



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Third-Generation Holocaust Representation

Aarons, Victoria, Berger, Alan L.

Published by Northwestern University Press

Aarons, Victoria & Berger, L..

Third-Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History, and Memory.

Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/48943>

## CHAPTER 2

# The Intergenerational Transmission of Memory and Trauma *From Survivor Writing to Post-Holocaust Representation*

The struggle of memory against forgetting.

—MILAN KUNDERA, *THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING*

Remembering is an ethical act, has ethical value in and of itself.

—SUSAN SONTAG, *REGARDING THE PAIN OF OTHERS*

Memory is the simplest form of prayer.

—MARGE PIERCY, “BLACK MOUNTAIN”

The movement from survivor writing to second- and third-generation accounts of the Nazi genocide marks an important shift in the intergenerational transmission and expression of Holocaust memory, trauma, and representation. The passage from firsthand, eyewitness testimony to second- and thirdhand, indirect witnessing marks not only a temporal and experiential change in the modes of representation, but also a perceptible shift in perspective, narrative voicing, and the disposition of memory. Memory is the structural and foundational link among those who write about the Holocaust from direct experience as well as from the haunting legacy that takes the shape of imaginative return. With the lat-

ter, the character and texture of memory are reconfigured in ongoing attempts to bear witness to the events of the Shoah as those events and their accompanying memories recede increasingly into the past, the Shoah—as Gulie Ne’eman Arad suggests—“transformed from memory into history.”<sup>1</sup> The movement from memory into history suggests passage from the immediacy and proximity of a subjective retention of and reencounter with memories of the past to the opacity of absent or indeterminate memory. What happens when memory becomes history, when, that is, the texture, the sensation, and the presence of memory in the convergence of past and present become contained within the fixed boundaries and inertness of temporality, that is, into a story? Here memory is apart from the teller rather than a part of, intrinsic to, the teller and thus can only be made accessible through an imaginative refocusing.

The intervening decades since the end of the war and the liberation of the concentration camps have seen an inevitable movement away from the immediacy of eyewitness accounts to the inexactness of indirect, approximate, secondary witnessing, a borrowed memory. From the direct testimony of those who, like Job’s messengers, experienced and lived to tell of the events they witnessed—“I did see this, with my own eyes,” Elie Wiesel writes in *Night*—to the distanced but no less pressing obligation to bear witness to the enormity of a past summoned by absence, memory remains the metonymic trope, the figured calculation of loss and the receptacle of the magnitude and duration of such loss.<sup>2</sup> As Eva Hoffman suggests, the transmitted memory of the Shoah for post-survivor generations is “an example of an internalized past, of the way in which atrocity literally reverberates through the minds and lives of subsequent generations.”<sup>3</sup> The transition from and juxtaposition of survivor writing to accounts by “nonwitnesses,” to borrow a term from Gary Weissman, brings into sharp scrutiny the ways in which memory and the intergenerational transmission of trauma make demands on the imagination but also on the nature of telling, the conditions in which language and forms of narration embody and extend the collective experience of memory, both a lived and living memory.<sup>4</sup> As psychologists Nanette C. Auerhahn and Ernst Prelinger, in their analytic work with Holocaust survivors, propose, for both the survivor and subsequent generations, “Re-telling an experience like the Holocaust cannot comment on that experience so much as demonstrate, exhibit, and continue itself.”<sup>5</sup> Those generations of wit-

nesses who follow the survivors in their attempts to extend the traumatic history of the Shoah into the present are custodians of the past. Their continued testimony constitutes a resistance to encroaching anonymity and obscurity, their language a defense against forgetting, guardians of memory in an attempt, as one grandchild of survivors insists, “to make a place for history and ensure that historical realities are transmitted to future generations.”<sup>6</sup> And even though, as the poet Paul Celan insists, “No one bears witness for the witness,” those descendants of Holocaust victims and survivors step into the widening void of absent memory in an attempt to prevent erasure and to carry forth the burden of testimony.<sup>7</sup>

Not insignificantly, all the literature we discuss in this book might be thought of as post-Holocaust attempts to shape and narrate the experience of the Shoah, although, for our purposes, post-Holocaust narrative typologies differentiate survivor accounts from those writing outside of direct experience. For even those who write from direct experience have narrated their accounts retrospectively, reaching back, as the narrator of Ida Fink’s short story “A Scrap of Time” puts it, “digging around in the ruins of memory,” memory “buried,” but “untouched by forgetfulness.”<sup>8</sup> And narrative is, by its own temporality, a necessarily screened disposition. The narrative is never the event itself but the trailing, mediated articulation of experience filtered through the constraints of language and consciousness, thus turning “life history into life story.”<sup>9</sup> Thus for the survivor, as Auerhahn and Prelinger suggest, articulating the events of the traumatic past represents efforts “at fashioning that experience into an internally consistent, coherent, and communicable form” (38). Despite the assurances of Primo Levi in the opening pages of *Survival in Auschwitz* that “none of the facts are invented,” the “facts” are inevitably arbitrated by and filtered through the ambushes, reflections, and calculations of memory as well as its defenses and instincts for deflection, repression, and survival.<sup>10</sup> And memory’s inherent shortcomings—its fixations, lapses, and protective impulses—are viewed against the inadequacies of the written word. Giving language to any experience is, although provisional, armor against the experience itself, as well as the sure knowledge that the reality, the final measure of the loss is loss itself, an absence of what once existed. Thus, as Primo Levi admits, the truth, the actual “history of the Lagers . . . has been written almost exclusively by those who, like myself, never fathomed them to the bottom,” since, to be sure,

“those who did so did not return, or their capacity for observation was paralyzed by suffering and incomprehension.”<sup>11</sup> This is not to say that the defenses and filters of memory and narrative design diminish the certainty of events, only that memory is fractured, hesitant, clouded by time and grief, subject to correction, and woefully inadequate to the task of transmission. Survivor memory is both constitutively relative to mediating consciousness and psychically undeniable as the self-presenting truth of trauma. As Nobel Laureate and survivor Imre Kertész reflects, “I could not give orders to my memory.”<sup>12</sup>

Such stipulations about perspective are measured against and anxiously figured by fears that the survivors, in articulating their accounts of the heinous execution of atrocities, would not be believed, as Levi cautions, “indeed were not even listened to,” and thus denied the legitimacy of not only their claims but their experiences, their lives (*Drowned*, 12). Despite the unembellished fact that, as Kertész explains, “nothing has happened since Auschwitz that could reverse or refute Auschwitz,” the written testimony by survivors is characterized by anxious fears that the limits of expression will fail to create the contiguity necessary to extend the experience into the present, to engage the reader or listener in its reenactment.<sup>13</sup> As Auerhahn and Prelinger in their study of survivors and their children find, relating the experience of the Holocaust is “an appeal to participation transmitted to the listener through the medium of the narrator’s consciousness which, through empathy and temporary identification, comes to constitute that of the listener,” or is an attempt to impart meaning through its associative participation in the traumatic reenactment (40–41). As Kertész and others make very clear, for the survivor, Auschwitz is not over, nor “overcome,” and thus, “The problem of Auschwitz is not whether to draw a line under it, as it were; whether to preserve its memory or slip it into the appropriate pigeonhole of history . . . The real problem with Auschwitz is that it happened, and this cannot be altered—not with the best, or worst, will in the world” (“Heureka”).

Firsthand accounts of the Shoah, therefore, are structured by trauma, by traumatic recall, and thus, as Auerhahn and Prelinger explain, “in some sense there is no post-Holocaust present . . . other than what can be interpreted in light of the Holocaust” (39). In other words, the Holocaust is the lens through which the present is interpreted and experience structured, “a model of trauma constructed from two moments—a later

event which causes a reinterpretation backwards and re-vivification of an original event which only now becomes traumatic and thereby restructures all subsequent events” (ibid.). As survivor Charlotte Delbo explains, “Auschwitz is so deeply etched in my memory that I cannot forget one moment of it.—So you are living with Auschwitz?—No, I live next to it. Auschwitz is there, unalterable, precise, but enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolates it from my present self,” a parallel consciousness running alongside of the mediated present.<sup>14</sup> If, for the survivor, discovering an adequate frame of reference for structuring memory into articulable, shared understanding is unstable, subject to fragmentation, to the amendments of time and assemblage—“For so long I have wanted to talk about this time,” Ida Fink writes, “and not in the way I will talk about it now . . . I wanted to, but I couldn’t, I didn’t know how” (“Scrap of Time,” 3)—then how much more is it so destabilized when fashioning a narrative from an imperfect memory that is not one’s own? What then might it mean—might it require—to participate in such memory?

Subsequent generations of writers who carry the burden of Holocaust history write from a memory vacuum, from the liminal space constituted by the conscious awareness of a history from which one has been materially but not culturally excluded. Such nonwitnesses, as Gary Weissman suggests, might be thought of as being “haunted not by the traumatic impact of the Holocaust, but by its absence” (22). Here the trauma extends not in the reenactment and refiguring of the event, but in the absence of conscious or unconscious perception of the reality of the experience; it is “in the utter ‘lack’ of . . . history, that trauma is transmitted” (Pisano, 144). Such “absent memory,” as Ellen Fine puts it, “is filled with blanks, silence, a sense of void, and a sense of regret for not being there.”<sup>15</sup> Post-survivor generations thus extend the legacy of the Shoah not from memory’s structuring embrace, but, barred from memory’s authorizing structures, from “a perception of memory as *loss*.”<sup>16</sup>

In pushing through this liminal space, those writing outside of direct experience and memory—not the memory of loss, but memory lost to history—as Fine proposes, “continue to ‘remember’ an event not lived through. Haunted by history, they feel obliged to accept the burden of collective memory that has been passed to them and to assume the task of sustaining it” (126). Collective memory in this context might be thought

of as an act of defiance in the face of absent memory, in its transmission creating a collage of individual, collective, and historical memory, linking personal and collective identities within moments of traumatic history. Memory thus becomes in some ways synonymous with history, with histories, with stories of trauma. Here we find a redefinition of memory as mediating, fluid, a pivot or axis around which generations intersect and impart not so much knowledge itself as what it means to know and what the requirements are for such knowledge. As Sarah Wildman, whose grandfather fled Vienna after the 1938 Nazi annexation of Austria, asks: once the past has been at least provisionally uprooted, “What, now, do we do with that knowledge?”<sup>17</sup> Such uncertainty speaks in part to the way in which past knowledge impinges upon and redefines established notions of identity and place. So, too, knowledge carries with it the obligation to participate in the narratives of the past, to reckon with the moral weight of such knowledge. As Auerhahn and Prelinger provocatively suggest, “To understand the implications of the Holocaust is to be traumatized by them, while to achieve understanding it is necessary to traumatize oneself with them” (41). If narrative is memory’s spokesperson, then, as the biblical injunction commands, “impress these . . . words upon your very heart . . . teach them to your children . . . reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away” (Deuteronomy 11:18–20). The obligation of the transmission of memory is that which Wiesel refers to as our “supreme duty towards memory.”<sup>18</sup> Collective memory is thus memory transferred, undertaken, and performed. As Susan Sontag proposes, collective memory is “not a remembering but a stipulating: that *this* is important, and this is the story about how it happened.”<sup>19</sup> That is, the recovery of Holocaust memory takes on the voice of moral injunction. However, as Lewis A. Coser, in his introduction to the influential work of Maurice Halbwachs—who perished in Buchenwald—*On Collective Memory*, reminds us, “It is, of course individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past.”<sup>20</sup> As Wildman, in her quest to reconstruct her grandfather’s past, comes to appreciate, “It’s not possible to remember alone” (368).

For post-Holocaust generations, identity formation and the making of personhood exist within a continuum of trauma and thus of memory that both diminishes and gains momentum as time moves farther from

the point of traumatic origin. Here collective memory might be more usefully conceived as the expression of a collective, prosopopoeic voice that enlivens and reanimates the past, both the living and the dead. On the borders of memory, such writers enter the fragile space of a memory not their own. As Fine suggests, they “cannot retrieve memory but can present it only as absent” (195). Thus, in navigating the lacunae created by absent memory, post-Holocaust generations attempt to recreate the past in response to absence. That is, with loss as both companion and adversary, those who write from an ever-increasing temporal, geographical, and experiential distance both write memory and write *into* memory, assuming the project of bearing witness within and as partners in a collective framework for both the expression and working-through of trauma. To this end, Fine proposes:

Linking the collective memory with the absent memory is the central image of the shadow that recurs throughout the texts, both in psychological profiles dealing with the post-Holocaust generation, and in memoirs and literary works by them. If survivors such as Elie Wiesel bear witness to their descent into Holocaust darkness, their legacy of night has surely cast a long shadow upon the succeeding generations. On one hand, the shadow is a hovering presence that will not go away, binding those who were not there to those who were, both dead and alive. On the other hand, the shadow is absence, a reflection of the reality that took place but not the reality itself. (127)

It is the acutely felt recognition of the space between “the reality that took place but not the reality itself” that outlines the writing of both the second and third generations of Holocaust narratives. After all, as Ruth Franklin, in *A Thousand Darkesses*, suggests: “Every act of memory is also an act of narrative. Total recall is beyond human capabilities, and so our minds distill and pound the chaos of life into something resembling a coherent shape. From the very moment we begin the activity of remembering, we place some kind of editorial framework, some principle of selection—no matter how simple, how neutral, or how unconscious—around the events of the past . . . a faithful and yet inevitably incomplete representation of actual events.”<sup>21</sup> Franklin’s argument, however, makes

allowance neither for the accuracy of witness testimony nor for the adherence to such testimony on the part of the postmemory generation. Thus despite the decades of writing and volumes of materials exposing the precise details of the succession of events that contributed to the Shoah, as Julia Chaitin, in “Living with the Past,” suggests, “As the years go by, understanding the significance the Holocaust has for the survivors and their descendants often appeared to become a more complex, rather than an easier undertaking.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Survivor Writing and the Landscape of Memory**

Survivor writing might be said to draw upon both midrash and lamentation, two defining traditions in Jewish literary expression. Midrash consists of stories that interpret and extend narratives and events in Jewish history. Midrash reanimates the events of these stories through their retelling, demonstrating their persistent relevance and resonance in the present, “an imaginative narrative commentary,” as Sarah R. Horowitz proposes, “composed after the initial narrative of experience” to comment on and offer a “reading” that explains the significance of the event in Jewish intellectual and cultural thought.<sup>23</sup> Midrashic stories are openings for moments of continuity and amplification, an invitation to carry the weight of memory and history into the present, thus extending interpretively Jewish history, identity, and collective memory. Such narratives hope to fill in the gaps created by time, distance, and understanding. But, so too, midrashic narratives must, in their retelling, recreate those gaps, those breaks and absences that are evoked and provoked by the experience and narratives they interpret. Midrash might be thought of as an enactment of analysis. That is, midrashic modes of expression must perform those very moments of rupture they invoke. Horowitz puts it this way: midrash “intercedes to fill in cognitive and psychological absences in history and memory while also reproducing gaps . . . that require of readers not distance but moral and emotional engagement” (290). Thus we find in such narratives characteristic patterns and tropes that enact rupture, disjunction, incoherence, confusion, ellipsis, and disintegration as a means of filling in the gaps in perception. As such, Holocaust literature, engaged in the reenactment of trauma, as Berel Lang suggests, “pushes certain features of writing to their limits.”<sup>24</sup>

Such midrashic occasions for engagement and recognition and the strategic discordances they create take place alongside of lamentation, an “elegiac response to catastrophe.”<sup>25</sup> The literary convention of moral lament originates in the Hebrew Book of Lamentations, the prophet Jeremiah’s mourning the destruction of the First Jerusalem Temple in 586 B.C.E. Here the prophet assumes the voice of the messenger and transmits memory in a speech act of elegiac reckoning and condemnation. The figure of the messenger is a recurring presence in first-generation Holocaust narratives, that is, stories, memoirs, and semiautobiographical accounts written by survivors. We find such a figure—the unheard messenger—an often dismissed harbinger of disaster and warning, in the opening chapter of Wiesel’s *Night*, for example, in the character of Moshe the Beadle, who brings news of annihilation to the disbelieving Jews of Sighet. So, too, we come across a weary messenger in Fink’s “A Scrap of Time,” in the guise of the peasant who lives to tell the tale of calamity. Isaiah Spiegel presents an enigmatic herald in the character of a loyal canine companion in the short story “A Ghetto Dog,” who in his attempts to warn his mistress, “seemed to wear the twisted grimace of a dog in lament.”<sup>26</sup> The messenger in these narratives functions as the reluctant but persistent Charon to, as Wiesel noted, “the universe of the damned.”<sup>27</sup> Here the envoy is the source of both a midrashic invitation to understanding and an injunction to lament. In evoking the two ancient paradigms of lamentation and midrash, Holocaust narratives turn to these longstanding and defining literary and cultural conventions in response to the devastation of the Shoah as well as its aftermath. Both midrash and lamentation, through their literary invocation of trauma, invite the reader to participate in an act of consanguineous understanding and ethical engagement. Here midrash and lamentation give voice to memory, breathing life into absence, excavating memory from beneath the eroding “layer of years,” as Ida Fink puts it (“Scrap of Time,” 3).

Fink’s “A Scrap of Time” paradigmatically enacts the complexities for the survivor in reigning in and capturing memory and wresting it into the coherence of narrative. In doing so, she portrays the difficulties in containing and restraining the shape-shifting nature of memory so characteristic of survivor writing. As Auerhahn and Prelinger reveal, “The ability to narrativize is dependent on the capacity to impose a plot or structure on a story whereby the end is made immanent throughout the work;

constructing a narrative depends on the perception of continuity in experience” (40). Disruptions or interruptions in the narrative transmission—like the dropped baton of relay—threaten the necessary momentum of resolve, of, in the case of Holocaust memory, the survival of memory and the continuum of moral reckoning. Because the work of memory, in the case of the traumatized survivor, resists sequential coherence and authorial constraint—as Kertész acknowledges, “I couldn’t command my memory to follow orders” (*Fatelessness*, 186)—those narratives that attempt to resurrect memory in order to transmit experience must navigate the gaps and derailments caused by the erosions of time and the absence of all moorings and precedents within which to contextualize both the experience and the emotional response it evokes. For those who lived through the concentration camp experience, as Auerhahn and Prelinger note, “One sought in vain for temporal precedents or causal explanations to link the experience to, for one was totally cut off from a past or a future that in any way seemed relevant to, preparatory for, or ensuing from the present” (39). Thus there were no organizing principles or structures upon which to draw in contextualizing and producing such memories.

Such excavation, as Kertész describes the haphazard process of memory work, is a matter of “rummaging through your memory,” sifting through the pieces and fragments of a severed past (*Fatelessness*, 147). How, in other words, might the survivor go back in time and approximate the immediacy of fear and distress, returning to a condition, as Fink describes it, of an “infantile state” of innocence, caused by what was then the “poverty of our imaginations” (“Scrap of Time,” 5)? How does the survivor return to a condition directly preceding awareness, those moments before being assaulted by cognition? That is, narratives by survivors attempt to create simultaneously conditions of unawareness and awareness. Such narratives yield double-voicing or double-vision in which we are presented with events as yet unanticipated and unimagined, where, as one of Fink’s characters forewarns, “every threshold led to the unknown, or rather to some disaster of an as-yet-unknown nature.”<sup>28</sup> Such tension emerges from the sure knowledge of the imminent unfolding of events to come. As the survivor-psychiatrist treating the distraught Art Spiegelman in the second volume of *Maus* proposes in response to the writer-narrator, infantilized and blocked by his inability to “visualize” and “imagine” the experience of the concentration camps: “BOO! It felt

a little like that. But ALWAYS!”<sup>29</sup> Spiegelman attempts to recreate the unforeseen suddenness of shock but also the consistency, the prolonged “always” of fright. Acknowledging the fragmented, alarming, and unruly disguises of memory, firsthand accounts of the Shoah navigate through, as they reflect upon, the “the ruins of memory” that participate in the reenactment of trauma (“Scrap of Time,” 3). In such narratives, the past eclipses the present and puts no purchase on a future that, as the protagonist in Wiesel’s novel *The Gates of the Forest* all too lamentably discovers, will be forever “mortgaged from the first day, from the first cry,” to the past.<sup>30</sup> In summoning those “scraps of time,” as Fink describes the traumatized and broken shape of memory, survivor narratives give voice to memory as the master trope of Holocaust testimony (“Scrap of Time,” 3).

The undisciplined and uncontrollable condition of memory is symptomatically enacted through aporia, in its focusing of doubt, the fitting trope for literary attempts to access and to control memory, to turn it into the coherent, unfolding design of narrative. In the meditations on the difficulties of finding an organizing principle around which to “talk about” that fractured, isolated particle of “time” that forever reconfigured the contours of long-entrenched codes of conduct and moral agency, Fink expresses the doubt and uncertainty that are a measure of the fractured memory she attempts to reconstruct. “I want to talk about a certain time,” Fink’s narrator begins “A Scrap of Time,” a narrative that culminates in a secondhand account of the roundup and murder of a community of Jews “in a dense, overgrown forest, eight kilometers outside of town,” an “execution” that “itself did not take long; more time was spent on the preparatory digging of the grave” (10). Among those systematically, barbarically murdered was the narrator’s cousin David, whose rumored death, with his arms “wrapped . . . around the trunk” of a tree, “like a child hugging his mother,” was unremarked and unmarked, since no eyewitnesses remained to tell the tale (*ibid.*). The absent narrator will take up, as Wiesel once put it, “the call of memory, the call to memory” (“Hope”), but only after painstaking, guarded, and qualified consideration of the task she approaches with such cautious restraint. The narrator’s confession that such disclosure was “so long” in coming, motivated by the fear of “forgetfulness” and indecisiveness, is contextualized against a cautionary, speculative backdrop: “I didn’t know how” (“Scrap of Time,” 3). The narrator’s plaintive and apologetic tentativeness about getting the details

right arises from her fear of memory's lapses, but also is a fitting response to the corruption not only of time—"measured not in months nor by the rising and setting of the sun, but by a word"—but also of language, words that "became devalued," corrupted, distorted, and fractured, their meaning contaminated (4). Such uncertainty and apprehension about how to "talk about [that] certain time" suggest the narrator's reluctance in confronting the imprecision of memory and language. Thus Fink's narrator will circle around memory, fearful of being consumed by it, but also of getting it wrong and thus participating in the very misrepresentation, distortion, and fraudulence for which she has contempt.

So, too, the narrator's hesitancy as well as the crafted repetition that slows the movement of the prose represents those guarded attempts to acknowledge the events to come. The repetitions of word and phrase that govern the story's opening pages reveal a wary reluctance to tell the story, at the same time that this repetition exposes the urgency to bear witness to the events that the narrator, though absent, heard. Time, through repetitive verbal motion, stands still, is arrested by circling back on itself. "I *want to talk*," the narrator implores us; "For so long *I have wanted to talk*," "not in the way *I will talk* about it now" (italics added). The repetition serves here to hold the narrative in place in an attempt to contain the trauma. Moreover, the shifting verb tense of the repeated phrase signals the narrator's surrender to memory: "I *will*" speak of the traumatic events that took place and that take place, still, in memory's return. The troping of syntax here, the repeated phrase as well as the polyptotic repetition of a word in varying grammatical forms—"want," "wanted"—reenacts the traumatic moment of rupture; such repetition prevents egress and represents the insistence of memory, its undeniability. The characteristic figures of repetition here are not only reiterative patterns of emphasis—although surely that—but are additive as well.<sup>31</sup> That is, the reiteration stops the narrative in its tracks, but also moves the narrative inside the experience, that is, inside memory. In a characteristic move, the narrator makes emphatic the historical antecedents and conditions in which she and others were—and are—enmeshed still: "We had different measures of time, we different ones, always different, always with that mark of difference . . . We who because of our difference were condemned once again, as we had before in our history, we were condemned once again" ("Scrap of Time," 3). Here the repetition of "different"—different from

other ones—in its adjectival form contrastive but relational, gives way to “difference,” a singularly distilled noun that signals complete transformation, an experience of identifying separation and isolation that creates the conditions for “condemned . . . condemned once again” (3).

The cautionary restraint with which Fink begins “A Scrap of Time,” her uncertainty, her verbal self-corrections, and the doubt, and sense of inadequacy she expresses—“I wanted to . . . I couldn’t . . . I didn’t know how,” “I should not have written,” “I forgot to say” (3, 4, 6)—create the conditions for the understated yet emphatic precision of memory that, once summoned, takes the narrator back to the specifics of time and place. Her initial aporia becomes, as the narrative progresses, less of an impasse to a particular time and place and more a way of grasping and realigning traumatic experience. As Wiesel has said, “I write to understand as much as to be understood” (“Why I Write,” 13). So, too, Fink’s reimagined narratives, the “I” that guides the reader into memory, attempt to capture the immediacy of time and the contours of space. Like visual representations, her short stories become arrested in the moment of traumatic impact, but also in those moments leading up to the trauma. Thus Fink locates memory in place; everything moves aside for the stark reenactment of events. With painstakingly controlled precision, Fink recreates in sharp detail the events leading up to the death of her cousin, shot with others on his transport in the woods not far from their village.

Entering the space of memory, Fink returns to a time before the devastation, slowing the gradually emerging “picture” of the world in which she finds herself, that “beautiful, clear morning . . . still fresh; its colors and aromas have not faded” (“Scrap of Time,” 5). As in a dream’s scrim against reality, the narrator “wanted to delay that moment,” to stave off the plummeting into horror that we anticipate (5). Just as in a dream’s hiatus, that moment when one is “not yet afraid” (6), the senses are sharpened, one’s perception is heightened, and the surrounding sights, and sounds, and colors become exaggeratedly acute. Fink’s narrator “sees” again “the bright blue dress that I was wearing when I left the house,” the “grainy golden mist with red spheres of apples hanging” in the orchard, “the shadows above the river damp with the sharp odor of burdock” (5). Here the language simulates the experience of awakening from a reverie.

At the moment of such awakening, like the sudden burst of a drowning person through the scrim of water’s thick canopy, Fink’s narrator emerges

into the exposed space of trauma. The reflective, unhurried pace of the narrative abruptly gives way, and buckles, moving faster, gaining momentum as the reverie turns into nightmare, into the trauma that the narrator can hold off no longer, the moment shattered, the immediacy of memory's traumatic rupture capsizing those prolonged moments in anticipation. The narrative ends abruptly, unframed by a return to the time before or after: "and that was the way he died" (10). At its close, the narrative pace accelerates; the earlier repetition and hesitancy are cast off, making the experience of being out of control emphatically felt, and the narrative is cut off abruptly at the moment of death. The sudden, understated close to the story precludes any consoling narrative frame, the language itself ruptured. The narrator breaks out of her reverie, like a glass shattering. And thus the shards, the fragments, and sharp pieces of memory, "scraps" turned brittle, cut through the defenses of time and concealment. The stylistic rent of the fabric of the narrative becomes a metaphor for loss, for mourning, and for grief. Ultimately unprotected by repression, the quietly insinuating ambush of memory shows itself symptomatically. We, in the company of Fink's narrator, are there, suspended in the moment of horror that hangs over the narrative, at once preventing closure all the while rendering cessation, life and voice interrupted.

Thus, for the survivor, the past exists in the immediacy of the present; memory warps and bends to suggest the ways in which time, as Fink shows, like the blocks of sidewalk in her childhood village, becomes "fractured and broken," a time no longer "measured in months and years . . . but by a word" (3). In survivor narratives, as Wiesel's young protagonist in the novel *The Gates of the Forest* reveals, "The past became present" (58). Here the past is not viewed by the survivor in relation to the present, but rather "becomes present," erupts through the language of trauma and occupies the space of the moment. Such traumatic rupture thus changes the shape of memory, and memory participates in the collapse of time and discrete space. Memory assaults the survivor palpably, transporting him or her back to a place from which there is no escape, and time, no longer linearly unfolding, following the course of nature and creed—"months and years . . . the rising and setting of the sun" ("Scrap of Time," 4)—stops at those moments of reawakened traumatic memory. In such moments, past and present coalesce. Thus the disas-

sociated narrator of Wiesel's story "An Old Acquaintance" will, with the understated certainty born of direct experience, pose the conditions for the survivor: "Can one die in Auschwitz, after Auschwitz?"<sup>32</sup>

The dissolution of discrete boundaries and demarcations of time is a recurring representation of present anxiety in survivor writing. In *Days and Memory*, Charlotte Delbo, imprisoned in Auschwitz for her work with the French resistance, asks, "How does one rid oneself of something buried far within: memory and the skin of memory. It clings to me yet. . . . I have no control over it" (1). What lies underneath the "skin of memory"? Skin cleaves, providing a protective covering, but, as Delbo admits, such a casing "gives way at times, revealing all it contains" (3). Skin ruptures, splits open, and although it "mends again," it always threatens to give way, exposing, as Delbo suggests, "a twofold being. The Auschwitz double" (3). The disfiguring condition of the divided self shows itself to be a recurrent pattern in survivor writing. The insistently hovering double, like an uninvited but familiar companion, an "old acquaintance," as Wiesel confesses, becomes, in the literature of the survivor, a metaphor for the dislocated, rearranged, and "black and buried" ("An Old Acquaintance," 113). As the Egyptian-Jewish writer Edmond Jabès has suggested, "One has to write out of that break, out of that unceasingly revived wound."<sup>33</sup>

## The Second Generation: A Witness to Memory

"The steady drone of memory always present."

—THANE ROSENBAUM, "CATTLE CAR COMPLEX"

If, as we have suggested, writing about the Holocaust from direct experience poses difficulties in accessing and representing traumatic memory in coherent, transmittable narratives, then how much more labyrinthine must it be to wrest imagined memory from absence, from a lack of first-hand knowledge of the events one hopes to shape into a story by which to understand the suffering of others? Those who grew up under the shadow of the Holocaust, that is, those whose parents survived the ghettos, concentration camps, or lived in hiding during the Nazi genocide, perceive their identities as fashioned largely by events that predated their existence. As one of second-generation novelist Thane Rosenbaum's

characters suggests, his parents' "reminiscences had become the genetic material that was to be passed on by survivors to their children."<sup>34</sup> While not exposed to the direct trauma of the Holocaust, the children of survivors, in many instances, carry on the legacy of that traumatic rupture in their parents' lives, either with a willful, deliberate embrace or through the patterns and underlying strains of their upbringing. Their embrace of their parents' Holocaust legacy is a response to their having grown up under those whose watchful gaze was itself shaped by experiences that were ineradicably defining of self. Art Spiegelman, for example, in the opening pages of *Maus I*, the biographical memoir of his father's experience in Auschwitz, sets the stage for the events in Europe that will unfurl by a brief but unshakable account of a seemingly insignificant incident that marks his own, far less remarkable, childhood.

When heedlessly left behind by some friends with whom he has been roller-skating, Artie, the young narrator, seeks the solace of his father: "My friends," he wails, "skated away without me" (Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 5). His father's response to his young son's typical childhood mishap and distress measures his own traumatic past and the subsequent knowledge gleaned of human motives and the limitless capability for betrayal and treachery: "Friends? Your friends? . . . If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week . . . Then you could see what it is, Friends!" (ibid.). These lessons, as yet enigmatic to the young narrator, eclipse the young Artie's commonplace childhood sense of outrage and dejection. Such cautionary, preemptive lessons—the hidden dangers of the father's past kept in only provisional abeyance—create the conditions for Artie's developing sense of the world.

The son's own emotions are necessarily minimized, trivialized, by his father's trauma-driven response, which becomes all-defining by its very force. His father's admonition about baseline human treachery harbors an as yet undefined but ominous portent of the influence of his own dark history on his son's view of the world. Vladek's cryptic and final edict on Artie's puerile—though entirely predictable and expected—reaction to his friends' childish unkindness exposes the ways in which Vladek's specific past is the lens through which all subsequent actions are perceived and mediated. This childhood incident, trivial and common enough though it may be, is emblematic of something else: a secretive knowledge

that only the initiated can fully appreciate. There is no space for childish feelings. Thus, the father's pronouncement on the motives of others and of the conditions of the post-Shoah world into which Artie has been born is the standard against which all actions, failed expectations, and fears are measured. Such knowledge—a hard-gleaned knowledge of suffering and survival—learned by Vladek in the unfolding course of his forced hiding, the ruthless pursuit of his family and friends, his incarceration in Auschwitz, and the magnitude of losses he suffered becomes the anxious legacy that his son inherits. It is a legacy that, as one of Thane Rosenbaum's narrators admits, "flowed through his veins" ("Cattle Car," 5).

As therapists Pierre Fossion, Mari-Carmen Rejas, et al., in their study of the family dynamics among Holocaust survivors and their descendants, argue: "In our family cases, CHSs [children of Holocaust survivors] were born after their parents' liberation from concentration camps and so were not directly exposed to Nazi persecution. They experienced the effects of trauma indirectly, through their parents' references . . . From birth on, they absorbed their parents' distress."<sup>35</sup> Nadine Fresco, writing about the French second generation, notes: "These latter day Jews are like people who have had *a hand amputated that they never had*. It is a phantom pain, in which amnesia takes the place of memory."<sup>36</sup> The indirect experience of trauma, the absorption of and preoccupation with suffering, is shown to be one of the most characteristic and repetitive tableaux in the literature of second-generation Holocaust writers. The oblique and often tangled and ambivalent ways in which the children of survivors take on their parents' prolonged trauma is transferred generally in one of two ways: through open and constant discourse about the past, specific stories of what the survivor experienced, or—and in many ways, more insidiously—through silence, a weighed silence that becomes solidified as felt anguish on the part of the survivor parent and dread on the part of his or her offspring. The child of Holocaust survivors, as psychologists Auerhahn and Prelinger argue, "may assimilate the parent's trauma both by what is said and done and by what is left unsaid" (33). This duality between silence on the part of the survivor and direct exposure to the past through the parents' candid stories shows itself to be the entwined nature of the transmission of the Holocaust to the children of survivors. One of Thane Rosenbaum's second-generation narrators puts it this way:

“Some family histories are forever silent, transmitting no echoes of discord into the future. Others are like seashells, those curved volutes of the mind—the steady drone of memory always present” (“Cattle Car,” 5).

In terms of the former, the exposure to a heavy, fraught silence, Fossion and others describe the survivor parents’ reticence as measures intended both to protect and cope: “Silence is their only means of expression, and this silence resulted in a discontinuity in the historical legacy of the family” (521). But in cases where the offspring of survivors feel themselves to have been shut out, the Holocaust, even in its narrative absence, becomes their legacy. In either case, as Fine suggests, “Whether indirectly or directly, whether through a curtain of silence or an avalanche of words, the Holocaust seeped into the collective consciousness of those born in its aftermath” (129). In defining the conditions of the legacy bequeathed to him, Rosenbaum’s Adam Posner, a recurring character who appears in a variety of guises in each of the stories in the collection *Elijah Visible*, maintains the essentializing identity of the child of survivors. After his parents’ death, he becomes their surrogate in grief: “Their own terrible visions from a haunted past became his. He had inherited their perceptions of space, and the knowledge of how much one needs to live, to hide, how to breathe where there is no air. He carried on their ancient sufferings . . . forever acknowledging—with himself as living proof—the umbilical connection between the unmurdered and the long buried” (“Cattle Car,” 5–6). So, too, Spiegelman will frame himself within the metaphorical bars of his own grief in response to his mother’s suicide in the episode “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” in the first volume of *Maus*: he can only see his own trauma as derivative of that of his survivor parents (Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 100–103).

Austrian-American psychoanalyst Judith Kestenberg has argued that, symptomatically, “The need to discover, to re-enact, or to live the parents’ past was a major issue in the lives of survivors’ children. This need is different from the usual curiosity of children about their parents. These children feel they have a mission to live in the past and to change it so that their parents’ humiliation, disgrace, and guilt can be converted into victory over the oppressors, and the threat of genocide undone with a restitution of life and worth.”<sup>37</sup> For those of the second generation who found themselves the subsequent child of parents who had lost children to the Holocaust, the replacement fantasies further complicate the trau-

matic engagement and surrogacy. The second volume of Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus, A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* is dedicated to the novelist's "ghost brother" Richieu, who, separated from his parents, perished during the war years (Spiegelman, *Maus II*, 15). Spiegelman's autobiographical narrator expresses his anxieties and fears regarding his relationship to a brother he never knew, a brother who "got killed," the narrator tells his wife, "before I was born. He was only five or six" (15). Art's fantasies about his unknown brother whose presence existed as "mainly a large, blurry photograph hanging in my parents' bedroom," takes on magical and magnified properties over the years of the narrator's upbringing (ibid.). The fantasy, "ghost brother," looming larger-than-life in the shadowy image on the wall, becomes the measure for the narrator of all he is not, of all he could never be: a replacement for the lost child. A constant reminder of his inadequacies, the photograph gazes down from the wall of his parents' most private space as a "reproach" (ibid.). As Art admits: "The photo never threw tantrums or got in any kind of trouble . . . It was an ideal kid, and I was a pain in the ass. I couldn't compete" (ibid., boldface in original). The narrator's aggravating sense of inadequacy and disappointment accentuates the impossibility of competing with a dead child, a child who never grew into adolescence, but rather, fixed in innocence and in incorruptible time in the frame of the photograph, becomes the iconized reminder of the magnitude of his parents' loss and his own inadequacy under the gaze of that loss.

His parents' loss is a measure of Art's miserable failure to live up to his fantasized notions of the ideal child—the dead child—that he can never replace. In a disturbing assessment of the intuited and largely self-imposed sense of responsibility foisted upon the child of survivors, Bukiet, the son of survivors, in his introductory remarks to the collection *Nothing Makes You Free*, proposes that the children born of survivors came to embody "a retroactive victory over tyranny and genocide."<sup>38</sup> As the grandchild of survivors Darren Sush suggests in reflecting on his own family dynamics: "For Holocaust survivors, their children were a representation of survival. The second generation reassured survivors that their conflict was ending and their life would continue."<sup>39</sup> Such a behest—however fabricated from guilt and a need to make amends both on the part of parent and child—imposes an impossible standard of measurement.

Such imagined feats of herculean and prodigious power, “this cosmic responsibility,” as Bukiet calls it, always fall short of one’s expectations, as they must (14). “Actualities,” as one of Delmore Schwartz’s youthful characters says in a different but no less apprehensive context, “always fall short.”<sup>40</sup> In these fraught ways, the second generation, those children of survivors, who, as Bukiet insists, “wouldn’t have stood a chance one single decade earlier,” assume with anxious agency the continuing burden of testimony (13).

Awash with insecurities and anxieties about their own motives and about the limits of imaginative reinvention, the second-generation witnesses to the Shoah, characteristically and self-reflexively call attention to their own failings and shortcomings in drawing upon a memory not their own. As Bukiet suggests, the essential and not-insignificant distinction between survivor writing and second-generation narratives is one of proprietary rights and authorial legitimacy: “even when the First Generation claim they’re writing fiction, their pages usually bestride memoir. They have no need to imagine; we have no option but to imagine” (21). While any act of narrative invention is an act of the imagination, if only in finding the right language, structures, and images for expression, the second generation writes nonetheless with the corrective, cautioning voice of the real witness surreptitiously looking over a collective shoulder—that “witness who wouldn’t go away, this author of all that silent testimony,” as one of Rosenbaum’s narrators ruefully acknowledges.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, although such second-generation memories are borrowed, tentatively secured, such a “tainted inheritance, secondhand knowledge of the worst event in history,” as Bukiet suggests, becomes the source of anxious expression in the narratives of the second generation, narratives constantly aware of their own inadequate appropriation of a trauma that is and is not their own (18). The greatly discomfited Spiegelman, as he draws it, perched at his drawing board metaphorically atop a pile of dead bodies, self-consciously exposes his deeply felt sense of fraudulence and inadequacy in attempting to capture his father’s suffering: “Just thinking about my book,” he reveals to his wife, “it’s so *presumptuous* of me. . . . How am I supposed to make any sense out of Auschwitz? . . . Of the Holocaust?” (14).

The commercial success of his enterprise compounds his pronounced sense of indiscretion in thinking that he could take on the task of trans-

mission. He exhibits anxiety, not only about capitalizing on the suffering of others, but also about the trajectory of his own life: “No matter what I accomplish,” Art tells Pavel, his survivor psychiatrist, “it doesn’t seem like much compared to surviving Auschwitz,” which is the final measure of character for this second-generation child of survivors (44). This realization is infantilizing for him, as we see his figure illustrated in increasingly diminishing dimensions, until rendered childlike, exposed, undefended, and in need of protection and succor: “I want . . . absolution,” Artie, regressed to his infantile state, swallowed by the adult-size chair, cries: “No . . . No . . . I want . . . I want . . . my MOMMY! . . . WAH!” (42). This regressive and largely exaggerated reaction suggests in the lives of the second generation a fear of the loss of autonomy, the impossibility of self-determination against the backdrop of the looming presence of the Holocaust.

Thus second-generation writers such as Spiegelman, Rosenbaum, Bukiet, and others might be thought to experience, as Miri Scharf suggests, “secondary traumatization,” an “indirect psychological impact” that allows for empathetic identification.<sup>42</sup> Such identification often becomes the source of self-conscious hyperbole, as we find in Spiegelman’s ironic self-analysis: “Don’t get me wrong. I wasn’t *obsessed* with this stuff . . . It’s just that sometimes I’d fantasize Zyklon B coming out of our shower instead of water . . . I know this is insane, but I somehow wish I had been in Auschwitz with my parents so I could really know what they lived through” (16). Despite the capacity for self-parody, to be sure, as Ruth Franklin suggests, “If there can be said to be a defining characteristic of the second-generation writers, it is that the Holocaust lies at the very foundation of their consciousness” (233).

Second-generation narratives thus reveal patterns of anxious, fraught witnessing in an attempt, as Bukiet writes, to “cope when the most important events of your life occurred before you were born” (18), but also to be faithful to the testimony and memory of those whose experiences came to define the generation that emerged under the constricting shadow of that particular past. Franklin has argued that the second generation, in their fixation on their parents’ experiences and on their own “place” in that history, has “appropriated the rhetoric of the survivors” (225). “In their efforts to establish themselves among the initiated,” Franklin argues, far too many second-generation writers show themselves to be im-

posters; they “construct their identity—at least their literary identity—in a way that displaces the actual survivors” (225). Such a gratuitous and largely self-serving appropriation, Franklin implies, constitutes a form of “identity theft” that undermines the very task of responsible and judicious representation (215). What Franklin seems to misunderstand is that the second generation is precisely not writing about the Holocaust. Rather, they write of the inheritance of trauma. They are not interested in displacing actual survivors or their testimonies. Instead they are invested in revealing how the survivors’ experiences have splashed their descendants with psychological, sociological, and theological detritus. Taken to its logical conclusion, Franklin’s position leads one to a *reductio ad absurdum*.

While, to be sure, the second generation occupies a precarious place—at once the direct heirs to a legacy of traumatic rupture and the indirect recipients of an inheritance existing only in their imperfect imaginations—the recognition of their tenuous connections to such knowledge creates the duality that maintains their uneasy suspension between knowing and not knowing. As Hoffman writes, “I suppose the Holocaust for me, as for every child of survivors, is, if not an embodied internal presence, then at least a deeply embedded one” (181). Second-generation narratives both allow themselves authority in their proximity to survivors and bow to its absence, acknowledging their tenuous place in the transmission of a memory not their own. The second generation thus finds itself unceremoniously poised, both banned and initiated: not there but *there* in the imagination, an uneasy place to find oneself suspended. Auerhahn and Prelinger describe this uncomfortable position, the dichotomy between the survivor’s perspective and that of his or her child, as “The difference between a scene *before* [one’s] eyes and a scene *in* the mind’s eye . . . the difference between a visual experience and a visualized experience, between metaphor actualized . . . and reality imagined, between trauma in reality and trauma in fantasy, between horror imposed and terror self-imposed” (33). The second generation might be considered thus the “in-between generation,” as Litvak-Hirsch and Bar-On have suggested, the initial conduit through which memory is bequeathed—however messily and ambivalently transmitted and appropriated—and passed on to the next generation, a generation who did not grow up under the di-

rect gaze of the past and who enter that history voluntarily but without direct escort.

### **The Third Generation: A Call to Memory**

The third generation, a genre still in formation, thus arises from the tension between knowing and not knowing, direct and indirect witnessing, in the tenuous transfer of memory and trauma. If the second generation found the past imposed on them—either by consanguinity or propinquity—then the third generation, the generation of grandchildren of survivors, comes to the past through a far more circuitous passage. At the same time, because the past of the Holocaust has not been directly levied on them, standing as sentry in the direct path of their own ethical comportment and responsibility, the third generation comes to the knowledge of the realities of the past unprompted and unguided. Because the third generation has not been directly implicated in the aftereffects of the trauma nor the restitution for loss, the generation of grandchildren—adoptive witnesses—take their place on the stage of history and enter the landscape of memory in pursuit of the tapestry of familial connections and continuity, of “unlocking family history and reactivating family roots” (Fossion, 523). In active pursuit of a legacy of which they are only half-aware, at best, the third generation pursues the tracks of the past alongside their own lives, lives less circumscribed by the events of the Holocaust than those of their parents, the second generation who, as Litvak-Hirsch and Bar-On uncovered, “served as a ‘buffer’ between their parents and their children, with no opportunity to process their own experiences.”<sup>43</sup> Less encumbered than their parents—the second generation who grew up with survivors—and with more “psychological freedom” to develop their own ethical measures and to pursue the past as well as the future, the third generation must contend with the vast lacunae created by the erosion of time and memory (Litvak-Hirsch, 775). They enter the stage of history on the sidelines, initially as observers, and then as interpreters of the past. No longer there in front of them, the past must be searched for, summoned from afar, stories wrested from obscurity, “no longer something to be recalled from a distance,” but “there . . . to walk into if [one] dared.”<sup>44</sup>

The third generation invariably meets the challenge to confront the past with the unpracticed, yet insistent resolve of the uninitiated. Such persistent pursuit is characteristically received with resistance from parents who tried to protect their children from the knowledge of the realities of the Shoah and also by grandparents who, although generally more prone to narrate their past lives to their grandchildren, are resistant to the efforts to uncover that which was secreted in their own attempts to repress and compensate for both individual and collective grief. One of Molly Antopol's characters admonishes her inquisitive granddaughter in the short story "My Grandmother Tells Me This Story": "I don't understand you. All your life you've been like this, pulling someone into a corner at every family party, asking so many questions . . . Why don't you go out in the sun and enjoy yourself for once, rather than sitting inside, scratching at ugly things that have nothing to do with you? These horrible things that happened before you were born."<sup>45</sup> The third generation, however, finds its place among those "things" that stealthily have come to have everything to do with them. The retrieval of the past for the third generation becomes central to identity formation; such stories—continuing memories—provide a framework for identity within which one might, as Efraim Sicher suggests, "give meaning to the future."<sup>46</sup> As Sarah Wildman admits of her quest to unearth her grandfather's past and her generation's uncertain, inexact, and indefinite search: "Part of it . . . was an endless foray into my own identity. It felt so arbitrary to be American. If I could better understand my grandfather's story . . . as I spent month after month in Europe, I might discover why I could never feel settled, or fully happy, at home, why I felt most alive in transit, moving. A wandering Jew!" (11). Thus, as Pisano argues, the Shoah "becomes not merely a part of . . . collective and individual identity, but the basic infrastructure through which [the] world is shaped" (80). The call to memory for the grandchildren of survivors shows itself in the construction of narratives that generate an understanding of events at least as much as they attempt to transmit knowledge. These writers attempt to evoke the presence of the past, to view it alongside their own histories in the making. Such imaginative returns, for the third generation, take the form of both literal and metaphorical journeys to reenact and reclaim the past. In such narratives—fiction and memoirs—absence emerges as a marker of place, but also as a trope for those who perished or who no longer exist to tell

their own stories. The third generation locates itself within and in defiance of such absence. The narratives that emerge find their place among “the art of atrocity,” as Lawrence Langer suggests, and thus create a contemporary “framework for responding” to the “horror” of the Shoah, “for making it *imaginatively* (if not literally) accessible.”<sup>47</sup>

The third generation’s intervention in the charged dyad between the survivors’ generation and the second generation complicates the ongoing transmission of Holocaust memory. As Darren Sush puts it: “Growing up as the grandson of Holocaust survivors, I’ve heard countless stories about the atrocities that took place during the Holocaust. My mind was bombarded with images and visions that I could not possibly fathom as truth. My family told these stories to me not to scare me into being a ‘good Jewish boy,’ or even to teach me about the possibilities of being a man, but so that I would learn of the struggle of those who came before me, and therefore could better appreciate what may lie ahead” (Sush). Inherent in this triangularity, despite its complications and incompleteness, is an extended lineage of generations invested in negotiating and preserving the memory of the Shoah, all conservators of a shared intergenerational inheritance. What forms will such representation take in the future? As one grandchild of survivors asks: “I wonder how my children will feel . . . I wonder how much connected they’re going to be to that notion of utter loss. I can only fathom it to a certain extent because I know what my grandmother went through. They won’t know my grandparents. They won’t know what it’s like to have lost . . . How do you pass that on?” (Pisano, 152). Such anxieties about the future of memory haunt contemporary narratives. As Wildman uneasily acknowledges of the narrative histories unearthed through indirect yet tenacious resolve: “The stories were tactile and yet dusty, faded; they were real, and yet totally unfathomable. And if they felt this way to us, what would they feel like to those who came after?” (12). How, in other words, does one responsibly transmit absence and loss? How does one render visible an ellipsis? What kinds of contemporary midrash will continue to be told?

Third-generation literary representation of the Holocaust at this point in time negotiates the elusive terrain existing between proximity and distance. Engaging a variety of tropes, these writers display both *familial* and *affiliative* characteristics of postmemory. Consequently, they demonstrate the possibility of having both a Jewish and a universal impact. In

addition, living “after such knowledge” enables these writers to live in the present by permitting them to work through their Holocaust inheritance therapeutically. As such, the generations of post-Holocaust writers engage in an ongoing dialogue that carries memory into the future, mediating loss and acknowledging at once the weight and the relief of a shared inheritance. As novelist David Grossman suggests, “lost stories” must “be told again and again because that is the only way to assemble the traces of identity and fuse the fragments of a crumbled world.”<sup>48</sup>