

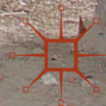


# Memory Work

## The Second Generation

Nina Fischer

palgrave macmillan memory studies



*Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies*

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# Memory Work

## The Second Generation

Nina Fischer  
*University of Edinburgh, UK*

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# Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<b>1 Introduction <i>Memory Work: The Second Generation</i></b>	<b>1</b>
The development of the Second Generation	13
Scope and structure	20
<b>2 Objects</b>	<b>29</b>
The meaning of objects	32
Family possessions in the Second Generation	44
Holocaust mementos	59
Objects in Second Generation memory work	65
<b>3 Names</b>	<b>69</b>
Names as acts of memory	72
Names and the process of memory work	75
Names as relational nodes of memory	79
Names, family communication, and the process of memory work	82
Migrant family names	85
Names in Second Generation memory work	96
<b>4 Bodies</b>	<b>99</b>
Written on the body	103
Bodily reactions to memory triggers	106
The specter of sexual abuse	110
The Auschwitz tattoo	114
The Second Generation and the Auschwitz tattoo	122
The 'Jewish body'	127
The Second Generation's 'Jewish look'	131
Hair	136
Interpreting and connecting one's body as a node of memory	146
Physical resemblances	149
Bodies in Second Generation memory work	153
<b>5 Food</b>	<b>157</b>
Food as traumatic memory	159
Food attitudes linked to starvation: obsessive eating and overfeeding	164

Food attitudes linked to starvation: hoarding	169
Starvation memories	173
Food as family connection	177
The Second Generation in the network of food memories	183
Food and ethnic connections	188
Food in Second Generation memory work	192
<b>6 Passover</b>	<b>195</b>
The Holocaust as a constant presence	199
Passover as a node of explicit Holocaust memory	201
An American seder	207
Passover in Second Generation memory work	210
<b>7 Experiencing History: 9/11</b>	<b>212</b>
A connected experience of danger	216
Understanding a reaction: experiential knowledge	219
A generation of anti-Semitism?	221
Embodied experiential knowledge	224
The attacks of 9/11 in Second Generation memory work	230
<b>8 Afterword: On Memory Work</b>	<b>233</b>
<i>Notes</i>	238
<i>References</i>	245
<i>Index</i>	257

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# 1

## Introduction *Memory Work: The Second Generation*

In recent years, we have witnessed a growing preoccupation with memory in public discourses and in academia, with respect to both individual and collective memorial forms. Our times are characterized by considerations and articulations of the meaning of the past in the present, as we see in discussions about the if, where, and how of the United States National Slavery Museum; in the long path to the official apology made in 2008 by Australia's government for its crimes against the country's Indigenous populations; or the increase in migrant families' 'memory tourism' to places of origin. In *On Collective Memory*, one of the seminal studies on memory beyond the individual, sociologist Maurice Halbwachs argues that communication is needed to create memory, asserting that memory is not 'just there'; rather, it is a process and an activity (1992). Memory is in the hands of many: political decision-makers and private individuals, museums and memorials, life writing authors and documentary filmmakers, to name but a few. From a theoretical perspective, the emerging interdisciplinary field of memory studies has turned to the forms, media, and processes of remembering and forgetting. What unites all these endeavors is a dialogue with the past; whatever form it takes, these efforts show that memory requires and receives humankind's attention and action.

An underlying understanding of memory studies is, to use the explanation of the cultural studies scholar Richard Terdiman (1993), that memory is the past made present. A connected, although generally implicit, assumption is that memory is a form of work. In this study, I turn my attention to this very aspect of memory as process and to do so, I employ the concept of 'memory work'. Memory work is a practice that, in the words of the film scholar Annette Kuhn, 'takes an inquiring attitude towards the past and the activity of its (re)construction through

memory' (2002: 157). It uncovers and interacts with the past's forms and meanings, both tangible and intangible, in and for lives, identities, and choices in the present. The term has been given different definitions, but I understand memory work as an individual's conscious, voluntary, and methodical interrogation of the past within collective frameworks, predominantly the familial one.<sup>1</sup> Today, many people engage in memory work to reach for their origins and place themselves within larger collectives, whether it be an Irish-American's desire to learn more about his genealogy by going to Ireland or a Palestinian documenting his family's losses during the *Nakba*, during the establishment of the State of Israel. The shape of memory work depends on the specific cultural and historical contexts and the forms in which memory is available, accessible, and approachable, as well as how these elements function as links between past and present: Ireland can be visited, whereas it depends on Israeli policy whether the Palestinian is allowed into Israel, the West Bank, or Gaza.

In this study, I analyze the particularities of one specific case: the memory work of children of Jewish Holocaust survivors as it presents in their literary texts. Known in Holocaust studies and public discourses as the Second Generation, the children of survivors form a distinct group shaped by personal, familial, and larger cultural processes after the genocide of European Jewry and characterized by strong relational structures, also with others from a similar familial background. Second Generation authors have created a large and multilingual body of writing that has been recognized as a subgenre of Holocaust literature. *Memory Work: The Second Generation* comparatively reads their English-language literary works across the genres, in which the authors address growing up without extended families in a cultural and genealogical void. Cheryl Pearl Sucher, the American daughter of two concentration camp survivors, describes such a situation of loss that overshadowed post-Holocaust family life: 'My childhood was not filled with heirlooms, photograph albums, or continuous generations. Everything was gone, memory's artifacts pillaged and ransacked. My father survived the war alone, his history province to memory' (1989: 53). The act of writing about these present absences shows that this situation is not just accepted as absolute: quite the reverse, as memory is understood as the connective if precarious tissue between present and past. Memory work – which is then given literary form – is the only way of engaging with the reality of losses and voids, the limits of the imagination, and the remnants of a family's past. Indeed, I maintain that the complex process of uncovering memory links forms a leitmotif throughout Second Generation

literature and is driven by the need to establish relational connections. This historical undertaking also has an ethical component, as it documents Holocaust survival and counteracts human and cultural losses by chronicling family memory of the pre-genocide period. The paramount importance of memory work suggests that, despite the distinctiveness of the experience of being born as a child of Holocaust survivors, neither the literary corpus nor the human position are solely defined by rupture, trauma, and loss.

Previous scholarship on Second Generation literature has focused primarily on the transgenerational transmission of the Holocaust past, which sees the children of survivors as a receptacle of memory (cf. Grimwood 2007, McGlothlin 2006), but in this study I shift the attention to this literary generation's active, conscious exploration of the family's past and present. The term 'Second Generation' refers to those born in the aftermath of the Holocaust, indicating a legacy of traumatic memory, but it has another meaning as well: it highlights a rupture in the (former) European Jewish family. The term implies that the survivors' children are the 'second' generation of a family that only goes back as far as the Holocaust; the multigenerational family connected by genes, tradition, and living memory that was tied into national and ethnic frameworks is gone. But even when the violence of history has ostensibly severed connections with familial origins, the texts emphasize a longing for continuity as the basis for genealogical positioning and sensemaking, as a 'usable past'. The historian and literary critic Van Wyck Brooks coined the term in the essay "On Creating a Usable Past" (1918), in which he sought to address problems in contemporary American literature and its connection to modernism, asking, '*What is important for us? What, out of all the multifarious achievements and impulses and desires of the American literary mind, ought we to elect to remember?*' (1993: 225). The term is primarily used in historical studies, but for me, it provides a concept describing the connection to a larger-than-nuclear family. Seen from this vantage point, Second Generation memory work is an attempt to recover a sense of origin through memory, thereby allowing the children of survivors to claim a place in the chain of generations, even in the face of radical rupture: this generation is the second after the Holocaust, but not the second in the family. I propose that the longing to uncover a 'usable past' upon which to build identity and continuity, rather than just possessing a past of destruction, drives the memory work and thus the literary endeavors of the Second Generation.

The objective of Second Generation memory work of uncovering a 'usable past' (i.e. to learn whatever possible about familial origins)

suggests that another longstanding focus of research – the traumatic impact of the Holocaust on the next generation – offers only a partial reading of the corpus.<sup>2</sup> In particular, texts depicting life in a survivor household can and have been interpreted as examples of secondary trauma narratives. The preeminent Holocaust studies scholar Geoffrey Hartman, among others, has discussed the phenomenon of secondary traumatization, which can be triggered by listening to the traumatic experiences of others (1996: 152) or, in the case of children, by growing up with survivor parents. Texts about the Holocaust from the methodological perspective of trauma studies implicitly understand Second Generation literature as a form of psychic recovery and the creation of a narrative that will enable the healing process. This certainly holds true for elements of the texts, and a significant body of research supports this view. But the emphasis on the representation of trauma in literary analysis is in danger of understanding texts as traces of pathological symptoms, that is, literature becomes a stage for acting out and working through traumata. In contrast, I do not take the Second Generation as a pathological population of traumatized victims but as a group of authors whose texts attempt to uncover family memory despite its truncation. Memory work is not a symptom of psychological damage or an effect of transmitted trauma but a natural human activity. Moreover, my approach complicates a trauma studies reading of Second Generation literature insofar as memory work is not solely concerned with the Holocaust – its interest also predates the genocide.

At the same time, the literary texts also chronicle life in the aftermath, and thus this corpus, in all its individual textual shapes, offers insights into Holocaust memory as mediated within a familial context: That is, Second Generation literature has made the survivor family a part of cultural memory. I conceive of the cultural memory of the Holocaust as a phenomenon that addresses references to the past that are collective in nature, mediated, and culturally determined, as becomes evident when we compare the role of the Holocaust in the national identities of Germany, Israel, and other countries, such as the United States. Using the terminology introduced by the memory studies expert Jan Assmann (2011), cultural memory is often contrasted with ‘communicative memory’, a form of memory that is inhabited and created in everyday communication. Both forms are intrinsically collective; however, I take this further and argue, along with media studies scholar José van Dijk, that ‘cultural memory can only be properly understood as a result of the individual’s and others’ mutual interdependent relationship’ (2007: 14). This view emphasizes relational traits and is more in tune with my

interest in links in memory. Memory work requires a sense of connectedness, or at least potential connectedness, to others and to the past; thus, I conceive of collective forms of memory not in terms of binary structures, but rather as multiple interconnected 'memory systems'. Andrew Hoskins, as an expert on media and memory, suggests that in such a formation, 'individual, collective and cultural remembering inhabit ongoing, dynamic and more connected [...] sets of relationships' (2011a: 132). The image of a memory network linking to many formats of remembering, for instance, family stories or the ubiquitous cultural products of Holocaust memory, aptly characterizes Second Generation memory work.

The most prominent memory sphere in which the Second Generation operates is family memory. Maurice Halbwachs maintained that the family is one of the social frameworks that constructs a common fount of memory and creates a specific self-understanding (1992: 58–9), and furthering his thoughts, the literary scholar Astrid Erll has shown that the family is an important link between individual and larger formations of memory (2011: 308). Family memory is never a straightforward structure. For instance, social psychologist Harald Welzer argues that family memories are constituted and kept alive in communication and that they are fleeting, fragmented, and often coincidental (2005: 163–84). But this is not all: family communication tends to be challenging, in part because it is tied up with emotions. In the case of the post-Holocaust family, communication is further complicated by the impact of trauma on the survivors' ability to speak about their past, the subject matter, and the parental wish to shield children from destructive knowledge. Here, communication patterns in survivor families, as explored in psychological studies, and for which several theoretical models have been proposed, play a role.<sup>3</sup> Families living a 'pact of silence'<sup>4</sup> are contrasted with families of obsessive communication in which even young children are the audience for mostly fragmentary and repetitive stories, often experienced as violent. However, literary texts written by children of survivors, whether fictional or life writing, cannot be neatly divided into two extremes; rather, they show a fluctuation between the two poles, and the communication styles differ between parents and depend on the subject. Traumatic events, such as the loss of a child or sexual violence, are often shrouded in silence.

But even silence does not preclude awareness. Indirect transmission in an undercurrent of nonverbal communication and in the unspoken but powerful presence of secrets and taboos is also found in families characterized by minimal direct communication. That which is left unsaid

or is only alluded to can be as problematic as unstructured, fragmented stories and communication patterns. For the children, this can create what historian Stephen Feinstein has termed 'nonmemory or lack of memory' (1998: 201), and what Ellen S. Fine, a literary scholar, calls 'absent memory' (1988: 41), which is characterized by 'blanks, silence, a sense of void, and a sense of regret for not having been there' (187). French Second Generation author Henri Raczymow (1994) offers the metaphor 'memory shot through with holes' – *memoire trouée*. He locates his generation's sense of loss in the disconnection from the family's former life and the multiple gaps in Second Generation memory: the knowledge about family roots, about the destroyed Jewish life and culture in Central and Eastern Europe, and about the actual events of the Holocaust.

The most prominent concept proposed for transgenerational memory after the Holocaust is Marianne Hirsch's 'postmemory'. However, as a widely used term applied to many historical cases, it has experienced a certain dilution and has also drawn criticism.<sup>5</sup> The literary scholar's original conceptualization for the survivor family highlights a generational distance combined with a paradoxically close relationship to the parents' past: 'postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated' (1997: 22). Hirsch also argues that transmitted traumatic memories leave traces in the offspring's psyche, and that the past's predominance can make the children's own experiences seem insignificant in comparison. She maintains that postmemory 'seeks connection' (1996: 664), a notion that resonates with my considerations of Second Generation memory work, as its main characteristic is to seek connection with an earlier past of the family and thus to find elements of a usable past rather than absence, lack, or 'nonmemory'. Hirsch's now ubiquitous term is productive for my study insofar as I think of it – in its most conservative familial formulation – as a precondition and impetus for memory work. The state of knowing but not knowing, of proximity without personal knowledge, causes the urge to uncover more about the lost past and to connect to one's origins, which ultimately triggers memory work.

My conception of memory work, which explores and documents family memory, while not historiography, also goes further than postmemory's 'imaginative investment, projection, and creation' (2008: 107). To illustrate this point, I call on Eva Hoffman, the daughter of two Polish Jewish survivors who survived in hiding. In her family, she experienced 'loss

that has no concrete shape or face' (2004: 73), a description that points to what Hirsch conceives of as mediated traumatic memory traces. In her attempts to deal with these unfathomable losses, Hoffman realized that 'there are limits to what the imagination can do' (217). As a result, she argues that only 'a confrontation with the past – however uncanny, however unknown – can bring the haunting to an end' (73). Here, post-memory characterizes the Second Generation experience and results in Hoffman's decision to consciously engage with the past. Not the imagination, only memory work can ultimately change the author's relationship to the past by concretizing the haunting and by finding elements of a usable past.

The words of Paula Fass, an American historian born to two Polish Jewish survivors, also present an evocative example of the urge to undertake memory work to find connective points in memory, as an alternative to the imagination:

In trying to reconstruct specific events and the lives of the lost, I have often nothing more than a few bare details, details that I have refused to embellish even with the historical imagination that I have developed as an adult. Instead, I have tried to gather my memories about the lives of all those meaningful people whom my parents knew and about a way of life of which my parents were deprived when they became survivors. To this I have added some of my attempts to find these people in the very few records that remain. (2009: 5)

In light of such deliberations, I propose that if we read Second Generation authors' attempts to disentangle, contemplate, and write through elements of their family's past as family memory work, we take a step beyond postmemory as a state and as imaginative investment. Therefore, I primarily refer to Hirsch's concept in cases in which creative efforts are at the forefront of the textual excerpt being analyzed; otherwise, post-memory is considered part of the experience of living with transmitted but fragmented family memory that inspires memory work.

As mentioned above, I understand Second Generation memory work as the process of deciphering and documenting parental stories about the past, actions related to the past, and other memory traces. Annette Kuhn, similarly highlighting memory work as an active inquiry into the past, defines it as 'a method and a practice of unearthing and making public untold stories' (2002: 9–10). In my book, 'unearthing' means, first and foremost, an examination of memory by the Second Generation, whereas 'making public' entails the production of meaning that is then

mediated in a literary text. I am interested in the processes, forms, and themes of Second Generation memory work. Memory work as a process is continually changing and developing as it goes from being an involuntary investment to becoming an adult's conscious choice. A child faced with the Holocaust as family memory does not have the means of understanding the past of survivor parents, and often, the past is experienced as a burden. An adult with historical knowledge, however, who has chosen to deal with the horrors and losses, is in a better position to uncover usable aspects.

To explore forms and themes of memory work, I work with the premise that certain topoi that embody memory traces – examples are family heirlooms or personal names – recur in these writings, no matter what genre. These topoi come to represent and define areas of concentrated memory work. Naming a child after a family member, for instance, is part of a ritualized commemoration in many communities. In Second Generation memory work, however, names are viewed not just as links between the generations but as objects to be interpreted and traced for the stories and connections they carry. Such ascriptions concern, for instance, the availability of information about the relative after whom one is named, the meaning a revived name carries for the survivor parents, or whether parents felt the need to give their child a non-Jewish name, either as an attempt to suppress painful memories or to assimilate into the surrounding national context. I consider such areas that are productive for Second Generation memory work as ‘nodes of family memory’, to emphasize that memory work is always linked into multiple networks. Here, memory converges across different memory objects, across generations and other social groups, and across smaller and larger mnemonic structures. These nodes function as hinges between the past and the present. The periods that the memory network of Second Generation memory work covers include the pre-Holocaust past, the period of persecution and survival, the time at which a certain memory comes to the fore, and the moment of memory work.

In a network of memory, nodes concentrate traces of the past and can manifest themselves in material and immaterial forms – in tangible objects or in a ritual, for example. Nodes of family memory are sometimes direct references to the past. At other times, they appear as secrecy-shrouded signifiers of much larger, mediated, yet connected stories. These metaphorical nodes of memory are not bound to a certain location; the elements they hold and the stories they tell are relocated but still incorporated into a network of memory, just as the survivor family is. Memory work connects, highlights, and follows the underlying links



of the multidimensional network of memory, thus revealing which links can be traversed and which are inaccessible, either because trauma caused silence or because they are truly broken by the destruction of the Holocaust. These two images – the concentrated point that represents a node and the surrounding connective structure of links to different times, stories, and people – carry the promise of potential discoveries about the past, as well as implying the sense of unknown but hoped-for possibility that characterizes the active, perpetually unfinished process of memory work.

I also propose the term ‘node of memory’, which highlights the mediated, networked character of memory structures, to differentiate it from French historian Pierre Nora’s influential concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory). In a sense, nodes of family memory are related to sites of memory as a ‘residual sense of continuity remains’ in both (1996a: 1). Another similarity to Nora’s project concerns the exploration of a conglomerate of different, yet connected elements that carry traces of the past and are brought together to create insight into a larger structure of memory; however, when conceived of as nodes within a network of memory, the dynamic and interconnected structure of memory work is highlighted. Originally theorized as *nation-mémoire* (a nation of memory), sites of memory have been employed for various kinds of mnemonic communities. Nora himself refers to them as ‘a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community’ (1996b: xvii), and a communal element certainly plays a role in literature dedicated to family memory. However, the focus of Second Generation memory work on the intimate matter of family life – rather than on sites invested with a ‘symbolic aura’ (1989: 19) – is another reason why I propose the term ‘nodes of memory’ instead of developing a familial reformulation of *lieux de mémoire*; the term’s wide use has already resulted in a theoretical overdetermination.<sup>6</sup>

With family memory as the thematic focus of interest, my study correlates once again with the work of Annette Kuhn, who explores lives rarely acknowledged outside ‘the expressions of hegemonic culture’ (2002: 9). In our current cultural atmosphere of what historian Jay Winter and others have called a ‘memory boom’ (2006: 273–90), considering a subgenre of Holocaust literature to be situated outside hegemonic culture might seem to be bordering on the absurd. However, what we find in the material examined here is an addition to Holocaust memory that is not usually part of public commemorations: the restoration of the personal in an engagement with survivors, not solely as ‘witnesses to history’ but also as the individuals behind their socially constructed roles, who

are portrayed as parents or as members of a community. Moreover, Second Generation memory work makes another personal addition to Holocaust memory in its engagement with the memory of those who have no voice: the family members lost and murdered – but once again, they are not only seen as victims but as grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. To cite Paula Fass, ‘it is the lives of these people I am hoping to recover, although their deaths intrude on all sides’ (2009: 5). This can be as seemingly inconsequential as a reference to a grandmother’s recipe for *gefilte fish*, but such elements restore the personal, depicting the grandmother as a woman with a certain taste and tradition, a caretaker and a chef whose recipe can be recreated after the genocide.

Second Generation writing also extends survivor family memory into postwar lives, mirroring the interest in the pre-Holocaust family. Survivor literature does not generally encompass the family’s extended story; most memoirs end at or just after liberation. Academia has only recently begun to consider the challenges survivors had to confront when rebuilding their lives. For instance, survivors were rarely thought of as migrants. Born into the aftermath, their children naturally include this period – when the difficulties survivors faced were much different from those they overcame during the Holocaust – in their writing. As readers, we are introduced to the survivors not only as those who carry the memory of the genocide but as parents, as migrants, and as people struggling to create a new life, although when it comes to the period in which the Second Generation is alive, a chronicling aspect rather than explicit memory work is more prevalent. In a way, by telling the story that survivors often leave untold – presumably because survival is the experience that was so overwhelming that all other experiences seem minor in comparison – Second Generation literature acts as a sequel to survivor testimonies.

Moreover, the emphasis on the connection with other lives and, indeed, the exploration of other family members’ life stories as a part of Second Generation texts result in a specific form of writing, which is not coincidental but the direct result of memory work. The authors engage with two stories at once, their parents’ as well as their own, in multi-layered family narratives. Because little is known about earlier generations, it is unsurprising that the parents’ story, including survival, has the most import. As Sonia Pilcer, the American daughter of concentration camp survivors, says, ‘What I wanted, why I yearned to be a writer was to tell stories. My parents’ stories, which were mine too’ (2001a: 10). Different literary scholars have offered terms for this form of writing. Victoria Stewart, for instance, suggested ‘trans-generational life-writing’

(2003: 25) for texts encompassing the stories of two generations. Second Generation writing also falls under what John Eakin has called 'relational life writing' (1999: 34–98). Nancy K. Miller notes that relational life writing expands 'the vision of the autobiographical self as connected to a significant other and bound to a community rather than restricted through mutually exclusive models' (1994: 4). A relational view of the self as connected to family is at the heart of Second Generation memory work. One way in which Second Generation writing highlights this is through the frequent incorporation of oral history interviews or written testimonies of the survivor parents. By including the parents' voice, the texts mirror the interconnected form of family memory, which memory work follows, scrutinizes, and attempts to decipher.

Thomas Couser, an expert on autobiography, has noted the potential ethical pitfalls in what he calls 'collaborative life writing' projects, especially with regard to exploitative uses of the other subject (2001: 15). Second Generation writing has been faulted for attempting to appropriate or colonize the survivor experience.<sup>7</sup> In some cases, the boundaries of appropriation might indeed have been crossed. American son of survivors Thane Rosenbaum's novel *Second Hand Smoke*, for instance, contains a disturbing fantasy of historical repetition in which neo-Nazis attack the two sons of survivors in the barracks of Auschwitz-Birkenau in which their mother was incarcerated (2011: 249–55). However, such incidents are uncommon, especially in life writing; creative explorations of victimhood or even fictional recreations of the parents' Holocaust experiences are rare in Second Generation writing.

Survivors speak with what the historian Joan Scott calls 'the authority of direct experience' (1991: 780), but the generational shift signifies a paradigm shift from witnessing events to bearing witness to the remembering subjects as vicarious witnesses' (Zeitlin 1998: 5) or, in Geoffrey Hartman's words, 'witnesses-by-adoption' (1996: 8). Indeed, the careful treatment of the events between 1933 and 1945, along with the inclusion of the survivors' own words within Second Generation texts, shows that the role of the witnesses is never called into question: the survivors, not their children, give testimony, and Second Generation texts do not deal with the Holocaust as experience, but rather as family memory. Remediation (that is, the move from one medial form of memory to another medium – in this case, the inclusion of survivor testimony in Second Generation texts) highlights the fact that this is not a witnessing genre, but rather an exploration and documentation of memory that is shaped by the relational, networked nature of memory work. Every remediation is also a form of 'repurposing' (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 45),

here the incorporation of the words of witnesses speaks to the position of Second Generation writing alongside survivor testimony. At the same time, a further purpose of including testimony is to allow readers to contemplate the traumatic memories of the Holocaust, which cannot be put into Second Generation words but form part of the memory work.

As these different ways of engaging with the past and bringing it into the present by way of literary texts demonstrate, memory work is ultimately not only about the elements of the past we uncover. It also concerns 'what we do with them, *how* we use these relics to make memories, and how we then make use of the stories they generate to give deeper meaning to, and if necessary to change, our lives today' (Kuhn 2002: 158). The literary project of the Second Generation instills meaning on a number of levels: It adds the familial sphere to the cultural memory of the Holocaust while writing the longer history of the family – before, then, and now. But more than that, engaging with the past beyond the self is an integral component of identity formation in relation to family structures and thus, certain elements become usable. This aspect of memory work is related to what sociologists Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering call the 'mnemonic imagination', defined as 'the ways in which we continuously qualify, adapt, refine and re-synthesize past experience, our own and that of others, into qualitatively new understandings of ourselves and other people, including those to whom we stand in immediate or proximate relation, and those from whom we are more distant' (Keightley and Pickering 2013: 121). By writing and remembering beyond the Holocaust, Second Generation memory work aids the understanding of the self while documenting family and, in this act, implicitly demonstrates that their families are much more than (former) victims of the Nazis.

Creating a family chronicle also aligns this corpus with Jewish tradition: remembrance is a central tenet of Judaism, and collective memory is seen as the connecting element of Jewish peoplehood. The injunction to remember, the foundation of Jewish religious practice, has taken on an even more prominent position since the Holocaust. In the Second Generation experience, the sense of fragmented knowledge caused by the mediated, never fully accessible, and yet overly present past as defined in Hirsch's postmemory is set against the ethical obligation to remember that stems from familial and societal expectations. Cultural memory presupposes a remembering of events that one has only in rare cases lived through. It provides the content of what is to be remembered: the Exodus from slavery in Egypt, for instance, plays an

important part in Jewish memory and identity and is remembered at every Passover celebration. Remembering as an imposed duty combined with ‘absences’ in memory creates an impossible paradox that many of the literary texts represent as a burden but that ultimately creates a need to investigate the past, that is, to engage in family memory work. The philosopher Emil Fackenheim put forward that a 614th commandment should be added to the 613 of the Jewish faith as a reminder that ‘the authentic Jew of today is forbidden to hand Hitler yet another, posthumous victory’ (1978: 22). Second Generation memory work, when read through this lens, is a retroactive act of resistance because it attempts to restore the personal rather than commemorate ‘Six Million’ – an unfathomable number – by depicting families that pre- and postdate Hitler. It is also part of the collective task and tradition of commemoration, especially now, as the survivors and their memories of the events fade away and the need for and forms of a cultural archive of Holocaust memory, broadly conceived, are growing.<sup>8</sup>

## The development of the Second Generation

Sociologist Karl Mannheim’s influential study ‘Das Problem der Generationen’ [The problem of generations] (1928) argues that generations, historical events, and memory are linked. The collective experience is existential for a generational cohort, as it transforms a cohort into an *Erfahrungsgemeinschaft* – a community linked by experience. The Second Generation *Erfahrungsgemeinschaft* is connected by experience and yet diverse: even if the majority of children were born soon after the war, the age differences within the group range up to about 20 years, and the family structures are also multiple, dependent on whether one or both parents were survivors, and under what circumstances they survived.<sup>9</sup> Mannheim differentiated between biological (i.e. familial) and social generations, but for those who self-identify as Second Generation, there is little distinction between the two, and the literary texts offer abundant evidence for this. There are unquestionably children of survivors who do not identify as such, but this study deals exclusively with Holocaust literature, that is, only with texts that engage with the topics at hand.

In this section I contextualize the material within the Second Generation’s larger story as a sociocultural phenomenon and identity – that is, a specific group in the aftermath of the Holocaust that defines itself and has been defined in relation to the familial past, as a distinct voice in Holocaust literature, and as a subject of multidisciplinary

research. The fact that my examples come from the English-speaking world reflects not only my corpus choices but also the reality that the majority of world Jewry now lives in Anglophone countries.<sup>10</sup>

Children of survivors were first mentioned in the discourses surrounding the Holocaust in the late 1960s, when mental health professionals at McGill University's Student Counseling Center and the Jewish General Hospital, the two main contact points for Jewish health issues in predominantly Catholic Montreal, noticed that a group of young people were seeking treatment for strikingly similar problems (cf. Rakoff et al. 1966, Trossman 1968). All of the patients had been born into the post-Holocaust families of survivors, and they displayed psychological symptoms reminiscent of the 'survivor syndrome' (Niederland 1961, 1968, 1981).

No pathological set of issues was identified, but the parents' traumatic past generally featured as the organizing factor in their children's lives. Psychological and psychoanalytic studies have suggested that the indirect reality of the past influenced the descendants on an unconscious level; thus, the next generation's situation was one of early childhood identification with parents who had not worked through their trauma and whose experiences impaired their parenting. Issues mentioned in the copious literature include guilt, mistrust, unconscious repetition of the parents' histories in sometimes life-threatening ways, assumption of the parenting role, problems of identity creation, separation fears due to a lack of individuation, and parental overinvolvement in the child's life.<sup>11</sup>

Many studies implicitly assume that the parents were severely damaged psychologically and have transferred their suffering uniformly to the children. But it is important to note that no experience of survival was the same, and they could range from incarceration in a concentration camp, taking on an 'Aryan' identity and surviving with false papers, to fighting as partisans.<sup>12</sup> Other influential factors on survivors' post-Holocaust psychological state concern age and the survivor's emotional and mental condition before the survival. Moreover, demographic evidence shows that many survivors were physically and mentally resilient and went on to lead successful personal and professional lives, a fact rarely discussed. Much like the first generation, their children are, on the whole, personally and professionally successful. Later studies have warned against generalizations and conclusions drawn solely on the basis of those children of survivors who have sought out help. Although much research has been done in the field of psychology, the Second Generation is not a population with a damaged psychopathology,

and this understanding also underlies my study. As mentioned before, memory work is not a struggle with trauma – first- or secondhand – but a common human activity, which is in this case enhanced by the losses of the Holocaust and shaped by the sociohistorical specificities of being born into the aftermath of genocide.

The members of the Second Generation are not merely the objects of psychological research; they quickly developed into a recognizable entity united by experiences and aesthetic expressions in cultural products (such as books and films) and social formations (such as Second Generation groups).<sup>13</sup> The first publication in the English-speaking diaspora was a 1975 issue of *Response: A Contemporary Jewish Review*. The issue – based on the uncannily similar experiences of a group of New York Jews in their twenties, all born to survivors – was entitled ‘The Holocaust: Our Generation Looks Back’. Later that year, after the addition of further, mostly life writing essays, Lucy Steinitz and David Szonyi (1975) adapted the issue into the anthology, *Living after the Holocaust: Reflections of the Post-war Generation in America*. In response to this first public appearance of the children of survivors, Eva Fogelman and Bella Savran (1979), both psychotherapists and daughters of survivors, organized nontraditional therapeutic groups in the hope of finding areas of commonality with others. The first session took place in Boston in 1976. Within a year, over 100 children of survivors had joined them.

The interest in finding a generational cohort, the first public expressions, and the growing Holocaust consciousness (especially in the United States, the home of the largest survivor community outside of Israel) led to increasing self-identification as a group. A *New York Times Magazine* article by journalist Helen Epstein (1977) about the experiences of the generation born to survivors was another significant step. In previous years, several journals had rejected ‘Heirs of the Holocaust,’ arguing a lack of public interest, but the opposite was the case. The article was reprinted around the world; Epstein estimates that within a decade of its original publication, almost a million people had read it (Lipstadt 1989: 141). This journalistic tidal wave raised public awareness and made ‘an unidentifiable group identifiable’ (141) by establishing the outlines of a recognizable group identity defined through the familial Holocaust past. Collective identities might be imaginary constructs, but developments such as the publication and the wide dissemination of Epstein’s article offered a sense of belonging to others. For Pilcer, for instance, it was an eye-opener: ‘When Helen Epstein published her article “Heirs of the Holocaust” in *The New York Times Magazine* in June of 1977, she not only recognized that there was an “us”, but also had the clout and intelligence

to articulate an unrecognized group within the Jewish community. For me, another daughter of survivors, it was akin to discovering a secret society' (Pilcer, 2001b).

In 1979, Epstein published *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Holocaust Survivors*, a book of interviews that, as the most widely read Second Generation publication – it was translated into six languages, including Japanese – is considered groundbreaking. Epstein conducted an international search for other children of survivors who also carry an 'iron box', her metaphor for the elements of the past she could not deal with as a child and therefore hid away in a place in her soul that she never touched but always sensed as a burden:

There had to be other people like me, who shared what I carried, who had their own version of my iron box. There had to be, I thought, an invisible, silent family scattered about the world. I began to look for them, to watch and listen, to collect their stories. I set out on a secret quest, so intimate I did not speak of it to anyone. I set out to find a group of people who, like me, were possessed by a history they had never lived. I wanted to ask them questions, so that I could reach the most elusive part of myself. (1988: 13–14)

Also, the growing number of public activities demonstrated an inter-connection between the self and larger Second Generation formations. The first conference on the children of survivors, an event showing a developing collective identity, took place in New York in 1979 and drew almost 600 participants, a number far surpassing the organizers' expectations. At the 1981 'World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors' in Israel, an official framework, the 'International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors', was established. Earlier, grass-roots efforts to create groups had been made across the United States and in Jewish communities worldwide, but due to differences in national memory cultures, some of these associations were established much later; Descendants of the Shoah Inc., for instance, was founded in Melbourne, Australia, in 1991. Second Generation groups have taken on social and political issues across the globe, consciously connecting social engagement and activism with the familial Holocaust legacy of individuals and the Second Generation as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

The forms of group identification and the outlines of a group identity, first pointed to by Helen Epstein, have been repeatedly reformulated since the 1970s. The accounts of the Second Generation phenomenon contain differences, but familial losses and the significance of memories



are viewed as the most influential elements and the connecting moment. For example, in her 1992 essay '2G', Sonia Pilcer recounts the experiences of her childhood and youth, but at the same time relates them to others of the Second Generation to address matters beyond her individual self. She discusses life in the multilingual migrant family, the meaning of the destroyed past, and the interwoven processes of truncated verbal and pervasive nonverbal memory transmission as paradigmatic elements of the Second Generation experience. Pilcer's enigmatic first sentence – 'I don't ever remember not knowing' (1992: 201) – already introduces the ghostly presence of the past known to her only in mediated form; however, such stories still possessed 'the power of prehistoric myth' (203). This commanding combination provides the basis for a group identity: 'We call ourselves 2Gs. Group shorthand for Second Generation, the survivor's children. There is a cabal of us' (204).

In Pilcer's experience, '2G' lives carry meaning far beyond their identity as the child of a certain family, and memory is their impossible, yet inescapable task: 'I was *their* seed of life after so much death. A living monument to their survival, a shrine to their murdered mothers. But I wasn't a *survivor*. All I have survived is my childhood and my parents' fierce, anxious love' (206). But memory is also the lifeline in a paradoxical situation: 'As their child, I find myself in limbo. I had no personal experience of the war. But I was born on the other side, lived my first year in a refugee camp. My father had numbers, my mother nightmares, and me, the legacy. The last act of the horror show of the century' (206). In Pilcer's *The Holocaust Kid*, published almost a decade later, the protagonist turns to memory work and writing to come to terms with her own and her peers' postmemorial state of being closely connected to the past and yet distant from it.

Melvin Jules Bukiet also scrutinizes the situation of his generational cohort in the introduction to his provocatively titled anthology *Nothing Makes You Free: Writings by Descendants of Jewish Holocaust Survivors* (2000). The son of a Polish Jewish concentration camp survivor and an American Jewish mother, Bukiet, a prolific writer known for his acerbic style, asserts 'this group of so-called second generation writers provides a remarkably coherent world view. Growing up on breakfast table anecdotes about concentration camps or bedtime stories from Hell has unified them in unexpected ways' (2000: 1). He identifies the Holocaust, being born into its aftermath, familial losses, and their memory as the cornerstones of a collective identity, an identity that makes no claim to victimhood: 'the Second Generation will never know what the First Generation does in its bones, but what the Second Generation knows

better than anyone else is the First Generation. Other kids' parents didn't have numbers on their arms. Other kids' parents didn't talk about massacres as easily as baseball. Other kids' parents had parents' (14).

A third example of such collective considerations is found in Eva Hoffman's memoir *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*:

Perhaps the character of this group can best be defined (to use a term borrowed from a certain idea of the nation) as an 'imagined community' – that is a community based not so much on geography or circumstance as on sets of meanings, symbols, and even literary fictions that it has in common and that enable its members to recognize and converse with each other with a sense of mutual belonging. We of the 'second generation' recognize each other across boundaries and languages, and we do have symbolic reference points we can touch on as on common scrolls. (2004: 28)

Hoffman, a Polish-born, Canadian-raised writer and academic who now lives in London, not only emphasizes the global distribution of the Second Generation, but also alludes to 'common scrolls' to offer a definition of a community not unlike the one created by Moses: the reference points of this group identity are based in memory and the collective, just as Jewish identity is. Hoffman references Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' here, but her description also evokes the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's 'imagined worlds', which exist globally rather than as a locally bound community, a characteristic much in tune with the post-Holocaust diaspora (1991: 296).

The above considerations of what it means to be Second Generation are not the only ones in the corpus. Indeed, deliberations concerning personal and group identities are such a prominent feature of Second Generation writing that even fictional texts contain them.

The group aspect palpably suffuses the literary phenomenon in various ways, almost as though the collective is needed to establish the Second Generation voice alongside the survivor literature. Interestingly, one of the first prominent literary appearances of a Second Generation figure is Elie Wiesel's creation. In framing his novel *Le cinquième fils* (The fifth son) (1983) around the experiences of a survivor's son, Wiesel implicitly validated the Second Generation story. But, unlike survivor testimony, their writing is not naturally imbued with historical authority and significance. Hoffman identifies the literary individuation from survivor literature as the precondition for Second Generation literature to come

into its own: 'In a way, we have needed to separate our voices from the spellbinding, significance-laden voices of the survivors, to stop being ventriloquists for our parents' (2004: 188). Memory work is one of the ways in which this differentiation from survivor writing takes form and, indeed, over the years, the Second Generation has become a distinct and recognized voice within Holocaust literature. Here, Hoffman, also highlights Second Generation writing as a way of making sense, of moving forward, and as a process. This is comparable to the process-like nature of memory work, in which taking control and coming to terms with the past over time by engaging with it changes the stance of the authors: they are survivor ventriloquists no longer.

This literary Second Generation voice is not only in dialogue with family and often with peers but also with Holocaust memory in the public sphere. Cultural products in general, and literature in particular, play a significant role in the dissemination of Holocaust memory, which is today so ubiquitous that Andreas Huyssen, a scholar of literary studies, speaks of the 'globalization of Holocaust discourse' (2003: 13). But a situation in which striped uniforms and the gate of Auschwitz can function and are used as trusted signifiers, has taken time to develop. It was not a part of public discourse when the children of survivors, most of them born during the early postwar years, were growing up. The growth in Holocaust consciousness has not only influenced their memory work, namely, when cultural products of the public sphere serve as resources for memory work, but it also shows in the increase in Second Generation publications, which, in turn, indicate a growing public interest.

In the 1980s, the first Second Generation works were published, and in the 1990s and the 2000s, numerous books appeared worldwide. Some, for example, the graphic novels *Maus I* (1986) and *II* (1992) by American son of concentration camp survivors Art Spiegelman, are now so widely read that they are increasingly included in the teaching of the Holocaust. Others, such as Helen Max's *Searching for Yesterday: A Photographic Essay about My Mother, a Holocaust Survivor* (2001), are almost unknown, issued in conjunction with organized writing groups – in Max's case, the Melbourne-based Makor Jewish Community Library – or self-published, like South African Nava Piatka's *No Goodbyes: A Father-Daughter Memoir of Love, War and Resurrection* (2009). Around the turn of the century, at a time when Holocaust memory peaked in the Western world and most Second Generation authors were in their early 50s, fully engaged in memory work, and seemingly at an age of self-reflection and expression, numerous books appeared, not only but also an extraordinary number of anthologies, highlighting a group element

even in the literary effort (Berger and Berger 2001, Bukiet 2000, Grinblat 2002, Knowles 2003, Weisel 2000). The relational quality is also evident in intertextual references across Second Generation texts. The author most often cited is Helen Epstein, due to her prominent contribution to the development of the collective identity and the impact her work had on many of her cohort.<sup>15</sup> An example for intertextuality in a fictional text is Sonia Pilcer's *The Holocaust Kid*, which references Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and the controversy surrounding his use of the graphic novel form to represent his parents' Holocaust survival. Many survivors considered Spiegelman's use of animal imagery an affront, as do those in Pilcer's work: "'Mice and cats", my father's voice rises. "It was nothing. A piece of garbage"' (2001a: 177). Relationality with other Second Generation authors can also lead to a merging of intertexts and literary criticism – for instance, in Eva Hoffman's analysis of the works of others who partake in her 'generational story' (2004: xi).

Regardless of their renown or literary quality, the themes explored in second-generation texts are strikingly similar, naturally with differences in focus and form. The collection of poetry *Ghosts of the Holocaust: An Anthology of Poetry by the Second Generation*, compiled by Steward Florsheim (1989), demonstrates that the issues move across genres, emphasizing that the Second Generation literary phenomenon challenges modernist preoccupations with form by prioritizing the content and intention of the texts. In the face of Holocaust memory, in particular familial Holocaust memory, and an urge to learn more about the past, the texts document memory work, and aesthetics are not their primary concern – not unlike survivor literature. Since I consider Second Generation literature as a cultural project and practice within larger memorial frameworks, my focus is what the texts do, that is, the memory work they perform, rather than the shape they take, and I am not interested in an aesthetic evaluation of the works.

## Scope and structure

Following the initial attention devoted to children of Holocaust survivors in the late 1960s, the academic interest throughout a range of disciplines has steadily increased. Literary scholars have also contributed through their discussion of what at this point has become a large and multilingual body of writing. *Memory Work: The Second Generation's* shift in thematic interest is not the only way in which it complements previous research. My notably broad corpus from across the English-speaking diaspora opens up the scope by comparatively going beyond

individual national literatures, hitherto the main approach to Second Generation writing.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously, I also sharpen the focus, insofar as I only include the work of authors who were born into a survivor family.

A significant question for scholars and practitioners, especially as we lose the living memory of the Holocaust survivors, involves memory transmission to the following generations, both in societies at large and within families.<sup>17</sup> One result of these considerations is an increased use of generational tropes. They have frequently become detached from survivor families and are used to denote all those born after the Holocaust who identify with the Second Generation experience as a generational cohort. This wider definition is prominent in literary criticism.<sup>18</sup> Ellen S. Fine, for instance, expands 'post-Holocaust generation' (1998: 186) beyond the realm of the family to include all those who 'have been marked by images of an experience that reverberate throughout their lives' (187). Among other influences, the wide usage of the term 'postmemory' and the transformation of its original sense of the familial transmission of memory to something that extends into larger memory cultures encouraged such terminological adaptations. Marianne Hirsch herself has opened the concept to transmission outside of family structures, but insists that 'familial inheritance offers the clearest model for it' (2001: 10). As the dilution of the term became increasingly evident, she distinguished between 'familial' and 'affiliative' postmemory (2012: 114).

While not an issue in the corpus under examination here, which solely concerns diaspora writing, the difference in the role of the Holocaust in Israeli and other memory cultures needs to be noted. In Israel, the Holocaust is not only an innate element of the national identity, the survivor experience is also shared by a large part of society. The literary scholar Iris Milner has pointed out that in the Israeli case, the Second Generation experience also exceeds the familial context and therefore the definition of 'Second Generation' must be distinguished from its diaspora usage.<sup>19</sup>

The Holocaust indubitably shaped and still shapes entire postwar generations, prompting both Jews and non-Jews to explore their past, but the widening of the term 'Second Generation' to include authors who feel close to the experience does not fit my intention to perform a case study of memory work within the survivor family. Moreover, the forms and processes of family memory as seen through the lens of memory work suggest that the experience of being a child of survivors must be viewed as distinct from an affiliative self-identification as

Second Generation. Unlike others' explorations into the past, Second-Generation memory work is based on the fact that the Holocaust, its losses, and its aftermath are familial experiences. First and foremost, Second Generation memory work deals with the innermost, intimate aspects of family memory. An example of this unique and distinctive experience of children of survivors are the visible traces of abuse suffered at the hand of the Nazis, such as an Auschwitz tattoo or a scar left on a parent's body. The witnessing experience is, by definition, an embodied one, and this physical aspect of memory is a presence in family life and suffuses the material.

The term 'survivor family', however, is broadly defined here: I also include writings of the children of refugees. Refugees might not have been imprisoned in concentration camps, and yet they experienced persecution, suffered the loss of family, community, and culture, and were forced to start new lives post-migration. As discussed above, psychological studies have shown different effects of war experiences on survivors that are dependent on many factors, among them circumstances of their survival. Escape and exile shaped refugee families in different ways than the experiences that camp survivors had to go through, and this shows in the themes of Second Generation memory work. For instance, refugees generally have more objects from the pre-Holocaust past, but their arms are not marked with an Auschwitz tattoo. Memory work and the attention it gives to uncovering elements of the past in the present naturally brings with it an awareness of the differences in survival and their impact on family life, the different subject matters, and the knowledge uncovered. Other issues that come to the fore concerning the parents' survival, often just implicitly – few authors make comparative reference to the experiences of other survivor families – are the age and gender of the parents. However, I only discuss these issues if the texts explicitly comment on them.

The Second Generation as a social formation and as a literary voice is certainly a transnational phenomenon, but for the purposes of this study, the material will be contextualized within mnemonic communities – that is, groups that share a distinct collective understanding of the past, including the postwar communities of survivors, the larger Jewish community, and nations. In recent years, due in particular to the omnipresence of mass media, Holocaust memory increasingly has moved beyond national frameworks, so much as to be called 'cosmopolitan' (Levy and Sznajder 2006: 10ff), but Second Generation childhoods and youths took place before Holocaust memorialization reached today's levels and were influenced by different countries' developments vis-à-vis

the Jewish past and present. An example of this is the less visible form of Jewish life in the United Kingdom as opposed to the United States, which shows, for instance, in parents' decisions about whether to give their child a non-Jewish name.

To limit the canon but keep the material comparable, I only consider texts from Anglophone literatures – Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and South Africa.<sup>20</sup> Combining texts from different English-speaking countries offers a new perspective on diasporic Holocaust writing and allows exploring how these different contexts, far from the cultural, social, and natural landscapes of the survivors' European origins, influence Second Generation memory work. However, only some nodes of memory refer to national contexts, depending on the location of a node in the network of memory. 'Inner' nodes of memory, such as the marked body of a survivor, are part of intimate family life. A name, in contrast, is a node that is in dialogue with the societal context. These 'outer' nodes of memory allow the gleanings of knowledge about the survivor parents' postwar experiences of being uprooted and of navigating being a cultural Other. Such matters were a natural part of family life and of the life experiences of the survivor's children, but unlike the explicit foci of memory work on the Holocaust and pre-Holocaust past through which the authors did not live, the postwar period and their own life span are documented rather than explored. With my focus on Second Generation memory work and its intention to engage with origins and a usable past, my selection of memory nodes are less concerned with the often disorienting experiences of the parents' migration. Other nodes, for instance, multilingualism, religion, or the encounters with non-Jews – all of which I only touch on in the context of other memory nodes – could offer different insights.

As already mentioned throughout this introduction, *Memory Work: The Second Generation* is methodologically based in both memory studies and Holocaust studies, offering research supplements for both fields. On the one hand, it explores literary works of the Holocaust from a memory studies perspective. Drawing on the field's interdisciplinary riches, including history, psychology, and literary criticism, it offers a fresh take on Second Generation literature that goes beyond a trauma studies approach. Although less interested in the transmission of trauma as explored in literary studies as an analytical tool, I nonetheless draw on psychological trauma studies to interpret parental experiences and their impact on family life as part of its theoretical hold in memory studies. At the same time, I analyze literature as a cultural object and

practice within a broader memorial field, including rites around names, food, and bodies, to name but a few.

On the other hand, since this study takes on one distinct group in the aftermath of the Holocaust, formed within the interplay between personal, familial, and larger cultural memory formations and through relational structures with family members – and frequently with others from a similar background as well – it offers an in-depth case study of memory work. While doing so, I also rethink memory as a network, in which nodes focus traces of memory that connect times, locations, and people.

Each of the following chapters offers a composite of thematically linked excerpts from a cross-section of both well-known and lesser-known texts that deal with one specific node of family memory. In close readings, I analyze the examples with and against each other. Previous research has focused on analyzing books in their entirety, and single Second Generation texts can certainly be read as chronicles of memory work, but such an approach would preclude comparisons and conclusions about the material that are not bound to individual works, authors, or national memory cultures. It would also limit considerations about memory networks and how certain topoi are carriers of memory that function as nodes of memory for more than one individual case.

Apart from the performance pieces of New Zealander Deb Filler and of UK writer Robin Hirsch, I limit my selection to the traditional medium of the written word in literary form and exclude the many other media in which Second Generation artists have worked: theater, film, music, visual arts, and so forth. However, my corpus crosses the genres: as the selection was based on subject matter, it includes different forms of life writing, graphic novels, fiction, and even poetry.

My seemingly casual linking of life writing and fictional texts might be a stumbling block for some readers, but I do so to show that these materials are all driven by memory work; even fictional texts are typically thinly veiled life writing – that is, the authors are writing from their life experience. This corroborates literary scholar Daniel R. Schwarz's suggestion that 'perhaps all Holocaust fiction is disguised autobiography. The personal is rarely far from Holocaust texts, whether they purport to be autobiographical or not' (1999: 39). This is connected to Second Generation literature's tendency to break traditional generic boundaries, as Efraim Sicher maintains. In such works, we encounter 'the breakdown of any generic boundary between fiction and autobiography' (2000: 81). This uncategorized form of writing is, according to Alan Berger, 'largely confessional' (1997: 35). Sara R. Horowitz, another scholar working on



Holocaust literature, argues that even when understood as cognitively and emotionally effective art, Second Generation writing bears ‘witness to the witness’ (1998: 278) and is closely linked to testimony (282). What we find here is not only a crossing of genre limits and a predominance of testimonial, or life writing elements even in ostensibly fictional texts, but also an interweaving of text and meta-text. For the purposes of this study I define Second Generation writing as a literary form in which intimate family experience is interwoven with historical events mediated through familial memory.

My analysis proceeds according to theme – objects, names, bodies, food, Passover, the attacks of 9/11 – and investigates the forms and functions of the respective memory nodes. All the nodes of memory I explore refer back to different periods of the family past, some more to the pre-Holocaust past, some more to the period of the Nazi persecution. The forms of memory work differ from subject to subject. Some, such as food traditions, lend themselves more easily to exploration and relational linking with a usable family past, while others, like the parents’ physical suffering, offer fewer possibilities. The outcomes are similarly dependent on the topics. Memory work struggles against the difficulties inherent in survivor family communication and against the historical realities of a murdered family and a destroyed past in which only a few carriers of memory from the prewar period or the Holocaust, be they humans or objects, are still to be found.

A range of memory nodes exists in the material; the selection presented in *Memory Work: The Second Generation* offers a survey. There are many other interesting nodes that are too rich to be included in their entirety here, examples being photography – both of the family and of cultural memory, in an extension of Marianne Hirsch’s foundational work; place – the family home, the village, city, or country of origin, as much as ghettos or concentration camps in which the parents survived; and language. Language is particularly complex, as accents, the different languages used in the family past and present, or the broken language of trauma tell so much about the past, but here the medium of communication becomes the subject of communication. Analyzing this intricate construct calls for a separate study with a strong linguistic vantage point. Only a few references to the meaning of the linguistic particularities of the survivor family, such as the use of certain words directly related to survival or the pre-Holocaust period – what did a grandmother call a certain food? – or issues related to being the Other, such as the ‘stain’ of German accents or expressions in the monocultural postwar United Kingdom, are included here.

Some of the nodes selected – such as the body or food – might seem like standard Jewish stereotypes, but their collective aspect offers a double advantage for analyzing memory work. On the one hand, these nodes connect back to the longer Jewish cultural history and thus help this specific case study of Second Generation memory work in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Such questions can be both negative, say, racial physical stereotyping, and positive, such as the community-strengthening aspect of traditional food ways. On the other hand, the nodes of this study also go beyond one specific ethnic group and can be translated to other instances of memory work, for instance if we think about the investigation of Palestinian family names and how these, consistent with Arab tradition, tell a story about places of origin.

*Chapter 2* explores material objects as the most tangible of nodes, investigating how these physical mementos of the pre-Holocaust past are interpreted and analyzed, as well as the meanings – for instance, loss, or ‘authentic’ family memory – ascribed to them. Few objects might have survived, but when they function as nodes in Second Generation memory work, the micro histories of families become part of cultural memory. In this chapter, the differences between the families of refugees and camp survivors are conspicuous. For children of refugees, there are more possibilities to connect to a usable past of family and origins through physical objects rather than associating their absence with negativity and loss.

In the corpus, some Holocaust memorabilia (objects from the period of persecution) are mentioned. They represent further challenges to Second Generation memory work because they are often guarded in parental silence and thus do not carry a usable past, which means that the links for Second Generation memory work are blocked. Questions of silence versus knowledge and its connective power are prominent in this chapter.

Given names, the subject of *Chapter 3*, are central to personal identity and are a palimpsestic node that connects the Second Generation to former generations of the family and simultaneously also to Jewish tradition. Here, the central questions are the following: Is a name a burden or a connective gift? Are links to a deceased family member stronger and more significant because of a shared name? Names as a node of memory offer the opportunity to look at Second Generation memory work as a process and to investigate how meanings, explanations, and the connection to one’s name change over a lifetime. Questions concerning migration and distinct memory cultures are also prominent issues here. Do

different national contexts impact the name choices of postwar Jewish immigrants, and if so, how?

*Chapter 4* moves on to embodied memories, both of survivors and of their children. The past is physically written on the bodies of survivors in the form of scars or other physical marks that originate from the time of persecution. The parents' suffering is a complicated area of memory work in particular if it is still evident today. The Auschwitz tattoo, a key symbol in the cultural memory of the Holocaust, is almost impossible to decipher; this is one of the spheres in which survivor testimonies are remediated within Second Generation texts. It is an affective force field in which cultural and family memory are interwoven and into which the Second Generation self can be inserted.

Considerations of the body also revolve around links on a scale larger than family: specifically, links to the Jewish community as an ethnic group, unworked-through fears that can still be active in survivors' minds and cause body perceptions influenced by National Socialist notions of racial Jewishness. This manifests, for instance, in hair, a gendered carrier of memory with links to a range of issues, including the shaving in the camps and questions of whiteness and alterity in connection with migration.

The last section, 'Connecting and Interpreting Second-Generation Bodies', analyzes embodied memory as metaphor, which provides a paradigm to describe the familial transmission of memory preceding conscious memory work and literal embodied memory – that is, the physical resemblance of the Second Generation to family members unknown to them. What knowledge about the past can be gleaned from one's own face? Are family features a physical link to the lost past?

A different form of embodied memory is encoded in food, the node of family memory explored in *Chapter 5*. Food evokes the hunger-induced memories of starvation, which can manifest in overeating, hoarding, or other problematic behavior. But at the same time it can be a positive source of family memory by signifying the *longue durée* and the usable past of familial and cultural food traditions beyond the chasm of the Holocaust. In particular, the sensual elements of the Proustian memory-triggering effect and the possibilities of recreating and imbibing the foods of the past make this topic a rich source of interpretation. Food as a node of memory highlights Second Generation connections to different communities: an ethnic connection through cooking that links past and present – *gefilte fish* are still being prepared in Jewish kitchens – and also the question of new national frameworks: how does food as a node of family memory function in the migrant situation?

*Chapter 6* brings Second Generation memory work into the larger framework of Jewish cultural memory, exploring the textual integration of Passover (the holiday revolving around the Exodus narrative) and the transmission of memory. The sociocultural practices of Passover offer a setting for the integration of family memory within the ritual of remembering the Israelites' slavery in Egypt and the Exodus to the Promised Land. The narrative itself, which resonates with Jewish suffering and liberation in twentieth-century Europe, offers triggers and connection points for memory work, as does the culturally prescribed form of teaching the next generation about the collective past within the family setting. Here, the networked form of memory becomes particularly evident as family memory and different times and spaces of Jewish history find ritual as a node of memory.

Finally, the attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, appear in the corpus, and *Chapter 7* explores how Second Generation authors have analyzed this event as a form of experiential learning about the parental past in their lived present. I explore how the mode of family memory work creates a lens that relates contemporary political events not just to 'global terrorism' but also to family history. Unlike the inner-ethnic considerations of the last chapter, here, the network of memory opens up not only beyond Jewish memory but also beyond Holocaust memory as contemporary history in mediated form is seen through the lens of the past.

The *Afterword* synthesizes the considerations presented in this study, deliberating and focusing more generally on the intricacies and complexities of memory work, and in particular on memory work as a pertinent research perspective for the exploration of the current popular interest in genealogy.

# 2

## Objects

In recent years, scholars and others have increasingly considered family possessions within the framework of family histories. Especially in the aftermath of violent trauma and the break in continuity it signifies, inherited objects as tangible links to earlier generations can trigger familial memory work. Such object-based quests to explore the past make for fascinating relational life writing, as proven by the popular appeal of Edmund De Waal's *Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010) and Nancy K. Miller's *What They Saved: Pieces of a Jewish Past* (2011). Both De Waal and Miller set out to explore the history behind certain objects – a collection of Japanese miniature sculptures, photographs, a mysterious land deed for a lot in Palestine, a postcard from Argentina, and a lock of hair – because without a narrative, these items are little more than signifiers for a story. In both cases, the search includes trips to former family homes and homelands, part of the 'return' journey phenomenon in which many Jews born into families formerly from Central and Eastern Europe partake.<sup>1</sup> Symbolizing the loss of family, community, and culture – the lost world of upscale Jewish Vienna for de Waal, and the destroyed communities of Bratslav and Kishinev for Miller – family objects serve as the triggers and compasses of physical and metaphorical journeys into the past.

Souvenirs, relics (primarily in the nonreligious sense), souvenirs, and other memorabilia are important themes in the study of memory; they represent the past and are, in metonymic form, embodiments of the past. In his seminal study on cultural memory, Jan Assmann defines several external dimensions of memory, such as societal and cultural structures, mimetic memory, and also the *Gedächtnis der Dinge*, 'the memory of things' (2011: 6). Objects tell many stories, ranging from intimate to public, and act as carriers of personal and cultural memory. These traits

make objects productive and rich nodes of family memory, as they exist in the present but physically incorporate the past. As tangible remnants, they refer to a time beyond their current existence, making them a 'physical mnemonic bridge' (Zerubavel 2003: 43), and the different temporal layers within them produce a sense of continuity that (if the object is portable) can even be transnational in nature. Consequently, through material objects, distances – both temporal and spatial – can be overcome as the person involved in memory work consciously links himself into memory networks. For instance, contemplating a piece of jewelry, once owned by a grandmother in Hungary and now in the hands of her granddaughter in New Zealand, expands the reach of this object across generations and across the world.

What makes objects a particularly evocative node of Second Generation memory work is that our connection to things is both physical and emotional. In his 'thing theory', Bill Brown, a literary scholar, suggests that objects are often interpreted as 'some record of the past, as though the past remained perpetually present, as though it could be repossessed – through the object – as affective experience' (2003: 104). In this sense, family heirlooms are meaningful beyond their legibility as carriers of memory, almost as though by association they have soaked up traces of the former owners' being. They provide intimate knowledge about their former owners and the choices they made when they created, chose, or kept a particular object. These objects can be physically traced in the process of memory work: said granddaughter in New Zealand can put on the necklace and see its shimmer on her own skin, while touching what her grandmother once touched.

The materiality of objects encodes their collective and connective traits in particular when they are viewed as family heirlooms. An inheritance is the product of a cultural understanding which, under normal circumstances, teaches us about the context in which this ritual is performed, as well as a technique for the continuation and prolongation of the family line – not just through values, knowledge, and traditions but also through material objects. In *Geliebte Objekte: Symbole und Instrumente der Identitätsbildung* (Beloved objects: symbols and instruments of identity construction), Tilmann Habermas, a professor of psychoanalysis and memory studies expert, explores the role that objects play in our lives and identity creation processes. He argues that one of the important aspects of the familial transfer of objects is that they act as a stand-in for an absent third party and can evoke the former owner in the present moment: even if worn in Auckland today, these pearls once graced the grandmother's neck in Budapest (1999: 283–85).

Given the destruction of the Holocaust, the theme of family-owned objects comes up only in some Second Generation texts, demonstrating the scarcity of family heirlooms in survivor families. In most cases – unless the parents escaped – internment and displacement made it impossible to maintain a tradition of inheritance in (former) European Jewish families. Susan Jacobowitz, an American daughter of survivors, exemplifies this familial situation in her dissertation-cum-memoir:

I've often felt that one of the most difficult and painful aspects of being second generation is the dearth of artifacts. Our parents are like the survivors of a shipwreck who washed up naked on their new land. If I could only hold in my hands one object that I knew my grandmother touched, it would be so precious to me: it would be the past made real, the powerful connection realized. (2004: 49)

Second Generation authors who were born into such a 'dearth of artifacts' frequently refer to the mnemonic promise of objects and their connective force: no objects means no tangible link with the usable pre-Holocaust past, 'the past made real'. At the same time, Jacobowitz' imagery brings in the issue of migration and the beginning of new lives without a legacy. Naturally, the subject of possessions in survivor families also introduces another historical reality shaping these texts: the National Socialist program of 'Aryanization' – the state-organized theft of Jewish property and the still ongoing issues of restitution. This is a stark reminder of one of the consequences of the Nazi persecution of the Jews that continues to this day and impedes memory work.

The double focus of Second Generation memory work which takes on the survival and the pre-Holocaust period is also evident in this tangible node of memory. The memory of children of concentration camp survivors – rather than of refugees – can encounter objects from the period of incarceration and persecution. In their discussion of 'testimonial objects' – objects that originated from the concentration camps – literary scholars Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer have argued that their value for memory work is twofold: 'material remnants can serve as testimonial objects that carry memory traces and embody the points of its transmission' (2006: 353). The authors also explore such 'testimonial objects' in their literary memory work. There is a distinct difference between reading Holocaust mementos and other objects. Memory work becomes tentative when faced with evidence of the parents' persecution. Throughout the entire process, however, memory traces and transmission are discussed, and not only when it

comes to objects connected to the Holocaust past: indeed, mementos also embody connective moments.

For the children of survivors, any object is a source and, especially given how rare it is that survivors started their new lives with objects from their past, these objects are precious. This value has little to do with economic value; rather, it is its mnemonic value, which includes relational and emotional aspects, that is the relevant factor. The mnemonic value allows incorporating the pre-Holocaust past into a family network of memory. Ascribing such significance to family heirlooms indicates that they represent the survival of the past and continuity in material form, offering the possibility for the Second Generation to locate themselves within a multigenerational family and its continuity.

The above-mentioned characteristics of objects as carriers of memory present them as rich physical nodes in the network of memory: they are affective, and evoke group history and social identity across the generations as they link back to family members, family history, and cultural history. For the most part, the objects examined here are ‘mute’ items that require a narrative or an explanation, unlike photographs or documents that work on a different explanatory level (a category that has already received a great deal of scholarly attention).<sup>2</sup> This chapter is subdivided into three sections. The first part analyzes the different ways in which objects act as signifiers for knowledge about the pre-Holocaust family, including their deaths. An important question here is at what moments in a life story family objects become meaningful. The second, ‘Family possessions in the second generation’, examines questions of transmission, focusing on the moment an object is handed on to the Second Generation. Both of these sections address objects originating from the pre-Holocaust family past; here, we find a majority of texts written by children of refugees. The final section then turns to ‘Holocaust mementos’, objects from the time of persecution that persist in the life of the survivor family. The analysis is guided by the question of whether the process of memory work changes, that is, how the treatment and interpretation of these items differs from that of objects that promise a connection to an earlier familial past of origins rather than destruction.

### **The meaning of objects**

Objects are memory nodes with a range of meanings and values – mnemonic, affective, or other. Here I will explore how these are traced and ascribed in memory work, especially in situations in which the



survivors owned no family objects after their survival and started a new life without any physical trace of their pre-Holocaust past. What does this absence mean for their postwar children? In literary memory work, the link between the Second Generation and objects from the family past are a central focus; however, one example of survivors rather than their offspring ascribing meaning to objects will be addressed: those discussed in the descriptions of camp survivors who went back to their former homes in the early months after liberation, searching for their families and the belongings they were forced to leave behind.

*Searching for Yesterday: A Photographic Essay about my Mother, a Holocaust Survivor* is a multigeneric family memoir that includes transcriptions of Australian Helen Max's oral history interviews of her survivor mother, who was born Raizel Teperman in Poland. During one of the interviews, which took place in the safety of Raizel's Melbourne home, she describes her return to her family's apartment, which had been taken over by their former neighbors when the family was deported (2001: 82–3). In 1945, then only 15 years old, Raizel was liberated from Auschwitz and set out to find her family. When she entered what used to be her family home in Jedlinsk, a small town near Radom, she found it occupied: 'I was shocked to see our furniture, to see the table set with my mother's beautiful Pesach crockery. On the shelf I could see our **Shabbes** candlesticks. I found it difficult to breathe, to speak. I remember saying something to them about not wanting anything, I just wanted a look' (82). More than anything, it is the sight of her mother's most valued objects, the Passover crockery and the Shabbat candlesticks, being used by strangers that brings certainty to the young survivor: 'I wasn't going to find my family here' (83). The degradation of these objects – so intimately connected to her family and to Jewish ritual – spells out the destruction of her family and her cultural origins. The visual evidence of the loss of her family produces an intense physical reaction, and Raizel escapes from her lost home. As she tells the story to her daughter, the reaction recurs; even now, safe in Australia, she feels compelled to flee. Max does not comment on the narrated scene or on the family objects that she will never experience outside of this verbal transmission of memory. These items are far removed from the reality of the Melbourne-born daughter, existing only in the realm of the family memory of earlier generations. They are not perceived as a stolen legacy, but as signifiers of the death of her family, reminders that are still unbearably painful for her mother.

Max's father is also a survivor from Poland, but he does not feature majorly in *Searching for Yesterday*, which sometimes – like in the excerpt above – reads like a narrative of female generations: mother tells

daughter, and the objects she speaks about are those associated with the feminine sphere of the family, the grandmother's crockery and candlesticks. Throughout Max's life, both parents had spoken little about the past, but the silence is more associated with Raizel: 'my mother carried many secrets – secrets made more intriguing by the numbers tattooed on her left arm. I grew up wondering how did they get there and what did they mean?' (2). This embodied presence in their Australian lives ultimately triggers Max's memory work in which she tries to uncover everything about the past, but the objects, which are introduced by the survivor as symbols of loss, are accepted as such and not interrogated any further. For her, these are lost links.

Max chose the framework provided by the Makor Jewish Community Library in Melbourne to create her book.<sup>3</sup> The community's program to support the memory work of its members points to the fact that the city has a strong Jewish community. Australia accepted the most survivors per capita in the world, bar Israel; in fact, postwar Melbourne had the highest percentage of Holocaust survivors of any diaspora community (Rubinstein 1996: 77).<sup>4</sup> It is this specific Australian context in which they live – a community of survivors in which exploring the past is now encouraged and supported – that furthers Max's family memory work.

The form of the memoir is rather unusual because it includes artwork that also gives a strong visual presence of the family's Australian lives. Originally a photo-essay, the book was later augmented with a written narrative of Max's memories, her mother's testimony, and an interpretation of the stories. In the photos, the daughter showcases the one surviving picture that still exists of Raizel as a girl with her family, contemporary family pictures, and photo art, all with explanatory captions. The artwork included in the book combines images from the cultural archive of Holocaust memory with pictures of contemporary anti-Semitic graffiti from Max's Australian surroundings, evoking vestiges of and links to family history.

Objects are also included in the photos of the family, to powerful effect – in particular, in a scene showing the now elderly survivor mother, wearing a traditional lace head covering, lighting Shabbat candles. In this photo, the survivor performing the ritual of welcoming the Shabbat mirrors the customs and movements she learned from her murdered mother. The caption quotes Raizel: 'Being Jewish and traditional is still a part of my life' (27). The image-based story of objects and Jewish family life is extended on the next page, which shows the family at a Shabbat table decorated with another silver candelabra and set with festive crockery. This image is captioned with the words, 'Having my family

around me is very important' (29). Here, the same kind of ritual objects that signified the end of a Jewish family in Radom are shown in use in a Melbourne family home, thus serving as a symbol for the survival of family and the survival of Judaism, with tradition serving as a link to the relatives who perished even if there is no material continuity. But there is also an absence of memory, which for Max is the crux of her memory work project: 'I had now become obsessed with a part of family history I had never lived. I had to know what sort of life my mother had before she came to Australia. Her life hadn't just started in Melbourne nor even in the camps. She'd been allowed to spend only a short time building memories with parents, aunts and uncles' (5).

*Sala's Gift: My Mother's Holocaust Story*, American-born Ann Kirschner's memoir, is based on and remediates a collection of over 350 letters, postcards, and other testimonial objects that Kirschner's mother, Sala Garncarz, had received and managed to keep safe throughout the five years she was incarcerated in various Nazi labor camps. After her survival, Sala married a GI and in her wholly American life she never spoke about her experiences in Europe, not even mentioning the existence of the letters. The familial silence was presumably furthered by the fact that Kirschner's father was not a survivor, nor even Jewish. Kirschner, however, an academic and entrepreneur, developed an urge to pursue family memory work. When Sala was about to undergo heart surgery in 1991, she gave her 'legacy' to her daughter: the collection of papers, a diary, and some photographs. These documents provided the trigger and the material basis for Kirschner's investigation into her mother's family history and 'Holocaust Story'. The book was translated into six languages, including Mandarin. Arlene Hutton also adapted it as a play, entitled *Letters to Sala*.

In *Sala's Gift*, Kirschner describes the scene in which Sala attempted to return to the family home in Poland. Much as in Max's case, family objects are signifiers for losses. Before the Holocaust, several generations of the Garncarz family had lived in different apartments in a building in Sosnowiec. As Kirschner relates, Sala entered the first apartment, where her sister Laya Dina's family used to live:

[A]n unfamiliar man opened the door. She could see past him into the room, and recognized Laya Dina's furniture. Everything was familiar, everything in the same place – except no sister, brother-in-law, niece, nephew. The man at the door said that he knew nothing about the previous tenants; as their eyes met, she felt a shock of fear, and she stammered that she must be in the wrong apartment. At the bottom of the stairs, she fainted. (2006: 202)

When Sala sees her sister's home with all of possessions still in place but the family gone, her search comes to an immediate halt; she does not even make her way upstairs to her parents' former apartment. The sudden realization that the rooms and the objects that used to belong to Laya Dina are now being used and ostensibly owned by a stranger quashes all hope for Sala, confirming that no one else, not 'sister, brother-in-law, niece, nephew', was still alive (although later she finds out that two of her sisters survived). She also recognizes that, despite surviving the camps, she might still be in danger – from the man who has taken over her family's possessions. Sala runs off in fear, fainting from the shock of realizing the extent of her losses.

In what seem like flashbulb memories – everything is remembered exactly as it was at that powerful moment – the objects actualize the annihilation of their family members. As in Max's text, the reader is only given a survivor's description of the physical outlines of the lost home: they represent unlinked nodes of memory insofar as the authors cannot access them in their memory work. This scene, an experience undergone by many returning survivors, is a narrative of the past that stands by itself. No Second Generation commentary is added, and the text employs a third-person narrator, which might encourage further contemplation. In both cases, stolen family possessions act as the signifiers of traumatic loss, symbols of destroyed lives. In part, this explains why they are not a source of longing for the Second Generation; as representations of the family's murder, they cannot serve as links to a usable pre-Holocaust past. These narrated objects form part of the parental suffering and provide memory links to a moment of trauma that can only be crossed by those who suffered it. Here, the Second Generation authors function only as archivists of survivor memory rather than involving themselves in the familial equation.

Both examples illustrate the double loss of family and belongings. Family possessions anchor personal histories, and a family defines itself by the objects with which it surrounds itself. Without the family's using them, however, they signify loss rather than memory. At the same time, the loss and destruction of family are compounded when a survivor sees that the family's belongings have been taken, used, and devalued. Thus, these accounts tell another story as well: they are a reminder of the complicity of 'ordinary men', the neighbors or other local actors who were provided with an ideology of state-organized theft that was used to rationalize their actions. They did not merely 'take over' the victims' belongings but they stole them in the hope that their neighbors would not return from the ghettos or concentration camps.

The upshot of both Kirschner's and Max's stories is clear: the new lives of these families of camp survivors included no objects dating back to the pre-Holocaust era. The refugee situation was different and subsequently, so is their children's memory work in this area. Examining situations of growing up without any family objects is a compelling way for authors to illustrate the chasm created by the genocide of European Jewry. Once again, the objects are not meaningful as such, but serve as the signifiers for other stories. Here, they stand for the break in the chain of generations: not only was a family erased, but also every physical trace of it and connection to it was irrevocably lost. Examples of this situation and sentiment abound in the corpus and are almost repetitive in their wording.

For example, Lev Raphael, the New York-born and -raised son of two concentration camp survivors explains, 'For me, growing up, there seemed no other significant experience in the world but the war, the one that has stolen from my parents their family, friends, home, their country, their past. There were no mementos of their lives in Europe before the war, hardly any photographs, even memories were in short supply because they were dangerous' (2006: 4). In his memoir *Writing a Jewish Life*, Raphael depicts the lack of mementos as another sign of the totality of destruction, a representation of the overwhelming feeling of loss suffusing the post-Holocaust family. This also implies a scarcity in postwar lives, especially for the children born into a situation in which objects and memories are closely entwined with the traumatic past: they are 'dangerous' – that is, forbidden – blocked links. The use of the word 'stolen' makes reference to the 'Aryanization' policy, but at the same time it refers to the larger idea of the intended obliteration of an entire people. As in the examples drawn from the work of Max and Kirschner, family possessions are stand-ins for other stories, revealing the consequences of the larger historical injustice at an individual level.

Eva Hoffman echoes the sense of loss that permeates Raphael's memoir. For Hoffman, whose parents survived in hiding in what is now Ukraine, the lack of objects from the pre-Holocaust past is emblematic of her family history:

But no objects had managed to travel across the time gap, and, of course, no persons. When my parents did allude to their lives in Zalosce, it was as if they were talking about a very remote, quaint world seen through a diminishing telescope. The six years of war had created a geological fissure in time and removed the world before to another era. There was nothing to help me imagine time extending backwards. (2004: 13)

The lack of any physical evidence of former lives is read as a metaphor for the historical divide, a spatial and temporal 'fissure' that cannot be crossed, even in the imagination, let alone by memory work. Hoffman was born in postwar Poland. Before the family's immigration to Canada, she spent her first 13 years in Krakow, but her parents' pre-Holocaust world nonetheless seems like a place in a parallel universe, cut off from her reality by a 'time gap'. This is so absolute that the parents' past in Zalosce, a town in the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands, is described in terms reminiscent of fairy tales: 'a very remote, quaint world'. Some material proof might have helped Hoffman traverse these divided universes and allow her to establish links in memory. Not having any denotes the disrupted memory network from which the node of objects is cut. The absence of any tangible evidence from the pre-Holocaust family highlights the impossibility of satisfying her compulsion for memory work by way of this memory node.

In both examples above, the lack of objects is a signifier of loss and a reminder of the difficulties of imagining oneself as part of a longer family history. A more immediate and urgent interest in objects as carriers of longer-term family memory can be triggered by a change in the family structure. This new urgency, caused by a death or a birth, indicates that memory work is not a static process; rather, it is dependent on the situation and context of those engaging in it. Anne Karpf, the daughter of Polish concentration camp survivors, was born in the United Kingdom and thus grew up in a family with a truncated history surrounded by a national context that celebrates long traditions. This context, which is less prominently a migrant society than, for example, Australia, influences her understanding of heritage, which in turn influences her memory work. The first time Karpf thinks about the meaning of family possessions is when she is pregnant with her first child. About to extend her family, she is troubled by the lack of material legacy:

I felt punched by the lack of continuity and by the realisation that I had no object to bequeath to my child which had been bequeathed to me – there was no silver spoon or lace shawl. I wasn't even sure if Jews use such things – they seem rather the accoutrements of christening – but their absence stood for the rupture which, at that moment, I felt so keenly. (1997: 255)

As a child, Karpf never questioned that her family had no bequeathed objects, but when faced with immediate questions of generational continuity, she longs for physical mementos of the family past to offset the

sense of ‘rupture’ she feels. Here, the British context, characterized by rituals and objects that have been passed down through many generations, offers her only understanding of legacies. She does not even know whether giving a silver spoon to a child is part of the Jewish tradition and freely admits that her thinking is shaped by her cultural framework.

However, a more profound issue underlies the rather trivial question of whether she is following only a British or a Jewish tradition. Karpf’s need for family continuity is so compelling that she hunts down something – anything – that could fill the void she suddenly feels, no matter whether it stems from her national context instead of Jewish tradition:

In Tenby, in a restaurant full of old objects, I saw a child’s antique highchair and became obsessed with the idea of buying one. I shlepped P with me round all the town’s antique shops in search of such a piece until I realised that it was a pathetic gesture – like buying a coat-of-arms, or simulating an heirloom – you couldn’t drum up or wish into being an authentic mark of continuance. No such object belonging to my family survived the war [...] and I was surprised how bereft I felt for I’d always known that we had none of those – it was one of the givens of my childhood. (1997: 255–56)

What Karpf describes here is a desire to create ‘future memorabilia’, a tool commonly used to ensure continuity through physical carriers of memory. The sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel calls such commemorative objects ‘pre-ruins’ because they are ‘highly evocative and thus able to constitute quasi-tangible bridges to the past’ (2003: 45). Karpf’s need for continuity is so strong that she wants to start an object-based family tradition or a future inheritance for her children; instead, she is looking for objects with a long history that are already memorabilia. It seems as though another family’s heirloom could create a sense of continuity, possibly even a usable past, beyond the ‘rupture’ of the Holocaust in which her parents’ entire families perished. As she mentions repeatedly in this context, her search for an ‘object to bequeath’ is influenced by the surrounding British monoculturalism, in which baptisms (rather than the *brit milah*, the traditional Jewish circumcision ceremony) bring together the community to celebrate the birth of a child, and in which most families have not experienced the disruption of migration, let alone the destruction of the Holocaust. The difference in experiences is further emphasized in the use of the verb ‘shlep’. In linking a word of Yiddish origin – which carries all the connotations of the European diaspora – with small-town British antique shops, Karpf accentuates the

absurdity of her 'pathetic' attempt to find an ersatz family heirloom. What she is attempting to do here is not memory work so much as forcibly erasing the Nazi destruction of her family. This is an impossible undertaking.

But years later, when Karpf is looking at her child, she realizes that family continuity has been ensured despite the absence of a material inheritance:

(And now I look at my six-year old and see abundant continuity which doesn't require material corroboration: heirloom or no heirloom she's absorbed some of the culture of my parents, and she feels as comfortable dancing to klezmer music as watching Power Rangers. This is osmosis through generations and happens to some extent of its own accord, though in my own untrusting way I give it a regular push). (1997: 256)

In her daughter, she sees a link to her parents and to a culture that predates her parents' life span. Realizing the mnemonic power of rituals, Karpf no longer places such import on material objects. What has been bequeathed to her and to her daughter is a way of life inspired by Jewish tradition and based in cultural memory. This is healthily intertwined with the surrounding culture. Her child is being brought up in a mixture of traditions, combining globalized popular culture with an 'osmosis through generations'. But more than that, Karpf turns this into memory work when she gives a 'regular push' to strengthen the family network of memory – even in the appreciation of cultural traits, such as traditional Eastern European Jewish music, which are connected to her family past.

For Helen Epstein, it is her mother's death that provokes her to become intensely and painfully aware of the absence of material objects and what they stand for: 'This dearth of a tangible past – people, objects, a physical context – with which I had grown up and to which I had become accustomed was made suddenly intolerable by my mother's death' (1997: 17). Having no tangible evidence of the family's former existence in Prague in their New York lives drives Epstein's exploration of her mother's past in *Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for Her Mother's History*. In a situation akin to that described by Karpf, Epstein's longing for the physical substance of a legacy is triggered by a change within the family structure. Her parents were survivors of the concentration camps, and the mother's passing means more than the loss of a loved one: with the death of the survivor generation, the last living



connection to the old home and family disappears. The missing objects thus act as reminders of the destruction experienced in this family, whereas a family heirloom could have served as a tangible reassurance of continuity at such a precarious time.

Epstein makes a wider case highlighting how migration in general, and forced migration in particular, limits or prevents the generational transmission of family possessions. But involuntary displacement has its own particular traits, for example, the 'annihilation of the past' (17), which is symbolized by the lack of remnants:

A person whose family has remained in place inherits possessions – a hat, a cupboard, old diaries, a prayer or recipe book – that transmits personal history from one generation to the next. The objects that would normally have been passed down to me – my grandmother's tea set, my mother's piano – had been confiscated and crammed into warehouses by the Nazis along with hundreds of thousands of pieces of property belonging to Czech Jews. (17)

In Epstein's work, physical absences are a frequent theme, and it characterizes the difficulties into which Second Generation memory work runs, which is due to the specifics of what Holocaust survivors experienced. In her family – and that of most children of European Jewry – the migrant situation is compounded by parents' incarceration in the camps as well as the Nazi-era appropriation of property. The wider historical frame of the continuing impact of 'Aryanization' also affects the following generations. Under normal circumstances, only luxury objects – jewelry, a watch, a piece of art – would generally be taken as 'heirlooms', but in the case of survivor families, in particular those who survived the camps, any object might be considered an heirloom. Epstein's excerpt suggests that for the children of survivors and their memory work, any object, even an old hat, can be a node of memory ascribed with immense value. For this child of survivors, even the most ordinary object, however trivial it may seem, carries familial history that can be handed on to the next generation.

During her search for other *Children of the Holocaust*, Epstein found that not only she herself but also others of the Second Generation tend to ascribe value to any object that has survived from the pre-Holocaust past – all of these are precious heirlooms. One example comes from Rochelle, the daughter of two survivors who made their new lives in Canada. The first wife of Rochelle's father and their two children had been killed during the Holocaust. The father never spoke about the

loss of his wife and children; in fact, he was so traumatized by it that he could not even acknowledge their existence to his post-Holocaust family.<sup>5</sup> However, some of this first wife's possessions now belong to Rochelle: 'I have two dresses that belonged to my father's first wife. I found them a few years after my mother told me and I was so excited I made my mother alter them for me. I wore each once. Now I keep them in my closet and look at them' (1988: 40). This shows a distinct difference between the ways in which the two survivors deal with the past: in both word and deed, the mother acted as a mediator between the father's silenced past. She is the one who satisfies Rochelle's desire to learn about her father by explaining what happened; indeed, the mother was even willing to alter the dead woman's dresses to fit her daughter's body.

The physical presence of the dresses in Rochelle's life comes up a second time in *Children of the Holocaust*: 'Much later Rochelle showed me the dresses, clean, freshly pressed, and clearly forty years old. They hung among her capes and shawls and blue jeans in the closet of her bedroom' (40). The reason why they stayed in the closet, only worn once, is not discussed. It could be out of respect for her mother, her father, the former owner of the dresses, or simply because they are 'clearly forty years old'. But given that they are freshly laundered and hang among Rochelle's everyday clothing, another reason suggests itself: the mnemonic value of these dresses that were worn by her father's murdered first wife is so high that they must be kept close and safe so that Rochelle can look at them often in an act of remembrance. Wearing them and thus treating them like any other article of clothing would make them lose some of their value as objects and tangible links to a usable past before the genocide. Memory work is strong and ongoing here: Rochelle lives with these dresses and speaks about them, even shows them to Epstein, another child of survivors.

Sonia Pilcer's *The Holocaust Kid*, a collection of linked short stories that is infused with autobiographical elements, features an American Second Generation protagonist – named Zosha by her parents, although she prefers to go by Zoe – who was born into a family with surviving possessions. They are ritual objects: a goblet and candlesticks. This means that they are not only frequently used but that their connective power exists both on a familial level and the larger collective level of the Jewish religion. This becomes evident in a scene in which the father recites the *kiddush* blessing over the wine to sanctify a holiday or the Shabbat:

My father raised an engraved silver goblet from his parents' home in Lodz. After the war, he had found it with a pair of carved silver

candlesticks, which his father had buried behind their apartment building. The goblet glittered in the chandelier lights as he began reciting the Hebrew prayer for the fruit of the vine, as his father had done before the war. 'Baruch atah...' (2001a: 166)

In Zosha's mind, the silver cup is intrinsically linked with its story. Her survivor father Heniek had unearthed the objects from their hiding place outside the Polish family home where his father had buried them before the Holocaust. Even though the goblet had been in the earth throughout the years Heniek was in the concentration camps, its beauty has not been tarnished, and 'the goblet glitter[s] in the chandelier lights'. In linking the *kiddush* wine cup and the Shabbat candlesticks with their story while they are being used, the pre- and post-Holocaust family are connected by family heirlooms and by tradition – every Shabbat and holiday, Heniek recites the blessing over wine and bread, 'as his father had done before the war'. This implies multiple survivals: of the parents, of the objects, and of Judaism, as these objects are linked to both family memory and cultural memory. Tilmann Habermas has suggested that ceremonial objects have as much inclusive power as rituals (184–85), and Pilcer invites her readers into this survival by including the first two words of all Hebrew blessings, 'Baruch atah ...' Those knowledgeable about Judaism can fill in the rest of the words, thus participating in both the protagonist's memory work and the restoration of tradition literally 'unearthed' after the Holocaust.

The inclusion of these family heirlooms in *The Holocaust Kid* occurs at a significant point in the family's life: Zosha-Zoe and her fiancé, Avi, the Israeli son of survivors, are about to announce their engagement and her pregnancy, events that will ensure the family's continuity. Echoing Karpf's longing for heirlooms to bequeath to her unborn child, Zosha is now consciously seeing the familial objects for the first time. Throughout the text, this Second Generation daughter has tried to free herself from the burden of her traumatic family legacy, but now she starts to consciously engage in memory work as she displays a new interest in the continuity linking past and future generations. This metaphorical continuance on existential and religious levels is enhanced by the backgrounds of the future parents: two members of the Second Generation, an Israeli and an American, are uniting their joint but disparate experiences of growing up in the Jewish state and in the diaspora. In the naming of their son, discussed in the 'Names' chapter of this volume, it becomes evident that after she becomes a mother, Zoe's memory work is even more pronounced and becomes a reassuring daily practice rather than an imposed, painful burden.

## Family possessions in the Second Generation

One motif in Second Generation memory work on objects as memory nodes is the moment of coming into possession of a family heirloom. Here, continuity and connectivity – or their lack – is emphasized. In light of the significance of these objects, the points of transmission tend to be highly emotive, especially when they occur unexpectedly. The implication of such moments is that by touching a family heirloom, the sense of belonging to a familial line becomes tangible: the recipient is given a usable past while becoming part of a chain of generations despite the Holocaust. This is indeed a point of contact and transmission in the sense of Hirsch and Spitzer, and a concentration of memory work.

Fern Schumer Chapman's *Motherland: Beyond the Holocaust: A Mother-Daughter Journey to Reclaim the Past* is a family memoir that revolves around a 'return' trip that the American-born Fern and her mother, Edith Chapman née Westerfeld, undertook together to Stockstadt, a small German town on the Rhine. In the Second Generation corpus, family places and the parents' former homelands are prominent nodes of memory.<sup>6</sup> Migrants tend to construct memory narratives of home, the place they left or were forced to leave. Holocaust survivors' narratives are also enriched with the local color of former house, town, and country. Both despite and because of the destruction caused by Nazi Germany and her allies, and because of the prevalence of narratives of past homes also in survivor families, the locales of family life in Europe are significant for both those who lived there and those born after the war from these natural and social landscapes. This significance is why I conceive of such journeys as 'returns', but as with all journeys to places of familial rather than personal origin, they are not actual returns as the visitors are for those who left or were forced from their homelands. For Second Generation authors, they are a part of memory work, as in this instance postmemory and an imaginary version of homeland and the sites of persecution are replaced by impressions of what Poland or Ukraine look like today, and where concentration camps have become memorials rather than a haunting presence. Most of these travelogues include both visits to former ghettos and concentration camps and, in the search for a usable past, to the towns, villages, and houses of their pre-Holocaust families.

Chapman's unexpected encounter with family heirlooms is a secondary theme of the overarching treasure hunt for family memories in her mother's homeland. In the liminal space of the airplane, Chapman uses imagery from the cultural archive unrelated to the Holocaust to describe her mission: 'Like an explorer rummaging through the *Titanic's*

wreckage, I'm looking for clues to who was on board, who they were, how they lived and died' (2000: 4). One element of this exploratory journey is the question of whether she will find any trace of the former life of her family in Germany: 'Will there be any physical evidence of my mother's past?' (4). In 1938, Edith and her older sister, Betty, were sent to the United States. The rest of the family, who stayed behind, perished in the camps. The two girls were saved as part of the little-known US rescue effort 'One Thousand Children Project', which, much like the *Kindertransporte* to the British Isles (although smaller in scale), allowed children unaccompanied by their parents to leave Nazi Germany and officially enter the United States, whereas the official immigration policy was otherwise restrictive.<sup>7</sup>

Edith, the child refugee, then 12 years old, brought a few possessions with her, but they did not become a functional part of her American life in which she later married a non-Jewish American. Indeed, she kept these objects hidden, even from her family, along with the story of her past that she never spoke about. Her daughter, however, knew about her secret trove: 'those few things she chose to save, the only physical evidence of her past, she kept in a tattered envelope, safely tucked away on a shelf in her closet. She never told me, but somehow I knew that it contained all that was left of her former life' (8). As a child, Chapman secretly went through the few letters, photographs, and pieces of jewelry, always aware that these objects symbolized a taboo area of her mother's life that she was not even supposed to know about. The two women never explicitly speak about the reasons for this silence, but *Motherland* implies that the secrecy and lack of words is related to Edith's losing her entire life and family as a child and never managing to verbalize this experience as an adult.

After the birth of Chapman's first child, her mother gave her a ring from the envelope, and even then, as a grown woman, Chapman kept up the pretense that she did not know about the physical remnants of her mother's destroyed past. The timing – the birth of a new generation – and its associations with continuity mirror other narrative integrations of family heirlooms and memory. In Chapman's case, however, the object came with family history attached and at the initiative of the survivor:

At that time, she said the ring belonged to her mother, who had sewn it into the hem of my mother's dress before she left Germany. (The Nazis confiscated all jewelry at customs, allowing Jewish refugees to leave with only 10 marks or \$2.50.) On the day my son was born, I slipped it on my right ring finger, and I haven't taken it off since then. (8)

For Edith, the birth of her first grandchild is a moment that connects back to a longer family history, prompting her to speak about her past, and Chapman adds an explanatory note for her readers. Furthermore, and probably unbeknownst to her, by putting the ring on her right ring finger – the finger on which Germans traditionally wear their wedding bands – Chapman is reenacting an element of German culture, possibly one that her ancestors had similarly upheld. In a way, by putting the ring on this finger, she has symbolically wedded herself to the family by becoming the next generation to own her grandmother's ring and its story.

During their trip to Germany, the mother and daughter meet Mina, the former maid of the Westerfeld family. Mina, now an elderly woman, dedicated her life to the memory of her Jewish employers, who had been like family to her. Because of her service, her continuing loyalty to the Westerfelds even during the Nazi period, and her outspokenness about the 'Third Reich', her community had ostracized her – not only during the war but also in the postwar period. Traumatized by this treatment at the hands of a society that initially tried to suppress its murderous history, Mina is still stuck in the past, unable to escape her troubling memories, even in 1990. When the women meet, the German adds another layer of knowledge to the ring now worn by Chapman: "*Das ist nicht der Ring deiner Grossmutter*. That's not your grandmother's ring", she says firmly, a little annoyed that I have the wrong information. "That belonged to your great-grandmother, Oma Sara". She turns over my hand, examines the band, and adds, "And you had it made smaller" (118). With this comment by a historical witness and adopted member of the Westerfeld family, the ring's story is extended by another generation. Chapman eagerly soaks up the facts as another link is added to the network of family memory. Edith was too young at the time she was sent to the United States to remember the exact details of this family heirloom, but for Mina, it is essential that Chapman knows the right story. The scene shows how invested the German woman is in her mission to remember things accurately, and it also indicates that she has appointed herself the custodian of the Westerfeld family memory. She might not be a family member biologically, but that has little significance: she became part of the Westerfeld family at a young age, misses them like a daughter, and their suffering and her own share common causes and perpetrators. This position and her memories, which are so much closer to the surface than Edith's, make Mina a central protagonist and informer in Chapman's memory work process.

Not only knowledge but also possessions change hands when Mina gives a doll-sized tea set to the pregnant Chapman for her unborn daughter. In a reversal of history, a Westerfeld heirloom is thus restored. Chapman's grandmother had given the set to Mina the last time they met. The objects come with stories about them. One of them is the memory of Mina, Edith, and Betty suddenly being allowed to play with the precious objects when the girls' departure to the United States was imminent. Mina is trying to jog Edith's memory, but Chapman, having grown up with a mother who never spoke about her past, doubts Edith's ability to remember these moments: 'My mother picks up the creamer, fingering this archaeological treasure that I suspect she barely remembers' (138). The daughter is correct – even when Mina arranges the tea set in a way that suggests their former games, Edith does not react. The loss of her family at such a young age seems to have overshadowed the more positive elements of her past.

Mina then tells Chapman how the tea set came to be in her possession:

'The last time I saw Frau Westerfeld', Mina continues, 'she was thinking she must sell the tea set to get some money to buy food. But instead she looked at me and said, *'Willst du sie haben? Maybe you would like these?'* Mina carefully places its chipped lid on the tiny teapot and turns to me. *'Willst du sie haben? Maybe you would like these?'* she asks gently. (138)

With this story, the Holocaust past shines through the objects; as readers, we understand that Mina was given the tea set when Edith's mother was about to be deported and murdered. In this postwar moment, Mina not only returns the heirloom to its rightful owners but also repeats the exact German wording 'Frau Westerfeld' had used, thus 'gently' reenacting the long-ago conversation between Chapman's grandmother and herself. The tenuousness of this continuity is emphasized by the need for translation: Chapman does not speak German. Much like every other connection with her German past, Edith also did not introduce her mother tongue – which she stopped using at age 12 – into her new family. What Chapman understands, however, without any need for it to be said, is that the heirlooms come with an obligation of continuance, even for her unborn child. Here, memory is an ethical commitment: 'When Mina opens her eyes she adds, "Be sure to tell her that the tea set is a heirloom. Tell her it comes from her great-grandmother"' (139). Edith, the traumatized child survivor, is a blank element in the

story. Not saying a word, she is an onlooker rather than a participant in the transfer of family heirlooms and memories.

Like Mina, Hans, a Stockstadt resident and a former classmate of Edith's, is a curator of the past and a safekeeper of memories in his community. However, his social position is different from Mina's. He acts from within the postwar German society in an attempt to alleviate some of the historical suffering – suffering such as that imposed on the Westerfelds, but also that which Germany has brought upon herself. In his efforts, he whitewashes parts of the past. At least, that is how Chapman, from her Second Generation perspective, interprets it. When the three women visit the museum of local history that Hans has established and where he acts as their self-appointed guide, Edith sees objects that could have belonged to her family. Hans tries to steer them away, Chapman insists on learning more, and Edith is torn between recognition and refusal to acknowledge a potentially agonizing truth. Throughout the scene, the Second Generation daughter reads everything she sees through the lens of memory work, assuming that the objects displayed, such as kitchen utensils and a school satchel, were stolen from the Westerfeld house when the residents were deported. This is indeed plausible, but she gets no verification from her mother: 'Her casual phrasing in no way addresses the feelings here, hers and mine. I suspect it is a way of distancing herself from a reality that is too chilling to capture in conversation' (49).

Edith cannot confirm whether the objects once belonged to the Westerfeld family, which Chapman reads as a defense mechanism; however, these potential family heirlooms turned museum artifacts prompt the survivor to connect to memories of her family. The encounter with these objects and the stories they entail are emotional for everyone involved, including the two Germans, who have their own issues to confront. Edith is encouraged to remember and tell stories of the past, but she refuses to delve too deeply into her history – the objects, as the signifiers of death, potentially touch on traumatic memories (as discussed above with respect to Max and Kirschner). For her daughter, the issues at stake are more black and white questions of right and wrong, but she acknowledges the challenges that the German perpetrators and their Second Generation must have faced.

Most significantly, this is the moment in which Chapman is introduced to a family narrative that had previously been unknown to her – her mother rarely mentioned her childhood when Chapman was growing up. Edith had consciously distanced herself from her German past. Not only did she marry an American rather than a fellow refugee but she also did not want to be taken as a migrant. She worked hard to



speak English with only the slightest accent, always trying ‘to rub out the “v”, the last vestige of her German accent. It was her stain’ (xi). The encounter with family possessions and the stories associated with them make the past more personal and appealing for Chapman and facilitate a connection to knowledge that was previously impeded by her mother’s silence and resistance to acknowledge her past in her present.

Context, both familial and national, cannot be disregarded when considering the meanings with which family possessions are imbued. For Chapman, these objects are linked to questions of family silences and continuity, but they also mediate a direct encounter with cultural contexts. Edith, the child survivor, tried to escape being a cultural Other even though she barely knew anything about her origins, whereas Robin Hirsch’s parents were adults and fully immersed in German culture when they fled to London in 1938. For Chapman, Germany was a foreign country of perpetrators before her visit, but for Hirsch, who grew up in postwar Britain in an atmosphere of strong anti-German sentiment, the country held another meaning altogether, influenced by both familial and national context. Unlike Chapman’s mother, who lost her cultural framework at a young age, his parents never assimilated, continued to speak German, and perpetuated a German-Jewish legacy with which Hirsch struggled, at least at a time when he was not yet voluntarily engaging in memory work. Language is one way in which Hirsch illustrates the chasm between his urge to fit in and having parents who are evidently a cultural Other in a then monocultural society that was only recently at war with Germany. The Hirsch family was unusual in the United Kingdom of the 1940s and 1950s, not just as refugees and German Jews but also as a multilingual family. Throughout his memoir, *The Last Dance at Hotel Kempinski: Creating a Life in the Shadow of History*, as well as in his performance art, Hirsch repeatedly introduces the survivor generations’ native German in his English language text, a narrative device illustrating the complicated split between home and national context without having to discuss it explicitly every time: the readers themselves are introduced to the diglossic situation that causes distanciation through a break in the narrative.

Hirsch describes how as a young adult, he went hitchhiking through Europe. When he visited his uncle, a survivor of the camps living in Belgium, he was given a present that put a symbolic end to his journey:

He also insisted that I take with me an old leather suitcase, a family heirloom. On it in black were embossed the letters M.H. ‘It belonged to my father, your father’s father. It survived two wars. It will serve

you in good stead. Is that right?' 'Stead'. '*Ach, ja, natürlich* stead'. My hitchhiking days were now indeed over, for with this heavy old piece of equipment and my rucksack I could hardly stand in the street and expect to be picked up. The essence of this kind of travel is to be light on one's feet and my uncle had seen to it that I was now weighed down. I suspect that it was not entirely without premeditation. (1995: 127)

Hirsch's complex reaction to the gift illustrates the many layers of mnemonic links converging in this object of the past, which are all connected to the family's displacement. The diglossia is an immediate reminder: the uncle's English is not fluent, and he falls back on his native German when corrected by the bilingual Hirsch. The linguistic situation links the material legacy with the difficult historical legacy that is as much of a burden as is the grandfather's heavy suitcase. In the description, Hirsch gives a sense of imposed remembrance rather than intentional memory work. Only later, when he composes his memoir, does it become clear that he is now interested in finding a usable past. But at the narrated time, the suitcase is a 'heavy old piece of equipment', and its physical weight seems to be augmented by his family's desire that he stop his gallivanting around Europe. More importantly, it is a family heirloom that comes with metaphorical baggage.

The suitcase, the object most commonly used to signify a history of migration, recalls the Hirsch family history: World War I when it served Hirsch's grandfather; the uncle who did not get out of Germany in time and consequently had to endure the camps; and ultimately also his parents' escape from Nazi Germany, which was followed by the challenges of being German Jews in war-time London. In the years 1933–45, only about 80,000 Jews (mainly of German, Austrian, and Czech origin) found refuge in the United Kingdom. When the war broke out, many were interned as 'enemy aliens' because of their German or Austrian lineage, despite the fact that they were Jewish refugees (Brook 1989: 31ff). After the war, due in particular to the worsening of the crisis in Palestine and British efforts to keep Jews out of the Mandate area, the immigration of Displaced Persons into the United Kingdom was made almost impossible. Despite international schemes to help survivors, only about 3,000 Holocaust survivors ultimately entered the country (Wasserstein 1996: 33). The social impact of these political facts, the sense of being unwanted, and the need to keep his German-Jewish legacy well hidden are prominent in Hirsch's memoir. Similar struggles with Britain as a country not too welcoming to Jews can also be found in other Second

Generation works, for instance, Anne Karpf's *The War After: Living with the Holocaust* and Victor Jeleniewski Seidler's *Shadows of the Shoah: Jewish Identity and Belonging*.

There is another contextual explanation for why objects are imbued with less mnemonic value for Hirsch than for other Second Generation authors such as Helen Epstein and Anne Karpf, both daughters of Holocaust survivors. Born to refugees who fled Germany after *Kristallnacht*, the pogrom of November 1938, he grew up surrounded by family possessions. Here, the difference in the possibilities for memory work between the children of camp survivors and the children of refugees becomes prominent. An illustration of the opposite case, in which family objects are ascribed so much mnemonic value that a whole fantasy of recovery is staged, can be found in the work of Lily Brett, one of Australia's preeminent Jewish authors, who was born in 1946 in a Bavarian Displaced Persons camp. Her parents, Max and Rose (Rooshka), both originally from Lodz, survived the Lodz Ghetto and Auschwitz and found each other again after liberation. In 1948, the family immigrated to Australia. Brett grew up in North Carlton, a Melbourne neighborhood populated mostly by European immigrants, among them many Holocaust survivors. It is commonly maintained that the Australian survivor experience was generally positive and that most of these 'New Australians' wholeheartedly embraced their adopted homeland. The literary scholar Richard Freedman, for example, argues that in Australia, Holocaust survivors did not suffer much from the 'migrant condition' (2007: 44), and Brett's survivors mostly reflect that claim. Brett now lives in New York with her family. Based in part on her experiences as the daughter of camp survivors who grew up without any tangible evidence of her parents' pre-Holocaust past, Brett develops an elaborate fictional scenario of a Second Generation daughter uncovering a treasure trove of family heirlooms in her novel *Too Many Men* (2002). Brett's award-winning oeuvre, which comprises poetry, autobiographical essays, and fiction, much of it thinly disguised autobiographical content, revolves around the experience of being born into a survivor-migrant family that lived in a community of other survivors.

One of the ways in which Brett works out the split between past and present is through her complex relationship with her parents' home country. 'Return' journeys to Poland are a prominent element of her memory work. In particular, the collection of essays *Between Mexico and Poland* (2003) scrutinizes the hold that Poland exerts over her and the sense of loss that she connects with it. Her description of several journeys emphasizes the urgency of these questions. On Brett's first trip in

the early 1980s, she visited the house that her father's family used to own in Lodz. In an interview, she stated, 'for the first time I saw concrete evidence of my parents' past. It was more momentous for me than even having my children' (Murdoch 1986: 9). Brett had always experienced her parents as 'dislocated and damaged' (Giles 1994: 14), and only when she entered that courtyard and walked in her mother's steps did she feel that she could 'place her' (10). When in the process of memory work rather than in a state of postmemory, space gave her a way of undoing some of the haunting of the past. But more so, when Brett sees the other place in which they had lived she highlights the double challenge of her parents' lives: they are both survivors and migrants.

In *Too Many Men*, Ruth Rothwax, a New York-based Australian like Brett, is on her third trip to Poland, and this time her father Edek accompanies her. During this journey, the Auschwitz survivor is trying to cope with his own past while ensuring that his daughter – who is prone to neurotic behavior, especially when it comes to her parents' past – does not succumb to the vortex of history. Readers familiar with Brett's work will recognize the protagonists from her other books. Edek, for example, is the same Edek who makes an appearance in Brett's other novels. He echoes her father, Max, linguistically and in his behavior, and the protagonist is only a thinly veiled alter ego of the author herself.

An important subplot of this father-daughter trip to a lost home country turns out to be the quest for family heirlooms. Heirlooms had never existed in the Rothwax family: 'She had grown up poor. She had grown up knowing that there were no family heirlooms. No legacies. No bequests or requests' (2002: 200). Before the war, Edek's family had been fairly well-off, owning an apartment building in Lodz, a fictionalization of the family home Brett had visited. Neither Ruth nor her father had been aware of the existence of family possessions before their trip, but they discover objects when they visit what used to be Edek's childhood home.

The storyline is developed over three increasingly emotional and harrowing visits to the apartment, now inhabited by an elderly Polish couple who remain nameless, identified only by their nationality, but described as vile and anti-Semitic. *Too Many Men* has been criticized for its one-sided treatment of Poles and its anti-Polish sentiment, mainly because of the scenes discussed here.<sup>8</sup> Brett is indeed playing with anti-Polish clichés in her generalizations and use of stereotypes. In *Between Mexico and Poland*, she explains her reservations about even contemporary Poland. Most notably, she perceives a Polish unwillingness to deal with the past, epitomized by the troubled public discussions about the

perpetrators of the 1941 Jedwabne massacre, in which German occupying forces and the Polish inhabitants of the town killed over 340 Jews. Brett also states that she experienced 'anti-Semitism that survived despite the absence of Jews' (2003: 388) on her trips.

The scenes in *Too Many Men* describe gradually growing greed, anti-Semitic insinuations, and attempted humiliation on the part of the Poles that spark outrage in Ruth and fear in her father. During their initial visit, the couple flaunts objects that had formerly been owned by the Rothwax family (2002: 159–64). The first thing Edek recognizes is the couch they sit on, which brings him (and subsequently, his daughter) to tears. Ruth, driven by a need to learn more about what transpired in 1940, wants her father to ask – she herself does not speak any Polish, only some Yiddish, a common feature of their Australian migrant community – what had happened to all the belonging that were in this and the other apartments in the house. Edek tells her, 'It is not necessary to ask this' (163), but she insists, not wanting to hear what her father is implying. The Poles, who must have moved into the apartment right after Edek's family was forced into the ghetto, claim that they found the place empty, even though visible evidence of Rothwax family life abounds. To Ruth, these objects – the couch, a cup, and other small things – are instantly endowed with an almost magical appeal. After all, they are the physical evidence of a usable past.

Driven by an urge to go further in this promising instance of memory work, Ruth insists on finding out more about the objects, and during a second visit to the apartment, a generational difference between survivor and Second Generation in the meaning ascribed to the familial objects becomes increasingly evident (187–97). Edek begins to recognize his family's belongings all over the apartment, but tries not to acknowledge that to the Poles. His daughter, in contrast, immediately yearns to take the silver bowl he identified away with her: "I'd really like to buy it", Ruth said. "What for?" said Edek. "I'd just like to keep it with me", Ruth said. "To hold it and look at it". "It is not a person", Edek said. "It is just a dish" (191). Through vision and touch, Ruth wants to integrate herself into the family that used to live in this apartment and thus counter the absence that had shaped her youth. For her, born after their lives were violently cut short, the former family possessions carry a trace of their former owners; they signify a usable past. For Edek, however, the objects do not represent a way back. On the contrary, to him they are reminders of the traumatic loss of his family. The emotive power of these objects – for example, the family's china set, of which more and more appears on the scene – is immense. The survivor once again breaks down in

tears, whereas his daughter is increasingly obsessed with the thought of owning the family possessions. Again, the difference between the experiential generation and the generation of memory work is evident: for the father, these possessions mean little, but for his Second Generation daughter, every single object is a treasure and a link with family. At the beginning of this second encounter with the Polish couple, Ruth is still hopeful that they might offer her information or even some family possessions. It does not occur to her that they are showing these objects as an enticement so that the living Rothwaxes will buy back the family possessions.

In the end, it becomes clear that Ruth's lost legacy has been turned into a commodity. This triggers a fight between her and Edek, who refuses to buy anything and will never go back. But for Ruth, the pull of the objects is irresistible, no matter what her father feels or says:

Ruth thought about her grandmother's china again. The teapot and sugar bowl and milk jug. She had never thought of herself as having a grandmother. It was strange to think of her grandmother's china. The fact that there was also a matching plate suggested that it must have been part of a dinner service. It must have been a stunning dinner set. The china was very fine and the gold fluting around the edge of the plate was unusual enough to have made it an idiosyncratic choice of tableware. (200)

Only when Ruth learns about these objects does she suddenly comes to think of her grandmother as a person who once lived. Indeed, they are what Tilmann Habermas calls a stand-in for an absent third. This is an astonishing achievement of memory work – her grandmother is moved from the sphere of murdered victims into the sphere of people who once lived. By way of the objects, Ruth even manages to learn something about this grandmother's life, and, moreover, she realizes that she has a connection with this woman who owned china with gold fluting. Ruth herself suddenly becomes a granddaughter:

Ruth didn't know what to do. She didn't want to upset Edek by suggesting that they return to Kamedulska Street. Yet she wanted the china and the silver bowl. She wanted them badly. She wanted to touch them. To hug them. To hold them to her. She knew they were only inert objects, but they had been held and touched by all the people that she would never be able to hold and touch. They had been touched by her grandmother and her grandfather. They had

been held by cousins and uncles and aunties. She wanted to hold and touch them, too. (201)

The intensity of Ruth's feelings drives this interior monologue, and repetition, of both words and phrases, is a narrative device Brett frequently uses to portray strong emotions. For her protagonist, these family heirlooms are a proxy for relatives she never knew, and she wants the objects so that she can touch what family members killed before her birth had once touched. The insistence on physical touch exemplifies the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's argument that to touch is also to be touched, that if someone's hand 'takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them' (1986: 133). Touching, even if just an object that was once touched, creates continuity. Even though Ruth is aware of the soulless materiality of these objects, she consciously considers them authentic carriers of the past, physically imprinted by former lives. Although she does not personify the objects, her emotions in relation to them and her desire to 'hug' and 'hold' them far exceed the feelings that china usually elicits. In imagining herself touching the objects, Ruth creates an image of herself as a part of a large family with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. The tenderness she feels toward these lost family members shines through in her use of the diminutive 'aunties'.

In the most excruciating object-related scene of *Too Many Men* (Brett 2002: 274–88), Ruth visits the apartment a third and final time, now without her father but accompanied by a translator, and ends up desperately bartering for what should rightfully have been her inheritance. From the beginning, she was scared and distrustful of the Poles, and she ultimately discovers that they are even worse than she thought. As it turns out, the couple had expected all along – ever since they had taken over the apartment and all of its contents – that the descendants of the former owners would come back one day, looking for evidence of and links to the past, and that they would be willing to pay for these objects.

During this visit, Ruth finally understands that a trap had been set for her when she first came to Poland: 'She remembered, vaguely, that the old man had offered her a cup of tea, all those years ago. Had he brought out the tea service then? He must have. But it had been no use. She hadn't known what she was looking at' (283). Like Brett herself, Ruth had visited Poland and her lost family home in the 1980s. Back then, the bait had not worked. Entirely disconnected, Ruth had not recognized that teacup as her grandmother's: she needed Edek as a mediator.

The change in Ruth's perception can be explained in part by Bill Brown's differentiation between things and objects. Brown argues that things exist for us only for their practical value. Objects, in contrast, are ascribed with meaning and history by their owners. The thing-state of an object adds temporality: 'Temporalized as the before and after of the object, thingness amounts to a latency (the not yet formed or the not yet formable) and to an excess (what remains physically or metaphysically irreducible to objects)' (2001: 5). In Ruth's case, the teacup was just a thing and not an object for memory work. It had to be identified by her father to become a valuable object with a before and an after – that is, he had to verify its status as a node of memory linking the pre-Holocaust past to her current life. The mnemonic promise of the material is always potentially endangered by its inherent silence. Things function in the realm of obscurity, and in the case of the survivor family, the Second Generation's disconnect from the past is so absolute that recognition can only be mediated by someone who is knowledgeable about the past. The urge to perform memory work is not enough. We can only uncover what we know is connected to our past.

In the subsequent haggling scene, at first Ruth seems to have the upper hand, but she is flooded by emotions and gives in when the man shows her the true extent of the Rothwax family china in his possession. Ruth cannot resist the pull that the physical remnants of her lost family exert on her: 'This was the closest she had ever come to having something tangible from the past. The past that had destroyed not only those who were murdered, but those who were left alive. The proximity to any part of that past was an enormous incentive, Ruth thought' (284). The need for tangible family remnants overwhelms the Second Generation protagonist. The negative impact of the Holocaust is part of her life experience, and suddenly, having elements of a usable rather than destructive past is in reach.

When Ruth runs out of cash and wants to leave, the old man presents her with her grandfather's overcoat. Seeing a piece of clothing that once warmed her grandfather's body, even an anti-Semitic slur cannot deter her: "'Jews always have a little something put away'" the old man said' (284). The initials I.R. stitched into the coat's lining cause her to burst into tears, and she loses all control when she sees the full name embroidered on the coat: 'Did this coat belong to Israel Rothwax, her father's father, her grandfather? [...] At the back of the collar, embroidered again, in dark grey, was the name Rothwax. The embroidered letters looked almost human, almost alive, to Ruth' (285). At this point, even the material shape of the letters forming the name Rothwax seems full



of life to Ruth. This mirrors the kabbalistic belief that the letters of the Hebrew alphabet carry power in their written form. The name 'Israel Rothwax' was not embroidered in Hebrew, but to his granddaughter, his very being is contained in the letters of his name. Ruth herself is a Rothwax, even though she is twice divorced, and now she discovers her own name on a piece of clothing that had been her grandfather's. Through the repetitive phrasing 'Israel Rothwax, her father's father, her grandfather', she becomes part of the family: he is not just Israel Rothwax, or her father's father, but also her grandfather.

By way of the objects, she links herself to a family continuity that extends beyond just her parents, and she wants to determine their story. Since she cannot uncover their prehistory, she explores the material state of the coat:

She could tell so much about Israel Rothwax and his wife Luba from this coat. She could see how big he was, and she could see in what beautiful condition Luba maintained his clothes. Not one part of the lining was marked or torn. Maybe tidiness and order were inherited traits. She kept her most formal clothes in plastic bags in her cupboard. If something tore, she had it mended. She cleaned every item right after it was worn. Maybe that was a Rothwax quality. A thrill ran through her. The thrill of being able to link herself to a family. To be part of somebody else. She had only ever been part of Rooshka and Edek. (295–96)

The materiality allows Ruth to deduce information about her family, connecting her to her ancestors with unprecedented intimacy. She can tell her grandfather's size and her grandmother's qualities as a caretaker of her husband. As the protagonist contemplates what she can learn from the state of the coat, it becomes clear that here, the main objective of memory work is the attempt to find similarities – that is, explicit relational links between the former owners, her grandparents, and herself – and to reveal another form of continuity through the idea of family characteristics, even if it is the trait of being tidy.

For Ruth, all the objects are 'discoveries unearthed after decades. As important to her as archaeological relics uncovered by archaeologists' (295). The metaphor of archaeology imparts a sense of what Ruth is experiencing, the recovery of a world that was destroyed, of which no evidence had previously existed. The family heirlooms allow her to feel connected to her ancestors beyond postmemory in a way she had never experienced. Seeing the physical evidence of people who were

only shadows and absences in the family narrative makes their former existence real. Through objects as nodes, memory work, and emotional investment Ruth becomes 'part of somebody else' as much as their existence is restored in her mind, and by way of the text, in cultural memory: those we think of as victims were people with everyday concerns before they were killed.

Ultimately, Ruth ends up spending a great deal of money to acquire the family possessions that hold so much mnemonic value for her. Protectively, she takes everything away from the Polish profiteers of her family's suffering. While this on the one hand continues the anti-Polish theme, it on the other hand also reinforces the stereotype of the rich Jew. This is presumably not the intended effect of the scene, but the portrayal of memory work as inevitable brings this disturbing moment with it. Moreover, the objects in this novel are not ritual objects or items of negligible economic value. Although old, they are luxury objects: a couch, a silver bowl, fine china, and a fur coat. These are the remnants of a prewar Polish Jewish life that was bourgeois. That these remainders of a destroyed culture are not connected to the poverty-stricken, Orthodox *shtetl* Jewry – often how pre-Holocaust Jewish life is imagined in public discourse – is another reminder of the autobiographical foundations of Brett's writing and memory work. The Brett family in Lodz had a similar middle-class status to that of the fictional Rothwax family, and would presumably have owned gold-fluted china and suchlike.

That Ruth finds no ritual objects mirrors her relationship to the Jewish faith. She is not portrayed as having a religious side anywhere in the novel. Once again, this correlates with Brett, who, in *Between Mexico and Poland*, describes her Jewish self-identification as only about the Holocaust: 'I am so un-Jewish. [...] I know virtually nothing about Judaism. I go to synagogue only when I'm in Poland. I know about death-camps and cemeteries. I know about murder and mayhem' (2003: 387). Engaging in memory work is far more natural to her than engaging in religious practice.

The objects in *Too Many Men* appear one final time after Ruth returns to the hotel, where she excitedly shares her experiences and her booty with her father. Edek cannot understand Ruth's joy about her find, but neither can she understand him: "Does it make you feel sad?" she said. "No", he said. "How can some pieces of china make me feel sad? The sad thing did already happen, and not to this china'" (2002: 295). Edek's idiosyncratic manner of speaking is another constant in Brett's writing and another way in which she shows how the survivor is marked by the past: he is a migrant, but more specifically, one can even hear the Yiddish

sentence structure shine through his English. But this signifier of the migrant and his simple words make his loss even more pronounced.

The linguistic disparity between father and daughter, as much as the content of this final conversation about objects, highlights once again the dissimilarity in the meanings the two generations attribute to family possessions of pre-Holocaust life. Second Generation Ruth, in fluent English, can only emotionally connect to her lost family when her memory work brings tangible results, whereas Poland-born Edek was there, lived through the past, and does not need any tangible bridge to connect to his own past and lost family. In her essayistic writings, Brett does not discuss family heirlooms, and the elaborate fictional scene created in *Too Many Men* reads like a fantasy of recovery. Here, the meaning of the objects surpasses any economic or even mnemonic value. They become the imaginary entrance point into a family genealogy. Objects represent a true node of interconnected family memory, but ultimately, Brett presents the fantasy as just a fantasy: Edek's voice is a reminder that these objects also signify the loss of family. For him, their memory links are very different.

## Holocaust mementos

Some Holocaust survivors keep objects from the period of persecution. For outsiders, it may be difficult to understand why a victim would keep evidence of that time; however, when interpreted as a reminder of survival or resistance, the meaning of such objects is entirely different. An example of this kind of positive reframing are survivors who don striped camp uniforms or caps at commemorative events at their former sites of incarceration. In the context of Second Generation memory work, the cultural memory of the Holocaust can become a stand-in for the parents' untold stories. Certain narratives and images like the yellow star have collective mnemonic power and are used by the children of survivors to fill in the 'absent memory' of their parents' survival. When Holocaust memorabilia exists in family life, however, they can transmit the experience tangibly to the post-Holocaust family. The questions that guide this analysis are whether, and if so how, the authors interpret these objects: are they also family heirlooms and potential links in family memory?

Lev Raphael's familial situation – growing up without any objects from the family's European life – was discussed above. However, Holocaust mementos exist: 'My mother had survived. She had a striped concentration camp dress. She had a wooden ring with a number on it, but I

didn't know where she had worn it either. She never told me. She told me too much/too little' (2006: 64). In this passage, the two objects of camp life act as symbols of what has been called the 'unspeakable' in the Holocaust experience. The striped dress and the numbered ring are silent presences in this post-Holocaust family, actualizing what cannot be understood and what is never explained. The silences surrounding them are multiple: the story of the objects stays untold, and it is never explained why his mother kept them. Raphael thus creates an image of the paradoxical situation in which he grew up: completely alien Holocaust memorabilia exist in this family's life, implying the proximity of the traumatic past, but at the same time the generational distance is represented in the simultaneous lack and overpowering presence of the unspoken stories. For the reader, this is mirrored in the structure of the sentence 'She told me too much/too little'. These objects and Raphael's portrayal of them are a striking illustration of postmemory in its most conservative familial conceptualization, in which proximity and distance blend into one.

Raphael simply states the fact of the objects' existence. In a way, this echoes his mother's silence. What we find here is that, confronted with these Holocaust mementos, which are not only silenced but also are not signifiers for a usable past, the impulse of Second Generation memory work stagnates. The objects' inclusion in the text is not explained, emphasizing that Raphael is not in a position to explore or explain elements of the Holocaust experience: these are not links into the past that can be traversed through memory work. This resembles the situations described by Max and Kirschner, who report their mothers' encounters with objects as symbols of traumatic loss without any commentary. Both cases indicate that memory work is not the same active force when it comes to the parents' experiences during the Holocaust.

The Australian Second Generation linguist Ruth Wajnryb was born in Sydney in 1948 to Polish Jewish parents who had survived the camps and found each other again after liberation. *The Silence: How Tragedy Shapes Talk* is both an academic study of the impact of trauma on Holocaust family communication and a text of life writing, in the sense that she uses examples from her own family and others of her cohort to illustrate her research. Wajnryb describes that, whenever she was visually 'confronted with the savagery of Holocaust events' (2001: 2), in a photograph or a documentary, she was overcome with shock and disgust, but would still almost instinctually superimpose her parents' faces on the products of cultural memory. But, as it turns out, cultural memory acts as a distancing mechanism rather than an answer. When

she finds mementos of her mother's survival, this superimposing of narratives ends, and she is struck by the need for an explanation:

Actual memorabilia make it worse, of course. When I was cleaning out my mother's things after she died, I found a faded, torn ID pass in the name of 'Helena Smarska'. It was issued on 7 December 1944 in the Polish city of Lublin. The photo is of my mother in Polish military uniform, and the signature is in her handwriting, though it is not her name. The signature and photo have an official stamp in which the only word I can make out is Lublin. I assume these are the false papers which she carried in the last year of the war to prove she wasn't a Jew. I stare at the photo, knowing the immensity of narrative that lies within it, and knowing I will never know. (2)

The ID pass is described in neutral terms: it is 'faded' and 'torn', the image is her mother's and so is the signature, even though it is not her mother's name. This object of family memory is not remediated in the text, and as readers, we are not given any certainties either.

What Wajnryb is holding dates back to the time of persecution and survival, but it generates no more than a cautious curiosity about its origins. She only 'assumes' that these were her mother's false papers when she was masquerading as a Christian Pole in 1944 – a careful phrasing of the obvious. The object does not provide answers; rather, it only creates more questions for Wajnryb as she recognizes 'the immensity of narrative that lies within it'. For her, the ID only suggests a possible narrative, while reinforcing the sense of loss at her mother's death. The description is lacking any emotions, as if she cannot engage in memory work with this object or she is steeling herself for having to live with the fact that it is not possible to learn more here.

For both Raphael and Wajnryb, the Holocaust objects without a story inhibit the urge to explore them, the opposite of the effect of objects from the pre-Holocaust past. Any impulse to imaginatively create a story is similarly thwarted: the children of the survivors cannot imagine what happened during the persecution. Overall, in the writings of the Second Generation, fictionalizing the world of the camps is taboo, as is putting the experience into words other than those of the survivor. The same goes for memory work. It cannot operate when it comes to directly Holocaust-related matters. As seen with the lack of response to parental descriptions of objects as the signifiers of death, the existence of Holocaust memorabilia is documented – after all, it is a part of family

life, much like the traumatic past itself – without Second Generation commentary.

This changes when Holocaust objects are given an explanation, that is, when a story provides a stable link to the past, and the objects are not purely signifiers of traumatic loss. Especially when positively reframed, as symbols of hope or resistance rather than persecution, they can provide a more positive connection. Kathy Kacer keeps such a Holocaust memento in her Toronto home: the dresser in which her mother hid while Nazi forces searched the Czechoslovakian family home. Kacer is an author of children's books used in Holocaust education, and she employs her parents' past to this end. In *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser* (1999), the story of her mother's Holocaust survival, she turns this positive object of family memory into a symbol representing evasion and survival of persecution. An article on the author in the *Toronto Star*, entitled 'This Treasure Chest Holds a Timeless Story', describes a visit to the author's home: 'When Kathy Kacer polishes the dresser in her dining room, she does so softly, lovingly. She feels like her grandmother's watching. And when she looks inside for china, candlesticks, crystal wineglasses, she envisions her mother as a young girl, tucked inside' (Leong 2004: B02). In this description, in particular in the adverbs 'softly, lovingly', the sense of pathetic fallacy is hard to escape. However, it is not clear whether this is simply journalistic sensationalism or whether the Second Generation author personified the dresser herself. Regardless, what we find here is that the dresser also holds the memory of a grandmother whom Kacer never met, a fact that opens up the object's reference system into the time before the Holocaust. The chest has become a family possession that is used daily, a constant celebration of the stories it carries, reflecting Kacer's motivation to recount the past to further Holocaust awareness.

*I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* is a graphic novel of Holocaust family memory created by the Canadian artist Bernice Eisenstein. Director Anne Marie Fleming turned it into an animated film in 2010. Eisenstein opens her book with the description of a complex Holocaust memento, a ring that she inherited from her mother. It is so important that the first chapter is even entitled 'The Ring', and an image of a hand holding this ring is drawn between two pages of text (2006: 12).

Regina Eisenstein was on the *Kanada-Kommando* in Auschwitz-Birkenau. The internees in this unit organized the belongings taken from the new arrivals: 'It was a place where the confiscated possessions of Jews were sorted – watches, shoes, clothing, books, kettles, bedding, eyeglasses – separated into piles that constantly grew. Inmates became archaeologists, cataloguing the remnants of their dying culture' (14). In

this metaphor, possessions signify death: the deaths of all the former owners of the 'constantly growing' piles of valuables, as well as that of their 'dying culture'. Eisenstein vividly captures the specific horror of this commando – the women were forced to act as the 'archeologists' of the belongings of their own people, organizing them on the behalf of the perpetrators, in the full knowledge that the owners were going to their deaths. One of the 'remnants' Eisenstein's mother discovered while sorting through her people's dying past was someone's inscribed wedding band, an object that, in her daughter's eyes, carries the outlines of a life story: 'L.G. 25/II 14. A man had been married in February 1914, and had died in Auschwitz' (16). Regina hid the ring in her shoe until the end of the war. On her own wedding day, shortly after liberation, she gave it to her husband, Berek. He wore it until he passed, thus linking their lives with that of the man who had lost his in Auschwitz.

After Berek's death, the mother imparts both the ring and its story to her daughter: 'Rarely has my mother surprised me, but it was hard to believe that she so casually offered this to me. A plain golden band, not a perfect circle, slightly bent, made oval. My father's wedding ring' (14). In the documentary spirit of memory work, Eisenstein examines and chronicles all the ring's details both narratively and visually, inviting us readers to participate in getting to know small, intimate testimonial objects. One of the reasons Eisenstein is so surprised by her mother's easy parting with a beloved object is because she, as a survivor, learned to lessen her attachment to the material: 'I have always attached sentiment to possessions, unlike my mother, believing that a person's belongings hold power, can capture the essence of their owner. Perhaps because all the things of value were taken away from her during the war, my mother is unable to bind herself to any object' (13). This generational difference of ascribed significance mirrors other parent/child reactions to objects as nodes of memory in this chapter.

In this case, the material legacy comes with a legacy of narrative memory: "'Now I will tell you its story", she said, and then we sat at her kitchen table with the ring placed between us' (14). The scene of transmission in which Eisenstein learns about the many owners of the ring is included visually in the text. In the accompanying image, the two women sit opposite each other with the ring between them as the testimony is passed. It is a moment of memory work fulfilled:

I once read that the Chinese treasure jade because it is believed that the spirit of the wearer enters the stone and can be passed on to the next person. So from a stranger to my mother, to my father as her

gift to him, then to me, I wear it as a bittersweet inheritance. [...] My father has come back to me, and I carry the spirits of the dead within a circle of gold. The ring holds all that I have come from. (16)

As part of the testimony, both the memory of Auschwitz and of pre-Holocaust Eastern European life are transferred to the Canadian-born Eisenstein in a transnational and transgenerational movement of memory. Here, a stranger who has no name but once had a life, is incorporated into the family identity and memory, as the ring also symbolizes this former owner's past in the inscribed wedding date and serves as a reminder of his (presumed) violent death. It also serves as a reminder of the destroyed life and culture of Jewish Eastern Europe of which he and Eisenstein's family were part. Moreover, the ring tells the story of the mother's act of resistance, her survival and liberation, and ultimately the parents' bond and the creation of the postwar family. All of these stories – from before, during, and after the Holocaust – make up the 'bittersweet inheritance' that is now the Second Generation daughter's. Eisenstein invokes another culture to support her own convictions, but the passage reveals that she believes in the memory of things, just as the Chinese do. This ring represents her origins in their entirety; it is a node with many links.

Before receiving this mnemonic object, Eisenstein had tried to fill in the gaps in her knowledge and memory of the past with the help of the products of the cultural archive of Holocaust memory, much like Wajnryb:

While my father was alive, I searched to find his face among those documented photographs of survivors of Auschwitz – actually, photos from any camp would do. I thought that if I could see him staring through barbed wire, I would then know how to remember him, know what he was made to become, and then possibly know what he might have been. All my life I had looked for more in order to fill in the parts of my father that had gone missing, and now the ring that I wear encircles that space, replacing absence with memory. (16)

For Eisenstein, much like for other Second Generation memory workers, the ubiquitous photographs of concentration camp survivors were a proxy for her father's past, but they failed to help her comprehend the experiences that had shaped her father into the person she knew. When Eisenstein begins to wear the ring on her finger, a change occurs because she reads it as a material carrier of memory that provides her



with a way of filling in the 'absence' she had always found troubling. Her actualization of the past is given a material outlet with immense mnemonic and emotional value, and therefore, her relationship to the past itself changes. Eisenstein's interpretation of the object and the sense of fulfillment it provides exemplifies Eviatar Zerubavel's observation that 'relics basically allow us to live in the present while at the same time literally "cling" to the past' (2003: 43). Although Eisenstein attributes meaning to the object itself, the aspect of the added explanation cannot be disregarded, unlike the cases of Raphael and Wajnryb, whose Holocaust objects were without narrative and therefore a dangerous presence rather than objects that signify connection. The links to the period of the Holocaust, which are much more volatile than those to other times, come into being when Regina describes what she witnessed as a survivor. Only thus can the ring become part of Eisenstein's family past. Second Generation memory work, as seen above, is otherwise too tentative or comes entirely to a halt. The mother bequeathing it to Eisenstein along with its stories is an ideal scenario of memory work: a tangible object is transmitted along with facts to a willing and eager listener. All these familial and larger historical elements are then included in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, Eisenstein's chronicle of family memory, and thus made part of the wider mnemonic structure of cultural memory.

### Objects in Second Generation memory work

In his treatise on sites of memory, Pierre Nora argues that memory and the material are intrinsically bound up with each other: 'Memory is rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image and object' (1996a: 3). The meanings ascribed to concrete objects in Second Generation memory work suggest that, indeed, objects are legible memory carriers because of their materiality, they can act as a means to fill in elements of 'absent memory', and therefore they represent affective, compelling nodes of family memory. Family possessions provide evidence of a family network of memory, despite the traumatic breach. Matter as memory can reference a number of temporal layers and generations. In my corpus they are links to other people, periods, and places. Along with those engaged in memory work, we, the audience, learn about candlesticks that survived the war in the Polish ground and made it onto a Shabbat table in America; we learn about Auschwitz's *Kanada Kommando* and the resistance to it; and we also learn about the loss entailed in not having anything tangible from a grandparent one never met. Reading

these texts of memory work, our scope of Holocaust memory opens up as we are introduced to the role objects play in remembering those who were murdered, those who survived, and those who were born after but are cut off from a living connection with their families before the Nazi onslaught. Objects might be rare and seemingly ordinary after the Holocaust, but when they function as nodes in Second Generation memory work, elements of the micro histories of families enter cultural memory.

As a relational exploration of the past and the present, Second Generation memory work also tends to include the parents' relationships to surviving objects. Obviously, each case is specific, depending on the survivor's experiences, but some general trends become evident, which shows a generational difference. For survivors, objects are often signifiers of familial loss, as evidenced by their reactions to returning to their former houses after liberation. In the case of their children, however, objects originating from a time before the Holocaust tend to be positively charged, signifying that a family they always just knew of as dead, lived at some point. The Holocaust cannot be disassociated from these objects and yet, through the material link, a usable past in the form of a longer, now tangible, family narrative opens up that can offer a positive source for Second Generation identities by providing a sense of genealogical continuity. The importance of such finds for identity creation processes in relation to family is evidenced in the increased longing for familial continuity, signified by a material legacy, when a change in the family structure takes place. These characteristics of the object within memory work are what make a situation in which there are no objects so problematic – if there is nothing to explore, memory work cannot proceed.

Second Generation memory work is also inhibited in other ways. For instance, to function as a memory node, an object needs a narrative, even if it is just someone identifying it as a family possession. Only the survivors' stories about it and its place in the family can add a layer of family memory that endows it with provenance and an explanation, that is, those who verify and highlight links with the past. The material form of an object then raises certain questions. For example, why was this particular object chosen? Such contemplations, connected to the object as a physical carrier of memory with certain visible and tangible characteristics, allows inferences about the family's preferences and their ideas of convenience or beauty, encouraging speculation about the prehistory of an object, an aspect that even dedicated memory work can rarely pin down. The creative process in which tangible evidence

and the imaginative element of postmemory are interwoven with family narratives is a further step in memory work, which goes beyond documentation. Moreover, even an emotional investment – the imagined memory of touch – can take place as the object itself becomes metonymic for its former owner. Brett's fantasy of recovery in *Too Many Men* is a potent example for such an imaginative engagement with family possessions.

Second Generation authors do not engage in such flights of the imagination when faced with a testimonial object in the sense of Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer. With Holocaust mementos, a different, much more challenging area of memory work is opened up: the presence of the destruction within post-Holocaust family life. These objects, as carriers of the experiences of the survivors, symbolize the challenges in Second Generation memory work when it comes to traumatic and silenced elements of the past. However, even testimonial objects can become usable when they are related to a longer history or some other usable element of the past, such as a positive reframing within the family narrative, as evidenced by Eisenstein's ring.

Hirsch and Spitzer have made a case for the importance of mnemonic objects in our explorations of the past in and for the present: 'Indeed, for anyone willing to subject them to informed and probing readings, material remnants can serve as testimonial objects enabling us to focus crucial questions both about the past and about how the past comes down to us' (2006: 355). Conscious memory work entails 'informed and probing readings', and this chapter has shown that in Second Generation memory work, objects function as stand-ins for the lived-in family memory and are important nodes within a broad network of memory. Thus, descriptions of family possessions and their extended temporal index provide a sense of the scope of memory work, while at the same time highlighting the transnational histories of survivor families.

Both family heirlooms and testimonial objects illustrate the displacements and migrations resulting from the violence of the Holocaust, bringing the European past physically into the present moment in new locations around the world. The familial travels of Holocaust memory due to the migration of objects go hand in hand with the migration of people. A German suitcase traveled via Belgium to London because the Hirsches were refugees, and a ring from Eastern Europe is worn in Canada because Eisenstein's mother managed to hide it in her shoe in Auschwitz. Such objects are not only carriers of family memory but also symbols for memory's movements across the world and across generations. The net of transnational entanglements caused by the Holocaust

and traced backward in Second Generation memory is emphasized even more when 'return' journeys are part of the process of discovering the family's material past, especially when they encompass the double focus of memory work: the places of suffering and the places of family origins. Journeys such as Chapman's mother-daughter treasure hunts for memory show the connectedness to both of the family's places, but also the disruptive effects of displacement – this American Second Generation daughter neither speaks her mother's German mother tongue nor does she know Germany. But that there are still family possessions to be found in Stockstadt tells a place- and object-bound story of dispossession, displacement, and memory work.

# 3

## Names

Across cultures, names are viewed as part of the essence of a person's being and, in their public use, as markers of our belonging to a certain family, ethnic, or national group. But more than that, names have long been understood as having inherent mnemonic and connective power. Aleida Assmann, a scholar of literary and cultural studies, even describes the memory of the dead, and specifically the commemoration of their names, as the anthropological origin of cultural memory (2011: 23ff). The remembrance of the names of the dead is, of course, dependent on cultural context. For example, Romani and Aboriginal Australian cultures forbid the use of the names of the deceased. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, however, forgetting or suppressing a person's name means something else entirely. The Roman practice of *damnatio memoriae*, the symbolic removal of a name from usage, signified removing someone from a community of memory and thus from existence, indicating that the ancients believed that names had immense commemorative power. Jewish memorial practices have a similar foundation. The Hebrew Bible ascribes a crucial significance to names, regarding 'the survival of a name as the predominant vehicle for carrying the memory of the dead' (Margalit 2003: 21). In *The Ethics of Memory*, the philosopher Avishai Margalit creates the image of a 'double murder' (2003: 21) to describe what it means to eradicate a name: both the person and their memory are destroyed.

The forcible removal of victims' names, which went hand in hand with the denial of their humanity, was part and parcel of the National Socialist agenda. Upon arrival in the concentration camp, names were replaced by numbers, as Primo Levi relates in his canonical Holocaust memoir *Survival in Auschwitz (Se questo è un uomo)*: 'My number is 174517; we have been baptized, we will carry the tattoo on our left arm

until we die' (1986: 27). Levi uses Christian rather than Jewish cultural references and the present tense to describe this radical experience, only to introduce his number much as he would his given name. Being 'baptized' with a number – and, in Auschwitz, even with a tattoo – is an act of dehumanization that has become iconic in Holocaust memory. In the broader cultural context of commemoration, remembering victims' names is a ritual frequently employed in memorials and ceremonies: recalling someone's name reaffirms their existence and identity.

Knowledge of a name's fragility is part of the survivor experience, and this has often influenced post-Holocaust choices, in that naming a child can be both an act of memorialization and of retrospective resistance as the name of a victim is brought to life again. In the Jewish tradition, names have always served as identifiable links in the family chain of generations. Patronymics are used for religious purposes, and within the family first names are given to remember other family members. This naming practice 'is a part of the process of bringing the child into the social order' (Alford 1988: 29) and a symbol of familial and ethnic continuity. In families of Ashkenazi descent – as is the case with most survivors – children are only named after family members who have passed away. In the survivor family, of course, many of these relatives perished during the Holocaust.

Personal names and their connotations are a prominent theme in Second Generation memory work. The canon of Second Generation writing attests to the fact that the practice of naming children after Nazi victims is one of the most frequent markers of survivor families. Indeed, in *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, Helen Epstein writes about one of her interviewees, 'He was the only child of survivors I had spoken to who was not named after some relative who had died in the war' (1988: 320). Epstein interviewed hundreds of her cohort, and the fact that this man, Tom Reed, was unique in not being named in memory of a family member reveals how pervasive this commemorative practice was among survivors.

The linguist Ruth Wajnryb provides the most comprehensive discussion of Second Generation names, demonstrating that the Jewish commemorative ritual of naming children after the deceased became even more important after the human losses of the Holocaust (2001: 148–54). Where the losses were too extreme and one specific name could not suffice for the task of remembrance, the naming ritual was sometimes forgone. In such a case, parents made other choices, for example, the use of the name 'Eva' to represent all Jewish women. But naming choices can also be less obvious, and a name unconnected to

the family might be an even more telling indication of the pain of some survivors: 'Sometimes so dreadful was the sense of loss and grief that parents could not bring themselves to force such a daily reminder into their lives' (149).

For survivors, naming their child after a murdered relative often 'meant a sustained, if unspoken, remembrance of loss and grief' (110). The social psychologist Aaron Hass argues that the parents' profound need to remember turns their children into 'symbols of compensation' for those who were murdered and after whom they are named (1990: 55). Harvey and Carol Barocas, both psychologists with an expertise in Holocaust trauma, maintain that children born to survivors can become 'replacements for lost family members', and that specific names tend to foster the survivors' identification of their children with these victims (1979: 333). The literary corpus suggests that parents told their children who they were named after, but mostly, the traumatic loss was too great and the survivors did not expand on their memories of those who perished. This left the next generation with only fragmented knowledge about their namesakes and not a full story that can function as a usable past. In addition to communication impeded by trauma, in most cases, the survivors did not know how their relatives perished: Nazi soldiers wrote the ends of the life stories of brothers, aunts, and grandparents.

All these factors can enhance a Second Generation sense of 'absent memory', which presents as a missing link in relation to one's own name – that is, to an essential element of personal identity. Scholars have shown that this form of memorialization through a living agent can have a problematic impact on those who have been given a certain name. The psychotherapist Dina Wardi, for example, maintains that answering to the name of a perished family member represents an immense burden for the new bearer of the name (1992: 98). A feeling of oppression is what Wajnryb identifies as the principal reaction to this situation. In a number of the literary texts, a sense of mnemonic oppression can be identified. In *Women's Autobiography: War and Trauma*, the literary scholar Victoria Stewart discusses the interconnections between names, identity, and commemorative intentions, asking, 'how can one remember enough without remaining trapped in the past?' (2003: 153). At this paradoxical juncture, memory work comes into play. In the active exploration of the past that memory work constitutes, Stewart's question may become answerable.

Due to the parents' communicative barriers, a voluntary and intentional engagement with the story of one's perished namesake is challenging and complex. Wajnryb has argued that 'Many learned not to

ask about immediate family, and especially not about the people whose name they bore' (2001: 264). Objects that signify the death of family and testimonial objects without a story represent an alien presence in post-Holocaust life, which can stop memory work from going beyond chronicling the parents' stories or the existence of such objects. But given how significant names are to personal identity, they tend to trigger memory work regardless of the taboos concerning traumatic losses present in some families.

Wajnryb also noted that over a lifetime the perceived burden of a name can be transformed (149), and I argue that this more positive interpretation is due to memory work and the attempt to uncover a usable past connected to names. When a constructive sense of relationality is uncovered in a name, the above findings are challenged, and names are not necessarily burdens. The main focus of this chapter concerns how memory work presents as a developing process. But this process covers a range of topics. The questions related to names as nodes in memory work often revolve around the relational aspect between the Second Generation and their namesake: Does the shared name facilitate a special connection? Is such a connection substantiated by an interest in the namesake?

Unlike objects, which are either family possessions or Holocaust mementos, names are a node of memory that often simultaneously refers to both the Holocaust and the pre-Holocaust period. From a memorial perspective, names as memory nodes have a special quality because they are both a carrier and an act of memory. Names as acts of memory tell the story of the parents' motivation for choosing a certain name. This links the generations of a family at a number of temporal levels, including the postwar migration. As an 'outer' node in the network of memory, name choices can be influenced by the family's new national context, such as when survivor parents sought to blend into their new country and lessen cultural Otherness by giving their child an 'English' name. The comparative section of this chapter, 'Migrant family names', focuses on this aspect, contemplating some parents' decision to give a child a non-Jewish, ethnically unmarked name and exploring how different national contexts have played a role in the choices of postwar parents and their children's memory work processes.

### **Names as acts of memory**

Names and the reasons behind the naming decisions of survivor parents are, unsurprisingly, a recurring subject in the corpus. In most cases, the



parents only refer in a quick aside to the person after whom their child was named, and yet, the act of naming prompts additional questions in those carrying the name: Why was I named after this specific relative? What can I find out about this person? Is there more that connects us? The parents' decision is an area in which imaginary and creative approaches are not uncommon; the involvement of the self seems to encourage considerations that are less documentary in nature.

Ann Kirschner's relational memoir *Sala's Gift: My Mother's Holocaust Story* deals for the most part with the survivor mother Sala's personal history as the daughter interprets her mother's epistolary legacy. Even stylistically, Kirschner takes herself out of the text by frequently using a third-person narrative form, as we already encountered in the scene of the survivor returning to her lost home. In the discussion of her naming and that of her brother, Joey, the pronoun *I* is not used:

Raizel wept most over Sala's baby, too emotional at first to do anything but look at Joey, his bright blue eyes and ready smile. Raizel had once feared that she and Blima were the only survivors. Now here was a nephew, named in memory of their father. It was a miracle, she repeated. [...] The three sisters were reunited, and she had a new baby daughter to share with them. The baby girl was given the Hebrew name Chana, after their mother. Bending tradition, Sala adopted the baby's English name from Queen Elizabeth II, whose new princess was named Anne. (2006: 154–55)

Here, the question of how to name the children born after liberation is used as a means of accessing and illustrating scenes of the early years in post-Holocaust life. In this family, only Sala and two of her sisters, Raizel and Blima, had survived the war. The birth of a new generation into their decimated family is a miracle of survival and continuity. Upholding the commemorative tradition and naming the two children after their murdered grandparents is an absolute that neither the survivors nor the author question.

However, in the case of Kirschner's naming, a link to the present moment is also established. She is given two names, an uninflected and unmarked 'English' name for everyday life and also a Hebrew name for Jewish ritual. The Hebrew name, Chana, is taken directly from the family in accordance with tradition: it was their mother's name. In contrast, the English name, which is etymologically connected, illustrates the importance of the sociocultural context. The sisters had immigrated to the United States, but even there the birth of the royal

princess in the United Kingdom on August 15, 1950, was a media event: 'radio announcers broke into programmes to give news of the birth. Afternoon newspapers in New York splashed the news across the front pages, displacing news from Korea'.<sup>1</sup> The birth of Sala's second child and first daughter had coincided with the birth of Queen Elizabeth's daughter, and the choice of name implies that the American Ann is also considered to be a princess by her family. Indeed, both aunts see her as their own, just as royal offspring may be considered to be the children of an entire nation. More than that, this name also demonstrates Sala's integration into the English-speaking world: the birth of the queen's daughter interested her so much that she named her own daughter after Princess Anne. She is more than a survivor; she is also an inhabitant of the world after the Holocaust. Both of these links, to the family past and to postwar history, are documented in the Second Generation text of memory work, highlighting the connectivity of family memory to multiple time periods.

Ann Kirschner presents naming in a post-Holocaust family as a conscious act of memorialization on the part of the survivor parents. As already mentioned in the introduction, psychologists have argued that survivors subconsciously perceived their postwar offspring as replacements for loved ones who perished. Dina Wardi provides an example of this research perspective when she emphasizes that it is in particular those children who are named after the murdered who 'serve as living memorials for the dead, generally family members who perished' (1992: 94). Such a commemorative ascription can be a tremendous burden for the child, especially for a young child who is not yet engaged in memory work. Lev Raphael exemplifies this mnemonic stance through 12-year-old protagonist Frank in the short story 'Fresh Air':

So I was a child of necessity, of duty to the past, named not just after one lost relative but a whole family of cousins in Lublin: the Franks. Frank. My incongruously American first name was their memorial. Perhaps that explained my mother's distance, my father's rage – how could you be intimate or loving with a block of stone? (1990: 65)

Frank uses his name to tell his family's story, a story that persists in the commemorative name he is given. The short excerpt portrays the multiple links of a Second Generation name as memory node: the protagonist can trace the origins of his parents' choice not only to their immigration to the United States, but further back to their life in Poland and the family's former home city, Lublin. At first glance, the ostensibly

American name might be interpreted as an attempt to assimilate the child into the family's new surroundings. Only those in the family's inner circle understand its real meaning. To young Frank, it means that he is a memorial, in the most literal sense – 'a block of stone'. This is also the explanation for his parents' coldness and distance: in his mind, he is a symbol for his parents' longing for the lost past and family, rather than a person in his own right. These sentences, so chilling in their austerity, indicate that Frank views the reason of his existence as nothing more than a reminder of violent death and the fulfillment of the duty to remember. As a child, he is unable to identify his parents' posttraumatic suffering, nor is he given a positive way to connect to the European family past. Raphael thus gives a telling example of the predominance of negativity in the postwar present through a family name. Like Kirschner, Raphael presents the child's name as an act of memory. Here, however, the focus is on the postmemorial situation this creates and how the boy is stuck in it.

### **Names and the process of memory work**

Throughout her oeuvre Helen Epstein repeatedly discusses the names she was given, and here we find both the Raphael situation of a mnemonic encumbrance as well as the liberation provided by memory work as a process that confronts the past rather than just living with it. In 1979 in *Children of the Holocaust*, Epstein describes her naming as a ritual of memorialization – she was named after her murdered grandmothers – and as an emotional burden: 'At times my life seemed to be not my own. Hundreds of people lived through me, lives that had been cut short in the war. My two grandmothers, whose names were mine, lived through me' (1988: 170). This idea of the murdered living through the Second Generation is referenced by the Warden concept of the 'memorial candle' and the much-discussed transgenerational impact of traumatic memory. But Epstein also implies that she is personally connected to the grandmothers whose names she bears because their 'names were mine', and this is challenging. However, the difficulties Epstein identifies in her early writing gradually change as she proceeds along her journey of memory work in which links are explored, reinterpreted, and strengthened.

Almost 20 years later, in the 1997 family memoir *Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for her Mother's History*, Epstein thinks of her names much differently. Now, the emotional burden is no longer central, and she is not greatly concerned by the aspect of naming as

a commemorative parental act. Instead, she is much more interested in her name as a carrier of memory, and unlike in her earlier texts, she acknowledges its second source: Helena, a Czech friend of her mother's who had helped her survive: 'During the war, my mother was classified a Jew and Helena an Aryan; Franci worked in concentration camps and Helena in the Czech Resistance. When I was born and my father wished to name me after his mother, Helena, my mother agreed because the name evoked her friend' (1997: 166). Epstein's intense memory work, which includes a visit to the locations of her mother's youth, another of the many Second Generation 'return' journeys, also leads to a personal encounter with Helena. Here, the shared name takes on connotations of friendship, humanity, and the acts of a 'Righteous Among the Nations', a woman who helped her Jewish friend even though it meant endangering her own life. The more Epstein learns about Helena, the more she uncovers about herself. Indeed, Epstein's relationship with the innermost part of her identity, her name, has undergone an immense change, a transformation from a burden to a potential for connection. In the course of her research into family history, she recovers knowledge that enables her to write the story of her mother's past. In addition, in her meeting with Helena, Epstein also discovers a usable past and present in the Czech Republic: Helena is a living link beyond the chasm of the Holocaust.

Sonia Pilcer's writing also exemplifies how a Second Generation name is connected with various layers of family memory and how the relationship to these can change over a life, even if the memory work involved here is less straightforward than in Epstein's case. In *The Holocaust Kid*, although the issue of naming comes up several times, it is never expanded on, and the simplicity of the words projects deep emotions. The following scene takes place during a Holocaust Day memorial service: 'I slipped into their row, taking a seat between them. "Zosha", my mother sighed. Her mother's name' (2001a: 59). Neither the protagonist nor the reader knows whether the daughter is being addressed or whether the grieving survivor is simply longing for her own mother. In this case, the name becomes a vague deictic pointer, and this semantic confusion indicates a fragmentation of the protagonist's identity that is the result of the family past. The excerpt also reveals that, not unlike when objects that function as nodes of memory, names evoke disparate associations in survivors and their children. Here, however, it is the Second Generation that feels less longing for those they have only heard of as victims, while the survivors miss their loved ones.

The generational disparity is even more evident in the next scene in which the subject of names comes up. Here, the survivor mother listens to her daughter's answering machine message: "Hi, it's Zoe. Glad you called but I'm not here. If you leave your name and – " Never. She hangs up, will not talk to the machine. Her name is Zosha Hanna, after both their mothers. A stranger, her daughter' (129). The American daughter's message reveals that she is trying to rid herself of the Otherness imposed by her grandmothers' Polish-Jewish names. The discarding of foreignness is simultaneously an attempt to liberate herself from the burden of these names, and thus, the author brings together questions of migration, assimilation, and the burden of traumatic familial memory. At this point in Zoe's life, as a young adult trying to make her own way in the world, she is unwilling to deal with or allow herself to be linked to the family past – memory is not an option. Her new name and Genia's angry reaction to it show the chasm that exists between the mother who does not understand her daughter's longing for liberation from history and the daughter who, in her steps toward selfhood, rejects her mother's need for remembrance.

In the essay '2G', Pilcer also takes on the issue of names, but here, migration and belonging in the United States are not explored. Interestingly, the author's middle name is the same as her Second Generation protagonist's: 'I am named Sonia Hanna, after both of my parents' murdered mothers' (1992: 202). And more than that, the Russian 'Sonia' is the counterpart of the Polish 'Zosia' [Zosha], they are diminutives of Sofia (Russian) or Zofia (Polish). In this early autobiographical piece, the author also refers to the burden of carrying the names of her murdered grandmothers, in terms reminiscent of Raphael's fictional scene: 'I was *their* first seed of life after so much death. A living monument to their survival, a shrine to their mothers' (206). In her novel, published in 2001, the memory work process is more prominent and, ultimately, negativity and loss are not the main issues anymore.

Showing the autobiographical basis of literary Second Generation memory work, the protagonist of *The Holocaust Kid* seeks to escape the emotional weight of her names and the stories associated with them. And yet, leaving the past behind is impossible. In fact, Zosha-Zoe chooses to introduce names connected to her family origins into her life. Writing for a glitzy celebrity magazine, she makes up stories about the rich and famous. But she hopes to become a serious writer and therefore uses pseudonyms so that her own name will not be associated with the schlock. Star-struck Genia does not understand her daughter's reservations and reports a conversation she had with one of her survivor

friends: “‘We were talking and she asked me if you didn’t mind using her name for one of the stories. That way she could see her name in print. I mean of course if you use your name, that’s something else. But if you’re going to make up Louise Colet, why not Fela Brumstein? Or even, for that matter, why not Genia Radon?’” (2001a: 11). Zosha-Zoe honors her mother’s request: ‘Eventually all my stories were signed with the names of my mother’s Polski platoon. But my most frequent pseudonym – once even receiving a note from a befuddled Glen Ford thanking me for a stimulating interview, which, of course, never took place except in my imagination – was Genia Radon, my mother’s maiden name’ (12). Although initially resistant, the Second Generation daughter steps back into the network of memory by performing family memory. She feels the need to comfort Genia even as she wants to rid herself of the past: ‘*After all the resolutions*: What she went through, how she suffered. I could not have survived. I mustn’t make my mother suffer more’ (14). Notwithstanding the complexity of the matter, this act – in particular, the bringing of her mother’s name of family and survival back to life – reveals an ongoing and conscious interaction with memory.

Throughout the novel, Zosha-Zoe rejects the past less and moves on to more intense levels of memory work. In this later period of her life, family names are not considered a burden anymore but a legacy that can be passed on to the next generation of a family that is short on material heirlooms but rich in memory. *The Holocaust Kid* ends with a portrayal of her son, Jesse. This child, born to an American and an Israeli member of the Second Generation, heralds a future that is shaped by memory as usable past. For Zosha-Zoe, meeting Avi and becoming pregnant marked the period in her life during which she shifted from trying to escape the past to consciously engaging with it, as indicated in the previous chapter. Here, memory work comes to fruition when she names her son after a victim. This wholly American child is not burdened by his name, but rather ‘has confidence that life is kind and that he will be loved’ (180). The next generation is living within family memory instead of having to work into and through it as Jesse’s mother did. His parents have given him a name in remembrance of a lost family member, but this Second Generation act of memory is a natural part of family life: it is contained in a narrative of memories.

Jesse is the apple of his grandparents’ eyes. In the text, the relationship between survivors and their grandchildren is illustrated by Genia’s thoughts about her grandson, who was ‘named after her baby brother Jesse, taken away with her parents, Yom Kippur 1942. *Baruch Hashem*’ (180). The American Jesse represents the victory of continuity over the

traumatic losses. Here, the memory of loved ones is a part of family life, and so is Judaism – neither the holiday of Yom Kippur, nor *Baruch Hashem*, the Hebrew interjection of thanking God, need a translation. In her memory work and beyond, it is clear that Second Generation Zosha-Zoe has changed her attitude toward the past. Similarly, her mother has also become much more focused on the present. The first Jesse was taken away to his death, but even while referring obliquely to his fate, Genia praises God for her grandson, not allowing the loss of her little brother to dominate her emotions and her experience of this moment. The book ends with a celebration of life: ‘My father toasts their friends of over 50 years. “*L’Chaim!*”’ (180).

### Names as relational nodes of memory

Due to its basis in memory work, Second Generation literature is focused on the relational, and the corpus suggests that being named after someone can establish an assumed or ascribed special bond with the predecessor in family history. Searching for knowledge about this person can also be a part of the memory work process. Here, the proximity between self and other through the shared name and the practice’s inherent curiosity and sense of responsibility with regard to the past coalesce. Bernice Eisenstein’s work illustrates how names were the impetus for her memory work: “‘A’ is for epel and it doesn’t fall far from the tree. When I was born, along with my English name, I was given the Yiddish names of my father’s two sisters, Binche and Chana’ (2006: 84). This paragraph introduces the family past on several levels. With the first sentence, which refers to a favorite saying of her parents, Eisenstein inscribes their language use into the text, representing the survivors as marked by the past even in linguistic terms. They are, after all, migrants who use Yiddish proverbs while speaking in accented English. Like many other authors in the corpus, Eisenstein is given an ‘English’ name – once again reminding the readers of the post-Holocaust migration – and two commemorative names in her parents’ native Yiddish, emphasizing the connection to the European pre-Holocaust family.

The proverb highlights familial links, even when Eisenstein has no personal memory of the two aunts after whom she was named. Throughout her life, however, she learns that she is intimately connected to one of her aunts not only in name: ‘Once, years later, when my hair was braided and pinned low behind my head, my father told me that I resembled his older sister, Binche. I could not read his expression at the time, but as my father found his way back to his family through me, I

felt that moment's tender fusing of pleasure and loss' (84). When told that she not only carries Binche's name but also physically resembles her, Eisenstein is incapable of gauging her father's feelings, but understands that he sees his sister in her face. More than that, when Berek 'found his way back to his family through me', she learns that parts of her being are embodied memory for her father, linking her into the past. The joyful recognition, however, is accompanied by a sense of loss, because she never knew the aunt she resembles.

Eisenstein's initial attempts to learn about the later part of her aunt's life are cut short; the only detail her father knows is that Binche was pregnant upon deportation and perished along with the rest of their family. At some point, after Berek had died, memory work is helped by chance and the community of survivors: the memoir of a former inhabitant of their hometown, Miechow, in Poland made its way into the hands of the Canadian Eisenstein family. Through this testimonial text, Eisenstein learns that after the local ghetto was emptied and all of the remaining Jews were forcibly taken to the train station, Binche went into early labor and delivered her baby. The newborn was shot immediately. The testimony did not contain information about whether Binche was also killed or transported to Treblinka with the other relatives.

For Eisenstein, who reports a personal connection with the woman whose name she carries and whom she resembles, even such information is better than the previous situation. Knowing allows her to fill in voids in family memory and strengthen the link with Binche: 'The words of Kaddish, the mourner's prayer were not recited, but now the testimony of a man unknown to me has brought back her name, completing my own, allowing me to place a stone on an unmarked grave' (85). Memory work is also self-work. With this new knowledge of Binche's fate, Eisenstein can now take another step toward 'completing' her own name while mourning her aunt. Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead, was not said for the first Binche, but now, Eisenstein dedicates an imaginary stone to her in the Jewish commemorative tradition of marking the visit to a grave. Eisenstein projects a sense of responsibility for her aunt; her memory work brought her closer to Binche by knowing more about her. Now, she is a witness to her namesake not merely as a Holocaust victim but also as a woman with her own (albeit horrific) life story, which is then in turn documented in the text of Second Generation memory work.

Cheryl Pearl Sucher, the American-born daughter of Auschwitz survivors who divides her time between New York and New Zealand, similarly develops a relationship with lost family members. She explores the



Holocaust as a legacy in *The Rescue of Memory*, a fictionalized account of family memory. During the protagonist's childhood and youth, her names are repeatedly referenced in this family, often rather starkly: "I named you after my mother and sister, Ruchel and Channah, whom I saw walk hand-in-hand into the crematorium" (1997: 25). The survivor father's comment about naming his postwar child after her grandmother and aunt falls at the end of a paragraph, emphasizing the presence of the Holocaust past in the American present of the family. Much like the unnarrativized testimonial objects discussed in the previous chapter, this statement is documented without commentary, conveying to the reader a sense of the ubiquitous but information-poor links to the past. But unlike the Holocaust mementos that are untouchable in memory work when not associated with some positive element of the past, the situation here is complicated by the fact that these names are written into the self of the protagonist: she, too, is Ruchel/Rachel and Channah/Hannah.

Later in this Second Generation coming-of-age novel, the subject of names comes up again, this time in the protagonist's contemplations. She has decided to explore the past for the sake of her own identity creation processes and emotional well-being:

Each year, on the Day of Atonement, I attend my father's synagogue to say a prayer in honor of the souls whose name I've been given. Inscribed on raised copper plates and illuminated by lemon-flame bulbs, the names read RUCHEL WALLFISCH and CHANNAH SUREH GREENBLATT. Bathed in the pale golden light, I wonder what else of theirs is mine.

YISGADAL V'YISKADASH SH'MAY RABAW.

As the congregation approaches the Cantic of Martyrs, I concentrate on the intervals between tears. Waiting for the Mourner's Kaddish, I remain standing, speaking the words in honor of their memories and praying for the peace of their souls. (30)

The adult Rachel has left behind an imposed, oppressive past. Now, she has chosen to recognize a special relationship, based on her memory work, with Ruchel and Channah. In the family synagogue, the material presence of the names on commemorative plaques that are 'bathed in the pale golden light' of memorial candles signifies that memory is tangible and alive. Throughout the Yom Kippur service Rachel experiences a private form of mourning and remembrance for her aunt and

grandmother, not least because of the profoundly emotional connection established through names. The prayers of Yizkor and Kaddish give her mourning for her relatives a collective framework. During Yizkor, Rachel is overcome by tears, and she takes part in the Kaddish, indicating that she actively mourns the two women. Like many others who do not know the day their loved ones died, she does so on Yom Kippur. There were other family members who also perished in the Holocaust, but the connection through her name provides Rachel with a special memory link to Ruchel and Channah. As in Eisenstein's case, the bond is marked by the absence of memory and the desire to know more: 'what else of theirs is mine', but the postgenocidal reality makes memory work impossible. Nothing more is to be found out at a time when those who knew the murdered relatives have passed away too.

### **Names, family communication, and the process of memory work**

A significant factor impeding memory work – especially the memory work on names which, after all, connects directly to deaths in the family – is parental trauma and the silence to which it can lead. A poignant example of this can be found in Julie Salamon's *The Net of Dreams: A Family's Search for a Rightful Place*. As with much Second Generation writing, this is a family memoir of discovery on a number of different levels – for instance, in concentrated memory work during a 'return' journey to the landscape of her parents' memories in what is now the Czech Republic, including their former communities and the sites of their incarceration under the Nazis. Salamon, a writer and journalist, now lives in New York with her family, but she grew up in rural Ohio as a member of the only Jewish family in town. But despite this Appalachian setting and the fact that she was only born in 1953, rather than immediately after her parents' liberation from the concentration camps, her memory work impulse is as prominent in her writing as it is in the work of others.

At a superficial level, the two daughters of the country doctor are aware of the origins of their names, and a seeming normality is projected by the following description: 'Every year with great satisfaction she would tell this child – named Julia Marlene after her great-grandmothers – the story of how she had made Dr. Sam wait while she had coffee' (1996: 272). Written from survivor mother Lilly (Szimi) Salcman's point of view, there is no indication as to whether the names pose an emotional burden or create a special connection with the great-grandmothers for Salamon.

The choice of a third-person narrator within the first-person structure of the book, however, creates a certain distancing effect, and indicates that the names of the children are a significant act and node of memory.

When Szimi thinks about her first daughter Suzanne's names, it becomes evident that they hold more than just commemorative meaning: "That adorable baby girl would be the bridge between past and future. She would be told, when she was older, that she carried the names of her two grandmothers' (238). Suzy represents a link in memory, and the naming act entails the explicit ascription of a task. Her Hebrew names, Sarah Braha, immortalize her grandmothers, but in the English name, used in everyday life to minimize the foreign effect of the Hebrew names, the connection only appears through the first letter 'S'. Additionally, both parents had Americanized their Czech names: after immigration, Szimi became Lilly and Sanyi became Alexander. In Salamon's relational memoir, however, the original names are used, emphasizing the links with the family's European origins.

Szimi's musings tell us about the other, much more traumatic memory hidden within her older daughter's middle name, Eva: "She wouldn't be told that she carried a secret memorial to her father's first daughter, a secret because her existence was never mentioned' (238). The children grew up knowing that names are given to commemorate, and yet, the origin of Eva is never explained, just as Sanyi's first-born daughter who perished is never spoken about in this family. For him, the murder of his first wife and daughter is too traumatic a subject to verbalize, but his postwar child 'carried a secret memorial'. The level of secrecy surrounding the lost daughter is profound: "When she heard the little girl's name was Eva, her middle name, Suzy was shocked. "Is that who I'm named for?" Szimi looked at her dispassionately. "I guess so'" (185). The daughter is stunned to learn of a half-sister whose existence had been kept a secret, but is even more shocked to discover that she shares more than genes with the murdered child. The mother copes with the unspoken past through denial, in her unemotional matter-of-factness, adding to the layers of silence surrounding the issue. Evidently, Sanyi had refused to talk to his new wife about his first child, and Suzy never asks about her; silence is an unspoken rule. The children are aware of this taboo, and it is so absolute that they do not even imagine this sister, let alone conduct a more research-based form of memory work that would necessitate verbalizing the issue with their parents. Indeed, Eva is never mentioned again in the memoir: this is a dangerous, blocked link in family memory.

In Elaine Kalman Naves' *Shoshanna's Story: A Mother, a Daughter, and the Shadows of History*, names are also carriers of memory, but the

communicative situation is different. In this family, the Holocaust is openly discussed. The relational memoir chronicles the entire trajectory of a survivor family history, from war-torn Budapest, where Naves was born and spent her early years, to their migration via England to Canada. The strong memory work impetus of the text is already evident in the title: Shoshanna is the survivor mother, but her story, which is scarred by the ravages of history, is also her daughter's.

As discussed in the introduction to this book, communication patterns in survivor families tend to fluctuate between silence and obsessive talk, and both extremes can be problematic. In the Kalman family, the difficulties inherent in excessive openness become apparent when the young daughter is castigated for tagging along to visit a Budapest church with her Catholic friends: "I can't believe that the namesake of my sister Magda would go into church after kissing the mezuzah." My middle name is Magda, my first name is Ilona, and I am nicknamed Ilushka. "Your aunt Magda was a remarkable woman" (2006: 19). The first Magda has not yet been introduced into the text, but Shoshanna ascribes a connection between her and her daughter. The reader only learns later – over the course of Naves' own interrogation of the family past – that Magda perished at the hands of the Nazis. As it turns out, however, Naves' names represent a profoundly palimpsestic node of memory: 'Mamuka was Shoshanna's mother. Coincidentally, like my other grandmother, she was called Ilona. I had been named for both of them, it being custom to call a new child after someone recently deceased' (66). Ilona – who, upon the family's migration to the English-speaking world, chooses to call herself Elaine – learns about this history when she is not even of school age. Hearing the story of her lost family members, she finds out about the complicated construct of her name that had hitherto been unclear to her:

But until recently I hadn't been able to sort out the other three aunties. I used to think they were all one and the same, a generic aunt called Magda, for whom, along with my grandmothers, I had also been named. If I'd been a boy, I would have been called Kálmán Sámuel after my two grandfathers. But because my grandmothers shared a name and there had been such a bonanza of recently dead people to choose from, I was named after three people, Ilona Magdolna. (67–68)

In the sarcastic undertone, we note the voice of the adult author intruding into the thoughts of Ilona, yet clearly, the girl is aware of the

burden of carrying the names of three dead relatives. Also evident is the need for clarification. For a long time, the child was unable to sort through the names she had been given, and learning their significance is a gradual process. Here, once again, the developing nature of memory work presents itself.

In this family, the past is a constant presence, and the Jewish naming custom is a natural way to counter loss. Naves' younger sister's names are an even heavier burden: she is named after two murdered children. These are the names of a cousin, 'the first Juditka' (70) – whose photo with this caption is remediated in *Shoshanna's Story* (Naves 2006: unnumbered pages), engaging the reader in a form of visual memory work – and of their father's first daughter:

Juditka had been twelve at the time she was wrested from their lives; Gusti's little girl had been six. Shoshanna and Gusti had struck a bargain on the name of their second child, should she be a girl: Éva Judit. Shoshanna had to give precedence to Gusti's dead daughter in the formal first name, as long as the baby's everyday name was Juditka. It was a compromise they both found just, for Gusti conceded that it would be unbearable if every time he uttered the new child's name, her dead half-sister were to shimmer in the air around them. (71–72)

This situation is reminiscent of Suzy Salamon, who was named after a murdered sibling, but in the Naves family, the children are aware of their names' origins and of the former lives of their half-sister and cousin. Moreover, these names are understood as nodes of memory that offer links into the past. Naves includes specific details, not only about Éva but also about her parents' 'compromise'. The decision to forgo using the name in everyday life to prevent the first child from 'shimmer[ing] in the air around them' demonstrates a high degree of awareness concerning the impact of the traumatic past on the children born after. The result is positive. Here, the knowledge of the past which is not shrouded in traumatic silence makes the children's relationship with their names and their namesakes less problematic than in other cases, and Naves' memory work is a natural part of family life.

### **Migrant family names**

Names allow memory work to focus on the prewar European past and, in a limited and often involuntary way, on the Holocaust, but as an

'outer' node in the memory network, parental naming choices also tell a story of the transcultural histories of Holocaust families and their negotiation of life in their new postwar home countries.<sup>2</sup> The preceding analysis has shown that often the postwar children growing up in the Anglophone diaspora had an 'English' name for everyday usage and a Hebrew name for ritual. However, when only an Anglo (or a specifically Christian name) was given, it could indicate a refusal to partake in the Jewish tradition of memorializing lost loved ones in children's names. This might be due to the lasting impact of trauma, an attempt to reject the past, or a wish to assimilate.

A Second Generation child with an explicitly Christian name features in Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust* when she sets the scene for the book by describing the New York survivor community in which she grew up in. The family life of her childhood friend Mary exemplifies the post-traumatic aftershocks of the genocide: the atmosphere in Mary's home was one of deep sadness, suffused with the unspoken presence of past horrors. This was apparent in every act of the survivors: 'Once Mary told me that they were afraid it [their house] would burn down or be looted if they left. I accepted that without a question, as if it was a natural consideration. Neither did I wonder why they had given their only child a Christian name' (1988: 16). The reasons underlying the survivors' resistance to leaving their house and the choice of the most Christian of female names for the only daughter of Yiddish-speaking parents were an open secret to Epstein even when she was a young girl. Moreover, during her Second Generation memory exploration – the research and writing of *Children of the Holocaust* – Epstein does not discuss why they chose to name their daughter 'Mary'. The deeply ingrained fears that led these survivors not to openly proclaim their Jewishness are self-explanatory to her: she knows how potent the Holocaust past can be, and she also knows that names are nodes of memory with multiple links to the past and the present. Mary's parents' worries are perpetuated by their new lives in the United States: they are still Jewish in a non-Jewish national context. Naming a child is a negotiation of life, and they chose full assimilation.

Names are public markers, providing the societal context with insights into the life, religion, and ethnicity of a family. In the diaspora, Jews have a long history of dual names: a Hebrew name for ritual use and one for usage in Gentile circles (Wilson 1998: 243ff). In this corpus, especially the North American texts portray a casual side-by-side use of a Hebrew name along with an Anglo name to make life easier in and for the societal context.<sup>3</sup> This is not surprising. The social historian

Stephen Wilson has shown that among immigrant groups in the United States, Jews have always been the most willing to change their names to avoid disadvantages caused by visible ethnic markers (1998: 305ff). At the same time, many migrants were forced to change their names at Ellis Island (or other points of entry), but such incidents do not come up in my corpus.

No matter where the text was written, national context, familial communication patterns, and the level of engagement in memory work are mutually influential. Nonetheless, the issue of names as a migration marker is unevenly distributed among the authors from different national backgrounds. In the Australian examples, having a Jewish name or a combination of Jewish and Anglo names goes mostly unchallenged, but Ruth Wajnryb and Mark Raphael Baker present their names as connected to both migration and the earlier past. In addition, having a non-Jewish name is not questioned in the North American texts and is rarely even mentioned, which suggests a general acceptance of the practice to ease life in a monolingual country. Here, I will only discuss one example drawn from Lev Raphael's work concerning names as a migration node of memory. The outlier in the material is the United Kingdom. In a country that did not consider itself multicultural or a country of immigration until the late twentieth century, name choices that reveal ethnic origins are considered problematic. This issue is raised in all of the texts included in my corpus.

Ruth Wajnryb's thoughts about naming reveal an interesting interplay between memorialization and the effects of her family's immigration to Australia. What she finds in her name is a celebration of her parents' new homeland: she is told that she was named in honor of the daughter of their visa sponsors, who also supported them during their hard first years in the country. To Wajnryb, it is self-explanatory what the name Ruth stood for in the eyes of her parents: 'This other little Ruth – a few years older than me – symbolized everything about the new country: youth, health, innocence, the future' (2001: 18). Australia became the home of a comparatively high number of Jews due to humanitarian immigration schemes that were implemented during the postwar years, resulting in the country's opening its doors to some of Europe's most desperate displaced persons (Rutland 1988: 225ff). Moreover, by going to Australia, the survivors were moving as far away as possible from the locations of the Nazi genocide of European Jewry. As mentioned previously, the situation of migrant-survivors in Australia is seen as generally positive, and the Wajnrybs' glorification of the country reflects this perception.

But the naming was also an act of memory. Wajnryb had always been aware that her middle names, Marie Eugene, commemorated two murdered grandmothers about whom she knew little, as her 'parents lived on the cusp between the imperative to remember and tell and the imperative to forget and move on' (18). But even as a child, Wajnryb sensed that her first name also meant something more than a celebration of the promising future that Australia represented: 'I knew there was more to the story than I was being told but I dared not ask' (18). Only later in life, when she is fully engaged in memory work, does she find out its true significance. After much questioning of her mother, she learns that this choice of 'Ruth' was also connected to the past. A woman the survivor knew had lost her daughter, named Karen, during their incarceration in Vilna Ghetto, and had asked Wajnryb's mother to name any daughter she was to give birth to after her child, but the survivor could not deal with this request. Despite the patriotic rationale given for their ultimate decision, Wajnryb knows that 'the choice was not so much of "Ruth" as of "not Karen"' (19). Here, memory work is once again proven to be a continuous process that changes over time and a necessary tool, both for learning about the past and integrating memory into the present.

In the Australian family memoir of Mark Raphael Baker, *The Fiftieth Gate: A Journey through Memory*, survivor mother Genia is portrayed as decisively turning to the present: 'Her first, Johnny, was named by American singer Mary Ford, or rather by her hit-song of 1953, hummed by my mother while feeding milk to her infant child. "Johnny is the boy for me"' (1997: 252). These name choices are significant attempts at lessening cultural Otherness. But John and Mark are not just English names. More significantly, they are Christian names, the names of apostles and (according to family legend) allusions to contemporary music. Popular culture might seem to be a random source for a name, but here, naming children according to the customs of the surrounding culture is an attempt to minimize the family's lack of 'Australianness', or what the media scholar John Fiske et al., in an analysis of the country's collective notions of a national identity, call an 'Australian cultural accent' (1987: 175). However, Baker, who ascribes a great deal of meaning to names as memory nodes, reads these choices as an attempt 'to obliterate not only my parents' foreignness but the memories attached to it' (252). Not unlike Wajnryb's mother's decision not to name her daughter after a murdered child, this parental decision is explained as being motivated by the hope of creating distance from the European past.



This changes with the next generation. Baker – who emphasizes through the subtitle of his book (*A Journey into Memory*) that memory work drives his writing – longs to counteract his parents' choices by connecting to the prewar family. In fact, he wishes that he had been named after one of the Polish relatives: 'If it had been my choice, I would have been named after a forgotten relative, one of those nineteenth-century uncles: Shmuel-Gimpel, Isser-Idel, Israel-David' (1997: 252). This comment indicates a desire to recreate a family genealogy that crosses temporal and physical distances: Baker wants to link himself to a chain of generations that reaches back into Eastern European family memory. He even contemplates changing his last name back to the original Bekiermaszyn, but ultimately decides against it in light of the impracticality of such a name in monolingual Australia. However, he chooses another method of extending the pre-Holocaust family line, stating, 'So I decided to put the past back into my name' (254). By selecting the name 'Raphael' as his new middle name, he connects himself to 'the earliest ancestor I can find on our family tree. "Who's he?" my father asks, but all I can tell him is that he was born in Szydlowiec at the beginning of the nineteenth century' (254).

His parents, for whom Jewish Eastern Europe is part of living memory and who did their best to become Australians, cannot understand his decision. When Baker explains that Raphael was the angel of healing, his parents are at a loss: "'Is something the matter?" my father asks with concern. "You're cuckoo!" my mother dismisses the name I have placed within me' (254). Baker's use of language is evocative: 'to put the past back into my name', or even more so, 'the name I have placed within me'. This wording emphasizes his wish to incorporate the past in embodied form into his self-understanding and identity as Baker becomes part of the family tree he has recreated in his quest for a usable past. His survivor parents, however, cannot understand this longing to make memory a tangible part of everyday life. His father worries about his son's health, while his mother outright rejects it as foolish. This is an exceptional case in the corpus. None of the other authors describes bringing an old family name back into usage; however, it is not unlike the restoration of family objects that hold the promise of links to a longer past. The issue also reflects the difference between the values that survivors and their children ascribe to objects – for the children, both nodes connect them with the family as a community; for the survivor parents, losses dominate their associations. For them, assimilation might have been a way to decrease cultural Otherness and the displacing effects of migration. It is not a

disconnect from a usable past in the way that it is for the memory-working Second Generation.

In his recent memoir *My Germany*, a sequel to *Writing a Jewish Life*, Lev Raphael describes how he, as an American child and teenager, felt about his first name. At the time, Raphael's first name was not the telltale Hebrew 'Lev'. His parents had given him the Anglicized version 'Lewis' in memory of his murdered uncle Lev. As with most of the survivors portrayed in his oeuvre, the author's own parents were also mostly silent about their past. But while English, 'Lewis' still carried the indicators of Jewishness, another unspoken subject: it was a common assimilated name. In his memoir, Raphael writes about how he used to long to be publically identified as an all-American boy: 'When I was young, I even imagined having a non-Jewish name, like Tom Danbury, a name I had heard in an Abbot and Costello movie. Think of it: Tom Sawyer crossed with the name of a New England town. What could be more American?' (2009: 84). Taking a cue from popular culture, young Raphael imagines himself into the narratives of his family's adopted homeland, wishing to be as American as Tom Sawyer and the Mayflower connotations of New England towns. This desire indicates a wish to fit into the American context, its cultural memory, and national identity. At the same time, it is a rejection of the markers of an immigrant family, as expressed in his embarrassment over names and his parents' accents. The parents had attempted to lessen their obvious migrant status, but for the young son, this was not enough.

Born in 1954, however, Raphael was not the victim of the public resistance against postwar immigration to the United States. The initially restrictive immigration policy was reversed with the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, which opened American doors to a 200,000 DPs per annum. The 1950 amendments to the Act allowed even more survivors to enter the United States (Dinnerstein 1982: 183ff). The historian Bernard Wasserstein estimates that by 1952, 137,450 Jewish survivors, of whom about half were classified as DPs, had immigrated (1996: 32). By the time Raphael was old enough to contemplate the implications of his name, American Jewry was well on its way to developing into the largest, most important diaspora community. This historical fact suggests that his urge to have an unmarked name also had to do with the desire of a young man trying to free himself from the oppressive past, not unlike the younger selves reflected in Sucher's Rachel and Pilcer's Zosha-Zoe.

His parents' secrecy and the lack of knowledge about the past combined with its oppressive presence triggered Raphael's desire to engage in memory work, which can be charted in his writings. His

personal exploration of issues connected to the Holocaust past leads to a new self-understanding that entails an openly Jewish identity. On a visit to Israel, he met his uncle Wolf and communicated with him in Yiddish, the language of the family's European past, which opened a connection to more than the uncle. At the same time, Raphael experienced a contemporary Jewish way of life, which had an impact on his identity creation processes and his memory work: It 'seemed dishonest to me to be named after Lev yet not have his actual name' (2009: 99). As a result, he decided to change his name to Lev, 'liberating it from its Anglo-Saxon prison of "Lewis"' (98), much like Baker's decision, indicating that the European past has become usable.

Texts from the United Kingdom provide the most evidence of the challenges and the contextual impact involved in the naming choices of survivor-migrants. Notably, every British author included in this study contemplates names between nodes of memory and ethnic markers. This demonstrates that memory work also takes on postwar lives and that in the case of the United Kingdom names have particular resonance. Names are a node of memory that is turned outward and not merely confined to the inner workings of the family. Here, context matters. North American texts are less concerned with what the world might perceive in names. Indeed, in most of the material, the issue is not even considered, whereas all the texts from the United Kingdom engage with these questions. This difference is grounded in the respective societal attitudes toward ethnicity and multiculturalism in general and toward Judaism in particular, a distinction that goes beyond the majority perspective on Jewish communities. Bryan Cheyette, a literary scholar, argues that the difference in national self-perception between the United States and the culturally hegemonic United Kingdom has had an influence on the self-perception of the two countries' Jewish populations: 'Whereas American Jews can constantly reinvent themselves using prevalent American mythologies, British "national culture" is made up of a particularly homogenous and unchanging construction of the past' (1996: 22). The British conception of nationality, which is based on a monolithic narrative of the past, means that the issue of naming entails different connotations. Moreover, the country's complex relationship with its Jews also causes family memory to be more strictly confined to the inner workings of the family.

Robin Hirsch's experiences as the child of German-Jewish prewar refugees who tried to be inconspicuous were introduced in the previous chapter. Studies have shown that British Jews have a history of refraining from public declarations of their Jewishness (cf. Berghahn 1984 and

Brook 1989). In Robin Hirsch's *Last Dance at Hotel Kempinski*, the question of memorialization through a name is not even mentioned. This, of course, can be explained by the fact that Hirsch was born in 1942, before the family's losses were fully known. However, it also suggests that an ethnically marked first name for their son was never considered an option in this family, who once were members of Germany's assimilated and socially integrated pre-Hitler Jewry.

Hirsch relates that, while his name was supposed to help him fit in, his parents' main consideration was that it needed to be pronounceable to relatives dispersed across various countries, a reminder of the survivors' transcultural histories: 'doubtless all over the world German Jews took note of the event, breathed a collective sigh of relief, and said, in German or the various other languages they were painfully acquiring: "*Ach ja, Robin, Gott sei Dank, a name we can pronounce*"' (1995: 18). With his off-hand tone, Hirsch highlights the effects of immigration: to the ears of the London-born son, the survivors' pronunciation of his name will always be marked. Neither German nor 'the various other languages they were painfully acquiring' would allow these involuntary migrants to pronounce 'Robin' as an Englishman would – the initial 'R' would betray a German accent. The previous chapter illustrated how Hirsch uses intra-sentential diglossic switching to portray the situation in which he grew up: between cultures and languages. Not including a translation introduces the Otherness of the immigrants into the text.

Indeed, the family's German accents were so prominent a marker and such a big problem for the young man, who desperately wants to be English, that he opens his solo performance 'MOSAIC: Fragments of a Jewish Life'<sup>4</sup> with the above sentence. In the show he not only uses the original German words but also playfully employs a strong stereotypical German accent:

That my parents couldn't pronounce it was of concern, of course, only to me. My father, if he could remember the name of his firstborn son, called me 'RRRawbeen' with that long rolling guttural German r which to this day gives me the shudders, and my mother would attempt to ingratiate herself with some appalling endearment like 'Robienchen'. This was as English as it ever got. (18)

Every time his parents said his name, the young Hirsch was reminded that he could not be the regular English boy he so badly wanted to be. The burden of being born to immigrants is overwhelming here, even when described in ironic tones. The father's German pronunciation of

his name still bothers him in retrospect, as does his mother's unwelcome diminutive. Interestingly, it is the son, rather than the migrant parents, who suffers from the Othering the name and accents introduce. He, much like other Second Generation children, wants to be unmarked.

Hirsch's focus on the cultural difference of his migrant family, however, shows that the oppressive burden of the past is less prevalent here. Indeed, he discusses openly how not only his parents' accents but also his last name made his social situation a challenge:

Growing up after the war, like the children of other German Jews who spoke German or at least the kind of English the Nazis spoke in war films, we knew, without having to articulate it, that it didn't exactly facilitate the much-hoped-for assimilation if one arrived at school each day under the burden of a name like *Treppengeländer*. (18)

His parents had tried to give their son a first name that would help him blend into postwar English society, but the real problem proves to be the family name 'Hirsch', which betrays a German background. Indeed, the author does not feel the need to go into the implications of what it meant to be born Jewish and be taken for a German in postwar England. All he says is that when dreaming up alternatives, they were recognizably 'English'. Much like Raphael, he imagined different names for himself, but in his case, they did not need to come from British cultural memory. All his fantasy name required was that it 'clearly wasn't German at all. Or Jewish, for that matter' (20).

Victor Jeleniewski Seidler's *Shadows of the Shoah: Jewish Identity and Belonging*, combines personal memories with a study of group identity and Jewish life in postwar Britain. For Seidler, being a British Jew translated into a need to clearly differentiate between a public and a private self. Names are public markers and therefore a prime example of this challenge, and he uses this theme to explore larger sociocultural considerations. His refugee parents had attempted to live the assimilatory motto of 'Being a Jew at home but a man on the street', namely, publicly keeping their Jewish identities well hidden and being as indistinguishable as possible.

This attitude was also revealed in the choice of their son's name, which attested to their participation in the collective public spirit: 'I was born in England in 1945. I shared with many others the name of "Victor" for this had been a "victory" that was to be remembered and celebrated in the streets' (2000: 3). For Seidler, such national implications of his name are problematic. He views his parents' attempt to fit in while easing the

next generation's situation in a hegemonic society – his older brother is called John (Seidler 2000: 24) – as an indication of their discomfort and internalized fears: 'But I was also to carry this mark as a sign of protection for it was a promise of what I was to become – "English", like everyone else – if I could not already be' (3).

During his childhood and adolescence Seidler had internalized his parents' projections, and having an 'unmarked' name was helpful: 'As children growing up in the 1950s, we did not really knowingly embody this sense of defeat for we were often left with very ambivalent feelings towards our own Jewishness. It was so much easier to think that we were English "like everyone else"' (5). Yet his memoir, which chronicles his memory work, reveals a growing identification with the Jewish people and the gradual development of his Jewish identity. Here, it becomes evident that Seidler felt forced into a certain role by his parents and national context. There is more to him than being 'English', and one of the ways this multiplicity of identities shows is in his names:

I was called 'Victor' for the public world. This was a form of self-protection and in the 1950s it was still called my 'Christian' name; but I also carried the name 'Jacob' which was an inner name. It was my Jewish name or my Hebrew name. But it was not necessarily a name I felt easier with. It remained hidden and was only spoken within the rituals of the synagogue. It remained a private name and at some level I felt uneasy, even ashamed, in relation to it. (5)

The disparity between the private and public selves presents itself to the world in the existence of both a 'public' and an 'inner' name. Seidler, however, experienced his two names as creating a 'rift' (5) in his being, an underlying and only gradually resolving tension. He experiences the onset of his conscious memory work late, as numerous factors postponed it: the monolithic British society of the postwar years, the self-doubts of its Jewish communities, the worries and hopes of refugee parents that were evident in their behavior, and his discomfort with being 'the Other'. As in many examples from the corpus, Seidler emphasizes that names are indeed on the border between public and private lives. In his case, names connect the familial immigrant background with the question of Jewishness and the new social questions set off by the beginning of multiculturalism in the United Kingdom.

A further example of the specific UK memory culture is Anne Karpf, who in her memoir *The War After: Living with the Holocaust* repeatedly

challenges the position of Jews in the country and the relatively hesitant development of remembrance. She is another London-born author who emphasizes the difficulties of having a foreign name in a context that is uncomfortable with strong signs of ethnic identity and marked Otherness even today. Angered by this attitude, she insists on the recognition of the foreignness of her last name. Memory work allowed her to take ownership of her ethnic roots as part of a usable past:

My own name is routinely misspelled, mispronounced and even joked about by people who assume that I don't mind and even expect me to participate. Though I used try [sic] to ease their discomfort by doing it myself first, now I remain militantly, stonily silent, while my interlocutor tries to quip his or her way out of having to learn to spell or pronounce an unfamiliar name. In fact the British inability to spell or pronounce any name beyond Smith or Jones is part of its general blindness towards other cultures, the linguistic equivalent of 'they all look the same'. (1997: 216–17)

At the time when Karpf was writing *The War After*, the composition and self-perception of British society was different than in the postwar period that Hirsch and Seidler describe, but (in Karpf's experience) the majority behavior had not changed. But nonetheless, after she has learned to live with her family legacy – which entails difference – she requires that her surroundings acknowledge and accept that she is neither a Smith nor a Jones. This is in contrast to her parents, who dropped the double 'f' from their original name, Karpff. Indeed, memory work necessitates that her Jewishness and thus the memory of the Karpf family's losses are not silenced or ignored.

Moreover, she decides to honor her family's memory in 'bequeathing my children my apparently intractable surname, along with foreign-sounding first names' (217). It is not unusual for Second Generation migrants to retain 'some kind of ethnic identity via names' (Wilson 1998: 305), thereby emphasizing family ties. Furthermore, multiculturalism and its celebration of ethnic roots have developed around the world. However, in the case of Second Generation immigrants who are also children of survivors and invested in memory work, there is more to this decision: Karpf claims that she named her children after family members with the intention of passing on a legacy of pre-Holocaust family memory. Thus, like in the case of Jesse in Pilcer's *The Holocaust Kid*, the grandchildren of survivors are made part of a long family

history and genealogy that did not start with Auschwitz, migration, or the postwar rebuilding of lives.

### **Names in Second Generation memory work**

Names are a node of memory that functions at the intersection between family and public spheres, drawing together temporal and transcultural elements of family memory. At the same time, the Second Generation – the children named – embody these mnemonic links. As such, the memory node is in direct dialogue with and serves as an essential part of the self. In that regard, it is deeply relational, since parental naming choices establish a distinct connection with one (or more) specific relative(s).

And yet, for children and teenagers who have not yet consciously set out on a journey of Second Generation memory work, being named after a family member who perished is difficult. Dina Wardi argues that when the traumatic past is involuntarily imposed on children in the form of a name, it can cause ‘a sense of deep semantic confusion and absolute fragmentation of their identity. The names they bear represent the identities of different figures, various segments of their personalities’ (1992: 98). In several of the examples discussed here, sharing a name with a Nazi victim within one’s own family frames it as a constant reminder of loss and violent death – if not for the self, then for the parents who performed this act of memory. A sense of semantic confusion is indeed evident in some of the texts that recount an engagement with names at a younger age – for instance, in Sonia Pilcer’s deictic merging that creates an indistinct reference and a mnemonic encumbrance for the Second Generation protagonist. In other cases, the act of memorialization can even result in the feeling that one is a replacement for a victim, most explicitly expressed in Lev Raphael’s fictional portrayal of the issue in ‘Fresh Air’, in which a child’s name serves as a memorial for an entire family. Feeling burdened through one’s own name with the task of memorialization and, even if only imagined, of personifying the parents’ losses, is challenging: ‘The most intimate and personal thing about you – your name – carries overwhelming emotional significance to others but try as you might, you cannot make yourself authentically connect with such emotions’ (Wajnryb 2001: 149). This passage emphasizes how, early in life, voluntary memory work for the self and the family does not seem important. In fact, the younger selves in the texts are generally portrayed



as seeking liberation from the past through distance. Psychoanalytical studies on children of survivors, which conceive of names only as an emotional impediment, do not take into account the development of memory work as it is presented in the literary texts: the engagement with the past is a process that depends on both personal and contextual factors, such as the increase in public Holocaust memory.

Over time, and with a growth in conscious memory work, the understanding of names changes. Rather than being experienced as an oppressive burden, they come to be seen as an abundantly linked node of family memory. The parents' losses are recognized as absences (that were dialectically ascribed to the self) in transmitted family memory, and the fragmented stories of murdered family members are explored more thoroughly to fill gaps with knowledge – as Wajnryb puts it, to 'authentically connect'. Coming to terms with one's name, in the best-case scenario through factual knowledge, transforms what was recognized as a lack of knowledge into a link through and for memory work. This link can even allow creating a relationship with someone that was killed before one's birth. Cheryl Pearl Sucher and Bernice Eisenstein exemplify such relationships that are shaped by commemoration and responsibility. Both developed forms of personal commemoration and could thus come to terms with the indistinct and unresolved grief for relatives defined by absences in memory. These are links uncovered in memory work that connect the Second Generation to the past, and any bit of knowledge makes it usable.

When conceiving of names as a node within the network of post-Holocaust family memory, memory work takes on both the time before and during the destruction because these nodes often connect to family members who were victims. But there is more in a name: Second Generation names also highlight familial continuity, embody postwar lives and choices, and relate a story of transcultural movements and the negotiation of new national contexts. The palimpsestic nature of Second Generation names illustrates that migration and its effects play a major role in these families, even though this has long been considered a side issue in Holocaust studies. The United Kingdom, a country marked by a complex relationship with its Jewish communities and a self-conceptualization in terms of ethnic hegemony, is a striking example of how contexts shape postwar name choices. Clearly, this period is significant in the life of the survivor family, and memory work on names naturally includes this period. Contextual factors – where we live, how diversity is conceived of in

this country – as well as a degree of acceptance of the Holocaust past through memory work can even raise questions concerning the future of naming traditions within such families. When considering their many links, their long reach across temporal and physical distances, and their evolving connotations, names present as an active node within Second Generation memory.

# 4

## Bodies

In recent years, in line with a general focus on the human body in the humanities, the corporeal aspects of memory have also been explored in the field of memory studies, concerning both collective and individual forms of embodied memory. Paul Connerton, a social anthropologist, argues that embodied practices are a significant way in which we remember on a societal level – for example, in the body’s performative integration in reenactments and rituals (Connerton 1989: 172). Tribal markings or the circumcision of Jewish men as the physical sign of the covenant between God and his people indicate that those who carry them are part of a certain group. The interest in the individual embodiment of memory extends not only to neuroscience and the physical paths of cultural memory but also to explorations of how our bodies are literally and metaphorically inscribed by the past: in the body’s language of markings and symptoms, the story of a life becomes visible and readable.

The philosopher Edward S. Casey defines body memory as ‘memory that is intrinsic to the body, to its own ways of remembering: how we remember in and by and through the body’ (1987: 147). Egyptologist Jan Assmann’s observation that memory manifests itself in different dimensions – some external, some internal – was explored earlier in connection with objects and material memory. Body memory entails both of these dimensions: some marks are visible, others less so. Family resemblances, scars, or tattoos give memory a physical form, but body memory can also be internal. For instance, a certain trigger can unleash physiological reactions or obsessive behaviors related to the past.

As with all nodes in Second Generation memory work, bodies are also linked to both the Holocaust and the pre-Holocaust family past. Thus on the one hand we encounter embodied traces of the parents’ survival, be

it physical, emotional, or an influence on the conception of the body. The embodiment of the Holocaust experience also carries over to the way the Second Generation reads and experiences the traces of memory written on and into the body. On the other hand, human bodies are also the physical extension of a familial line, and through resemblances and many other connections, memory work can go beyond the genocide. In this chapter, in which both the body of the survivors and that of their offspring are the focus of memory work, the multidimensional and interwoven structure of family memory comes to the fore in the physical connection and continuity between earlier generations, survivors, and their children.

The cultural memory of the Holocaust in the public sphere is suffused with images of physical suffering, as symbolized by the figure of the *Muselmann*, the camps' living dead whom Primo Levi called 'the men in decay' (1986: 63). Emil Fackenheim, a philosopher and theologian, described such human shells as 'the truly original contribution of the Third Reich to civilization. The true *novum* of the New Order' (1994: 215). The physicality of the survivor body itself – most prominently in the Auschwitz tattoo – is entwined with the narrative testimony in our conception of survival. In her study *The Era of the Witness*, the historian Annette Wieviorka argues that the embodiment of the Holocaust experience has been crucial in providing survivors with a recognized social identity. They are conceived of as bearers of history: 'the witness became an embodiment of memory [*un homme-mémoire*], attesting to the past and to the continuing presence of the past' (2006: 88). Today, as survivors are passing away, the extent of the public conception of the experience of survival as embodied shows in technological developments such as the creation of survivor holograms, to give future generations a sense of an 'authentic' encounter (Katz 2013).

Despite the survivors' role in cultural memory, Second Generation texts demonstrate that only some embodiments of survivor memory appear in public testimony; indeed, it is mostly restricted to the intimate setting of the family. Here, they often appear as unconscious eruptions, be it nightmares, obsessive behaviors, or other bodily effects of violence. The children of survivors were the involuntary audience for this physical prolongation of persecution, and many of the excerpts explored here connect to childhood experiences, which makes the body an instinctive, albeit challenging, area of memory work. Like with other nodes of memory, certain elements – be it trauma or the destruction of archives – impede memory work. In the case of bodies, impediments multiply parental trauma, for example, by playing a silencing role.

Moreover, the body in Western culture is socially constructed as an area of taboos, a complicating factor in attempts to consider it as a node in a memory network: reading other people's bodies always verges on the intrusive, and even more so when these bodies have been victimized. In this case, it additionally requires the child's implicit acknowledgment of parental vulnerability and suffering.

The combination of the materiality, tangibility and readability of the Holocaust past in personal and cultural memory inscriptions, along with the intimacy the body evokes and the ethical limits of representation, makes this a particularly complex memory node. This interplay also establishes the main questions concerning the embodiment of Holocaust memory: Can the children of survivors see the body of their mother or father as that of a survivor? Can physical suffering be a link in family memory? How far can memory work go in its urge to replace absence with knowledge when the (traumatized) body acts as a node of memory?

In Second Generation memory work on bodies, certain issues and areas of the body are recurrent. This chapter only contains a selection of the many topics the authors discuss in relation to this rich memory node. Mirroring the corpus, I give primary attention to the modifications of the survivor body and body conceptions that resulted from persecution and survival. In cases in which memory work also turns to the Second Generation body concerning, for instance, living with a 'Jewish body', I analyze both in connection with each other.

The hardships of hiding, ghettos, and concentration camps are inscribed in permanent and literal 'body writing' on survivor bodies (Assmann 2011: 230). This is my first area of interest; however, even here we see that some visible markings are not necessarily self-explanatory but require a verbal account of their origins. Behaviors and physiological reactions triggered by experiences that recall past events are embodied forms of memory, which are unconscious and yet prone to erupt at any time. Trauma, defined as that which cannot be spoken about, is given visible form through the body, and the children of the sufferers can identify reactions that uninitiated observers might disregard. But identification is not an explanation and, as mentioned above, verbalizations are not easily forthcoming. Sexual violence in the camps, another topic of this chapter, is an element of body memory that is too shrouded in silence to serve as a link or even be readable. It represents more of a taboo than any other form of physical suffering and manifests as a destructive family secret that demonstrates the limits of Second Generation memory work.

The tattoo on survivors' forearms, in cultural memory one of the most identifiable markers of victimhood, literally carries Auschwitz into post-Holocaust family life. Throughout this study, the links to the period of persecution (for instance, in Holocaust-era mementos) have already shown themselves to be challenging or even blocked for memory work. In the case of the tattoo, Second Generation authors tend to use certain strategies, such as visual texts or the inclusion of survivor interviews, to narrativize the parental experience. The remediation of oral testimony in the texts emphasizes the relational aspect of memory work not only in content but also in form. The Auschwitz tattoo also comes up in connection with Second Generation bodies. This potent marker, its place within both cultural memory and family memory, and the immediacy of the marked body create an affective force field into which the Second Generation self is inserted.

Considerations of the body also revolve around links on a scale larger than family: specifically links to the Jewish community as an ethnic group, which bring up the long history of anti-Semitic conceptions of the 'Jewish body'. This issue refers to the mortal danger during periods of persecution and the unworked-through fear that can still be active in survivors' minds long after the persecution has ended. This can be revealed, for instance, when the religious commandment to circumcise one's sons and thus physically mark them as Jewish is called into question.

Hair is the most prominent element of body memory in the corpus. It is a gendered carrier of memory with links to a range of issues, beyond referring back to the experience of being shaved in the camps. Discourses opposing blond with 'marked' dark hair show that in some cases, National Socialist notions of racial Jewishness have become an embodied norm that manifests in body conceptions. This form of trauma-induced mimicry also brings up issues of whiteness and alterity in connection with migration.

In the last section of this chapter, 'Connecting and interpreting Second Generation bodies', I consider literal embodied memory and body memory as a trope, for instance, in various metaphors such as genes, blood, or mother's milk, which are called upon to illustrate post-memory's sense of proximity to the parents' survival. The frequency of body metaphors suggests that they provide a paradigm for describing the familial transmission of memory that precedes conscious, voluntary memory work. In its most literal form, embodied family memory is transmitted to the next generation as a physical resemblance to relatives whom they will never meet. This link to one specific family member echoes issues discussed in Chapter 3 with regard to the connection

through names, with resemblances here being the work of nature rather than the conscious commemorative choice of the parents. This last section once again shows that memory work is never only about the past. We all perceive a correspondence between our bodies and our selves, and the prominence to the Second Generation body in the corpus suggests that it is connected to establishing one's place within a chain of generations.

### **Written on the body**

In the context of the Holocaust, few body memories are innocent, and their physical traces tend to be affectively charged. After all, 'experiencing intense emotions (both negative and positive) blurs the Cartesian mind-body distinction' (Misztal 2003: 80). Indeed, it has been shown that 'emotional memories' – those formed under conditions of arousal – are more vivid, accurate, and enduring than ordinary, everyday memories (Schacter 1996: 192–217). Among them, it is in particular memories of physical and emotional suffering that leave the victim's body marked. One poignant example is the physical inscription of traumatic memories, as first became evident on a large scale in soldiers returning from the Great War (cf. Winter 2006). Not only had combat disfigured soldiers' bodies, those suffering from shell shock also brought the trauma home on deeper levels. Many of these traumatized bodies replayed traumatic situations over and over again involuntarily, with the sufferers unable to stop by their own will. Scholars had long hoped for scientific evidence that the body and not the brain controlled reactions to traumatic events, but only in the 1990s did the Dutch psychotherapist Bessel van der Kolk (1994) show that 'the body keeps the score' in cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). His research proved that trauma indeed leaves a physical residue in the neurobiology of the body, for instance, through higher hormonal levels, changes in the nervous system, and weaker immune responses. These complex physiological processes stay in the nether regions of the brain and are inaccessible by the frontal lobes of logical reasoning.

'Trauma', which comes from the Greek word for 'wound', is often described in terms of a blow or injury to the tissue of body and mind. Wounds and their corollaries, scars, are frequently used literally and metaphorically to illustrate the suffering of the Holocaust survivor. In this corpus, the scar as a trope for the residue of trauma appears far more often than actual scarring on the survivors' skin. That physical marks are perhaps less common a theme than one might expect points to the

challenges memory work faces when analyzing violence committed against one's parents.

Ruth Wajnryb offers a rare example when she relates how her father's scar was part of the intimate, embodied family memory:

I knew too, when I took Dad's hand, to take the right one, not the left, because when I grabbed the left he would suddenly wince in pain, and when I looked closely I saw some scars and malformation on the inner side. I don't know when I found out that this was from a severe beating in the camps. I think I sensed a link to the war long before I knew the specific detail. This perhaps was because the dramatic pulling away and momentary pain across his face happened repeatedly, without explanation. (2001: 207)

Even as a child, Wajnryb knew that touching her father's scarred hand would cause him pain that went beyond the physical, and she also knew that this was related to his suffering during 'the war': his body functioned as a link to earlier times. Neither the parents nor the child spoke about the state of his hand and the story behind it, but young Wajnryb innately made a connection between the scars, her father's dramatic reaction when they were touched, and the contamination of this part of his body. And yet, the physical remnants of the past seemed to disappear in everyday life. To the daughter it was an ingrained reaction to take his unscarred right hand, but to actually see the scars, she had to consciously look for them. Wajnryb does not remember when and how she was told about the violence that caused them, but the description 'severe beating in the camps' is not explored in any greater detail.

The reader acquires only a little more information than what is contained in Wajnryb's childhood experience of facts 'without explanation', raising questions: Is the awareness of another person's trauma an ethical limit to memory work? Does the sufferer's silence prevent memory work? In the case of the Second Generation, in whom we have already seen memory work stalling in regard to objects that signify the death of family or in regard to the unspeakable subject of murdered siblings, these questions are even more intricate: can one's parents be imagined as the victims of physical abuse, in particular, as the victims of genocidal perpetrators who intended not only their suffering but also their elimination?

The cause of the pain cannot be explored, but its traces carry the past into present family life, and the metaphorical use of 'scar' appears frequently in the corpus. Exemplary is Thane Rosenbaum, for whom the scar is a symbol: 'For them, the scarring ran deep and, in fact, had traded places with the surrounding skin' (Raphael 1999: 3). The survivors are so



intensely marked that the traumatic experience has become the center of their being, and unmarked areas are the exception. Scars are an image for describing the unfathomable past, the perpetual pain, and its presence in family life, as the authors attempt to explore and explicate experiences that tend to stay unspoken.

Lev Raphael takes on the metaphorical use of the word 'scar' in his first book, *Dancing on Tisha B'Av*. Published in 1990, this collection of short stories is, on the surface, much more concerned with the effects of transmitted memory than with memory work, the prevalent issue in his later work, especially his memoirs. In 'Winter Eyes', Stefan, the young protagonist, comes from a family in which the past remains unspoken, but its undercurrents are palpable and destructive. His mother, suffering from the effects of the camps, has been taken to a mental hospital. The father and the uncle, who is involved in bringing up Stefan, have decided not to tell the boy what is going on, which causes him to think that his mother left because of him. The uncle tries to calm Stefan, but his attempt to explain without betraying too much of the adults' secrets does not work: "It's not their fault. We're all scarred". "Scarred?" "Inside, it's inside" (1990: 46). Stefan is only offered the word 'scar' as a trope, but he does not understand this metaphorical use and is as confused as before.

When the boy later falls and hits his head, and the first thing he says is "Will I have a scar?" Stefan managed, unable to open his eyes. "Yes". Stefan smiled and hugged Scotty. He would be like them now that he had a scar. His mommy would always stay and his daddy would never hit him again or be angry' (47). The boy feels his family's 'scarring' in their behavior, and through his own literal wound he hopes to become closer to them and to finally understand what he senses but cannot comprehend. Raphael's use of 'scar' highlights the development of memory work: even the young child is driven to it, but he lacks the faculties to pursue it in a conscious way. As an adult writer, he employs the image so that his readers can themselves uncover the fact of the older generation's survival.

Raphael also uses the motif of the scar in his memoir *Writing a Jewish Life*. Here, 'Scars' is the title of a selection of short vignettes of childhood memories, most of which touch on his difficult relationship with his father. The elements of problematic parenting on which he focuses are all connected to and influenced by the father's survivor status. The last vignette describes a scene with a scarred boy, not unlike the fictional Stefan:

My father has left me scarred. [...] The story: My mother said she asked him to put me to bed, several times, because I looked tired. I fell somehow against the glass-topped blond wood table, ripping

open an eyebrow, needing stitches. I have the scar – a line, a space where nothing grows. I see the fifties room – [...] I see it all but have no memories. I have the scar. (2006: 116–17)

With the titular use of the word ‘scars’, the Second Generation author signals that each vignette represents a painful memory. This last scar, however, is a physical mark that can be traced back to his father’s actions, caused by the survivor’s emotional scarring. Stefan had also hit his head on a table – indicating the autobiographical source of *Winter Eyes* – but he views the scar as a path toward understanding the unexplained and silenced parental experience. Raphael’s texts of personal and family memory employ the metaphor of the scar to describe the Second Generation situation: they themselves are scarred by their parents’ traumatic marks, which are carried into the present as an absence. In his case, they constitute the structure of his memoir, which is the chronicle of his memory work.

### **Bodily reactions to memory triggers**

William Niederland, a German Jew who fled to the United States in 1940, was the first psychoanalyst to explore what he called the ‘survivor syndrome’, a loosely defined condition comprising physical and psychological issues. When asked to evaluate Holocaust survivors during the fight for restitution from Germany in the 1950s, he identified a group of recurrent psychosomatic elements in many of the people he examined. The physical problems primarily center on the gastrointestinal tract, resulting from starvation. Frequently, survivors also suffer from hormonal dysfunctions and a weakened musculoskeletal system. Another common symptom is depression, manifesting itself in fatigue and sleeping disorders (Niederland 1961, 1968, 1981). Much later, Niederland’s pioneering work led to the recognition of PTSD as an illness.

As evidenced throughout this study, silence – of both parents and children – is often the only possible reaction to traumatic experiences. Research has shown that speaking about the horrors of the past is the most effective way of relieving the suffering, but frequently the effects of the shocking experience on mind, soul, and verbal facilities prohibit the verbalization of memory. In such cases, the body itself tends to reveal signs that refer to the past. Second Generation writer Eva Hoffman illustrates this in *After Such Knowledge*: ‘The memories – no, not memories – but emanations of wartime experiences [...] kept manifesting themselves with a frightening immediacy in that most private and potent of family

languages – the language of the body’ (2004: 9). Such physical expressions of unspoken memories were a pervasive presence: ‘In my home, as in so many others, the past broke through in the sounds of nightmares, the idiom of sighs and illness, of tears and the acute aches that were the legacy of the damp attic and of the conditions my parents endured during their hiding’ (9–10). This statement is representative of many other descriptions of growing up in a survivor household; indeed, nightmares and their accompanying screams are a recurrent theme in the corpus. Here, however, I want to focus on memory work explicitly taking on bodily reactions.

Niederland identified a chronic state of anxiety as the most prevalent symptom from which survivors suffer, a state closely associated with fears of renewed persecution (1981: 415). Certain situations can trigger anxiety, fear, and their physiological responses in trauma survivors that mirror the body’s original reactions. Encountering a policeman, for instance, might create a similar – even if imagined – sense of danger to that experienced when the survivor encountered a Gestapo officer. In such subconscious reactions, trauma comes to the surface unintentionally and uncontrollably. The passing of time is of no consequence in PTSD. The past physically persists in the present moment and forms a part of post-Holocaust family life as the survivors’ children become witnesses to their parents’ extreme reactions to seemingly innocent events.

Lisa Appignanesi was born in Poland and grew up in Paris and Montreal before moving to London as an adult. She devotes a large portion of *Losing the Dead*, which she calls a ‘family memoir’, to her parents’ survival during the Nazi occupation of Poland, where after a period in the Warsaw ghetto, they managed to pass for ‘Aryan’ with the help of forged papers. Mother Hena’s disguise as a Christian Pole was facilitated by both her fearless manner and also by the fact that she was blond and blue eyed, a matter discussed later in this chapter. Father Aaron, however, had a darker complexion and was therefore in greater danger of being discovered. In Appignanesi’s discussion of her parents’ respective memories of survival and how this influenced their later lives, her father’s continuing distrust of his own body is prominent. Every time they crossed the Canada-United States border, ‘He would grow pale, then waxy white. Beads of perspiration would gather on his brow and the top of his head. His shoulders would tense into ram-rod position. By the time we arrived at the border-crossing, he was incapable of speech’ (1999: 50). This description of the father’s behavior shows how significant the encounter with the border guards was. All the details – his increasing pallor, his perspiration, his change in posture, and even

his inability to speak – are still present when Appignanesi writes her memoir. A common symptom of PTSD is the persistence of increased arousal that causes, for example, physiological reactions when survivors are faced with a situation that resembles the original traumatic event. But these explanations are not available to a child. Thus, for years, young Appignanesi would copy her father's behavior and go into a similar panic.

It is only when she engages in memory work and contemplates these childhood events that she recognizes that 'any official demand for documents, any confrontation with a uniformed being, sent them tumbling back into the emotional storm the Nazi occupation of Poland had produced' (51). The recognition that her father's body was reacting to past events finally allowed her to stop mirroring his fear. In her memoir, Appignanesi then explores and records the way her father's body still tells the story of persecution and hiding, but her own reaction has been liberated from his past through memory work.

For Helen Max's mother, Raizel, any authority figure stimulated reactions learned during persecution:

She is constantly reminded of her childhood traumas whenever she needs to have any dealings with police, doctors and people in authority. They frighten her. Her body shakes, her legs feel heavy and she finds it almost impossible to walk. If I am with her during such confrontations she will grip my arm tightly to steady herself and her face becomes pale. Her breathing comes in quick short bursts as she gasps for air. These symptoms don't settle until we finally return home. (2001: 2)

This description is written from the grown daughter's perspective and immediately related to 'childhood traumas'. As opposed to Appignanesi's text, in which we do not know whether the father worked through his suffering later in life, these events take place many years after Raizel's survival and show that the passing of time evidently did not diminish the bodily presence of the traumatic past. No encounter – or 'confrontation', as her daughter tellingly puts it – with authorities is a neutral experience. Indeed, these events are portrayed as a recurrence of the past dangers to which body and psyche react in uncontrollable ways. For Max, this is predictable and she knows the toll even a doctor's visit takes: 'It can take her days to recover from such an ordeal. I excuse her because she'll never know the security and safety that she craves. She's reluctant to deal with anything that touches on her past life' (2). In the entire

excerpt, Max's tone expresses worry. After all, Raizel is a child survivor who at age 15, when she was liberated from Auschwitz, found out that her entire family had perished. But despite the mother's post-traumatic suffering and her resistance to engage with the past, Raizel has to be the source for Max to learn about this lost family: 'She was the only family member left, the one link from the past to the present' (4).

When the author embarks on her memory work, she asks her mother to tell her story. Yet Raizel stays reluctant: 'She lights up a cigarette, and her hands shake. A sign that is now familiar to me whenever she gets closer to bringing those memories to the surface' (19). It is not only encounters with figures personifying the dangers of the past that cause a physical reaction but even having to speak about it triggers a similar response. The philosopher Susan Brison, who has highlighted the close interconnection between body and mind, maintains that 'whenever something resurrects the only slightly buried terror' (1999: 42), the body replays what is going through the mind, an argument that holds particularly true for traumatic memories, which are inscribed in all the senses. Raizel's body resists the act of uncovering, and throughout their venture into the past, the daughter can recognize the signs of this resistance. In many ways, the survivor has stayed a persecuted child, and through engaging in memory work, Max now also knows that the terror is not worked through, only buried – close to the surface.

A survivor's even more dramatic physical resistance against speaking about the past is described in Ann Kirschner's family memoir, *Sala's Gift*: 'My mother's silence seemed to swallow up questions before they could be spoken aloud. When someone else – a new friend, a careless relative – wandered into the forbidden territory of Sala's years during the war, she turned her face away as if she had been slapped' (2006: 1–2). In this family, the past was a 'forbidden territory' that had become personified in its oppressiveness, swallowing up the questions the daughter wants to ask. Any step in that direction is a physical intrusion, and Sala instinctively turns her head from the violence she is experiencing whenever asked about the war.

When Kirschner's children start school projects on family memory, she herself commits to memory work. Much like in Max's case, Kirschner tries to engage her mother in a conversation about the past. But even decades after the events, Sala's body speaks louder than her words: 'she began to fidget, to squirm, unable to find a comfortable position. She threw out a few innocent anecdotes, about the rag doll that was her only toy, about a circle of friends, their school uniforms. I had heard these all before' (2). Kirschner interprets the stories of Sala's Polish youth as an evasive

technique that protects her from thinking about her incarceration in the Nazi labor camps, but her body expresses that the traumatic past is right there behind the tale of the rag doll. Ultimately, verbalization remains impossible: 'But then her discomfort became acute; her always troubling arthritis and back pain interrupted her, she had to stand up, she had to walk around, and the tentative, sputtering flow of memory dribbled to a halt. She kept her secrets' (2–3). The initial physical discomfort turns into an acute ache, and the stories stay untold. Both her arthritis and her back pain – presumably the result of doing hard labor – prevent her from revealing more. Much like Appignanesi and Max, Kirschner gives a detailed description of how trauma has a physical hold on the survivors and creates a verbal barrier: 'She kept her secrets'. Until Sala manages to speak, memory work into stories is stalled; her daughter can only engage with the verbal elisions and bodily symptoms.

Only much later, just before her death, Sala passes on her story to Kirschner in the form of her wartime letters. This symbolic act, which was discussed in the 'Objects' chapter, allows her to overcome the traumatic barriers that had been reinforced by embodied memory all her life. Now that she has enabled memory work in her family, allowing her daughter to explore her documents, the survivor can speak about her past and her losses.

### **The specter of sexual abuse**

A generally unspoken issue in the context of the body as a memory node is the question of whether survivor mothers were the victims of sexual violence (fathers are not mentioned in regard to this subject even though Nazi sexual abuse also included men and children). The silence surrounding the sexual abuse of Holocaust victims is deafening. Public discourses about the Holocaust rarely mention the fact that concentration camps had brothels and that women were forced into prostitution for the benefit of non-Jewish internees. Even historiography has been slow to address the subject, and only in recent years has some research been published (Hedgepeth and Saidel 2010). None of my texts explicitly mentions a mother as the victim of sexual violence. Only in rare cases is oblique reference made to the subject. This is a secret that cannot be explored for fear of what might become known and of what asking about such a shame-filled issue might lead to. Indeed, when it comes to sexual violence, even the body does not allow any deductions as in the above cases, becoming a closed-off node, and memory work

tends to freeze because sexual violence represents a traumatic secret for both generations.

In one instance – in the safe environment of an interview with Helen Epstein for *Children of the Holocaust* – the son of survivors broaches the issue: “I’ve always been afraid to ask what actually happened to her, where she was. I think I don’t want to know”. I asked what Al was afraid to hear. He smiled, his cheeks dimpled like a small boy’s. “God-awful things”. “What specifically?” “The worst”. “Like what?” “That she was raped” (1988: 227). Dina Wardi finds that it is not uncommon among children of survivors to imagine their mothers and other female family members as the victims of sexual violence (1992: 179ff). However, the long narrative lead-in to the statement that his mother might have been raped indicates the taboos surrounding what Al euphemistically calls ‘the worst’. Notably, the subject is so much of a taboo to him that, even though he is thinking about the possibility, he does not want to know – even the memory work impulse stalls.

Al is not the only one to reach his limits here. The tabooization even seeps into the conversation between the two children of survivors: ‘Both of us were silent. I had often thought about that possibility in regard with my mother’ (Epstein 1988: 227). Epstein explains that this consideration was caused in part by her knowledge of warfare and its workings: ‘In wars, women were always raped’ (227). But another trigger for such thoughts comes straight from popular culture representations of the Holocaust and sexual violence: ‘In *The Pawnbroker*, a film both Al and I had seen as teen-agers, female concentration camp inmates were shown working as prostitutes, waiting naked in small rooms until the S.S. officer entered. That image too had been forced down into my iron box and now it hung in the air between us’ (227). Epstein’s inclusion of the iconic image for her own unworked-through family past, the ‘iron box’, demonstrates how personal this issue is. But this is also reminiscent of the ways in which some Second Generation authors draw on cultural memory to fill in the gaps in knowledge discussed in connection with familial Holocaust mementos. Sidney Lumet’s 1964 film brought the sexually abused female victim of the Nazis into the public sphere, and the intricate negotiations of two teenaged children of survivors with the past, split between wanting to know and not wanting to know, turned popular culture personal. This common point of reference translated into potential family memory becomes its own link in the memory network, but for Epstein and Al, the possible sexual violence in their own family history is an unexamined and unexaminable part of memory work: ‘I had never had the courage to ask my mother whether it had happened

to her. "I guess that's been in the back of my mind for a long time", Al said softly. "I've never said it out loud before. It's hard to even say... but I don't really think she was raped'" (227). Al never asked his mother about rape – he can barely even say the word – and ultimately he tries to convince himself that the thought is not based in reality.

For both Al and Epstein, and all the other cases in which sexual violence comes up, it translates into a family secret. The sociologist Gabriele Rosenthal has noted that Second Generation fantasies are often based on survivor parents' actual experiences that became family secrets (1999: 33–34). John Bradshaw, an educator, has described the range of family secrets. In this case, we are dealing with a 'dark' (i.e. destructive) family secret (1996: 195ff), a secret that results from a perversion of the private sphere. Bradshaw's examples of dark secrets include murder, violent death, or incarceration in a concentration camp (150). Secrets of the traumatic past are often not kept voluntarily; their traumatic content compels the silencing of the narrative, as Wajnryb has noted in her linguistic study on silence in the survivor family: 'My impression is that the worst things imaginable a human being can face [...] those were not told. Simply, they were untellable. They may be documented in historical archives but they are not the stuff of personal narrative' (2001: 187). In his research on family secrets, the French psychoanalyst Serge Tisseron has explored, among other subjects, the case of the post-Holocaust family. He notes that in these families, secrets are connected to intense feelings of shame and humiliation. As a result, they often do not constitute a secret in the original sense, but are rather left in the realm of the unsaid. Some experiences are even partially dissociated by the victims because of their traumata (1996: 30).

Nonetheless, secrets have a tendency to seep through, especially when other family members intuit their presence. Dark, destructive secrets thus get extended through the generations, in part because they are not integrated into the official self-image of the family and also because of their nondiscursive quality (Assmann and Assmann 1997: 15). Wajnryb exemplifies this characteristic of the family secret, in particular the secret of sexual abuse in the family, through the comments of one of her interviewees, Sam:

We grew up knowing that there were 'other things' that happened, what was not being told. We wondered what they were – fascinated and repelled at the same time. Sam was not the only one who wondered about what brutality his parents had endured. He said he always wondered if his mother had been raped. He asked her once.



The response was typical, as was its outcome: Her sharp 'No!' told me nothing. It meant, 'Don't ask!' (2001: 187)

Sam's need to know more could not be stopped by a familial taboo. But when he crossed the threshold into forbidden territory, his mother rebuffed him and enforced the status of sexual violence as a dark secret, whether it had happened to her or not. To an even greater extent than with other forms of suffering experienced in the camp, sexual abuse ultimately remains untouchable, even for the one person in the corpus who dared to ask.

An interesting literary reaction to the impossibility of thinking, let alone asking about rape, is found in Lily Brett's work. Throughout – in her life writing, fiction, even poetry – Brett implies that the human body is a carrier of memory, specifically traumatic memory. The problems she discusses, mainly concerning weight, body image, and sexuality, have much darker places of origin than the body anxiety of the average Western woman. Sexuality is chiefly explored in *Just Like That*, Brett's first novel. Working in the 'safe' sphere of fiction provides a certain emotional distance, but Esther Zepler, the Australian daughter of survivors who has made her home in New York, carries echoes of Brett's autobiographical writings, and the implications of these similarities are left open for the reader.

As with all of Brett's works, the past is a constant presence in the novel. The opening lines of the book are 'Edek Zepler used to fuck Polish girls. They were mostly maids, and he fucked them, standing up, in the hallways of the buildings in which they worked' (1994: 1). The crude description of Polish maids paying their housing registration fees to Edek in nature sets the tone of the novel. Instantly, the significance of the body and its abuses becomes clear. The fact that the protagonist's father, a Holocaust survivor, is the victimizer is not discussed further in the book, but Esther considers his exploitation of these girls as influential on her own life. Her thoughts about this interfere with her own sexual relations with her husband, distressing and revolting her (36–38).

Soon after these early references to sexuality, Esther introduces the topic of sexual violence in the concentration camps, Brett's main way of highlighting the sexual body as a node of memory: "'You know, my mother told me about a woman in her barracks who was forced to have sex with one of the guard dogs for the amusement of the Gestapo. For years I wondered whether it was really my mother who had been fucked by a dog. I felt so ashamed. I felt awash in the degradation she had suffered'" (7). The shame flooding the protagonist is much like that of

other incidents of (imagined) sexual violence in the corpus, but here, Esther is 'awash in the degradation' not least because she knows historical details.

The experience of sexual violence is one of the strongest taboos in the survivor narratives, due to the shame-filled nature of the subject and also because the fear of being socially outcast is strong. This fear is not ungrounded, as not only the general public and academics but also therapists have dismissed testimonies of sexual abuse as a product of the internees' imagination (Rosenthal 1999: 29–30). If the subject is broached, survivors tend to describe themselves as witnesses to and not the victims of sexual violence. Rosenthal, countering earlier scholarly approaches, argues that these are concealed descriptions of personal experiences (27). Esther does not know whether her mother's memory was her own experience or whether it was a concealed description. But she uses this story to fill in the terrifying silence and clarify possible family secrets. This replacement narrative resembles Epstein and Al's inclusion of popular cultural images of the Holocaust rape victim in imagining the family past. In Brett's novel, however, it does not remain hypothetical: 'You might not be able to get it out of your head, either, if you thought your mother had to bend down on all fours and be fucked by a dog' (1994: 250). The psychoanalyst Yolanda Gampel has pointed out that it is in particular taboo areas that lead to fantasies that often go beyond facts (1992: 120). The phrasing 'if you thought' indicates that Esther knows that even though she imagines Rooshka the victim, it is not necessarily fact. Taboos and imagined realities condition and reinforce each other, and in *Just Like That*, this is played out fictionally.

Overall, Brett's inquiry into sexuality portrays female bodies as inscribed with a gender-specific legacy. In the end, however, she leaves the issue in the domain of secrets – it remains unclear whether the event depicted is a memory or purely a fantasy appearing in a fictional (rather than autobiographical) text. Richard Freadman, a literary scholar, has pointed out the repeated juxtaposition of sex and the Holocaust in Brett's writing, noting that it is never entirely worked through (2002: 193). It might be the pervasiveness of the secret that prevents this. Memory work has reached its limits.

### **The Auschwitz tattoo**

The Auschwitz tattoo – the numbers that replaced the victims' names upon their arrival at the concentration camp – is one of the most notorious, readable, and evocative symbols in Holocaust memory. With a

tattoo, as with a scar, the past is visibly written on the body. The tattoo links to a number of temporal levels in the network of memory: the tattooing process, the ensuing horrors of Auschwitz, and also a life after survival that is indelibly marked. The writing on the body is explicit in this case; the tattoo cannot be mistaken for another kind of marking in the way a scar or a physical ailment might be. In the case of tribal tattoos, usually it is only the in-group that can read the sign, but here, anyone fluent in the language of Holocaust memory can identify it. However, recognizing the tattoo and its origins is still a reading by outsiders. We can identify the outlines of the experience – the fact that this person survived Auschwitz – but otherwise, neither the children of survivors nor the wider public can understand the suffering the tattoo (or the telltale scar after its removal) implies.

Auschwitz numbers as tangible signifiers of the past are a recurrent theme in Second Generation writing: being surrounded by people with tattooed forearms was common, especially when a child grew up in a close-knit survivor community. For Anne Karpf, for instance, the tattoos were a constant in her British Jewish childhood. She understands it as telling as much of a story as the words and the actions of the survivors: ‘We were told stories about the war, and saw the number inked into my mother’s arm’ (1997: 5). The children were well aware of the tattoos’ significance. Even the use of the preposition ‘into’ rather than ‘onto’ the mother’s arm indicates how Karpf viewed this mark as more than skin-deep. The tattoo is a marker of survivors worldwide, and its appearance in the texts reminds us of the global dispersion of Holocaust survivors. Naava Piatka describes her parents’ ‘slew of tiny, taciturn, tortured-looking friends, some with deathly white skin and blue numbers tattooed on their parchment-like arms’ (2009: 11) as one of the elements of her Cape Town childhood that marked it as different from those of her South African peers. The tattoo was the recognizable sign for her that these people were closely connected to her parents. Throughout her writing, Sonia Pilcer also highlights Auschwitz tattoos as a constant visual presence in her life, first in Germany and later in New York.

The following passage from Pilcer’s *The Holocaust Kid* mirrors her childhood experience – the tattoos are present but not discussed – for the readers: “‘Such eyes. The very spitted image of Elisabet Tailor”, declared Gita Blum, who had survived eight months of Auschwitz. Her numbers flashes like blue neon on her bejeweled arm’ (2001a: 4). Zosha-Zoe, was (like the author) born in the Landsberg Displaced Persons camp in Bavaria. In the DP camps, the birth of every child represented the promise of a future for the Jews, a symbol of survival. Ostensibly, the

imagined conversation between mother Genia and some survivor friends takes place in Landsberg, but the accented migrant English simultaneously extends the presence of the tattoo into later years. Additionally, the reference to Elizabeth Taylor moves the text forward in time: The famous actress's conversion to Judaism, which took place in 1969, is a frequent and satisfying subject for Pilcer's survivor characters. What stays a constant, no matter when or where, are the numbers: 'As they tossed bright plastic chips and picked up cards, blue numbers flashing on the insides of their arms, the stories multiplied' (2001a: 34). Their game of chance evokes the game of chance that was survival, and stories of persecution and survival provide the narrative backdrop to Pilcer's childhood, even in the United States. Indeed, the tattoo is a marker of this migrant community:

My father worked in a knitting mill in another state, New Jersey. His fellow workers on the machines, beer-drinking Americans, spoke neither Polish, Yiddish, German, nor even Russian, all of which he knew, so he had to learn English. In his freshly laundered T-shirt, all could see the blue number B48356 swell on the inside of his forearm as Heniek forced a loose bolt into the scalding maw. (33)

In his workplace, Heniek is physically Othered by the tattoo, just as he is Othered by his immigrant status. Here, Pilcer extends her memory work outside the family and points to the lack of Holocaust awareness in the 1950s and 1960s. She imagines how the 'beer-drinking Americans', who unlike her father, only speak their mother tongue, stare at the number uncomprehendingly. This description, including the fact that the machine he fixes is a 'scalding maw', strongly plays on the visual, in particular with respect to the imagined gazes following Heniek's arm.

Other Second Generation authors have used explicit visual strategies to incorporate the Auschwitz tattoo into their memory work. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is one of the best-known Second Generation texts, not just because of the decision to create a graphic novel of the Holocaust in which characters are depicted with animal heads (Jews are mice, Germans are cats, etc.), but also because the text provided the cultural archive with images of life in a survivor family, of the narrative transmission combined with Second Generation memory work (symbolized in the voice recorder), and of the network of family memory that connects family history on multiple temporal levels. Spiegelman calls *Maus* a 'comix' in an attempt to differentiate it from cartoons, which had previously not been used for the discussion of serious historical matters,

and also to highlight his artistic method of interweaving different visual and narrative elements.<sup>1</sup> In an interview, he explains, “The strength of comix lies in [its] synthetic ability to approximate a “mental language” that is closer to actual human thought than either words or pictures alone’ (Kalir 1993). The pictorial nature of *Maus* allows the constant presence of the Auschwitz tattoo in later family life to be experienced by the readers. Father Vladek’s tattooed arm appears throughout the text. It is introduced early in the first chapter of *Maus I*, when his son asks to be told about the past so that he can draw a book of family history (*Maus I*, 12). Thus, Vladek is visually identified as an Auschwitz survivor, even before the term ‘concentration camp’ has been used.

Bernice Eisenstein uses the same technique of visualizing the Auschwitz tattoo in *I was the Child of Holocaust Survivors*. In her case, the effect is tripled: over the course of the book, the numbered arms of her mother, aunt, and grandmother appear in the depictions of the family’s daily life in Canada. The first instance shows the white-haired grandmother bathing her grandchild while the child’s mother is singing to her daughter (2006: 59). Like in the opening of *Maus*, the tattoos are not discussed in this scene. Both texts visually reflect the survivor family: the presence of the tattoo is a constant evocator of the past, even when cloaked in silence – the visual evidence precedes any other form of knowledge, a narrative strategy that echoes the Second Generation experience. The readers are confronted with the material evidence of survival, and this remediation of the Auschwitz tattoo can create a visceral, emotional response. This makes the marked parental body an explicit node of memory; however, at the same time, the uncommented-upon yet prominent presence – in family life first and later also in cultural memory – also indicates an interruption in the process of memory work. A narrative explanation is lacking, but unlike a testimonial object that might only be seen once in a while and is not discussed at length, the texts mirror the constant presence of a tattoo on a parent’s arm.

Much as with other nodes linking to the period of the Holocaust, however, the violence behind the Auschwitz tattoo is not imaginatively recreated in literary memory work. Instead, the words of the survivors themselves about the process of forced tattooing are often integrated into the Second Generation texts, thus circumventing the impossibility of imagining the details of one’s parents’ victimization. The inclusion of testimony emphasizes the fact that while a person is performing memory work, creative impulses are kept to a minimum. In fact, they are usually not an option at all when it comes to the actual events of the Holocaust, which emphasizes the difference from a postmemorial approach to

Second Generation writing. In this area, the documenting, witness-to-the-witness nature of memory work prevails: as the researchers and archivists of family memory, the authors need survivor testimony to reveal the unimaginable. Here, we find that Second Generation writing is relational not only in the content and the memory work it performs but also in its remediating form, which additionally highlights the network of family memory. Visual representations of the tattoo function similarly. Even if mediated, an image refrains from a narrative fictionalization.

A revealing example of the incorporation of parental words to illustrate the experiences of Auschwitz is the tattooing scene in *Maus II* (Spiegelman 1992: 26). In the top panel, which provides a visual backdrop of Vladek telling his son about the ordeal, we see a line of prisoners being tattooed by one of their own. In this line are not only the iconic mouse figures but also a pig, which in Spiegelman's visual language translates to a Polish internee. Thus, the artist visualizes the multiethnic camp population at the same time as he introduces us to the horrors of the tattooing situation without spelling them out: all the people involved are silhouetted in black. The superimposed image of the now elderly survivor – whose tattooed arm is exaggerated in size – is portrayed in the light of the moment of memory transmission. Vladek's tape-recorded and remediating words accompany the panel set in Auschwitz: "They registered us in ... They took from us our names. And here they put me my number" (26). In the panel depicting the conversation between father and son, Vladek points with his right hand to his tattooed left arm, making the deictic reference of 'here' unmistakable. The survivor's words are simple but chilling, and his accented language emphasizes the many ways in which he is marked by the past. Vladek is a migrant and like other survivors in the corpus, most dominantly Brett's Edek, his idiolect never changes. The use of the possessive pronoun 'my' in connection with the number, however, points to more than a linguistic issue: He has not only accepted the number but he has claimed it as his own.

That Vladek indeed understands the Auschwitz tattoo as a positive marking and an indication of a new identity becomes clear when he recounts an encounter he had with another internee, a Polish priest (28). This priest was knowledgeable about Judaism and gave Vladek, who was at the brink of giving up, a new hope of survival by doing a cabbalistic reading of the numbers on his arm. Their sum turned out to be 18. In Hebrew, numbers also stand for letters, and the number 18 corresponds to the letters in the word *chai*, or 'life'. After learning this, Vladek takes

the number as a promise of survival, despite the reality surrounding him. These scenes are also mediated by his son through images: first, Vladek sitting on the ground by himself in tears, then in conversation with the priest (a panel in which his number is shown again, increasing in size), and ultimately talking to his son, proving that the priest was right (28). One common misconception about the Auschwitz tattoo in public discourse is that it did not signify an absolute death sentence. Rather, it held a curious double meaning. Only those internees who were chosen to work were tattooed, making it a marker of potential survival – victims who were sent to the gas chambers right after their arrival were not tattooed. Here, Second Generation memory work challenges cultural memory by introducing complexities. Spiegelman's inclusion of this scene requires readers to scrutinize their understanding of history.

As discussed above, in Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, the tattoo is first introduced visually. Later in the text, the author incorporates excerpts of her mother's video testimony from Stephen Spielberg's Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. One of the recorded and remediated stories describes the tattooing: 'I was told to put my left arm out, there is no feeling anymore. And I am tattooed. 54090. My sister is 54091 and my mother 54092. (Regina speaks directly to the interviewer:) You don't want to see it' (2006: 106). During the interview, Regina primarily used the past tense, but when the subject turned to intimate issues, both physical and emotional, she switched to the present as a narrative tense. Being visibly marked as an Auschwitz prisoner is an experience that never became an element of the past to her; it is an eternal presence, like the tattoo on her body. This sense is even more pronounced in the sentence 'And I am tattooed', a statement that can only be followed by the number itself, which is as present in her mind as it is present on her body. However, the tattoo is too private for public display, either to the interviewer or the future audience watching the testimony. Regina's discomfort with exhibiting the physical evidence of her incarceration is unmistakable. She directly addresses the person interviewing her, telling her that she does not want to see the tattoo. The daughter does not comment on this testimony, but her relational text of memory work chronicles the event and its retelling as part of family history.

Eisenstein also includes a family photograph of Regina, her mother, and her sister that visualizes the tattoos. The three women had survived Auschwitz together, and in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, this triad linked by family, experience, and numbers are shown in a large-scale artistic recreation of the photograph. This image appears in the text

when Eisenstein discusses the confrontation with and uncovering of the original site of trauma – a ‘return’ trip that Regina and her two children, Bernice and Michael, took ‘back to the holy land, back to Auschwitz’ (112). The journey necessitated a close interrogation of the physical evidence of Auschwitz left in form of the tattoos. In the picture, the women are posed in a row, their arms next to each other, a stance that draws the viewer’s attention to the consecutive numbers (112). Here, readers are asked to actively participate in Eisenstein’s memory work. The author is also an observer of the traces – diagonally across from the image of the tattooed women, Eisenstein depicts herself as a little girl holding her tools, huge pens and brushes, in her arms. When it comes to the subject of Auschwitz in the memoir, she is only a child who is trying her best to record the family past. She explains the inspiration for the picture:

When I found this photo recently, I couldn’t believe it. My mother, grandmother, and aunt posed as I had wanted to draw them – sitting close together, wearing watches, their numbers in a row. After I finished, I briefly saw something I’d never seen in them or never recognized – a kind of innocence, a lightness, as if their arms didn’t even carry the mark of the past. (113)

In this image, Eisenstein discovers another side of her survivor family: they are marked by the past, but there is also a sense of survival in their spirit. The ‘innocence’ and ‘lightness’ these women project provide a sense of who they were before the Holocaust and how they have carried this into the present as they recreated their lives and family.

In this case, memory work brings Eisenstein a new understanding of the many meanings of the word ‘survival’. It can also refer to the survival of the women as they were before Auschwitz. Sensing a usable past and continuity beyond the Holocaust only happens for Eisenstein when she fully engages with this picture by recreating it in her text, and thus readers will also add to their understanding of survivors as people who lived lives before and after Auschwitz. Much as in the case of Spiegelman, this familial exploration of the iconic tattoo adds a more complex interpretation that goes beyond the conventional, sometimes simplified narratives of popular Holocaust memory.

Karpf does not work with images, but like many others, she includes survivor testimony in her relational memoir. Several chapters of *The War After* are transcriptions of oral history interviews she conducted with her parents in their London home. They spoke about various



aspects of survival and, in one specific instance, her mother, Natalia, describes how she was tattooed: 'it hurt because they had like a pen: if you look at it, you'll see that it's constructed of many tiny little dots, and every dot went through the skin, and it was red and inflamed after. But we didn't mind. My number is A27407, I think – I forgot already because I don't look at it. [Checking] Yes' (1997: 89). In this excerpt, the Auschwitz tattoo is introduced in terms of its texture and corporeality and Natalia even invites her daughter to look at it. The survivor has distanced herself from the number – she does not even remember it – which is documented in the act of checking that her daughter included in her transcript. There can be several explanations for her forgetting or suppressing the number, but Karpf does not try to explore the motives behind it. The answer comes from Natalia herself when she speaks in more detail about the tattoo, explaining that at some point it became a sign of potential survival for her: 'One day there was an Appel [sic] again, and they said they were going to tattoo our numbers. When they said that, we knew that we weren't going to the gas chamber, only they were going to transfer us somewhere else. So we were pleased about the tattoos' (89). Even here, Karpf does not comment on her mother's words – words that, like those of Vladek Spiegelman, might seem surprising, considering the common conception of the tattoo as a symbol of horrors rather than something to be 'pleased about'. Once again, the intricate memory work of a Second Generation author adds a human element to this iconic metonym for Auschwitz in public discourses.

In all three of the above texts, the visual and corporeal existence of the tattoo is highlighted, drawing the readers' attention to its constant physical presence in these families. It has been argued that memory is intensely visual. The psychologist Martin Conway, for instance, maintains that about 85% of memories contain visual imagery (2008). The tattoo itself is an embodied visual link to Auschwitz, or as Melvin Jules Bukiet puts it, 'the artless aniline blue of 108016 tattooed on my father's forearm was an abiding sign of the past in our present' (2000: 23). Hence, visual strategies are not surprising choices when analyzing the multiple links and layers of this node of family memory. Second Generation authors cannot 'write Auschwitz', but memory work must address the insistent presence of the Auschwitz tattoos that permeate the post-Holocaust family life and increasingly also the cultural memory of the Holocaust. Consequently, alternative strategies are chosen to delve into the subject, and the survivors' own words or visual remediations of the tattoos are incorporated into the texts.

## The Second Generation and the Auschwitz tattoo

The successful 2012 Israeli documentary *Numbered* explores the lives, testimonies, and tattoos of a group of elderly survivors. Dana Doron and Uriel Sinai trace the development of the tattoo into one of the best-known and most symbolic elements of Holocaust memory. Many interviewees of the film engage in acts of reinterpretation. Not only are positive meanings ascribed to the tattoos – one man speaks about his refusal to call his tattoo a scar; to him, it is a medal – but they are also framed as voluntary acts of commemoration as young Israelis have had the numbers of their elders tattooed on their arms. Through this commemorative act, family members, mostly grandchildren, have voluntarily bound themselves into an embodied Holocaust memory because ‘they wanted to be intimately, eternally bonded to their survivor-relative’ (Rudoren 2012). Opposed to the caution with which the parental tattoos are approached some authors have effectively turned the Second Generation body into a memory node by taking on both metaphorical and literal inscriptions. Remediating this evocative image creates a diffuse area of memory work in which the outlines of the practice, as discussed in the introduction, can become blurred in their literary explorations. Sonia Pilcer for example, repeatedly explores the image of the tattooed Second Generation daughter. In one case, the tattoo is used as a trope, but in another case, the child protagonist literally draws it onto her own arm.

In a scene presumably set in the late 1950s (the author of the semi-autobiographical text herself was born shortly after her parents’ liberation), young Zosha had marked her arm with numbers that a teacher discovered during a math test. Holocaust consciousness was still limited at the time, and her American surroundings did not understand the implications of the numbers she had written on her arm; consequently, Zosha gets sent home for cheating. After picking up her daughter in the school principal’s office, Genia erupts with anger: ‘Spitting on her handkerchief, she tried to rub out the numbers. The blue ink resisted. She continued, spitting and rubbing, wiping the tears that flowed from her eyes on her sleeve. Slowly the numbers began to unwrite themselves. “How could you do such a disgusting thing?” she cried. “I wanted to be like you!”’ (2001a: 174). Throughout *The Holocaust Kid*, Pilcer highlights the need for explanations about what created the world inhabited by Second Generation children. Zosha grew up in a community of survivors in which the tattoo was a strong visual presence, and for her, having a number was a sign of belonging. Silence about the past had

not had the desired effect of leaving the child unburdened; instead, it had enhanced Zosha's need to be like her family and the surrounding community. Contemplating this situation, the adult protagonist interprets it as an early and subconscious version of memory work: 'And I have lived through her [i.e. Genia] to reach back to ancestral soil' (174). But at the time, she only feels the postmemorial situation, not least because she is pushed away due to her childlike attempt to connect, not unlike Raphael's Stefan who wished for a scar.

In metaphorical use, the tattoo becomes a representation of memory in the survivor family. This trope appears twice in *The Holocaust Kid*, both times in connection with what the protagonist perceives as an imposed injunction to remember. Unlike her childhood wish to connect, she now wants liberation from the past. Using the powerful image of the Auschwitz tattoo, the permanence and corporeal presence of the past are presented as irrevocable: 'I remembered the Holocaust every day of my life. Never forget. That was my tattoo' (52). In a later scene, this is further emphasized: 'Tattooed on my arm: *Must never forget, not even for a moment*. Because I lived when so many died' (150). For the daughter born after the Holocaust, remembrance is experienced as her *raison d'être* and as the dues she must pay for her existence. The protagonist's burden of memory, which is so intense that it feels physically inscribed, is only eased by her increasing and voluntary interrogation of the past through memory work.

In *What God Wants*, her early collection of interrelated stories, Lily Brett creates a diorama of a survivor community in which the Second Generation protagonists span a continuum from dealing with their family situation well to 'memorial candles' in a Wardenian sense. Esther, who is by far the most troubled amongst her peers, had herself tattooed:

When Esther was seventeen, she had her mother's Auschwitz number tattooed on her right forearm. She looked at it now A4257. The letter A was given to those who were chosen for work. Esther had had a strange sense of relief after she'd been tattooed. As though some missing link had been relocated. Looking at her tattoo always made her feel calm. (1993: 88)

Here, the decision to inscribe numbers on her arm is driven by the teenager's psychological issues. It is an attempt to relive her parents' experience in order to understand more about them. In this case, the literary scholar Roberta Buffi argues that the tattoo is 'meant to bridge the gap left by the burdensome silence about the trauma of

the Holocaust which keeps the world of Brett's survivors separate from that of their children' (1996: 58). But the tattoo does not replace therapy or memory work. Later, Esther commits suicide in her former high school locker – she never managed to leave behind this period in which she followed the illusion that tattooing her own arm is a link. Unlike the other children of survivors depicted in *What God Wants*, who all portray different elements of the same experience and collective identity, Esther goes beyond memory work: she longs to write herself into the parental survival story through repetition. Her parents see her tattoo not as a sign of desperation but as an affront: 'Her mother and father had been hysterical when they had seen the tattoo. "What are you doing, idiot?" Her mother had screamed. "You are mocking our tragedy", her father had said and turned his back on her' (Brett 1993: 88). The calm the tattoo initially brought to this pathological protagonist – to her, it represented the promise of survival – dissipates, and the 'missing link' she thought she had found is lost again. Choosing to make her body a node of memory does not work. The relief provided by this reenactment (as opposed to the conscious exploration of the past) is only minimal and is ultimately short-lived.

Thane Rosenbaum takes on the Auschwitz tattoo in a number of ways in his novel *Second Hand Smoke*. In Miami Beach's survivor community, Mila, forever marked by her past, is a radiant figure with strong connections to the underworld, where she makes her living through gambling. Her life's mission is to turn her American-born son Duncan into a fighting machine. As an adult, he becomes a furious, avenging Nazi hunter. Early on in the novel, Rosenbaum emphasizes the connection between the game of cards and the game of survival: 'She was obsessed with numbers: a constellation of odds always danced in her head, while a faint row of digits clutched her forearm' (1999: 43–44). Here, the Auschwitz tattoo is depicted as a personified power that cannot be escaped, and Duncan is also in the clutches of her numbers:

When he was a child, Duncan had memorized this row of numbers: 101682. As much as he wanted to escape from them and from what they represented in the incalculable math of his family's history, he was also tantalized, as well. He had dreamed of these numbers in his sleep. They became his ATM and E-mail passwords, as well as the pick-six combinations in Lotto. He had been both tortured and strengthened by their presence in his life. The power they had, the unwashable mystery contained in that row of blue! (243)

This fictional Second Generation son uses his mother's Auschwitz numbers in all possible situations and is enthralled by their power, which is torturous, empowering, but ultimately unknowable to Duncan. But although the numbers and their meaning might be a mystery, the survivor marked her son with them: 'Only through those numbers might he one day be able to understand the legacy that Mila had sealed underneath and invisible inside his own skin' (243). This marking is perhaps metaphorical, but the location of the metaphor – inside his skin – is literal. As it turns out, Duncan is not the only marked son in this twisted tale. After liberation, Mila had a baby, Isaac, whom she abandoned in Poland. Before she left for the United States, however, she tattooed her Auschwitz numbers on the newborn's arm: '101682. The enduring password. These were her numbers, tattooed onto her own forearm when she was a young teenager. For almost two years they had replaced her real name. Now it was a permanent scar. And this was what she chose to give her son as a farewell, something to remember her by. The digits were now his, too' (240). In Isaac's case, Rosenbaum creates a scenario involving the literal transmission of family memory – not merely the psychological and metaphorical experience undergone by Duncan – but for both sons, the Auschwitz tattoo symbolizes a legacy.

Duncan, in name and otherwise, is fully assimilated into the English-speaking diaspora, but the name of Mila's firstborn suggests a connection to the Biblical son whom Abraham was willing to sacrifice when commanded to do so by God (Genesis 22: 1–19). The *Akedah* ('the binding', referring to Isaac's being bound by his father Abraham to be sacrificed) is a foundational event in Judaism. Rosenbaum references it by invoking the tools of the Biblical sacrifice – knife and fire: 'it was in fact an instrument for breaking the skin – of the human kind' (239) and, after a little while, 'it was as if he had gotten used to the fire' (240). Significantly, the tool Mila uses for the reenactment of her own binding is an original SS tattooing machine that her husband had stolen from the camp; however, no angel is sent to interrupt this sacrifice, in which a mother passes on her Auschwitz-created faith in human evil.

When the adult Duncan travels to Poland in the 1990s, he finds and recognizes his brother because of the tattoo, but only the American Second Generation son understands its origin and meaning. Meanwhile, the Polish community and Isaac himself believe that he is a miraculous child survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau. He is treated as a Christ-like figure, the child that survived the onslaught of an infanticide much worse than Herod's. Duncan decides not to burden his brother with the knowledge of the real origin of his tattoo: 'He finally understood. There had been

child abuse on two continents. Permanent scarring. With Duncan it had been rammed down his throat; with Isaac it had been sandblasted onto his arm' (244). In both cases, the description of the transmitted Holocaust past is phrased in violently physical terms. Rosenbaum's scene becomes increasingly problematic as he makes a case for Second Generation victimhood – these sons are represented as victims-of-the-victims.

Such crossings of generational lines show that here, memory work on the tattoo concerns the Second Generation's status. Certainly, I do not interpret Mila's tattooing of her infant son in the same vein as the literary scholar Susan Jacobowitz, who argues, 'Rosenbaum suggests that Isaac and Duncan have a Nazi for a mother' (2004: 165). However, these scenes add an unsettling layer to Second Generation writing. Here, the Second Generation self as victimized is written into a parental narrative. The exploratory and chronicling impulse of memory work fades, and it thereby loses its focus and relationality, opening the door to criticism of Second Generation writing as such.

The literary editor Ruth Franklin, for instance, dismisses the entire literary production of the children of Holocaust survivors. In *A Thousand Darkesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction*, she tackles the controversial issue of novelistic imagination in Holocaust literature. Although Franklin generally defends fiction as a means of enriching Holocaust memory, she also argues that the writings of the children of survivors must be viewed as purely fictional. She further claims that the Second Generation commits what she terms 'identity theft' vis-à-vis the survivors by creating 'elaborate literary fictions in which they identify so strongly with the sufferings of their parents as to assert themselves as witnesses to the Holocaust' (2011: 216). Franklin's main case for criticism is the work of Melvin Jules Bukiet, which she perceives as an exploitation of parental survival. It is particularly the literary uses of the Auschwitz tattoo on which she bases her argument. In his introduction to *Nothing Makes You Free*, his edited collection of Second Generation writing, Bukiet lists – possibly cynically, after all he is known for his caustic tone – all the ways in which he uses his father's number: '108016 is the secret personal identification number for my bank account. 108016 is also the code to enter my computer and answering machine at work. Whenever I need a number in this age that compels them, I use 108016. A few years ago, I presented a novel I wrote to German Chancellor Kohl, and signed it "108016"' (2002: 23). In sentences such as this, Franklin identifies in Bukiet a 'deranged pride' (2011: 217) about using his father's tattooed numbers in his everyday life.

Much of Franklin's analysis of Second Generation writing boils down to an accusation of 'Wilkomirski-ism' (216), an assertion that disregards the

role of Second Generation writing in Holocaust memory and in literary studies. At the same time, she draws attention to the creative uses of this icon of Holocaust memory, which can be seen as distorting and appropriating the parental experience of survival. However, an unexplored point in her argument might be the prominent role of the Auschwitz tattoo within memory cultures. The literary scholar Richard Crownshaw theorizes that this highly mediated symbol of the Holocaust experience holds special potential for exploitation. The large-scale transmission of memory along with considerations of collective trauma function through affective channels and 'can become appropriative, displacing or colonising the memories of witnesses' (2010: ix). Invocations of the tattoo are particularly affective because of its overdetermination. These elevated levels of affect might also explain some of the self-focused uses of the motif in Second Generation writing. Here, familial memory work, in its relational form, plays no role, and literary trauma studies readings might be more apt.

### The 'Jewish body'

The anthropologist Melvin Konner's *The Jewish Body* (2009) provides a cultural history of the ways in which the (Christian) world has physically labeled Jews over the centuries, by way of complexion, the nose, or the circumcised penis, to name but a few. Among these stereotypes we find some that had special currency in National Socialist thinking and its dehumanization of Jews, popularized through the images of the hook-nosed Jew in *Der Stürmer* and other publications. These racial stereotypes constituted a danger during the Nazi persecution, for instance, when Jews attempted to hide by passing as 'Aryan'.

The circumcision of the Jewish male is the only true physical marker of Jewishness not steeped in the pseudoscientific racial thinking of the Nazi era or much older anti-Jewish stereotypes. This rite of passage into Jewish peoplehood is an enactment of a Biblical commandment: 'You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant' (Genesis 17: 11). Throughout the Jewish presence in Christian Europe, the surrounding community interpreted circumcision as a physical mark of difference. Even today, circumcision is a widely debated and controversial subject in Germany and other countries. The cultural historian Sander Gilman, who has written much about the difference conceived in Jewish bodies, has shown that the circumcised genitals of Jewish men have attracted attention throughout European history, with negative meanings (such as diseased, feminized, or sexually deviant) ascribed to them (1991: 93–96, 123).

Circumcision posed the ultimate danger for Jewish men during the Nazi persecution, especially for those trying to escape or live in hiding: their bodies would betray them. Survivor Aaron of *Losing the Dead* was introduced above as a man fearing his own body, and in Lisa Appignanesi's reading, this is the heart of the problem: 'But there was one anatomical feature of the Jewish males which couldn't join in the masquerade: the ultimately telling matter of the missing foreskin. As my father had good reason to know, appearances, the very sign of his masculine embodiment, marked him out as vulnerable. His body itself made him fearful' (1999: 52). Despite the fact that it is a nonracialized physical marker, the survivor's circumcision is another area of taboo, and Appignanesi's comment is exceptional in my corpus.

But when considering the body as a node of memory, the authors are not only faced with taboos and how to include the suffering during the Nazi period but also with the problem of how to tackle physical stereotyping without stereotyping themselves. Art Spiegelman's parents, Anja and Vladek, originally tried to survive in hiding, and the graphic format – in particular, the use of animal images to signify different ethnic and national groups – allows the author to visually represent the danger of 'looking Jewish'. In the allegory of *Maus*, depicting Jews as mice means that their ethnicity takes the form of a long tail. Pigs are the animals that represent Poles, and by putting pig masks on his parents, Spiegelman visualizes their attempt to assume a Polish identity. In Anja's case, the tail cannot be hidden; it can be seen peeking out from under her stylish coat. Vladek notes the danger that his wife's body projected: 'I was a little safe. I had a coat and boots, so like a Gestapo wore when he was not in service. But Anja – her appearance – you could see more easy she was Jewish. I was afraid for her' (1986: 136). In an analysis of Spiegelman's anatomization of Jewish bodies, Michael Rothberg, a literary scholar, maintains that especially in this scene, 'Anja's body leaks Jewishness' (1994: 675). The graphic novel visualizes this effectively, and through the use of animal images, Spiegelman circumvents the use of recognizable physical markers. In the case of Jewish bodies, these markers are not just recognizable but they are also part of the catalogue of anti-Semitic imagery.

Spiegelman's animal figures have been discussed widely, especially with respect to the choice of the mouse as the signifier of the Jews, as well as how his highlighting of ethnic differences can be understood as echoing Nazi race theories. The Jew as mouse has implications far beyond the notion of 'difference' put forth by Sander Gilman, especially



in its play on Nazi notions of Jews as less than human, even vermin. But by using the mouse, Spiegelman is in fact not reinforcing racial thinking. On the contrary, he is destabilizing the canon of physical stereotypes of Jews by refusing to employ them. In his visual text of memory work, he documents the historical realities of Jewish life under Nazi rule and explains the survivors' ingrained knowledge of what a certain body can mean, while he simultaneously forces his readers to rethink their conceptions of Jewish bodies.

Indeed, bodies are mostly what we think about them – the human factor makes stereotyping possible. In Second Generation memory work, the ascriptions of this node function as links and explain much about past and present by way of connections through and conceptions of bodies. The body also offers knowledge in Epstein's quest into her mother's past, related in *Where She Came From*. Epstein frames her family origins historically and socioculturally, creating a rich tapestry of family memory and offering historical facts to her readers. For instance, to contextualize her mother Franci's pre-Holocaust life, Epstein includes a portrait of prewar Prague. At the time, the city was a multicultural and open-minded metropolis, especially in the higher classes of society in which Franci grew up. Belonging to this social circle meant complete assimilation and no connection to Jewish tradition, but it was also a world without an anti-Semitic foundation, which was the reason why teenaged Franci and her cousin, Kitty, only learned about their supposed 'Jewish looks' when they were faced with Nazi propaganda. Before the German invasion of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, '[t]hey were typical Prague girls who had, for several years, been examining their faces in the mirror and redrawing the lines of their eyebrows according to Hollywood specifications' (1997: 210). The cousins were culturally and visually a part of their society, and did not worry about their faces not complying with political expectations until the publicly propagated racist views of the Nazis also took root in their home town: 'Now, Nazi propaganda seized the initiative, idealizing "Aryan" looks and making Jewish physiognomy a matter of public discussion' (210). Suddenly, the young women's lives were entirely upended, including the violent distortion of their body images. In a Fanonian experience, they were physically Othered.

Hoping that assimilating to the 'Aryan' ideal might help them to leave this unknown sphere of Otherness, they worked on transforming themselves: 'Kitty decided to lighten her hair; Franci's was so dark it was a lost cause' (210). Kitty's body was closer to the coveted ideal, and with the

help of some hair dye, she attempted to change her racial categorization. Dark-haired Franci was driven to a much more intrusive response:

They could do nothing about their brown ‘Jewish’ eyes, so their attention turned to their noses. Kitty’s was small, straight, and unremarkable but Franci’s was long and slightly hooked at the end: the stereotype of a ‘Jewish’ nose. Its length and shape became the focus of all her frustration with the Nazi restrictions. ‘I thought if my nose was different’, my mother later told me, ‘I could go to the movies’. During that strange pre-war summer, my mother talked her boyfriend, her parents, and one of Prague’s few plastic surgeons into helping her obtain a nose job. When, on September 1, Hitler invaded Poland and the allies declared war on Germany, my mother perceived Czech jubilation through the haze of a postoperative headache. (210)

Not acutely aware of the level of danger or refusing to believe it, Franci had a nose job – an attempt to rid herself of the most stereotypically ascribed feature of a people to whom she felt no connection. With this decision, she became part of a tradition of acculturated Jews who resorted to the plastic surgeon to liberate themselves from this highly marked feature. In 1898, the German-Jewish plastic surgeon Jacques Joseph performed the first rhinoplasty in Berlin, a procedure that ‘began the craze for nose jobs in fin-de-siècle Germany and Austria’ (Gilman 1991: 185). Sander Gilman reports that Joseph’s clientele was largely the assimilated Jewish population who hoped to ‘conceal their origins’ (187). Franci attempted the same kind of liberation through concealment, hoping to visually fit in with the majority. Almost ironically, her physical recovery was simultaneous with the beginning of the war. Later in life, when talking with her daughter who is so engaged in memory work, Franci is well aware of the naiveté of her hope that getting a nose job might allow her to keep on living the life to which she had been accustomed before the Nazi invasion.

This story interweaves family and world history within Epstein’s narrative, which is framed around the body as a connecting node. Franci’s story is integrated through direct speech, but in addition to historical facts, Epstein inserts a creative element into her memoir. From a Second Generation retrospective stance, she inscribes her own thoughts into her maternal grandmother Pepi’s mind, a woman she had never met, but who represents the last vestige of a lost culture, a culture of the *shtetl* Epstein had previously established. *Where She Came From* is a reconstruction of family life by way of a historical chronicle of prewar Eastern

European Jewish women, and Pepi represents the generation who broke with Orthodoxy, the choice that made it possible for her daughter to grow up assimilated in the cosmopolitan Prague of the 1920s. Pepi was orphaned when she was only eight years old and was brought up by an aunt in the small town of Bretnice in rural Bohemia, where she experienced anti-Semitism firsthand long before the Nazi invasion.

This woman, who had experienced the harsh realities of early twentieth-century *shtetl* life, would have understood the danger surrounding them: 'I imagine that Pepi tended her daughter sadly, understanding the futility of straightening a nose when it was the whole world that was askew' (1997: 210). Here, implying a usable past in this pre-Holocaust world of the *shtetl*, Epstein assumes that Pepi's Jewish identity was not imposed. The same was not the case for her daughter, who unsuccessfully rebelled against the ethnic legacy forced on her. The story of Franci's nose plays a major role in Epstein's analysis of her mother's state of mind at the beginning of the period of persecution, but along with her readers, the author knows the futility of fighting against the Nazi machine by attempting to erase physical markers related to anti-Semitic stereotypes.

### The Second Generation's 'Jewish look'

When considering the body as a node, the networked nature of memory becomes particularly evident – parents' and children's bodies are connected through embodiment, contexts and perceptions. Frequently, it is during 'return' journeys to Europe and encounters with the nations of perpetrators, bystanders, and their descendants that the Second Generation is also made aware of their 'Jewish looks'. Such moments can spark to life the fear-filled family memory and cultural memory of being recognized as a Jew.

During her research for *Where She Came From*, Helen Epstein traveled to Czechoslovakia to experience the locations of family memory. In Prague, the city of Franci's childhood and youth, Epstein feels at home: she speaks the language and recognizes aspects of the culture that had been translocated to her New York childhood. However, things are different when she arrives in the small town where her maternal ancestors had lived in rural Bohemia: 'It was in Kolín that I became aware of the subtle change in the way people behaved when I said I was a Jew. With varying degrees of discretion, they examined my face for "Jewish" (dark, myopic) eyes, a "Jewish" (large) mouth, a "Jewish" (hooked) nose" (66). Epstein's trip took place in the 1990s, but as her

features are examined for physical evidence of her Jewishness, she experiences a flashback of parental history. She interprets the Czech behavior as a search for physical differences informed by anti-Semitic thought, mentioning all the stereotypical elements of 'Jewish physiognomy'. Even when the observers are unable to find any of these markers, a physical Jewishness is ascribed: 'One man, examining my straight nose, said he found my pronunciation of Czech nasal' (67). Epstein describes this experience in the neutral, distanced tone of an ethnographer. It is part of her memory work, and there is no obvious indication of fear or anger; rather, she presents a matter-of-fact description of encounters with people who expect physical markers of her ethnicity.

Notably, this expectation is generational, as the people who identify her as Jewish are elderly. With regard to younger Czechs, Epstein observes, 'Unlike the older Czechs who had lived alongside Jews all their lives and had witnessed their deportation, they did not search our faces' (67). During the Nazi occupation, a ghetto had been established in Kolín, and later, all Jews were deported to concentration camps. Growing up without any Jewish neighbors, the younger generation does not look for features or stereotypes associated with Eastern Europe's past.

This presumption of innocence is not the case in Fern Schumer Chapman's *Motherland*. In this travel memoir of a mother-daughter visit, anti-Semitism is implied as a transmitted fact of German life. In Frankfurt, Chapman instantly links the airport official with National Socialism. His description – 'beefy, blond-haired, steely-eyed, uniform' (2000: 13) – reveals that the associations arising in the mind of the American Second Generation traveler are inescapably bound to the cultural memory of the 'Aryan'. In this scene, Chapman is not encountering a German customs officer in 1990; rather, she is encountering her idea of the Germans who murdered her family and forced her mother to be sent to the United States: 'He'd be perfect in the SS – right out of Central Casting – with his fair complexion and imperious manner. I half expect him to snap up an arm and salute Hitler' (13). Both the man's appearance and his authoritative behavior reinforce her preconceptions. Chapman directly references Hollywood, indicating that history is conceived through its film version: the cinematic Nazi figure is the only referent she has.

Her explanation for what she perceives as the German's disdain is based on her mother's and her own physical features: 'For Germans, it seems, blond hair and blue eyes are knowable, therefore safe and trustworthy. My dark hair and eyes, like my mother's embody our foreignness; to this functionary, we must look like all the people Germany has banned

or banished. We're either guest workers or irritating reminders of what was' (14). In this generalization, Chapman projects her own thoughts concerning her dark features and thus the signs of her Jewishness into the mind of the customs officer. She also repeats her associations with 'Aryan' features. In a way, Chapman has fallen for the Nazi racial propaganda of the Nordic German, and her perception is filtered through cultural memory. At the time of her visit, the average German would most likely not have associated dark features with Jewishness. In the early 1990s, no more than 40,000 Jews were living in the country, which has a population of about 80 million. And while the association between Jews and German historical guilt is certainly true, the physical connection made here is driven by the racial stereotypes dominant in Nazi ideology.

Texts such as Chapman's suggest that when faced with a situation of presumed danger, a fear of having a 'Jewish body', so common in survivors, surfaces even in their children. In his psychosocial study on post-Holocaust family life, Aaron Hass observes that one of the reasons survivors tell their children about their experiences is 'to prepare them for a possible future onslaught from an enemy fuelled by centuries of anti-Semitism' (1990: 75). Kurt Grünberg and Jürgen Straub, also psychologists, have argued that it is in particular these elements of the parental legacy – aspects connected to situations of persecution and destruction, in which life and the physical body are in danger – that have the greatest impact on children's emotions and reactions (2001: 10). Later, Chapman acknowledges that her reactions have been shaped by collective fears and also by the fact that she has made her mother's history her own: 'Unwittingly, almost through a kind of emotional osmosis, my mother has passed down so much of herself, even her rancor. This man personifies the people who have shattered my mother's life, and indirectly my own. Now I see: I've come prepared to hate' (2000: 15). This hatred is comparable to Brett's accounts of her visits to Poland, but unlike Brett, who stays with her conception of Poles, Chapman's comment shows that now, memory work is winning over learned fears and cultural memory.

A textbook example of transferred fears linked to one's own body is illustrated by one of Epstein's interviewees in *Children of the Holocaust*. Rochelle, the Canadian daughter of survivors, relates that as a young woman, she wanted nothing more than to be inconspicuous: 'I wanted to be a special kind of Jew, a Jew who wasn't too Jewish. I stayed observant but I didn't want to be conspicuous. I had this theory if people knew I'd be one of the first to be taken away. I had very blond hair when I was young and I got very upset when it turned dark. When people

would say *you don't look Jewish*, it made me happy. I thought I was safe' (1988: 42). Before she began to examine these fears and their origins, Rochelle suffered from anxiety over the danger that her body might put her in. Her blond hair had protected her as a child. When it grew darker, her fear increased because her body seemed to betray her. She found release through art therapy, learning to face the past that was reaching into her present, and eventually she no longer equated her body with danger. In such instances, the memory links are contagious and perilous: they engender fear and reverse stereotyping, highlighting a need for conscious memory work.

But the memory of genocide is not the only historical factor to create a framework with implications for 'visible Jewishness' in this corpus. Migration also plays a role. Like names, which are connected to the past but have a societal life, national contexts are important when it comes to issues of physical alterity. Gilman observes that the impact of the social context on Jewish visibility should not be underestimated (1991: 236), as it is a key issue for diaspora lives: 'The desire for invisibility, the desire to become "white", lies at the center of the Jew's flight from his or her own body' (235).

Again, much as with what was discussed in Chapter 3, it is the United Kingdom and its social framework in which visible markers of Jewishness are viewed as a challenge. From a young age on, fitting in was always an issue for Victor Seidler and his peers. In the context of migration, the children were the mediators between cultures, and they were the first to emulate the customs and behaviors of their new surroundings: 'We learned to avoid behaving in such ways that might draw attention to differences. If Jews were emotional and learned to talk with their hands, we would learn to be reserved and would be careful not to use our hands' (2000: 26). In this case, body language – talking with one's hands – rather than a specific physical feature was identified as a tell-tale sign of Jewishness. Consequently, Seidler and the other migrant children taught themselves the local body language to fit in. In retrospect, he realizes that aspiring to majority behavior meant more than just becoming 'English': It required them to 'internalize unknowingly certain anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jewishness' (26).

The intersections of cultural memory, Holocaust family memory, social contexts, and body perceptions in this node of memory are also explored in connection with the circumcision of sons born after. In light of the fear of renewed persecution discussed earlier, some survivors did not have their sons circumcised, in case a body marked as Jewish might become a source of danger again. In this context, where it is not the

survivor fathers' bodies that are at stake, the limiting power of taboos is less prominent, but unsurprisingly it is mostly Second Generation males who discuss this subject.

Helen Epstein reports that one survivor family who had made their home in Canada had stripped themselves of any affiliation with the Jewish faith. The parents only told their son that he was Jewish when he turned 13, the age at which he would have been initiated into Jewish manhood under different circumstances. The reason for their secrecy was that they, 'like others, did not want to pass on a stigma to their children' (1988: 97). To prevent the 'stigma' of Jewishness from becoming visible, they had refused to have their son circumcised. But in the memory work conversation between him and Epstein, the subject comes up, indicating what an important line of inquiry this is.

Lev Raphael's short story 'Caravans' also features a family that outright rejects any association with Jewish life and tradition. Even as a child, the uncircumcised son knows that this was meaningful: 'When I was eleven, I asked my Dad to tell me why, really. Over the years, he'd said things about "health reasons", but that didn't make any sense, or not anymore. "Because that's how they knew, that's how they could tell!" he spat. "My Polish was the best, and my German –! I had blue eyes, blue like the sky, but you couldn't hide that"' (1990: 72). Increasingly aware that the family past was the explanation behind his parents' choice, the Second Generation son does not believe the pretexts of 'health reasons' any longer and tries to find out more. The response 'Because that's how they knew, that's how they could tell!' reveals that for the survivor, the potential danger of living with this body is still in force. During the war, he had the 'right' eye color and spoke the 'right' languages, but he could not change the facts of his body. The refusal to have his son circumcised was thus a precaution against any future persecution of Jews, but this stays unspoken until the adult son explicitly makes the connection.

Duncan, the American protagonist of *Second Hand Smoke*, introduced above, was taught by his survivor parents that assimilation is the only possible way to survive. Although Thane Rosenbaum's troubled survivor couple mocks religion, tradition is still upheld:

They were trying to have it both ways, and their guests knew it. In giving birth to a son, they were holding up their end of the sacred covenant of God – laughably, the same God who was now even harder to trust than before. Nonetheless, they showed their obedience and good faith, the *bris* forever branding their child as a Jew. But in naming him Duncan, they were not taking any chances, either. (1999: 5)

After surviving the Nazis, religion in this family has become, if not impossible, then at least a minefield. But faith and religious customs are not entirely cast off, as later also explored in the chapter on Passover: the parents hold a *brit milah*, the circumcision ceremony that will ‘forever [brand] their child as a Jew’. Rosenbaum’s acerbic description shows the lived paradox of a child’s body that is secretly marked as Jewish under the cover of assimilation – circumcised but bearing the name of a Shakespearean king. In this bodily mark of Judaism, like in most of Rosenbaum’s writing, two themes are explored together: the survivors’ ongoing battle with the shadows of the past and the meaning of Jewishness in a post-Holocaust world.

## Hair

Of all the body parts and body issues that this node of memory brings, the one that appears most frequently is hair, predominately female hair. In this section, I consider a number of the ways in which Second Generation memory work explores the meaning of hair, among them the shaving the Nazis’ victims experienced upon their arrival in the concentration camps. Hair is also connected to issues surrounding the ‘Jewish body’, including the meanings associated with hair within an internalized system of body images tied to the ideological discourses of the National Socialists, and to questions of assimilation and alterity after migration.

The historian Dominick LaCapra includes the shaving of victims’ hair in the camp ‘entry rituals of degradation involving the extreme reversal of “ordinary” expectations’ (1994: 173). Female survivors in particular describe this humiliating erasure of the prisoners’ physical privacy as a source of shame and traumatic memories. Hair is almost universally understood as a key feature of female beauty. In Judaism, like in other faiths, a high degree of seductiveness and sexuality is ascribed to female tresses, and in Orthodox tradition a married woman is required to cover her hair when in public.

The haunting memories of the physical intrusion of their parents’ bodies once again cause Second Generation authors to employ various narrative distancing techniques. This takes either the form used in the case of the tattoo – the remediation of the survivor parents’ own words – or creative approaches, such as poetry, suggesting a qualitative difference between a permanent signifier of victimhood, the Auschwitz tattoo, and the shaving.



In his memoirs, including *Writing a Jewish Life*, Lev Raphael describes his parents as incapable of telling him more than fragmented stories about their survival. These fragments, however, were often repeated and became fillers for the stories that could not be told. One of the recurrent narrative shards was his mother's story about her forced shaving: "They shaved our heads". Here, she breaks off, and the words float in my memory like a ragged cloud, with only empty sky around it. She rarely said even those four words together' (2006: 66). All that Helena can describe – and not even this, most of the time – is the powerful outside agency taking over her body and the ensuing loss of her femininity. No story follows this sentence, there is no further elucidation, and the words become a disconnected vignette of memory. But to Raphael, they are so meaningful that he uses the exact same fragmented sentence in his subsequent memoir, *My Germany*, as an example of the 'bits of stories – flashes, really' (2009: 25) he was told about his parents' past, emulating his mother's more compulsive and involuntary repetition for his readers.

Much later in her life, Helena loses her hair again. Raphael does not explain whether this is due to age, illness, or chemotherapy, but the situation is unbearable for her. Her son, knowing how active the past is in his mother's inner life, understands that the original experience of having her hair taken has imprinted itself on the later one:

When my mother starts losing her hair, the hair that was luxuriant, alive – before the War, and even after for some years. She suffers new defeats. In all of New York, she can't find a wig that looks good. But what wig can hide the losses no one sees? She tries some vitamins, and wisps of hair grow back, but cannot hide her higher brow. I suggest a different man to cut and style and dye her hair, but she erupts in tears, pleading to be let alone: 'There is no hair there!' (2006: 66)

Well versed in reading his mother's behavior and its implications of a different time, Raphael interprets this renewed loss as a form of re-traumatization. It is a 'defeat': no wig can look good enough to cover the returning visual evidence of the initial experience. Seeing her hairless head, Helena once again sees herself as a victim despite her survival. Hoping to help, Raphael suggests some anti-hair loss treatments, but she cannot acknowledge the situation in the present. Her tear-filled reaction 'There is no hair there!' shows her son that the original pain has taken over in uncontrollable ways.

Not only is the body as such an important topic in Lily Brett's oeuvre, but throughout, both in essayistic and fictional texts, Lily describes her mother Rose (Rooshka) Brett, née Spindler, as very concerned with her own and her daughter's looks. Brett implies that this is a result of the loss of femininity the survivor experienced during her incarceration. Her arrival in Auschwitz is the subject of Brett's poem 'To the Left', in which Rooshka, who is directly addressed, is sent to the left, the line that the reader knows means a chance of survival.

This poem by a daughter for her mother is a song of pain and care, and, at the same time, an attempt to document Rooshka's suffering and survival. But all that Brett can creatively write about is her mother's being shaved. It becomes a signifier for other physical abuses. Concerning the shaving, Brett goes far and allows her imagination to explore the fact that all of her mother's hair, not just her head, was shaved. An image from Rooshka's Polish childhood – plucked chickens – becomes the final stand-in for the intrusion of her bodily privacy:

plucked  
 of yourself  
 you resembled  
 the trembling chickens  
 your father bought in Lodz. (1986: 1–2)

Not only her femininity but also her humanity was taken from her – Rooshka was 'plucked' of herself.

In Brett's and some other authors' work, the shaving of hair is an area in which the imagination is allowed to intercede, unlike other physical abuses, which were shown to be beyond the limits of Second Generation words and memory work. Mark Raphael Baker even creates an entirely fictional scene set in a concentration camp. His memoir, *The Fiftieth Gate: A Journey through Memory*, is, for the most part, divided into two narrative strands: Baker's memories and historical commentary, in which oral history interviews with his parents are embedded. However, he assumes the voice of a victim, his paternal grandmother, when she experiences her own shaving and observes that of her daughter Marta:

This room is lined by female inmates who shear our hair. I wait my turn, and diffidently watch my dark mane fall, as if it were cut from a captive animal. Women cooperatively hand over their wigs, the last vestige of their modesty. 'A little shorter please', Marta tells the

hairdresser. 'Please, make it even'. Her thick black hair drops in a single lock like a twisted potato peel. 'What's going to happen to us?' She asks the barber, who flinches before gliding the clippers across her bowed head. (1997: 270)

Although Baker is fictionalizing the camp experience, he circumvents the use of his own Second Generation voice as he takes his grandmother's perspective, who does not know what is about to happen. Only the barber who shaves Marta is knowledgeable, but when she is asked about their fate, she stays silent. Only her flinching body speaks. The scene ends with the two entering the gas chambers, and here Baker's narrative ends – we, author and readers, know what happens next. Indeed, we are put into a position of backshadowing, a concept introduced by the literary scholar Michael Bernstein: 'Backshadowing is a kind of retroactive foreshadowing in which the shared knowledge of the outcome of a series of events by narrator and listener is used to judge the participants in those events *as though they too should have known what was to come*' (1994: 16). In this case, the narrative backshadowing of the victims' situation is not judgment based, but the word choices betray Baker's perspective: 'shear' and 'captive animals' imply a judgment of the acts of the perpetrators, and the adverb 'diffidently' adds emotional resonance to the scene.

His wording also raises other issues. In the description of the girl's 'bowed head', for instance, religious associations abound, and the barber seems to be blessing the little girl while shaving her. The image 'twisted potato peel' is charged in the context of survival as well: a potato peel might hold the promise of life for a starving internee, and its use as a metaphor for the lost hair and the impending death in the gas chambers introduces contradictory sentiments. Barker's imaginary scene is an attempt to recreate the last moments of family members in the concentration camps, a narrative act that is unique in the corpus. The rather complex outcome explains why the fictional creation of such scenes is not generally part of Second Generation writing.

In different ways throughout the corpus, hair is represented as carrying the traumatic residue of the Holocaust. An interesting example is included in Lily Brett's *Too Many Men*, in which Rooshka takes her adolescent daughter to get a haircut. At the hairdresser's, the mother insists on having Ruth's hair cut shorter and shorter, and Ruth ends up looking 'like a pinhead' (2002: 99). Notwithstanding the embarrassment she feels, Ruth judges what happened from a perspective of memory work and presents it as a reenactment of the survivor's past

on her daughter's body: 'She had looked in the mirror when she got home and known that Rooshka hadn't meant to make her look ugly. Something out of her mother's control caused her to have Ruth's hair cut off. Ruth knew that it must have been something connected with the chopping off of her mother's own long, thick plaits, in Auschwitz' (99). In an interview conducted in 2000, Brett relates this scene as her own childhood experience, even using the same word, 'pinhead': 'There was the day that Brett's mother marched her across the road and ordered the barber to cut off her long curls. "Shorter, shorter", she demanded. So that Brett went from chubby kid with a mass of curls to being a chubby kid, who looked like a pinhead' (McKew 2000: 53).

Brett's family life serves as the material for her oeuvre; however, there is one elision: her younger sister, Doris, is mentioned only twice in Brett's writings, suggesting problems between the two, because usually the author tends to rework topics thoroughly and repeatedly. Doris Brett published her childhood memories in *Eating the Underworld: A Memoir in Three Voices*, a book in which she also tells the story of her fight against ovarian cancer. In the innovative memoir, which is partially written in verse, she discusses her troubled relationship with Lily, whom she sees as exploiting her parents' past in her work, especially in the descriptions of Rooshka as a traumatized mother with questionable parenting skills. Doris Brett intends to defend her mother's public image, and one example she uses in support is her sister's memory of the haircut and the meaning Lily ascribes to it:

Her mother, she says, had an unconscious need to make Lily experience something of the experience she had undergone in Auschwitz, where inmates had their heads shaved on arrival.

I am struck yet again by how memory is coloured by interpretation. I too had my long hair cut short in the same style, to the same length, by the same barber across the road. It was the practical, short haircut that many of my friends sported. I didn't experience it as an attack on me, but rather as a symbol of growing up and being able to prepare myself for school in the morning. (2001: 365)

What we encounter here is not only a quarrel between the two literary sisters. It is also an indication that the two did not experience childhood events in the same way. The scholarship has explored how siblings deal with the past in Holocaust families. For instance, Dina Wardi argues that in survivor families, one child is subconsciously assigned the task of being the 'memorial candle' – that is, the designated carrier of

memory – and is expected to serve as a link between past and present (1992: 6ff).

Paula Fass offers a different take on siblings' dealings with the past in her memoir, *Inheriting the Holocaust*. In describing her younger sister, Iris Marsha Fass, who was born in the United States – much like Doris, the Australian-born sibling of Lily Brett – she says that because of the temporal distance and because of her role as the younger sibling, she was 'without access to the many languages of secret knowledge, [...] my sister was kept from the hiding places and thereby also became separated from things that were deeply important' (2009: 171). Especially in the retrospective view of memory work, siblings may imbue events and experiences with different meanings. Whereas one Brett sister describes the haircut as a shocking experience, in which evidently the mother's past and the meanings she attaches to hair took over, it is just a haircut to the other sister.

Second Generation memory work also interrogates and documents the ways in which attitudes can be past inflected in the survivor family. As a result of propagandistic discourses about the 'Jewish body' and the danger of this body during National Socialism, some survivors unconsciously internalized anti-Semitic stereotypes into their body perceptions. Gilman argues that stereotyping can elicit a range of responses in its objects: 'it may be internalizing and self-destructive (self-hating) or it may be projective and stereotyping; it take [sic] the form of capitulation to the power of the image or the form of resistance to the very stereotype of the Jew' (1991: 6). Such internalized negative body images play out even in the post-Holocaust family, including in the dark, often curly, hair prevalent among Ashkenazi Jews – one of the features considered a physical identifier of Jewishness. Here, it facilitates memory work. In this case, the links of this memory node extend into the present moment, not only as considerations for memory work but also as ideas that are still virulent. A frequent, if gendered, motif in Second Generation writing is the desire – of both survivors and their daughters raised on parental fears and ways of thinking – for the inconspicuous blond hair of the 'unmarked' Gentile body. Dark curls are considered difficult on a practical level – because of their unruliness – but the real challenge is the visible Otherness they are assumed to convey to the world.

The part of Lily Brett's oeuvre that deals with her childhood and adolescence is set in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, a 'white' context that provides many opportunities for Brett's survivor mothers to show their physical preferences for blue eyes and blond hair: 'The looks Rooshka admired most were so Aryan it had disturbed Ruth. It was as

though Rooshka was in accord with the Nazis on that issue. Blue eyes were superior. And blond hair. Still, Ruth thought, it was understandable. The Germans had flung so much shit about dark-haired, dark-eyed Jews, that some of it must have stuck' (2002: 405). It has been argued that body images are an area susceptible to traumatic impact, and they represent a recurrent issue in the so-called 'survivor syndrome', the cluster of symptoms discussed earlier. This paragraph drawn from *Too Many Men* spells out the connection between Rooshka's thinking and Nazi physical ideals, with Ruth identifying the adoption of the aggressors' values in her mother's thinking. The continuing impact of the 'Aryan' versus 'Jewish' body dichotomy indicates that subconsciously, the sense of victimization did not end with liberation.

Similar physical values are evident in the chapter 'Blonde and Dark' in Lisa Appignanesi's memoir, *Losing the Dead*:

Not that I wasn't told I was pretty and clever and all those things good-enough parents tell their children, but I knew, none the less, that I belonged down there with the darkies. In my mother's oft-repeated narrative of her pre-war life, blondeness recurs as an important feature. It is a talisman bestowed by generally jealous gods. To be blonde is to be favoured. This is not of course an aberration peculiar to her. From Botticelli's Venus to Goldilocks to Marilyn Monroe, blondes, as we well know, have more fun. But my mother's story bears a particular inflection. (1999: 37)

From an early age, Lisa Appignanesi had associated dark features with being less worthy, in part due to her mother, Hena's, life lessons in which blond hair was the key to survival, as introduced above. The hero of this family's stories is Uncle Adek, who hid in plain sight with forged Aryan papers and helped both his family and other Jews survive, although he, in the end, did not. In these stories, his blond hair is a central and oft-repeated motif. Throughout, blondeness is associated with the courage to face and conquer the dangers of Nazi persecution. The knowledge that she 'belongs down there with the darkies' assigns an inferior status to Appignanesi. More importantly, it cast doubt on her ability to survive persecution. Her use of the word 'darkies' and her 'identifying with the racial slur' (Lassner 2008: 119) add a layer of understanding specific to an English-speaking readership. Here, racism is cross-culturally translated from Nazi-occupied Europe to the prejudice permeating the history of North America and other postcolonial contexts. The survivor mother's reasoning has taught the child that complexions and their associated

status are a judgment issued by higher forces, and that she has evidently been 'relegated to the nether realms of dark paternity' (Appignanesi 1999: 37). By invoking the most famous Gentile blondes in Western cultural history, this hierarchy is established in a broader context.

Melvin Konner has observed that the longing to be blond is found throughout Jewish history, as blond hair is the most characteristic feature of the Western Gentile woman, constructed as dangerously appealing. However, there is more than sexuality involved in this desire: 'The unconscious idea seems to be that some of the status of the blonde will rub off on the Jew or the black, or, for men, the conquest of such a prize (consider 'trophy wives') would prove that they are not after all inferior' (2009: 49). Neither in Brett's nor in Appignanesi's texts has the value of blond hair a sexual underpinning. The memory of survival taught by the family lends hair colors a much more sinister meaning.

Such parental attitudes toward 'Jewish bodies' show once again the complexity and multiple connections of a node of memory that carries an undigested and disturbing element of the past into the present. Indeed, the sense of being less worthy and the attempts to live up to body perceptions that are strikingly close to 'Aryan' ideals suggest a specific kind of mimicry in which the race ideals of the National Socialists are played out on the survivors' bodies. The concept of mimicry has been developed in postcolonial theory to describe the paradoxical and ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Through memory work, Second Generation authors reveal how the former victims aspire to certain physical features, which were considered worthy in the Nazi period. However, what is explored here is not the mockery or menace that the colonizer recognizes in the resemblance created by the colonized, but rather a link to a memory of victimization that takes embodied form. The National Socialists' propaganda depicted the Jews as a disease on the German *Volkskörper* – the collective body of the nation – creating an interpretation of the Holocaust as a 'public health project' (91) required to 'cleanse' the race. This subtext differentiates survivor family mimicry from that observed in colonization. Here, the marked body carries a history of genocide.

But hair and the alterity it might project also connect to contemporary contexts, that is, to migration. For Paula Fass, hairstyles reflect the stages – from prisoners in Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen to American immigrants – in the lives of her mother and her peers. As forced laborers, 'the women were bald and constantly hungry and always cold' (2009: 134). Fass' mother, Bluma, who had been 'kind of a spokeswoman' (134) for the women in the camp, told her daughter a great deal about

her survival, including the problems within the prisoner community. Nothing bothered the survivor more than the stealing she witnessed among the internees, and she reports an incident in which one woman took her friend's blanket; however, Bluma 'rejoiced when this woman – blond and prosperous – married and bore two sons and lived well into her late life' (135). The connection between migration, prosperity, and blond hair thus appears twice in her daughter's relational memoir, emphasizing the survivors' need to recover the physical beauty that had been taken from them as young camp internees: 'they came to America to wear furs and diamonds and bleach their hair blond' (134).

Blond hair as the color of American immigration was also something that Sonia Pilcer's protagonist, Zosha-Zoe, and her friends noticed. The Second Generation daughters even had a term for the color of their survivor mothers' hair: 'I recalled that it was Hela who had coined the term "Lodz beige" to describe the strange color, never seen in nature, that transformed these women from Holocaust brunettes to Hollywood blondes' (2001a: 57). This passage describes – in rather ironic tones – what the young women perceive as a collective dissociation attempt from a certain 'Jewish look'. The survivors all chose to forgo their natural coloring and thus, in a way, their history, to fulfill their desire to be visibly unidentifiable Americans. It is the Second Generation daughters, the first-generation Americans, who know that their mothers will never become 'Hollywood blondes'. The daughters see that 'Lodz beige' is still tinged with 'Holocaust brunette' – it is a color 'never seen in nature'. The insistent effort the survivors put into changing their appearance tells their children that dark hair is part of a racially defined 'Jewish look', and that these associations are still alive even many years later, throughout the diaspora.

The specific Second Generation situation, unlike that of 'affiliative' members of the group, also shows in the fact that body perceptions can even affect the next generation's body image. Throughout *The War After*, Anne Karpf contemplates what it means to be Jewish in the United Kingdom, suggesting that due to a subtle British variation of anti-Semitism, local Jews have ensured that they are much less visible than their US counterparts. Her body, in particular her hair and the infamous 'Jewish curls', are an issue in this minority community that values invisibility:

About frizz, we the trying-to-assimilate, were phobic, willing to go to almost any lengths to induce, no *compel* our locks to uncoil. To do this we had, above all to keep them dry. Swimming was a trichological



ordeal (even when done the Jewish way, with head perpendicular, as if the water might singe it). The rain was our enemy, the hairdryer our aide-de-camp. Some (although – and this was the matter of some pride – not me) even had to recourse to the iron. (1997: 46–47)

The consistent use of the collective personal pronoun ‘we’ indicates that the urge to escape the ‘Jewish look’ is not Karpf’s alone, but rather a sentiment shared by many a British-Jewish girl. Her lengthy description reveals the true extent of the problem in which every drop of rain was ‘our enemy’. For these teenagers, being Jewish was a form of Otherness, as England’s ‘white’ heritage was not inclusive of alternative ethnicities or religions. Postwar Britain’s monocultural context did celebrate difference, and this fact was deeply ingrained in the girls’ psyches, as expressed by Karpf’s considerations of visibility: ‘It never occurred to us to flaunt our curls, much less cultivate them. Fashion had declared that this wasn’t the fashionable look, even if it was (regrettably) ours’ (47). Jews were not in fashion, and ‘looking Jewish’ was regarded as unfashionable; therefore, keeping one’s hair straight seemingly circumvented this problem. By straightening her hair, young Anne Karpf was inscribing herself into a long diaspora tradition of invisibility, as indicated by Sander Gilman.

However, later in life, when she becomes interested in examining the impact of the past on her actions, Karpf discovers that there is more than visibility and passing at stake in her views about her body: ‘When, in my early thirties, I went to see the film *Sophie’s Choice*, in which a Nazi tells the heroine admiringly that she looks “so Aryan, so beautiful”, I recognized what I’d always believed: Jewish couldn’t be beautiful – it occupied a lower rung in the hierarchy of looks; “You look Jewish” never could or would be said as a compliment’ (47). Notably, the implications of Jewish visibility can only be described in the strongest possible terms, those related to the Nazi past: ‘Jewishly curly hair would have seemed equivalent to wearing a yellow star’ (47).

Only when watching *Sophie’s Choice* does Karpf understand that her issues about ‘looking Jewish’ go beyond the question of assimilation. Meryl Streep’s portrayal of the beautiful Gentile victim and the admiration her fair features inspire even in the Nazi enemy make Karpf realize that she had always associated being Jewish with being less worthy and desirable. The corresponding National Socialist views had underpinned her teenage behavior – family history shaped her body perception. Memory work disables the transgenerational virulence of the negative messages of the past. By identifying these influences in the parents’ thinking, they are exposed, explored, and their influence is contained.

## **Interpreting and connecting one's body as a node of memory**

Whereas the physical and psychological suffering of the survivors can be described and analyzed in a straightforward fashion, the position of those born into the aftermath is more difficult to explain, and much of the literature, as indicated in my introduction, focuses on this point. Body metaphors are one of the primary ways in which authors mediate the paradoxical situation of living with memories transmitted across the generations. The cultural studies scholar Marc Ledbetter maintains that the 'body metaphor lays claim to the world and narrows the distance between who we are and the experiences we have, by describing the world in the most personal terms we have, ourselves' (1996: 12). In texts of Second Generation memory work, the frequency of the body metaphor suggests that it is one of a few possible ways of describing the sense of an intrinsic knowledge about and connectedness with the past that cannot be adequately explained through verbal and nonverbal communication. The body metaphor provides a biological and thus translatable model for describing a deep and involuntary link between survivor parents and their children. In their visual and affective images, they also open up an expressive depth. The sense of having an intrinsic (though noncerebral) knowledge of the parents' past is one of the cornerstones of Second Generation self-definition and personal identity. It is also the impetus for conscious forms of memory work. In the context of this study and its inquiry into Second Generation memory work, the impact of the past is less of a focus. But body metaphors are also a part of memory work insofar as when paradoxical emotions are put into words, a revelation takes place. The impact of the past is noted and made a part of conscious family memory rather than remaining in the realm of involuntary and subconscious processes.

The use of the body metaphor is not limited to the primary material. Theoretical texts also employ it as a means of illustrating the subject matter. In both cases, the most frequently used metaphors are wounds and scars. The literary scholar Efraim Sicher, for instance, speaks about 'the Second Generation that "bears the scar without the wound"' (1998: 27), while Nadine Fresco, a historian, observes that the survivors 'transmitted only the wound to their children' (1984: 419). In one of the earliest essays published on the Second Generation, she uses a powerful body metaphor to describe her observations: 'These latter-day Jews are like people who had a hand amputated that they never had. It is a phantom pain, in which amnesia takes the place of memory' (421).

Here, Fresco attempts to describe the absence experienced by children of survivors, which can be as real as the phantom pain for a lost limb; however, in this case, it is the phantom pain for a limb one never had. This image captures the difficulty of describing the transmission of memory, a significant issue for the children of survivors, as Efraim Sicher suggests: 'the story of the Second Generation usually includes the story of transmission, which is also the story of their link in the genealogical chain as they in turn pass on the narrative to their children' (2000: 80).

Indeed, numerous studies have taken on the issue of transmission. Some scholars have examined transmitted memory, most prominently theorized as 'postmemory', while others, such as the literary scholar and psychoanalyst Gabriele Schwab, in *Haunting Legacies* (2010), are concerned with the transmission of trauma. The number of models developed to capture and frame the transgenerational processes in the Holocaust family demonstrates the challenges theorists face in explaining such forms of transmission (cf. Kellermann 2001b). Yolanda Gampel, for example, suggests that the parents' past impacts the children of survivors through a form of 'radioactive identification' (1992: 119), while Haydée Faimberg (1988), a psychoanalyst as well, extends the term 'telescoping', originally used in nineteenth-century England to describe train accidents in which compartments were pushed into one another, applying it to the generational telescoping of memories and even traumata that transgress the boundaries of the individual. Actual bodily transmission is not as common as the widespread metaphorical use might suggest; however, certain traits particular to children of survivors have been found, such as a possible hereditary predisposition to low levels of cortisol (Yehuda et al. 2000: 1252).

Although scholars have largely sidestepped biological (e.g. genetic) models of transmission, presumably due in part to the problematic connotations of heredity in light of Adolf Hitler's racial theories, Second Generation authors frequently describe the intricacies of inherited family memories through body metaphors. A certain body-based knowledge that exists from childhood is repeatedly reported in the material: 'I don't even remember not knowing. I believe I sucked the knowledge with my mother's milk. It gave me a secret inner life that was as voluptuous as it was tortured' (Pilcer 1992: 1). Here, Pilcer uses the image of being physically nurtured with the Holocaust past, involuntarily imbibing a history that would later occupy her emotionally. Anne Karpf speaks about knowing the past 'almost intravenously' (1997: 39), and Lily Brett's protagonist, Esther, in *Just Like That*, lives with a 'profound sadness' that she had 'absorbed' (1994: 250) from her mother. All of

these examples are built on the premise that memory is connective and can be transmitted physically, a transmission that occurs unconsciously during early childhood. The examples also show different versions of a quasi-nurturing situation in which a parent (for the most part, the mother) becomes part of the child's body.

Male authors describe transferrals of memory primarily with hereditary or genetic models. Rosenbaum's work provides telling examples: 'The legacy that flowed through his veins. Parental reminiscences had become the genetic material that was passed on by the survivors to their children' (1996: 5); 'My DNA may be forever coded with the filmy stuff of damaged offspring, the handicap of an unwanted inheritance' (63); and 'Who knows how many generations it will take to cancel this virus from our blood?' (62–63). Bukiet uses similar images: 'Whatever wisdom others bring to it comes from the heart and head, but for us it's genetic' (2000: 16), and 'Like a dangerous hereditary disposition to a fatal disease, the War colors every post-War perception – maybe onto the seventh generation, and surely onto the second' (16). In both authors' texts, the repeated references to genes and a hereditary element frame Holocaust memory as a physical disposition. More problematically, the transmission implied here entails not just knowledge but also an illness that might potentially damage future generations. At the same time, these genetic and hereditary images emphasize the interconnected structure of memory even more than non-science-based descriptions.

Overall, even though the images used tend to be gendered, transmission is described as taking place via a physical path. The appearance of constructed social roles, with women employing deeply ingrained images of nurturing, only enhances the images of a body being taken over by an external agency. The frequency of body metaphors that describe a physical concept of transmission suggests that the interlinked mental and emotional situation is experienced as so tangible and real that only the body can serve as a representation of it.

The familial transmission of the Holocaust past has been explored in literary texts, for example, in Thane Rosenbaum's short story 'Cattle Car Complex'. Here, Rosenbaum describes the son of survivors who, after getting stuck in an elevator, is overwhelmed by transmitted memories of the cattle car transports. His body reacts with 'the return of a repressed, unmastered past. But it is his parents' past in the cattle car that rises up as he pushes the "down" button, not his own' (Burstein 2005: 189). This short story has been discussed by a number of literary scholars: Andrew Furman has noted the continuing suffering even across the generations (1999: 91); Erin McGlothlin interprets it through the lens of repetition

and 'narrative paralysis' (2006: 43); and Gary Weissmann goes so far as to read it as a 'romantic fantasy staging the Second Generation American Jew's transformation into full-fledged Holocaust victim' (2004: 15). This short story falls outside the limits of my research. As the quoted studies show, it is part of the issue of transmitted trauma, and I only include it here to illustrate a larger trend.

## Physical resemblances

The most immediate way in which we recognize family connections is through physical resemblances between relatives. In the context of Second Generation memory work, I interpret such resemblances as the bodily links of family memory and a physical connection to a usable past of family life. But as we have already seen above, the body is a complex node of memory, and physical resemblances are not necessarily easy to live with, as they reinforce the divide between *being* and *having a body*. Furthermore, they are not easy to discover. Few of the truncated post-Holocaust families have photographs, and thus their children do not know what their extended families looked like or whether they physically resemble anyone. In such a situation, only those who knew the victims can make the connection between family features from a time before the Holocaust and those of the present. The exploration of a physical connection is usually triggered by factors outside the self: another person recognizing a relative in one's facial features, or a photograph – the material trace of a person, frozen in time, carried into the present. Learning about the physical likeness to family highlights an eerie link to former family that may also have a distancing effect, as one's body is suddenly marked by family memory and traumatic loss. Indeed, psychoanalysts have argued that children can be physical reminders of the dead. Gabriele Schwab's concept of 'replacement children' builds on a body of research on children who 'grow up with the sense that their generation must replace the entire generation that was destined for genocide' (2010: 37). My question here is whether the process of memory work changes this sense of a burden when it comes to body resemblances like it did with other nodes.

Cheryl Pearl Sucher's protagonist, Rachel, of *The Rescue of Memory*, whom we encountered in the chapter on 'Names', is 14 years old when – through her survivor father's moment of recognition – everyday interactions and the past blend into one: 'He leaned back. "Did I ever tell you how much you remind me of my older sister?" "All the time", I muttered, handing him a jar of pickles. He was staring at me the way he stared at

a load of brake shoes in a broken-down shopping cart brought into his place of business by a swollen-eyed junkie' (1997: 25). Rachel, a moody teenager at the time, does not deal well with her father's references to his sister, Channah, who, as Rachel knows, died in the gas chambers. For her father, seeing his sister in his child's features is calming, but for the protagonist, it increases the mnemonic oppression under which she lives. Rachel's description of the way her father looks at her suggests disgust, distance, and surprise. At the same time, she feels that her body is being taken away from her and used as a canvas for other people's faces. In this instance, knowledge is forced memory work and is not a positive experience. This link is not hers, but her father's.

But there are also moments of physical connection that emerge from conscious memory work and not from an imposition of memory. Examples can be found most frequently in descriptions of 'return' journeys to the family's places of origin, which can minimize the distance – both temporal and spatial – from the people whom the Second Generation resembles. In *Motherland*, Chapman relates how she always knew that she resembled her grandmother who perished. However, even though she has seen pictures, it is only when she is in her mother's hometown in Germany and is shown an image of a smiling Sara that she recognizes some of her own features: 'At last, and for the very first time, I see the resemblance between my grandmother and me' (2000: 121). During this intentional period of family memory work, Chapman finds the sense of recognition she had been missing for so long. Cerebral knowledge is finally integrated into an emotional landscape in which she is a part of a family that predates the rupture of the Holocaust.

Eva Hoffman also finds a physical link to family memory during a 'return' trip to her family's former homeland. In *After Such Knowledge*, she describes a journey that she and her sister, Alina, undertook to the former *shtetl* where their parents grew up. In the village that is now in Ukraine, where no Jews live anymore, they meet by pure chance a woman who turns out to have been an old family friend and former neighbor:

We would have missed Olga, and her exclamation, on first seeing my sister, 'But she is Hava to the life!' Olga claps her hands to her face with the wonder of it as she looks at my sister. Hava was our paternal grandmother, whose face we had never seen, not in life, not in photographs. To know that my sister looks just like her is strangely moving. We had had grandparents once, real grandparents just beyond the time-cut in my imagination; and the information leads into a fuller more inhabited past. (2004: 209–10)

For Olga, the visit of the Second Generation sisters conjures up memories of her friend Hava. For Hoffman, finding out about her sister's resemblance to their murdered grandmother, a woman of whom not even a photograph exists, proves to be both confusing and deeply touching. When Olga sees their grandmother in Alina's face, Hoffman suddenly realizes that her grandparents were not merely Nazi victims, but people who lived in a small village and had friends and neighbors. In a way, Olga, as a witness to their lives rather than their deaths, creates a link beyond the 'time-cut' of the Holocaust in Hoffman's understanding of the family past: suddenly, the post-Holocaust generation is physically connected to the generation who did not survive. Indeed, until this continuity of physical features was pointed out, she could not even imagine having had grandparents, but now, 'the information leads into a fuller more inhabited past'. Through the family resemblance, the past evolves from being inaccessible to being a part of her self-conception. Time extends back beyond the Holocaust to include a larger family of which she is a part.

In the 'Objects' chapter, Lily Brett's *Too Many Men* was already introduced as a novel in which Second Generation memory work succeeds despite all the obstacles that the destruction of the Holocaust throws in its path. One of these successes occurs when the protagonist, Ruth, in the course of a journey to Poland with her father, Edek, finds photographs of family members. Her recognition of physical links between herself and others makes her part of a multigenerational family. However, this recognition comes in stages – the feeling that she is part of a larger family is not instantaneous for Ruth. The first encounter with the photos takes place as father and daughter, in a powerful image of memory work in concrete form, dig up family photographs from the garden of the family's former home in Lodz, where Edek had hidden them before he was deported.

One of these pictures shows Ruth's murdered cousins and another female family member. When Second Generation Ruth initially looks at the photo, all she sees is a certain family resemblance, but no more than that. During her encounter with the Polish couple who make her barter for her family's former possessions, additional photos become part of the interaction, and she is pressed to fully acknowledge that the women depicted are her family members: "These people don't belong to me", she said. "Look again", the old man said. "Look at the children – look at the older girl". Ruth looked at the photograph the old man was holding out' (2002: 286). The connection she suddenly feels manifests itself physically:

Something in Ruth's body misfired. It felt like a malfunction in the wiring of her electrical circuits. There were flicks and twinges in her

head. They felt like kinks and stitches. Nips and pinches. She went hot and cold all over. Parts of her face were burning and other parts of her were cold. Her hands and knees were shaking. The two small girls in the photograph looked about six and eight. They both had curly, dark hair, parted at the side. The curls on the right fell into ringlets and jutted out exactly at the same angle as her own hair. (286–87)

Her reaction reads like an illustration of Roland Barthes' *punctum*: Ruth's mind takes much longer to grasp what she is seeing, while the immediacy and intensity of her physical reactions show that her body has already understood. Given how much importance Brett attributes to the physical, the signs of alarm displayed by the protagonist's body, ranging from one extreme to the other, are significant. Ruth is working her way toward recognition when she acknowledges as her own the dark curly hair that adorns the heads of the two little girls, whom she knows must be Hanka and Liebala: 'Both of the girls could have been Ruth. If someone showed her a photograph of either of these girls, Ruth would have sworn that the girl in the photograph was her. That was exactly how she looked in all the photographs she had of herself at the same age' (287). She suddenly sees the family resemblance so clearly that it crosses the line of similarity into seeing her own younger self. The age difference – she is now a grown woman – no longer creates a sense of distance as she concentrates on the image: 'Ruth looked closely at one of the younger women. She felt sick. The woman looked so like her. The same eyes. The same mouth. Who was she?' (287). The face of the woman once again prompts a physical reaction. Now Ruth recognizes even more of herself, but she does not have access to any narrative that goes along with this face – not even a name, limiting access to a fully usable past. In the phrasing of her sentences, she focuses on her own features – she does not resemble the unknown relative, but says, 'The woman looked so like her'.

Such a reversed structure is also used when Ruth finally discusses the photographs with her father – who knew the people depicted – even though for him, these people and their features predate her existence.

'Don't you think Hanka and Liebala look like me?' Ruth said. 'I always did know this', Edek said. 'So did Mum'. 'Why didn't you tell me?' Ruth said. 'What for?' said Edek. 'To tell you the truth', Edek said, 'I did try myself not to think of it too much. It is not easy to have a child who reminds you so much of other children. Children what are dead'. (299)



Indeed, for her parents, Ruth had always resembled those little girls. Here, it is spelled out that she is a carrier of physical memory and has always been so to Edek and Rooshka, her face serving as a reminder of familial features – the features of other, murdered children. Edek’s acknowledgment that he tried to suppress thoughts about the resemblance adds a new layer of knowledge with respect to the enduring presence of the past and her parents’ constant suffering. Notably, it also reveals that Ruth’s features were never only hers. They were also reminders of immense losses and the violent deaths of children. In this fictional example, Brett fully plays out both sides of the equation: Ruth finds her way into a family through a physical likeness, and Edek, the survivor, demonstrates another way in which the past has been violently severed but still reaches into the post-Holocaust present.

In her study *The Silence*, the linguist Ruth Wajnryb observes that families deal with the physical resemblance of their children to perished family members in two different ways. For some, there is an ongoing attempt to make connections through traits and features, as was the case in Sucher’s novel. In the other type of family, the connections are for obvious reasons intentionally avoided, as seen in Brett’s text. Both situations are ultimately complex, as Wajnryb notes: ‘Today I’m not sure what’s worse: being linked to people you cannot connect with; or being suspended in ancestral space, with no connections further back than one generation’ (2001: 153). But despite the problems entailed in both scenarios, the physical links are represented as an impetus for Second Generation memory work. The examples discussed here suggest that the very resemblances that might be burdensome to children who feel like replacements are viewed as helpful later in life, as physically resembling a lost family member can also fill in gaps in memory. Here, we finally find also access points to a usable past in body memory, a node which otherwise mostly connects to the Holocaust.

### **Bodies in Second Generation memory work**

Second Generation authors portray their parents’ bodies, which have been modified by a violent regime and its racial discourses, as well as their own bodies as readable memory texts that literally and metaphorically carry the past into the present. It is a multilayered node of memory with links reaching in several directions, but since it connects in so many ways to the Holocaust, it is also complex and often challenging for memory work. Helen Epstein’s description of the difficulties

she encounters in picturing her father as the target of violence exemplifies this:

I tried to imagine my father, who was more than six feet tall, weighing barely one hundred pounds. What had he looked like? It did not seem possible. The only signs on my father's body that I took for vestiges of the war were his toenails which were misshapen and discolored, and his teeth, which he said had never been the same since the war. But otherwise, my father had rebuilt his body. I did not want to imagine him as he must have been. (1988: 146)

An Olympic water polo player before his survival of Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and Friedland, Kurt Epstein's body barely showed traces of his survival. But more than that, this also reads like an extension of Elaine Scarry's theory of the impossibility of imagining someone else's pain, because it cannot be shared. Epstein's statement illustrates that, even though there are small areas of her father's body that still betray the violence he suffered, she cannot imagine her father's past pain because it would mean imagining him as a victim and thus imagining Auschwitz. The daughter's reaction of being neither willing nor able to think of her father as a camp inmate suggests that even as a grown woman fully involved in memory work, there are limits to how far she can go.

The scarcity of physical markings from the time of persecution in the texts indicates an unwillingness or inability on the part of the children to conceive of their parents as the victims of physical abuse: these bodies, which carry the embodiment of the attempts on their lives, are at the same time the source of life. Even if traces are visible parts of family life, scrutinizing the violence the parents experienced is an area in which Second Generation memory work is nearly impossible. In some cases, such as the haunting fear that a mother may have experienced sexual violence, memory work reaches its limits. These links might be feared and assumed, but they cannot be traversed.

Of the visible markers of the past, only the Auschwitz tattoo is discussed repeatedly, but here as well, memory work is hesitant. The authors use certain strategies to background their voice. Sometimes the survivors' words are introduced to discuss the tattooing process. Thus remediations of oral testimony, a well-known genre in public discourses of the Holocaust, are inserted into the Second Generation texts. Visual techniques are also an effective tool, as when visual evidence precedes cerebral knowledge, the audience is affectively pulled into the narrative, reflecting an 'affiliative' rather than 'familial' postmemorial position, in

Marianne Hirsch's terminology, in which the audience is called upon to participate in memory work. In using such strategies, Second Generation writing echoes the way the body of the survivor has become part of Holocaust memory. Here, however, the setting is that of personal experiences in intimate family life, in which body perceptions shaped by anti-Semitic abuse, a father's scars, or a mother's screams at night tell of unspeakable suffering, rather than the public persona of the Holocaust survivor we know from video testimonials in museums or classrooms.

The previous chapters have shown that Second Generation literature chronicles the relational web of memory work, which also becomes evident here because the Second Generation is physically a part of this network. The ways in which the body is explored showcases it as a means of interrogating the role of the children of survivors within the truncated family. This once again suggests that memory work is not merely about the past but also concerns the integration of the self in a family continuity. The portrayals of this connection range from literal to highly metaphorical in the corpus. Even in the contemplation of paradoxical issues such as the transgenerational transmission of memory, the use of the body as the anchor of the self in reality illustrates that it is conceived of as a node of family memory.

The most literal form of embodied family memory is the physical resemblance of the children to family members whom these children of survivors never knew, a relational form of memory that extends beyond the breach of the Holocaust, leading further back into the past. This bond requires others who can recognize the resemblance. Only through this intercession can the potential of the body as a node of memory be realized. As in other cases in which an intimate link to one specific member of the lost family is established (for instance, through a shared name), memory work manifests as a process. What is perceived by a child as burden often transforms into a boon for the memory work of the adult. This suggests that the interpretation of the connection shifts from a kinship with a victim to appreciation of the potential offered by a link to a lived-in, usable pre-Holocaust past.

In recent years, the interweaving of the human body and memory has been studied widely, for example, in the recent anthology *Body Memory, Metaphor and Movement* (Koch et al. 2012), which brings together the work of philosophers, cognitive scientists, and movement therapists. Here, the psychiatrist Thomas Fuchs (2012) establishes a taxonomy of different types of body memory, ranging from procedural memory (which enables us to drive, for example) to pain and traumatic memory. Elements of the latter are evident in the memory inscriptions onto/

into the survivor body and how the Second Generation lives with this constant intrusion of the Holocaust past into family life. However, in the case of Second Generation memory work focused on the self, the body is suggested as a literal and metaphorical node of family memory in ways that go beyond Fuchs' phenomenological approach. Such considerations of embodied memory in relation to close family members point to the enriching benefits of a multidisciplinary approach to the field of memory studies, in which literature is an important participant in other frameworks of memory.

# 5

## Food

'Food is never "just food" and its significance can never be purely nutritional' (Caplan 1997: 3). This sweeping statement by the anthropologist Pat Caplan also holds true for the intersection between food and memory. One of the most frequently quoted scenes involving the triggering of *mémoire involontaire* – involuntary memory – is the story of the madeleine in Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (In Search of Lost Time, also translated as Remembrance of Things Past) (1913–27). Proust's narrator dips the cake in his tea, tastes it, and suddenly nostalgic memories of his childhood overwhelm him. The experience of taste imparting memory is grounded in the physiology of the body itself: taste and smell are a joint oral sense that is directly connected to the limbic system, the area of the brain responsible for memories and emotions. Memories triggered by tastes and smells tend to be strong, characterized by an immediacy seldom achieved in other, less embodied forms of memory. As the anthropologist Jon D. Holtzman notes, 'the sensuousness of food is central to understanding at least much of its power as a vehicle for memory' (2006: 365). In this corpus, too, food and memory are closely connected and, as with all nodes of Second Generation memory work, they are linked to both the parents' survival and the usable family past.

Food also features other affective aspects beyond the senses, one of which is symbolized in the act of breaking bread, in which a group of people comes together to eat and enjoy each other's company. The kitchen is often thought of as the heart of the home, idealized as a place of warmth, family, and the transmission of memories, pointing to the fact that social identities are stabilized by way of food traditions. Sidney W. Mintz, also an anthropologist, suggests that food carries the past into the present in a number of ways: 'The foods eaten have histories associated

with the pasts of those who eat them; the techniques employed to find, process, prepare, serve, and consume the foods are all culturally variable, with histories of their own' (1996: 7). Food traditions, for example, in cooking or eating rituals, reveal much about the culture in which they exist and, because the kitchen was long considered a place for women, it can be a gendered area of cultural memory. But there are multiple collectives created by food, one of which is the community-building element of recreating the foods of the generations who came before us – on a familial, ethnic, or even a national level.

This sense of connecting to our origins through the food we prepare and eat is particularly evident in migrant families. In the context of the search for ethnic roots that has evolved over recent decades in relation to the development of multiculturalism, there has also been an increasing interest in the foods of former homelands. This is particularly true in the United States, where Jews are at the center of a movement of cultural memory work that seeks to rediscover one's roots and strengthen identities. Claudia Roden, a cultural anthropologist and one of the best-known Jewish cookbook writers, suggests that American Jewry exhibits 'a need for identification to fill a cultural vacuum. Whereas some look for anchorage in religious orthodoxy, others rediscover the cultural heritage in the kitchen. There are all kinds – Yiddish gourmets, purists, followers of kosher "nouvelle" and eclectic creators. Latkes and knishes have become chic. So have kasha and kugel' (1999: 73). Much like Second Generation memory work, this is an engagement with the usable past of European Jewry and a collective and a familial level: certain elements of this culture have survived despite the destruction of the Holocaust and offer a way to connect.

An exemplary case of a journey into the past through food is Elizabeth Ehrlich's memoir, *In Miriam's Kitchen*, which is related to the corpus explored here. The Jewish-American Ehrlich spent a year with her mother-in-law, a Holocaust survivor from Poland, collecting Miriam's memories as the older woman taught her about family traditions, recipes, and history in her kitchen. Centered on learning to cook the foods of Jewish Poland, Ehrlich's book describes her path toward Judaism and back to the destroyed family past that was recreated in the smells and tastes of traditional dishes: 'When I am with Miriam in the kitchen, she speaks of the past. I listen, trying to imagine the world from which her cuisine came' (1998: xii). Tales and recipes are brought together by this 'keeper of rituals and recipes, and of stories, she cooks to recreate a lost world, and to prove that unimaginable loss is not the end of everything. She is motivated by duty to ancestors and descendants, by memory and

obligation and an impossible wish to make the world whole' (xii). One of the elements of this world of the past that comes to life for the survivor's American family involves following the dietary laws of *kashruth*. This highlights a specifically Jewish perspective on the links between food, memory, and identity: accepting or rejecting the kosher rules touches on collective identity and memory. In Judaism, food itself is meaningful, in that it is part of the daily rituals of keeping kosher; however, it is also framed as a carrier of cultural memory in other ways, for example, in the symbolic foods on the Passover plate, which tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

In the context of survivor family memory work, food represents a connection to both periods of the past explored by the Second Generation: the hunger and starvation of the Nazi persecution, and the pre-Holocaust past, entailing the food traditions of family, ethnic group, and even nation. Its potential for recreating and reenacting a usable past make food a node of memory in Second Generation texts that relates stories of suffering but also offers sensual experiences that facilitate the reconnecting to a more personalized family past in Central and Eastern Europe. Given the importance of food in our lives, it is naturally a frequent subject, and this chapter will scrutinize different elements of this memory node, illustrating how they relate – in spoken and unspoken ways – to both temporal elements.

### **Food as traumatic memory**

Starvation and hunger were central elements of the Holocaust experience. This form of physical suffering connects this node of memory with body memory, raising questions related to those concerning the embodiment of violence explored in the last chapter. But unlike the still visible Auschwitz tattoo, the survivor parents are no longer emaciated. At the same time, food is a daily presence and a potential trigger for traumatic memories or distressed behaviors in post-Holocaust family life. Therefore, the questions that need to be asked are whether and how tales and behaviors connected to food are a part of family life, and how these stories are later explored and explained in conscious memory work.

To introduce this, I draw on an example from Helen Epstein's childhood, in which dinnertime was a potent trigger for the eruption of embodied memories. Family meals are a significant part of family life. In fact, they are a family ritual and thus constitute an important setting for the communicative creation of family memory. On the surface, this promises a positive aspect of bonding, but the effects of food-related trauma turned

the Epstein family dinner into a detrimental routine in which the hunger of the past was all-encompassing – much as in Ruth Wajnryb's family, in which 'the nutritional function of mealtime took precedence over any familial or social purpose' (2001: 195). Hunger makes communication impossible, and in the Epstein household, the need for sustenance drove the survivor father's every action, starting as soon as he arrived home from work: "'What's for dinner?'" he asked in Czech and, without waiting for an answer, pulled open the refrigerator door, found an open can of sardines or an end of salami and wolfed down the food, using a piece of bread as a fork. He stood this way, hunched over the kitchen counter in his overcoat, for several moments' (Epstein 1988: 52–53). As is indicated by Kurt's use of his native language, the return to the family home is also a return to safety and to the vanished world of Czech Jewry, as relived in a New York home. But in this migrant household, the children observe the daily ritual of a hunger-stricken father. Epstein interprets his behavior in loaded words: he is not eating, but rather 'wolfing down' anything he can find while standing 'hunched over' the counter.

The daughter's play-by-play report, clearly ingrained in her memory, then turns to the food consumed in this family: 'We ate cold cuts for breakfast, leftover meat for lunch and roast or stew or chops for dinner. When I asked why we never had tuna casserole like other people, my mother said they had gone three years without meat and that was enough' (53). Starvation has written itself into the family menu: Franci would never serve the all-American staple of tuna casserole to her family; she and Kurt wanted meat to make up for their past suffering. Moreover, as Epstein notes, 'The kind in the supermarket did not pass muster. My mother shopped at the Nevada Meat Market whose owners had noted her blue tattoo and extended credit when she had no money to pay for her purchases' (53). The Auschwitz tattoo helps the family buy their meat, and once again, young Helen is well aware of how the past influences their current life.

Familial Holocaust memory is also evident at the dinner table itself:

My father was already at the table, hunched, head down. He swallowed his food so quickly that he seemed not to chew, looking up only to see what my mother was doing, why she hadn't sat down at the table herself. 'Daddy didn't always eat this way', my mother sometimes told me. 'His family had manners. They had a cook and servants'. My father himself did not acknowledge any particularity in his eating habits. 'When someone sits down to eat, he should eat and do nothing else', he said. (54)



Again, Epstein describes a memory of her father eating as though someone might take his food away from him; even his posture is once again defensive. Observation teaches the daughter a great deal about her father, but the starvation itself is only implied; indeed, it is a conversational lacuna, left inadequately explained by her mother's comment about her father's well-mannered family.

The child's lack of understanding leads her to point out that her father has already finished his meal, while the others have not even started to eat. Franci immediately tells her daughter off, and no explanation or even conversation follows. This awkward effort to approach an element of the past that emerges in the present is not unlike Pilcer's young protagonist drawing an Auschwitz number on her arm. Both are a child's attempt at memory work, at trying to figure out effects of the past, and both are rebuffed and taken as an offense by the parents. Here, a storm of rage is about to erupt:

My mother began to eat. I ate. But my brother let the food sit on his plate. His mouth, which was never as clean as my father would have wished, hung open as he looked at the ceiling, then down at the floor between his legs. He played with his fork and when the fork hit his glass of chocolate milk, it made a small ping! My father looked up. He took a breath and his chest grew even larger than it was; his shoulders loomed over the table. "Tell me, what are you waiting for?" he demanded. "You think food stays warm forever? Or you are too fine to eat this kind of meat?" (Epstein 1988: 56)

A noise and a child's reluctance to eat finally set Kurt off. Little Tommy has not yet learned what his mother and sister know – at such tense times during a meal, the only way to calm down the father is to eat. Anger physically transforms the man, his already large frame becoming even more intimidating. As he works himself into a frenzy, the survivor has entered a different time and space: "My brother's eyes grew larger as the volume of my father's voice rose, the Czech interspersed with a coarse German whose meaning we deduced rather than understood. "*Hajzel!*" he shouted. "*Svine!*" The words meant "toilet" and "swine" (56–57). At this point, especially in the language choice, it becomes clear that the scene developing here is taking place in the father's past. These words are a repetition of the expletives used against ghetto or camp internees who lacked the basic facilities. The psychologists Harvey and Carol Barocas have identified the use of swear words that refer to filth as a subconscious identification of traumatized survivors with their

abusers in a regression triggered by stressful moments (1997: 333). The lengthy scene described here is stressful for all those involved, and Kurt Epstein's anger was explosive and abusive: 'He seemed to be in another world, raging at people we could not see. Our misbehavior was just a trigger that released a rage that was there all the time, locked inside like my mother's pain' (Epstein 1988: 57). The children understood neither the father's rage nor the mother's depression, but even at a young age, Epstein was aware that her parents moved into another world when stressed. This world was always active in them and was thus linked to their family life.

As seen throughout this study, memory work is a developing process, and children tend to live in a state of postmemory in scenes such as the dinner described here – which references the past in behaviors, fragmented sentences, and interactions – that triggers it. Kurt then makes a comment that – for the historically knowledgeable reader and for the adult Epstein, but not for the children – is a clear allusion to the Holocaust: 'Do you know what we would have given for a meal like this! Seven hundred calories a day we were given!' (57). Toward the end of the scene, Epstein's text shifts from description to explanation:

'Eat!' he ordered. 'Or do you want a slap in the face?' My father found nothing incongruous in this remark, just as he found it perfectly natural to become angry whenever my brother and I hurt ourselves. Anything that endangered the health of his children was a personal threat and the fact that we were not eating was no exception. But I did not understand this then. I hated my father when he lost his temper. He spoiled dinner, he made my mother cry, he insulted us with ugly names. He was a bully. (57–58)

Here, the adult daughter, who is consciously involved in the memory work of comprehending her father's past hunger and the violence he suffered, speaks. Now, she can explain that it was fear for his children's well-being that turned him into an abusive and choleric man lacking self-control who ruined every evening. Epstein's text exemplifies the extent of the problems surrounding food as a node of traumatic memory that can so easily be triggered and reenacted in survivor families. Food is a part of everyday life and thus serves as a potential daily reminder of times when it was not readily available, while also referencing the pre-Holocaust family and the migration.

Food is pervasive in this material because it plays such an important part in our lives and is central to Second Generation memory work. The

eating habits of survivors and the ways in which food is affective on an everyday basis within the private lives of family represent an intimate variation of Holocaust memory. Eating habits and attitudes toward food are not part of the public discourse on Holocaust memory, despite starvation being a factor in the general understanding of survival. Eating is something we *do* more than talk about and, as seen in Epstein's text, the memory of starvation presents itself more often in survivors' relationships with food rather than detailed stories. The inclusion of such moments in Second Generation memory work shows that family memory is lived experience and part of the children's daily interactions. But in the literary texts, these are part of the raw material for the direct and intentional narratives of an adult's memory work.

Studies have shown that Holocaust survivors' attitudes toward food tend to be influenced by starvation, and that food-related issues are among the most persistent problems later in life (cf. Favaro et al. 2000, Sindler et al. 2004). In her taxonomy of survivor families, the psychotherapist Dina Wardi suggests that a dysfunctional relationship with food is one of the main identifiers of what she calls the 'victim' family (1992: 120). It can entail hoarding, overeating, or overfeeding one's children to a degree that can result in eating disorders.

Ruth Wajnryb, as a linguist researching communication styles in survivor families, has identified certain 'dicta' that are specific to such families and are primarily drawn from the Holocaust experience. Dicta are understood as life lessons. Such lessons are taught – mostly implicitly – in any family, but in the survivor family, dicta concerning food are frequent and refer to much more than just food. Indeed, they are lessons about life and death (2001: 193). In these paradoxical messages, food emerges as a node of memory, but as in the Epstein example, children lack the ability to decipher their deeper meanings. However, these messages are triggers for – and later serve as themes of – memory work.

Wajnryb identifies certain recurring elements in the eating habits of survivor families: in general, plain, no-nonsense food is served, which is eaten quickly, quietly, and to the last crumb. She also found that mealtimes are often high in tension and that a child's refusal to eat, or the refusal to eat as much as the parents consider necessary, can cause emotional outbursts. In this corpus, lived examples of such scholarly findings are abundant, serving as the material for memory work that predates the deliberate choice to engage in it. In this respect, food is an interesting node of memory because it is partially preconscious, with the meanings of the parents' behaviors only later understood.

## Food attitudes linked to starvation: obsessive eating and overfeeding

In a study on the connection between PTSD and eating disorders, the psychiatrists Mario Mantero and Laura Crippa find that constant thoughts about food are common for those who have suffered from deprivation. The authors suggest that 'Binge eating could be a way of relieving tension in the traumatized' (2002: 10). The children of survivors, as the intimate witnesses of the survivors' everyday actions, frequently describe scenes of family life that under ordinary circumstances would be considered examples of binge eating.

Lisa Appignanesi's descriptions of her childhood food memories are vivid, and these memories include a survivor community beyond the family: 'The ardour with which they ate spoke of an unstoppable hunger as if food were a novelty which might disappear at any moment' (1999: 19). This way of eating is perceived as a key characteristic in the world of survivors: 'Everyone ate – fragrant chicken soup with barley, sour-cream flecked borscht with a hot potato at its centre, pickled herring buried in onion rings, slabs of boiled beef as thick as the moist bread, pastries filled with cinnamon and raisins and sugary goo of apple' (19). This sentence alone, in which the dishes keep coming, mirrors the reality observed by the survivors' children in terms of both the amounts of food consumed and the urgency of its consumption. The food served indicates that these now elderly Canadians are migrants who are still tied to the Eastern European Jewish food ways. Indeed, if this passage is read independently, there is no way of knowing these survivors live in Canada.

The presence of the past is evident not only in eating behaviors. Eating is also often accompanied by stories of the past, which are as never-ending as the food: 'So they ate and told stories' (19). The dining table of survivors thus becomes a setting for speaking about traumatic experiences, while the action – the eating – is the direct result of those experiences. Eating the foods of home and telling stories are commonly considered to be sources of comfort, but in this case, neither can provide any long-term relief. This combination was a constant in Appignanesi's childhood.

The technique of listing dishes, which tells a story by standing un-commented, is found across the genres. Lily Brett uses it in her poem 'An Ordinary Meal':

a  
choice

of  
 chicken  
  
 or  
 barley  
 soup  
  
 liver  
 lamb  
 or  
 veal  
  
 carrots  
 cauliflower  
  
 potatoes  
 and  
 beans  
  
 a radish  
 salad  
  
 sliced  
 cucumber  
  
 diced  
 beetroot (1986: 122)

This simple but incessant list of dishes turned into a two-page-long poem relates much about the significant role played by food in this family. It reads like a telegram, every word being singular and important. At the same time, the lack of punctuation throughout imparts a sense of urgency and breathlessness. By the time we have made our way through the vegetables, we are still not done: only after three choices of dessert does a full stop finally appear. The poem does not tell us whose 'ordinary' meal this is, but its inclusion in Brett's first publication, *The Auschwitz Poems*, indicates the background of the family to which the 'we' of the poem refers. The collection, which came out in 1986, was one of the earliest Second Generation works and the first to be published in Australia. The book title stands in dialogue with the title of the poem: an 'Auschwitz poem' is not ordinary, nor is this meal ordinary for any typical Australian family – these are survivors, who eat food which resembles that of Appignanesi's Canadian survivor community and not the Vegemite and pavlova of Australia.

In her graphic novel, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, Bernice Eisenstein also includes a long list of the dishes her mother cooked for

holiday meals. During every meal, she would keep ‘placing platters of food onto an already overladen table’ (2006: 148). Using the generic tools of the graphic novel, Eisenstein adds a visual comment, drawing her mother carrying a huge, overladen serving board. In addition, a bowl full of food is balanced on her head (150). Eisenstein’s play on native traditions of women carrying burdens on their head introduces an image of care and devotion, but at the same time, it also serves as a further technique used to convey to her readers the immense amounts of food served and eaten in this setting.

In all the above examples, the texts use certain rhetorical, orthographic, or visual means to create a full image of the family experience: food is always linked to the family past – to Auschwitz and beyond. By mirroring childhood experiences in the texts, the reader is introduced to the intimate goings-on of family life shaped by starvation and migration.

More explicit memory work appears in the discussion of a related subject, the parents’ urge to make sure that everyone has enough to eat, especially their children. In the survivor family, overfeeding often takes on an urgent tone, as it is subconsciously connected to the survivors’ struggle against death by starvation. In one of the earliest studies on the Second Generation, Harvey and Carol Barocas found that pregnant survivors dreaded that their bodies, which had been so maltreated, could not provide sufficient nourishment for their unborn children. Barocas and Barocas suggest that this fear accompanied these women throughout their parenthood: ‘Such mothers felt a constant need to push food on their children and would hoard food in closets and stock up unnecessarily, anticipating some future disaster’ (1979: 333).

The fear of renewed persecution has been a theme throughout this study, and food is another area in which it emerges, due to the connection between nutrition and survival. Here, the paradoxical dicta (in which survivors implied but did not always explain their past experiences) come to the fore. Ruth Wajnryb cites ‘You need to eat’ – which appeared in the description of the Epstein family dinners – as a prime example. Wajnryb uses this exchange from her own family to show how a child cannot understand the past that informs the logic of such life messages: “‘I’m hungry”. “*You’re hungry! You think you know what ‘hungry’ means?*” “Yeah, sure, this feeling I have now, this is ‘being hungry’, isn’t it?” “*Eat up. It’s good to have an extra layer*”. “Layer of what? For what? Why is it good? What will happen if I don’t have the extra layer?”” (2001: 14–15). The initial interchange exemplifies what the historian Deborah Lipstadt has called the ‘impossible comparison’ (1989: 147) between

the Holocaust and any other experience. That is, the child's hunger cannot ever compare to that of the survivor parent's past. But instead of explaining, the survivor follows up with a sentence that is seemingly unconnected to the earlier comments. However, the non sequitur is understandable in light of the allusion to hunger that signified the threat of death by starvation, and extra body fat implies better odds for survival. The child's unanswered questions convey to the reader the one definite piece of information that can be gleaned from this exchange: food is a charged node of memory.

Wajnryb remembers

Food and death were connected, this I knew. We were not allowed not to eat. I became pretty expert at smuggling food off my plate into my lap, and off my lap into my room, and from my room out of the house. I'm told this is typical eating disorder behaviour. But as a child I knew I would gag if I ate more – yet I had to eat what was on my plate. So the solution seemed simple: remove what was on the plate. (2001: 17)

In this family, refusing to eat meant tempting death and was an absolute taboo. To deal with this dysfunctional association, young Wajnryb developed behavioral traits that under other circumstances would be considered an eating disorder. Here, however, they are a reaction or possibly a rebellion against the constant overfeeding. As a child, Wajnryb knew that she was expected to be much plumper, but in retrospect, she recognizes that 'even if I had had layers and layers of fat on me, I don't think it would have been enough' (17).

As Wajnryb grew older and engaged more with the family's Holocaust past, the reasons for food being a familial minefield became clearer for her: 'Refusal to eat or, more commonly, to eat as much as the parents dictated, caused extreme distress in the children and triggered angry outbursts. It was like rubbing the war in their faces, mocking their experience and its legacy' (196). Wajnryb, a thin child, always avoided showing her body so as not to upset her parents: 'That day in the shop, though, my mother saw again how thin I was and predictably, poked my protruding rib-cage and hissed the "Bergen-Belsen". I'd often heard these words; they were part of my mother's response to my thinness; until I found out many years later, I thought it was a Polish curse' (196). Here, the fear of death by starvation led to behavior bordering on abuse, again much like the scenes described in the Epstein household. The mother conflates times and places, and in her thin child, she sees the suffering of the camps and wants to protect her. The daughter correctly

explains this behavior as connected to the past, but misinterpreting her mother's anger, she imagines the words to be a curse. When Wajnryb achieves a more sophisticated historical understanding, she can finally explain the reasons behind her mother's actions and actively explore these as sources of knowledge.

Even seemingly everyday activities can trigger past-inflected fears in survivors. For Nana, Rachel's aunt and the primary caretaker in the family in Cheryl Pearl Sucher's *The Rescue of Memory*, leaving the house sparks a need for food: "Just a minute, I have to pack some fruit". No matter where we went, Nana always had to pack fruit first' (1997: 122). This was a constant throughout Rachel's life. Even for a flight to Israel she is given a care package, and no argument can convince Nana to stop packing provisions. Even legal restrictions about bringing food across borders cannot discourage her; instead, she responds by describing her own experiences: "During the war, I smuggled food into Ravensbrück from my munitions factory, miles away from my barracks. Was I afraid then?" she posited. "And these customs inspectors of yours, do they have guard dogs?" (218). Nana, a survivor of several concentration camps, utilizes the 'impossible comparison' between smuggling food into a concentration camp and minor dealings with customs officials to force Rachel to take the food with her.

In contrast to the families of Epstein and Wajnryb, in which the past tacitly made its connection felt, this survivor speaks. Her arguments, which come straight from her camp experience, silence Rachel and brook no dissent. Even though Rachel has already stopped resisting, a further argument follows: "The worst that can happen is you'll make a few friends with all the left-overs" (218). Here, another life message or dictum that stems from Nana's past is added: food can help you to make friends. Once again, the Second Generation daughter is taught that food means more than sustenance and is always linked to the past. All the issues are later brought up and investigated in the literary chronicle of memory work.

Mother Genia in Sonia Pilcer's *The Holocaust Kid* lives according to the same principles as Nana: 'Genia always brought food. Just in case some disaster befell them. Besides, she was convinced I was starving, living by myself with no food in my refrigerator' (2001a: 116). Every time she leaves the house, the survivor braves a world of potential dangers, but food can keep danger at bay and ensure survival. At the same time, her daughter's empty refrigerator translates into starvation in her mind. As in the earlier example provided by Appignanesi, the subtext of the past that the narrator interprets for the reader is then followed by actual



stories of past: 'As my mother sliced the black bread, she said, "You know the Russians gave Daddy two loaves of black bread a day. After the war, he was only forty-seven kilos. In four months –"' (117).

### **Food attitudes linked to starvation: hoarding**

In a study conducted in Florida retirement homes and community centers that cater to Holocaust survivors, Amy Sindler and colleagues found that the effects of hunger on food-related attitudes are persistent into old age. Scholars coming from the fields of biology, physiology, and Jewish studies focused on Holocaust survivors, but the traits identified are also common in other survivors of starvation. They include '(1) difficulty throwing food away, even when spoiled; (2) storing excess food; (3) craving certain food(s); (4) difficulty standing in line for food; and (5) experiencing anxiety when food is not readily available' (2004: 189).

Many of these characteristics also manifest in Second Generation writings. Anxiety, for example, is the driving force behind the Sucher scenario explored above. In the material, hoarding and the taboo against wasting food are recurrent subjects that are connected to and offer information about the Holocaust past. They will be analyzed here as triggers for memory work. The representation of this intimate knowledge of the Holocaust family once again emphasizes the documentary and relational impulse that guides texts of memory work, illustrating and extending scientific research into the issues.

Rooshka in Lily Brett's *Too Many Men* is almost an illustration of the above study and a prime example of a survivor who compulsively hoards food: 'Rooshka could never throw bread out. She kept uneaten bread for weeks. Eventually Edek and Ruth would throw out the moldy crusts and ends and slices that Rooshka had accumulated' (2002: 243). Rooshka never overcame her attitudes toward food that were driven by the memory of starvation. However, the excerpt also highlights that, like all other symptoms associated with Holocaust survival, this dysfunction is not an inevitable result. Edek, who is also a concentration camp survivor, can throw away the scraps of spoiled bread his wife has hoarded. The next sentences explain the causes of the hoarding: 'Rooshka had lived for too long without bread to be able to discard any. Bread had meant the difference between life and death' (243). Through the ambiguous narrator voice, Second Generation memory work comes to the fore: the survivor's reasoning, absorbed through family dicta, and the daughter's commentary blend into one, but the links are inevitable.

Such a superimposition of parental experiences and memory work is the result of growing up in a survivor family, a situation that Lev Raphael calls ‘a minefield’ (2006: 3). This troubled environment also involves food: ‘Nothing could be wasted in our home, nothing could be thrown out. If I was scraping some unfinished food from my plate into the garbage can, I might be greeted with, “You know what we would have done for something like that in the war?”’ (3). The epitome of suffering – the experience of starvation and its psychological impact on the survivors – is the first element in the description of Raphael’s family life. Wasting even the smallest leftover was considered a transgression of epic proportions. This was not only a transgression against the unwritten family rules but also an ethical transgression against the parents and their history, as though throwing out leftovers in the prosperous post-Holocaust United States would aggravate the parents’ starvation experience.

Young Raphael was well aware of the implied accusation of disregarding his parents’ suffering, even though he was told again and again that he would never know what it was like for them during the war: ‘No, I didn’t know, not really, and I was afraid to ask, because I was wasting food when my parents had starved during the war. How could I be so thoughtless and cruel?’ (3). This last sentence has an ambiguous source: was the child called ‘thoughtless and cruel’, or did he himself interpret a parental comment in this way? Raphael leaves it to the reader to infer his meaning, but this example makes his trigger for memory work clear: the past was present even at the dining table. He did not understand it, but made sure to behave in ways that would not upset his parents. The placement of this scene at the opening of his memoir draws the reader into this experience that created the need to understand the reasons underlying his parents’ behavior. At the same time, it is a none too subtle reminder that the familial Second Generation experience is very specific and results in a particular form of participant-observer memory work.

The survivor father Vladek in *Maus*, described as a miser throughout the text, is at his most particular when it comes to food. Wasting food is framed as the worst sin imaginable in this family. *Maus I* and *II* both include food-related scenes set at the temporal level when Art Spiegelman is an adult and actively involved in family memory work: ‘I visited my father more often in order to get more information about his past’ (1986: 43). We then observe him having dinner with Vladek and his second wife, Mala, a situation that triggers behavior from earlier times:

‘So finish at least what’s on your plate!’ ‘Okay ... okay’. ‘Y’know, Mala, when I was little, if I didn’t eat *everything* Mom served, Pop and I

would argue 'til I ran to my room crying...' 'You should know it's impossible to argue with your father'. '...Mom would offer to cook something I liked better, but Pop just wanted to *leave* the left-over food around until I ate it'. (43)

As father and son once more repeat the interaction they have cultivated throughout Art's life, the son at first complies, eating when he is told to do so. But then he breaks their pact when he involves Mala and tells her about the family's food ways during his childhood years. Vladek had always tried to force Art to eat everything that was served, whether he liked it or not, a situation that often ended in tears. His mother, Anja, as the mediator of the family, had tried to maintain peace through a compromise that involved other food options, but Vladek would not allow that to happen.

Here, an ambiguous narrator voice repeats Vladek's words: "'Sometimes he'd even *save* it to serve again until I'd eat it or *starve*'" (43). But Vladek has not changed. He retorts, "'Yes! So it has to be. Always eat *all* what is on your plate'" (43). In Vladek's threats of starvation, food is once again explicitly linked to the Holocaust. In Spiegelman's memory work, the interpretation of his father's actions turns out to be different from that of other Second Generation artists and authors. He gradually comes to believe that his father does not want to waste food because he is stingy, a conclusion that implies that Vladek utilizes the starvation trope to get his way.

In a later scene in *Maus II*, Art and his wife, Françoise, visit Vladek because Mala has left him. In his house in the Catskills, they find him packing up half-eaten food. As soon as they enter, Vladek wants them to eat. When they refuse, he comes up with another solution:

'It's a shame to waste. I'll pack and you can take it home with you'. 'The box is almost empty. Just *leave* it here'. 'Okay, if not, is not. Only just try then a piece from this fruit cake'. '*I'm not hungry!*' 'So, fine. I can pack the fruitcake in with the cereal for you to take home'. 'Look, we don't want any, ok? Just forget it!' (1992: 78)

Here, two food-related impulses – the taboo against wasting food and the urge to feed loved ones – are intertwined. But Spiegelman's reaction is not one of understanding, nor is he repeating the pacifying behavior he learned as a child. As in his childhood, the father's relationship with food leads to an emotional reaction, but now, instead of starting to cry, the son becomes angry. The narrative and visual text betray his anger,

which Vladek ignores. He keeps on packing up the food and then says, "I cannot forget it...ever since Hitler I don't throw out even a crumb" (78). Survival becomes Vladek's rationale for his behavior – not unlike the Sucher text, in which the young protagonist, Rachel, has no response to Nana's mention of a concentration camp. In this case, however, the son sees manipulation and refuses to respond to it, yet he becomes increasingly aggressive. In the image, his face is red and his cigarette is falling out of his mouth. He then also highlights food as a node of memory, although much differently from how his father did: "Then just *save* the damn Special K. In case Hitler comes back!" (78). Vladek does not react; instead, he bemoans the fact that even if he glues the box back together, the shop will not let him return it.

This reaction, among other indicators, explains why Spiegelman's focus here is not on connecting his father's current actions to his survival, but rather on his belief that in this case, Vladek is exploiting his survival. In a discussion with Mala, Spiegelman brings up his doubts about the interconnection between survival and his father's behavior: "I used to think the *war* made him that way...!" "*Fah!* I went through the camps...*All* our friends went through the camps. *Nobody* is like him!" (1986: 131). Mala is not one for easy explanations, and Spiegelman now allows himself to believe that Vladek is simply stingy.

And yet, representing his father's behavior poses a problem for the 'acutely self-conscious artist' (Miller 2003: 49), because "In some ways he's just the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew" (Spiegelman 1986: 131). How can Spiegelman describe his father without feeding into common anti-Jewish stereotypes? Working in the graphic format, which enhances the most prominent features of a character to get its message across, only exacerbates the problem. The literary scholar Nancy Miller adds an important point to the moral dilemma about depicting Vladek as a miser, which goes beyond issues of anti-Jewish imagery: 'But of course the relationship between accuracy and caricature for a cartoonist who works in a medium in which accuracy is an effect of exaggeration is a vexed one, especially if the son is still angry at his father: not a nice guy, ever' (2003: 49). But Spiegelman does not single out his father's behavior, he is chronicling everything, including his own anger and his contemplations concerning representation.

Ultimately, due in part to Mala's comment, Spiegelman decides to stay true to his mission of memory work. He draws his father as he sees him, rather than making him a 'witness to history' whose personal faults are ignored because of his suffering and of his social role created by public Holocaust memory. He does not whitewash his own reactions, either,

openly portraying his intense anger that suffuses the scenes in which he refuses to believe that only Vladek's survival- and food-related traumas are responsible for his behavior. However, the repeated inclusion of the survivor's obsession with food and Spiegelman's long path toward the conclusion that it is not solely caused by the Holocaust suggest that this was not always the case. As a child, he must have connected this behavior to Vladek's other particularities that were the product of survival. Here, the cultural memory of the Holocaust is in dialogue with the ethical negotiations required when memory work uncovers uncomfortable truths.

### Starvation memories

Starvation is also related to other physical suffering during the time of persecution, namely the violence that left traces on the body, as explored in the last chapter. The connection is evident not only in terms of content but also in form: once again, the survivors' own words tend to be remediated in Second Generation texts to describe hunger during the persecution.

David Mittelberg is an Australian-born sociologist whose father survived the Warsaw Ghetto and several concentration camps. Mittelberg's memoir, *Between Two Worlds: The Testimony and the Testament*, is more obviously a relational piece of writing than many other Second Generation books, combining the writings of father and son. The first part of the text, 'The Testimony', documents survival in Israel Jacob Mittelberg's own words, which he symbolically gave to his son on the occasion of his bar mitzvah, the ceremony after which a Jewish boy is considered a man. Later, Mittelberg had the account translated from Yiddish into English, making it accessible to a much larger audience beyond his family and the Yiddish-speaking survivor community. He framed it with his own words in an introduction and in 'The Testament', that is, the chronicle of his memories of growing up in a survivor family and of his memory work.

Included in 'The Testimony' is a description of life in the Warsaw Ghetto during the uprising, which lasted from April 19 to May 16, 1943 (2005: 24–38). As part of the effort to deport all those still alive, the SS and the police had entered the ghetto on the night of Passover (Pesach in Yiddish and Hebrew), but they were stopped by the Jewish resistance, which held out for an entire month. Israel's portrayal of this time, which he spent hiding in the ghetto's bunkers, is punctuated by sentences documenting the increasing hunger and the need to find food. On one

occasion, despite the ongoing fighting, he and a few others entered another bunker, in which dead bodies were lying next to still edible provisions: 'The smell of the corpses did not deter us. We rushed to taste the matzos, schmaltz, and eggs we had prepared for Pesach' (29). This testimony chronicles the human impact of starvation, not only in the victims' willingness to eat even spoiled food but also in the loss of humanity: 'We asked Rabbi Meir for some food for the child. He refused' (27). The survivor does not comment on what he has seen. The facts speak for themselves.

After the German forces broke the resistance and transported all the survivors to concentration camps, Israel saw his wife and son for the last time in Treblinka. He himself was taken further to Majdanek. Now, food was part of the organized system of camp life, but 'When the Germans realized that the mortality rate was threatening the numbers at work, they doubled our bread ration' (63). Israel goes on to discuss the food at the camp. Demonstrating the testimonial impetus of his text, all of the details are painstakingly recalled: 'True, the bread was not really bread, but a mixture of oats with – who knows – what else. The soups were made of tinned beetroots or cabbage. Once or twice we were given sweet soups, the answer to everyone's dream, the most gourmet delicacy. Very occasionally we were given a teaspoon of marmalade' (63). The detailed description of the camp food also suggests something beyond the desire to document. Food, as the foremost instrument of survival, was of vital importance, and its details cannot be forgotten. For us, the contemporary readers, calling the soups of the concentration camp 'the most gourmet delicacy' is surprising, as it adds a human element – taste and even luxury – to the camp experience. The absolute nature of the unimaginable suffering that the Holocaust represents in public conceptions is complicated by the experience of joy conveyed in this phrase. The son does not comment. His father's testimony concerning the time of persecution and incarceration stands on its own.

This rather startling element of enjoyment also appears in the testimony of the survivor mother Lilly (Szimi) Salcman in Julie Salamon's *The Net of Dreams: A Family's Search for a Rightful Place*. The trigger that prompts her food memories is a family visit to Auschwitz as part of a 'return' trip. At the camp, Lilly describes her arrival as an internee: "'The next morning they woke us and gave us coffee and bread, this dark, heavy bread. It was the best bread I ever ate. By this time we hadn't eaten since we left the train and who knows when before. We ate the bread with black coffee, and then we were taken on foot to the C Lager'" (1996: 118). Again, we observe a testimonial impulse. In

this case, however, the spoken words at the original location make this memory even more vivid.

The daughter's surprised reaction is included in the memoir. Starting a new paragraph, thus highlighting the importance of this sentence, Salamon repeats her mother's words and then goes on to describe the expression on her face: '*It was the best bread I ever ate*'. As my mother said these words she lit up with a look of pleasure, as though she were describing her first dinner at Lutèce' (118). Salamon does not comment explicitly on this description of the bread in Auschwitz, but the repetition and the pauses implied graphically mirror her reaction and that of the reader: we are not witnesses, and our idea of Auschwitz, shaped by cultural memories of unimaginable horrors, does not permit it to be a place where anyone could find 'the best bread I ever ate'. Likening her mother's expression to someone reminiscing about an experience in an elegant New York restaurant contextualizes Salamon's work in her own sphere of references and highlights the unexpectedness of this comment even more. Description and testimony continue:

Then she smiled. 'At the beginning we used to get something for dinner that was like baby oatmeal. They made it sweet. I gave everything away for it. I would give anything I had to get more of it. I would exchange my soup for a piece of bread and the bread for the oatmeal. They had this stinking cheese, and I loved it, too. Most of the girls couldn't stand it. It came in wooden boxes and it was runny. The girls who were dishing it out gave me the box, and I would scrape it out with a piece of bread. This was just at the beginning, and then they stopped bringing that'.

*They had this stinking cheese, and I loved it.*

When I heard my mother's description of the food at Auschwitz, I understood why my closest friend never believes me when I compliment her on a meal. I understood why I was brought up to think that there were two designations for food: 'delicious' and 'less delicious'. (119)

Once again, the memories of meals in Auschwitz read like a connoisseur's description. These foods were not only a means of survival but also a source of joy. Also here, Salamon repeats the rhetoric and graphic form. Now, however, she begins to contemplate more than just her mother and her memories, finally comprehending her own tendency to overpraise every dish she is served. As the full narrative of the mother's relationship with food in Auschwitz is finally recounted, the daughter understands that subconscious messages about the meaning of food had

bled into their family life, causing her to internalize an unquestioning appreciation of food. Through this significant node in her family's memory, she is connected to her mother's past, and memory work manifests as self-work.

When considering food as a node of Holocaust memory, once again Second Generation memory work exhibits hesitancy, even if less so than when dealing with beatings or sexual violence; hence, initially, cultural memory about starvation in the camps tends to serve as a source. In both of the above examples, this knowledge stands in stark contrast to the narratives later added through oral history, in which the parents' past is personalized as their own experiences are filled in.

Pilcer's *The Holocaust Kid*, an autobiographically inspired collection of short stories, also takes on the memory of starvation, but here, it comes in the form of an interior monologue going through the mind of the father, Heniek, which means that the origin of these thoughts are the author's childhood memories, cultural memory, or an intersection of the two. We listen to Heniek's thoughts when he is stopped in his tracks because he is unwilling to leave a parking meter until all the money he put in is used up. He is not stingy like Vladek, but his relationship with money is tied to his survival: 'With money you could buy time, a *shtickel* bread, soup like from a sewer' (2001a: 78). In this straightforward equation, money is food and food is life. Here, the use of *shtickel*, the Yiddish word for 'piece', adds to the idiosyncrasy of his language, and once again, a survivor is represented as a migrant. The grammatical use also indicates that he grew up speaking Yiddish: the half-sentence 'soup like from a sewer' is linguistically authentic, and its content references popular Holocaust memory about food in the camps. This double movement emphasizes Heniek as a figure from cultural memory, 'the survivor', allowing readers to base their interpretations of the scene on their previous knowledge. At the same time, it is also a narrative device to create distance from a Second Generation voice talking about Auschwitz.

Food connects Heniek's interior monologue as it moves between the different times of his life: 'They have bread on the table. That's what matters. Bread not death. I will not die. He had said it so many times, he believed it. Though everyone else died. He had craved bread the way others hallucinated messiahs. Black pumpnickel, rye, sourdough, oh, challah, sweetest of breads' (79). Here, Second Generation experience shines through the monologue written in the survivor's voice as we learn how inextricably life in the aftermath was connected to the obsession with survival and perpetual fears. In the short, paratactic sentences,



both periods are constantly intertwined: the wartime resolution to survive is still framed in the present tense. The equation of bread with life holds true in Heniek's American life, too, now channeled into the idea of putting bread on his family's table. But the provision of food in the present immediately leads back to the camp experience that is symbolized by the lack of bread. In a memory saturated with death, bread, not religion, was his hoped-for savior.

But the memory of bread also takes him further back into the pre-Holocaust past, with a recollection of the traditional breads of Jewish life: 'How his father salted the Sabbath challah with a silver minaret shaker, breaking off a piece that he shared with them all' (79). Here, challah, a traditional sweet bread that forms part of the Sabbath ritual, references the era of family continuity before his survival of Auschwitz. Only with this positive memory – a usable family past rather than destruction – do his sentences become longer, losing the paratactic breathlessness of the camp memories. In the course of the paragraph, Pilcer links different temporal layers, connecting through memory work to the period of suffering, to the earlier family life, and ultimately also to images of cultural memory – those of prewar Jewish culture and those of the Holocaust.

### Food as family connection

Food also manifests in much more concrete form as connected to the usable past. Indeed, more than any other node in this corpus, food, presumably due to its sensual nature, emerges as offering productive and strong links to lost family and culture. First and foremost, such links show when survivors talk about the foods eaten in their families. But positive food memories also appear in Second Generation memory work in other, more indirect ways – for instance, through engagement with food traditions. The sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel has noted the nostalgic moment of trying to recreate elements of the past: 'Imitation entails repetition, thereby helping to create an illusion of actual *replication*. By wearing clothes resembling those worn by our ancestors and eating the "same" food they once ate, we try to symbolically relive their lives' (2003: 46). Second Generation writers show themselves to be well aware of the illusion involved in any attempt to relive lost lives; however, the subject of food as a means of replicating or at least learning about the past keeps coming up. The lack of accessible family food memories in the form of recipes is often interpreted in the same way as the lack of heirlooms, but where such traditional elements of the past still exist, they open

up possibilities for thinking about the family in different frameworks, for example, within the ethnic and national traditions of former home countries. Already the above examples on eating after survival show a distinct preference for ethnic foods, with little difference concerning the new home countries of the migrant survivors, and food longing is turned backwards.

Pierre Bourdieu, as a sociologist and anthropologist, identified taste as the sensual force that connects us to familial origins at elemental, affective, and embodied levels: 'And it is probably in tastes in foods that one would find the strongest and most indelible mark of infant learning, the lessons which longest withstand the distancing or collapse of the native world and most durably maintain nostalgia for it' (1984: 79). A striking example of this longing for home is *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezin*, a collection of recipes compiled by the inmates of Theresienstadt. One Mina Paechter organized the effort, and when she was about to die from malnutrition, she entrusted the handwritten collection to a friend to give it as her legacy to her daughter, who had escaped to Palestine. Only in the 1960s did the parcel finally reach Anny Stern and was ultimately published as a book in 1996. Cara De Silva, the editor of the collection, understands collecting and writing down the recipes as a form of resistance, through the community-building strength of traditions and the meanings of food that go beyond nourishment: 'To recall them [family food and food ways] in desperate circumstances is to reinforce a sense of self in our struggle to preserve it' (1996: xxvi). While documenting the positive meanings of food and home cookery, this is also a testimony to the conditions in the camp and during wartime, in the unfinished, hurriedly written recipes, recipes including replacement ingredients or a name such as *Kriegsmehlspeise* (wartime dessert). Here, the two mnemonic aspects of this node of memory come together, as the traumatic memory of hunger is overcome with the power of memory of imagined former and future meals.

Survivors' longing for the tastes of their childhood and youth represents a common theme in the literature of their children. Descriptions of food can create a blissful image of pre-catastrophe life, which are among the most positive of memories. Edek, the survivor father who appears throughout Lily Brett's work, is a real gourmand. His appreciation of food, especially of sweets and, more than anything, of Polish chocolate, permeates Brett's oeuvre. Although this is framed simply as a love of food, a certain obsessive element also suggests a subtext of the memory of starvation. Edek's daughter, in contrast, always watches what she eats and is worried about gaining weight.

The biggest compliment Edek can muster is when he declares something to be equal to Polish food: 'Edek had eaten four hot dogs with sauerkraut from four different street vendors. "This sausage is the best I have eaten since I left Poland", he said to each one' (1994: 66). When it comes to food, Poland is Edek's *non plus ultra*: 'You would have thought his life in Poland was composed of slices of ham and blocks of chocolate. Maybe in Edek's mind it was. It was certainly easier to dwell on ham and chocolate than a dead father and sister and brothers. They were truly out of this world, Ruth thought' (25). In *You Gotta Have Balls*, Ruth reads the disturbing double meaning in Edek's frequent and idiosyncratic expression 'out of this world', and understands his recollections of Polish food as a mechanism to sweeten his past: 'Wedel's had been around forever. They were part of Edek's youth. The good part' (2005: 47). Indeed, Polish chocolate becomes a stand-in for all the good memories of prewar Poland. Similar attempts to give a bit of 'home' back to the survivor father by buying Wedel's for him are found throughout Brett's fictional and essayistic pieces, often phrased in similar ways.

Edek does not only eat Polish food, but his commentary on the cuisine is also a sensual and cultural education for the postwar generation. *Too Many Men* in particular is a journey through the Polish kitchen. The subtheme of eating as a way of connecting with the past is prominent. Most of the outings are punctuated by Edek's explanations of every Polish food they come across (2002: 77–83). Edek's urge to discuss the Polish cuisine appears wherever they are and whether the next generation is already familiar with the foods or not. To his son-in-law he says, "'We did eat knishes. You know what is a knish? It is a piece of thin dough what is baked and winded around potato and kasha. You can't get a knish like this in Melbourne. We used to eat knishes in Poland'" (1994: 200). This exchange takes place in New York, a city in which most people know what knishes are, adding an element of overexplaining that illustrates the importance of the stories to the foods of his old home. Moreover, the Yiddishisms inadvertently mark him: He is not only a survivor but also an immigrant whose accent and taste buds will always connect him to his origins.

In Helen Max's *Searching for Yesterday*, the survivor mother Raizel's oral testimony includes strikingly sensual reminiscences of her family's Shabbat meals:

The food was no different to what we would eat today. We had *gefillte fish*, chicken soup, *challeh*, chicken, fruit and cake. Sometimes on Friday my father and I carried the *cholent* pot, which was heavy as it was made of cast iron, over the road to the bakery. The pot would be

filled to the brim with potatoes, meat and beans. My favourite meal. My mouth still waters when I close my eyes and I imagine I can still taste those potatoes. (2001: 20)

The Australian Max family still celebrates Friday night dinners together – a photograph of a richly decorated Shabbat table is included in the memoir (29) – and the dishes served are still the same as in Raizel's Polish childhood home. Her explanatory comments emphasize continuity, to then incorporate memories specific to that time and place, such as the collective *shtetl* method of cooking the traditional stew for Shabbat, cholent. Although the traditional Ashkenazi dishes have been translocated to Australia, it is the sensual memory of the taste of her mother's cholent that is most alive and present in Raizel's mind. In an almost counter-Proustian move, the memory sparks her taste buds into action. As in the other cases discussed in this chapter, here again 'food evokes recollection, which is not simply cognitive, but also emotional and physical' (Holtzman 2006: 365).

Foods often serve as a trigger that releases autobiographical memories that, while perhaps not be forcefully willed to appear, nonetheless serve direct rather than implicit memory work. Mark Raphael Baker's interview with his survivor father, Yossel, in *The Fiftieth Gate*, provides a vivid example that starts with the senses: '*Mmmm, what did they call it? Mmmm. I can smell it but I can't remember what we called it. The oven I remember. The smell of special cakes with blackberries from the forest. It makes me hungry just thinking about it*' (1997: 26). The very first memory in this testimony is that of a smell – the hint of food to come, or in this case, the first whiff of a food memory. This sensual memory triggers hunger as Yossel remembers the cakes of his childhood in a memory process that echoes Raizel's. Even though he is unable to name the cakes, he can still taste them. Links through food memories are particularly strong. Over the course of the process of remembering, he inscribes himself into the collective of those who ate such cakes, as indicated by his shifting use of personal pronouns, from 'what did they call it' to 'what we called it'.

Initially, the father's memories do not come easily – his son interprets this as anxiety over even the prospect of having to think about his losses – but his childhood foods provide an opening. Suddenly, Yossel forgets his fear and manages to reclaim forgotten childhood images. Once again, this is prompted by the taste of food:

*Lollies. Anyone who is alive today from my town would remember Buba Laya and her lollies. My grandfather was a small man with a beard;*

*everyone had beards in those days. They moved to Wierzbnik where he and his wife Laya had a shop, like a milkbar. They sold lollies. He would bribe me with sweets to learn more Torah and go with him to Shul. (29–30)*

The first word of this testimonial passage hints at the migration background of the family: the father's words are expressed in Australian English, his new language. The local 'lollies' are the candy of the United States. Also the Yiddish 'Buba', grandmother, needs no explanation in Baker's text. It is as much a part of his vocabulary as 'lollies' is. The innocent nostalgia and comfort of remembering the candy his grandparents sold allow Yossel to voice other memories. The remembered sweets lead to details of the family history and then to a small, private memory of the boy who needed to be bribed into learning. The sensuousness of food opens up previously inaccessible memories, which now become conscious, verbalized stories that are then cross-culturally translated with a comparison to the Australian general stores known as 'milk bars'. Yossel thereby brings his son into this memory, but he also assumes that the memory of Buba Laya – in its Yiddish inclusiveness – would be shared by other survivors from the town. Here, relationality abounds as Second Generation memory work chronicles the past and brings memories of pre-Holocaust lives into the arena of cultural memory.

The collective character of food memories is also highlighted in Pilcer's *The Holocaust Kid*. In one scene, a group of survivors jointly cook the dishes of their past in their American summer homes in the Catskills, like a displaced recreation of Jewish Europe:

Their days are charmed. They bake the crumb cakes and almond crescent cookies of their childhood, sharing recipe secrets with each other. *Cholent*, a heavy beef, onion, bean, and potato stew simmers for over twenty-four hours in the middle of the summer. They make *galler*, the most disgusting of Eastern European delicacies – boiled beef hooves, which turn into a white jelly. Blue Paradise is heaven on earth. (2001a: 172)

This description of 'Blue Paradise', the bungalow community in which elderly survivors come together, creates an almost bucolic scene, a seemingly perfect imaginary return to the pre-Holocaust era. Usually, Pilcer's groups of survivors live no 'charmed' moments, but the utopian setting of the Catskills and, more than anything, cooking traditional Ashkenazi foods allow the reality of their American lives to fade away as a better time is reenacted.

In 'Food and Memory', Jon D. Holtzman explores the recreation of ethnic foods in connection with the construction of identity, arguing that diasporic or expatriate groups are driven by 'gustatory nostalgia' (2006: 367). This nostalgia is focused not only on places and foods but also, more significantly, on the past community. David Sutton, an anthropologist who investigates food as a means of reconstituting displaced communities, maintains that the sense of a temporary return to lives predating the fragmentation of migration can be 'specifically triggered by the memory of taste and smell' (2001: 125). This temporary refuge provided by the foods of the lost home is particularly powerful in the context of Holocaust survivor memory. Survivor histories are fragmented multiple times; they are a diasporic group that has been additionally distanced from their homes by the violent catastrophe that destroyed familial and cultural environments. Food thus allows a temporary refuge from the new homeland as well as from the fact that the previous community and world were destroyed. The imaginary return reinforces the hope that some connections persist, despite it all.

Meier Zable, the father of New Zealand-born Australian writer Arnold Zable, coined a term for this type of recreation of the lost past – 'living dreams' (1993: 153):

They are memories triggered in the present to form something new – a poem, an insight, an original idea. Take his latkes, for example. The recipe had come from his mother, Sheine. She would beat together grated potatoes and eggs, shredded onions and flour. Father follows the same formula, to which he adds raisins, perhaps almonds, something of his own imagining. The latkes thereby become a 'living dream', a live reflection of the past. As such they transcend mere nostalgia, he is at pains to stress. (153)

This image provides a striking example of the mnemonic bridges built by both the survivors and their children. For the survivor generation, this 'living dream' is a recreation of a lost past that goes beyond the sentimentally charged limits of nostalgia. For the Second Generation, it is the essence of memory work. A reflection of the past is uncovered and creatively recreated, as a new flavor is added to the traditional latkes.

What connects all these examples is not only the sensuousness and productivity of this node of memory. They also present Second Generation texts as migration literature. Survivors are migrants who long for their lost homes, and food is one of the ways in which a usable past can be reenacted, even if just for the length of a bite. For Second

Generation memory work, however, the knowledge that can be gleaned from such moments is immense: not only does it connect to the usable pre-Holocaust past and to migration but also, additionally, food is imaginable, unlike so many other aspects of the parents' past.

### **The Second Generation in the network of food memories**

Family foodways as links to a usable past come up throughout the corpus. The desire to recreate a living reflection of the past through food results in a remarkable outcome in the anthology *Mixed Blessings: New Zealand Children of Holocaust Survivors Remember*, edited by Deborah Knowles. Here, the members of the Auckland Second Generation group pursued a collective form of memory work through and with family recipes. The idea for this book, which contains essays by 18 members of the group, was conceived during a meeting: 'We had all brought along a favourite family recipe, and a memory with it. As the evening progressed, it seemed that schnitzels and schmaltz were just the starting point; quite soon it was the memories that took over' (2003: 6). Knowles' introduction is much in tune with my considerations concerning Second Generation memory work. In emphasizing links with pre-Holocaust family, she speaks about the Second Generation need to find a usable past: 'And what could be more "usable" for us than our families' recipes? They are the perfect link between the time before the Holocaust and the present. These useful little bits of home proved to be wonderfully portable, easily recreated and shared in the new land' (9). The anthology brings together short life-writing texts about the memories these recipes triggered, the emotional and mnemonic value ascribed to the food of the old homeland, and pictures and stories from Europe. Each selection contains a recipe, sometimes remediated in its original format, further enhancing the affective power of the food and family connection. The texts are interspersed with earlier and contemporary family photographs of the New Zealand families, the people now recreating certain tastes. Exploring and recreating family recipes is thus portrayed as a form of continuity and a way to learn about and commemorate the former family members and their traditions.

*Mixed Blessings* is organized around the two poles of 'home' and 'the new land', designations that Knowles takes over from the parental generation, making this very much a collection shaped by migration. For these children of immigrants, who (through taste buds and family traditions) are connected to an unknown European past, food has always been an identifying feature in the monocultural New Zealand of their

youth. Due to the country's immigration policies, these families were mainly refugees, and their situation differed from that of concentration camp survivors.<sup>1</sup> As seen in previous chapters, refugees had more heirlooms – such as photographs or recipe books –, thus providing tangible historical sources for Second Generation memory work.

The opposite situation can be found in Lily Brett's *Too Many Men*, in which protagonist Ruth, as the daughter of concentration camp survivors, includes the traditions of the kitchen in the list of her family's losses: 'She had grown up poor. She had grown up knowing that there were no family heirlooms. No legacies. No bequests or requests. No family recipes. No words of advice or pieces of wisdom' (2002: 200). Ruth's memory work is limited because no inheritance or meaningful element of the usable past has been transmitted to her. Indeed, the missing family past is represented by the lack of personal possessions, words of the ancestors, and food ways: family members and traditions alike fell victim to the National Socialists' murderous agenda.

Fern Schumer Chapman's *Motherland* also addresses the lack of family recipes:

In fact, from the perspective of her loss, little in her past life had value; no event, no material possession, no pictures bore genuine significance. Nothing could replace her parents, her home, her sense of place. Records of her German life weren't worth keeping; she probably threw out most of her immigration papers, letters, maybe even photographs and family recipes. (2000: 7)

In this interpretation of survivor mother Edith's life, Chapman implies a causal link between Edith's age, the manner of her escape, and the act of destroying the physical evidence of a past the child refugee was too young to ever fully inhabit. For the daughter and the memory work she seeks to perform, these objects, potentially including family recipes, are lost a second time.

In the material, cooking is frequently connected to motherhood and nurturing. It is thus constructed as a specifically female tradition in which daughters can participate from childhood on. Teaching a daughter to cook is an ancient initiation rite. According to sociologist Miriam Meyers, 'food serves as a bridge to keep women across generations from being strangers' (2001: 105). Gender is an important aspect in the study of memory as well. As Jon D. Holtzman notes, food is often 'a vehicle for particularly feminine forms of memory' (2006: 370). In this corpus, it is indeed gendered as mostly female writers explore food



as a node of family memory. Not one male author uses the concept of the family recipe as a trope for the greater loss of the past.

Underlying these explorations is the idea of a 'female line' that connects the generations of a family. Once again, Lily Brett offers examples. As with all her Second Generation protagonists, Esther in *Just Like That* is driven by the need to find family connections that were not cut off by the Holocaust. One of these is cooking: 'Yesterday, she had pointed out again to Zelda that being able to cook ran in the family. That she and Zelda and her mother and her mother's mother, Zelda's great-grandmother, were all good cooks. It was one of the few things she knew about her grandmother. That she had been a good cook' (1994: 266). The creation of a living female line based on 'being able to cook' comes naturally to Esther. In this case, she has knowledge upon which to build her memory work; the fact that her grandmother was a good cook is 'one of the few things' that she knows about her. Notably, Esther uses this knowledge to write her daughter into continuity, transgenerational legacies, and strong family traditions.

The particular power of food as a node connecting to usable pre-Holocaust memory is that it can be recreated rather than only contemplated and discussed. This enables the Second Generation not only to witness the survivors' nostalgic longing for the foods of the old homeland but also to personally engage in the food traditions of the unknown past. The possibilities to connect are multiple. The recreation of recipes may be framed as a gendered or an ethnic tradition, but the two frequently blend together. In her poem 'Lithuanian Grandmother', Merra Young-Prottegeier, an American daughter of survivors, explores a fantasy of a lost ancestor in her kitchen:

Round and short,  
perspiration on your face.  
You cook with  
a stone oven  
and open hearth.  
Smells of fresh bread,  
*tzimisis, szoldn.*

Smells waft from your decade  
into mine. Pass through unseen  
the dark Holocaust curtain.  
Take you from me,  
before I am born.

Named after your name,  
 no picture of you exists.  
 Your son, my father, tells me  
 I resemble you. (1989: 69)

In the first stanza, Young creates a traditional female image of a nurturing grandmother in her Old World home, cooking the dishes of Ashkenazi cuisine. The use of what we are led to assume are Yiddish words for the food she is preparing, *tzmisis* and *szoldn*, emphasizes that the two women are connected in a number of ways, for example, through language. However, the Yiddish is incorrect, highlighting for the reader how disconnected the generations are. Young uses *tzimis* rather than the more correct *tzimmes* (or a variant of this transliteration). Additionally, *szoldn* is not a commonly known Yiddish word. It might be a family idiosyncrasy. However, at the end of the poem, the writer feels caressed by the old language, Yiddish. Her Jewish family household and family, marked by the mezuzah on the doorpost that the imaginary hand also touches, are viewed as linked to and protected by this mythic maternal figure.

In crossing beyond the destruction of the Holocaust and imagining the smells of a past Lithuanian kitchen, the granddaughter also implies a relationship through the body. This embodiment further enhances the connection Young-Prottengeier feels with her grandmother. They share a name and there is a physical resemblance. In previous chapters, the close link with a family member one resembles or is named after has been explored, but the poet takes this connection even further: the grandmother who was taken from her speaks to her and guides her hand later in the poem. Her status as a granddaughter who belongs to a family tradition of the kitchen is never in doubt: she has a rich past, the historical realities notwithstanding.

In Lisa Appignanesi's *Losing the Dead*, the survivor mother, Hena, describes her own mother, Sara, as a traditional Orthodox woman: 'In preparation for the Sabbath, she washed and scrubbed and attired the house, baked the woven white loaves or *challahs*, cooked stuffed, sweetened carp and boiled beef, as well as that slow-simmering stew, the *cholent*, put into the oven the day before so that no fires need to be lit on the holy day' (1999: 40). In Hena's memory, this is an *eshet chayil*, a 'woman of valor', as represented in the traditional Shabbat song sung in honor of the woman of the house. Although she repeats her mother's words, the Second Generation daughter, Lisa, is doubtful of this interpretation: 'in my mother's memory, her own mother has crystallized

into the *shtetl* woman of legend – the perfect, anxious housekeeper' (40–41). Hena ascribes certain traditional traits of the good Jewish housewife to her mother, while refusing to identify with any of them herself. Interestingly, however, she attributes them to her daughter: 'Indeed, when my mother wants to pay me one of her ambivalent compliments, she tells me that I must have my grandmother's genes. Cooking genes, to be exact. She, herself, apart from the annual creation of a pot of stuffed carp, *gefilte fisch*, has never cooked' (41). Not unlike her refusal to identify with what in her mind is a 'Jewish body', Hena also refuses to assume a social role prescribed by custom. The only thing she is willing to do in the kitchen is to prepare the traditional dish of *gefilte fisch* once a year. However, she ascribes to her daughter a position in a female tradition, creating a link between Sara, the grandmother who perished, and Lisa. Aware of the workings of Hena's mind and of the presence of the past in her mother's present behavior, Appignanesi reads this as an 'ambivalent compliment'. She does not discuss the connotations of Hena's connection-making in relation to what she considers a tradition of female submission. However, leaving this uncommented upon allows the Canadian Appignanesi to be inscribed into the European family, even if Hena herself refuses to participate.

One of the most interesting cases of the kitchen as an explicit node of family memory is found in a scene from Fern Chapman's *Motherland*. Here, memory work makes an unexpected discovery:

One day, I stood on a chair next to the stove and saw a nylon stocking filled with plums soaking in a boiling pot of purplish-black water. It looked as incongruent to me as Santa Claus wearing ballet slippers in one of those cartoons that challenges a child to spot what's wrong with this picture. 'What are you doing?' I asked, incredulously.

'Making jam', she said. 'This is how my mother made it'. The word seemed to get caught in her throat and come out muffled. It was the first time she mentioned her mother to me. 'Who?' I asked. 'My mother', she said again, more clearly. Still the word 'mother' sounded odd coming from her. Until that moment, it never occurred to me that she actually had a mother. Why would it, since I never heard anything about her? (2000: 57–58)

In this scene, a food custom enables a granddaughter's first encounter with a grandmother whose existence she had never even imagined. The lack of family recipes and the fact that no German food was ever cooked by her refugee mother indicate the minimal links created in their

American home with the family who had stayed behind and were subsequently murdered. Her mother's disconnection from the past felt absolute throughout Chapman's life, and only as Edith reenacts her mother's seemingly anachronistic method of jam-making does she first utter the words 'my mother' in her daughter's presence. Chapman, already confused by what is happening in the kitchen, cannot process the words 'my mother', much like Edith, who can barely say them. The special set of disadvantages that plagues child survivors has placed extreme constraints on her daughter's memory work, signifying that this food-related breakthrough is particularly important for Chapman's narrative of family memory. The grandmother only comes into existence for her through the recreation of a cooking tradition that allows the normally forbidden memory of the murdered family to enter the American home.

This strong connection between food and family – as people rather than as losses – also becomes clear to Helen Epstein on her memory quest, as documented in *Children of the Holocaust*, when her mother Franci rediscovers family members she had assumed were dead. When Epstein observes them together, she sees that 'My mother looked like her relatives. She talked the same mixture of English laced with German expressions. She cooked the same sort of food and read the same books' (1988: 259). The physical resemblance and the shared manner of speaking make her mother one of the family, as does the cuisine that connects her to a culture. Suddenly Franci is not the solitary survivor of her family. When Epstein sees her mother with others so like her, the daughter finally begins to imagine Franci as part of a family beyond their small post-Holocaust nuclear unit.

## Food and ethnic connections

In most families in which the parents were socialized into a certain culture (unlike the Chapman scenario), their postwar, postmigration children are brought up on the foods of the European family, like in most migrant families. Whenever Eva Hoffman comes to visit her parents' home in Vancouver, she experiences cultural continuity: 'We sit down around the Formica-topped kitchen table, and my mother heats up the mushroom-barley soup – my favorite – and presses some honey cake on me. Here I am, in my shtetl-on-the-pacific' (1998: 147). In this context, the Yiddish word *shtetl* does not refer to an Eastern European village; rather, it connotes 'home'. Translocated to Canada, where the family is now overlooking the Pacific Ocean while eating barley-mushroom soup and honey cake, the traditions are still alive, and Hoffman does not question that: she is a part of it.

Families tend to share a cooking tradition, but food is also part of a larger framework of cultural customs: ethnic or national food ways. Upholding such traditions is an important part of creating and maintaining ethnic identities. In Judaism, food is especially significant, most obviously in the dietary laws of kashruth that inform both food choices and practices of preparation and consumption. In the context of this book, ethnic cooking generally refers to Ashkenazi cuisine in its different local variants (e.g. cholent is eaten and written about by Second Generation authors from around the globe), although survivor families are also influenced by national origins. In *Jewish Eating and Identity through the Ages*, the Jewish studies scholar David Kraemer argues that food, more than anything, is a negotiation of identity through the working-out of boundaries with other Jews and with Gentiles (2007: 5). In the context of memory work and the search for continuity, this implies the attempt to align oneself within ethnic boundaries. Collective identity cannot be disentangled from collective forms of memory. Jon D. Holtzman suggests, 'Ethnic identity forms a central arena in which food is tied to notions of memory' (2006: 366). As this chapter has shown, food is a rich source for memory work, and the continuation of ethnic and national food ways represents a further link to the usable pre-Holocaust past of family continuity, now within wider frameworks.

The comfort and reassurance offered by a collective belonging that functions both synchronically and diachronically are an essential feature of memory work. Not only do formal religious rituals create a sense of belonging but so does eating ethnic food. For Julie Salamon, in *The Net of Dreams*, it is the smell of cholent that reminds her that she is part of a larger family. The stew in question was not cooked in her childhood home in rural Appalachian Ohio, but served in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. On a 'return' trip to see the sites of her family's origins, Salamon, her mother Szimi, and her stepfather, Arthur, visit his sister, a survivor who never left Eastern Europe: 'In the home of Arthur's sister, Zhoffka, we ate soup and cakes and cholent – a traditional Jewish casserole made many ways but always with beans. They smelled and tasted like soups and cakes and cholents I'd eaten in my mother's kitchen and all over the world, and that always made me feel at home' (1996: 21). This American Second Generation daughter plays a part in the gustatory memories of her ethnic group – the smell and taste of the traditional Shabbat stew allow her to feel at home anywhere in the world. Traditional foods mitigate migration and the chasm of the Holocaust, as *cholent* becomes the great connector.

As a child in an entirely Gentile community, Salamon had longed for assimilation and yearned to share the food ways of her classmates:

Szimi would eventually learn to make apple dumplings, though her menus would remain primarily Czech and Hungarian. Her children would grow up eating navy beans and ham, mashed potatoes and gravy, and tuna casserole at their friends' houses and foods with mysterious names at home – dishes like chicken *paprikàs*, *lescó*, *knedle*, *shliskele*. (265)

The children had convinced their survivor mother to adopt some American dishes, but for the most part, the family meals stayed within the traditions of the parents' native Czechoslovakian-Hungarian Jewish cuisine. Thanks to this childhood education, the adult Salamon becomes a part of an Eastern European Jewish community despite her family's radical displacement.

Lily Brett connects to the pre-Holocaust generations of her family through food, and she also identifies the connective tissue of ethnic eating on a collective level. In Brett's interpretation, the transnational element is a fundamental characteristic of the Jewish kitchen, simultaneously reflecting Jewish history: 'Every cuisine tells a story. Jewish food tells the story of the uprooted, migrating people and their vanished worlds. It lives in people's minds and has been kept alive because of what it evokes and represents' (2002: 62–63). The idea that ethnic history can be conveyed in cooking or baking is especially pronounced in descriptions of baked goods in Brett's work. In one of her early poetry collections, *After the War*, in a poem entitled 'Cakes', she uses this example to contemplate the transnational nature of Jewish life. Brett sees and tastes cakes, any of which could have been baked by her mother, not only as a child in Carlton, the inner-city Jewish neighborhood in Melbourne where she grew up, but everywhere she has encountered Jewish communities: the United States, New Zealand, France, England, and Israel. What she learned in that bakery window of her childhood is that migrants bring many things with them, all of which have a history. The poem also teaches her readers about migration to Australia:

in the window  
of Goldie's Biscuits  
in Rathdowne Street

where the pyramids  
 of powdered ponchkes  
 never diminished (1990: 61)

The Yiddish/Polish *ponchkes*, Edek's much-loved jam doughnuts, for those not part of his world, speak to the presence of Jewish Eastern Europeans. In addition to observing that migration has carried taste preferences to places widely dispersed across the world, Brett notes a form of ethnic transnationalism in the characteristics that unite these cakes and which, in her eyes, make them different from other baked goods:

the asymmetrically  
 twisted  
 crusts  
  
 the  
 crooked  
 rugelahs  
  
 the honey cake  
  
 with  
 the burnt glaze ... (62)

They induce a sense of familiarity, as though all these cakes had come from the Brett kitchen, and vice versa, they serve as a reminder of a larger Jewish family around the world that is connected by tradition.

Survivor Edek, who eats his way through Brett's oeuvre and teaches the next generation about the past through food, has already introduced food as telling stories, but when his daughter Ruth visits Poland, in *Too Many Men*, cakes also speak to her:

Warsaw had wonderful cake shops. Cake shops that had the cakes of her childhood. When she was growing up they didn't have apple pies or jam tarts or custard or vanilla slices or other Australian cakes in the house. They had strudel and sponge cakes and marzipan and cheese-cakes. The cakes of the past. The cakes Ruth could see all around her now. (2002: 25)

What we find here is that over time, due to the long, interconnected history of Polish and Jewish culture, each cuisine has absorbed elements

of the other. For the Australian-bred Second Generation daughter, the cakes of Warsaw, more than anything, take her back to her own migrant childhood in Melbourne, where she grew up hearing her parents' stories about their Polish past, making this a repetition of the sentiments portrayed in the above poem.

Similarly, Paula Fass' memoir, *Inheriting the Holocaust*, includes a journey to Poland. As a trained historian, Fass is more keenly aware of the division between Jewish and Polish cooking than Brett's protagonist. Keeping kosher enforced natural boundaries between Jewish and Gentile communities, but she imagines that there might have been one exception: 'Maybe only in the cafes and in the pastry shops could Jews grab a small piece of the local action. Indeed, Polish cakes such as apple cake (so unlike American apple pie) did bring back sweet memories of one of my mother's specialties' (2009: 23). Just as Brett and her protagonist see and taste a Melbourne home in Poland, Fass is gustatorily connected to her parents' former homeland by way of her mother's Brooklyn kitchen. In both of their childhoods, Australian and American, apple pie never played a role, other than signifying that their families were newcomers to local tastes.

The memory work displayed in these last examples engages less with uncovering knowledge and more with connections and the realization that the usable past plays a role and is alive in the present. Migration and displacement, constants in Jewish history, are taken into account here, as Second Generation memory work emphasizes the transnational connections between the here and the there of the family living in the aftermath of the Holocaust. This once again showcases food as a rich node in a memory network with many connecting links: to different temporal and spatial levels, within the family and outside of it.

## **Food in Second Generation memory work**

In this chapter, I proposed that in the Second Generation experience, food links to the past on a number of levels and is thus productive for the Second Generation project of unearthing and exploring family memory. A humorous and touching illustration of most of the issues discussed is found in New Zealander Deb Filler's performance art. In her autobiographical solo play *FILLER UP!*, the daughter of Ruth, a German Jewish refugee who had fled with her family in 1938, and Sol, a Polish Jewish survivor of several concentration camps, even makes challah on stage. Sol was a baker, and thus his daughter brings together earlier lives, starvation, survival, and stories of life after liberation: Sol was working with



his father in their Polish village, was sent to a labor camp rather than the gas chambers because he was a baker, and later made bread with starving German POWs. Filler's sharp humor becomes especially evident when she describes the family's life in New Zealand and the unquestioning adoption of this new context. In the film adaptation of the stage show, *Punch Me in the Stomach*, she once again uses food as a way to tell the particularities of survivor-migrant life in the faraway 'land of no blintzes' (1997: 4, 25), for instance, in the differences between the refugee family of German background and the Polish concentration camp survivors. Food also frames her Second Generation experience of an overfeeding mother, who is quoted as saying, 'I was feeding you good German food straight into the womb'. Humorously, the memories go on: 'She started me on solids immediately. Waiting for me when we go home from the hospital was a year's supply of Wiener Schnitzel and potato salad' (9, 10), illustrating the Second Generation situation she grew up in.

Filler's example differs from most other cases of Second Generation memory work on food, in which the subdivision between the memory of the Holocaust and the memory of a pre-Holocaust past is more distinct than with any other node of memory examined. Both of these foci eventuate in different forms of memory work and in different possibilities for exploring the past in the present, but the immediacy and the intimacy of food memories manifest across different subjects and approaches.

The nodes of food and the body are closely connected – indeed, when it comes to food, memory is also embodied. The triggers are either situational (a moment of hunger) or sensual (a smell or a taste). Survivors might not speak much about the experience of starvation, but their bodies and their eating habits can be dramatically affected. That is, they may involuntarily carry memories into the everyday intimate interactions of the family. Food, as a constant of life, activates the performance of certain elements of the past, for instance, post-traumatic behaviors such as overeating, overfeeding, and the taboo against wasting food, on a daily basis, and thus layers of memory become intricately interwoven.

The other, much more positive, aspect of food as a node of family memory is that it opens up passageways into the usable past, highlighting a past of riches rather than only destruction. With the kitchen constructed as a gendered space, mostly female authors write themselves into a generational network of food traditions extending beyond the Holocaust in both directions. Even in such a seemingly trivial act as cooking and eating ethnic foods, Jewish identities are negotiated and

Jewish peoplehood is affirmed, opening up connections to a larger collective beyond the nuclear family circle.

In food ways and their continuity, we encounter a special emphasis on the transnational nature of survivor and Second Generation biographies. In the ethnic kitchen, a connection to the past home is maintained, and certain dishes connect Jewish homes around the globe. This ethnic connection brings an interesting perspective into the reading of these migration-shaped texts: when it comes to food as a node of memory, tradition is strong, and there is little difference between the locations to which survivors migrated. The only element that seems to be compromised in my corpus is the connection to what religiously distinguishes Jewish cooking from other cuisines: the ritual commandment of kashruth. The texts prioritize sensory nostalgia within a memory work framework over kosher cooking, and there is no obvious display of a longing to participate in this religious ritual.

The importance of food as an aspect of social memory underscores the Second Generation urge to connect to a pre-Holocaust family. Even where the family recipe book is not part of the available fount of memory, the execution, that is, the cooking of family and ethnic recipes as well as an education in taste, represents an attempt to keep tradition alive and thus to become part of a larger family. The French thinker Alain Finkielkraut, in *Le Juif Imaginaire* (The imaginary Jew), describes the lack of connections to the destroyed world of pre-Holocaust European Judaism as central to his Second Generation identity. There is only one element of cultural memory – food – that connects him to the unknown past of prewar Polish Jewry: ‘Yet to sound, search and excavate my inner depths would be in vain, no trace of them remains, except perhaps my taste for poppy seed bread, scorching hot tea, and the way I hold sugar in my teeth rather than let it dissolve’ (1994: 39). Finkielkraut’s ethnic memory is embodied: his taste buds show a preference for ethnic foods, and his parents’ habits have taught him the customary ways of consuming it. As seen with the use of the body metaphor to describe the transfer of nonpersonal memory, Finkielkraut notes a physical transfer of this legacy. The quasi-corporeal link with the pre-Holocaust past opens up a positive and expansive realm of a vanished world and emphasizes the saliency of this memory node in Second Generation memory work.

# 6

## Passover

Religious holidays are often rituals of collective remembrance. They draw groups together, reminding them of their common, sometimes mythical, origins. This holds particularly true for Judaism, in which collective identity is based on the memory of a collective past, and every holiday references ‘the historical narrative of a community’ (Connerton 1989: 46). At Passover, Jews remember one of the founding stories of their people: the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> During the Seder, Jews all over the world come together to eat, drink, and read the Haggadah, the ritual text that sets out the order of the night. This scripted occasion – not only the text but also the ritual foods and the glasses of wine to be consumed are prescribed – is the paramount vehicle for the transmission of cultural memory within the family framework. The commandment ‘And you shall tell thy son’, drawn from Exodus 13:8, which appears twice in the Haggadah, emphasizes the importance of the family in integrating the next generation into the community. Josef Yerushalmi, an expert on memory and Judaism, poignantly calls the Passover Seder ‘the quintessential exercise in Jewish group memory’ (1982: 44). During the Seder, memory becomes a social practice as ritual elements reenact the past in the present – the eating of matzah, unleavened bread, or the six symbolic foods on the Seder plate. Each has a place in the retelling of the Exodus story, representing an element of the collective past. *Maror* and *chazeret*, two types of bitter herbs, represent the harshness and bitterness of Egyptian bondage, for example.

Celebrating Passover entails fulfilling a commandment included in the Haggadah that calls on every Jew to personally imagine themselves into the Exodus narrative of leaving Egypt. The prescribed ‘as if’ condition of the holiday requires participants to remember events that happened long before they were born. The decree to keep memory

alive for the following generations – indeed, to personally remember a past that happened before one’s birth – is particularly resonant when read in the context of the survivor family and the Second Generation memory work that is so deeply concerned with the transfer movements of memory. The literary scholar Efraim Sicher highlights the Haggadah’s communicative ritual of question and answer as an ideal setting for the integration of Holocaust memory into the cultural narrative of redemption. He also points out how ‘the family framework of the Passover feast underscores the absence of missing members at the reunion and gives occasion for reminiscences and the intergenerational transmission of memories’ (2000: 60). Thus, the intimate family memories explored in Second Generation memory work are embedded within a structured, ritual setting of religious significance that involves teaching memory on a collective level. Moreover, another factor makes Passover a potential node of family memory: in its motifs, the Exodus story of collective Jewish suffering and liberation mirrors the survival of the Holocaust.

In public commemoration of the Holocaust, the conceptual link between the two liberations has been made explicit. In Israel, religious tradition and memory politics overlap as the commemorations of Passover and the Holocaust are tied into a grand national narrative. In 1953, with the enactment of the Memorial Law, the annual ‘Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day’, was established on the 27th of the Hebrew month of Nissan. The date first proposed for the commemoration was the 14th of Nissan, marking the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, which started on April 19, 1943, when the SS entered the ghetto on the Seder night; however, religious leaders objected to the timing, which would interfere with the celebration of Passover. The 27th of Nissan does not fall during Passover, but it is close enough to make the connection resonant, and the date was explicitly chosen to create a palimpsest of narratives of oppression and liberation: from Egypt and from Nazi Germany. Within a 20-day period, the Israeli narrative of collective commemoration thus moves from Passover to Holocaust Remembrance Day to *Yom ha’zikharon*, the day commemorating fallen soldiers and victims of terror attacks, finally culminating in the celebrations of Independence Day.

The Passover Seder itself can also include references to the Holocaust. Liora Gubkin, a religious studies scholar, notes that of the almost 100 nontraditional Haggadot published in the United States between 1970 and 2002, about 25% include references to the Holocaust (Gubkin 2007: 5) even if Orthodox branches of Jewish practice have not participated in this increasing inclusion of nonrabbinical commentary (Gubkin, 5).

Survivors began to create Haggadot that interweave the story of the Israelites' liberation with their own survival experiences as early as 1946. One such example is Yosef Dov Shenison's *A Survivor's Haggadah* (2000), compiled in a DP camp in preparation for the first Passover after the liberation of the concentration camps. Miklos Adler, a fellow survivor, illustrated the Haggadah with woodcuts that connect the two Jewish survivals like the text does. It was long forgotten until the Jewish Publication Society reissued it in 2000, pointing to the increase in public Holocaust commemoration. The *Hagadat Volakh: Hagada shel Pesah le-zekher ha-Shoa* (Wolloch Haggadah in memory of the Holocaust), published in 1985 by Yad Vashem, also links the memory of the destruction of European Jewry to the Israelites' plight. Here, lithographs of Holocaust imagery created by David Wander are juxtaposed with the traditional text. For instance, a striped camp uniform is the illustration for the paragraph instructing every generation to experience Passover as if the Exodus had happened to them.

One of the most recent additions to the canon of Haggadot is the *New American Haggadah* compiled by Jonathan Safran Foer (2012). Foer, the American grandson of survivors, was joined in his efforts by translator Nathan Englander and several others who contributed illustrations and commentary. Nathaniel Deutsch's commentary in particular transports the ritual text into contemporary life, asking questions that require contemplation in the face of a holiday that celebrates liberation. Some of these questions involve complex social situations, for example, the treatment of African Americans in modern US society and the ethical problems arising from Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories. A central element of the *New American Haggadah* is a cultural history of Passover compiled by Mía Sara Bruch. This time line describes various historical and local contexts, different versions of the Haggadah, and also intertextual references to the diverse uses of the Exodus story within Western culture. Here, the Holocaust is framed as one part of Jewish history, rather than the most decisive issue; however, there is a discussion of the *Survivor's Haggadah* and other ways in which the Exodus narrative experienced a renaissance in the wake of the Holocaust, such as the renaming of the illegal immigrant ship that traveled to British Mandate Palestine, the *Exodus 1947*, made famous by Leon Uris' eponymous novel. Rabbi S. R. Kapel, himself an internee, had assembled the Haggah for use in the internment camps. After 'next year in Jerusalem', usually the final sentence of the text, he added the Yiddish plea '*Die Hagodeh zol zayn die letzte in Goles!*' (May this be the last Haggadah written in Exile' (Foer 2012: 110).

The insertion of Holocaust memory into the Passover ritual is itself congruent with tradition. The Seder ceremony has always been subject to change in accordance with time or context. For instance, some add a glass for Miriam to commemorate the role of the prophetess in the Exodus and honor the female contribution to Jewish life and culture. The historian Peter Novick notes that in the 1950s, when the Holocaust did not yet have a prominent place in the American public realm, even religious leaders and Jewish-American opinion makers had no suggestions for how to commemorate the victims, 'with the exception of the occasional insertion of mentions in Seder rituals' (2001: 104). In the 1980s, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, founder and president emeritus of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership (CLAL) initiated one of the more frequent additions of Holocaust remembrance to the ritual. Greenberg, an important voice in American remembrance work, suggested a prayer called 'The Fifth Child: The One Who Cannot Ask' in remembrance of the 1.5 million murdered children. This addition to the section describing the 'Four Sons' is inserted into the ceremony before opening the door for the prophet Elijah (Greenberg 1986: 21).<sup>2</sup>

The wider post-Holocaust culture makes connections between Passover and the Holocaust, but more personal links are found in the context of the post-Holocaust families of survivors. Elie Wiesel was the first to highlight the intimate connections between this holiday and the children of survivors (whose situation in many ways mirrors the 'as if' condition of Passover) in *The Fifth Son (Le cinquième fils)* (1983). In the novel, which won the Grand Prize in Literature from the City of Paris, Second Generation protagonist Ariel's greatest challenge is the knowledge that his brother (after whom he is named) perished in the camps, yet still occupies the biggest part of his father's heart. The epigraph 'Blessed is God who gave the Torah to His people Israel, blessed is He. The Torah speaks about four sons; one who is wise and one who is contrary; one who is simple and one who does not even know how to ask a question' (1986: 9) introduces Passover as a conceptual frame for the novel. In the Haggadah (and reenacted at every Seder table), these four sons are present.

In Wiesel's text, a fifth son – the absent son – emerges. He is the child killed during the Holocaust: 'There is, of course, a fifth son, but he does not appear in the tale because he is gone. Thus, the duty of the Jewish father is to the living. When will you understand, Reuven, that the dead are not part of the *Haggadah*?' (35). The first Ariel and every other child who died can no longer ask the ritual questions. More than that, they represent a lost Jewish generation, conspicuous by their absence.

This idea was referenced in Greenberg's liturgical addition to the Seder; however, he did not consider the complex situation this creates for the postwar child living in the shadow of a lost sibling, an experience shaped by traumatic loss and the lack of knowledge and connection.

As described above, the paradigmatic story of the Exodus and the Seder ritual show similarities to the Second Generation experience. It is unsurprising that they are taken as a node of family memory. Three different motifs can be identified in Second Generation memory work: first, parents who explicitly refuse to participate in any religious ceremony after their survival; second, Passover as a traditional holiday celebrated without any reference to the Holocaust; and third, a number of texts that show the Passover injunction to remember and tell the next generation as explicitly linked to the parents' survival. In the first two cases, the Holocaust is a constant presence, unaffected by Passover celebrations or the lack thereof. In contrast, in the third group of texts, the living memory of the family becomes an explicit part of the ritual framework provided by cultural memory.

### **The Holocaust as a constant presence**

We only encounter survivor parents who refuse to celebrate Passover in a few texts. More frequently, the holiday is not mentioned. Thane Rosenbaum's *Second Hand Smoke* serves as an example of this first group of families, in which the parents have left the faith. In Rosenbaum's novel, Passover is mentioned only in passing. The survivor mother, Mila, 'reached inside a cupboard to find a bottle of wine left over from a recent Passover. The holiday had passed her by without ceremony. Freed from bondage less than two years earlier, she no longer regarded the Exodus from Egypt as a red-letter day on her calendar' (1999: 238). Much like the circumcision scene discussed in Chapter 4 of this book, this passage shows Mila's complex and antagonistic relationship with the Jewish faith: the bottle of Passover wine in the cupboard suggests an acknowledgment of the holiday even if the day 'had passed her by without ceremony'. Her refusal to celebrate is explained as the direct result of the Holocaust experience, with the connection made obvious through the use of the word 'bondage', which transforms Mila's incarceration in the camps into a modern replication of the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt.

Later on, the subject of Passover comes up once again in a farcical depiction of the holiday: mobsters and Gentile fashion models celebrate together in a scene that ultimately resembles the story of Sodom and

Gomorrah more than the Exodus narrative (290–92). Here, the Second Generation protagonist is witness to a contemporary decay in Jewish identity and practice and the resulting cultural destruction.

In *Writing a Jewish Life*, Lev Raphael mentions that during the first 23 years of his life, he never experienced a Passover Seder, thus illustrating his parents' disconnection from any religious tradition (2006: 15). Their defiance was a result of the Holocaust – his father's family, at least, was religious before the war. Raphael describes his father as 'a man who grew up in the same part of the world as Elie Wiesel but never set foot in a synagogue after the war' (6). Throughout their oeuvre, both Rosenbaum and Raphael are concerned with the loss of Jewish faith and ritual after the genocide. The survivors' Jewish identities are depicted as centered on the Holocaust, which mostly cut their connections to a prewar religious identity. Now, their children understand themselves as being kept from religion, not only because it is part of past horrors but also due to parental fears that Jews could once again be persecuted.

The treatment of Passover in Sonia Pilcer's *Holocaust Kid* offers an example of the second group of texts, which make no explicit connection between the story of Passover and the family's Holocaust past. The holiday is a traditional celebration, but does not become a node of family memory connected to the Holocaust, indicating that these survivors have opted to recreate their lives according to the cultural and religious traditions of Judaism. The importance of the holiday is emphasized by the fact that it is chosen as the setting for major family announcements. The chapter 'Resurrection', set at the family Passover celebration, takes place immediately after the Second Generation daughter has experienced a liberating, almost cathartic moment when visiting Auschwitz that leads her to do memory work rather than fight what she had previously considered a burden. Zosha-Zoe and her boyfriend, Avi, also the son of survivors, use the occasion to tell her family personal news.

The scene is one of contemporary Jewish-American life: 'The table was covered with a white tablecloth, a ceremonial holiday plate in the center, haggadahs from Maxwell House and Manischewitz at the side of each plate' (2001a: 166). The first two components, the festive white cloth and the Seder plate, mark this table as traditionally Jewish, while the other two, the complimentary Haggadah given out annually by the coffee company and the brand of sweet Kiddush wine, indicate the American context. The family's other pedigree soon becomes evident: as they sit down, cousin Batya, who suffers from Alzheimer's, asks whether her sister is coming (166). This sister perished in the camps, and the implicit acknowledgment of the dead emphasizes that this Passover



takes place in a survivor family. However, it is neither the ritual nor the story of Passover that triggers the question of the elderly survivor. Batya asks the same question at every family event. The survivor father is angered by the disruption, but the dead are normalized into the scene dominated by the living: Heniek immediately proceeds with the ceremony, allowing no space for the family past. In fact, it is a happy day for this family: after Zosha-Zoe reads the four questions, traditionally the duty of the youngest child at the table – despite being in her late thirties, she is still the youngest – Avi seizes the opportunity to ask his own question: for her hand in marriage. In addition, he reveals that they are expecting a child, an announcement that brings immeasurable joy to this family that lives continuity through tradition, but is yet to extend the chain of generations.

All three of these authors – Pilcer, Rosenbaum, and Raphael – integrate Passover into their texts. Although the holiday is not a setting for an explicit transmission of Holocaust memory, the past still influences the treatment of the holiday with implications that can be explored. In these texts, the presence of the Holocaust past cannot be denied – it either halts observances of the Jewish faith or, if celebrations take place, the past is as much a part of them as it is a part of any other day and any other family meal.

### **Passover as a node of explicit Holocaust memory**

In the above examples, Passover does not represent a special occasion for memory work. In some families, however, an explicit connection is made between the content and ritual of Passover and the parents' Holocaust survival. In such cases, the family past becomes part of cultural memory as the ritual, although initially interrupted, is familiarized through communicative memory as, once again, memory presents as a network.

The integration of parental memories takes two different forms in the relevant texts. Either some aspect of the Holocaust past is incorporated into the matrix of the ritual or the content of the Passover narrative prompts a sudden eruption of survivor memories. Paul Frosh, a communications and media studies expert, argues that the 'as if' condition of Passover and the ritualized but performative nature of the reading allow the participants in a Seder to imaginatively 'witness' not merely the story of the Exodus but, just as importantly, the present moment: "To be present" in this performative situation is not thought of in relation to an original event, but in relation to the community which is present

to the witnessing text''' (2009: 259). Second Generation memory work is also predicated by the collective nature of the Seder night. In this case, the collective is the family in which personal memory is activated, a memory that now links the Holocaust past to the cultural memory of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt.

In *The War After*, Anne Karpf describes Seders in her parents' house, which were always big affairs with many survivors and non-Jewish guests in attendance. Rafael (Felek) Scharf, a survivor friend of the family, conducted the Haggadah readings, but the focus was rarely on religious matters. The more significant part of the night involved the discussions, initiated by Felek, about topics related to the Holocaust, whether personal experiences or questions of remembrance (1997: 261–63). What preoccupies Karpf most in connection with Passover, however, is that it mirrors her Second Generation relationship with the Holocaust. Jewish studies scholar Arthur A. Cohen notes that, theologically, Passover and the Holocaust are related because the Exodus requires presence 'really, if not literally', and so does the Holocaust. He argues that this creates an 'obligation to hear the witness as though I were a witness, to be a witness as though I were a witness' (1981: 11). Alan Berger, in his study on Second Generation literature and theology, makes the link with the Second Generation experience explicit, asserting that the urgent mission of memory that drives survivors has also been transferred to their children, much like the situation found in the Passover celebration.

This legacy, reinforced by the Karpf family Seders in which recounting the Holocaust past was as important as the narration of the Exodus and the connection troubled the Second Generation daughter:

(The Seder, as a story of escape and survival celebrating the Jews exodus from Egypt, has an obvious special resonance for Holocaust survivors. Yet I was never comfortable with the passage enjoining Jews to imagine the exodus as if they personally were there and involved – such a confusion between real participants and emphatic descendants violated a distinction which had been critical in my own life.) (1997: 261)

In this aside, Karpf demonstrates how the 'as if' condition of remembering Egyptian bondage and the Exodus, and the Second Generation experience of both transmitted and imposed memory are closely related. For much of her life, she could not disentangle the Biblical commandment from the complexities of the position with which she, as an 'emphatic descendant', was struggling and which she discusses at length

in *The War After*. Yosef Yerushalmi has suggested that the injunction to personally remember is 'not so much a leap of memory as a fusion of past and present. Memory here is no longer recollection, which still preserves a sense of distance, but reactualization' (1982: 44). This as yet unresolved fusion of past and present is the basis of Karpf's unease. Only later, with her increasing memory work, does this change.

Despite these challenges, Passover is a central symbol of Judaism for Anne Karpf. The more in tune she is with the past, the more of a central role she can play in the holiday. This becomes clear to her after she hosts the family celebration in her London home for the first time: 'When I later announced that I'd do it every year, my mother told me to keep the ceremonial artefacts she'd lent me – Elijah's cup, the special plate, and the cloth to cover the matzos. It was as if she'd passed me the baton of Jewishness' (1997: 285–86). For Karpf, a missing family legacy in material form had been a problem that weighed on her and impeded her memory work, as described in the chapter on objects. Her mother's 'ceremonial artefacts' show her that a living tradition exists, allowing her to see connections to a pre-Holocaust past. The schematic cultural format of Passover makes this possible, even though the specific ritual objects did not actually come from the earlier past.

David Mittelberg describes how, in his family, the Passover night is explicitly devoted to the remembrance of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. As described in the last chapter, his father, Israel Jacob Mittelberg, had witnessed the uprising, a subject his son takes up in *Between Two Worlds*. In the Mittelberg family, we see the active creation of a new tradition within the ritual framework of the Seder night:

The Pesach Seder in our family always began with a one-minute silence commemorating the Nazi invasion of the Ghetto on the eve of Pesach 1943. The liberation of the Jews from Egyptian bondage was linked inextricably with the survival of contemporary Jews from Nazi bondage. To this day, every year when I conduct the Seder in my own home I continue this silent commemoration with my children. (2004: 106)

Here, we see the active integration of the past into the present day as Passover is connected, 'linked inextricably' even, to an event that is meaningful in the family narrative. Commemorating the Nazi invasion of the Warsaw Ghetto has become ritualized by the Mittelbergs as part of the Seder. Within the family setting, a historical event is thus made personal. As an element of ritual, family memory stays active, exhibiting

the conscious side of Second Generation memory work: Mittelberg hopes that the next generation will continue this new tradition, which has now moved to Israel with them, thus once again highlighting the transnational features of survivor families.

Menachem Z. Rosensaft is the son of Dr. Hadassah and Josef Rosensaft, survivors of several camps, founders of the World Federation of the Bergen-Belsen Survivors Association, and well-known figures in the fight for remembrance. The younger Rosensaft is also engaged in public commemoration efforts and is a prominent figure in Second Generation group activities. He was, for instance, the first chairman of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Rosensaft frequently speaks about familial mnemonic forms: 'My father's reading of the Haggadah on Passover was interspersed with tales from Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, which had become part of our living, evolving family tradition' (Fogelman 2001: 214). In an interview with Eva Fogelman (herself the daughter of survivors, and as a therapist, organizer of the first Second Generation group), Rosensaft relates that in his family, Passover Seders exemplified the interweaving of the living memory of the Holocaust into older forms of ritualized memory.

The Rosensaft family also created a new tradition: 'My parents put potato peels on the seder plate. "These", my father would explain at the beginning of the seder, "remind us of Auschwitz where any inmate who was able to get hold of potato peels was fortunate. In the camps, potato peels were food"' (214). In this case, Holocaust remembrance is added not only in narrative form but also as a carrier of memory: the potato peel. It has been granted an elevated status as one of the symbolic foods of the Seder, not only in its presence on the Seder plate but also in the prescribed explanations. By including family memory in the ritual, cultural memory takes more concrete form. Through the act of ingesting food with historical meaning, the past is ritually reenacted. In this regard, the sociocultural practice of Judaism enables the insertion of other memory elements into an already existing framework. Meanwhile, the interpretation of this new symbolic tradition also draws on the paradigmatic elements of the Exodus story: in the Rosensaft family mythology, the story told by the potato peels is one of suffering but also of hope and survival, annually brought into the present moment, together with the symbolic meanings of the other foods on the Seder plate.

Rabbi Irving Greenberg, who introduced the 'Fifth Child' prayer in memory of the murdered children, also asked contemporary Jews to eat 'the rotten bread of Auschwitz, or the potato peels of Bergen-Belsen'

(Novick 2001: 200). He argued that creating an act that would parallel the eating of *matzot* in memory of the Exodus from Egypt would keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. For a contemporary audience, potato peels are an obvious reference to the Nazi camps, but this tradition also connects to the Jewish past in another, more usable way: the potato was a standard feature on Eastern European Seder plates. In place of *karpas*, the vegetable dipped in salt water to remember the tears shed in Egypt, Jews living in warmer climates tend to use celery or parsley. In many areas of Eastern Europe, however, green vegetables were hard to find at Passover, and often potatoes were used instead.

The example of the Rosensaft family highlights the fact that the bondage/suffering aspect of Holocaust memory is not the only element that fits into the paradigmatic story of the Exodus. The double story of Passover also allows the liberation aspect to be emphasized. Liora Gubkin cautions against this because 'liberation after the Shoah cannot be easily equated with freedom-redemption' (2007: 79). The Second Generation canon, however, suggests otherwise, at least when it comes to the freedom aspect: the parents who choose to read their liberation into the Passover framework do so consciously and carefully. Ruth Wajnryb, for instance, describes how her father added the *shehechianu* blessing, which celebrates a special occasion by thanking God for sustaining the gift of life, enabling the present moment to be enjoyed. At every Seder, he repeated the blessing, just as he had said it after his survival in 1945. Wajnryb had always known that this blessing was not an integral part of the ritual; rather, 'every year he gave renewed thanks' even though he was 'not a religious man' (2001: 138). For him, and through his blessing, Passover was a node of memory that directly connected to his suffering and liberation. By adding the prayer to the Seder night, this also became the case for his Australian family.

In *I was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, Bernice Eisenstein describes her family as one that celebrated Passover without connecting it to the Holocaust past. Usually, the ritual was not all that important to her father Berek (Beryl):

On Passover, he would read from the Haggadah solemnly, and sometimes quickly. As it happens, the first night of Passover occasionally coincides with the hockey playoffs, and during those seders, the Egyptians would get off light as my father rushed through the Ten Plagues and hurried the Jews through parted waters and into their Promised Land so that he could go up to his bedroom and watch the hockey game. (2006: 150)

Especially on the occasions when the speed of the Haggadah reading was decided by the national sport of the Eisensteins' new home country, Canada, no opening was left for any family memory talk to develop.

One year, however, the parental memories were set free, a particularly important moment for Eisenstein's memory work, signified in the traditional Passover formula: 'I remember on one particular Passover evening when that night became different from all the rest' (151). The unexpected trigger for an eruption of the father's memories during this Seder night was his collection of figurines: 'he picked up the porcelain figure of the woman, and looking at it for a moment, he was reminded of another time. He began to speak about his life after the war, after Liberation, when he and my mother lived in Bergen-Belsen as displaced persons' (151). In the setting of Passover, when parents are commanded to transmit the lessons of the past to their children, Beryl indeed shares stories that he had never before told his family about. An object connected to his time in a DP camp triggers memories, and the fragility of the figurine is a reminder of the fragility of life. Here, it is not explicitly the ritual of the holiday that provides a matrix of memory transmission, or the content of the Exodus story that allows an alignment of narratives, but instead an external prop.

Seeking to hand down more than the memory of suffering to his children, he speaks about the beginning of their postliberation lives: 'War ends and my parents are liberated, and over the years all that I have ever been able to imagine is chaos and sickness and exhaustion and the constant rediscovery that so few survived. But I was wrong. There was more. Life forces life to continue' (151). The stories told are the opposite of Eisenstein's internal narrative. As her father fills in the gaps in her knowledge of the past, it turns out that the horrific explanations she had drawn from cultural memory were far from the positive experiences of renewal on which Beryl wanted his children to focus their sense of origins:

I think of my father as someone who had difficulty expressing himself through language, but that night he recounted his story fluently and with excitement. I had watched his face as he spoke and I saw the look in his eyes as he stepped back to a place that had been transformed, to a time when he and my mother and those who were there with them began to live. He had given me a compass with which I could find my way to where he wanted his memories to begin. (154)

During this Seder night, the survivor father is suddenly seized by an urge to tell his story in a way that allows his daughter to observe the presence

of the past. Even his facial expressions show the positive embodied memories of the time after liberation, when they 'began to live'. At this Passover, not only is Eisenstein's memory revised from horror to rebirth but she also comes to understand how her father conceives of his narrative of family memory. He wants the foundational myth of the family to be the time of liberation – that is, the Exodus from Europe and the arrival in the Promised Land of Canada – rather than the slavery implied by the memory of the Holocaust. As a result of the connective power of Passover as a node of memory, Eisenstein is given a 'compass' to help her navigate family memory to replace the inaccurate ramblings of her imagination.

### An American Seder

Thane Rosenbaum's short story 'Elijah Visible' is the only Second Generation text set in its entirety at a Passover table. It offers a biting depiction of an American Seder and the loss of memory – an occasion not unlike the above-mentioned criminal underworld Passover of *Second Hand Smoke*, in which the Second Generation protagonist wonders about diaspora Judaism: 'Is this how American Jews remember when we were slaves? What will happen to the Holocaust one day?' (1999: 292)

The fully assimilated children of survivors in the Posner family are celebrating together in a fashion that pays little tribute to tradition and retains no spiritual content: 'the Seder, which once had been a solemn and sanctified event, was reduced to a carnival' (1996: 91). This is not a Bakhtinian carnival creating a liberated and utopian space; rather, it is an occasion devoid of any meaning. These assimilated Jews have lost the connection to their forefathers in the old country, and with the death of the generation that came from the cultural center of prewar European Judaism, the religious tradition that had survived centuries has all but disappeared: 'A far cry from the family's origins in Poland. Rabbinic grandfathers, observant fathers – now a new generation of fragmented legacies, American torchbearers skilled in the art of cultural compromise' (89). The survivor parents had celebrated the Seder night as a traditional holiday, but the next generation suffers from a self-induced chasm with the past: 'The informality was seductive, rampant and everywhere' (91).

The children do not know Hebrew, the language of Jewish observance, and Rosenbaum thus suggests the loss of Jewish identity in yet another form. In Judaism, in which language and identity are so closely connected, a loss of language always entails other losses: 'For Jews,

forgetting language has been intertwined with losing faith; performing language has signaled religious affiliation' (Wirth-Nesher 2006: 14). The Second Generation cousins are imbued with the knowledge of what ought to be part of Passover by their immigrant parents; however, they have transformed tradition into an empty exercise: "And now that is what we are doing: davening to the beat". Her hands slashed through the air lithely. Measuring notes and meters, as she sang: 'Bless the matzo, one, two, three; point to the celery, five six, seven, eight; make a horse-radish sandwich, all together now – dayenu'" (Rosenbaum 1996: 90). They make reference to the necessary words, acts, and symbols: prayer, the *matzot*, the bitter herbs, and the songs. All this, however, becomes a mockery when it is compared to an aerobics class (90) and intermingled with popular culture: 'Besides the horseradish and the bitter herbs were back issues of *Glamour* and *Elle*' (93). This jarring juxtaposition causes Adam Posner, the protagonist around whom the connected stories of *Elijah Visible* revolve, to lose his patience with his relatives: "Are the two of you hoping to get dolled up for Elijah's visit? What's the latest fashion for a Hebrew slave girl, nowadays?" (93).

Conflict erupts as Adam condemns his family's Seder, acting as the voice of remembrance and continuity. He speaks his mind because he has just received a letter from their uncle Artur, a survivor living in Belgium. The American survivor generation had broken off contact with him, ostensibly for monetary reasons, but much more significant issues were at work beneath the surface: 'The Posners were related not just in blood, but also in experience, in memory. There was a conscious avoidance of bringing together those who knew, who had been there, with those of the next generation, who were witnesses to nothing but the silences, and the screams' (95). The American survivors had refused to speak about their past, and this silence of avoidance also bled into other areas of transmitted memory. As a result, this subsequent generation, now celebrating a corrupted Passover, was far removed from memory, both familial and cultural.

Their 'near-vacuous Jewish identities' (Furman 1999: 99) are the consequence of this lack of knowledge about the past: 'Like maybe you're too afraid to know the past, to know the truth [...] Listen to the music we play around here; we've lost our soul. We don't know who we are, where we come from, why we should care about tomorrow' (Rosenbaum 1996: 100–01). Because of his cousins' refusal to engage in memory work, Adam tells them about their uncle's letter, which contains the testimony of his survival along with a list naming all of the family members who perished. However, his relatives have no desire to hear any of this and



interpret the letter as an attempt to extort money from them, following the logic of their parents.

But Adam insists, connecting (albeit unintentionally) the symbolic figure of Elijah the Prophet, the herald of the Messiah and ultimate redemption who is ritually welcomed at every Seder, with the figure of the Holocaust survivor. Redemption for the assimilated generation takes the form of memory: "He's trying to save us, save us all" (98). Elijah does not come to the Posner family on that Seder night, but the following day Artur buys a ticket to visit his American family. Linking Artur with Elijah illustrates the conviction that only memory and its bearer, the Holocaust survivor, can bring a form of deliverance to these contemporary Jews. Both figures, the prophet and the survivor, thus become saviors, the survivor bringing salvation through knowledge of the past. His words, which Adam repeats to his cousins, replace the words of the Haggadah and the ancient Jewish past on this Seder night. The commandment to tell one's children is carried out when the stories of the parental generation conveyed in Artur's letter are finally shared and familial memory work is activated.

The effects of Adam's insistence on memory work are now evident at the Passover table: 'Suddenly, a rush of forbidden screams, tired silences, and soft whimpers flooded the Seder. It began to sink in, although only imperceptibly so' (101). Not knowing about their exodus from Europe prevented this generation from connecting to a Jewish identity that was shaped by the earlier Exodus from Egypt – or, as the literary scholar Alan Berger suggests, 'In this case, it is the oppression of silence about, and ignorance of, the Shoah from which the cousins are to be liberated' (1997: 82). The Posners must first learn to engage with the familial Holocaust past before they can reconnect to Jewish collective identity. The lesson learned here concerns the need for awareness and memory of all stages of Jewish life, but the Holocaust, as family history, must come first. In his letter, Artur insists on the importance of a familial memory narrative: 'you and your children carry the seeds of their memories. It is a great responsibility for you, but you must live a life that gives meaning to their death, and comfort to their souls' (Rosenbaum 1996: 96). Second Generation memory work – learning and knowing about the past of the family – is the necessary precondition for remembrance on all levels. At the beginning of the short story, the Posner Seder is portrayed as similar to any other Seder celebration, even if it is particularly barren of meaning. Over the course of the night, however, the memory of the Holocaust takes the place of the earlier cultural memory provided by the Haggadah.

## Passover in Second Generation memory work

The Passover Seder is a sociocultural practice of memory transmission from older to younger generations that functions, among other pathways, by means of reenactment and the corporeality of experience. Over the course of time, changing contexts and customs have influenced or have been consciously incorporated into the ritual. The Exodus story, the paradigmatic story of collective suffering and liberation around which the holiday is centered, has also been invoked in connection with other historical events, both in Jewish history and beyond.

Holocaust memory resonates with the memory of the Exodus, and is one of the most frequent additions to contemporary, non-Orthodox Seders. In the case of the survivor family, the Holocaust past can personalize the cultural memory of the Exodus. Ruth Wajnryb maintains that Passover is particularly evocative with regard to the inclusion of Holocaust memory. In her family, the Exodus story was always about the Holocaust as well, and was thus always personal:

Perhaps the difference might be captured by understanding the difference between public ritual and private grief. In non-survivor homes, the celebration of the Exodus from Egypt is a public ritual. There is no personal experience, every aspect is symbolic, from the food to the tablecloth, to the strange rituals. [...] However, when Passover is celebrated through the lens of the Holocaust, as it was in many survivor homes, it is no longer a moment of public ritual but one of private grief. The iconic associations are of the Holocaust rather than of the Exodus. It is a cataclysmic event that happened not millennia ago, but in our lifetime, or just before. Smooth ritual gives way to raw nerve. (2001: 273–74)

Passover triggers memory work because its content and ritual bear such similarity to the post-Holocaust family situation. Especially the Second Generation experience – living in the aftermath of a formative event and being called upon to remember what one did not experience – is brought to the fore in celebrations of the holiday in which memory is reenacted and imbibed, thus relating this chapter to the two previous ones.

The texts included here show two tendencies for how Holocaust memory becomes part of the Passover ritual in ways that are intimately related to the material I explore. In the first case, it is evident that no matter whether the religious ritual is rejected or whether the

holiday is simply celebrated as a family occasion, the Holocaust past is always in attendance. As an innate part of family life, memory is a constant presence, especially when it results in the refusal to participate in the religious traditions of Judaism. In the second set of examples, family memory becomes part of Passover, either through its incorporation as a new tradition within the ritual – as in the case of the potato peels – or by erupting from the framework of the ritual. The connective, networked form in which family memory emerges is shaped by the frame of Passover, as is the content of the memory: both the bondage and the liberation aspect of the Exodus story resonate with elements of Holocaust survival.

The exploration of different nodes of memory in the previous chapters has shown that Second Generation memory work is not uniform, but rather adapts to the subject in question. Some elements of the parents' memories are so deeply hidden in traumatic silence that they barely allow any investigation of the past, while others offer much easier passageways into family history. In the case of Passover as a node of family memory, Jewish cultural memory offers a paradigmatic story that mirrors Holocaust survival, and the performative elements of the ritual enhance memory work. This has facilitated Second Generation memory work that is part of the sociocultural practice of memory transmission in Judaism. In the next chapter, in which I describe how Second Generation authors have integrated the events of 9/11 into their writings, memory work takes yet another form, turning to an examination of the present moment in which the family past provides paradigms of thinking. Here, lived history becomes a method of understanding aspects of the parents' experiences and transmitted memory.

# 7

## Experiencing History: 9/11

For many people, when the two hijacked planes were crashed into the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, their perception of history changed. The citizens of New York became eyewitnesses to what came to be called 'global terror', while the rest of us watched the images saturating media outlets. Due to the extensive coverage, people around the globe lived through the events of 9/11, processing and explaining what had happened according to their own experiences and knowledge of the world.

For people with a history of trauma, the attacks could have particularly dire consequences, as they were prone to 'sense similar uncanny knowledge about what was happening' (Kacanades 2003: 169). One such group was Holocaust survivors, for some of whom the attacks triggered old fears stemming from this past of persecution. Based on his work with survivors, Dori Laub, a professor of clinical psychiatry, reports that various individuals suffered from retraumatization, in certain cases so extreme that it called for hospitalization (2003: 206). Laub repudiates any equation of the Holocaust with 9/11, but maintains that there is a resemblance between the two events: both were unimaginable, traumatic, and thus lacked a narrative. These similarities explain the impact the attacks had on some concentration camp survivors, even decades after their liberation.

Likewise, their children, the indirect, secondary witnesses of familial Holocaust survival, who now became the direct, primary witnesses of traumatic, world-changing events, speak about the attacks in ways that are influenced by their background. In its enormity, 9/11 echoed the events that ruled the parents' lives, shaped the life experiences of the Second Generation and created, as this study has shown, a need for memory work that is more intense than in other family situations.

Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* is the best-known example of a Second Generation author's examining 9/11. The ten-piece cartoon series was published in 2002–03 in the German weekly *Die Zeit* and subsequently reissued as a book in 2004, still using the original broadsheet format. Its introductory words can be read as an epigraph to all the material included in this chapter:

Before 9/11 my traumas were all more or less self-inflicted, but outrunning the toxic cloud that had moments before been the north tower of the World Trade Center left me reeling on that faultline where World History and Personal History collide – the intersection my parents, Auschwitz survivors, had warned me about when they taught me to always keep my bags packed. (2004: i)

Spiegelman's cover image, a black-on-black depiction of the missing towers, has become a symbol of the attacks, and his work has also brought 9/11 as experienced by the children of Holocaust survivors into the public eye. For the artist, the attacks represent 'the faultline where World History and Personal History collide', a danger point central to the life lessons that survivor parents taught their children, which had hitherto been purely abstract. Now, through knowledge gained from direct experience, the void of the previously unimaginable danger point became concrete and comprehensible, even though historical specificity differentiates the generational experiences.

A major concern for Spiegelman is the question of how to write about and bear witness to the attacks. The self-reflexive attention to the act of writing after 9/11 echoes the discussions surrounding artistic representation in the wake of the Holocaust. Thane Rosenbaum similarly contemplates the impact of disaster on ethics, art, and aesthetics. Almost like a Second Generation reflex, he interprets the current events through the intertext of family memory and, drawing on discussions about art after the Holocaust, calls for an initial silence as the appropriate artistic response to the large-scale murder and destruction of the attacks. He knows 'a comparison with the Holocaust, and genocide, is ludicrous on any scale' but 'what happened on that day may be the country's single greatest tragedy' and needs to be worked through (2004: 129).

For Spiegelman, as a comic artist, the attacks were the motivation for creating a new 'comix'. This format is inextricably associated with *Maus*, his chronicle of the Holocaust as family memory, which combines different medial forms, such as drawings and photographs, and is produced in the service of memory work. Going back to it was a natural

choice for the artist. As he asserts, 'after all, disaster is my muse' (1). The ethical imperative to remember, echoing the Biblical commandment of *zakhor* that underlies all Second Generation texts, was the driving force behind the creation of *In the Shadow of No Towers*: 'The unstated epiphany that underlies all the pages is only implied: I made a vow that morning to return to making comix full-time' (1). However, Spiegelman's 9/11 project goes beyond witnessing and documenting: he explicitly charges the Bush administration with exploiting the events for its own purposes. As a result, *In the Shadow of No Towers* is a partisan text with a clear political message suffused with the ethical lessons drawn from Spiegelman's family past (cf. Versluys 2006: 991ff). What we see here, as in much of Second Generation memory work, is a distinct network of memory – cultural, familial, personal – which is brought together in the concentration point of 9/11.

Several other Second Generation authors, such as Lily Brett, Lev Raphael, and Sonia Pilcer, have also turned their attention to 9/11. The sheer number of texts dealing with the event positions it as an important issue in the corpus, especially since they all exhibit a tendency to connect the attacks to the Holocaust and World War II. Although in this case the children of survivors are participants in *lived history* – admittedly mediated, for the most part, but as a media event its impact feels personal – rather than the recipients of transmitted memory, family memory provides the explanations through which the attacks are decoded and remediated: even here, memory work is active. But in a situation of experiential learning, memory work functions differently: it becomes a predominantly interpretive rather than an investigative method, with experience (rather than narratives, objects, documents, or other embodiments of the past) filling absences in knowledge.

The 9/11 texts are meditations on a blurring of boundaries between past and present: faced with an event that is, at least initially, experienced as this generation's historical rupture, the temporal layering or linking so central to Second Generation experience is reinforced. This can take the form of an articulation of the lifelong awareness of looming danger, with heuristic value then drawn from such a reaction. Furthermore, a sense of historical repetition pervades the material, although always with the caveat that 9/11 and the Holocaust are not equivalent.

In 'History as Social Memory', the historian Peter Burke theorizes about the human tendency to explain the present, and especially its challenges, by trying to find a 'fit' – that is, a historical analogy. He argues that we do this to integrate new experiences into known frameworks, since history seems to provide coherent patterns (1989). After

9/11, one of the most frequently employed analogies was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Its unprovoked, unexpected nature might make Pearl Harbor objectively a better comparison in US history; however, as the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel has shown, historical comparisons are primarily drawn from the mnemonic groups to which one is most closely connected, such as family or nation (2003: 48–52). Throughout his work on Jewish studies, David Roskies has identified a tendency to interpret every new disaster in the context of ‘a continuum of Jewish history’ (1999: 3). Each new catastrophe the Jewish people have suffered recalls earlier suffering, for example, the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. In the case of the children of Holocaust survivors, their initial inclination is to link this new breakdown in safety and certainty to the catastrophe of their parents’ era.

The reactive linking of contemporary dangers with the memory of the Holocaust is not uncommon in the writings of the Second Generation. The first programmatic text by a writer from this group, Lucy Steinitz’s ‘Personal Foreword’ to the 1975 anthology *Living After the Holocaust*, connects current threats at the time with the past of the Holocaust family: ‘When we read reports of the atomic bomb, impoverished Jewish communities in Russia, the Middle East, or New York, or of the threat of Israel’s annihilation, our memories slip back thirty years. Psychologically, the trauma of the Holocaust continues’ (1975: iii). Every danger is connected to the Holocaust, even when it does not necessarily present a personal danger. Any threat against *clal israel*, the whole of the Jewish people, or even against humanity at large has the same effect. In the case of 9/11 texts, the peril to Jews is mentioned only marginally in the discussion of a suspected increase in anti-Semitism. The main issue is the peril of ‘global terrorism’, which threatens much larger collectives.

Michael Rutschky, an expert on literary studies and sociology, contemplates paradigms of experiential layering, using the traditional substrata of the novel to examine how people structure their life stories. One of these paradigms is the ‘historical novel’, a genre that returns to and resurrects past narratives to provide validation in the present. Rutschky notes that it is often a heroic past, such as the past of the knight or the revolutionary, that provides a pattern for interpretation: ‘As a lived experience, the historical novel subjects its material to the principle of seniority; a certain standing in the present originates from a standing in the past’ (*Der historische Roman als ein gelebter, unterwirft seinen Stoff dem Anciennitätsprinzip; Geltung in der Gegenwart entsteht, weil in der Vergangenheit Geltung da war*) (1998: 81). In the case of the children of

survivors who recognize their parents' past in the present, the past is not heroic, but rather a past of collective suffering. Due to this history, trauma and transmitted memories of suffering are an ingrained feature of their family life, with 9/11 – as part of the generational memory of the children of survivors – becoming the latest chapter in their historical novel.

### **A connected experience of danger**

As described in several of the previous chapters, the traumatic events of the past often created a deep-seated fear in the survivors that bled into their post-Holocaust family life and parenting. Impending danger was always assumed, taught as a life message to their children, and the seeming safety of normality was viewed as only a thin veneer that could crack at any given moment.

Hendrik Hartog, a professor of law and social history, struggled with this familial legacy, his experience of 9/11, and his professional understanding of history in a *New York Times* op-ed entitled 'The Cataclysmic in Everyday Life'. As the son of survivors, Hartog's childhood was permeated with the message that safety was nothing but 'an accident of the moment, likely to disappear in a flash. A life without traumas and cataclysms was not something to which one felt entitled, even if, as was certainly the case for me, a childhood occurred without major traumas or cataclysms' (2001: 19). Hartog feels this even though he knows that no absolute change in world history has taken place: 'my trained historian self rears up against the journalistic desire to mark with habitual regularity historical and metahistorical transitions and discontinuities' (19). However, this piece was published in the direct aftermath of the attacks, less than three weeks after 9/11. At that point, no matter how strong the professional convictions of the historian were, it was the lessons learned as the child of Holocaust survivors that truly informed his reaction.

Hartog emphasizes that this affective reaction, which connects and correlates the two dissimilar events, is not a rational response: 'as we sit here one week later, the lessons my parents unwittingly taught me return. Life can change in a moment, as it did for them in the 1940s. [...] Usually I think apocalyptic thinking like that is grandiose and wrong. And my public, rational self thinks so now. But I live with the knowledge of my parents' experience' (19). He does not claim any similarity to the events of the 1940s. But still, even as his 'public, rational self' struggles against this reaction, Hartog cannot help but follow the memory work



instinct to create links. There is no escaping the predominant influence of family memory on his subconscious interpretation of current events: to the child of survivors, life is intrinsically precarious.

In a similar vein, throughout her oeuvre, Lily Brett refers to the sense of an 'omnipresent threat' (2002: 15) that she understands as transmitted in the survivor family. Fear is a fundamental part of Brett's Second Generation identity: 'The ability of universes to alter with little or no warning is something I grew up with. Something I am inextricably linked to. Something I can't let go of. Something I can't just will away. It is part of the past. I am connected and tied to this past. It is a past that is part of my present. And always has been' (342–43). Here, Brett articulates her lifelong knowledge that the world is unsafe and prone to sudden transformations. The past from which she learned this lesson and to which she is 'connected and tied' is not her own, but that of her parents' survival: Holocaust memory has saturated her family life, and Brett portrays it as deeply ingrained in her consciousness.

In 'The Attack', an essay included in her collection of life writing pieces *Between Mexico and Poland*, Brett explores how this threat is suddenly no longer her own:

There is a new sensitivity in the city. A new sense of the fragility of what is around us. A new appreciation. A new understanding that universes can crack and alter, overnight. Your own universe. And other people's. This understanding is something I grew up with. (2003: 342–43).

Brett identifies the realization that safety is an illusion as the primary result of the attacks. All over New York, this long-term resident of the city can see that 9/11 has caused a fundamental disruption of faith in personal safety, one of the most important parts of the Western perception of life. Brett views this belief that safety is illusory as a characteristic of the survivor family. For her parents and their peers, the moment of disillusionment was September 1, 1939 – the beginning of the war, the beginning of the end for Polish Jewry, and the beginning of her parents' odyssey through the camps: 'My parents' universe came to an abrupt halt. Overnight. Overnight the future changed. Spun on its axis. It cracked and fractured. Germany invaded Poland. Everything changed for my mother and father. And for millions of others' (342–43).

Such historical paralleling is abundant in texts that deal with 9/11. In *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, Eva

Hoffman discusses this as a specifically Second Generation reaction to the attacks:

It would be self-indulgent in the extreme to think that children of the war were especially affected by September 11; but we undoubtedly have our associations. It seems that what I feared most, or felt most closely in the violence and passionate agitations of that moment, was the crumbling of a protective, shared rationality – of that ‘vener of civilization’ which my parents and others like them had found to be so thin – and the uncovering of that irrational universe which had roiled so darkly in my childish mind. (2004: 240)

Although Hoffman was not in New York or Washington during the attacks, the media coverage meant that the event was experienced in real time across the world. One of the reasons underlying her conviction that the world had undergone a shattering catastrophe is exactly this: the ‘witnessing of catastrophe *in medias res*’ (238). Even the secondary witnessing of the broadcasted violent deaths of thousands makes the experience personal, signifying that it can only be interpreted through the lens of previous knowledge. Here, memory work is presented as an interpretive tool. Hoffman’s mediated experience is saturated by family memory:

For me, as I turned on the television that afternoon in my London flat and stared at the inexplicable images of airplanes crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, nothing except the date of my confusion was clear: September 1, 1939. That was my point of reference for global terror, for the overturning of the world. For the War. Here, I thought, it was. A childhood expectation confirmed. In some shadowy way, I felt well prepared. (237)

The ‘inexplicable images’ Hoffman sees are immediately framed by family life lessons: they are a ‘childhood expectation confirmed’. The linking of her parents’ experiences to contemporary ‘global terror’ reveals her innate and now actualized childhood knowledge of constant peril, in a reaction analogous to that of Hartog and Brett. The only way Hoffman’s socialization as the child of survivors allows her to explain what is happening is through a correlation to the German attack on Poland and the beginning of the Second World War.

In an effort to attain some clarity with regard to the historical events that might provide a parallel, Hoffman contemplates several of the milestones in her parents' experiences. In retrospect, having considered the beginning of the war, the November pogroms of 1938 known as Kristallnacht, and Adolf Hitler's election in 1933, she realizes that none provide an appropriate comparative event for September 11, 2001. Ultimately, Hoffmann acknowledges that her initial reaction had its origins in the overtly present past so defining for the Second Generation situation, and was not an accurate interpretation of the facts of twenty-first century terrorism. She therefore insists that analogies should be avoided. Notwithstanding this conviction, the author recognizes that family history shapes and guides how she experiences current events. The Second Generation daughter cannot help but see links to the past as she lives through the present moment.

### **Understanding a reaction: experiential knowledge**

The above excerpts provided examples of Second Generation reactions to 9/11; however, as has been described throughout this book, memory work is an ongoing process, changing over time and allowing new conclusions to be drawn based on personal growth and increasing knowledge. In the case of this chapter, where personal experience comes to the fore, the knowledge required to fill in voids in the parents' story is extracted from the author's experience of the attacks.

One of these voids concerns the backshadowing reaction – to once again apply the concept of literary scholar Michael Bernstein, which came up in the 'Bodies' chapter – that questions why the Jews of Europe did not realize that Nazi Germany was planning their genocide. For Raphael, his own reaction, that is, his mind's refusal to believe an event that was too shocking to assimilate despite witnessing it, finally allows him to understand the survivors: 'In memoir after memoir, report after report, one hears of Jews who were trapped in ghettos or in hiding saying, "It can't be true. It's not possible". People didn't behave like that. Germans couldn't behave like that – they were so civilized, so cultured. My parents were among those who doubted the truth; it was simply too grotesque' (2006: 22). Raphael, from his backshadowing perspective (he knows what is about to happen to his parents), could never understand why they did not realize the danger.

However, when he watches the live images of the second plane hitting the World Trade Centre and the collapse of the towers, he finds it 'simply too grotesque' to assimilate: 'I quite literally couldn't believe

what I was seeing' (22). Here, experiential knowledge – the repetition of his parents' disbelief of reality – offers an explanation: 'Only later did I realize that despite the evidence of my eyes, my stepson's alarm, and the reports from commentators on the scene, I had immediately sought a less painful truth' (23). This new disaster experienced by both father and son finally enables Raphael to understand his parents:

Feeling the shock, feeling the sense of violation, terror, but particularly the disbelief that has hit New Yorkers and the country as a whole, it is only now, some fifty-odd years after my parents arrived in this free country, that I have a real inkling of what it must have felt to say during the Holocaust, 'This can't be happening. It's not possible'. I feel closer to what my parents went through, in a strange and horrible way. (23)

The shared experience thus not only facilitates a sudden understanding but also reinforces the close connection Raphael has with his parents. This closeness is demonstrated throughout the text, he even includes his father's words in direct quotes.

The elder Raphael, who had lived through Bergen-Belsen, was not far from Ground Zero when the planes hit, and once again he barely survived. He has no words for this renewed experience of mortal danger: "'Don't ask", he said. "It was like the war. The explosions – "' (23). The mention of the war and the pregnant silence of the unfinished sentence imply a reexperiencing of the Holocaust past, supplying the context for his son's linking of the events in today's United States with the horrors of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. However, this silence also illustrates the communicative conditions in this survivor family. As discussed, for instance, in the chapters on 'Names' and 'Bodies', Raphael's work attests to the overpowering, yet nonverbal presence of the past in both his own family and those of his protagonists. Now, experiences rather than family narratives provide a response to the unanswered questions of Second Generation memory work.

In her dissertation-cum-Second Generation-memoir, the literary scholar Susan Jacobowitz also addresses the effects of 9/11, relating reactions that are similar to Raphael's. She could never understand her father's description of an event as so horrific that it defied comprehension until she contemplated her own response to 9/11:

My caveat is that, as I watched the events of September 11th, 2001, unfold on my television, it took me several hours before I could

understand that the planes the terrorists had hijacked had passengers on them. Even though it was mentioned, I was confused and kept imagining that empty planes had been stolen off of runways. I could not comprehend the horrific slaughter of random, innocent travelers, of entire families. Only later did I make the connection and realize that this, then, was what my father had been talking about – something so horrible that, even as it had been made clear, it was still on some level just incomprehensible. (2004: 3–4, n.1)

For both Raphael and Jacobowitz, by means of a life-shattering event, destruction suddenly becomes personal, and their reactions mirror their parents' stories in previously incomprehensible ways. At this point, their memory work is enriched by the experiences of the present, and their interpretation of the past changes as transmitted memory is enhanced by embodied personal memory as 9/11 acts as a connective node.

### A generation of anti-Semitism?

In the period directly following the attacks, a rise in anti-Semitism – often in the guise of anti-Zionism – and the fact that such views were publicly voiced are noted in several of the Second Generation texts. This observation suggests another historical analogy. Jonathan Rosen's 'The Uncomfortable Question of Anti-Semitism: Waking Up to My Father's World', which appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* less than two months after the attacks, opens with a description of Rosen's survivor father, who obsessively listened to the news all throughout his life, waiting for a new catastrophe to strike. His son identifies this behavior as a residue of the traumatic past. Unlike his father, the American-born Rosen had always believed in their safety and in the fact that anti-Semitic thought was a thing of the past. In the wake of 9/11, however, he suddenly became conscious of and personally affected by anti-Semitism. Now, the family narrative of personal danger and persecution, his 'father's world', became active for Rosen:

But in recent weeks I have been reminded, in ways too plentiful to ignore, about the role Jews play in the fantasy life of the world. Jews were not the cause of World War II, but they were at the metaphysical center of the conflict nonetheless, since the Holocaust was part of Hitler's agenda and a key motivation of his campaign. Jews are not the cause of World War III, if that's what we are facing, but they have been placed at the center of it in mysterious and disturbing ways. (2001: 48)

In his essay, Rosen touches on observations that indicate a global revival of anti-Semitism; however, his analysis of the genocidal threat faced by European Jews in the 1930s becomes problematic when he employs it as a historical parallel to the situation after 9/11 in the United States, as this implies that anti-Semitism was a primary factor in the attacks. Anti-Semitic and anti-Israel statements had indeed become more common by late 2001, but this was not a resurgence of the Nazi's genocidal agenda. Rosen's argument should therefore be read as the resurfacing of internalized historical fears caused by transmitted family memory rather than a historically sound interpretation of the situation, a reaction probably due in part to the timing of the article when emotions were still running high.

However, Rosen's response can also be interpreted as Zygmunt Bauman's 'hereditary victimhood' stance. In 'The Holocaust's Life as a Ghost', the sociologist calls attention to the dangers involved when Jews are dominated by the memory of the Holocaust, arguing that this can lead to the adoption of a nonpersonal victimhood position that may cause any event to be interpreted as a potential threat:

For Jews especially, living in a world contaminated with the possibility of a holocaust rebounds time and again fear and horror. To many the world appears suspect at the core; no worldly event is truly neutral – each event is burdened with sinister undertones, each contains an ominous message that can be overlooked or downplayed only to the Jew's own peril. (1998: 33)

Through the processes of collective memory, anyone can take on the imagined status of a hereditary victim. This argument is comparable to Richard Crownshaw's warnings about the contemporary emphasis on the vicarious experience of traumatic events. The literary and memory studies scholar asserts that we need to 'hold onto a more nuanced and gradated sense of trauma and historical affect, particularly in the face of a confluence of histories not necessarily our own, being aware of our possible implications in transferential relations but also knowing the limits of our affective and experiential participation in memory after the Holocaust' (2010: 246).

*Memory Work: The Second Generation* has shown that the ghosts of the Holocaust – for example, in the form of transmitted fears of persecution – are particularly alive for the children of survivors. Learning to live with these uneasy spirits is part of the purpose of memory work. With regard to the transferential case of Rosen, who invoked his father's fears and made them his own in the wake of 9/11, he was evidently

among those who 'draw a sense-giving reassurance from every sign of hostility toward them; and they are eager to interpret every move of those around them as an overt or latent expression of such hostility' (Bauman 1998: 37).

In 'The Uncomfortable Question of Anti-Semitism: Waking Up to my Father's World', family memory and lived history merge, resulting in an overreaction rather than a clarification. The early publication date, less than two months after the attacks, allows a similar interpretation as in Hartog's case: the experience is still too raw, not fully assimilated, and therefore not yet a true step in experiential learning. Leaving aside these complex and problematic issues, Rosen's essay must be acknowledged as one of the earliest and most important catalysts initiating the necessary public discussion of the new 'dinner-table anti-Semitism' in the Western world.

Spiegelman also contemplates the toxic link between 9/11 and anti-Semitic thought. In the introduction to *In the Shadow of No Towers*, he describes how televised anti-Semitic comments caused him to curb his own whirlwind conspiracy theories involving the Bush administration: 'Only when I heard paranoid Arab Americans blaming it all on the Jews did I reel back in, deciding it wasn't essential to know precisely how much my "leaders" knew about the hijackings in advance – it was sufficient that they immediately instrumentalized the attack for their own agenda' (2004: 1). Later in the text, Spiegelman visually references the pervasiveness of anti-Semitic fantasies in the public domain, portraying himself watching a news report on CNN in which an Arab-American spokesman reiterates the rumor that there were no Jews in the World Trade Center during the attacks (10).

The rising specter of anti-Semitism is also the theme of the sixth plate of *In the Shadow of No Towers*, which depicts a homeless woman who spends her life cursing on the streets of Spiegelman's neighborhood. The caption accompanying the image of the 'Crazy Lady' reads 'I eventually realized she was hurling anti-Semitic epithets at me in Russian' (6). On the day of the attacks, however, things progressed: 'her inner demons had broken loose and taken over our shared reality' (6). Spiegelman draws this scene as an apocalyptic version of New York, using imagery suggestive of Hieronymus Bosch. Now, the anti-Semitic abuse is no longer secretive or cloaked in Russian; it is fully out in the open as she suddenly speaks in English: "'You damn kikes – **You** did it" "**Dirty Jew!** We'll hang you from the lampposts, **one by one!**" "**You hear me Jew? One by one!**"' (6). Spiegelman yells back at her but also visualizes the impact of the accusation, which is an articulation of what his parents

suffered in Europe. The left side of the page shows a large-scale vertical panel of him falling from one of the Twin Towers, with the caption linking current and past events: 'He keeps falling through the holes in his head, though he no longer knows which holes were made by Arab terrorists way back in 2001, and which ones were **always** there' (6). The temporal levels conflate at the moment when the attacks are combined with the abuse. Spiegelman cannot help but read the situation through a filter of family memory. In effect, he lives in a network of memory. Once again, we see experiential learning at work: the fall into nothingness is a powerful visualization of the reaction he cannot yet rationalize.

In the above-mentioned essay 'The Attack', Lily Brett also touches on anti-Semitic rhetoric, which has also become stronger since 9/11. Brett witnesses it in a setting in which she would never have expected such an outburst to occur: 'a middle-class gathering in the West Village' (2003: 300). This time, the accuser is neither a partisan spokesperson spouting conspiracy theories on a television show nor a crazed homeless woman, but instead a young, well-educated New Yorker who, like 'a crude and perverted cardboard cut-out' (299), fervently proclaims that the cause of the attacks on the United States was the government's support of Israel's policies against the Palestinians. But then, she proclaims that Israel was the true reason behind 9/11. To counter these accusatory comments, Brett draws on her own family's suffering: "'Hatred of one another is a terrible thing", I say quietly. "I grew up with the aftermath of what happens when hatred spreads. My mother and father were in Nazi death camps", I add. But I can't say any more' (303). Brett's attempt to raise awareness of the contemporary hatred against Jews through the story of her parents' survival does not end the accusation that Israel caused 9/11. The woman sees no connection. However, Brett's broaching the subject of her family's Holocaust history prompts another Jewish guest to call attention to and oppose the openly anti-Semitic diatribe.

### **Embodied experiential knowledge**

The fact that 9/11 was so intensively televised and remediated in many formats made it a global media event; indeed, this seemingly enabled an eyewitness experience for a worldwide audience. However, witnessing also includes other senses of the body, such as hearing and smelling. Concentration camp survivors speaking about 9/11 have recounted their instant olfactory recognition of the smell of burning human bodies.



An example is Jorge Semprun's speech on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp on May 10, 2005. Semprun, a survivor, writer, and former Spanish minister of culture, made an explicit connection between the crematoria of the Nazis and the burning bodies of 9/11, invoking a memory of the senses that is specific to the eyewitness generation and will disappear with their passing:

No one will have a memory sensitive to the smell of the ovens of the crematoria – this smell that saturates and perhaps stimulates recollections, this smell that beyond any doubt represents the specific nature, the uniqueness of the memory of the extermination camps. No one will be able to explain to the inhabitants of New York that this loathsome odor that spread from the Twin Towers over entire neighborhoods after the attacks of September 11 was exactly that of the Nazi crematoria.

*(Niemand wird mehr in seinem sensitiven Gedächtnis den Geruch aus den Verbrennungsöfen der Krematorien haben, diesen Geruch, der die Erinnerung imprägniert und vielleicht anreizt, diesen Geruch, der ohne Zweifel das ganz Spezifische, das Einzigartige der Erinnerung an die Vernichtungslager ausmacht. Niemand wird den Bewohnern von New York erklären können, dass der ekelhafte Geruch, der sich nach den Attentaten vom 11. September von den Zwillingstürmen über das ganze Stadtviertel verbreitete, genau jener der Krematoriumsöfen der Nazis war).* (Semprun 2005)

For some of the Second Generation authors, the olfactory aspect of 9/11 – the smell of burning bodies – evoked their parents' embodied memory of the Nazi crematoria. Once again, a historical analogy comes into play, but more significantly memory work now takes the form of embodied experience. In her poem 'After Math' (published on November 9, 2001, in an issue of the *Jewish Daily Forward* dedicated to Jewish writers' responses to the attacks), Sonia Pilcer implies connections between the Holocaust and 9/11, among them the olfactory aspect of burning bodies:

People who were 'there'  
talk about the smell.  
How the wind blew  
dust in their hair  
coated their throats.  
Motes of DNA floating in the air.

This is not the Big H  
 though there's an echo.  
 Large scale murder,  
 the randomness of the dying  
 and we who are left  
 to carry on.

I go to Ground Zero  
 need to taste, smell it, photograph  
 the steel skeleton of a lost civilization.  
 Like survivors go back to Auschwitz  
 climb into the ovens  
 collect ashes  
 to bury those with no graves (2001c)

The opening words, 'Once again', introduce the poem as a work of repeated history – the opposite of the 'Never Again' of public Holocaust memory. At the end of the first stanza, an icon of Nazi atrocity, the crematorium, is evoked in 'thousands incinerated'. In the second stanza, the echo of the original event becomes all the more obvious to readers who live with the Holocaust as a vivid historical reference: the word 'there' in this specific usage refers to more than the events of that day in September 2001. In survivor testimonies, it is a recurrent code for the concentration camps. In the third stanza, the connection is then made explicit with the use of the term 'Big H', which Pilcer frequently employs as shorthand for the Holocaust. However, there is no claim of equivalence between the two events. 9/11 merely carries an 'echo' of the Holocaust. In light of these layers of meaning, particularly the use of the word 'there', the smell of burning bodies and the human particles in the air also have a double referent – the concentration camps and Ground Zero. The smell, an overwhelming attack on the senses described by both camp survivors and the direct witnesses of 9/11, lingers in New York. The post-9/11 air of the city is thus Holocaust memory become experience. For Pilcer, as the daughter of survivors, this olfactory connection between the two historical events is an inescapable fact, and she cannot but visit the site. Her need to sensually experience and scientifically document highlights her longing for understanding and memory work, even in the course of the most shocking event in her own lifetime.

Pilcer's shifts between the two events guide her pronoun usage. At the beginning, she evokes a collective, a 'we' that is despised and

endangered. In the third stanza, the 'we' reappears, but it does not represent the American people and the Western World that the first stanza referenced. Now, the 'we' refers to everyone who was not a victim of the attacks and therefore survived. In this concept of 'survivor', Pilcer includes even those whose lives were not endangered. The oscillating 'we' limits and specifies a personal experience. Thus 9/11 is an exclusive location of explaining and defining identities. However, it also integrates widening concentric circles of the collectives that felt the impact of the events, much like the reverberations of the Holocaust for those born after the fact. Only the last stanza introduces the first person, and with it comes an insistence on memory work in a final explicit paralleling of the experiences of survival with the use of the words 'ovens' and 'Auschwitz'. Once again, a network of memory is exemplified when a Second Generation author connects events, times, and places.

The compulsion to return to the primary wound is explained as a deep human need to revisit the place that has left a traumatic residue. The author's visit to Ground Zero, much like excursions to the physical sites of the events of the Holocaust, is also a form of 'dark tourism', the visits to sites of disaster and suffering that are related to 'return' journeys. Only acts of documentation and remembrance are possible in an 'After Math': collecting ashes and trying to bury those who stayed 'there' without graves. But Ground Zero is not only a location of suffering and destruction but it also represents the impermanence of lived-in places, comparable to the lost communities of European Jewry. This is made explicit with Pilcer's invocation of a 'lost civilization', a term that much more aptly describes prewar Jewish Europe than the World Trade Center. The places of localized family continuity – homes, synagogues, and other locations – have been shattered and lost. The only possibility to recreate them is through memory work, either by means of transmitted narratives or actual 'return' journeys. Memorials at Holocaust sites carry traces of the events that took place there, but the destruction of 9/11 is much more recent and tangible; consequently, the memory work impulse motivates Pilcer to visit the site of the attacks. At Ground Zero, the direct aftermath of destruction can be experienced through the body and its senses, even as one pays respect to the victims.

Art Spiegelman also refers explicitly to the link between the two man-made disasters through smell. For the artist, being in New York on 9/11 was a moment of experiential learning, breathing in the air of his city revealed a link to his parents' past. On the third page of *In the Shadow of No Towers*, Spiegelman portrays himself and his wife, Françoise, running to their daughter's school right after the first plane hit. The school was

close to the World Trade Center, and they did not yet know whether Nadia was still alive.

At this point in his treatment of 9/11, Spiegelman draws himself as a mouse, the animal previously used to portray his father's Holocaust experience, thus conjuring up the image of the persecuted Jew who is nowhere and never safe. In *In the Shadow of No Towers*, however, the mouse is a less specific referent. It now stands for all those who are in lethal danger, and the animal reappears in that usage throughout the book. Thus, the concept of the victim-survivor is opened up beyond the Jewish experience and the setting of the Holocaust to include others. Here, allegiances are widened and potentially even globalized, not unlike Pilcer's concentric uses of 'we'.

Inserted into the frames depicting Spiegelman and his wife rushing to find their daughter is a series of smaller panels of the artist as the protagonist, retrospectively contemplating the smell of New York in relation to the stench of the crematoria:

I remember my father trying to describe what the smoke in Auschwitz smelled like...The closest he got was telling me that it was... 'indescribable'... That's exactly what the air in Lower Manhattan smelled like after Sept. 11! [...] Asbestos, PCB, Lead, dioxins, and body parts... Lower Manhattan's air is a witch brew that makes Love Canal seem like a health spa. (2004: 3)

In this passage, Spiegelman compares his father's olfactory experience to his own. Vladek, who is rarely short of words in *Maus*, never succeeded in describing the smell of the burning bodies. Now, his son makes the same linguistic choice: 'indescribable'. Spiegelman can only explain the smell of post-9/11 New York through reference to the toxic waste dump in the Love Canal district of Niagara Falls, New York, which caused a scandal and also the first awakenings of environmental consciousness in the 1970s. But Love Canal was a 'health spa' compared to what Spiegelman has no words to describe. However, through his bodily experience of the destruction of 9/11, he comes to understand what his father had never managed to express in words. An embodied memory of the survivor father is thus evoked in the next generation by a different event. This memory is not transmitted. Unlike the body metaphors used by some authors to illustrate transgenerational transmission, it can be grasped through bodily experience.

Brett did not initially connect the smell of post-9/11 New York to burning bodies; her olfactory recognition was shaped by vivid personal

memories of burning buildings. A fire had recently destroyed her family's loft, an experience she explores at length in the essay 'The Fire', which is also part of *Between Mexico and Poland*. Her embodied memory of this period focuses her on the recent rather than the family past. In her oeuvre, Brett frames the Second Generation as driven by memory work in every situation, so it is surprising even to herself that she does not immediately link her current New York experience to her postmemorial imagination of the crematoria. The author describes how, at the same dinner party at which she experienced the anti-Semitic tirade, the subject of the smell pervading New York became the topic of conversation. A young Indian man compared the smell of burning bodies at the World Trade Center site to the smell of electric crematoria in India:

The conversation has stopped me in my tracks. I can't speak. All my life I have been haunted by the thought of the smell of bodies burning. Of burning flesh. I've written about the smell of my mother's bones burning, in Auschwitz. I have read about the smell caused by bodies burning. I have thought about the smell. I have dreaded the smell. I have never smelt it. I want to ask him about the smell. I want to ask him if he was sure he could smell it. (2003: 296)

In her specific style, with the frequent repetition of the words 'I' and 'smell', Brett emphasizes how haunted she had always felt by the smell of burning bodies, a smell she did not recognize when she finally experienced it.

The image of 'burning flesh' exemplifies the Holocaust experience for Brett, and instances of it abound in her writing. For example, in *Too Many Men*, the protagonist Ruth Rothwax cannot help but imagine the smell of her family burning when she visits Auschwitz (2002: 13). Understood as a palimpsest of memory, the stench becomes physical in her fantastic encounters with the ghost of Rudolf Höss, the camp commandant. Even as a ghost, Höss cannot rid himself of that smell, and for Second Generation Ruth, the explanation is self-evident: "'It must have seeped into your soul'", Ruth said. "Burning flesh can do that'" (469). However, despite Brett's writing about and contemplation of 'burning flesh', in post-9/11 New York, she only registers her own embodied memories of the burning loft. But meeting someone knowledgeable about the smell that had always preoccupied her postmemorial imagination is a revelation. Only after speaking to the young Indian does Brett link the two events through smell, and she longs for a deeper understanding of it. Apparently, her memory work had previously failed in this regard, either

because she was unable to ask or because the survivors were unable to explain, as in Spiegelman's case. Only the experiential situation makes memory work possible, and once again, it shows itself as a process. But here as well, she is prevented from asking questions. Inquiring at length about the smell of burning bodies is presumably not an appropriate thing to do at a dinner party.

As in other examples discussed in this chapter, Brett also opens the scope of her memory work to include more than the Jewish experience in relation to the Holocaust. The smell of Indian crematories has an entirely different, non-Western context. In addition, the smell of burning bodies is no longer purely a marker of genocide. Overall, despite certain attempts at historical analogizing, the integration and interrogation of 9/11 in the canon of Second Generation writing demonstrates a willingness to reflect on and link the Second Generation experience to wider contexts. The attacks are not interpreted within ethnic boundaries, nor are they considered an exclusively American subject. As a global media event, 9/11 was a much wider experience, and Second Generation memory work acknowledges this fact rather than creating exclusionary associations only with the Holocaust.

### **The attacks of 9/11 in Second Generation memory work**

In his address to a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, announcing the 'war on terror', President George W. Bush (2001) spoke about the attacks against the United States. He called the perpetrators 'the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions – by abandoning every value except the will to power – they follow in the path of fascism and Nazism and totalitarianism'. Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, as the symbols of absolute evil in Western public discourse, are powerful arguments in any discussion. In this 'war on terror' rhetoric, the National Socialists and other totalitarian ideologies become the precursors to the rise of 'global terrorism', an argument that reveals helplessness, a search for explanations, and an attempt to find supporters of a war in the wake of 9/11. In this historical analogy, the past is instrumentalized for political reasons.

In the case of survivor families, however, the memory of the Nazi genocide is not theorized: it is personal, a family memory, and it has a significant influence on subsequent life experiences, even for the next generation. The 9/11 attacks might have triggered an eruption of memories or even retraumatization for the survivors, but for their children,

the prominence of Holocaust family memory resulted in an inclination to remediate the present through a past they did not personally experience.

As contemporary events become a central issue in Second Generation writing, the texts are transformed into a record of how life is lived under the influence of the Holocaust as family memory and of how the moment is lived through this prism. Especially in texts published only days or weeks after the attacks, in which immediate reactions shine through, writers describe their sudden comprehension of events in the parents' past. Their memory work is helped along by contemporary history, as previously inconceivable parts of the parental story become intelligible through experience.

In these narratives, which contemplate personal experience in connection with world and family history, the Holocaust is intensely present as a mediated memory, providing the paradigm and the historical analogies for the interpretation of the contemporary catastrophe. With historical parallels, we generally seek to explain a current event through a past one; however, in this specific case, the current event – which is so significant and shocking – provides an opportunity to fill in absences in memory for which the fragmented narratives of the past are insufficient. Experiential knowledge provides a new facet of memory work, an unintentional element that can either function intellectually (in facilitating the understanding of a reaction) or as an embodied experience.

In this instance, the present experience or the contemporary bodily existence (which in other cases has provided a confirmation of a Second Generation identity) now also connects the events to a wider community of experience: the whole of New York City and even Indian funeral pyres offer new contextualizations of a smell hitherto only imagined and exclusively connected to the crematoria of the Nazi camps. Similarly, the pervasive sense of endangerment is not exclusive to the Jewish community, instead encompassing larger communities of experiences and memories, despite the fact that the historical analogies employed to provide explanations for the events of 9/11 are often drawn from family history. The Second Generation existence in the present is linked into a network that connects nodes of memory, but this does not necessarily imply a backward perspective. The present moment is equally significant.

*Memory Work: The Second Generation* offers an interpretation of the Second Generation oeuvre as literary explorations of the Holocaust and the pre-Holocaust family past. At first glance, 9/11 might seem to be a surprising subject within this context. However, the incorporation of

the attacks into Second Generation writings emphasize that memory work is not separated from or located outside of the present moment. In this case, the past and its narratives are never disconnected in the experience of current events, and they provide opportunities to read and understand the present moment. The prominence and recurrence of the attacks as a theme once again indicates that Second Generation writing engages in more than investigations of the past. Because the past is inextricably interconnected with and has a profound impact on the experience of the current moment, experiences in the present can fill in 'absences'; indeed, they highlight new links in family memory.



# 8

## Afterword: On Memory Work

Approaching Second Generation literature as memory work, I explored in this study how the children of Holocaust survivors delve into their families' pasts to learn about their parents' survival and about familial origins that predate the Nazi destruction of European Jewry. Using the lens of memory work has enabled me to demonstrate that, despite the distinctiveness of the experience of being born into a family of survivors, and even if it is not always possible to uncover a usable past, neither the literary corpus nor the human position are shaped by rupture, parental trauma, and truncated transmitted memory alone.

Memory work is a process that takes numerous forms and provides different outcomes depending on the subject explored, the possibilities for access into the past, and the conscious choices of the individual who commits to memory work. It fills in 'absences' as it situates the Second Generation within larger family history, emphasizing the existence of networks of memory even when some of the connections are frail, blocked, or broken. What becomes evident is that this memory work has unique characteristics and is only possible because of the proximity to the survivors. The intimate memory of the survivor family ensures that the familial Second Generation project remains distinct from other explorations of Holocaust memory.

Writing in the shadow of the Holocaust, Second Generation authors reveal themselves as driven by an urge to learn more about the past, both personal and impersonal, in the form of tangible evidence as well as distant recollections. These texts document journeys of discovery and self-discovery that are motivated by a deeply relational urge to establish connections between the self and proximate others, dead or living. As demonstrated here, Second Generation memory work is not only in the service of the individual but it also builds a chronicle of family memory and adds to the wider cultural memory of the Holocaust. The literary texts thus add a new angle to public Holocaust memory that engages with memory on a familial scale, widens the scale to pre- and postdate the Holocaust, and even pays attention to the influence of postwar migration, when a memory node is located close to and thus is in dialogue with social or national contexts.

Second Generation memory work presents as a process in which children are initially burdened by the transmitted past, but this changes when the authors voluntarily and intentionally engage with the past. Thinking back to the introduction of this book, concerning prevalent research perspectives on Second Generation writing based in trauma studies and focused on the transmission of memory, it becomes evident that such research has primarily thought about the first stage, which triggers the process of memory work. But as comedienne Deb Filler says in an interview about her art and her father-daughter 'return' journey to Poland: 'I think that before I took the trip, the fantasies were very vivid, but after the realities of seeing that the Holocaust was over and that those people weren't there anymore, I think it gave me a chance to move on and to realize that, karmically speaking, we had won. The Jews had not been extinguished from the human race as was the plan. That the rich Jewish culture and history and education and music and art exists' (1997, 5:10). This realization caused her to start working on her show of memory work in honor of those who died, those who survived, and of the continuation of Jewish life and culture after the Holocaust. This demonstrates, once again, that memory work – while it in a best-case scenario replaces a sense of historical haunting with more concrete elements of the past – is a perpetually unresolved process. It is not finished even when the literary work is produced, because then it enters into the circulation of Holocaust memory; indeed, it becomes part of wider networks of memory, and thus guarantees the life of familial memory.

This last paragraph also illustrates the double research supplement of *Memory Work: The Second Generation*, which is based both in the study of Holocaust literature and in memory studies. On the one hand, it reevaluates and brings to light a hitherto overlooked aspect of Second Generation literature by using a new research framework and drawing on interdisciplinary sources. On the other hand, it traces an exemplary case of memory work and its setting within a networked structure converging across different memory objects, across generations and times, and across smaller and larger mnemonic formations, in nodes in which memory traces are concentrated. Memory work connects, highlights, and follows the many links of the multidimensional network of memory, thus revealing which links can still be traversed and offer access to a usable past of continuity rather than destruction.

I have positioned the literary Second Generation memory work as part of much broader cultural developments. As noted in the introduction to this book, memory work is not only the purview of those born into the aftermath of the Holocaust. In fact, I would suggest that considering these texts from a 'memory work' perspective sheds new light on other phenomena of the much-discussed 'memory boom'.

The memory work impulse goes beyond the Holocaust as shows in the wave of life writing we have witnessed since the 1990s, the numerous 'return' journeys now undertaken, and – on a wider social level – the engagement of nations with their collective past, even if it is a dark rather than heroic past. This is most evident in the case of Germany, where the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, an acknowledgment of the genocide committed by the nation, has been constructed in a prominent position at the heart of the country's capital, Berlin. Memorials to other victim groups are continually being added, and public debates about them are ongoing.

These examples point to the many forms that memory work and its resulting products can take, but in recent years, with developments in modern technology, a whole new range of opportunities to engage in memory work has opened up. Among them are the possibilities of exploring genealogical connections through DNA research and, more prominently, the seemingly endless options created by the Internet's 'connectivity' to access informational resources and people worldwide. Andrew Hoskins (2011) has identified a 'connective turn' in media and society resulting from the advent of digital technologies that have caused a radical diffusion of memory. Taking this trend and my own considerations related to memory work operating within a network of memory into account, I argue that the connective turn is certainly one of the most significant factors transforming contemporary memory work, since the past now seems to be at the tips of our fingers rather than stored in dusty archives. Indeed, many people are using the Internet to explore their family past and origins, as can be seen in the enormous success of sites such as [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com) and [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org), and in the ways these sites cater to this interest.<sup>1</sup>

[familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org), a resource of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), is motivated by the conviction 'that families are meant to be central to our lives and that family relationships are intended to continue beyond this life' ([familysearch.org/about](http://familysearch.org/about), accessed January 22, 2014).<sup>2</sup> However, the website places emphasis on a perceived interest in memory work. For example, in the 'Connect Generations' project, users are encouraged to create a family tree to 'discover your place in history' ([familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org), accessed January 22, 2014). [Ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com), which unlike [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org) is a publicly traded company on NASDAQ with a 2014 revenue of \$620 million (compared to \$225 million in 2009), offers insights into the growth of family memory work. The company's social media coverage includes a smartphone app for 'meaningful discoveries about your ancestors, no matter where you are' ([ancestry.com/cs/us/](http://ancestry.com/cs/us/)

ancestry-app, accessed April 6, 2015), both responding to and reinforcing the sense of urgency and immediacy evoked by this form of memory work. Although ancestry.com was initially also motivated by the LDS focus on genealogy, the company now has some 2.7 million subscribers and operates sites around the world – from Australia to Canada with a European headquarters established in 2012 – demonstrating the global nature of the interest in genealogy extending far beyond the Mormon belief system (corporate.ancestry.com/press/company-facts/, accessed January 12, 2014).<sup>3</sup>

While these trends are outside the scope of my study, which has focused on literary texts, future research would do well to explore such cultural, social, and technological developments under the lens of memory work, as the proliferation of such sites indicates a widespread personal urge to identify oneself with and connect to larger collectives.<sup>4</sup> Second Generation memory work has revealed itself to be motivated by ‘absences’ in memory. The children of survivors were born into decimated families that were cut off from their origins by the Holocaust and by the subsequent migration to new shores. Many related questions could be asked about the current genealogy boom: What drives this phenomenon? Is our sense of safety and security deteriorating in a world of endless technological possibilities? Have the hypermobility and globalization of our times created absences in our own lives? Is the connective turn an indication of the decimation of the multigenerational family based in one location, resulting in a decreased sense of belonging and connection through the unavailability of living family memory? Whatever the causes, like any market, the laws of supply and demand govern genealogical research – that is, the interest in memory work and the development of technological tools that make it possible influence each other – but not only its motivation and formats but also the outcomes might be of interest. Is this form of family memory work only an undertaking for the self, at most leading to the creation of an online family tree or photo album, or is there more to this phenomenon?

*Memory Work: The Second Generation* has shown that the memory work of the children of survivors is focused on and triggered by a need for connectedness. Indeed, it allows us to understand how the filling in of ‘absences’ in memory also becomes part of broader cultural knowledge beyond the interests of the individual. In *Multidirectional Memory*, which explores the links between Holocaust memory and decolonization, Michael Rothberg makes an interesting argument about the ‘multidirectional’ nature of cultural memory in our day and age. He maintains that ‘the borders of memory and identity are jagged; what looks at first like

my own property often turns out to be a borrowing or adaptation from a history that initially might seem foreign or distant' (2009: 5). Rothberg asserts that collective forms of memory are productive and not bound to the zero-sum logic of memory competitions. In the significant role of relationality in Second Generation memory work, we see an ethical element at work: in the aftermath of the genocide, memory work is not an undertaking intended purely for the self as it documents survival and counteracts human and cultural losses by chronicling family memory of the pre-genocide period. But what about other forms of personal memory work? Do they involve a comparable multidirectional element whereby memories of family and one's origins circulate in a similarly productive fashion, as indicated by Rothberg for collectives?

Indeed, one question underlying any study of memory work would have to be whether it is an encouraging sign – as the 'memory boom' that ushered in the 'era of testimony' was, increasing the attention devoted to those who suffered and acknowledging the experiences of the victims – or whether it is driven solely by an interest in one's own connections and origins and in situating the self within the world. Today, when our opportunities to actively engage in and investigate memory are virtually endless, does this knowledge about our connection with others influence our interactions, or is it just another file on our computers and another post on Facebook? In the case of the Second Generation, memory work is 'productive' beyond the individual. Future research into other forms of memory work will need to explore whether they are also productive in a similar form, for instance, whether they increase understanding of families that are different from one's own and of how individual family memory work may enrich cultural interests and larger memory structures.

# Notes

## 1 Introduction *Memory Work: The Second Generation*

1. Some diverging conceptions of the term 'memory work' exist. For instance the sociologist Frigga Haug's (1982) social constructionist and feminist research method called memory-work, which is not relevant for my study. Barbara Gabriel (2004), a cultural studies scholar, uses 'memory-work' collectively to study the German national labor of memory between commemoration, suppression, and forgetting, and thus assigns a collective ethical dimension to the concept. Similarly, James Young (2000), an expert on Holocaust memorials, uses the term 'memory-work' for collective, often national memorializations of large-scale losses. Cultural sociologist Iwona Irwin-Zarecka goes even further, applying the term to any engagement with memory, whether academic, political, or personal. She thinks of it as 'the work of giving order and meaning to the past' (1994: 145), a definition that is not specific enough for my purposes. Kuhn applies memory work to her personal memories and their trajectory toward more collective visual cultural products of remembrance, such as photography and film. This is close to my material, which entails personal explorations of the past within larger frameworks. The relational aspect of learning about and documenting the lives of proximate others shows that my conception, unlike Gabriel's and Young's national considerations, touches on a smaller-scale ethical interest in the historical exploration.
2. Trauma and its transmission is also the focus of the studies of Grimwood (2007), McGlothlin (2006), and Schwab (2010). Janette Burstein views the collective trauma of the Holocaust as central to all contemporary Jewish-American literature (2005).
3. Such studies include Adelman (1995), Grünberg and Straub (2001), Kogan (1995), and Kellermann (2001a).
4. Several concepts describing the communicative silences within the Holocaust family are in circulation, among which are 'conspiracy of silence,' and 'Holocaust life secrets'. For a survey, see Grünberg (2000).
5. As a concept with a tendency toward overdetermination – that is, it lends itself to multiple memorial situations, inside and outside the family and within different historical contexts – postmemory has also drawn criticism. The Jewish studies scholar Laura Levitt has challenged the inclusion of those beyond the family, arguing 'if we allow the interplay of connections and distinctions between ordinary and extraordinary losses we can more fully come to understand how all of these losses are part of our everyday lives' (2007: 33). Jonathan Long, a literary scholar, has observed a 'conceptual mutability', as postmemory can be understood as both a subject position and a generational form of memory that 'threatens to diminish rather than enhance postmemory's explanatory and critical power' (2006: 151).

6. This is especially obvious in the much-debated distinction between history and memory. Michael Rothberg (2010) provides a survey of the shortcomings and many uses and extensions of Nora's concept. One example of a beneficial development beyond Nora's influential concept is provided by a special issue of *Yale French Studies* edited by Michael Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal, and Max Silverman (2010). The editors, all literary scholars, set out to remedy Nora's 'starkly limited conception of the nation purged of many of its imperial adventures and minoritarian inflections' (Rothberg 2010: 4). The alternative offered is *noeuds de mémoire* [knots of memory], a concept open to convergences of memory beyond the nation-state.
7. Ruth Franklin, a book critic and editor at *The New Republic*, mounts the sharpest attack against Second Generation writing (2011: 215–34).
8. The notion of the archive (both metaphorical and tangible) and its technologies of inscription and storage have become important topics in the humanities in recent years. The traditional concept of an archive as a physical location of 'old' media has increasingly been challenged, especially by the advent of the seemingly endless storage possibilities offered by the Internet and 'the fluidity, reproducibility, and transferability of digital data. In this way archives as they have become increasingly networked have become a key strata of our technological unconscious, transcending the social and the technological' (Hoskins 2009: 97). Indeed, Andrew Hoskins identifies a 'new living archive' shaped by hyperconnectivity that has evolved from the sociotechnical developments of our contemporary lives. This debate on the archive, however, is not my focus. I assume a 'cultural archive of Holocaust memory' to include all traces of the past, including those Hoskins has brought to our attention, creating an interconnected, broad, and less literal concept of the memory archive in which Second Generation memory work operates and to which it contributes.
9. The birth rate in the Displaced Persons Camps (75 to 100 per 1000) was among the highest recorded in Jewish history (Gartner 2001: cxxvii).
10. The United States became the diaspora leadership after the destruction of Central and Eastern European Jewish life. With the cultural rise of US Jewry, English took on a new importance, even at the expense of languages considered to be innately Jewish (Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino). In the 1990s, English was the native language of 48% of world Jewry, and only 30% of Jews spoke Hebrew as their mother tongue (Rubinstein 1996: 3).
11. A sample selection of research includes Bar-On and Julia Chaitin (2001), Bergmann et al. (1982), Kellermann (2001a), and Wardi (1992).
12. Clinical psychologist and traumatologist Yael Danieli created a typology of survivors according to their experiences and how these led to different adaptation strategies in their postwar families. The coping categories she identified led to her terms for describing families: 'Numb', 'Victim', 'Fighters', and 'Those who made it' (Danieli 1981).
13. The historian Deborah Lipstadt and the social psychologist Aaron Hass have offered insights into the Second Generation phenomenon beyond psychological studies. Lipstadt (1989) summarizes a set of variables that can impact children of survivors: a) a struggle for autonomy against often unusually protective parents, b) the phenomenon of the 'impossible comparison', c) the need to be 'superachievers' to compensate for their parents' losses, d)

- a sense of loss in terms of a diminished family circle, and e) a search for a personal way to express thoughts about the Holocaust and to highlight family continuity. Hass (1990) provides a sociological study of the second generation. On the basis of interviews, qualitative surveys, and his own life story, he presents an overview of the impact of the Holocaust legacy and the effects of growing up in a survivor family.
14. For an anthropological perspective on Second Generation groups, cf. Kidron (2007).
  15. Among the numerous examples are Hoffman 2004: xi, Karpf 1997: 220ff, 241, Raphael 2006: 14–15; Salamon 1996: 81–2; and Sucher 1997: 131.
  16. Alan Berger's *Children of Job: American Second Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust* (1997) is one of the earliest studies of Second Generation novels and films. He primarily asks psychosocial and theological questions, and examines the impact of the Holocaust on contemporary Jewish-American identity. Marita Grimwood also has an American focus in her investigation of transmitted trauma and the Holocaust's 'ongoing effects in the present' in Second Generation writing (2007: 3). Janet Burstein (2005) concentrates on US authors, but is not solely concerned with Holocaust literature. Hebrew literature and the Israeli Second Generation for whom the Holocaust represents not just familial but also national memory, is the subject of Iris Milner's *Kiray Avar: Biografia, zahut vezikaron basiporet hador hasheni* [Past-present: biography, identity and memory in second generation literature] (2003a). In her analysis, Milner devotes special attention to the ways in which the writings of the Israeli children of survivors reflect and are influenced by the historical, social, and cultural context of the Jewish state.
  17. A recent example is Robert Crownshaw's *The Afterlife of Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (2010), in which the literary scholar considers a wide range of memorial practices, from literature to architecture. He explores how the Holocaust is currently being made meaningful to subsequent generations, and the affective and ethical implications this may have.
  18. Erin McGlothlin expands the term to include the next generation of Germans and is thus able to analyze the 'contrapuntal generations' (2006: 9) through the trope of being 'marked' by history. Similarly, Anastasia Ulanowicz, in *Second Generation Memory and Contemporary Children's Literature: Ghost Images* (2013), explores the interconnections between childhood, transmission, and intertextuality in children's and young adult writing, and takes on 'Second Generation memory' related to the Holocaust and other atrocities. Gabriele Schwab (2010) surveys several historical cases in which transferred traumatic memory has been woven into the memory cultures of both victims and perpetrators, such as South African Apartheid, South American dictatorship, and the Holocaust. Similarly, in *The Generation of Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch uses a comparative approach to bring together different affiliative postmemorial experiences in what she calls 'connective histories' (2012: 201–59).
  19. For instance, David Grossman's *Ayien Erech Avaha* [See under: love] is one of the most important Israeli Second Generation novels, and Grossman, although he is not the child of survivors, must be included in a definition of the Second Generation as a literary generation in Hebrew literature (Milner 2003a: 28–35).



20. Due to historical circumstances, South African Second Generation literature is limited. In my corpus it also appears only minimally. In the years leading up to the Boer War, local anti-Semitism increased in South Africa and led to the introduction of the Aliens Bill in 1937, which curtailed the number of immigrants from certain backgrounds and practically closed the country to Eastern European Jews. Apartheid also caused fears concerning the situation of Jews in the country. Stephen Cohen maintains that 'At the end of the Second World War, South Africa's political situation was such that it no longer attracted Jewish immigration on the same scale and the growth of the community was largely due to natural increase' (1984: 9–10).

## 2 Objects

1. Since the fall of Communism, Jews from all over the world have taken to visiting their family's former European homelands. In Israel, such 'return' journeys are so common that a word has been coined for this phenomenon: *tiulei shorashim*, 'roots journeys'. These transnational voyages to recover family memory in situ have also attracted scholarly interest. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller's *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory* (2011), for example, provides several case studies that explore the dynamics of such returns, especially those taking place in the wake of violent events.
2. The mnemonic power of photographs and, to a lesser extent, documents in the post-Holocaust context have received much scholarly attention, most prominently from Marianne Hirsch, who argues in *Family Frames* (1997) that photographs are a family's 'prime instrument of self-knowledge and representation – the means by which family memory would be continued and perpetuated, by which the family's story would henceforth be told' (1997: 6–7). Andrea Liss (1998) and Barbie Zelizer (1998) examine the complex relationship between photography, Holocaust memory, and its transmission. Iris Milner investigates the importance of documents for children of survivors (2003b).
3. Makor's 'Write Your Story' program was launched as part of a larger cultural movement in the Australian Jewish community to uncover family histories. To date, over 90 books have been published with the intent of providing historical links to families and to 'furnish future readers and scholars with primary-source material on the social history of the Melbourne Jewish community' ([http://www.makorlibrary.com/write\\_your\\_story.html](http://www.makorlibrary.com/write_your_story.html)). The Makor program is based on the idea that for this community, in which the majority of families were affected by Nazi persecution, the Holocaust and migration are dual forces that had a disruptive influence on family life, and therefore need to be addressed.
4. By 1949, some 15,000 Jews, mostly Displaced Persons, had entered Australia, and during the two decades after the war, their numbers reached 27,000 ([http://www.holocaust.com.au/lb/r\\_australia.htm](http://www.holocaust.com.au/lb/r_australia.htm)). Most of these Jews arrived on assisted migration schemes through which Australia sought to boost its population; however, a quota limiting Jewish migration to 25% was introduced in 1948 (Golvan 1990: 31–60).

5. Children who perished during the Holocaust are the most traumatic area of Holocaust family memory. These murdered siblings are also a part of Second Generation memory work, but are predominantly treated as a dangerous secret in post-Holocaust families because the survivors often refused, or were unable, to speak about the murder of and their mourning for their earlier children. An example of absolute silence concerning lost siblings can be found in Salamon (1996). Here, the parents never speak about the father's first daughter; after the postwar children find out about their murdered sister from an outside source, they never bring up the subject again, not even to each other. The memoir itself mirrors this familial silence – between parents and children and between the siblings – as the murdered sister is not mentioned again, illustrating the impossibility of memory work in this area of secrets, silence, and trauma. One way in which Second Generation authors react to the memory of a murdered sibling is connected to their own presumed position as a 'replacement child'. They often avoid further exploration of what they know to be an emotional minefield in the family and a topic that has troubling implications for their own identity work. Indeed, these are blocked links in the network of family memory, and the theme of murdered siblings is therefore not included in this study. For an extended psychoanalytical discussion, see Schwab (2010: 118–150).
6. In the Second Generation corpus, journeys to the parents' former homelands are prominent. Examples include Raphael (2009), recounting a visit from the United States to Germany; Epstein (1997), about a trip from the United States to the Czech Republic, and Zable (1991), the description of a trip from Australia to Poland. These journeys are connected to the 'dark tourism' movement of visits to former ghettos and concentration camps, but more significantly, the authors are concerned with finding pre-Holocaust family homes; cf. Fischer (2013).
7. The American public generally resisted the admission of Jewish refugees in the 1930s, and fewer than 100,000 Jews from German-speaking countries managed to get visas and enter the United States (Dinnerstein 1982: 1ff).
8. For example, Andreas Nentwich, a literary critic, entitled his review of *Too Many Men* 'Eine Entgleisung', which can be translated as 'An Aberration' (Nentwich 2001). ([http://www.zeit.de/2001/17/Eine\\_Entgleisung](http://www.zeit.de/2001/17/Eine_Entgleisung)). Accessed May 15, 2013.

### 3 Names

1. '1950: Princess gives birth to second child', [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/15/newsid\\_2956000/2956684.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/15/newsid_2956000/2956684.stm). Accessed July 19, 2012.
2. The names that survivors who immigrated to Israel gave to their children also tell an intriguing story of a sociocultural framework in which the negotiations of national identity and Jewishness influenced personal choices. In her sociological study of the Israeli Second Generation, Tamar Fox points out that the tradition of naming children after family members 'seems to be true more of children of survivors of the Diaspora than in Israel, and even less so in kibbutzim, where there was a strong anti-Jewish-names (if not plain

anti-Jewish) inclination' (1999: 105). In accordance with Zionist ideology and the intention to create a new Jewish way of life, specifically Israeli names (such as Hebrew names that stem from nature), Biblical names not used in the diaspora, or Hebraized versions of European names were given to the locally born children. In complying with the national narrative that pitted the Jewish state against the diaspora, the survivors were trying to become full members of the surrounding society through assimilation.

3. Jews have a long history in Canada, both in the cities and in the western prairies, and they are a natural part of this now multicultural society. Despite this, Canada had one of the worst records with regard to helping Europe's Jews. In 1923, the first immigration restrictions were established, and fewer than 5,000 refugees were allowed to enter the country during the Nazi years (Troper 1987: 51). Following World War II, even after the full extent of the atrocities of the Holocaust became known, Canada was slow and generally unwilling to change its restrictive immigration policies. Until 1948, the country was closed to survivors waiting for visas in the displaced persons camps. In subsequent years, fewer than 25,000 Jews were admitted, a very small percentage of Canada's immigrants. For a comprehensive study of this dismal record, see Arbella and Troper 1983.
4. Hirsch (2001). <http://vimeo.com/16697053>. Accessed August 13, 2013. 00:02.

#### 4 Bodies

1. I use the term 'graphic novel' despite the inherent problems to differentiate the material investigated in this book from fictional cartoons. Calling such work a 'novel' might imply fictional content; however, 'graphic novel' is increasingly used to denote factual material. The term is not strictly defined; it broadly refers to a story in book form using cartoon images.

#### 5 Food

1. In New Zealand, anti-Semitism was marginal before the 1930s. However, Adolf Hitler's propaganda made an impact even on this remote country, taking the form of opposition to the immigration of European refugees. The first German Jewish refugees arrived in 1936, but by 1940 only a few hundred refugees were accepted. Anti-Semitic sentiment worsened during and after the war years. This influenced political decision-making, and strict immigration quotas made Jewish immigration practically impossible. In 1936, 2,653 Jews lived in New Zealand. The community had grown to 3,661 in 1951, an increase that included natural growth and immigration unrelated to the Holocaust (Levine 1999: 37).

#### 6 Passover

1. Jews are not the only group to make reference to the Exodus story. Rewritings that recapture the spirit of freedom of the followers of Moses abound in

Western civilization. In *Exodus and Revolution* (1985), Michael Walzer has shown that it has repeatedly been used as a paradigmatic story of suppression, liberation, and redemption.

2. In 1957, the late Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson also introduced an absent fifth son into the liturgy (Schneerson 1957). This Jewish child refuses to come to the Seder celebration because he rejects Judaism. Schneerson's concept of the 'Fifth Son' is not connected to the Holocaust; rather, it was a reaction to increasing assimilation.

## Afterword: On Memory Work

1. In connection with the specificities of my study, also genealogy tools for Jews, such as jewishgen.org, an affiliate of the New York Museum of Jewish Heritage, and yiddishkayt.org, an organization that promotes knowledge about ethnic roots/ancestry separate from the Holocaust and Israel, had a big increase in interest.
2. LDS's genealogical work is also motivated by the desire to posthumously baptize family members and others regardless of their religion. When it became known in the 1990s that the Church had vicariously baptized Jewish victims of the Holocaust, it led to a public outcry and official promises to prevent this from occurring. However, the practice is ongoing and in 2012 the issue was once again debated, when it became known Anne Frank was proxy baptized for at least the 10th time. ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/21/mormons-posthumous-baptism-anne-frank\\_n\\_1292102.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/21/mormons-posthumous-baptism-anne-frank_n_1292102.html), accessed January 15, 2014).
3. Ancestry.com is equipped with powerful search tools, including access to billions of historical records, but it also displays a strong community-building intention: its Internet presence proudly announces that it hosts 'the world's largest online genealogy community with over 25 million posts on more than 198,000 boards' (<http://boards.ancestry.com>, accessed December 12, 2013).
4. The widespread interest in this form of memory work is demonstrated by the public fascination with the work of the sociologist Anne-Marie Kramer on the 'meaning and significance of family history/genealogy within personal, family and national life in the UK' ([www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/expertise-guide/areas/g/genealogy.aspx](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/expertise-guide/areas/g/genealogy.aspx), accessed January 23, 2014). Kramer's research has been profiled on BBC's Radio 4, in *The Guardian*, and on local, national, and international radio shows.

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# Index

- 2G (essay), 17, 77  
9/11  
    comparison to Holocaust, 212–14,  
    220–2, 224–31  
    impact on concentration camp  
    survivors, 212, 224, 225–6  
    resurgence of anti-Semitism, 222–4  
    smell and recollection of Holocaust,  
    224–30, 231  
    terrorism, 28, 215, 219, 221, 224,  
    230  
    Twin Towers, 212, 213, 224, 225
- absent memory, 6, 59, 65, 71  
accents, 25, 49, 79, 90, 92–3, 116, 118,  
179  
*After Such Knowledge: Memory, History,  
and the Legacy of the Holocaust*  
(book), 18, 106, 150, 217  
*After the War* (book), 190  
anti-Semitism, 53, 131, 132–3, 144  
    and stereotypes, 127–8, 131–3, 141,  
    172  
    *see also* 9/11  
Appignanesi, Lisa, 107–8, 110, 128,  
142–3, 164, 165, 168, 186–7  
'Aryan', 132, 133, 142  
    as ideal, 129, 141, 143, 145  
    passing as, 14, 107, 127, 129  
'Aryanization', 31, 37, 41  
Ashkenazis, 70, 141, 180, 181, 186,  
189  
assimilation, 75, 77, 86, 89–90, 93,  
129–31, 135–6, 145, 190, 207,  
209, 223, 243n, 244n  
Assmann, Aleida, 69, 112  
Assmann, Jan, 4, 29, 99, 101, 112  
Auschwitz, 11, 19, 22, 27, 33, 51,  
52, 62–4, 65, 67, 69–70, 96, 100,  
102, 109, 114–27, 136, 138, 138,  
140, 143, 154, 159–61, 165, 166,  
174–7, 200, 204, 213, 226, 227,  
228, 229  
    *see also* concentration camps; tattoos  
*The Auschwitz Poems* (book), 165  
Australia, 1, 16, 33–5, 38, 51–3, 60, 69,  
87–9, 165, 180–2, 190–2, 241n  
    postwar immigration policy towards  
    Jews, 243n
- Baker, Mark Raphael, 87, 88–9, 91,  
138–9, 180–1  
Bergen-Belsen, 143, 167, 204, 206, 220  
*Between Mexico and Poland* (book),  
51–2, 58, 217, 229  
*Between Two Worlds: The Testimony and  
the Testament* (book), 173, 203  
body language, 134  
body memory, 99, 101, 102, 153, 155,  
159  
body reactions to memory triggers,  
27, 99, 101, 106–10, 149, 193  
Brett, Doris, 140–1  
Brett, Lilly, 51–3, 55, 58–9, 67,  
113–14, 118, 123–4, 133, 138–41  
Brooks, Van Wyck, 3  
Buchenwald, 225  
Bukiet, Melvin Jules, 17, 20, 121, 126,  
148
- Canada, 38, 41, 67, 84, 107, 117, 135,  
164, 188, 206, 207, 243n  
    postwar immigration policy towards  
    Jews, 243n  
*The Cataclysmic in Everyday Life*  
(article), 216  
Chapman, Fern Schumer, 44–9, 68,  
132–3, 150, 184, 187–8  
*Children of the Holocaust* (book), 18,  
41–2, 70, 75, 86, 111, 133, 188  
concentration camps, 2, 14, 17, 69,  
111, 112, 114, 117, 138, 172, 174,  
225  
    camp survivors, 10, 17, 19, 22, 26,  
    31, 33, 37–8, 51, 64, 169, 184,  
    193, 212, 224

- Couser, Thomas, 11  
 cultural memory, 4, 12, 24–9, 40, 43,  
 58–60, 65, 66, 69, 90, 93, 99–102,  
 111, 117, 119, 121, 131–4, 158–9,  
 173, 176–7, 181, 194–5, 199,  
 201–2, 204, 206, 209–11, 233, 236  
 Czech Jews, 41, 50, 129, 160  
 cuisine, 190  
 Czech Republic, 76, 82  
 Czechoslovakia, 82, 130, 131  
 anti-Semitism, 132
- Dancing on Tisha B'Av* (book), 105  
 de Waal, Edmund, 29  
 death camps, 58, 224  
*see also* concentration camps  
 destruction of the Temples, 215  
 displaced persons, 50, 87, 90, 206,  
 241n  
 DP camps, 51, 115, 238n, 243n  
 US policy on, 90
- Eakin, Paul John, 11  
*Eating the Underworld: A Memoir in  
 Three Voices* (book), 140  
 Ehrlich, Elizabeth, 158  
 Eisenstein, Bernice, 62, 79–80, 82, 97,  
 117, 119–20, 165–6, 205–7  
 Eisenstein, Regina, 62–5, 67  
*Elijah Visible* (book), 207–9  
 Epstein, Helen, 15–16, 20, 40–2,  
 51, 70, 75–6, 86, 114, 129–33,  
 135, 154, 159–63, 166–8, 188,  
 242n  
 Exodus (from Egypt), 12, 28, 159,  
 195–202, 206–7, 209, 210, 211,  
 243n, 244n  
*see also* Passover
- Family Frames: Photography, Narrative  
 and Postmemory* (book), 241n  
 family possessions, 29, 32, 36–8, 41,  
 44, 49, 51, 52, 53–4, 58, 59, 65,  
 67–8, 72  
 Fass, Paula, 7, 10, 141, 143, 192  
*The Fiftieth Gate: A Journey through  
 Memory* (book), 88, 138, 180  
 Filler, Deb, 24, 192–3, 234  
*"Filler Up!* (play), 192
- films about the Holocaust, 111, 122,  
 145, 193  
 Fine, Ellen S., 6, 21  
 Foer, Jonathan Safran, 197  
 food  
 and hoarding, 169–73  
 and overeating, 164–9  
 and trauma, 159–63  
*see also* hunger; Passover  
 Freadman, Richard, 51, 112  
 Fresco, Nadine, 146–7
- gas chambers, 119, 121, 139, 150, 193  
 gefilte fish, 10, 27, 187  
 Germany, 44–6, 48, 49, 50, 51, 68, 90,  
 92, 106, 115, 127, 130, 132, 137,  
 150, 196, 217, 219, 230, 235  
 and national identity, 4  
 postwar society in, 46, 48  
 ghettos, 25, 36, 44, 51, 53, 80, 88,  
 101, 107, 132, 161, 173, 196, 203,  
 219, 242n  
*see also* concentration camps  
*Ghosts of the Holocaust: An Anthology  
 of Poetry by the Second Generation*  
 (book), 20  
 graphic novels, 19, 20, 24, 62, 116,  
 128, 165, 165, 166, 243n  
 Grimwood, Marita, 3, 238n, 240n
- hair, 136–45  
 shaving of in concentration camps,  
 27, 102, 136–40  
 Halbwachs, Maurice, 1, 5  
 Hartman, Geoffrey, 4, 11  
 Hartog, Henrik, 216  
*Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and  
 Transgenerational Trauma* (book),  
 147  
 heirlooms, 2, 8, 30–2, 39–41, 43, 44,  
 45, 46–52, 55, 57, 59, 67, 78, 177,  
 184  
 Hirsch, Marianne, 6, 7, 12, 21, 25, 31,  
 44, 67, 155, 240n, 241n  
 Hirsch, Robin, 24, 49–51, 91–3, 95  
 Hitler, Adolf, 130, 132, 147, 172, 219,  
 221, 243n  
 Hoffman, Eva, 6–7, 18–19, 20, 37–8,  
 106, 150–1, 188, 218–19, 240n

- The Holocaust Kid*, 17, 20, 42–3, 76–8, 95, 115, 122–3, 168, 176, 181, 200
- Holocaust mementos, 31, 32, 59–64, 72, 81, 111  
 see also heirlooms; Jewelry as mementos
- Holocaust Remembrance Day, 196
- Holocaust survivors  
 anxiety, 107, 134, 169, 180  
 depression, 106, 162  
 see also camp survivors
- homes  
 return to former, 29, 33, 35–6, 44, 51, 73, 120, 160  
 takeover of Jews' former homes after the war, 2, 36–7, 55  
 see also return trips
- hunger, 27, 106, 159–60, 161, 162–4, 166–71, 173–4, 176, 178, 180, 183, 192–3  
 see also trauma, and food
- I was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (book), 62, 65, 119, 165, 205
- In the Shadow of No Towers* (book), 213–14, 223, 227–8
- Inheriting the Holocaust: A Second Generation Memoir*, 141, 192
- Israel, 2, 16, 34, 43, 91, 122, 204, 215, 222, 224, 229, 241n, 242n, 243n  
 and impact of Holocaust on national identity, 4, 21, 122, 196, 240n
- Jacobowitz, Susan, 31, 126, 220, 221
- Jedwabne massacre, 53
- Jerusalem, 197, 215
- jewelry as mementos, 30, 41, 45–6, 59–60, 62–5, 67
- Jewish body, 127–36  
 see also anti-Semitism
- Jewish diaspora, 15, 18, 20–1, 34, 39, 43, 86, 90, 125, 134, 144–5, 207–9, 239n, 241n, 242n, 243n
- Jewish identity, 18, 91, 94, 131, 200, 207, 209
- Jewish religious objects, 35, 39, 42, 58  
 menorah (candelabra), 34  
 mezuzah, 84, 186  
 Shabbat candles, 33, 43  
 see also Jewish religious rituals
- Jewish religious rituals and laws  
 brit milah (circumcision), 36, 99, 127–8, 134, 136  
 kaddish, 80, 81–2  
 kashrut, 159, 189, 194  
 kiddush, 42, 43, 200  
 lighting Shabbat candles, 34
- Just Like That* (book), 113, 114, 147, 185
- Kacer, Kathy, 62
- Karpf, Anne, 38–40, 43, 51, 94, 95, 115, 120–1, 144–5, 147, 202–3
- Kindertransport, 45
- Kirschner, Ann, 35–7, 48, 60, 73–5, 109–10
- Kristallnacht, 51, 219
- Kuhn, Annette, 1, 7, 9, 12, 238n
- language and memory, 25, 49, 79, 91, 92, 118, 131, 160, 161, 176, 181, 186, 207–8
- Last Dance at the Hotel Kempinski: Creating a Life in the Shadow of History* (book), 49, 92
- Levi, Primo, 69–70, 100
- life writing, 1, 5, 11, 15, 24, 25, 29, 60, 113, 217, 236
- Lipstadt, Deborah, 15, 166, 239n
- Living after the Holocaust: Reflections of the Post-war Generation in America* (book), 15
- Lodz, 42, 51, 52, 58, 136, 144, 151
- Losing the Dead: A Family Memoir* (book), 107, 142, 186
- Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (book), 188, 250
- McGlothlin, Erin, 3, 148, 238, 240n
- Mannheim, Karl, 13
- Maus I & II* (book), 19, 20, 116–17, 118–19, 128–9, 170–3, 213, 228
- Max, Helen, 19, 33–7, 48, 51–2, 60, 108–10, 179–80
- 'memory boom', 9, 234, 237
- memory studies, 1, 4, 23, 30, 99, 156, 222, 234
- menorah  
 see Jewish religious objects

- mezuzah  
 see Jewish religious objects
- migration  
 and impact on culture, 74, 83, 84,  
 134, 166, 181, 189, 190  
 and memory, 38, 39, 41, 50, 67, 79,  
 182, 183, 192, 233  
 and naming, 79, 84, 85–97  
 and new lives, 22, 31
- Miller, Nancy K., 11, 29, 172, 241n
- Mittelberg, David, 173, 203–4
- Mixed Blessings: New Zealand Children  
 of Holocaust Survivors Remember*  
 (book), 183
- mnemonic value of objects, 29–33,  
 42, 50, 51, 56, 58, 59, 64, 65, 67,  
 241n
- Motherland: Beyond the Holocaust: A  
 Mother-Daughter Journey to Reclaim  
 the Past* (book), 44–5, 132, 150,  
 184, 187
- My Germany: A Jewish Writer Returns  
 to the World His Parents Escaped*  
 (book), 90–1, 137
- Nakba, 2
- names  
 as acts of memory, 8, 70–5, 186  
 Hebrew, 57, 69, 73, 83, 86, 90, 94,  
 118, 243n  
 as identity, 93–5  
 Jewish naming rituals, 70  
 memory work, 8, 23–4, 26, 75–85,  
 96–8  
 and migration, 85–96
- Naves, Elaine Kalman, 83–5
- Nazis, 11, 12, 22, 25, 31, 35, 40, 41,  
 44, 45, 46, 50, 62, 66, 70, 71, 82,  
 84, 87, 93, 96, 107, 108, 110, 111,  
 124, 126–33, 136, 141–3, 145,  
 151, 159, 180, 181, 186, 189, 196,  
 203, 205, 219, 222, 224, 225, 226,  
 230, 231, 233, 241n, 243n  
 and propaganda, 129, 143, 243n
- New Zealand, 183, 192–3  
 postwar immigration policy towards  
 Jews, 243
- Niederland, William, 14, 106–7  
 see also survivor syndrome
- No Goodbyes: A Father-Daughter Memoir  
 of Love, War and Resurrection*  
 (book), 19
- nodes of memory, 8–9, 23–6  
 and bodies, 99–101, 110–11,  
 113–14, 117, 122, 124,  
 129, 130, 131, 134, 146–9,  
 153–6, 193  
 and food, 27, 157, 159, 162–3, 167,  
 172, 176–82, 185, 187, 192–4  
 and hair, 136–45, 146–9  
 and names, 8, 72, 74, 76, 79–89, 91,  
 96–8  
 and objects, 8, 30–2, 36, 38, 41, 44,  
 56, 58–9, 63–8, 72, 76, 89, 99, 234  
 and Passover, 201–7, 210–11
- Nora, Pierre, 9, 65, 239n
- Nothing Makes You Free: Writings by  
 Descendants of Jewish Holocaust  
 Survivors* (book), 17, 126
- objects as narrative elements, 29,  
 32–6, 44, 63, 65–7
- Palestine, 29, 50, 178, 197
- Palestinians, 2, 29, 224
- parental behavior and trauma, 4–7,  
 14, 23, 86, 96, 100–1, 105–7, 140,  
 159–62, 239n, 242n
- Passover  
 and the Haggadah, 195–8, 200, 202,  
 204, 205, 206, 209  
 linking to the Holocaust,  
 196–211
- Pesach, see Passover
- physical resemblance of Second  
 Generation to Holocaust victims,  
 149–53
- Piatka, Nava, 19, 115
- Pilcer, Sonia, 10, 15–17, 20, 42–3,  
 76–7, 90, 95–6, 115–16, 122, 144,  
 147, 161, 168, 176–7, 181, 200–1,  
 214, 225–8
- Poland, 33, 35, 38, 44, 51–2, 55, 58–9,  
 74, 80, 107, 108, 125, 130, 133,  
 151, 158, 179, 191–2, 207, 217,  
 218, 234, 242n
- Polish Jews, 6, 7, 77, 128, 135, 191–4,  
 217

- post-traumatic stress disorder, *see*  
trauma
- postmemory, 6–7, 12, 21, 44, 52, 57,  
60, 67, 147, 162, 238n, 240n
- pre-Holocaust past, 8, 10, 22, 23, 25,  
26, 31–2, 33, 36–8, 41, 44, 56, 58,  
59, 61, 72, 79, 89, 95, 99, 129,  
155, 159, 177, 181, 183, 185,  
189–90, 193–4, 203, 231, 242n
- Proust, Marcel, 27, 157, 180
- Punch Me in the Stomach* (film), 193
- Raczynow, Henri, 6
- Raphael, Lev, 37, 59–61, 65, 74–5,  
77, 87–91, 93, 96, 104–6, 123,  
135, 137–8, 170, 180, 200–1, 214,  
219–20, 242n
- remediation, 11, 27, 35, 61, 85, 102,  
117, 118, 119, 121, 122, 136, 154,  
173, 183, 214, 224, 231
- The Rescue of Memory* (book), 81–2,  
149–50, 168
- 'return' journeys, 29, 44, 51, 68, 76,  
82, 120, 131, 150, 174, 189, 227,  
234, 241n
- 'Righteous Among the Nations', 76
- ritualized commemoration, 8, 28, 70,  
75, 195  
*see also* names, names as acts of  
memory
- Rosen, Jonathan, 221–2
- Rosenbaum, Thane, 11, 104, 124–6,  
135–6, 148, 199–201, 207–9,  
213
- Rosensaft, Menachem Z., 204–5
- Rothberg, Michael, 128, 236, 238–9
- Salamon, Julie, 82–3, 174–5, 189–90,  
242n
- Sala's Gift: My Mother's Holocaust Story*  
(book), 35–6, 73–4, 109–10
- scars, 22, 27, 99, 103–6, 115, 122–3,  
125–6, 146, 155  
*see also* tattoos
- Schwab, Gabriele, 147, 149, 238n,  
240n, 242n
- Searching for Yesterday: A Photographic  
Essay About my Mother, a Holocaust  
Survivor* (book), 19, 33, 179
- Second Hand Smoke* (book), 11, 124–5,  
135–6, 199–200
- secondary traumatization, 4
- Seidler, Victor Jeleniewski, 51,  
93–4
- sexual abuse, 110–14  
as a taboo, 101, 111, 113–14  
*see also* silence
- Shadows of the Shoah: Jewish Identity  
and Belonging* (book), 51, 93–4
- Shoshanna's Story: A Mother, a Daughter,  
and the Shadows of History* (book),  
83–5
- shtetl, 58, 130, 131, 150, 180, 187,  
188
- Sicher, Efraim, 24, 146–7, 196
- silence  
over loss of children, 83, 242n  
over sexual abuse, 101, 110–14  
and trauma, 5, 6, 9, 60, 67, 82–3,  
85, 101, 104, 106, 109–10, 112,  
123, 211, 238n, 242n
- The Silence: How Tragedy Shapes Talk*  
(book), 60–1
- smell and memory, 157, 158, 180,  
182, 185–6, 189, 193  
*see also* 9/11
- Sophie's Choice* (film), 145
- South Africa, 23, 115, 240n, 241n
- Spiegelman, Art, 19–20, 116, 118–21,  
128–9, 170–3, 213–14, 223–4,  
227–8, 230
- Spitzer, Leo, 31, 44, 67
- starvation, *see* hunger
- Stewart, Victoria, 10, 71
- Sucher, Cheryl Pearl, 2, 80, 90, 97,  
149, 153, 168–9, 172
- survivor syndrome, 14, 106, 142
- survivor testimonies, 10–12, 18,  
27, 118, 119, 120, 122, 154–5,  
179–81, 208, 226, 237
- taboos, 5, 101  
*see also* sexual abuse; silence
- tattoos, 22, 27, 34, 69, 70, 99, 100,  
102, 114–27, 136, 154, 159, 160  
*see also* scars
- Terdiman, Richard, 1
- Theresienstadt, 154, 178

- Too Many Men* (book), 51–5, 58–9, 67, 139, 142, 151, 169, 179, 184, 189, 229, 242n
- topoi, 8, 24
- Torah, 181, 198
- trauma
- and food, 159–63
  - post-traumatic stress disorder, 103, 164
  - transmission of, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 23, 75, 127, 147, 149, 216, 238n, 240n
- trauma studies, 4, 23, 127, 234
- Twin Towers, *see* 9/11
- Ukraine, 37, 38, 44, 150
- The Uncomfortable Question of Anti-Semitism: Waking Up to My Father's World* (essay), 221–2
- unconscious repetition, 14
- United Kingdom, 23, 25, 38, 49, 50, 74, 87, 94
- and complex relationship with its Jewish communities, 91, 97, 134, 144
- United States, 3, 15, 16, 23, 28, 45, 46, 47, 73, 74, 77, 86–7, 90, 91, 107, 116, 125, 132, 141, 158, 170, 196, 212–30, 239n, 242n
- usable past, 3, 6, 7, 23, 26, 27, 39, 42, 44, 50, 53, 60, 66, 71, 72, 76, 78, 89–90, 95, 120, 131, 149, 152, 153, 158, 159, 177, 182–4, 192, 193, 223, 234
- Wajnryb, Ruth, 60–1, 64–5, 70–2, 87–8, 96–7, 104, 112, 153, 160, 163, 166–8, 205, 210
- The War After: Living with the Holocaust* (book), 51, 94–5, 120, 144, 202–3
- Wardi, Dina, 71, 74–5, 96, 111, 123, 140, 163
- Warsaw, 191, 192
- Warsaw Ghetto, 107, 173, 203
- uprising in, 173, 196, 203
- Welzer, Harald, 5
- What God Wants* (book), 123–4
- Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for Her Mother's History* (book), 40, 75, 129, 130, 131
- Wiesel, Elie, 18, 198, 200
- Winter Eyes: A Novel About Secrets* (book), 105, 106
- Winter, Jay, 9, 103
- Writing a Jewish Life: Memoirs* (book), 37, 105–6, 137, 200
- Yad Vashem, 197
- Yiddish, 39, 53, 58, 79, 86, 91, 116, 158, 173, 176, 179, 181, 186, 188, 191, 197, 239n
- You Gotta Have Balls* (book), 179
- Zable, Arnold, 182, 242n
- Zepler, Esther, 113
- Zerubavel, Eviatar, 30, 39, 65, 177, 215