data from the field of 'what is known' – published sources, which can be stratified using the Latvian Gatekeeping Filter. When the first stage of discovery comes – that is, when the journalist-researcher goes into the field to gather their first wave of 'new interviews' – that stage then moves to Pro Actively Seeking Access, before a second stage of processing and stratifying the data gathered, like fishermen inspecting and evaluating their catch. Here the Latvian Gatekeeping Filter behaves like the original Manning White gatekeeping filter (see Figure 3), with relevant material allowed through and extraneous or non-relevant data rejected. At this stage the datafield is again reviewed and decisions made as to whether more data is needed, and if so, the form that should be in. The researcher may need to visit the location again to gather more specific detail or to interview a contributor with specific rather than general experience to 'plug a hole'.

During the discovery stage of Pro Actively Seeking Access, the journalist-researcher will be capturing moments, thoughts and impressions from location, as well as conducting interviews and gathering books, artefacts, photographs and information. Narrative interventions by the journalist-researcher may be prompted by a decision to 'say what you see' at a location or to set up a showcase interviewee – or they may be added at the narrative assembly stage. Here, the Active Included Narrator is a device that both drives and then 'smooths out' the sequentiality of the narrative.

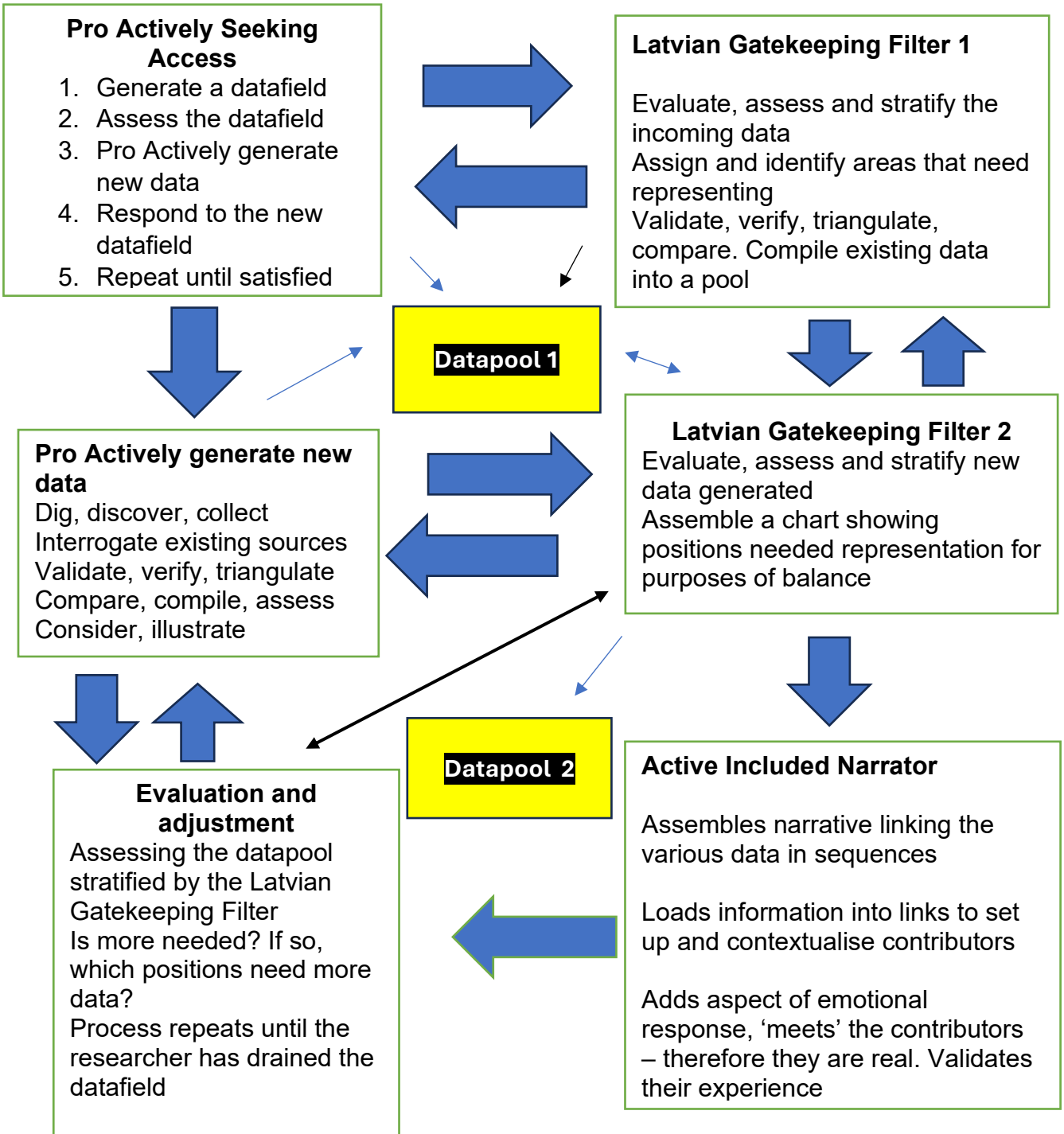
Pro Actively Seeking Access drives the discovery and the Latvian Gatekeeping Filter processes and evaluates the resulting data and identifies where gaps may be. The Active Included Narrator loads information into the narrative to contextualise and set up contributors and then create smooth junctions into the next sequence in a single, authored voice – thus creating a unified sequentiality of narrative.

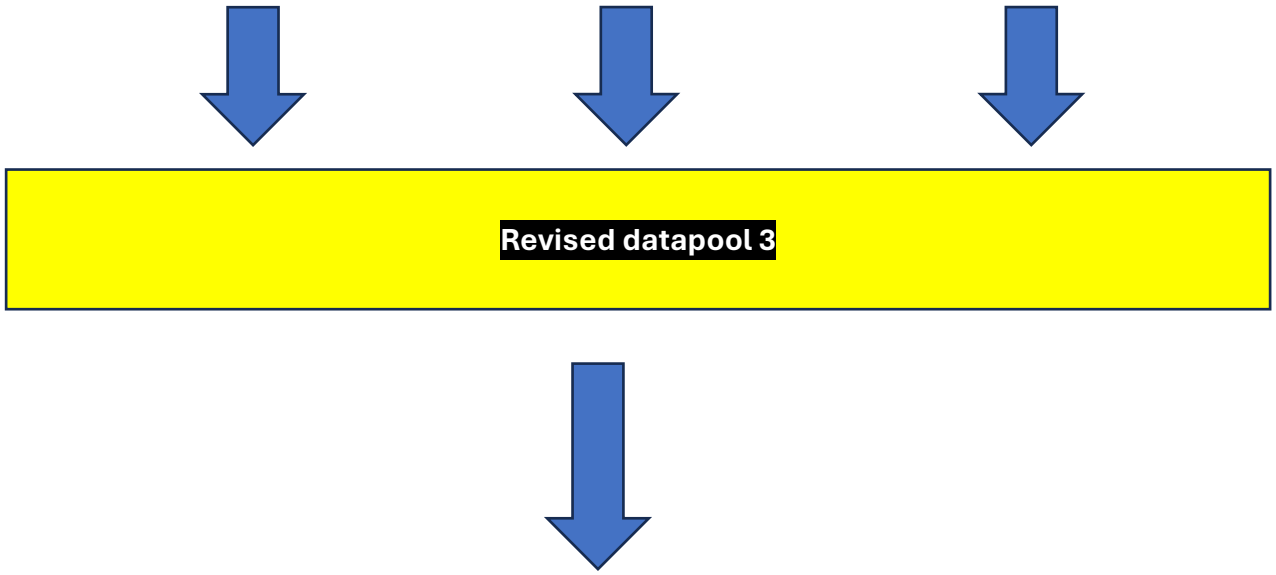
The resulting technique of Historical Discovery Journalism aims to present a glimpse of lived experience at the time – 'then' - and of the way that time and place is remembered 'now' that can be summarised as:

THEM, THEN
THERE, NOW

The cyclical process of discovery, verification, triangulation and revision, built on a foundation of an accepted, published version of 'what is known about events in the past' can be expressed in the form of a flow chart (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Flow of the construction process of Historical Discovery Journalism





Historical Discovery Journalism

A multi-source technique of documentary journalism starting with ‘what is known’ and drilling deeper into ‘the history’ by revisiting and re-examining ‘what people say’. Subject to review and revision/addition at all stages of the narrative assembly, with the discovery process responding to the data gathered and what it reveals in terms of ‘story-turns’.
Researcher may go back to the location or possibly generate and gather new data using digital transfers, depending on budget.

6.2. Implications of the findings

This critical analysis has identified many positive benefits from the application of this technique to what is known about the past, as new contributors have been found and their memories placed on record. These memories add great value to a documentary study of lived experience in particular social situations, in this case Soviet Latvia between 1940-49. The findings of the critical analysis have helped formulate tables and templates relating to this study of Soviet Latvia in English, which can be applied and adapted to suit studies of other periods in any language. This thesis outlines the formula for that approach, the elements that are processed into narrative, and how source data can be identified, verified and stratified. The potential of this technique has been recognised by peer groups and academic reviewers, and examples are shared below.

The veteran Latvian journalist Frank Gordon, who worked as a journalist under both Nazi and Soviet regimes, reviewed the published monograph with this comment:

> This book should be in every thinktank and university whose area of interest is the post-Soviet space, and especially the Baltic countries (Gordon, personal letter to author, 2019).

The Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies awarded the published monograph an Honourable Mention in its 2020 Book Prize, judged by a committee chaired by Professor Dovilė Budrytė. The committee said:

> Vincent Hunt's *Up Against the Wall: The KGB and Latvia* integrates many personal testimonies from ordinary citizens of Latvia, and thus enriches the study of the Soviet period in Latvia while making a persuasive argument that Latvians were key players in the establishment of the Soviet security forces. (AABS, 2020)

That the application of this technique to a subsequent published monograph by the researcher using this method – *The Road of Slaughter* (Helion, 2023) - received a positive review for the 'historical landscape' created is further evidence of its potential contribution to future research. In a review for The Journal of Baltic Studies, Heck (2024) wrote:

> The book is not a linear account of the destruction of the [Latvian 15th SS] division in Pomerania. Rather, it is a mix of oral history, battle analysis, a study of memory, and Hunt's travelogue through the region. The photographs, many previously unpublished, and maps are excellent additions to the work, helping to create a vibrant visual component to the text […]
>
> From a structural perspective, his interweaving of primary source material, oral history, and memoir, plus his reflections as he traveled the areas discussed, is a successful way to engagingly retell history […]
>
> … writing in the midst of the fallibilities of memory, the complexities of 75+ years of historical revisionism, and modern geopolitical considerations, Hunt should be commended for producing a readable account of the 15th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS in 1945 and its subsequent legacy in Pomerania, Western Europe, and the former Soviet Union (Heck, 2024).

In a review for The Journal of Slavic Military Studies, McGilvray (2024) comments:

> His use of photographs of the few surviving Latvian Eastern Front veterans gives human faces to the stories, contrasting with the photographs of when they were soldiers, but in reality, were boys. Hunt's methodology relies on first-hand accounts of veterans in the form of interviews with those still alive

> between 2019 and 2022, in addition to their diaries and letters of 1945 and memoirs written since. This enables Hunt to compare and check events. In addition, he has also used Latvian, Polish, and German archival sources, as well as consulting experts for further observations. It makes for a well-rounded work.

Thus it can be seen that practitioners working in the field have recognised the qualities this multi-disciplinary approach can bring to studies of past events and societies. This thesis has formulated that technique into a distinct approach, proved it to be underscored and validated by academic rigour for its rooting in processes of verification and reliability from best practice in qualitative research methods. This technique offers a transparent and safeguarded multi-disciplinary pathway through the various intersections of pro-active digital discovery journalism with a dark, disputed history. It combines oral history accounts, images, maps and published academic literature with a pro-active discovery approach to 'what is known about the past'. The method of content-gathering is underscored academically by the scholarship of oral history, history, memory studies, narrative theory and lived experience as well as with reference to qualitative research methods and photographic and translation theory.

Historical Discovery Journalism seeks out new stories from eyewitnesses that have not been gathered before or published in English (through research or translation) and adds academically-valuable details about 'what happened then'. Academic validation across related disciplines such as subjectivity and lived experience (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992; Denzin, 1989) and memory studies (Halbwachs,1925; Keightley and Pickering, 2010; Muiznieks, 2011) underpins the value of the contribution of the Historical Discovery Journalism technique and its rigour, highlighting many areas of resonance with social sciences research methods. Although the researcher does not claim this account as 'history' it is undeniably a 'version of events about the past' based on primary sources, which as Marwick (2010) says "form the very basic 'raw material' of history" (2010: 26).

In addition, the Latvian Gatekeeping Filter devised from this critical analysis offers a wide-ranging and transparent mechanism to identify and evaluate incoming narrative data for partiality and positionality. In the case of Soviet Latvia, this has enabled the creation of a data pool of detailed accounts from across the political spectrum and throughout the decade of totalitarian repression under scrutiny for this thesis, as well as a series of tools for the identification and evaluation of source material in a

conflicted and contested episode of ideological occupation. It has acted as a timeline creator as well as a grading tool for data, and, as noted earlier, has the potential to be adapted as a possible template for future research into totalitarianism and periods of conflict. As the narrative theory consulted for this thesis shows (Hinchman and Hinchman, 2001 et al) humans telling their 'life-stories' edit for dramatic effect in the same way as journalists do. Thus, the Latvian Gatekeeping Filter offers a way to stratify and evaluate raw data so it can be selected to give the master narrative a conscious and broader database and a wider foundation to draw from politically, stylistically and contextually in the final narrative structuring process.

6.3. Beneficiaries

The theoretical approach of Historical Discovery Journalism is of potential benefit to documentary makers, historians, academics and journalists investigating particular periods or episodes in the past. For example, a journalist conducting further research along 'the road of slaughter' in Poland will find eyewitness testimony from people who were there, the viewpoints of contemporary historians, Polish researchers wanting to correct 'the version of events' about where they grew up, along with relevant images from the time and detailed maps drawn about the events that happened here. There are also suggestions for locations where further inquiry might investigate rumoured Red Army massacres now lost to 'history'. There is a multi-disciplinary legacy as a result of this technique being applied which can be used in a number of ways for today's multi-media audience:

1. In the creation of illustrated online articles;
2. As a verified and validated published source for future research, monographs and historical documentaries to build on;
3. As a guide for historical researchers to channel their efforts towards fresh discovery – for example, to identify the 'unknown' civilian refugee victims killed in the exodus from Podgaje-Flederborn.

It should also be noted that since the publication of this latest monograph *The Road of Slaughter*, a translation in Polish has been prepared, which may also shed further light on certain instances and leverage Polish archives. A second edition in English has been published (Helion, October 2024) adding new details about certain

controversial episodes from the sons of Legionnaires who were there, who contacted the researcher-author with this new information when the book was published.
As this thesis has used seven academic lenses to critically analyse the elements that are interwoven to create Historical Discovery Journalism, so those seven disciplines can benefit from the eyewitness contributions showcased in this type of monograph. Curators of museums and galleries too, which use personal experience to 'draw visitors in' and 'make the personal universal' may find the new contributions add to their knowledge about what happened in the past – and so this material may be of value to them, as they know that it is safeguarded, properly sourced and underscored by academic rigour.

6.4. Potential impact of the research

6.4.1. Challenge the future way we think about writing about the past

This critical analysis has identified a range of multi-disciplinary sources and highlighted ways they can combine to write powerfully and vividly about 'then' from 'now' – in other words to sample lived experience and 'frame' it in an authored narrative style, thus creating a compelling and very personal documentary long-form narrative.
Underscored by qualitative research methods the combination of documentary journalism with oral history and the cross-disciplinary scouring of sources for relevant information and eyewitness accounts – maintaining consistency of style through the 'first person' viewpoint - generates a spectrum of perspectives, from the official to the personal. Coupled with narrative descriptions and contributions from historians, experts and family descendants, this 'mix' combines to produce a much more detailed and personal account of the conflict between totalitarian oppressor and individual members of the oppressed society than can be found in the mostly geo-political or military accounts of this struggle in the existing literature. This combination – contained in 12 of the 26 chapters of the published monograph which are the focus of this thesis – offers a hybrid method of writing about 'the past' from a 'Now' standpoint which is both academically rigorous and historically and journalistically underscored by the literature. This has the potential to be applied by future researchers to other studies of conflicted societies or periods of time.

The researcher's subsequent monograph about the Latvian 15th Division in Pomerania in 1945 – '*The Road of Slaughter'* – has taken and refined the technique of 'first person viewpoint' to assemble a body of evidence which suggests that 'history' does not reflect what happened there in February 1945. Allegations of Soviet war crimes and mass executions have been identified and the historiography of the period is not recognised in any official accounts in either Poland or Latvia. Neither are the current memorials correct. The findings of this latest research monograph led to the researcher contacting the War Crimes prosecutors of both Latvia and Poland to alert them to this inaccuracy. However, both have declined to open investigations into events along the 'Road of Slaughter' despite there being a compelling body of eyewitness evidence that the 'history' there lacks accuracy, scope and detail, and the current memorial, erected by a Communist Polish government in 1965, does not reflect the reality of what actually happened 'in the words of people who were there'.

6.4.2. Challenge to the accepted version of events about the past

Following the realisation through journalistic research that – for example - the memorialisation of events in 1945 at Podgaje-Flederborn in Pomerania was partial, incomplete and factually wrong, this journalistic discovery may stimulate a 'call for action' for this inaccuracy to be put right. Using this example, the memorials at Podgaje should be amended or changed to be more inclusive of the civilians and soldiers from many countries who died in the three-day battle there, and who are not remembered on any memorial.

The question marks about alleged Soviet mass executions that are not 'on the record' has prompted the researcher to include calls for an inquiry into seven incidents in Pomerania, all highlighted using the techniques of Historical Discovery Journalism as theorised in this thesis.

The discovery technique of Pro-Actively Seeking Access has been proven time and again in the researcher's professional practice to be an essential tool in 'standing up' vague stories, local anecdotes and developing a network to share knowledge. Another example from Pomerania is of a 'Soviet' cemetery at Slesin that local people told a historian - seventy years later - also included fallen Latvians. After the intense close combat there, locals ordered to bury the bodies had simply created one mass

grave. In the researcher's view, this is a clear case for restorative retrospective action by the relevant authorities. Because the journalist's research networks are interactive and pro-active, this story was inserted on deadline with a picture by pro-actively emailing the historian for further information, a quote and a picture – the elements that journalism requires to 'stand up' a story. Here, the technique formulated in this thesis of Historical Discovery Journalism and refined in the case of Pomerania has shown that it can re-examine the 'accepted version of events' and investigate further. Further monographs about the experiences of this military unit in Berlin in April and May 1945 using this Historical Discovery Journalism technique have made similar steps forward in terms of pinpointing accurately where they were, describing their experiences through the words of eyewitnesses and illustrating the places where they fought.

As a result of this thesis and the repeated application of this technique in the researcher's published work, the researcher believes that Historical Discovery Journalism can do more than just write about 'then from now': it has proved that it can be effective as a technique that questions and challenges existing accounts of what happened in a certain place and time. The researcher believes this theoretical model offers a paradigmic shift in the way 'the past' can be viewed in the case of Soviet Latvia 1940–49 and also the Eastern Front in Pomerania in 1945, and that this can be applied to future research into societies emerging from similar totalitarian, dictatorial or extremist rule. These may include the former Soviet Republics, emerging from a period where repression of memory was widespread and is also evident today, such as Kazakhstan and Belarus; nations emerging from long periods of one-party rule such as Syria or regions occupied recently by dominant regimes, such as in eastern parts of Ukraine. However, there are natural limitations to the lifetimes of eyewitnesses and concerns about the reliability of memory as they age. Nonetheless, underscored by the rigour of the methodological lenses of academic practice of oral history, history, memory studies, translation, photography, lived experience and narrative theory, Historical Discovery Journalism demonstrates a content-rich amalgamation of professional journalistic practice and methodological academic theory. It is culturally-nuanced, vivid and detailed, offering – in the case of the published monograph - dramatic personal testimony of the lived experience of totalitarianism and armed resistance to an alien ideological regime, underscored by theoretical 'best practice' in qualitative research methods and journalism. The lived

experience data, both from archives and pro-actively generated, is situated within published historical accounts of conflict with and resistance to Communism in Soviet Latvia and offers – by itself – valuable contemporary thinking on the legacies of war and the long-lasting effects of incarceration and trauma on memory.

Although seen through the telescope of the advancing years of some contributors but academically grounded through the critical lenses employed for this thesis, the accounts of what happened seven and eight decades ago can be regarded as vivid, detailed and emotional, yet reliable. The narrative technique is empathetic but not sympathetic. Thus, the technique of Historical Discovery Journalism frames the detail and emotion of the first-hand account within the historical parameters of 'what is known', grounded in the situational context of 'whose history is this?' It is the history of the people who are telling their stories.

In this way, personal testimony can be identified as partial, influenced by ideology or limited by the scope and reach of human memory. It is 'what it is', and the more of it that can be found the wider the window opens onto a now-lost past society that even 75-80 years later can find itself in the grip of 'memory wars' (see Muiznieks, 2011; Zelce, 2011 and Zake, 2013 and others).

The research carried out for the purposes of this thesis demonstrates that personal accounts contribute significantly to a more detailed understanding of events in the past. One limitation is that the effectiveness of this technique depends on researchers being able to find articulate and eloquent contributors willing to talk. The period of Soviet Latvia is now approaching the limit of human lifespans. Adding photographic evidence to testimony as well as secondary source elements from history, sociology and social anthropology, from diaries and the less formal stories passed down through families, means that the burden of 'reliability' is spread across a wider body of evidence. Then there is additional contextualisation from the folklore of Latvian society - which is a very strong factor - the relevance and messages of poetry and literature and the researcher being at the location describing 'what happened here' from a 'Now' perspective, As a result these accounts of lived experience in totalitarian Soviet Latvia 1940–49 have been shown, from reference to the literature, to have a depth, richness, relatability and human quality that a history based solely on documents can never approach.

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