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Aarons, Victoria, Berger, Alan L.

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CHAPTER 6

Refugee Writers and Holocaust Trauma

As I see it, the connection to the past that I define as postmemory is mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation.

—MARIANNE HIRSCH, INTERVIEW

Judith M. Gerson points to the fact that “there is no universal understanding of the terms *refugee*, *survivor*, and *immigrant*.” Nevertheless, the distinctions are important for several reasons: “First . . . [they] indicate the comparison that immigrants make when referring to themselves in contrast to refugees or survivors.” Consequently, she adds, “it offers a meaningful distinction for them.” “This distinction,” she continues, “helps mark survivors’ suffering as the real suffering.” Moreover, “the contrast immigrants draw between themselves and refugees suggests that scholars and the lay public alike need to rethink their more common assumptions that lump immigrants, refugees, and survivors together into a single category of Holocaust survivor . . . erasing potentially important differences among them.”¹ Nevertheless, there is fluidity to the distinction between survivor and refugee. Refugees are survivors of a certain type. This point is illustrated by the narrator in Margot Singer’s “Lila’s Story” who remarks—concerning her grandparents, pre-Shoah immigrants who spent the war years in pre-state Israel: “So you could say that they survived, but they were not *survivors*, not . . . in the new sense of the word.”²

Nevertheless, third-generation refugee writers share similarities with third-generation grandchildren of survivors: we think here especially of their concerns for the inflection of traumatic memory in their lives, their search for a useable past, their relationship to the Shoah, the function of their inheritance in shaping their identity. Moreover, the trope of photographs plays a vital role in this generations' archival research. Marianne Hirsch underscores the role of photographs: "For me, the key role of the photographic image—and of family photographs in particular—as a medium of postmemory clarifies the connection between familial and affiliative postmemory."³ Hirsch's distinction between familial and affiliative postmemory emphasizes the difference between an intergenerational vertical identification of child and parent occurring within the family and the intra-generational horizontal identification that makes that child's position more broadly available to other contemporaries" (Hirsch, *Poetics Today*, 29:1, Spring 2008, 114–15). Affiliative postmemory has great applicability to the third generation who receive their "memories" mediated by the second generation, by their own archival research, by pilgrimages to sites of memory, and by the proliferation of Holocaust museums. They do not have the experience of growing up in survivor households.

In this context, however, it is important to note that the third generation does *not* seek to appropriate survivor memories, which is an important point raised against the second generation by both Gary Weissman and Ruth Franklin.⁴ Weissman critiques what he discerns as a type of envy amongst those who seek to appropriate survivor memory as their own. Franklin's critique deals with what she feels are inappropriate claims to be a "second-generation witness." Their critique is perhaps best tested by the writings of descendants of refugees. On the one hand, the stories these granddaughters and grandsons hear deal both with the approaching fury of the storm, the storm itself, and its aftermath. On the other hand, the third generation of those who survived the Shoah, as this study shows, treat the Holocaust as both a subject of archival research and a highly personal matter, or in Mendelsohn's felicitous phrasing, the relationship is one of "proximity and distance."⁵

This chapter discusses the writing of three granddaughters: Johanna Adorján—born in Stockholm—whose paternal grandparents were both survivors *and* immigrants; Erika Dreifus—American-born—whose pa-

ternal grandparents were German Jews who immigrated to the United States in the late 1930's; and Margot Singer—also born in America—whose paternal grandparents were German Jews who fled Europe and came to Israel as immigrants when the country was called the Yishuv. Singer's maternal grandparents were rooted in Eastern Europe in what was called the Pale of Settlement. We are fully aware that Adorján has written an autobiographical, nonfictional memoir and that Dreifus and Singer have written works of fiction. Nevertheless, both of these distinct genres are united by a search for more knowledge about the Shoah. Furthermore, each treats the shape-shifting inheritance of trauma and personal identity in the third generation subjected both to the claims of the past and the pressures of the postmodern moment while seeking a way forward and, as noted, the trope of photographs plays a significant role especially in Singer's work.

Johanna Adorján

Johanna Adorján is a Berlin-based journalist who writes about cultural affairs for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Her Hungarian-born survivor grandparents committed suicide in 1991. *An Exclusive Love: A Memoir* (2010) is a debut work that was a bestseller in Germany. It was written in German, and has been sold in eighteen countries.⁶ Adorján imaginatively recreates the last day of her grandparents' lives. Her memoir concludes with the police report of their suicide. The majority of her book, however, is a quest to connect with the Jewish dimension of her ancestry and to better understand the continuing impact of the Shoah on her own identity three generations after the Shoah. Adorján's memoir is a multifaceted quest for detailed knowledge of the Shoah, about which her grandparents were largely silent. It seeks a better understanding of the "mysterious" Jewish half of her identity and a firmer grasp of her relationship to her grandparents, especially her grandmother. She describes her work as "imagination based in facts."⁷

Adorján's own third-generation and postmodern identity is a complex phenomenon. Her father is a baptized Protestant who married a non-Jewish Danish woman. The author was raised without formal religious affiliation. She has two younger brothers who evinced little interest in their family's history. Istvan, "Pista," Adorján's paternal grandfather, sur-

vived two Nazi camps: Mauthausen, an “extermination through labor camp” and Gunskirchen, one of Mauthausen’s sub-camps. Vera, his wife whose parents were murdered by the Nazis, lived on forged identification papers in Budapest and gave birth during the war to Adorján’s father in a hospital there. Following the war, the couple lived under communist oppression in Hungary, fleeing the country after the 1956 revolution to settle in Denmark where they abandoned any Jewish affiliation, “Jews above Judaism” as one reviewer terms them (Botton).

The author remembers that as a child she visited her grandparents and, although she was twenty-one at the time of their death, had never asked about their wartime experience. The memoirist utilizes her reportorial skills seeking to fill in the blanks about their lives. Since, as noted, her grandparents never spoke about the Holocaust, neither their son, Adorján’s father, nor his sister, was able to provide many details. Consequently, Adorján’s archival research consists primarily of interviewing her grandparents’ friends in Hungary and in Sweden. In the process of doing this she deepens her self-knowledge thereby broadening her understanding of history in general and of the Shoah in particular. In this sense her journey resembles the one taken by Daniel Mendelsohn in the course of his research and writing of *The Lost*.⁸ Interestingly, however, Adorján attests that she would not have written her memoir without the approval of her father, who was the manuscript’s first reader and to whom she dedicates her book. Her aunt was also instrumental in her writing the book and was the second reader.

Her memoir is a story of several intergeneration and interpersonal relationships: that between her grandparents, those between her grandparents and the people who knew them during—and after—the Holocaust, and the author’s own relationship to her Jewish identity and to the Shoah. Her grandparents were intelligent and attractive people; he was an orthopedic surgeon and she a multilingual physiotherapist, interpreter, and opera connoisseur. Adorján discovers through her interviews that Vera thought no one aside from Pista loved her and that she had initially threatened to kill herself if her husband did not return from Mauthausen. Years later in Denmark, with Pista suffering from a fatal disease, they implemented the suicide pact they had first made much earlier in Hungary. The couple read *Final Exit*, a volume providing detailed instructions on how to commit suicide.⁹

Writing as an astute observer of everyday life, Adorján provides a plethora of imagined domestic details: the recipe for the cake Vera might have baked as she prepared for her and Pista's last day, her grandmother's feelings about her flower garden which she would never see again, the sorting of clothes to be given to relatives, Vera's saying goodbye to the family dog, her insistence on cleaning the house, and the last discussions between Vera and Pista. Adorján's literary nonfiction has neither chapter titles nor numbers. This reinforces the reader's impression of the psychically disjointed nature of the author's continually moving between interviews and geographical locations. Moreover, Adorján's personal reflections are significantly informed by relaying snippets of Holocaust history, which she hears from Vera's good friend Illi.

Adorján typifies the third-generation literary nonfictional representation of the Shoah, assuming responsibility for transmitting a story that is both very personal and yet remote. Moreover, and intimately connected to the Holocaust, her search, like that of Jonathan Safran Foer, Nicole Krauss, Julie Orringer, Daniel Mendelsohn, and others in this generation, involves discovering and exploring her own Jewish roots; in the context of an interfaith marriage her father is Jewish, although by definition rather than practice, her mother is not. Hers is a variation of Hirsch's postmemory. It manifests itself as a nagging feeling of incompleteness that makes her both "sad and angry" when she discovers that her grandfather excluded his own children from knowledge of their Jewish heritage (Adorján, 75). Similar to the feeling of most German Jews in the interwar period who felt primary allegiance to Germany, Adorján's grandfather wrote a brief memoir in which he observes that "he comes from a family who felt they were Hungarians of Jewish origin" (Adorján, 74). Seeking to find out details of her grandparents' Holocaust experiences, she muses: "I lack a piece of myself. Something is missing, and I don't even know exactly what" (Adorján, 75). This leaves the author with the trauma of a perpetual fear of rejection and deprivation. "The deepest feeling known to me," she writes, "is the sense of not belonging." (50).

Adorján's interviews provide a composite, and ambiguous, portrait of her grandparents. The interviewees, themselves in their nineties, rely on memories which have begun to fade. It is worth noting that Adorján's father accompanied her to some of the interviews, and her aunt came along on at least one such occasion. Erzsi, Vera's Hungarian friend

and Adorján's primary informant, reveals that Vera, despite her apparent warmth and social graces, was in reality a woman with two personalities: "One was very formal. The traditional feminine image" (49). Erzsi was the only person who saw her other side. "Then," reports Erzsi, "she was silly. We laughed a lot, and she acted like a teenager" (49). But Vera was not a happy woman. She was "very insecure," thinking that no one in the world, except Pista, liked her. Only Erzsi and Knud, the grandparents' Danish physician, "saw behind the façade her grandparents had erected" (161). Vera, although she avoided the death camps, suffered from depression, which Primo Levi long ago identified as the "survivors disease."¹⁰ Consequently, her love for Pista was "exclusive." Erzsi correctly observes that Vera, like Etty Hillesum, had her life interrupted by the war and never fully recovered from the trauma.¹¹

Johanna Adorján has ostensibly inherited, so to speak, her grandmother's identity trauma. While it is not literally possible to inherit someone else's memory, this does not prevent Johanna from musing, "No one loves me, no one can love me. That is my deepest conviction and . . . my greatest fear" (Adorján, 50). Hearing Erzsi's report, Adorján thinks that she would like to call everyone she knows and tell them: "I'm not crazy after all. I'm only my grandmother's granddaughter. She had it too. She was like me. I am like her" (ibid.). This identification with the grandmother is also pronounced in Margot Singer's "Lila's Story." In Johanna Adorján's case, however, her feelings of insecurity concerning her identity may also be linked to her parents' lack of formal religious observance. In addition, since her family of origin rarely spoke about the Shoah, Adorján inherited silence. She told an interviewer that she believes "silence is inherited." And "if one generation doesn't ask questions, the next will."¹² In this sense, she confirms sociologist Marcus L. Hansen's law of the third-generation return: What the son wishes to forget, the grandson wants to remember.¹³ While the second generation, the offspring of Holocaust survivors, does not forsake their Shoah legacy, Adorján — as a non-Jewish member of the third generation — strives to carve out a memory.

Adorján's memoir interjects accounts of the history of Hungarian Jewry before and during the Shoah, reminding the reader that such bits and pieces of history intrude on the everyday lives of the third generation: it consists of fragments stitched together to form a fragile whole. Hungary's Jews were the last to be deported, the military war was es-

entially over but the fanatical drive to exterminate the Jews continued undeterred. The cattle cars kept rolling to Auschwitz. Reflecting on the surreal situation, Illi, another survivor friend of Vera, whom Adorján interviews, muses: “That’s how history unfolds. The Holocaust was raging, Jews are transported to Auschwitz in their hundreds and thousands to be gassed—and others know someone who can get them false passports, and they quarrel with their parents about the totally normal aspects of life”(Adorján, 61). Adorján discovers that the commonly received Holocaust narrative needs adjusting. Concerning her own family’s survival, she has a myriad of questions. Vera had given birth to Adorján’s father in September 1944 and had initially hidden him in a drawer: “But how did she manage to hide herself? Where was that drawer? How did she contrive to get the false papers allowing her to avoid arrest and deportation? Why did she have (forged papers) and my grandfather did not? How did my grandmother survive the war” (27–28). Complete answers to these questions may, as Mendelsohn, Foer, and other third-generation witnesses discover, never be known.

Adorján and her father go on a pilgrimage to Mauthausen, the site of memory and consequent trauma where Pista had been imprisoned. The occasion brings up a host of unresolved, and perhaps unresolvable, issues notably the stark contrast between the mundane everydayness of the present, nearly idyllic setting and the grotesque extermination that occurred there in the past. She notes that there are occasional traffic jams when too many visitors arrive, and muses ironically that contemporary visitors to the camp, unlike those interned there during the Shoah, are free to walk out. The horrors that were perpetrated on prisoners are ancient history to many contemporary visitors. Adorján and her father view a documentary about the camp. During the film, her father experiences deeply personal emotions. He “[puts] a finger under his glasses a couple of times. I don’t dare to turn to look at him” (10).

Later, Adorján displays the sense of responsibility for, and protection of, memory of the Shoah that characterizes the third generation. She is angered by the bored indifference of “ugly teenagers” (Adorján, 10) on a class trip to the camp who are inappropriately dressed, noisy, and busy texting. The Shoah may be chronologically remote, but it is an event that remains intensely personal. Without personal memory but with individual responsibility, Adorján is determined to remember. Looking at

the “hospital” where prisoners died in agony during needless operations without anesthesia, her overriding thought is: “but my grandfather survived it. He did survive it” (11). Again, questions present themselves: “What was it like for him in Mauthausen? Did he work in the [infamous] stone quarry? Or as a doctor? What did Jewish doctors do in a concentration camp? Which patients could they have treated for what?”(12). Pista took the answers to these and other questions with him to his grave.

Further details emerge about her grandparents when Adorján’s father tells her about a box of her grandfather’s papers he has in his possession. They discover that Pista had been liberated from Gunskirchen and not Mauthausen. But the father, who had taken some papers from his parents’ home after their death, never looked at them. In contrast, the author is vitally interested in discovering all that she possibly can about her grandparents. This situation recalls in principle the relationship to Holocaust history portrayed in the previously cited Israeli film “The Flat” (*Hadira*) by Arnon Goldfinger. Here the daughter of deceased survivors wants to throw all of her parents’ papers in the garbage, whereas her son is obsessed with tracing his grandparents’ Holocaust history, which includes their bizarre relationship both before *and after* the Shoah with a German Nazi who had served on Adolf Eichmann’s staff. The grandson travels to Germany to meet the daughter of the Nazi. Initially she is cordial and forthcoming. However, she is unable to own the fact of her father’s murderous past. Adorján discovers through her interviews that Pista and Vera think of themselves as thrice-born: their biological birth was followed by a second birth in 1945—the end of WWII—which, in turn, was superseded by their emigration to Denmark—their third birth.

Adorján is consumed by the issue of her personal and cultural identity. She feels confused and incomplete because her grandparents were ambivalent about their own Jewish identity; on the one hand they downplayed that identity, while, on the other hand, they were interested in the Jewish identities of other people. Moreover, they had wondered about, and were deeply troubled by the possibility that their son’s future father-in-law had been a Nazi. The grandparents remain Jews but with no connection to the religious or ritual dimension of the tradition. Johanna acknowledges to a friend that she has never dated a Jewish man. Her friend prods her to go on J-Date. She does so but is disappointed because many

of those who respond to her posting have not told the truth about themselves, being especially evasive or downright deceitful about their age. Although she does eventually meet someone acceptable on J-Date, the relationship does not work for some unspecified reason.

An Exclusive Love references two photographs in Adorján's possession that record her grandparents' final visit to Budapest, five months prior to their suicide. One photograph portrays her grandparents sitting at a table with Adorján's mother and "a few old people whom I don't know" (Adorján, 136). Her grandmother appears less glamorous than the author remembers her. Although Vera is laughing in the photo, her body language tells a different tale. She holds her handbag firmly on her lap "in what looks a slightly anxious or tense way." Her grandfather sits behind the table and looks "with a sad smile" at two laughing women whom Adorján does not know. The second photograph shows only her grandfather. It was taken on a café terrace and Pista is looking at the table in front of him, although it is outside the frame. He "looks troubled" (Adorján, 137). While photographs do not play a major role in Adorján's memoir, their depiction—not of the Shoah itself—but of two of its victims after the war, whose body language and facial expression reveal anxiety, sadness, and tension serve an important function. Hirsch, as noted earlier, describes photographs depicting pre-Shoah Europe and lost family members as "ghostly revenants from an irretrievably lost past world" (Hirsch, 115). While Adorján's grandparents did survive, they nonetheless bear the psychic cost of that survival. They embody Hirsch's concept of "ghostly revenants."

Adorján is, however, unwilling to abandon her search for a cultural home. Her subsequent journey to Israel is psychologically enriching and comforting. She feels at home, musing: "Ah, here you all are!" (Adorján, 83). This feeling of at-home-ness brings to mind what the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs describes as collective memory, a phenomenon referring to the cultural reinforcement experienced by being in the presence of one's own people. The issue for Adorján is, however, complicated; the Jews both are and are not her own people. Adorján is not the daughter of a Jewish woman and therefore is not halakhically considered Jewish. However, her paternal grandparents were Jewish survivors of the Shoah. Moreover, on the return flight she is surrounded by elderly Israeli

married couples. The women talked to their husbands nonstop “in a tone of slight annoyance, which did not seem to bother the men” (84). This reminds Adorján of her grandparents. The author wonders if that eternal discussion is typically Jewish. Furthermore, she wonders if it is typically Jewish “to kill yourself when you have survived the Holocaust” (86). Here she reflects the fact that many survivor writers did take their own lives. The list includes Primo Levi, Paul Celan, Arthur Koestler and his wife, Piotr Rawicz, and the Polish, non-Jewish Tadeusz Borowski. Moreover, she questions whether or not the phrase itself—“typically Jewish”—is legitimate or is merely a cultural stereotype?

The memoirist is conflicted about the motive of her grandparents’ double suicide. On the one hand, it may reflect fear. Vera’s act may be seen as “A woman’s fear of being unloved, alone, a burden on others” (146). On the other hand, it may also be interpreted as an act of aggression toward her own children, “behaving . . . as if she were entirely alone in the world” (*ibid.*). These questions will remain unanswered. No one ever really knows fully what is at work in the mind of a suicide. Adorján also wonders if survivor post-war suicide is “typically Hungarian” (86). She notes that although Hungary has one of Europe’s highest suicide rates, most Hungarians do not kill themselves. Her musings reflect her uncertainty over her own identity. Although she is not Jewish according to Jewish law, she feels psychologically comfortable with Judaism and at ease while visiting the Jewish state.

Adorján’s father and aunt had prevailed upon Pista to write a memoir for the family. He responds at age seventy-seven with a seven page document written, ironically, in a flawed German. His testament is a “Jewish family history through and through” (74). Although he himself came from a family of assimilated Jews, he notes that several relatives were gassed in Auschwitz. But for his children’s sake he explains the meaning of the Passover Seder. This calls to mind Orringer’s bridge metaphor: Jewish ritual may continue to address Jews who ostensibly have little connection to Judaism. Adorján feels both sad and a “little angry” (75) when reading the document. Her grandfather had in effect stolen a part of her identity. “Something is missing, and I don’t even know exactly what” (75). Although Adorján’s Jewish identity remains elusive, she nevertheless feels a sense of responsibility for transmitting her traumatic Holocaust legacy.

Erika Dreifus

Erika Dreifus's debut short-story collection *Quiet Americans: Stories*¹⁴ was named a Sophie Brody Medal Honor Title by the American Library Association and recognized as a "Notable Book" by *The Jewish Journal* and "Top Book" by *Shelf Unbound*. Dreifus, who has a master's and a doctoral degree from Harvard, blogs at "Practicing Writing," and has an e-newsletter "Practicing Writer." She is also the Media Editor of Fig Tree Books. *Quiet Americans* is an extended and exquisite meditation on how the Shoah continues to inflect the identity and perceptions of third-generation writers. Although Dreifus's title brings to mind Graham Greene's classic novel, she attests there is no "intended direct connection between the two titles" (Anne Stameshkin "Mishpocha and Beyond: An Interview with Erika Dreifus," *Fiction Writers Review*, May 30, 2011, 8). The trope of silence, however, plays a significant role in several of her stories as well as serving as the collection's title. The volume's seven stories, which the author—echoing Adorján—describes as "fact-based fiction[s]" (Dreifus, "Everafter? History, Healing, and 'Holocaust Fiction' in the Third Generation," 524) are united by the tropes of anxiety and insecurity. The stories utilize various angles of vision to explore the Holocaust's ongoing traumatic ripples on the descendants of those who fled prior to the full onslaught of the maelstrom. Dreifus confides:

The more I write, the more I discern the ways in which so many of my characters (or their parents and grandparents), having been chased from their original "living space," still search for psychic and physical territory, still don't feel safe, still cannot fully "live" their lives. The shadows of Nazi persecution remain, whether the main characters are refugee-survivors, people who managed to survive the extermination camps, or children *and grandchildren* of either of those first two groups.¹⁵

Moreover, Dreifus boldly problematizes the terminological discussion. Unlike Gerson, she conflates "refugee" and "survivor," assigning the term survivor to both survivors and refugees. Although this leads to terminological inexactness, Dreifus addresses the issue head on. She rhetorically enquires: "If my grandparents were not 'survivors,' then how can I have

remained so affected? So tied to this territory? Has there been something toxic, wrong, inauthentic about my obsession? Have I, too, in the words of Alain Finkielkraut, become an ‘imaginary Jew?’” (“Ever After,” 527–28).

Responding to her own query, Dreifus attests “I don’t think so. And not only because not everything I write is about ‘me’” (528). She attests: “All of the stories in *Quiet Americans* reveal a deeper understanding of what it means to be Jewish and an American and a survivor” (Christi Craig, “An Interview with Erika Dreifus,” posted May 23, 2012). This begs the question, precisely what has she survived? Dreifus writes that her book is dually inspired. On the one hand, there is the impact of “the experiences and stories of my paternal grandparents, German Jews who immigrated to the United States in the late 1930s” (Bio, Chatty long version, Dreifus website, 2). A second source of her inspiration is her “own identity as a member of the ‘third generation’” (ibid., 2–3). We believe that Dreifus is an inheritor of the postmemory instilled in her by listening to her grandparents’ stories.

In a candid self-assessment of her book, Dreifus writes: “Lots of flashbacks. Lots of pain. Freud might identify quite a bit of ‘remembering and repeating’ in my pages” (525). He might also, we believe, recognize Dreifus’s attempt at “working through” her traumatic legacy. More specifically, the author writes that only after reading the late Israeli scholar Dan Bar-On’s 1995 book, *Fear and Hope: Three Generations of the Holocaust*, was she able to “reflect seriously on the possibility of a heritage handed to the third generation that required healing. Working through” (525–26). Furthermore, attests Dreifus, writing itself is “the best way to explain the Holocaust—and its after-effects—for myself and for the world” (“Ever After?” 527). Writing for oneself connects to Hirsch’s notion of familial post-memory. Writing for the world is akin to Hirsch’s afflictive post-memory.

Chronologically, the volume’s first three stories “For Services Rendered,” “Matrilineal Descent,” and “*Lebensraum*,” occur either before or during the Second World War. The final three tales “Floating,” “The Quiet American, Or How to Be a Good Guest,” and “*Mishpocha*,” happen in the first decade of the twenty-first century. “Homecomings,” set in 1972, is literally in the middle of the collection. Josef and Nelly are continuing characters in the second, third, and fourth stories. All of the stories, as noted earlier, reflect the burden of a traumatic inheritance

while exploring various ways of seeking to work through this troubled legacy. Dreifus emphasizes the omnipresence of the Shoah's shadow by prefacing her volume with two epigraphs, one from Gunter Grass: "It doesn't end. Never will it end." The second references the survivor and Nobel Laureate Imre Kertész: "Which writer today is not a writer of the Holocaust?"

Three stories in the volume—"Floating," "Homecomings," and "The Quiet American"—deal with the ugly persistence of post-Shoah anti-semitism. "Floating" juxtaposes the immanent birth of Mia and Jerry's grandchild—his parents had fled Hitler in the 1930's—and the Jew-hating poetry of Amiri Baraka (born Everett LeRoi Jones), New Jersey's African-American poet laureate. Writing in the wake of 9/11, the delusional Baraka claimed that Jews were responsible for the Islamic terror attacks on America, which killed 3000 people, Jews and Muslims among them. In contrast to his hate-filled work, Mia recalls her own pregnancy experience, which was infused with love. She "floated out of the [obstetrician's] office" after discovering she was pregnant with her first child. The embryo itself is described as floating inside her. Finally, she and Jerry floated through the entire pregnancy. Now the parents of Allison and Andrew, they anxiously await the birth of their daughter's baby, their first grandchild.

Mia, heart regulated by a pacemaker, head assaulted by migraines, is portrayed as phobic and anxiety-ridden. Both her mother and Jerry's parents have died, as has her brother's wife from breast cancer. Her brother himself has prostate cancer. Times have changed; it has become more difficult to "float." Conjuring the role played by science, or pseudoscience, in the Shoah the author observes that contemporary fetal testing—a sonogram, which is a different type of photography, has revealed that the fetus has a potential defect—served only to heighten anxieties. "Floating," Mia muses, "is so much more elusive in this life, with the holes of loss and absence, the demands of replacement, the trials and terrors tearing through the hours and days and years" ("Floating," 108). Furthermore, her own children argue about Baraka's right to free speech. Allison is vehement in her denunciation of his blatant antisemitism. Andrew, her brother, believes that the man deserves the right of free speech. Allison contends that Baraka may be entitled to express himself, but "not quite in this way. And not on taxpayer money" (110). Dreifus invites her readers to

contemplate the split in third-generation responses to antisemitism and the impact of the Shoah, and to speculate how the fourth generation—in the form of Allison’s about-to-be-born child—will react to the Holocaust and to continuing expressions of anti-Jewish bigotry.

“The *Quiet American*” focuses on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, a German word that translates roughly as “coming to terms with the past.” Written from a second-person point of view, Dreifus tells the story of Rebecca, a third-generation American, who reluctantly travels to Germany. She is a passenger on a tour bus in Stuttgart, birthplace of her paternal grandparents. Greta, the German tour guide repeatedly exclaims: “This building had to be rebuilt after the war. The original was destroyed by the bombings” (“*Quiet*,” 116). Her preoccupation with buildings comes at the expense of any stated concern about either Jewish or other civilian lives lost. Rebecca’s dread at the prospect of going to Germany had been emphasized earlier in the story when she tells her American Jewish friend, also the granddaughter of European-born grandparents: “I don’t know which is worse, at this point. To be an American in Europe—or to be a Jew” (114). She, like Maria in “*Floating*,” is fearful, worried about terrorism in both America and in Israel. Her unease intensifies during the bus tour.

Most of the others on the bus are German. This prompts Rebecca to wonder what they did during the war. Seven passengers are not German. In addition to Rebecca, there is an American family of four from Chicago and a middle-aged British couple. The Americans remain quiet in the face of Greta’s constant refrain about the allies who bombed Stuttgart. But the British man, who had been in the RAF during the war, exclaimed that while he may not have been responsible for the Stuttgart bombings, if he had been he would “hardly be ashamed” (121). Everyone stares at the man. After improbably giving Greta a tip—“it’s the polite thing to do” (*ibid.*)—and as she remembers that twenty years earlier on a trip to Paris her father had tipped their guide, she runs after the British couple. She profusely thanks the former bombardier for speaking up. Rebecca has been rescued from her silence. Moreover, Dreifus symbolically delivers her message that Jewish refugees in America remained largely silent, speaking only to each other in their native languages about the Shoah-wrought devastation. In addition, she reinforces Wiesel’s contention that silence in the face of assaults on the facts of the Shoah serves

to kill the victims a second time. Two generations removed from the Holocaust, Rebecca's identity and perception of the world remain inflected by its traumatic legacy.

"Homecomings" treats the issue of "working through," as well as the significant role played by photographs in linking generations affected by the Shoah. In a 2011 interview, "Manheim in Pictures and Prose," Dreifus attests that the story derives its *raison d'être* from her paternal grandparents' 1930s immigration, and her grandmother's traumatic 1972 return to her natal city.¹⁶ The story begins with Nelly Freiburg collecting the belongings of her recently deceased mother Sophie Kahn. Sophie, a refugee from Manheim who escaped to Brazil and died in Brooklyn, has left very little, except for photographs. Nelly looks at and removes the photos: she is struck by the one of her parents' wedding in Germany. Moreover, she recalls that Nazis had beaten her father during Kristallnacht before sending him to his death in Dachau. Three other photos command her attention: that of her husband Josef and herself surrounded by other refugee friends and relatives in New York; their son Mickey, his wife Paula, and their three-year-old daughter Rebecca. The earlier photos are in black and white, emphasizing their distance from the present, while Rebecca's photo is in color.

The trip to Mannheim is a wedding anniversary gift from Mickey and Paula to Nelly and Josef. It coincides with the 1972 Munich Olympic Games during which eleven Israeli athletes were murdered by Black September terrorists. Intensifying the hovering shadow of the Shoah is the fact that Dachau is only six miles from Munich's Olympic Stadium. Although staring at the "grainy newspaper photos" (88–89) of the camp with some fascination, the thought of going anywhere near there "made [Nelly] retch" (89). Furthermore, she refuses to sleep in Germany. Instead, she and Josef stay with cousins in Strasbourg and take a day trip to Mannheim. Returning to America, Nelly reflects the ambivalence of many European-born Jews expelled from their homeland. She muses that in the future she might return to Mannheim with her son and daughter-in-law and their two young girls—Paula is soon to give birth to a second daughter—when the children are old enough to understand. Maybe she would be ready then to visit her house and her father's grave. Or maybe not. The story begs the question: Which country, Germany or America, does Nelly consider home? "Emigration," writes Eva Hoffman, "is an

enormous psychic upheaval under any circumstances. It involves great, wholesale losses: of one's familiar landscapes, friends, professional affiliations; but also of those less palpable but salient substances that constitute . . . one's psychic home—of language, a web of cultural habits, ties with the past. Perhaps even ties with the dead.”¹⁷

“Homecomings” reveals the power of photos in helping shape narrative. Dreifus confides that “visiting a location isn't necessarily essential for every writing project. But I believe that for ‘Homecomings,’ it mattered very much” (“Mannheim,” 5). Elsewhere, in an interview Dreifus emphasizes that all the things mentioned in her short story, including the descriptions of the city itself “. . . are based on these real places and what I saw.”¹⁸ Dreifus shares several photos including a flower shop; Mannheim's central railroad station, Ifflenstrasse—the street where her grandmother had lived. Unlike the fictionalized grandmother, Dreifus's real life grandmother never got out of the car to visit her apartment. On the contrary, she just sat in the car and wept. The final photograph shows the location of her father's prewar office. All the photos are in black and white; only one of them has a barely visible person. These photographs concretize Dreifus's imagining the city where her parents lived prior to fleeing Europe. Furthermore, they reinforce Hirsch's attestation: “Historical photographs from a traumatic past authenticate the past's existence, what Roland Barthes calls its *ça a été* or ‘having-been-there,’ and, in their flat two-dimensionality, they also signal its insurmountable distance and ‘derealization’” (Hirsch, 116).

“For Services Rendered” is the tale of Dr. Ernst Weldmann, a German-Jewish refugee pediatrician, who, along with his family, is permitted to immigrate to America in the spring of 1939, several months after Kristallnacht. The conceit of the story pivots on the fact that Weldmann is spared owing to the direct intervention of Emma Göring, the wife of Reichsmarschall Herman Göring. Weldmann had treated the couple's young daughter Edda. Emma is grateful for his skill and compassion, not caring that he is Jewish. Bidding Weldmann farewell, she tells him that she and Emma will miss him. Summoning the physician to Carinhall, the Görings' official residence, the Reichsmarschall confides that this was not the first time Emma had intervened. His fellow Nazis were displeased by her actions.

At the conclusion of the war, American newspapers carry accounts of the Nuremberg Trials of high-ranking Nazis. Göring's photo is prominent among them. Unlike photos of victim families, this one elicits neither empathy, compassion, sadness, nor a desire to identify. Nor is the photo a screen protecting Weldmann, the refugee viewer. Instead, Weldmann views the photo through a physician's eyes musing about how much weight the beefy Nazi has lost. Furthermore, the photo prompts him to wonder about the fates of Emma and Edda. Consequently, Dreifus implicitly and explicitly raises the question of the relationship between justice and compassion. Should Weldmann follow the norm of the pediatrician and seek to ensure the safety of Edda by writing a letter to the court on behalf of Emma urging leniency? Or should he be faithful to the memory of the Jews, including his extended family, who perished in the Shoah? The top Nazis deserved punishment, although Göring had committed suicide in prison while awaiting execution. The doctor worries that Edda Göring will lose both of her parents.

"For Services Rendered" reveals a deep divide in the refugee community. Some, like Klara, Weldmann's wife, want justice to prevail. Nazis are murderers and deserve to die. Others, like Weldmann, advocate compassion—not for Nazis but for their relatives, some few of whom were among the helpers of the Jewish people. Although Klara thinks him crazy, Weldmann writes a letter on Emma's behalf to the judge presiding over her trial for war profiteering. Emma responds, thanking him. Moreover, she reports how grateful she is for the Jewish letters of support she has received. Dreifus told an interviewer that the complexity of the story fascinated her. Dreifus' tale is based on a bit of truth. Her grandmother had been a nanny for the family of an affluent Jewish physician whose daughter was the patient of a German refugee pediatrician who had been told by his Nazi employer in Germany, "You should get out of here" (Stameshkin, 4). Refusing her father's suggestion to "look this guy up," she wanted to explore the story as a work of fiction rather than nonfiction. Like many in the third generation, she utilizes both testimony and imagination in seeking to articulate the manifest questions associated with the hovering shadows of their Holocaust inheritance.

Dreifus's short story "*Mishpocha*" ("Family") constructs the tropes of anxiety and the internet, "The electronic Tree of Knowledge," in telling

of David Kaufman's—a second-generation member—quest for learning more about his parents' pre-Holocaust history and better understanding his Shoah-related legacy. An only child, David was raised in silence about his parents' Holocaust experience. Consequently, he muses: "When most of your family has been . . . *exterminated*; when to the question, 'how did your parents meet?' you must reply . . . that their fingers had quite literally entwined over a soup kettle at a European DP camp in 1945 . . . when you've had no true aunts or uncles or cousins, you're bound to have questions" ("*Mishpocha*," 131). Moreover, these questions leave him prone to phobic assumptions including fears of terrorism—a common thread among Dreifus's protagonists—although he is married and has two children.

Following his mother's death, David laments that there were still "so many questions" (127). Issues of intergenerational communication between survivors and their children are a key focus of many second-generation writings. Collectively, the second generation has been termed the "Children of Job."¹⁹ Their parents' difficulties in communication were frequently based on the false assumption that if they remained silent they would spare their children any anguish. The absence of pre-Holocaust family photos from his parents' side contrasts sharply with an abundance of such photos from his wife Barbara's side of the family. Her German ancestors settled in Philadelphia in the first third of the nineteenth century. Many vital records "testified to their place in the world, their role in history" ("*Mishpocha*," 132). Moreover, they had left an abundance of photographs, which documented their presence. David, on the other hand, yearned "to know who [his parents] were before he knew them, before they were his parents" (134).

Although initially overwhelmed by the sheer number of online Jewish genealogy groups, and dubious about the accuracy of DNA tracing, David is persuaded by a friend—a daughter of survivors—and ultimately submits a DNA specimen during the "Days of Awe" (*Yamim nora'im*), the time between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when, according to traditional beliefs, one's fate for the coming year is decided. Much to his surprise and initial disbelief, he discovered he was related to five other men who shared a surname "McMahon. Or MacMahon" (148). David speaks to his father, now in a nursing home and the walls of whose room are covered with photos of his two grandchildren, and discovers that his

parents had adopted him, as his mother was unable to bear children because of what had happened in the camps. His biological mother was Catholic and unmarried. Therefore, like Adorján, David is not Jewish by birth. However, the identity of each is tied to the Shoah.

Dreifus, the granddaughter of refugees, seeks to imagine the psychic life of a son of survivors. Queried about her choice, the novelist attests that “at this point, I’m not sure that I remember deciding to write a story with a 2G protagonist” (email message to Berger, October 2014). This is not, however, an uncommon phenomenon: Anne Raeff, a daughter of refugees, imagines the complex relationship between a survivor, her daughter, and her granddaughter in *Clara Mondschein’s Melancholia*; Thane Rosenbaum, a second-generation novelist, turns his attention to the third generation in two novels, *The Golems of Gotham* and *The Stranger within Sarah Stein*; and Nicole Krauss, a third-generation writer, portrays the psychic sequelae of the Shoah in the lives of a brother and sister in the second generation in her novel *Great House*. Dreifus’s character differs however in that while he vigorously affirms his Jewish identity, he also reaches out to the non-Jewish people to whom he is linked by his DNA. Consequently, Dreifus implies that after the Shoah the catastrophe may help understanding between Jews and Christians. Moreover, her conflation of survivor and refugee is sure to spark intense and continuing debate over the precise meaning of the two terms as well as what they share and where they diverge. In addition, the term “quiet” itself raises questions. Is this silence meant to reflect awe, fear, respect? Each of these possibilities, in turn, raises additional queries.

Margot Singer

Margot Singer’s *The Pale of Settlement*, winner of the 2008 Flannery O’Connor Award for short fiction, is a collection of nine interlinked short stories. She utilizes the tropes of photography and identity in illuminating the complexity of third-generation post-Holocaust literary representation among descendants of immigrants and refugees. A professor of English at Dennison University, Margot Singer, who “does not consider herself the recipient of trauma in any way,”²⁰ is named after her grandmother’s sister who perished in Auschwitz. Jewish by birth, she disdains formal religious practice and is married out of the faith. Her stories, how-

ever, deal persistently with Jewish family history, the vagaries of Jewish memory, and the complexity of Jewish history. Like Dreifus, her paternal grandparents were German-Jewish refugees; however, they moved, not to America, but to Israel prior to the formation of the Jewish state. Her maternal grandparents had their roots in Eastern Europe in what was designated as the “Pale of Settlement,” an area in Western Russia where most Russian Jews were forced to live from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. The protagonist of the nine stories is Susan Stern, a journalist and the American-born daughter of Israeli parents. She visits Israel every summer to spend time with her grandparents and other relatives who remain in the Jewish state.

Singer consciously titled her collection. She told an interviewer that “The Pale of Settlement is a place of historic memory, yet its shadow still hangs over both Israeli and diaspora Jews . . . It seems that the Pale—a vanished place where Jews were forced to live, and later one of the sites of the Holocaust—is the dark mirror image of Israel.”²¹ In the same interview, Singer comments, “So many of [my] stories have to do with boundaries and border crossings, with that liminal place where history, memory, and myth meet” (*RJ Interview*). Susan Stern is herself portrayed as living on the border between young woman and adult, Israeli familiar roots and an American life, the tug of tradition and the allure of secularism. Singer also implies that history is cyclical and that humans have a propensity for evil. Her protagonists inhabit both a pre- and post-Shoah world in which issues of identity and meaning loom large. Moreover, Israel itself is viewed as a place of post-Holocaust Jewish refuge, the stage, so to speak, on which issues of contemporary identity are enmeshed with stories of biblical origins.

Unlike those of Dreifus, Singer’s characters for the most part are not wracked by anxiety over personal security and safety. Rather, they reflect Singer’s concern for questions of memory and identity. “These queries,” Singer continues, “are unique to the Holocaust but also probably quite common among [grand]children of refugees and immigrants of all kinds. If your family left the place they’re ‘from,’ where are you from? How can you imagine/know what your grandparents’ life was like? How can you ‘read between the lines’ of the stories and photographs handed down over time? What has been lost in transmission or translation? To what extent can you distinguish between memory and imagination two generations

on?” (Singer e-mail to Berger, May 2014). Singer’s stories raise these issues in a variety of geographical settings: Israel, Jerusalem, Deir Yassin, Hazor, the Gaza Crossing, Manhattan, and Nepal.

Three of the stories in the collection, “Hazor,” “Deir Yassin,” and “Helicopter Days,” have to do with the impact on identity of wars—ancient and modern—and the tales people tell about them. In “Hazor,” which encapsulates many of Singer’s concerns, Avraham, a retired Israeli archaeologist, confronts the vagaries of memory: revisionists question Israel’s founding myths; his own wife has lost her memory to Alzheimer’s disease; he discards his eldest daughter’s long-lost diary—“No text could escape the distortions of its own mythology. The truth erased itself as you wrote it down” (“Hazor,” 134); a reporter asks about the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and historical facts, and if archeology can illuminate the true narrative of Jewish history. Avraham is also the protagonist in “Deir Yassin,” a story in which Susan is bringing the ashes of her uncle Zalman, who died an expatriate in America, to his brother Avraham in Israel. Avraham decides where the ashes are to be scattered. The story explores the themes of exile and contested memory. Palestinians associate Deir Yassin with the site of an Israeli massacre. For Israelis the village is the place where advance warnings of an imminent battle were unheard. Today a mental institution is situated on the site. Singer attests that as a fiction writer she is not interested in taking sides. Rather, her interest lay in “exposing the layers—the archeological strata, if you will—of memory and history and propaganda and myth” (*RJ Interview*).

“Expatriate” is the story of Susan’s mother who finally accepts the fact that after years of living in Manhattan she is never going to return to Israel. “Borderland” treats literal as well as metaphorical borders. Hiking in Nepal, Susan encounters an Israeli who is traumatized by his duty as a guard in the Gaza Strip. The title story deals with Susan’s affair with an Australian man whose tales of the Aborigine myths reveal the danger and power of stories. It also touches on Arab terrorism. “Reunification” speaks of the implications of Susan’s advice to a former lover living in Germany and his pregnant girlfriend. It happens against the backdrop of the fall of the Berlin Wall. “Body Count” addresses the issue of false reporting about the alleged massacre of Arabs in the village of Jenin. Susan reflects: “How easily the Israelis were cast as Nazis, the Palestinians as martyred Jews” (“Body Count,” 177). All of the linked stories in Singer’s collection

treat characters who are in exile from the histories of their biological or national families.

“Lila’s Story” is Singer’s most direct engagement with the problematic of the Holocaust’s legacy in the third generation. Told in two voices, that of Lila the immigrant grandmother and that of Susan, her granddaughter, the story concerns Susan’s visit to Haifa, her first since Lila’s death, and occasions her retracing of Lila’s life. Complicating the history of Susan’s Holocaust inheritance is the fact that she is more than thrice removed from the Shoah. Lila and her husband Josef were pre-Shoah immigrants; they themselves witnessed nothing. Their war years were spent in Palestine. Moreover, the tale raises the issue of who precisely is a survivor. More in-line with Gerson’s distinction between survivor and refugee, and more nuanced than Dreifus’s conflation of the two terms, Singer’s narrator pays attention to linguistic accuracy and conceptual precision. The narrator observes, “So you could say that they [Lila and Joseph] survived, but they were not *survivors*, not exactly, not in the new sense of the word.” (“Lila,” 41) “They were immigrants,” notes the narrator, “among the lucky ones” (41). Yet they share at least one characteristic of those who were trapped in Europe: Josef is grateful to God—*Gott sei Danke*—that his parents had died before the Holocaust. This recalls the biblical warning that there will come a time when the living will envy the dead.

Susan shares the family narrative that she had heard so many times growing up. Lila soon discovers that she had crossed more than an ocean. Haifa, Palestine in 1939 was far removed from the alleged civility of Europe. “Here in Haifa, it is primitive, dusty, dirty, hot . . . The difference lay in every dimension of existence, from the type of clothes that one wears to the food that one eats. Wiener schnitzel, potato salad, and chocolate roulade are too heavy for the climate,” Lila writes to her sister trapped in Europe. She continues, Palestine “is just so *uncivilized*” (37). Lila and Josef were truly strangers in a strange land. Neither was a Zionist; they were instead Europeans but, as the narrator observes: “there was no escaping being Jews” (40). Moreover, as the situation in Europe grew increasingly ominous, letters from relatives ceased. After the war Lila discovers that her parents had been deported to Theresienstadt—the so-called model camp—in 1942. Her father died there; her mother perished in Auschwitz. The fate of her sister was unknown.

Singer, like Dreifus, utilizes photographs as a frame of reference. Looking through a pile of old photographs of Lila, she muses: “What am I looking for? Something tiny in the background—a half-glimpsed face, an out-of-focus sign. A fingerprint, a trace of scent, a follicle of hair.” “No,” she concludes. Like Adorján, looking at photos of her paternal grandmother, Singer is “looking for [her]self” (41). The story then cuts back and forth between the grandmother’s life and that of Susan. Viewing an old photograph of Lila with her back to the sea and smiling into the camera, Susan notices a faint shadow at her grandmother’s feet. She wonders if the person who took the photo was Josef or perhaps Lila’s lover. Susan herself had had an affair with a married man. She imagines that Lila at age forty had also had an affair. Lev, her lover, took her picture with his “nice new Leica” (52) saying the same words to her that Susan’s lover had uttered: “Smile,” [he said,] “I want you to see how beautiful you are” (53). This episode reveals two important points about the third generation: the need to identify with an immigrant and the fact that photographs can never fully reveal what is captured in the camera’s lens. Photographs can, attests Hirsch, “tell us as much about our own needs and desires (as readers and spectators) as they can about the past world they presumably depict” (Hirsch, *Poetics Today*, 29:1, 117).

The author is sensitive to the ambiguous role played by photographs in linking the lives of Lila and Susan. The photographs both unite and distance the two protagonists. They also give rise to the writer’s imagination. Susan had gone on holiday with a married man. The man had taken her picture because he wanted her to see how beautiful she was. Susan muses over the fact that no one had ever asked who had taken the photos of her. This made her wonder about the photograph of her grandmother with her back turned toward the sea. A faint shadow appears at her feet along with the curved outline of a head. Susan imagines that her grandmother “wasn’t necessarily looking at my grandfather when she smiled that way” (“Lila,” 48). Susan does archival research in the form of interviewing her aunt. She, like Dreifus’s David in “*Mishpocha*,” wants to know what her grandmother was like “before—before our memory of her, before the compounded effects of age and time” (“Lila,” 51). Susan has a photo of her grandmother as a young girl of ten or twelve and realizes that she “know[s] nothing about her at all” (52). The photo serves as a screen, concealing more than it reveals. “My grandparents,” attests

Singer “had this box of old photographs and often they would go through the images and say ‘Oh, I don’t remember who that person is’ or ‘I don’t remember what that was all about.’ It was a mysterious and wonderful box of clues about unknown aspects of the past. Consequently, looking at a photograph becomes much more than a simple fact. In ‘Lila’s Story,’ a photograph of Susan’s grandmother changes subtly each time Susan comes back to look at it. If Susan is looking for the truth about the past, she leaves feeling somewhat frustrated with the realization that even a fixed image can be illusory” (*RJ Interview*).

The authors in this chapter offer three different angles of vision concerning memory of the Shoah in the third generation. They, of course, have no direct memory of the Holocaust, which occurred before they were born. Nor is it possible to have a memory transfusion. Rather, as Hirsch notes of the second generation—the generation of postmemory—“they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (Hirsch, 106). The third-generation writers exhibit both connections and discontinuities between themselves and what preceded them. This generation partakes in both familial and affiliative dimensions of postmemory. Johanna Adorján seeks to identify with her survivor and immigrant grandparents—especially her grandmother born in Hungary and postwar immigrants to Denmark; the stories of Erika Dreifus, granddaughter of German-born refugees who came to America, issue a warning about the persistence of antisemitism; Margot Singer, grandchild of immigrants to pre-state Israel, explores the relationship between myth, memory, and imagination. All of these writers share a concern to illuminate the role that the shadows of the Holocaust continue to play. Collectively, their work instantiates a further refinement of Hirsch’s notion of postmemory.

In terms of Gerson’s distinction between survivor, refugee, and immigrant, the stories discussed in this chapter reveal at least two things. First and foremost, there is an abyss between the experiences of a survivor and those of a refugee and immigrant. Survivors are like the messengers in the biblical book of Job who report “I alone have escaped to tell you” (Job 1:15, 17, 19). Refugees and immigrants fled before the full onslaught of the Holocaust. However, it needs to be stressed that Adorján’s grandparents were both survivors and immigrants. In the second place, there is a marked difference between the characters in the stories of Dreifus

and those of Singer. Dreifus's protagonists are anxiety-ridden, some to the point of phobia. Singer's protagonists deal with identity through the prism of memory and myth while seeking to link their families past and present. The authors whose work we have considered in this chapter help flesh out Gerson's typology while revealing how Holocaust representation shifts in the third generation.

